

## **THE IRONY OF LEADERSHIP, OBSERVANCE OF CIVIC VALUES AND APPLICATION OF RECIPROCITY IN NIGERIA**

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### **Abstract**

*It is notable from several events in the country that key issues in Nigeria's democracy and in her governance structure are far from been determined. Bad leadership yields nothing good in the society, ranging from poor and discriminatory selection of those who man our various government ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs), where squared pegs (leaders) are placed in round holes to the formation of unprogressive, irritant clique, popularly called cabals which make them not to perform according to the yearnings of the governed. Governance is misapplied through the practice of the constitution and laws negatively; paying no regard to good policies as enshrined in Chapter 2, section 17, subsection 3, and section 18 of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution (as amended). This paper adopted historical and hermeneutical approaches to highlight the failures of leadership and lack of observance of civic values in Nigeria as noted in the polity. A theory of reciprocity was also applied with a notable example from a text in the Bible to explain the irony in the leadership and observance of civic values in Nigeria. The paper recommends that good governance; provision of social amenities, adequate security, equitable allocation of amenities and gender/age equity in democratic politicking would result to multifarious development and signify positive observance of civic values in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Civic values, Hermeneutic, Irony, Leadership, Reciprocity

### **Introduction**

The irony of leadership in Nigeria represents one of the opposite ways our leaders operate what is presented in the preamble of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution (as amended): "WE the people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Having firmly and solemnly resolved to live in unity and harmony as one indivisible and indissoluble sovereign nation under God... And to provide for a constitution for the purpose of promoting the good government and welfare of all persons in our country, on the principles of freedom, equality and justice, and for the purpose of consolidating the unity of our people..." This constitutional affirmation has been operated wrongly to the

extent that questions are severally asked whether the people actually took part in writing the said constitution. The leaders do not believe that they are to practise within the sovereignty, equality and control of the "We the people," which gave them the opportunities to be where they are. The Constitution is not operated by them as "We the people" but, as either, "I" or "Me and my people/cliq." Justice, equity and fairness are casualties of the constitution, of which the products are tribal sentiments, nepotism (lack of merit in affairs of governance/favouritism), religious fanaticism, egocentrism, bulk-passing between arms of government or between past and current governments and incitements of violence through undignified speeches, popularly called hate speeches, along with protection of the violence and blood tasty breeders. Without the people's involvement in the practise of the constitution assumed to have been written by them, the document is without authority. Therefore, operating it in spite of the people, and without their interest in mind, portrays bad leadership. In areas of civic responsibility and practice, the leaders do not have anything interesting to teach or transfer to the younger folks, other than prepping them for thuggery and hooliganism; cultism, irrational thoughts, examination malpractice, culminating to institutionalize raping and kidnapping instincts. Leadership in Nigeria is incapable of inculcating civic values in the people, especially among the youths.

Leadership is service and good leadership should be service for the good of all Nigerians as enshrined in the constitution. Sadly, bad leadership has given birth to nurturing youths who have no regard for the unity of all segments of the country leading to exhibition of self-centeredness, inferiority and superiority complexes, pride and arrogance among other vices that are the very antithesis of unity. Bad leadership has manifested in poor and discriminatory selection of those who man government ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs). Such square pegs (leaders) in round holes lead to formation of the unprogressive, irritant cliq, popularly called cabals who bend rules at their whims and caprices, and are aversed to the practice of equity to justify citizens' trust in the government. This negates the provisions of Chapter 2, section 17, subsection 3 and section 18 of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution (as amended). Human beings take, seriously, issues of life and death, as well as heaven and hell. Failure to pay attention to the issue of leadership with commitment and passion to serve, results to neglect of infrastructural development, care of the environment and food security, poor socio-economic growth and extreme hunger in the land. Since Nigeria's independence, there has been unending cry against the consequences of corruption, which has been the bane of good leadership and governance in the country. Corrupt persons are wont to amass riches for themselves and they are not interested in creating wealth for the common good. All they have tried to do through the years is paying lip service to fighting corruption due to lack

