

## **BACK FROM INDIA – THE ODYSSEY**

It is an experience worth recording on paper. If you care to read, I like to embellish this write-up with a short historical overview of the origin of the term “Odyssey”. Homer is the name traditionally assigned to the author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the two major epics of Greek antiquity. Both epics deal with legendary events that were believed to have occurred during and after the Trojan War. The *Odyssey* describes the return of the Greek hero Odysseus from the Trojan War. The opening scenes depict the disorder that has arisen in Odysseus's household during his long absence: A band of suitors is living off of his wealth as they woo his wife, Penelope. The epic then tells of Odysseus's *ten years of traveling, during which he has to face such dangers as the man-eating giant Polyphemus and such subtler threats as the goddess Calypso, who offers him immortality if he will abandon his quest for home.* The second half of the poem begins with Odysseus's arrival at his home island of Ithaca. Here, exercising infinite patience and self-control, Odysseus tests the loyalty of his servants; plots and carries out a bloody revenge on Penelope's suitors; and is reunited with his son, his wife, and his aged father. The term Odyssey, as traditionally used by writers, authors and ancient historians, (as also applied here) generally describes difficult and astonishing experiences one can never easily forget in life.

India is a vast land and a continent, even though Geographers and Historians refer to the region, state as ‘subcontinent’. Much is of course known about India by the West, America and the rest of Asia. It is a nuclear power, a nation on the brinks of joining the First World nations and a nation teeming with peoples of all languages, cultures and color. Here, like Nigeria, more than 30 languages are spoken. English is the common language (the British were there in the forties!). Hindi and Tamil are among the well developed languages. Nigerians who visit India, precisely Chennai (formerly called Madras), will be very familiar with Tamil language they say that in short each state has its own language. A student can study all the known subjects in the curriculum without any reference to English language. Even the most educated are much more at home with their local languages; this is why when two Indians are speaking with you, they easily switch over to their local language they are more conversant with! You can compare this situation with that the Yorubas and Hausas (but not Igbos find themselves.

What is the present population of India? An Indian Rev. Fr. told me, something like 1.4 billion. I don’t think I can tell you exactly, as many Nigerians cannot be in the position to tell you what the present population of Nigeria today is. If you are curious I bet you, you may have to wait perhaps till the year 2015 when another ‘reliable’ census may be conducted in Nigeria, our fatherland. If you are impatient to wait till that date, sorry any figures you are quoting are mere guess work.

May a bold assertion about Nigerian population may apply comfortably to India. No one is sure, but take it that India is a populous nation. That may really be true about India of Mahatma Ghandi, many many years ago. Today the population has continued to thin down as many families don’t want many children they cannot feed and send to school. It is like Nigeria of 2000 and onward. Days are gone or

‘are going’ when a primary school is asked to write a short composition about “My Family”, would write such stuff as I reproduce here: *In my family we are 15; my father, mother. I have 11 sisters and 2 brothers. And I am the most senior or the biggest of all! Which means that the siblings of this ‘senior’ must all be as big as ants and crickets!*

Who knows why there were many girls and few boys. You can guess. Parents have been trying consistently to get as many boys as possible. But each time a girl would appear and another trial would be made. So each the woman must be heavy with a child every six months!

Alas, things have changed. The gory picture looked once like that in India, they told me. But today the picture has radically changed. Many families are satisfied with one or two, boy or girl no one takes any special interest. So the population continues to thin down even though the cities seem to be suffering from population explosion. No! There is no population explosion. Rather the rural population has continued to desert the villages to squeeze into the shrinking areas of the cities. Everyone is looking for better life and easy sources of income.

