



Finote Ethio-Canadian Information Centre In Toronto



ፍኖተ ኢትዮ-ካናዳውያን የኢንፎርሜሽን ማዕከል በቶሮንቶ

E-mail: torontofinote@gmail.com

Women's Liberation Movement and democracy

[Halima Adem]

„Without us, the world stops working“ – This was the slogan under which millions of Spanish women launched a general strike on 8 March 2018. Without women participation in unified social transformation praxis in Ethiopia, the country will sink in catastrophic civil disobedience.

ኢትዮጵያውያን ነን እና ትላንትም ዛሬም ነንም :: ሰንደቃችን ምንም ልጣፊ የሌለበት አረንጓዴ ቢጫ ቀይ:: እነዚህም ደረስም እነ አገዳሰ አጋም፤ እነ መንግስቱና ገርማሜ ንዋይ፤ እነ ገርሱና በላይ ዘለቀ፤ አሞራው ውገነህ፤ ፊታውራሪ ወርቁ፤ እነ ጥላሁንና ዋለልኝ እነ ጣይቱና ጽጌ፤ ማርታ፤ ቆንጂትና ድላይ ሁሉ የተቀበሉት የተሰዉለት።
[ሀማ ቱማ]

Preamble

Change refers to any deviation from accepted way of life or established lives, and social change is the change in society (a web of social relationships) at large. The dialectical law of nature and society informs us that society is changeful and dynamic, it can never remain static-it spirals upward from quantity to quality, negating the old to pave the path for the new one. The universe is expanding and evolving dynamically in the formation of new galaxies and billions of stars. Similarly, the evolved and expanded human mental capacities primarily reflect the increased information processing capacities of the enlarged human brain including the enlarged neocortex, cerebellum, and basal ganglia. These increased information processing capacities enhance human abilities to combine and recombine highly differentiated actions, perceptions, and concepts in order to construct larger, more complex, and highly variable behavioral units in a variety of behavioral domains including language, social intelligence, tool-making, and motor sequences. Ignoring men's hypocrisy, women have been key agents of social change as well, and because of social change there is tremendous change in the lives of women. These women are not only the beneficiaries of change they are the key agents for change. Throughout Ethiopia’s struggle for independence against colonialism (partition/scrambles for Africa and neoliberal/neocolonialism for Ethiopia), women stood shoulder to shoulder with men. invisibly with determination and revolutionary zeal. While these women worked hard, fought and died for freedom, few have been able to share the fruits of that freedom: they remain subjugated, marginalized and disenfranchised, as they have been throughout history.

Women are the driving impetus of all-inclusive provisional people's democratic government

Social change is nothing but variations in, modification of, any aspect of social process, social patterns, social interaction, or social organization. Participation in the politics of the social transformative praxis and national movement, which had been acts of patriotism and political life, became a respectable natural niche for all Ethiopian women. Moreover, the EPRP's principles/visions of emancipation of all women from layers of oppressions (inequalities such as gender, socio-economics, socio-political) remained rooted in its commitment to substantive equality, truly universal human rights, and participatory democracy from below.

There cannot be a real democracy if the voices and issues of women that constitute half the population of the country are ignored or sidelined. It is the need of the hour in a country like Ethiopia to have equal participation of

women in mainstream political activity. Citizens need to deconstruct the stereotype of women as limited to household activities only. The nature of society has a crucial impact on the extent and effectiveness of women's political participation. Their low representation in decision making institutions signifies deep flaws in the political structure of Ethiopia. Historical, social and cultural factors have restricted rural/peasantry women from enjoying their rights of participation in political processes. In Ethiopia now, despite Abiy's overzealous boast of empowering them, women's rights cannot be achieved by granting decrees of equality but through a socialization process, whereby legal rights will be recognized and entrenched in order to promote their interests and heighten their participation in a democratic processes: women are overwhelmed by problems of daily survival and in addition to their economic marginalization, their role is further constrained by cultural, religious, and ideological orientation. Moreover, because of their proximity to the oppressive power of the state and as a primary socializing agent, their role is crucial to any society aspiring to democracy.

African women is Africa's greatest resource, as they have been the backbone of the continents socioeconomic progression. 24% of parliamentary and ministerial seats across sub-Saharan Africa are held by women, with countries like Rwanda (61%) and South Africa (40%) leading the way. In light of all this, Ethiopia still struggles with gender equality. One wonders, how can this be, when we boast the first head of an internationally recognized state in Africa, Empress Zewditu and Empress Taytu Betul who bravely lead the Ethiopian army, alongside her husband Emperor II Menelik, against the heavily armed Italian army during partition for Africa.

