

## INDIGENOUS RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICE A SOLUTION TO THE CORRUPTION PROBLEM IN NIGERIA, EVO A CASE STUDY

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### **Abstract**

*Indigenous beliefs and practices for Evo African's, is a way of life that underpins the way and manner people promotes indigenous religion and its relevance in our global society. The social, cultural and religious phenomenon of the religious beliefs and practices are the guide to human relevance from pre-existence, existence and post-existence in the society. The religious practices and beliefs in Evo, permeates all the factors of development ranging from economic, political, psychological and spiritual concept of humankind that participates in all fairs of life. But today the presence of corruption in the fabrics of Evo society of Rivers State in Nigeria is a plague that needs to be cured. As Evo is discussed, the problem of corruption is a global pandemic that has congregated the entire world destroying the values morals and indigenous religion once inculcated in human for his survival and the survival of the environment. Since the western bureaucracy is foundational to the birth and spread of corruption leading to insecurity of the Nigeria nation, its use for fighting corruption will not be feasible. In other to eradicate corruption and restore peace and tranquility, the practice and restoration of indigenous religion as a bedrock policy for a corrupt free society should be highly sought for.*

### **Indigenous Religion (EVO)**

Indigenous religion according to John S Mbiti (1) summarizes the belief and practice of the people of every society. It is the vehicle that moves the existence of man from conception, up till ancestor-hood. Indigenous religion establishes the relationship between the physical reality and the supernatural experience which is expressed in symbolic ritual and liturgy. Indigenous religion arbitrates for the value of morals and sanctity of society thereby promoting order and coherence in the physical and spiritual reality.

### **Corruption In Nigeria**

Corruption as stated above is a pandemic that is plaguing the global society. It is starving the human race from the joy and peace of survival thereby creating room for risk and insecurity in the Nigerian nation. According to Peter Genger (2018:20) corruption is a contemporary theme of research that scholars are searching for mechanism to end its spread and existence. He further averred that "corruption is a form of violence that is difficult to analyze and resolve under one descriptive concept and one wide intervention strategy." This connotes that the pandemic corruption is an disintegrating factor of peace and security in a society between the government and the people. This bridged gap has often resulted to conflict that may not be resolvable by a bureaucratic system of justice since it is void of restorative attributes. Hence, for corruption to be properly handled, it must have value for morals as taught and practiced in the indigenous religions of Africa. It is essential to note that corruption can only survive in an atmosphere that is encumbered with moral decay where justice tends to destroy than restore.

Philip O. Okolo and Akpokighe O. R. (2014) asserts that corruption was initially not part of the African society, it is an alien that was imported through colonization of the African nations. The problem of corruption started with the erosion of rich cultural values and practices of African indigenous religions in compliance to Western barbarism. This challenge of corruption which was imported into Africa, can also be sent back to where it came from if the African people will return back to the practice and beliefs of the ethical norms of indigenous religion.

It was through the entry of corruption into Africa that the societies began to experience the suffering that is embedded in favoritism, ethnicitism, nepotism that has crippled the habit of mutual love and hospitality that was inborn in an African (the share of love and care of the black race). The cost of corruption cannot be estimated or quantified in terms of money and asset, it is rather very heavy to the survival and structure of the Nigerian society of which Evo is inclusive.

It is satisfying to note that the problem of corruption is not without a solution. Thus a way out to the pandemic of corruption is hinge on the restoration of indigenous religious beliefs and practices that once coordinated the societies in the absence of corruption during the pre-modern era.

Olukayode Abiodun F. (2013) suggest that corruption is virus that is eating and killing the developmental potentials of African nations. Thus, as long as corruptible ideologies of the Western nations is accepted as a norm in Africa, African nation will be continually plagued with difficulty of developing itself

without the aid of other continents of the world (especially Nigeria). This is the method the Western nations are using to keep African as subject and slaves.

There is a common saying that “ He who pays the piper, detects the tone of the music”, as long as the Western nations continues to sway Nigeria with corruption doses, Nigeria will remain in a state of servitude.

Olukayode (2013) further avers that the continuous introduction of other religions and indoctrination of the Nigeria people with foreign cultures that promotes and spread corruption, Nigeria will not develop. This is the same school of thought shared by both Peter Genger and Philip Okolo et.al.

