

MORALITY AND THE FUTURE OF THE NIGERIAN YOUTH: A LEADERSHIP PERSPECTIVE

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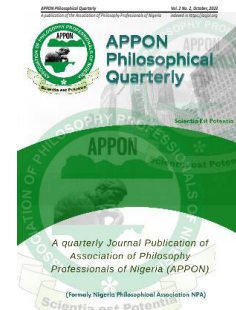
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Abstract

Giving the centrality of morality to good governance and the steady decline of good morals among the younger generation in Nigeria as manifested in such social vices as kidnapping, robbery, embezzlement of public funds, assassination, drug trafficking and so on, there is the fear of immoral leadership of the country when the younger generation ascend the corridors of power in Nigeria. The consequences will be backwardness and underdevelopment when compared with neighbouring countries with good moral foundations for governance. This essay is therefore aimed at mitigating the high spate of moral decadence among the present generation of young people in Nigeria in order to set the proper moral foundation for good governance/leadership in the future. To forestall this immoral foundation and promote good morals among the younger generation for future good leadership, there should be actionable measures by the government of the day to check and prevent social vices among younger people and to ensure that those who commit these crimes are adequately punished for correction and deterrence. In addition, parents, guardians and moral instructors at all levels of education should always live exemplary lives to their younger ones. The prescriptive method has been adopted for this paper.

Keywords: Morality, Youths, Leadership, governance, Nigeria

Introduction

Morality is the basis of good human relationship and a society that does not put the promotion of good character (behaviour) foremost, degenerates backwardly and the past will apparently be better than the present while the future

may be worse for the majority of the people. This is why it is very important to make sure that morality is both the foundation and the apogee of any social relationship. These questions then crop up: why is morality a categorical necessity for our future? Are Nigerian leaders laying

a strong moral foundation for the younger generation? Apparently, this generation does not give good consideration to morality. It does not focus on the improvement of the generality of the people. Self-interest of wealth acquisition is overriding that of the common good. This obviously creates a negative cultural orientation which is misleading the younger generation. If this negative orientation is not averted, the future generation of Nigerians will be nothing to write home about with the resultant effect of backwardness and underdevelopment when compared with neighbouring countries.

For Nigeria to fit into the global world, the younger generation must be given a reorientation and reeducation of morality that is geared towards cultivating and entrenching positive values that can power positive social change in Nigeria. How this can be achieved is the aim of this writing. This begins with the conceptualization of "Morality" and other relevant terms for simpler and contextual understanding.

What is Morality?

The term "Morality" is an everyday concept used in different ways. It is the basis of assessment of human conduct, either good or bad. Whenever we use such terms as right, wrong, good, bad, virtuous,

sinful, ought, duty, obligation etc, we are directly within the domain of morality (or Ethics). Etymologically, the Latin word "Mores" from which "Morals" is derived means habit, custom or way of life.¹ Morals therefore have the same organic root-habit or customs. Morality of persons or groups however consists not merely in what they habitually or customarily do, but in what they think is right or obligatory. This is why my concern is not wholly the habitual or customary, but with those actions for which we can proffer reasons or justifications. It is therefore the sense of normativeness (prescriptiveness) that is attached to morality (Ethics) rather than habit.

The understanding of morality in respect of human action is that acceptable to the people. According to Uduig women, "An act is said to be moral if that act is good, noble, praiseworthy, generous, or right. The enactor of such act is said to be benevolent, virtuous, humane or Kind.² Morality orders the life of man in the world so that the goal of life can be achieved. The utilitarian principle of morality apparently prevails in this article and it holds that a given moral action is right if the action in question produces the greatest possible happiness and pleasure for the greatest number of people.³ This clearly presupposes that self-interest or individualism is not the accepted basis of

¹ O. Albert, "The Concept of Security in the Context of Urban Crimes and Segregation in West Africa Security, Crime and Segregation in African Cities since the 19th Century", Karthala; FRA, (2003) p. 53-69.

² Ibid

³ F. Macfarlane, "The Private sector, security in industries in south Africa", Proceedings of the

justification of human actions. Good citizens or people are those who consider the means to the end of actions and not the opposite. The means must always be the basis of examination of human actions as it is the universal justification of actions whether the person is favoured or not favoured. This obviously explains why self-interest is subject to condemnation and rejection. This self-interest is becoming the foundation of morality in Nigeria which is reducing us to "the survival of the fittest syndrome".

Nigeria is a country richly endowed by God with human and natural resources, yet one of the poorest countries in the world. Nigeria is a country where immoralities, corruption, embezzlement of public funds by government officials have come to be accepted as normal and part of what it means to be a Nigerian. Should our future not be better than the present? Should the present leadership and guardians not function to the betterment and good welfare of the present youths for tomorrow?