The result is not hard to image as our Senior Primary School kid tells us more about “My Family”. *We live together in our house, which has one bedroom for mom and dad, a kitchen and one parlor. In the night I and my brothers and sisters sleep in the parlor. My father is a carpenter and my mother is a house wife. My mother takes care of us. How can she undertake any other job when she has 13 little kids to feed? She sometimes however sells some vegetables and roasted corns in front of our house. We don’t do any farming because we have no land to cultivate.....”*

Indian continent and people are not unknown to Nigeria and Nigerians. Most of us who finished secondary school education in Nigeria before the Biafra War broke out will remember that most of our Physics, Chemistry, Zoology, Biology and English teachers were Indians and Sri Lankans. They taught the sciences well and that was why the missionaries ‘imported’ them. Such names as Mr. Bala – a Tamil name (my Chemistry teacher), Mr. Tartunkal – from Indian state of Kerala (Physics master), and Mrs. Emmanuel - Tamil (English teacher) and of course her husband Mr. Emmanuel taught Biology in BSC – Bishop Shanahan Secondary School, Orlu, Nigeria, my Alma Mater. Other science teachers like Arkanaika, Rajanaika came from Sri Lanka, formerly Ceylon.

Recently in Business and Technology, Nigerians have come into closer contact with the Indians. In the nineties Indian business men dominated the contracts of road and other major construction works in Nigeria. Some of them left Nigeria when Nigerian economy started collapsing under poor management coupled with political leadership and massive corruption.

Some Nigerian states find business dealings with India more comfortable than with Europe and America. Nigerians prefer China, India to Germany or Britain. Many Nigerians are very familiar with such names as ‘Tata’ and ‘Ete’. There are many Indian-made vehicles of every specie on Nigerian roads – township and rural. It is amazing.

Even as from the early sixties Nigerian students eager to further their education they could not afford in Nigeria had taken refuge in Indian Universities

scattered all over Bombay and Madras. Most Nigerians who are forming strong growing communities in most cities of India are those who took their tertiary education in Indian universities. As well, some of them took also Indian wives and are doing quite well like their counterparts in Britain and United States.

### **In Search of Medical Treatment.**

Today, Nigerians are fleeing Nigeria to India, not in search of work (none available), better comfort or greener pastures. No. India is still struggling to feed and find employment for its large population. But they have almost succeeded in attracting foreigners, including Nigerians to their formerly impoverished land by creating self-employment opportunities in areas such as Medi-care. Computer science and general business opportunities. They say that most computer experts one finds in Europe and America today are Indians!

No one will be surprised to find many hi-tech-hospitals and therapy and rehabilitation centers springing up in many cities of India. They say Indian doctors are among the best in the world today. They specialize in all sorts of treatment, including of course surgery. Such names like *Apollo Hospital, Miot, Dr. Kamashi Memorial Hospital and Life-Line* specialize in sophisticated cases of heart diseases, kidney problems, various kinds of cancer diseases psychiatrist and neurological problems. And the doctors are not doing badly. Their good performance is assured by the length of time and resources spent in medical schools in India. One young doctor whom I spoke with told me he spent exactly 31 years in school to qualify as a doctor who can practice in India! He is an expert in Bone-fracture cases and surgery.

### **Nigeria to India**

To come for medical treatment in India you must have got such recommendation from one of your Nigerian private doctors. Most of them know India and the facilities their hospitals offer to help desperate Nigerians. Ready with your invitation letter proceed to Indian High Commission in Lagos. There may need for an embassy doctor to certify and some examination of your records that you are qualified for the journey.

### **How I Missed My Flight to Rome!**

Dear Reader, we have to divert a little bit for you to enjoy the story of my trip to Dubai and then India. That period of time or Nigerian history can in fact be described as one of the darkest moments in the history of Nigeria as a nation. You may guess who were directing the affairs of Nigerian nation that time, Like the Israel of the old it was the time when things started falling apart: various kinds of corruption were trooping into the Nigeria; name them violent armed robberies, ritual killings. You could see decapitated heads and limbs in the gutters of Nigerian streets. Cocaine business had in fact got its full license to thrive and operate in Nigeria. Why waste your time seeking for job that could earn you N50,000 a month, when a pinch, only a pinch of stuff can make you a millionaire within two

rounds you dealt with the stuff? We call ‘bribery and corruption’ today was brazenly , shamelessly, audaciously practiced in Nigeria, in public and private places, No one complained,

### **OJO – The Boarding-Ticket Magnet**

The man OJO (I can’t remember his second name, but where he come from, everyone knew) broke my heart; Ojo was in-charge of the boarding card to Alitalia and the plane was to leave around 22 hours Nigeria time for Rome. Ojo was selling the boarding card to whom he wished. The desperate cry to secure a boarding card could be heard everywhere in the airport. “ Ojo, Ojo, Oji, give me”. Ojo, Ojo, Ojo have you forgoitten me? Here is my money. Have it please. Do you want some more. Ojo, remember I must travel tonight,,,,,

As the crowd pursued Ojo from one part of the airport to the other to my greatest surprise standers-by never questioned the crazy show that was going on in the airport. It was not an unusual scenario.

