**Eritrean Woman Beautiful and Multitalented**

**By: Berhane Woldu**

I made my way to Adi-Qual as the orange morning light was shining; frosty wet gray smog and patches of fog tint spotted the sky high and far in the distance above the corn fields. The country side was loaded with white fog; icicle likes hung from the trees. Everything held by a white gentleness. As I drove I could see from afar people in the green meadow and rows of corn fields. As I draw nearer there they were, Eritrean woman from all walks of life and different nationalities working on the fields. In Eritrea it is common to find people who follow different religions and people who speak different languages claim the same ancestry. Ceremonies, work habits and many other customs overlie as do farming and grazing practices. This unconventional social make up and unity is the secret that makes the Eritrean woman different from all the rest. This cultural and social value is what gives the society stability and success. What amazes me the most is the endurance, strength, and unshakable faith of an Eritrean woman and for that; she is the pillar of the Eritrean society.

Eritrean woman always dress immaculately for duty or leisure. She wears her olive ebony hair lay on her back and a twofold thread and homemade nickels around her neck, a neck that reminds one of alabaster. Her skin tone is a brownish gold, or ebony dark, and at times light-skinned, the skin as smooth as ice-cream; attractive in a way that disturbs your emotions. Graceful smooth footed walk of a peasant, a narrow waist, small breasts she very often dress in Shfoe, Lewet or colorful patterned Tob and sandals. For an Eritrean woman there are many ways to wear her hair; she might tame it with pins or weave it in a thick plait hanging over one breast like the Bilen Woman or knot it intricately at the nape of her neck like a Qunama Woman or sweep it back in such a manner that the broad, smooth planes of her cheeks declared themselves like the Tigre woman. One can put the hair on their palm reminding themselves of silk and she knows how to play with her hair lovingly, like a stringed musical instrument. When the hair is combed and let go it lay opened like a twinkle black waves as does a Tigrina woman. An Eritrean woman is not vain she understand that she matures, an ever-deepening realization, that there is more to life than the extraordinary beauty she have always been celebrated for. She has accomplished what many women in some other culture have yet to start. She has been married had children. In youth she had been so thoroughly beautiful that her beauty had been publicly celebrated.

The life of an Eritrea woman has always been strenuous; it is hard work, housework, field work, liberation fighter more field work on top of house work. If anything it is hard work that an Eritrean women do a lot of in her life, stoop labor done in the direct sun, early morning with cold freezing weather. Despite the hardship she enjoys the morning gray light, the neat rows of corn flowed up and down the meadows and valleys. The wind bringing the smell of the sweat flowers to the nose.

During the struggle for liberation, Eritrean woman accepted duties the liberation war imposed on her. She understood love meant life itself, but honor was greater and, joined the armed struggle it was a point of rightness. She would die before she surrenders; to her, life in defeat was not worth living. She endured the hardship of war struggled against those larger forces that could not be struggled against. She was part of history traveled in it easily.

Subsequent to Independence and war of aggression, it is her daily task to help and give hand in farming activities after work or in the summer to work at picking corn, tomatoes or potatoes to bring little money to the house. With that little money she makes needs meet. Her hands tented in the picking seasons with corn juice. In the fields she wears shashe or veil on her head. She is of average weight able to squat low between the tomato rows for quite some time without pain. During this period of transition from medieval to modern day Eritrea, she has learned to compose herself in the face of it. Today she is stronger, skilled and more educated than ever before. The modern Eritrean woman is equal to her male counterpart. She works in construction, as a teacher, a doctor and more and yet, she knows how to farm. She is good with corn, wheat and barley. Her hands are red stained from picking tomatoes in the spring. In the winter the golden corn mingles with her skin and scents as she wants to tie her life to the farm and the closeness to the people she loves. It is a matter in part of faith and destiny, but even more of soul. Her experience taught her to seek union with Greater Life and to imagine herself as part of the lager commune. The prospect of death in the dry season, to her, is irrelevant next to its happy recognition of its participation in the life of the grander conviction. In most cultures there is fear of death; her life is separate from being. An Eritrean woman, for that matter, sees that life embraces death, and because she feels the truth of this she gains tranquility.

The young Eritrean (Warsaye) women as did her mother (Yekalo) stand out with grace and confidence when she speaks she is clear, serene and unruffled, and her voice carries the strength of truth. As one looks at her walking you notice the tight gins or long Lewet dress, the blouse she wore drowning through the shoulder, her long hair hanging in a thick braid, henna tattoo on her arm, her hand lose and graceful, the straightness of her back that shows her true refined posture yet this beauty “Fit for a Queen” changes into a modern maid, a farmer, a solder when time requires of her. She understands that egos are nothing; she bends her ego, her head, and bows to her elders. She knows that her being is intertwined with the grater Eritrean society and without the society she alone is a drop of water in the Red sea.