

ONLY IN NIGERIA

SEE THEM! AN ENTIRE FAMILY ON A MOTOR BIKE!
ONLY IN NIGERIA!



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THE MILK IS B



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Preface to the e-Book (online) edition

Many Nigerians, particularly those living in the Diaspora have continued asking for the electronic version of **ONLY IN NIGERIA**. The contents of the e-copy remain basically the same. We have only added the subtitle “**Elsewhere in America**”, namely “**ONLY IN NIGERIA, Elsewhere in America**”. The title of my book is well chosen because most of the issues raised in the publication are those usually referred to in the Nigerian press as “Nigerian factors”. These have been contrasted with what obtains **elsewhere**.

Nigerians are found all over the world in hundreds of thousands, if not millions. Surely there are more Nigerians in America and most Nigerians are well at home with the United States of America. One finds a lot of ‘T –shirts’ in Nigerian bearing the inscription ‘**I love America**’. “Nigerian factor”, simply warns the reader never to get upset or disturbed by the assertions being made or graphics about Nigeria being displayed. “There should be no cause for alarm”. Nigerians are used to the situation and such statements or news items don’t shock them any more! What is being said or discussed may really be disturbing or may sound unreal, but most of the times the facts are incontestable. They provoke mixed feelings. They can be amusing but most of them can provoke suppressed anger. The less hardened patriots do as well weep widely for our dear country.

When some few carefully selected humorous ‘items’, including graphics from **ONLY IN NIGERIA** were shown online some Nigerians who saw them did not actually doubt the author or question the facts or refute them. No one was dismayed or expressed anger. They simply tried to make the author understand that there are some other places and nations of the world where “such things” happen. They named the follow places as examples, India, Bangladesh, Guinea, Ghana and few other tiny ‘countries’ one may find difficult to identify on the world map. In other words these fellow Nigerians are saying “**NOT ONLY IN NIGERIA!**” What do they want us to understand? What should be our consolation? What should be the way forward for Nigeria? In the United States of America, there is a television program named **ONLY IN AMERICA**. A lot of interesting topics are presented there. Unfortunately these are not the likes you may find in “**ONLY IN NIGERIA!**”

Preface to the second edition - “A few years later”

About 5 years have elapsed since the first publication of **ONLY IN NIGERIA**. We have all along been praying for our fatherland. “Prayers for Nigeria in Distress” (Ekpere maka Nigeria no na nsogbu) have been composed and recited in Churches by the faithful asking God to have mercy on our fatherland. For about two years, almost daily, non-stop, our deepest concern was on Bribery and Corruption – “Prayers against Bribery and Corruption”. The prayers were

meant to minimize bribery and corruption in Nigeria (Awufu, Ngari, Wuruwuru). We did not stop at prayers. We have been fasting and putting on sack clothes. We have been lamenting. We have continued to raise alarm pointing out some consequences of our evil deeds and unrepentant hearts that have brought a lot of suffering on the masses.

Not a few Nigerian Christians are however disappointed as it seems God has abandoned Nigeria. Many have vowed never to recite those prayers any more as the situation continued to deteriorate. Bribery and corruption continued to thrive and has in deed affected most sectors of our institutions. There is no need to name them.

Asked whether things have changed in Nigeria since the last five years or so, an angry Nigerian teenager snapped: “No, not in the least. Things have gotten worse. And I still want to leave this bloody country!” The young man, Secondary School Drop-out, is one of the thousands of Nigerians still in-search-of Greener Pastures, elsewhere outside Nigeria. He has been duped several times by Nigeria con men who had promised him better life outside Nigeria. He would have liked to be dumped somewhere in the Sahara Desert, if he had an opportunity.

So, not much has changed for most Nigerians even years after the so-called democratic elections which ushered in an era of democratic rule were first held in late nineties. If things have not really “gotten worse” why have Nigerian young men and women continued to abandon their fatherland in search of better life elsewhere?

On the political and economic situation, the following newspaper report says it all.

Archbishop indicts Nigerian leadership Says it is in the hands of crooks.

The Metropolitan of the Catholic Archdiocese of Owerri, Most Rev. A.J.V. Obinna has described Nigeria as an unfortunate nation whose affairs are piloted and steered by people of questionable characters. The Archbishop dropped this hint recently at Owerri the capital city of Imo State, while commissioning the Parish Administrative and Financial Council of the newly inaugurated Holy Trinity Church, World Bank Housing Estate, New Owerri.