The true story was that at last the Alitalia left at exactly 22.00 pm and I did not get a boarding pass. Some other who did not get too were not as worried as I was. They just vacated the scene in a few moment and peace returned to the airport,

I tried to blame myself for not running after OJO. But how could a priest of God, finely dressed in Western clergy man run after a shameless crowd-puller to solicit for a boarding pass. In what nation outside Nigeria can you witness such a drama. Could they have brought one Ilitalia agent at the counter? No! How could they? I was told that was part of the contract and agreement. Nigerians were in-charge of the boarding processes. The Italians only took over as passengers entered the aircraft!

Dejected, disappointed and depressed after the Ojo spectacle and commotion I sat down somewhere thinking about what next I could do. One of the girls at the British Airways departure counter advised me to change my flight to London since I had the ticket. Alitalia would return in two days time while British airways would arrive in 8 hours time. What an ordeal?

### **How I Nearly Missed My Flight to India!**

With your visa to India ready, book your flight. The best airline they recommend is Arab Emirates Airlines. Nigerians are in-charge. The Arabs trust them. We thank them for offering jobs to our brothers and sisters, since our own carrier “Super-Boeing-International Carrier” can never fly. Thanks to foreign airlines. Thanks to foreign hospital administrators for belling the harassed and unfortunate Nigerians out! Why can we have our own airline? I seriously asked one of the learned administrators I saw around. He thought I was crazy to ask such a question. He thought I knew why! “How can it work when the Aviation minister will convert Nigerian Airways to a family property? As long as the Nigerian minister remained in-charge, his wife and children will fly to any destination with free ticket! Only his brothers and sisters, in-laws and friends can work in the airways offices..... You can fill other stuff. Nigeria is a strange country.

About to book for the flight a good Nigerian (employee of the Emirates ) advised me never to say I was traveling to India for medical treatment. Why? Otherwise your flight will be delayed for 72 hours during which time the airline authorities will require further details about your ailment. They may be right. That may be necessary for bedridden patients.

On departure day to Dubai I was still haunted by the “Ojo and Boarding Pass Drama” of many years ago. The reminiscences have not stopped haunting me. Missing an important international flight to Rome! But today I am not flying to Rome or London but to Chennai (Madras, India) via Dubai. Why should I be worried. Why was I having nightmares? Ojo can’t be there as I check-in and board the aircraft. If Ojo was still alive he could be working there, I tried to reassure myself. Please, dear reader, don’t be distracted as I narrate another ordeal with Nigerian airport officials, behaving like Ojo but in different garbs. Let it not happen again in my life!

As it approached my turn at the Emirates counter to show my documents and check-in like other who arrived early before me, a neatly dressed Nigerian employee of the airline asked for my Yellow Fever Certificate. Oh My God! I haven’t got it or rather I forgot to bring it along. Truly I had one that was issued to me at Owerri a week earlier. But why this tragedy. I was sad.

The young man seeing how worried I was asked whether I could rush home to collect it. He insisted it was important for all traveling to India. I knew of course. But rush to where? To the East, Owerri; then Orlu to collect a Yellow Fever Card! If I decided to rush and come back, the airline would have left for Dubai and India! What a mess? Missing my flight again? No don’t say it again.

The young man tried to console me and said he would help me. Help me? He assured me. And my spirit returned into its abode. I took out my handkerchief and cleaned the sweat rushing down from the face and soaking my clothes including my clergy man and suit.