The Nexus between Morality and Generation

Before relating morality to generation, it is pertinent to give a consideration to "generation" in line with our focus. Generation is therefore seen as the period of time that it takes for children to grow up and become adults and have things surrounding lives considered by them. What this implies is that each generation manages and controls social relations and interactions of their time. In the present dispensation, it is the people of the time

that are controlling now and laying the foundation for the future. It has been noted that the way of human interactions in Nigeria is not favouring the coming-up generation: its morals are ill-fated and consequently misleading, misinforming and mis-educating the people. If this is not obliterated, the future of leadership in Nigeria and its citizens will be a blunder. To have this avoided, morality must be the bedrock of interaction and relationship in Nigeria. It must guide the conduct of the present youths for a better tomorrow.

The relationship between morality and generation is that morality determines the good conduct of the people of the time. In this context, the younger generation must not be trapped into the corruption engrossing and engulfing the present day Nigeria. The youths must be educated and directed by the present leadership through the available media as to what the future will be for moral betterment. The attractions of immorality must be declared null and void otherwise the bad may become accepted and the good rejected.

The Youth And Moral Decadence In Nigeria

As indicated above, Nigeria is, in a way, identified with immorality and corruption. A friend told me that in London, once you are known as a Nigerian, corruption becomes your name, you will be feared and avoided. The multiplier effect is that Nigeria is a sick and dying country, being eaten up by the deadly disease called "corruption". This is why her various organs and systems are not functioning properly. How can this level of immorality

be eroded from the present youths and future leadership? Are the ills of the society identifiable? If identifiable, can they be eradicated from the future generation? If possible, how can such be done? In what follows, some of the acts of immorality prevalent among the youth of the present day Nigeria are highlighted.

Cultism is becoming a quagmire amidst younger generation, secret activities of some cults have degenerated to killing and robbery of people. Some institutions of higher learning such as universities and polytechnics have become training grounds for evil activities -lots of killings of members and non-members, robbery, raping, etc have come in vogue in the present day Nigeria. Some youths do no longer see it as evil and immoral, they see it as “supermanity” over others and therefore use any means available to promote it.

When the present-day leaders do nothing to prohibit it, one wonders what our future will be. The place of future prominent leaders will be made of secret occultists while the place of good citizens will be jettisoned. The young generation must be drawn to the dangers and implications of cultism by the parents, guardians and governments at all levels, otherwise cultism will be seen as a paradigm of absolutism of leadership of future Nigeria.

Another immoral action that is a threat to leadership of the future generation is drug addiction (and its trafficking). Some people without good caution of the dangers of drug-addiction do not see

anything wrong with the use of hard drugs. Once they are addicted or used to the drugs, they can be invoked into unacceptable and condemnable action. Most people addicted to such drugs as cocaine, heroin, Indian hemp etc have been found to be into unbelievable actions which, to some extent, have diminished the ingenuity of great potentials of the nation. To avoid this, the government and NGOs should create awareness of the dangers and risks in drug addiction. The area of drug trafficking must be overridden by the laws inhibiting it. The government agents must make sure that such is checked and those caught in such business be decisively dealt with. This will invariably deter the younger generation from engaging in them. With a big check on the youths, there will be a reduction in certain areas of crime amidst them and will give us the relevance awareness of people of good character to future leadership.

Another overwhelming ill that threatens the future generation is the “get-rich quick syndrome”, which is a crude capitalist misnomer cropping up in Nigeria today. The social, (especially political) atmosphere in Nigeria is promoting a wide-gap between the rich and the poor. It is only those with the wherewithal that are taking the mantle of leadership and this is making people to get rich via any means in which case, moral consideration is set aside. Those in government are promoting corruption through the diversion of government purse to private ones and this consequently has placed a lot of them to the states decisions. Equally, most of them

have clothed themselves with immunity to crimes committed by them as money plays a prominent role in the society.

With this in view, the younger generation is addicted to “anything goes in acquisition of wealth”. Robbery, kidnapping, assassination, drug-trafficking and other social vices are no longer evil in the eyes of many young people. What is the case is anarchical means of wealth acquisition. This, in its effect, is rendering the society insecure and if nothing is done, the future will be hopeless in terms of insecurity and social vices. It is against this background that urgent attention of the government is needed. The political and ruling class must come up with economic programme that has as part of it a diversification of economy whereby different fields of the economy is given attention as to create jobs and infrastructural facilities to make us feel belong to the same country.

Also constituting a sabotage to a better future generation leadership is disobedience to constituted authorities in Nigeria. Disobedience to laws and authorities is becoming alarming that some people do not see those disloyalties to orders and authorities as a misnomer. What matters to them is how it is to be made as to make one wealthy. Illegality and disobedience to constituted authority should not be allowed to operate. Government and its agents of obedience (Police) must make sure that criminals are properly dealt with to forestall future occurrence.

Equally to be abstained from, is gambling. In most communities in Nigeria, gambling has become the habit of the younger generation. Younger ones, who are supposed to be occupied with reasonably occupation- training and learning, spend most of their time with gambling. This, by statistical analysts, has rendered most potentials non-actualized and apparently denied them civilized social relationships. Our young generation must abstain from these ills of gambling. The danger must be known to them and through good conduct parents and foster-care-givers, the younger ones should be liberated.