The Prelate, while speaking on the poor Electoral System which according to him left this nation in the hands of “dubious crooks”, lamented on the poor administrative policies made by the products (of this “stolen elections”), which have remained unprogressive and selfish. He thus listed some selfish policies made by these poor quality administrations whose primary motives from the day they were selected have been egocentric and thus far from common good.

“Today’s leadership was stolen and so cannot do anything for the good of the common man. This is because a good number of today’s leaders are not occupying their rightful positions; rather they either by hook or crook forced themselves into these leadership positions and so stole these positions from their rightful persons. Consequently, their administrative policies will never be favourable to the citizens of this nation. How can a thief think of the good of the victim of his dubious act? Even if he does, it does not exonerate him from being a crook, for the end cannot justify the means,” he said.

Speaking further, the Chief Priest stated that the successive impeachments, probes and election nullifications in various States in the country point to the truth that last election was a complete robbery. Little wonder, the dream of our blessed nation has remained unrealized as the standard of living of every average Nigerian depreciated.

“This nation is in the hands of crooks, because, last election was a dramatic robbery of the entire nation. That was why everything about it was manipulated by these crooks who have vowed to make good of our public ruin.” He remarked.

The outspoken Archbishop further noted that, no matter the level of progressive policies and initiatives of these leaders of questionable characters, their positions remain unjustifiable and unfitting as their consciences, if they still have any, remain restless. This is because a squared peg in a round hole remains unfitting no matter its services. He however did not exonerate Christians from this fowl play as he blamed them for their compromises.

The Bishop noted that even Catholics are involved in this political robbery, since the Catholic Church has the greatest population of Christians. As such, Catholics play an important role in the Nigerian politics, implying that if our politicians are corrupt, the Catholics among them are inclusive.

Against this background, he urged Christians to remain loyal to their faith which professes love of God and neighbour and to desist from every form of bad politicking which has for long set our country back.

“If the Catholic politicians in this country don’t go against their faith while playing the politics, things must have changed for the better. As such, the blame goes more to these Catholics who compromise and sacrifice their faith on the altar of mere politics. This is sheer greed and avarice.”

In conclusion, Archbishop Obinna prayed for the intervention of the Blessed Trinity in our already endangered nation whose poor citizens suffer in the hands of crooks who persistently exploit and marginalize them through their self centered policies and initiatives. (The Forum, May 5th 2008)

The above report and the following selected topics go to prove that not only have things not improved for the masses; in fact “things have truly gotten worse!”

COMPLIMENTARY NOTES

“What the people are saying” – Reactions

We published some of our readers’ reactions to our publication “**ONLY IN NIGERIA**”. Most of the reactions were quite positive, in the sense that the majority of our readers, who wrote, overwhelmingly supported our ‘stand’ on these serious issues touching all Nigerians as well as our fatherland.

Here we like to publish some of the letters of encouragement we received as we were about going to the press. We acknowledge these readers’ contributions to our work by publishing their comments.

Tour de force

Another of Rev. Fr. Ndiokwere’s *tour de force* – informative and educative...a vivid picture of our social life – some part very sad, some part humorous ...a compendium for all Nigerians, in Nigeria and in the Diaspora from age 15. Read it and react!

(Mbachu C. Godwin Educationist and Rtd School Principal.)

The language Nigerians understand

Father Ndiokwere has a way. He has the knack and the style of saying the truth in an euphemistic way. In his column in The Forum Newspaper “Only in Nigeria”, Fr. Ndiokwere puts the truth in a simple humorous way, offending neither Eve nor Adam and yet makes his point.

Just like a joke, but in reality not one. Saying serious things in unserious ways and with amiable words. Non-fiction written as if it were fiction. That is the type of language Nigerians understand only too well. It is native to them and reminiscences of Chinua Achebe’s literary ways. I mean, as the Igbo would say “Ebe a na-ama Njakiri, ka a na-ekwu Eziokwu”. [Truth is often couched in jokes.]

(Rev. Fr. Nonso Odiaka CSSP)

Worthwhile undertaking

Ndiokwere is right! Nigeria is like the proverbial wealthy man’s house. There, you find excellence! There, you also find mediocrity as well as imbecility. Only In Nigeria do such extremes seem to dwell amicably side-by-side. But does that not challenge us to the very possible betterment? Nigerians arise! Let us show the world that it is only in Nigeria that men do actually and successfully wriggle out of such impossible situations.