I was directed to a young man that looked like an airport cleaner. He took me inside a small airport room. Without question he gave me a fresh Yellow Fever Certificate, neatly completed, but leaving only spaces for personal details. He demanded a fee, which I promptly gave him without question. At least I would not miss my flight! That was a big help for which I will ever be grateful to smart Nigerian airport officials.

In every self-fulfillment, joy and thanksgiving I took the Yellow Fever Card to the director who gracefully took it from me and gracefully completed to missing spaces and handed it back to me. I thanked him and gave him something he acknowledged with a beaming smile. “Thank you sir”, he said “and safe journey.”

This first temptation had been overcome. I could collect my boarding pass and get into the waiting arena or lounge. But wait! The screening machines and the Nigerian customs officials and police. Okay. I have no contraband. I was screened and I passed over. But not my hand luggage. One police or customs official who searched my bag insisted I was carrying a dangerous “weapon” or “missile” that I or some terrorists could use to blow up the aircraft! What was this man talking? I pleaded: “Sir. It is only an electric shaver. It is no dangerous weapon or gadget.” He was not ready to listen to me. However one other fellow traveler who had

watched the drama with the customs official advised me to give some tip or dash. “That’s what they do here the fellow traveler murmured in anger. Give him something. He will release your electric shaver. What?”

Anyway I did offer something in the Nigerian way. Perhaps not big enough? The customs man insisted I should go to the departure gate and bring an Arab Airport Official to the screening section of the airport (about a kilometer away) so that the dangerous weapon I was carrying could be handed over to him. Only the Arab could decide if I could take the shaver to the aircraft.

Scheizer! But what a bull shit! I could buy another shaver in India, much cheaper than what I offered as a bribe to get my shaver released? In annoyance and deep disappointment I left the place and rushed to the departure gate. In fact I could have missed my flight if I had continued pleading or arguing with a corrupt Nigerians customs office. As a result of my last minute decision to abandon the shaver another possible disaster had been averted. We boarded the aircraft en route to Dubai and arrived safely in India on schedule.

## **Welcome to India!**

God bless Nigerians who can afford the resources to pay the exorbitant hospital bills in India. The trip is not for any poor man, I can assure you. If you are not rich, forget it. If you have no European or American benefactors like I have forget a medical treatment trip to India. If you a casual fellow with the ambition to stay alive long, maybe up to 100 years – but remember that the psalmist tell us that for us poor vulnerable human beings our span is 70; and 80 for those stronger, but it is all empty and useless life; be prepared to sell all your families’ property to procure good health in India.

Want to come to India for serious medical treatment or surgery in Apollo or Miot be prepared to pay a deposit of about \$10,000 to start processing your papers after your local doctor had confirmed your disease could not be treatment in your country. Be prepared to pay for all the medical tests, including CT-Scans, PET-Scan and X-rays. Do you know what PET-SCAN is? They say it is one of the latest and most sophisticated scan machines that can detect and locate any cancer virus not matter how small and at what part of the body the worm is hidden. Other scanning gadget can just tell you cancer is around. But where? How big? They use these and other sophisticated modern gadgets and machines to detect your ailment. And you meet experts as your travel from one scan room to the other. The results of scans and X-rays are accompanied by detailed reports which help the doctors to treat you well. By the time you know it your medical bill is running to two digit numbers in dollars. Some hospitals don’t accept the local currency.

As you check your pockets please do not forget your airfare from Nigeria, via Ethiopia, change at Mumbai (Bombay for Chennai. Your loved ones will no doubt be anxious to visit you and see how far you have improved. The journeys to and, short and long will always drain your purse. At a time it might look ridiculous to worry about the fat bill. The important think, is whether the patient was reporting some significant changes in his life. That is a more serious point to consider. What is money afterwards? A Latin adage the following to say about this loved and hated commodity. It says that “without money, there is no life”. Not true? Another

adage puts it this way “Money is the root of all evils”, people hold this view. But the truth is that money is good. It is only avarice that paints the bad picture! Whatever view people like to hold about money and poverty, I believe the English writer Bernard Shaw sounded the final death knell on this matter for his it is clear who is responsible, when Shaw asserts: “The greatest evil and worse crime is poverty”. Don’t you see that they are interrelated! As you check your pocket, my dear sick visitor to India do not forget the cost of food. You may need extra food-support. India menu is a disaster! “One man’s food is another’s poison. You find the phenomenon everywhere. Indians are mainly vegetarians, they rarely eat meat nor drink alcohol. All the huge cows roaming the highway, the street corners and everywhere are sacred to the Hindus who dominate the land and government. Some one hinted to me that a driver who recklessly kills a roaming cow would suffer harsher penalties (even death than one who killed a person in similar circumstances!