of political will and determination to, frontally, counter the scourge. What obtains largely appears to be tribalized fight against corruption. Some people are more respected than the others, with stubborn respect to impartial justice; deviating strongly from the way of God's principles of justice and purposeful judgment that "he that does wrong must receive for the wrong which he has done: no respect of persons while passing judgment." (Job 34:19; Col. 3:25 NIV) It is worthy to note that when leaders make reckless decisions, the citizens suffer. But, when the people feel victorious over their socio-economic endeavours or challenges, even the leaders rejoice; and this is what good leadership entails - making the people to make ends meet without duress under peaceful, conducive and secured environment when all needed infrastructure is in place. In Nigeria, too much of blame games in leadership goes on; no one tries to repay, in kind, what another person has provided or embarked on previously for the people. That is why we have abandoned projects, national assets and infrastructure littered all over the states in Nigeria.

### **Leadership: What It Entails**

Out of many definitions of leadership, the definition and explanation by Margaret Rouse caught the authors' interest: "Leadership is the ability of an individual or a group of individuals to influence and guide followers or other members of an organization. It involves making sound and sometimes difficult decisions, creating and articulating a clear vision, establishing achievable goals and providing followers with the knowledge and tools necessary to achieve those goals." Ogbeyi (2012) captured leadership this way: "It denotes the ability to lead, direct and organize a group." Mrs Farida Waziri, AIG (retd) succinctly explains who is a leader: "A leader is one who fosters change, but not merely to hold formal leadership positions." It then goes to say that the performance of a leader affects the led positively or negatively. The result of following the principles of good leadership based on God's goodness can be expressed in the following statement: "Blessed are they whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the LORD; they keep his statutes, seek him with all their heart, they do nothing wrong; they walk in his ways." (Psalm 119: 1-3, NIV) There can be no better ways of stating the feelings of the people when they gain rewards and favour from the performances of willing, conscientious and diligent leaders, hence, this congratulatory statement of God Almighty. However, this is not about religiosity, but about keeping the precepts and principles of God through justice by those who earn the seat of leadership and have power over the governed. A leader in the political circle should be and act like a prudent business leader that organizes and manages his enterprise with considerable initiative and an innovator of ideas, bearing the risks involved to achieve positive outcome: sound development and gains. The leader harnesses and

suitably combines resources (human and natural) to achieve this. Good leaders prioritize and improve the mental wellbeing of their citizens, invest in them, mostly the youth and women, so that life can be made easy for them through their endeavours: menially or professionally, for economic empowerment and subsequent growth. A leader must have suitable qualifications in terms of capacity and willingness to make the desired development come to effect. For many years of democratic practice in Nigeria, the people are still searching for a leader with character, whom they will confess that the country prospered under their leadership. Why so? Because there was equality and every one prospered according to their capability; and there was peace everywhere in the polity. Or, so they would say, there was a period when bad leaders ruled the country but one leader was exceptional.

### **Misapplication of Leadership and Reciprocity in Nigeria: Lesson from 1Kings 12:12-16**

Leadership challenges in Nigeria could be addressed with the aid of similar biblical episodes and social psychological theories such as that portrayed in 1Kings 12:12-16; and theory of reciprocity for lessons to correct contemporary leadership styles. Reciprocity connotes the fact that people reward kind actions and discipline unkind actions. Theory of reciprocity, therefore, states that people do evaluation on the kindness of an action, both the intention and consequences of such action. Reciprocity is a social norm of responding to a positive action which depicts that people are cooperative to a friendly action than self-interest model, where hostile actions can attract ruthless and revolting response from the masses. It is not a surprise to experience bad leadership and non-observance of civic values in Nigeria with little or no impact on the national development in the recent times when reciprocity theory is considered. Fukuyama (1996) observes that there must be coexistence of democratic and capitalist institutions within certain pre-modern cultural habits that will ensure their proper functioning; else, productivity or adequate results will be hampered. The episode in 1Kings 12:12-16 teaches that the ten tribes of Israel deserted King Rehoboam and crowned Jeroboam king due to the hardened heart of Rehoboam to lessen the financial and physical burden on the northern tribes of Israel levied by King Solomon their father. Rehoboam rejected the advice of the elders to alleviate the national hardship; rather he vociferated harshly during his manifesto in accordance with his inhumane peers. Rehoboam threatened the people that his little finger was thicker than his father's waist, which implied that his smallest measures would be harsher than his father's largest measures; that his father, King Solomon punished the Israelites with whips but his own would be scorpions (1Kings 12:10-11). Having heard the dehumanizing threat from the would-be king Rehoboam, the Israelites, especially, the Northerners, refused to anoint him king. Instead they exclaimed "what share do we have in