That, for me, could be the best lesson we can draw from this “Worthwhile Undertaking”. That may have been the propelling intent of Ndiokwere’s **ONLY IN NIGERIA**.

(Rev. Fr. Dr. Chibuike Ukeh [Germany])

A pandemic case of individual and national concern

This is another of Rev. Fr. Dr. Ndiokwere's series. A well-packaged exposition, thrilling, informing, touching, and revealing indisputable realities and episodes of our time in Nigeria. A pandemic case of individual and national concern. A call for total solemn recollection, reflection and radical ethical reorientation by all Nigerians. A reminder of their onerous responsibilities of the mainstream institutions – **NOA, EFCC, ICPA** – Courts, Churches and others, where offenders shall face the wrath of the law with no sacred cows.

As generally complained earlier, most readers who missed some editions of The Forum Newspaper where these numerous writes-up were published will now be happy to get the ensemble 'Only in Nigeria'. The author is commended for his wisdom and ingenuity. Many will candidly find the book an indispensable compendium for every household, the operators and counselors in government, businesses, schools and churches.

(Sir Ben Aleme – Educationist, Union Leader)

Copies for friends and libraries

"Only in Nigeria" is a welcome development. Those of us who missed some parts of the series will be happy to collect some copies for our library and friends. Surely, Father Ndiokwere has joined the Achebes and Wole Soyinkas in x-raying Nigeria's life style.

(Sir. Hyacinth Chukwu [KSJ] – Educationist)

The simple truth in deed

Is what Father Ndiokwere saying true or is he manufacturing falsehood? No one who reads Fr. Ndiokwere's book "Only in Nigeria" will have any doubt in his mind about where Nigeria is heading to. Quite serious topics treated in a way that all – young and old can comprehend and get worried. Do not miss a copy of this book. "Only in Nigeria" is must read for youths and leaders of tomorrow.

(Constancia Amagba – University Student)

An important document

Thank God I can have these important topics as a book. I got worried each time I missed an issue of The Forum Newspaper. Perhaps "Only in Nigeria" featured and I missed it! Fellow Nigerians we possess an important document that will help us think twice and change our strange attitudes. **(Rev. Sister Mary Nkechi)**

Lucid and admirable

In an admirable, lucid and straight forward manner, Rev. Father Dr. N. I. Ndiokwere has in this book laid bare some aspects of our social life which reveal the extent to which things have gone awry in Nigeria, and the need for something urgent to be done to reverse the ugly trend.

As this book is educative, it is recommended not only to students and all Nigerians, but also to the relevant Agencies of the Federal, State and Local Governments whose responsibility it is to re-orientate the people. All may find its contents very useful.

(Barrister R.E. Egwuatu)

Indispensable manual for Nigerians and visitors to Nigeria.

Dr. Ndiokwere's book "Only in Nigeria" is not for Nigerians only. Visitors to Nigeria must lay their hands on this book. It will serve a useful purpose. It is a manual that must be read and carefully preserved for regular reflection and recollection.

(Chief N. I. Nnabuife – Educationist)

Our leaders must read this book

The Book **ONLY IN NIGERIA** should be circulated to all parts of Nigeria, to government offices for all those who run the affairs of this country to read. This book must be found in all university libraries. No Nigerian who cares about the future of our fatherland can afford to ignore the contents of this book. It is time we Nigerians stopped a while and think about what is happening to us.

(Ngozi Uchendu – University student)

What of the judiciary?

ONLY IN NIGERIA has to some extent succeeded in unveiling some of these 'cankerworms' among us. But alas! It has only scratched the surface of the Nigerian ills, namely "**What is wrong with Nigeria.**" What of the Judiciary? The author has not yet visited that area. There, too are many skeletons in the wardrobe. There is need for us Nigerians to think again and change our lifestyles.

(Chris Okey – Lawyer)

A requiem: A funeral for Nigeria?

I am sure we are not yet singing the **Requiem** for Nigeria. Nigeria may one day wake up and begin to change for the better. But for the future of our children and the younger generation we all must join the author to continue to scotch the dangerous snake. Perhaps it will come out of hiding, get enough exposure and then be over-powered or killed! I felt bad and depressed after reading this book. But I believed things must change.