There is so much that can be said about the disenfranchisement of women in Ethiopia, but what can those of us not residing within the confines of the countries unevolved political and social agenda do to help our sisters and the country as a whole? We must take action on all fronts, not just provide lip service as we sit comfortably within the walls of our homes. Residing within Western countries is not always easy, as it can sometimes be made to appear. However, let us reflect on the luxuries that are afforded to us, such the ability to free ourselves from the ideology of 'a woman's place', a working mother, with no autonomy, little education and tied to the opinions of her husband. Imagine, 80% of the Ethiopian population resides in rural areas for which women provide the majority of agricultural support, but a women's access to these resources and community participation is managed by the men in their lives – fathers, brothers and then husbands. This prohibits the recognition of the women in these communities and the opportunity for them to reinvest in their communities, as women are much more likely to do. The women in Ethiopia are restrained from continuing their education beyond, and not to mention the rampancy of FGM (female genital mutilation). However, you can not the beat the spirit of a women, if not for themselves, then for their children, they are pushing forward, but we must be of greater service to expedite equality on all levels. Among these theoretical part on gendered barriers are:

- **Structural barriers:** Include women's general positions within different social systems as they pertain to issues of women's levels of educational achievement, rate of participations in the workforce, the percentage of women in poverty, and the division of childcare and household responsibilities
- **Institutional barrier:** which political (electoral) system favors women the most, what is the role of parties as gatekeepers, number of women party activists and the strength of women's organization within the party
- **Cultural barrier:** gendered beliefs about politics, while specific gender stereotypes vary across cultures, most societies view politics as a man's world.

As the saying goes, "to whom much is given, much will be required". For those of us gifted with the freedom to make decisions for ourselves and enjoy the liberties of democracy, we must remember those who are still struggling and standing on the front lines and join them. Our mission is to restore the dignity of Ethiopia and its people, but this cannot be done **without the full and free participation of Ethiopian women**. We must follow in the foot-steps of **Ms. Aberash Berta, a democracy activist and EPRP member that disappeared over 20 years ago, and Mrs. Genet**

Girma-lead EPRP member- who remains active in the establishment of the democratic process in Ethiopia. The Martyrs have been recognizant of issues arising from theoretical and empirical insights made by revolutionaries and women activists working on issues of women’s empowerment, political participation and representation. To understand equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes, they ratified the inter-related concepts of Political participation, Political representation, Political leadership, and Political accountability.

Political leadership

Political leadership, which cuts across both political participation and political representation, by key individuals shaping political agendas, taking the lead in articulating these and participating in their translation into policy. It had been well known from hitherto existing history of societies that women’s active participation in public life has a positive impact on communities, legislatures, political parties and citizen’s daily lives. When they work together, women can have a profound and positive impact on their communities. The ***EPRP women Martyrs had/have taken such active revolutionary responsibilities for the emancipation of all women to:***

- achieve higher standards of living: the interests of men and women are different and even conflicting and therefore women are needed in representative democratic institutions to articulate the interests of all women
- involve in collaborative leadership styles: the equal representation of women and men enhances democratization of governance in both transitional people's democratic government and consolidated democratic people's democratic institutions.
- work across party lines
- participate in peace building activities: there must be symposium for the prevention and resolution of conflict and peace building
- make better decisions on behalf of all oppressed women: women’s wings within political parties can be another mechanism for promoting reform.

The principles of EPRP in promoting full and equal participation of women in politics in 60th-70

Organized civil society has had an important impact on the evolution of democratic institutions in general, and especially on the role women have assumed in them. The principle addressed the analysis of obstacles facing women in the political arena from the perspective of civil society. Thus the members promoted specific initiatives to increase women's participation in politics, and identified best practices in legislation, promotion, training and for social revolution presented or put into practice through institutions of the would-be **established people's democratic government** or **civil society that would have contributed to increasing the presence and impact of women in politics in the region.** The testing of the party's tactics from the standpoint of the principles of social democracy and of the lessons of the revolution was also necessary for those who really desired to pave the way for unity of tactics as a basis for the future complete unity of the whole Ethiopian social-democratic parties or pluralism, and not to confine themselves solely to verbal rebuke. To give a complete answer to the questions of equality, justice, and freedom, the party of the class-conscious workers must clarify:

- the significance of a provisional people's revolutionary government in the revolution then and now in progress and in the entire struggle of the oppressed people women/men in general;
- its attitude towards a provisional revolutionary people's government that should be women inclusive
- the precise conditions of Social-Democratic participation in this government to achieve the goal of the party's vision for democratic framework
- the conditions under which pressure was/is to be brought to bear on this government from below, i.e., in the event of there being no EPRP representations (social democrats) in it. Only when all these questions have been clarified, will the political conduct of the party in this sphere be principled, clear, and firm

The EPRP had/has demonstrated within its principle that promoting gender equality can become part of a party's values and political platform wherever it finds itself on the political spectrum. Given increasing attention to gender equality in societies across the nation, a progressive political party would do well to review its own stance on gender equality, and to develop a coherent policy or set of views that are in line with party values. A party that not only develops a stance on gender equality, but also articulates its stance in the form of **concrete objectives and goals, obtains a powerful tool by which to reach out to female members of its electorate, and possibly to the broader voting public.** In light of the present gross human right violation, particularly of women (young and old), citizens of Ethiopia, internally displaced or otherwise, all concerned citizens call for all Ethiopian Women whether those who are in the Ethiopia or abroad to support the formation of provisional people's democratic government in struggle for democracy. One can argue that a **all-inclusive transitional people's democratic government** has a legitimate mandate to change social institutions to establish economic and political liberty for the whole population. Introducing changes of socio-political institution in favor of women seems most complex in lower middle-income countries where the shares of rural populations remain important along with the percentages of illiterate women. Overcoming such long-lasting discriminatory cultural practices depends heavily on the authority of countries' type of regimes. The influence of women in the society increase under a generally democratic, not ethnic authoritarian, regime allowing people access to information about different lifestyles and grass root women participation in popular election processes.