### **In the Hospital**

You, as a patient have little or no problems. As you relax in prayer at what happens next, your senior doctor will all sorts of tests and X-rays and in fact a ‘General Checkup’. You don’t know all the ‘other diseases’ and ailments you have been putting up with, please tell when asked. Even though you came for a heart problem, Make sure you order a ‘general check-up’. If you are man even though your main problem is that of heart –chronic or mild, you must also reckon with other men’s diseases which oftentimes send men to untimely death. Prostrate diseases are rampant among all men. White and black, as from 30 men must be wary (on their guard) about the possibility of their prostrate problems going or becoming ‘cancerous’. If so there is reason to show a big concern. “A stitch in time saves nine”, they say. The hospital environment will be your cherished community, family for the next few weeks you many stay in this foreign land.

### **With Whom to Interact!**

As a foreigner from Nigeria, able to make it to India, whatever your problems you will go back home happy and much-better you were when you come. If pains still remain after all the treatments, you should not worry, nature will play its own part in complete healing when you are discharged and you return home.

Usually a deluxe room is assigned to you (deluxe = special, sumptuous, luxurious, exclusive, plush, expensive, superior,.....). There is everything in your apartment including ICU (intensive care unit gadgets. Next to your spacious room is a smaller bet for your aid, your boy, sister. Wife etc who has come to take care of you.

In this room, you have cable TV, Refrigerators and assorted fruits are supplied, cold drinks and whatever else you may need. The toilets may have to 6 towels and you must tell them whatever you need and these will be supplied. These are parts of mundane things employed to calm a troubled soul. They are important and expensive and you must pay!

The situation in the ward, in your room is important and needs close examination. The person you interact with everyday will no doubt influence you., He or she is next to your doctor. Let us first look at the figure of the Indian doctor.

## **The Doctors**

Whatever part of India they come from, whatever their color (some be described as 'white' (Caucasian?), others half white half black. There are still many others 'deep black'). All and said color does not play any role in the society we are studying, The doctors can be described as nice, kind, friendly gentle, knowledgeable and profoundly humble.[These virtues are opposed to pride, haughtiness – the German word that expresses this well is 'hoch-mutig = high opinion of oneself, arrogance, conceit, self-importance, over-confidence and unapproachable, The Indian doctor is a fine fellow , man and woman.

The Indian doctor is thorough in whatever he does, He meticulously oversees the procedures for the surgery which begin by 5. P.m. everything be ready before the surgery begins. The patient, he insist, he tell the nurses and all hospital attendants that should no be treated like any other animal. He is a human being. The patient must be brought early enough to the theatre to familiarize himself with the huge place. He should not be made to look excited and his blood pressure running high, in medicine, especially surgery, Dr. Samson says there is no room for half-measures.

## **The Nurses and Other Attendants**

Some older Nigerian nurses are said to be very good and many are so useful to the doctor's help. Most Nigerian registered nurses and midwives have high reputation in Nigerian hospitals, public and private. It is not the same in India most Indian nurses are mediocre. As it is always easy or good to generalize we can however say that Indian nurses are no match to their Nigerian counter-parts.

Their most important handicap is language. Many cannot communicate in English, as they did their nursing school from the beginning to the end in their local language Tamil, how do you expect her to speak, write and converse fluently in English, Whether they understand you or not they nod or quake their head are disappear. Till we see again tomorrow or next! Language barrier is a terrible thing. I heard the hospital authorities are now taking note of the numerous foreigners coming to their hospitals and who find it difficult interact with the nurses and other attendants who take care of then for 24 hours! Either they are sent for training or are sent away.