In this wise, there is a call for the revolution against Western cultures that promotes corruption and a rebirth of indigenous religious values that advocates for peace and fights against corruption.

Adewale K. Kupoluyi (ND) argument on the entrance of corruption to Africa agrees with all the above scholarly assertions so far, He stresses that corruption is not only in Africa, but is a global pandemic that is threatening the peace and stability of sub Saharan African countries in a larger scale. Much as it may be a global pandemic, it has a localized antidote to it cure. One of the problems of the challenge of corruption is that though the cure to it is within the local societies, it has been abandoned and relinquished to Western methodologies that have not yielded any result for centuries. It is like pouring water on a ducks back. Hence, the re-introduction of indigenous religious beliefs and practices will help fight this social pandemic called corruption.

The traditional mechanism can be legislated as laws and policies to strengthen the observances of indigenous religious ethos that promote morals and integrity in Evo societies and Nigeria at large.

Patricia Ebere Nwazonobi and Agweye O. Apah (2018: Abstract) Opined that religion has the potential of moral inculcation of promoting stability of the society thereby reducing the influence of corruption. Corruption is a virus that is able to affect and is affecting the centric survival of the society causing economic recession and political crisis that has continued to plagued the Nigerian nation.

Hence, if the standard and value of religion are imbibed by adherents, the social pandemic of corruption will be curbed in the Nigerian state. Eluu Eni Patrick (2019) suggest that the hope to eradicate corruption from the fabric of the Nigerian state is to promote indigenous religious beliefs and practices that advocates for morals.

Thus, if this is done, it will help the Nigerian nation to disassociate herself from the evil culture of the Western state and imbibed the culture that arouse the consciousness that the power of justice rest with the divinities, deities and the Supreme being and not the government machineries. This is a special antidote for corruption in Nigeria.

Moreover, the pandemic of corruption as outlined by Wotogbe-Weneka (2018) is a systemic problem of human factor of unjust economic order in which wealth of the nation appears in a few private individual pocket at the detriment of the poor masses. The question is, why will there not be conflict in a state that is full of corruption? Since the incompetent corrupt political office holders do not incorporate or recognize the value of indigenous religions as means of sustaining and governing the Nigerian nation.

The indigenous religions of Africa in no doubt have in its beliefs and practices have strong and effective ethical norms used in administering the indigenous people over the years before the advent of colonial policies that gave rise to corruption in Nigeria. The problem of corruption has remained, since the loss of values and morals propagated by the indigenous religion.

### **Factors Of Corruption Leading To Insecurity In Nigeria**

One of the many factors of corruption in Nigeria is injustice. People tend to react negatively if they feel treated unjustly. Citing the issue of the Niger Delta militancy, Wotogbe-Weneka (2018) avers that the continuous neglect of the federal government of Nigeria in checking the case of environmental degradation in the Niger Delta is a factor that influenced the crisis and spread of militancy and insecurity.

It is very important to note that the Niger Delta is the mainstay of the Nigerian economy in terms of the production of crude oil and gas a major export items. With all these endowed natural resources that should enrich the region in development, the reverse is the case. The Niger Delta has continue to suffer deprivation and marginalization from the Federal government of Nigeria a component of corruption which have bedeviled them from receiving portions of the national cake.

It is rather unfortunate to note the resources that enriches the nation that is gotten from the Niger Delta is been used to develop areas of the countries that contributes little or nothing to the Nigerian economic development whereas the Niger Delta suffer from abject poverty and underdevelopment. In this wise, the question that should be asked is “could such an act not generate ill feeling

resulting to conflict by the people of Niger Delta?" This is practiced in Nigeria as a proceed of colonial policies that Nigerian state has been plagued with.

There is also a new motivation for a new refinery in the north whereas those of Port Harcourt and Warri are going into extinction. This is a full blown act of injustice that can generate conflict and insecurity in the nation. The marginalization through underdevelopment of the Niger Delta with wealth that is generated from natural resources is a clear indication of injustice that is fueled by corruption of the federal government of Nigeria.