David, what part in Jesse's son? To your tents, O Israel! Look after your own house, O David!" (1Kings 12:16 NIV) So, Israel departed to their various tents and did as it seemed right to them. They eventually chose Jeroboam as king who, eventually, led them into idolatrous practices that incurred the wrath of God that consequently led them to exile. Swaggart (2013) laments that the foolish decisions or bad leadership style of Rehoboam and the impatience of Israel to abandon the covenantal civic value ignited the division and crisis between Israel and Judah for about 250 years. These reciprocal actions in Israel's national politics caused both the national entity and the people much harm. Nigerians, both the political aspirants and the masses should draw lessons from this incidence and be wise in their franchise. However, Hale and Thorson (2007) opine that the rigidity and brutality of Rehoboam, consequent upon reciprocity, was divinely masterminded in order that the prophecy of Prophet Ahijah might be fulfilled concerning the separation of Judah from Israel (1Kings 11:29-39). Nigerians should beware of autocratic leadership that allows marginalization, insecurity to the so-called minority and inequality in gender and distribution of power and revenue. Indifference to genocide and encouragement of religious fanaticism in the garb of politics and jettisoning of civic values as a result of bad leadership can usher in anarchy, agitations for secession and divisions may leave the nation porous and susceptible to foreign invaders. The people should take all these into consideration when casting their votes during polls in order to form good governments that will pay heed to good governance and observance of civic values.

### **Wherein are the duties of political parties?**

"The labour of the fool demoralizes everyone around him because he doesn't have a map to the city." - Jewish saying

One cannot talk about bad leadership in a political (democratic) set-up as in Nigeria without highlighting the role of the political parties as the main supplier of leaders and players of politics. Under a democratic multi-party system, leaders work in tandem with the political parties which produce them to implement their programme(s). Failure of the party to have an articulated clear vision, achievable goals with members exposed to the knowledge and tools necessary to achieve the goals which the leader will spearhead, will make the leader to derail from the path of good governance. Also, a political party must have structures that groom political gladiators on leadership, management and supervisory roles. This can be implemented during retreat sessions which we get to hear of when people are elected; and continued when people are given ministerial positions; not just spending money to quarter them and feed them after which bad leadership process continues. When there is disequilibrium between the ways the party thinks and the way the leader (for instance the president) thinks, implementation of policies

through manifesto suffers. The first casualty becomes economic management, leading to discordant welfare policies for the people. Poverty and scrambling for wealth become veritable grounds for insecurity. The people then complain of not benefitting from the system and the murmurings of bad leadership and governance become loud. The party in power through the Assemblies - National, States and Local governments should do well to monitor what and how the leaders who carry out implementations of her policies do their work. Carrying out situational leadership wrongly where appointments and placements of appointees into MDAs and Boards of parastatal agencies under the watchful eyes of the party is not palatable. Appointees should be placed in right positions or situations. Parties should constantly push leaders they produce to act and lead to satisfy the interest of the masses who are the designers or embodiments of democracy. Therefore, any party in power cannot, possibly, be exonerated from bad governance of the country which the leader (e.g. president) is accused of and being taunted as a bad leader since the party does not properly supervise the making of strategic and visionary decisions and convincing the people to follow those decisions faithfully through awareness creation. Political and electoral process or voter education of the masses on issues relating to registration for voting, significance of voter register before and during elections, voter cards and their significance, conduct during election, principle of "one man one vote," and guidance of votes and ballot boxes etc, should be an important programme of the parties. But this is glaringly lacking in Nigeria, hence the high percentage of disenfranchisement of the electorate and misapplication of voting potency that permeate the land during voting periods. Many of the people believe that the benefit of coming to vote is when the parties dish out handouts in the form of inducement to earn their votes; but not to enthrone good leadership and good governance.