## **Cuisine – Food and Victuals**

Food can constitute a stumbling block for a Nigerian wishing to come to India to improve his health conditions. Didn't the ancients say "one man's meat is another's poison," But the situation can as bad as you may thing. There some common food items one can choose from, but it becomes a daily affair, then these

should be cause for anxiety, there are options (1) if you are not staying long, do not worry, eat whatever you and leave the rest. (Make arrangements and bring Nigerian foodstuffs along with you, you will save a lot of money and may get well again sooner than you would have expected.

We complained so much where we were that some of the Indian doctors gathered and requested a list of Nigerian food we said we were missing, Without wasting a second we list them: (1) Yam – king of all crops (2) Cocoyam, (3) Rice (4) Beans (5) Cassava (6) Bread-fruit –ukwa (6) Corn(7) Plantain (8) Spaghetti (9) Macaroni (10) Indomi. Above all certain delicacies can be prepared from the above namely: Akara, moi – from Beans. Innumerable number of delicacies comes from ‘flour’. Bread is the principal and king in this group and it is abundant in Nigeria, This is to just to name but a few. So, as far a Nigerians are concerned, it is part of the “cross”, accompanying the main one that has brought the patient to India – sickness – that must be tolerated and borne with equanimity, calmness of the kind. We remember too; “When in Rome do like the Romans,” Whatever the case may be, if for any reason I am to find myself again in India I must bring along Nigeria’s delicious stuff to keep body and soul together as the doctors did their part.

## **India – People – Religion –& Culture**

There is no type of oriental religious sect you don’t find in India. The largest religious group is of course Hindu – about 75% of the entire population. Their language is called ‘Hindi’ and is the second largest written and spoken language of India after English. The second religious group is Muslim – about 11% and the other religions spread among the rest of the population. The Sirkhs, a tiny religious sect, known by their head attire (padded-head-dressing, are said to be a powerful religio-political group The Christians constitute about 2%. The Christian denominations as all over America, Europe and Africa are as numerous as sand on the sea shore.

The two largest religious groups – Hindu and Muslim are said to be always at logger-heads and can often be described as ‘Iraq and Iran’. There is absolutely no Christian/Muslim or Christian/Hindu religious violence. No burning of Christian Churches including Cathedrals and slaughtering of Christians in India as it regularly happens in Nigeria and other parts of Muslim-dominated states!

## **Sacred Cows**

India culture is basically ‘Hindu’. They are mostly vegetarians. They don’t eat meat and many other delicacies people enjoy all over the world. Big (sacred) cows roam every nook and cranny of cities and slums. They cross the roads and highways and nobody disturbs them. They eat whatever they like undisturbed, and are rarely scared by human population and presence. It is here I understood the meaning of the idiom “Sacred Cow”. I was told it was sinful to harm any cow. They are treated as ‘sacred’ and must be respected. One Indian lecturer told me that it would be ‘safer’ for a motorist to kill a human being on the road than harm any cow!

There is plenty of meat and none to consume. Christians eat the beef (cow meat) but with ‘caution’. Why? You can understand. They milk however is consumed with passion by everybody. It is next to water. There are other taboos associated with diet. Most Indians are ‘tiny’ and ‘weightless’, especially young women. In fact most of their young women can safely be described as ‘babies’. A young lady of about 20 looks like a 10-year-old kid and can weigh as much as a new-born baby. I am not exaggerating. Most of the women nurses are too small by their look.

The figure and ‘aroma’ of St Thomas The Apostle pervades the Christian communities of Chennai and of course the state of Kerala, nearly 90% in Christian population. St Thomas was said to have traveled to India those days to evangelize the Indians. Like the rest of the apostles he was martyred precisely in Chennai (Madras). St Bartholomew was also said to have evangelized in India. But St Thomas dominates the entire area with the magnificent and imposing basilica raised in honor of the saint at Chennai. You have not performed a useful pilgrimage to Madras if you did not visit St Thomas Mount. All the monuments and edifices bearing the Apostle’s name and stories are sources of pride for the Christian communities of India – ancient and modern.