Wotogbe-Weneka citing Uzorka and Ebisi (2014:112) opined that corruption has destroyed the capacity of the Nigerian government at all levels to provide public services of quality and quantity needed to improve the living standard of the people. The euphoria of modernization was the key factor that swept African countries into underdevelopment through corruption. Their quest of wanting to be like the Europeans and other Western nation made them to forfeit their indigenous religious values and plunged them to failure.

### **How To Resolve The Nigeria Problem Of Corruption Using Indigenous Religion**

The researcher tend to bring to the front burner, that the acceptance of indigenous religious beliefs and practices by the government of Nigeria will salvage the nation from the problem corruption has plunge this nation for years. If we follow thus:

#### **1 Inculcating Cultural Values and Norms**

It is sacrosanct to note that a return to the indigenous religious values in culture as practiced by traditional forbears is very important. This includes value for hard work and honesty above material or monetary gain and the worship of wealth. The indigenous religions and its beliefs, taboos, laws and sanction, abhors violence, murder, human trafficking and kidnapping that arose from corruption which is plaguing the Nigerian nation in contemporary times. Rather indigenous religions of Africa, conveniently supports the value for life, settlement of disputes and good governance that is void of marginalization but full of fair distribution of co-owned resources in the presence of the divinities and deities.

These are the short-falls of the Nigerian practice of Western philosophies of individualism rather mutual welfare which is the tenets of indigenous religion during the pre-modern era. Nigeria society today is suffering from greed, dishonesty, stealing, arm robbery, banditry and laziness all resulting from

corruption. The norms and values of trust, selflessness and industry which were the foundational bedrock of the indigenous societies taught by its religion has been thrown to oblivion.

In this wise, if the Nigerian people and the government will sincerely embrace the tenets of indigenous religion, it will go a long way to ameliorate some of the challenges that is bedeviling the nation by the presence of corruption.

It is with regret that Wotogbe-Weneka (2018) citing (1996) stated that most Nigerians think that to be in tune with modern life means abandoning and undermining every aspect of indigenous religious life and culture. This accounts for the high rate of ignorance in traditional values.

## **2 Disrespect for law**

The indigenous religion in the pre-modern valued taboo, sanctions and laws very much since it was instituted by ancestors, deities, divinities and the Supreme being. These laws, taboos and sanctions were strictly obeyed to avoid the wrath of the divinities. This was because defaulters were severely punished by deities and other spiritual beings for defiling the land. This was carried out either by the spirit beings or traditional age-grade according to Wotogbe-Weneka (2018).

Hence, in modern times crime is on the increase and it is easy for criminal to use the bureaucratic system of justice to jump the laws and its judicial consequences since the practice requires evidence. A brilliant law can stand for a criminal who has faulted the law in the day light, but for want of corrupt evidence he pleads not guilty and is discharge and acquitted.

This is a follow up to a nation with a corruption system were the innocent are considered or forced to accept that they are guilty and the guilty pleads not guilty. Thus, the episode of the global health pandemic called corona virus (covid19) that is raving and killing people. Certain government official (police and army) used the directive of the governor of Rivers State Nyesom Wike imposition of curfew in some areas of the state to curtail the spread of the virus to perpetrate corruption. Within the borders of the state, it was a trending news that Police and army officials who were place there to protect the lives of the citizenry resorted to making life a hell for those were coming and going out of the state by charging person five hundred naira (N500) to pass through. While others within mile 3 arrested passersby asking them to bail themselves with as much as three thousand naira (N3000). These people were only looking for food due to the shutdown of markets and motor parks.

It was reported on Wazobia radio on Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> of April 8:00am news that due to the movement restriction made to avoid the spread of the virus, as many people as numbering one and fifty to two hundred (150-200) were arrested and kept in a room, charged to the court pleading guilty to avoid been thrown into the prison with the stigma as ex-convict. This was a government that was supposed to protect lives, but turned out to expose the lives of its citizenry to the danger of the supposed virus through over-crowding at the police state (SIB Port Harcourt). what form of corruption is greater than restriction of movement without no provision of food and other amenities to ameliorate the suffering of the masses.