(Anthony Anyanwu – Rtd. civil servant and community leader)

“Only in Nigeria” on the internet?

Some chapters of **ONLY IN NIGERIA** should be placed on the Internet for wider circulation and also for Nigerians in the Diaspora to read and appreciate. Nigerians, home and abroad, should be worried about these evils found in every nook and cranny of our society.

(Uju Okeruo – Computer student)

Our leaders must think again

The decay in Nigeria is nauseating. We are consciously aware that it is **ONLY IN NIGERIA** that people climb to their desired heights with a ladder, turn back and push the ladder down only to try to jump from that height on their way back to base. This is both the reality and irony of the Nigerian system as depicted in our leaders.

It will surely be **ONLY IN NIGERIA** that people who benefited from the glory of mission schools in the past have turned round to destroy the very institutions that nurtured them and made them what they are today. I pity the future generation of Nigerians because as the Latin adage says - **Nemo dat quod non habet**, no one can give what he has not. The future is very bleak. Anyone who thinks otherwise should have his head examined because this country has been ravaged by its leaders and not by the led.

(Obi E. – Educationist and community leader)

Our examination system

For many years now, examinations in Nigeria have turned out to be a scramble for certificates, and no longer true assessment of the individual's abilities and capabilities. I hate to say this. Exam in Nigeria is a sham! When will our leaders and examiners learn to shun bribery and corruption? **ONLY IN NIGERIA** has exposed the ills rocking this sector of our revered institution. It is sad to note that there may not be an end in sight

(Uchenna Onwunali – student)

CHAPTER 1

A CATALOGUE OF WOES & SONGS OF SORROW

Only in Nigeria you see such things happen! Elsewhere, in all other nations on the globe, such ugly scenarios, strange phenomena, and distasteful behaviors would be described as 'anathema' (abomination, loathsome). Perpetrators of such acts would elsewhere, except in Nigeria, be prosecuted and even jailed for life! In fact they would feel some shame. Not in Nigeria! Not Nigerians! Do it in Nigeria! You go scot-free!! No one even frowns at such behaviors. In some situations, in Nigeria, perpetrators and such public actors receive loud ovation from the people. We have here a catalogue of woes. These are worrisome situations and phenomena. You can weep as loud as you can. If you are an elder, try to control your tears and gnash your teeth. But behold, my dear, the catalogue of woes you read is only a tip of the iceberg!

Nigeria is a strange country and my 'poem' may prove so. It is a frustrating poem with no well-planned poetic devices. But it can break the heart to imagine that such evils thrive in my fatherland and few people care to know and get worried. It all confirms the "allegation" by the world body called Transparency International - an Anti-corruption organization - that my country is **number one and always number one** in this nauseating and sickening carefree attitude: "Do what you want and go free."

It is a lamentation, songs of sorrow, an elegy that stimulates the lachrymal glands and makes one weep for a dear fatherland you once cherished. It is a lullaby. But the song will never make the baby sleep peacefully nor will it allow the baby-sitter have any rest. It triples the heartbeat and is very distressful. My poem confirms that Nigeria is **number one** in everything except in whatever is good and admirable. It is only in Nigeria you find it happen. Surely nowhere else!

1. It is only in Nigeria that security officials in uniforms - name them - police, army, highway patrol agents, vehicle controllers of particulars - seat-belts, lights, including hazard signals - set up dangerous road blocks, hastily arranged to prevent motorists having a smooth ride to their destinations. Logs of wood, heavy iron scraps, broken bottles and other dangerous missiles are assembled by road security officers on our roads to make sure that accidents, which take place, are really fatal. The only reason for such reckless activities is for an easy collection of "tithes" from everyone that passes their way. They say this disgusting treatment of her citizens has the approval of the leaders.