## **Education**

The Indians take education as seriously as the Europeans and the Americans. Up to Primary School level education is free and government sees that all her citizens can read and write, as well speak as many as four languages, including English. On the other hand there is a proliferation of nursery, primary, and secondary schools established by private organizations including some Church bodies.

Pupils and students attend classes regularly and strikes even in the universities and other tertiary institutions are rare. Tell me then why these people will not do well in life irrespective of their vast population!

Mathematics and sciences are given the special position and importance they deserve. No wonder many Indians qualify as wonderful medical doctors, computer analysts and programmers, and of course teachers in Maths and sciences. I was told that Indians, young and old, rarely use the calculator. I tried to verify. You can believe how smart they are; how ‘mathematical’ they think. An Indian shopper can easily tell you the amount you pay having collected about 37 apples @ 10 apples per 1.5 rupee. He doesn’t need a calculator! You can try them in other sophisticated geometric, algebraic and arithmetical calculations and see how poor other people, including Nigerians are in calculations!

## **People, Attitudes, Lifestyle**

We are bound to observe differences in lifestyles and attitudes when we visit places, far and near. Certain characteristics and qualities of things we see must strike us hard, especially if we are leaving our villages for the first time. We are even likely to observe more differences if the places we visit are far away from our own regions and continent. There will always be a lot of things to say about other peoples’ ‘strange’ attitudes when compared with ours. Our accounts when we get

back home might excite our friends and families who may be anxious to hear from us. We always have our own local communities, states and countries in mind as we compare and contrast. We may hear from excited and astonished listeners' expressions like "God is a mystery". "The world is boundless". "Odikwa Egwu". One of the ways of narrating the "strange attitudes I saw in India is by telling you in the first part of this account "what I did not see!"

### **What I did not see!**

- (1) I did not see any person, wealthy or poor, kidnapped in India and fantastic ransoms paid to obtain release of victims. There is absolute security in the villages and cities and people went about their business 24 hours, round the clock without any molestation from hoodlums, bandits and swindlers. In fact I never heard any sound of gunshot from any quarters.
- (2) I did not see any police check-point where vehicles are checked and controlled by security men in police or army uniform. But there are police wardens at check points on the roads directing the flow of traffic. The traffic wardens help the street lights especially at multiple junction roads. The street light function 24 hours round the clock,
- (3) I did not see anybody, normal human beings or lunatics 'pee pee' or 'poo poo' at any place, public and private property. I did not see anybody, male or female, young and old urinate into the gutter or at the foot of trees and poles. I must add too, I did not see anybody naked. There were a few fellows I saw that looked like lunatics (by their look, unshaven and unkempt), but they were never naked. I didn't see them performing any frivolous antics at street centers and middle of roads.
- (4) I did not see any people, men and women, young and old fighting, quarrelling and exchanging angry words and hauling stones at one another. These Indians are absolute gentle people. In most congested street corners and roads people in a hurry push at each other, but no one gets angry. When such 'accidents' happens, to your greatest astonishment what you find is mutual apologies! "I am sorry". Who has offended the other? They go about their business peacefully.
- (5) The Indians should be among the best and most elegantly dressed people in the whole world. Men always dress 'British' in style – trousers and shirts (long and short sleeved). Women have the traditional wear at home and at every other occasion. Few men put on the traditional wear – wrapper. School children and students are always in uniform, clean and elegant.
- (6) They have great compassion for the sick. In most of their hospitals, the inscription on the hospital walls and wards are clear and teach the lesson: "The most important person in this hospital is the patient". A visitor can then draw more conclusions!
- (7) I did not see any stabilizers attached to the TV Sets, refrigerators and other electrical appliances in my room. No voltage drop in power supply, 24 hours daily!