### **Observance of Civic Values**

Acquiring characters necessary for purposeful citizenship and statesmanship for composite development of Nigeria is supposed to be a virtue that should be transferred from leaders to the young (or ordinary) citizens. By that, if any person is born into Nigeria, they would be regarded as being, already, into a system primed for development: a country that is free of rudiments of corruption. There is joy in a nation where citizens follow and obey standard civic values formulated and observed by their leaders ahead of them. The Youth will cleanse their negative inborn ways by taking heed therein, according to the conduct of their leaders who take delight in following the letters of the statutes of the nation. It is difficult to be good and patriotic citizens when the conditions for civic values are mismanaged or adulterated by those who are meant to set the pace for ideal acculturation. For example, traffic rules and regulations are evidently flouted by those in power on daily

basis. Leaders' offspring live in affluence, clothed in purple and fine linen, enjoy themselves and feed sumptuously every day, even glaringly wastefully, to the detriment of the "commoners." What will the followers or the governed learn from such habits? Of course, they will learn how to propagate social maladies. That shows how bad and inappropriate leadership is in Nigeria. It is pertinent for leaders stationed in every aspects of human endeavor, particularly, areas relating to the teachings of civic values, including religion to aim to "produce sound, knowledgeable and morally developed followers who understand the Golden Rule and apply it in their daily living ..." (Nzomiwu, 2014) for the benefit of the nation. Failure of leaders to perform their duties and fulfill their obligations to nationhood impinges on the protection of the Rights of the citizens, thereby breeding chaos in the society. This makes civic values non-observable by all and sundry. Indirectly, bad leadership sows the seeds of moral decadence in the polity. It is said that the young goat learns the eating of grasses from the adult goat. So is the pattern of moral acculturation in the society - learn from me, and do as I have done. But the leaders, so far, have not set the right statutory example by action to follow. In fact, there is no better way to encapsulate the lessons and truthfulness of our civic values and call for obedient observance of them than the words of the second stanza of the Nigerian National Anthem where leaders are prayed for by the people to observe good governance:

*O God of creation, direct our noble cause  
Guide our Leaders right  
Help our Youth the truth to know  
In love and honesty to grow  
And living just and true  
Great lofty heights attain  
To build a nation where peace and justice shall reign*

There is no iota of doubt that when the leaders (who are actually statesmen in every sense of it) observe and practise the tenets of this stanza, the generality of the citizens, mainly the Youth, have no choice other than to agree and obey as stated in the Nigeria's PLEDGE:

*I pledge to Nigeria my country  
To be faithful, loyal and honest  
To serve Nigeria with all my strength  
To defend her unity  
And uphold her honour and glory  
So help me God.*

With this in mind, there should be no more lip service to Nigeria's concerns, but pledge of allegiance to selfless governance and followership. Let our

religious beliefs work to bear on our conscience, attitude and conduct in uniting the people towards development and growth of the country to which sectionists and tribalists lay claim for the sake of satisfying their desires.