Furthermore, the political system in Nigeria cannot be exempted from the problem of corruption. The electoral system that produces leaders of the society today has been marred with corruption. The once simple voting that counts for the choosing of a leader has been up turned to ballot snatching with thugs to impose the unwanted individual who will steal and loot the treasury and resources of the larger society. The high rate of election malpractices but at the pulling units and the court is mind blowing. As if it was easy the new system of vote buying has continue to plague Nigeria in continuous slavery and poverty.

Because of monetary inducement has rip off the conscience of the hungry and poor that they vote for crumbs thereby trading their future and resources into the hands of corrupt and wicked leaders. There are countless court cases of voting irregularities that may be irresolvable with this pandemic of corruption. In this wise, it is no gain say that Nigeria electoral and political system needs redemption by inculcation the indigenous religions of which Evo is inclusive. This is to straighten the already bent Nigerian system to its standard position that promotes the welfare of all citizenry and equality of the human race before the divine entities.

Wotogbe-Weneka further avers that to sanitize the political system of Nigeria with the help of indigenous religious aid, the practice of oath-taking by government official should be localize, swearing before the local community deity of individual as a symbol of upholding integrity irrespective of religious affiliations, since they may understand and dread the effect of offending deities in the indigenous religion rather camouflaging with foreign religions like Christianity and Islam whose God is full of mercy for defaulters.

In the process of oath-taking, pouring of libation should be adopted likewise in the voting and electoral exercise, since INEC officials has not seize to complain about the failure of card readers machine during election. The deities will help

in accrediting and authenticating voters in other to avoid election rigging and manipulations, saving the nation from the human resources people use in pursuing elections cases in the courts.

Corruption can be cured in Nigeria, the slogan of a fight against corruption is a means the government of Nigeria uses to promote corruption itself. Soon and very soon, if Nigeria do not kill corruption, corruption will definitely kill Nigeria. The high rate of crime is overwhelming with a momentary cover up of leaders for the perpetrators of such crimes.

The indices that show the corrupt state of Nigeria ranges from: stealing, arm robbery, banditry, Boko haram, militancy, kidnapping, child labour, human trafficking, legalization of prostitution and immorality on print and social visual media etc. the teeming joblessness of Nigeria youth perpetrating crime is a clear indication of a corrupt nation. The question is, who made these youth jobless? In the presence of vast arable land that can be cultivated thereby increasing the production of food for the nation to grow its GDP. Still there is a limited area of sea and river waters that can be fished upon to help the young people make ends meet.

It is regrettable that those involved in these corrupt practices, the larger number of them are the growing youth of the Nigerian society. It is still pertinent and painful to observe that in recent times the character of industry and hard work which the indigenous religion inculcated on the society has been eroded by corruption. People do not want to work hard anymore but they want to earn enough monies. My question is where will the money come from? Youths are running away from learning trade or adding a vocational skill to assist them in life, it has been abandoned in recent times to gambling through Baba Ijebu, Pools, Nijabet, betting etc.

The little children are not left out in the share of corruption, as over pampering of the children is leading them to laziness and unfit for the future to manage the society as future leaders. Today parents have made the children see hard work as punishment and abhor it. Parents go to the extent of corrupting the children in school by pay for people to write their examinations for them.

Some parent also pay for people to cut grass for their children, this is the reason why Wotogbe-Weneka (2018) citing Nwanyawu (1997:147) opined that for our young people to aid the growth of the nation in the future, they must develop creative mindset which goes along with mental/attitude that is processed with manipulative skills that will generate new ideas and objects.

## **Conclusions**



Thus far, the role of the indigenous religions of Nigeria in curbing the challenges of corruption has been and enriching discussion. Moreover, with the numerous problems of corruption Nigeria is grappling which ranges from false federal policies of the western nation is extensive identified in this paper.

However, Nigerians must come to the realization that those western antidote cannot solve the problem of corruption it created in Nigeria. Hence, the Nigerian people have not benefited more since the abandoning of the their rich indigenous religions and culture. The loss of her indigenous sense of belonging as inculcated through indigenous religion has continued to plague the Nigerian nation into the servitude of the consequences of corruption.

Finally, this paper advocates a return to the beliefs and practices of indigenous religion that strengthens morals and ethical values, which is fundamental and effective in the restoration of the nation from the hands of corruption. If not, the negative attributes of corruption portends a severe danger to the Nigerian existence as a nation.

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