Morality and the Future of the Nigerian Youth: A Leadership Perspective

Most analysts have concluded that the past has been better than the present and present most likely to be better than the future in Nigeria. This is why, as pointed earlier, Nigeria is a country where immorality corruption and embezzlement of public funds by government officials come to be accepted as 'normal and part of what it means to be a "Nigerian". This impression about Nigeria is a poor one and must be countered if serious moral consideration is to be given to the present day younger generation. The only way to revive Nigeria and save her from her impending dearth is a moral regeneration, a moral rebirth. How is this to be done? Is it possible to eradicate moral decadence in Nigeria?

In response to these questions, it is “Yes” Nigeria as a nation possesses the machineries for a better future generation leadership based on good moral

background. How is this background to be established? In the first place, Nigerian leadership must be based on good moral background and standing. It should be aimed at the betterment and welfare of the people. In doing this, leadership will avoid corrupt self-enrichment. Leadership must be well disciplined. Leadership must be embodiment of morality. Those leading the affairs of the people should take morality as a priority. This invariably will be leadership by example. Unlawful and illegal acquisition of wealth should be relegated to the background and those involved in immorality should not be allowed to take possession of leadership. Leaders in their respective affairs must check and discourage immorality. Partiality, clannishness, bias and prejudice must be avoided. There should be no immunity for anybody committing crime or immoral act.

The leadership agents must not compromise or grant privilege to anybody, otherwise, immorality becomes prevalent. The danger of such is understood in these words of Albert Einstein "The world is a dangerous place to stay, not because of those who commit evil, but because of those who stay, watch and allow it to happen".⁴ The implication of this is that where it is anybody's responsibility to check and prevent acts of immorality and

it is not done, the guilt remains with him. So, leaders must be conscious of this.

In addition, the people and the present leadership class should also take seriously such projects as job centers, creativity village, skill acquisition, youth empowerment and civil liberty organizations that promote creativity. This will go a long way in changing the orientation of our youths. This tallies with the opinion of Chukwubuike, who noted that "when a creative mind (youth) lacks adequate empowerment, the person more often than not, resorts to violence as a means of expression and release."⁵ Parents, guardians and moral instructors should always live exemplary lives to their younger ones. Making sure that anything evil is condemned, and they should advise on the dangers of such actions. As stressed by Deur and Parke, parents should ensure consistency in applying rewards and punishments because this engenders high level of morality.⁶ This is justified by Hebrew 6:10 which says "for the lord disciplines him whom he loves and chastises every son whom he receives".⁷ With the present trend of habits and culture, morality is dwindling and it is attributed very much to quest for wealth on the side of the adults. To avoid such to future generations, the ills or evils must be drastically exposed, the positions of the

International Conference of the Institute for Defence policy and the Centre for policy studies on Rethinking South Africa Security Architecture, (25 July, Midrand Halfway house 1994)

⁴ T. Hobbes, , *Leviathan*, edited by J. C. A. Gaskin, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) p.104

⁵ A. D. Ali, *Security and Economic Development in Nigeria since 1960*, Kuwait Chapter of Arabian Journal of Business and Management Review, (Kuwait Chapter, 2(6), 2013)p. 1-7.

⁶ O.O. Ewatan, &U. Ese, "Insecurity and socio-economic development in Nigeria", *Journal of*

commitants not withstanding or minded.

To really facilitate the moral regeneration for the future generation leadership, we need a heavy dose of moral instructions, moral education at all levels of education - from the nursery and primary schools to the tertiary educational institutions. Ethics or (morality) should be given priority and made a compulsory course at all levels of educational and training institutions in the country, to remove moral ignorance which is the foundation of immorality.

However, with this awareness and conscientization amidst the youths, there will be a good ethical crop-up or leadership and lives become appreciable in the country, fear of insecurity becomes a thing of the past, and the potentials and tendencies become actualized to the greatness of the country Nigeria. This is our expectation if our younger generation imbibe good moral knowledge.

Conclusion

The foregoing discourse argues the conclusion that, Nigeria has seen the advent of poor leadership due to the collapse of national values. Drawing from the fact that the Nigerian youths are people of high credit balance of hopes and great expectations from its leaders, we postulate that, the youths are social engineers and catalyst for positive change who should have a greater space in national development. While the youths of today face economic, social and cultural challenges and have been entrapped in the treacherous triangle of poverty, illiteracy and unemployment, the Nigerian state

should take it upon itself to empower them to succeed in life. It is thus concluded that, nation building does not only involve the implementation of political and economic policies and action programs, it must aim at improving the lives of the ordinary citizenry as well as recognising the values and other important desires of the society that would act as a national catalyst to build up the Youths who are leaders of tomorrow. It is therefore incumbent on the government to look into the matters that concerns the youths and ensure that they are usefully engaged in building and sustaining a Nigeria of the future worth living in, and dying for.

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