### **Project Abandonment**

There is need to improve on what was on ground which were inherited from predecessors, rather than rejecting or abandoning them. At most, let there be reassessment or revaluation of such inherited policies or projects to cause sustainability to come into good effect. When these assets are neglected or ignored, development, production and services in areas of healthcare (mostly primary healthcare), power/electricity, education, accessible roads, agriculture which facilitate human growth, are hugely affected negatively. Revival or sustenance of those assets will give impetus to socio-economic enhancement in the life of the people, industrial infrastructural growth and job for the teeming unemployed skilled and unskilled persons in the land. It will lead to vibrant export undertakings and foreign exchange revenue generation. Where there are good leaders in place to sustain good governance, these glaring developmental inadequacies such as bad policies or lack of policy continuity, lack of political will, political hatred and marginalization of some regions, corruption (which has always been the main culprit), impunity and poor distribution of manpower to situational areas, hostage taking of leaders who mean well by cabals will not occur; because with creative prudence, finance could be made available for the development of these projects appropriately. There is no doubt that the wealth to execute projects is in the hands of men not exposed to benefit the people. The areas where failure of leadership is glaring include:

**Poor roads** across the country hinder transportation of humans, herds, goods and services; and as well increase the cost of production in the land and services to hinter lands. Some roads in the country are not cared for because of conflicts between the federal and state governments as to whose responsibility it is to repair the roads. These conflicts do not aid development and growth.

**Sanitation:** Indiscriminate dumping of refuse on roads and in the streets without calculated adequate disposal mechanism in place, even when taxes are collected for their clearance does not enhance growth; instead, environmental pollution which affects human health is in vogue. Inadequate water supply is rife. Some states collect arbitrary fixed water tariff monthly but without supplying water to homes, companies and establishments which deal on production of goods and rendering of services to the people. This affects the private sector operations adversely and raises cost of production and services.

**Erosion:** Tackling erosion sites in the areas where they exit in the country has been a herculean task for leaders, even when moneys have been claimed for them. Erosion sites still dot some areas in the country. So is the problem of desertification unattended to with every form of seriousness. Desertification and loss of grazing herbs requires the problem-solving skills of leaders to rectify the losses, the applicable security challenges and improve on their economic advantages. The abandoned Ajaokuta Steel Plant in Kogi State could have, by now, helped Nigeria to the peak of industrialization. Nigerian Coal Corporation, Enugu; Oji River Power Station; Nkalagu Cement Company; Oji River Dam; Mambila Hydro Power generating Centre; The commercial hub of the country, Aba has constantly been neglected by every government, and yet unemployment abound in the country. Some other areas that require attention for development and revenue generation are the Lake Chad which if allowed totally to dry up will be an economic disaster for the country and other associated countries in Africa. Solid mineral development sector deserves good leadership intervention for the economic growth of all the states and regions of the country where such is sourced.

Educational infrastructure showcases dilapidated buildings and foul environment across the country. Dilapidated educational infrastructure affects both quality of education received and health of the people. In fact, there is still confusion on which tier of government that should take care of school development which can, however, be resolved by constitutional review through unbundling some areas in the exclusive lists.

### **What to do**

The ways to solve the inept and corrupt leadership as currently contrived in Nigeria, could be by good intentioned constitutional review to bring it to the point of connoting "We the people" in practice. The leadership of the nation should allow what the people agree and say to be the springboard of our statutes. Others are political and institutional reforms; positive change in attitude and behaviour of those who occupy leadership positions, or the Youth and Women (using their numerical population, capacity and expected proficiency) to rise-up and peacefully and electorally claim leadership, which will be attuned to the people's sovereignty as stated in Chapter 2, section 15, subsection 5 of the Constitution. Nigeria has vibrant and efficient youth population - male or female in all areas of industry and production, which can operate well if the arena (political environment) is made conducive and participatory. There should not be any room for the use of trickery, twisting and cajoling tactics to woo the masses into voting and electing unworthy "leaders" before and during general elections. This is because, as Valentine Achum put it: "They sing sonorous and sensuous songs of reforms, only to end up with 'cacophonous choruses' of deforms." During political campaigns