### **Some of the ‘Strange Things’ I saw**

1. Left-Hand-Drive is the system like in Great Britain. Although they drive recklessly, few or no accidents occur on the streets and highways.
2. They used to blow their vehicle horns without stop even when there is no need to use the horns.
3. The seat belts in their cars are mere ornaments. Nobody takes note of the benefits of the seat belts.
4. “Always wear your helmet to avoid untimely death” is a warning for motor cycle users, written all over the bill boards. But few people care to keep the rule.
5. They, big and small person, rich and poor, eat with their fingers and not western cutlery.
6. They sit on the floor on their buttocks, young and old, boys and girls, easily than and other group of people on this planet. In most of their Churches and halls there are no chairs, pews or benches. While it may take a typical Nigerian woman at least *ten minutes* to prepare and sit on a bare floor, it takes an Indian woman or man less than *two seconds* to complete the exercise.
7. The slums are too vast, but compare well with “Ajegunle – Lagos” suburbs and their likes in Nigeria.
8. Environmental sanitation is almost ignored. The gutters stink and no one takes note.
9. They cross major roads at any points and no one is rarely knocked down.

### **Medical treatment in Nigeria - Which way forward?**

*Casual visits to Miot, Apollo, and Kamatschi hospitals in Chennai.* I took time to visit these three famous hospitals which bring Nigerians almost daily to this part of the world. Everywhere you went, Nigerians are the grand sponsors of these hospitals. Those I visited spoke with passion and almost in tears questioned why Nigeria could not compete with India in this particular healthcare issue. Nigerians, joke aside, have great brains in every field of human endeavor. But why does it not work in our fatherland? Are you not worried too? What are the issues at stake? Almost everyone agreed that we still have a long way to go in areas of power generation, water, and roads.

On a very serious note all concerned Nigerians, home and abroad - I have spoken to are making passionate appeals to our leaders, particularly political and Church leaders, as well a good-spirited individuals and philanthropists to come to the rescue of many beleaguered, stressed and harassed Nigerians who spend life’s fortune in search of good health outside Nigeria,

Government must take a serious look on the provision of power and other necessities of life to make the dream-like goals of most Nigerians look like a realizable venture. We may start by taking good care of the hospitals we have in our fatherland, which must include the maintenance of the existing structures we already have. Wonderful incentives must be made available to young medical students to take unprecedented lead into the intricacies of modern medical research

which brings about astonishing major break-through into areas such as heart surgery, cancer treatment and other everyday ailment that if not well handled send a great number of people to their untimely death.

### **Wohin Nigeria? Which Way Nigeria? A Lamentation**

Who says Nigeria would not recover from the comatose situation in which our past and present leader have left her for quite a time now? No! Nigeria will wake up again from slumber, from the snooze and take back her hitherto and enviable position among in the community of developed nations. But we may have to ask the God we and the ancient Israel and other nations worshipped – the Lord who forgives and restores. We must lament however, rid ourselves all our haughty attitudes and lifestyles and humble ourselves asking for forgiveness and restoration before the Lord: “Oh Lord will your wrath last forever, We have been scattered all over the world and are there daily humiliated and impoverished. We have become fewer than all nations because of our sins. In our blindness and reckless life we think we will live in this world to enjoy our ill-gotten wealth forever. Only fools think so. ....We are so sick and fible. Our span is only 70 or 80 for those who are strong. But their remaining years are only emptiness and suffering...” If you visit the Indian embassy of consulate in Lagos and Abuja and behold how Nigerians seeking for visa to travel to India for medical treatment, you can appreciate the picture of poverty and humiliation I am painting!

Nigeria can become once again a haven for people of the world who seek security, but cannot find it in their country; who seek good health care but can't produce qualified medical personnel to run their health institutions; who seek education but can't boast of qualified teachers and professors or even educational institution adequately equipped to meet the needs of our modern hi-tech world of today. *Nigeria must become a nuclear nation if we are to realize our dreams,*

The Lord can touch the hearts of our leaders to hearken to the voices of the poor and oppressed in Nigeria. The sick, no matter the seriousness of their ailments DO NOT need to travel abroad, spend life's fortunes to seek medical treatment for an aching limb. All the supplicated surgeries and transplants can be performed here in our fatherland, in the bigger and smaller city hospitals, name them Abuja, Lagos, Ibadan, P.H, Enugu, Benin, Kano, Kaduna and of course Owerri and Orlu. Then all the other nations from Africa, Europe, Asia and America can flock our embassies overseas looking for visa to visit Nigeria. This may look like a dream, but no doubt a dream that can be converted to reality in just a short time