(1) ወይዘሮ ዳሮ ነጋሽ

(2) አበራሽ በርታ

(1). ወይዘሮ ዳሮ ነጋሽ ፣ የዲላኦማ ዋና ተጠሪ ፣ የስምንት ወር እርጉዝ በፋሽስቱ መንግሥቱ ባንዳዎች ተረሽናለች። ህይወትዋን ለመላው ጭቁን ሕዝብ፣ እና ለመላው ድርብ ተጨቅዎኝ ሴቶች የልጅዋና የራስዋን ህይወት ለዲሞክሲ መብት ሰውታለች።

(2). አበራሽ በርታ (የትግል ስምዋ መዓዛ)፡ ግዋዲት መዓዛ ከአምባ ግዋዶችዋ ጋራ ለሕዝባዊ መንግሥት በቆራጥነትና በአይበጋረነት ስታገል፣ ለሴቶች የድርብ ጭቆና መቼትሎው ይኸው ሕዝባዊ ዲሞክራሲያዊ ትግል መሆኑን ለኢትዮጵያውያን ጭቁን ሴቶች ምሥሌ ሆናለች። አበራሽ እና ሌሎች ግዋዶችዋ በወያኔው አቢይ አህመድ እስር ቤት አሰብአዊነት ድርጊት እየተካሄደባቸው ይገኛሉ።

Touchy and heroic poem-from the poet Hama Tuma

ስንቱን የገደሉ ስንቱን ሰው የፈጁ
 ዛሬ ተዘክረው በክብር ሲቀበሩ፤
 ለፍትህ ለሀገር የሞቱት ተረስተው
 ዛሬም እንደ ትላንት በዝምታ ታልፈው
 ይሉኝታ ባጡትም በሰፊው ተወግዘው።
 ያገር ጆሮ ሁሉ በጋራ ተይፍኖ
 መናገር ፋይዳቢስ ቃልን ማርከስ ከቶ
 በግፍ የገደለ በገፍ የመተረ
 በንጹሃንም ደም ራሱን ያጠበ ፤
 ዛሬም ይከረፋል ነገም ይጠየቃል
 ፍትህ ካላገኘ የሰው ደም ይጫሃል።

በኢትዮጵያ የትግል ታሪክ ከያ ትውልድ እንትሰታሰሉ ጀምሮ በተደ ሽብርና በአሁኑ ወትት መስየትነት ከክፈለ-ት በርካታ እየቶቻችን ምስል በ<<ያ ትውልድ ተቋም>> ድረ ገጽ (www.yatewliid.com, www.yatewliid.org) የተካተተ።



የገጽ 20 ቀን 2012 ዓ.ም.



The portraits depicted below demonstrates the exemplary, symbolic, women who were/are attracted to political life if they were provided role modeling in the arena.

It transports us directly into the private world of a woman who had never lost their inspirational power as an original thinker and courageous activist in first the EPRP's social democratic principles, and then the revolutionary

group, the Youth League. They suffered for their convictions; jail sentences in 60th, 70th and some now had been /have been followed by red-terror and a unlimited years in prison for opposing repression and dehumanization of citizenries. Their brutal death at the hands of the militaristic renegades and the during the 60th-70th mass uprising in Ethiopia had contributed to their mystique: They now revered as the revolutionary who never compromised. EPRP's women's role as an national revolutionary figure took them to places from which women of their class were usually barred. They had a sharp eye for incongruity.

We've got rampant neoliberalism leading to the consolidation of power and influence and money in the hands of the 1%. We've got an increasingly disenfranchised, unstable situation around the rest of the world as the middle class is disenfranchised and slowly bled dry by the top. We're actually seeing a return to sequence of unwanted values in the worst possible way in terms of the dismantling of welfare provisions for people around the globe. So any critique of neocolonialism/neoliberalism is very indispensable condition in those terms. **Anti-colonial and anti-neoliberal women heroes should follow these Martyrs gait to fight for their survivals and the country's sovereignty!**

As success without democracy is improbable, democracy without women is impossible!

The political participation of women results in tangible gains for democracy, including greater responsiveness to citizen needs, increased cooperation across party and ethnic lines, and more sustainable peace!

If your actions create a legacy that inspires others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, then, you are an excellent leader: the women-Martyrs are the true heroes of our time!