scary campaign messages either graphically or by speech to portray uncertainty targeted at the would-be opponents should be checkmated. This type of crude acts could act as a voter suppression meant for the opponents' voters to stop them from voting. It goes to say that bad leadership emanates from those who by pretext were initially elected as good leaders as portrayed to the people during campaigns: good leaders elected in pretense turn around to propagate bad leadership because, they choose to do things wrongly and unconstitutionally. The patriotism in them and their conscience, therefore, become blinded. Let the veil hindering total political participation rent from top to bottom so that every democratic enthusiast - male or female can enter the political scene with hope of success with no limitation by political "mammon." The youth should regard themselves as a people within a particular growth chain when creativity and innovation should represent their thinking and operation for the sake of development. Youths with creative and innovative minds will not allow themselves to be manipulated by corrupt minds into thuggery, violence and causing any security breach. If your mentality tells you that you are a youth, think that way. A youth should have a fiery zeal and a tendency to reject intolerance and exclusiveness. The zeal and the intolerance should be evidence of your desire to rebuff bad leadership and bad governance in all ramifications; and make sure that you are not excluded in political processes aimed at good governance; not just a set of people that should be given chance to operate on a silver platter. Your desire to have the highest positions must be based on your capacities and values. By these attitudes, you will continue to propagate the message of love into the age of statesmanship. He who aspires to lead must have a problem-solving and risk-taking mentality. It is not about let me go and grab what "my people" should merit. Nigeria, at this stage of her life, needs no tribalized leadership. The youth should be graciously urged (not by arm-twisting) to work consciously and diligently to preserve Nigeria's unity through which we utilize the spirit of diversified resources for development and growth. The process of achieving good leadership should start from the time of nominating and voting for those who presented themselves to contest for leadership positions. The purpose is to usher in good democratic proponents for better "political" governance, transformation and national growth, which are devoid of all intent to corrupt. There is no gainsaying the fact that bad leadership which has taken root in all fabrics of public and private sectors in Nigeria, or as Nwoye (2018) connotes it, "the people have taken corruption in Nigeria as article of fate," impedes all forms of development and human character. Good leadership that encourages participatory followership and recognition of justice, equity, accountability, transparency and fairness as the springboard of governance breeds socio-economic, cultural, religious and political privileges and gains; because when a righteous politician governs, the citizens will be happy and benefit from governance.

## **Conclusion**

If we looked at the ways the ideals and ideas of the constitution are operated, there are obvious flaws and changes in the operations of those elements. Justice, equity and fairness in handling the tenets of human resources in terms of postings or placements, and allocation of finances to government agencies in the country are the most affected. At least, there have been constant cries in appointments, poor budgetary allocation and how the laws of the land are applied for different people unequally. Management of the economy and security has not had any reasonable good taste of comments and opinions as well. The Nigerian women and youths should be encouraged to participate in democracy through the process of non-costly flawless electoral process: age, gender, wealth and myopic reasoning should not be allowed to be worrisome barriers. These have been the bane of participatory 'electoral' politics in Nigeria. The youth are to be regarded as the engine growth in the country, while the women are the pillars and catalyst for growth. As they are called upon to show interest in politics, electoral process and political elective positions should be non-discriminatory, conducive and affordable to accommodate their participation. God enjoins leaders not to have two different weights or measures in their bags or houses for judgment. They must have accurate and honest weights and measures when needed in proclaiming justice in the land. So that all categories of people: orphans, widows/widowers, physically and mentally well, and physically and mentally challenged should be treated equally in the eye of justice and in reeling out national support. Good leaders, no doubt, receive the prayers of both men and women in the society and blessings of God. It is high time the people, notably, the women and youths exercised their sovereignty over bad leadership and make democracy to work, going by its definition: "by, of and for the people." There is no iota of doubt that good leadership and political governance based on justice, fairness, equality and equity are the ingredients that will keep all diversified ethnic groups and regions coherent as one Nigeria; and propel the country to a sustainable growth and development in an atmosphere of tranquility. Leaders in any position in the country must not continually portray themselves as "forces of negativity;" even as we pray to God that in His mercy, to soften the heart of unyielding leaders so that they do not continually lead the citizens of Nigeria into perennial hardship.

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