

African Cleansers and Precessional Effects

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I'm sitting here with a copy of an article in front of me about "cleansers" in African villages. It tells the story of an African woman whose husband died recently, so now she was expected to have sex with the village "cleanser." The cleanser is a man who has sex with widows and other women who have recently experienced the death of a family member. Having sex with the cleanser makes the women fit for society again by driving away evil spirits. Village tradition holds that this is necessary or the whole community suffers.

Where do such traditions come from? It's true that other cultures have felt a need for lovemaking as a way to re-integrate people into their communities after experiencing trauma or loss. Ancient goddess priestesses would perform ritual sex with soldiers returning from war. This would "love the war out" of them so they could return to their families as husbands and fathers and brothers rather than as warriors.

Perhaps a loving man would help a new widow grieve, and in releasing her grief, allow her to return to living as a whole family member again. If this was the traditional purpose, it has been lost through the years, or the article misrepresented the situation. The cleanser described exhibited neither sacred intent nor high standing in their society.

Whatever the original intent, sacredness is not apparent here. The tradition's detrimental effects are the focus of the article. The primary problem is that the cleansers are infecting the women with HIV. Hardly driving away evil spirits that! A woman has just lost her husband and probably her financial support, and now she has her health taken from her by a supposed "cure."

However, I wouldn't have read an article again and again for a doom-and-gloom story. The valuable part of the article for me was learning about the woman's response.

But first, some background. Richard Buckminster Fuller, aka Bucky Fuller, wrote and spoke about precessional effects. Precession is when the bee thinks it's collecting pollen to make honey for the hive. As it goes about from flower to flower, the pollen sticking to its legs fertilizes all the plants, ensuring their survival. The plant pollenization is a precessional effect of the bees gathering pollen.

Humans are extraordinarily good at not noticing our own precessional effects. While improving the technologies of war, we've unintentionally made life better for the survivors in innumerable ways. One example is Hitler's People's Car, the Volkswagen. Then there are improved canning technologies for food and shipping methods.

In the 60s, President Kennedy started the Peace Corps in partial response to the Cold War. By the early 70s, using lessons learned in the Peace Corps and other aid projects, micro-lending circles had sprung up all over the "less developed" world.

Micro-lending circles and cooperatives – they've gone by many names and worked in many variations – were formed when a village or community was offered a small loan to put one of the local women in business. In Latin America it might be a \$200 loan for a sewing machine so a widow could feed her family with the proceeds of her sewing. It might be the money to buy a loom in Guatemala, or a farming yak in Nepal or a milking goat in Africa.

The loans would be paid back, thereby funding a loan to the next woman. Each woman that participated would become part of the group that chose who received the next loan and for how much. Wealth would expand slowly at first, then exponentially as more women could combine funds to make more loans. Seed money at its finest, simplest. Entire communities were strengthened by self-directed, mutual support.

Back in Kenya, the cleanser is giving women HIV-AIDS – those that didn't already get it from their now-deceased husbands, that is. But some of these widows are now refusing the cleanser. Because they can. They can, because they are part of a women's support network. Often now called a widows group, they make money to support themselves and the increasing number of village orphans.

The women are empowered to refuse the village traditions in favor supporting each other and the orphans. They are healthier, wealthier, happier. The AIDS orphans are being raised with different values which will change the future. Health is returning to their society using precessional effects.