2. It is only in Nigeria that agents who are paid to protect innocent people harass, maim, intimidate and even kill those they are meant to protect.
3. It is only in Nigeria you find one man making a single public donation of money, which exceeds his annual income, and in some cases his whole-life income! He may be richer than the state and no one cares to know his sources of wealth.
4. It is only in Nigeria that one person can possess more than three Nigerian international passports at the same time.
5. It is only in Nigeria that foreigners can come in and go without control, stay as long as they want. In Malaysia, for example, foreigners have only two weeks to finish their legitimate business in that country and go. If you want extra days you must visit the ministry of internal and external affairs.
6. It is only in Nigeria that government receives just less than 10% of revenue due to her while individuals collect more than 90%.
7. It is only in Nigeria that jobless and destitute men in the villages are forced to pay taxes while the affluent ones go free.
8. It is only in Nigeria that squander mania has become a cherished culture of a depressed nation; trillions, billions, millions of dollars and naira have been squandered in unplanned, often useless and uncompleted projects - name them road constructions, market development projects, hotels, ID card projects, Iron and steel industries. They are too many to mention.
9. It is only in Nigeria that "guarantees" are not demanded for contracts executed by individuals and registered companies. Elsewhere contractors take responsibility for their completed contract for up to 20 years!
10. Only in Nigeria is everyone qualified to be a contractor and contract is a way of making fast money. One who has 'completed' a **contract** can escape with over 50% of the cost.
11. It is only in Nigeria that markets flourish on highways and people are regularly killed by high-speed vehicles. Elsewhere markets are built in safer areas of the cities and country sides.
12. It is only in Nigeria that "filth is next to godliness". "Clean-up exercise" is a no person's affair. Visit our small neighbors like Ghana, little Republic of Benin, or Cameroon. They don't throw rubbish anywhere they like. You will definitely be prosecuted if you do.
13. It is only in Nigeria that people in luxurious or *tokumbo* buses or other vehicles throw rubbish out of the windows - name them - bottles, cans, oranges and banana peelings, egg shells and all sorts of garbage.
14. It is only in Nigeria you find men and women - young and old - 'piss' or urinate, and even 'poo-poo' (or defecate) in public, in front of passers-by. Elsewhere only lunatics and people with psychiatric problems do such things. Even at that it is an eyesore.
15. It is only in Nigeria that motorists referred to as 'Okada or Ina Aga' fix any type of car horns on their motorcycles and blow the horns at leisure.

16. It is only in Nigeria that there is no speed limit on any road - highways and local roads.
17. It is only in Nigeria that motorists double or triple their speed at city centers, cross roads and at dangerous corners.
18. It is only in Nigeria that cyclists carry passengers on top of fuel tanks. There is no limit to number of passengers motorists can carry.
19. It is only in Nigeria that men and women, boys and girls mount the motor bike - balance themselves in front and behind each other on a motor cycle. Elsewhere it is an eyesore. Such people can be prosecuted for indecent behavior and distasteful public show.
20. Only in Nigeria are question papers for public examinations sold in open markets.
21. Only in Nigeria can a student in Junior Secondary 2 or 3 sit for **GCE, WASCE, JAMB** and other public examinations. They often pass in flying colors!
22. Only in Nigeria can everybody purchase forms for public examinations. No questions are asked by competent authorities about the candidate's qualifications and suitability.
23. Only in Nigeria do pupils and students pay their teachers, invigilators and supervisors to be allowed to steal, copy, and carry **EXPO** at public examinations.
24. Only in Nigeria can dunces, imbeciles, and failed candidates get admission into institutions of higher learning while the most intelligent and best qualified are denied admission.
25. Only in Nigeria can a student gain admission into the university by simply paying the right amount of money to the agents of the competent authorities.
26. Only in Nigeria can a student be promoted to every new class without passing any single class examination.
27. Only in Nigeria is the national currency, known all over the world as money, is treated with agonizing disrespect and handled with so disgusting a manner that it can be used as a cleaning rag or a writing material for all sorts of calculations and notebook records.
28. It is only in Nigeria that national currency is rated as a primary carrier of all sorts of communicable diseases, including scabies, cough, catarrh, and even tuberculosis. Nigeria's central bank authorities care less and keep the discredited tattered naira notes in circulation. No wonder every type of abominable disease thrives in Nigeria.
29. It is only in Nigeria that ambulances are used for carrying corpses. Motorcades or procession of vehicles accompany corpses in frenzy celebration of death. From the mortuary to the dead person's house, (can extend miles), a triumphant procession home is led by Okada Riders, Drummers and Dancers. Every motorist on procession must carry the posters of the dead person which are usually plastered all over the vehicles. The

procession must be slow and must block all roads through which it must pass. Who cares about other Nigerians going about their daily business? No! Everyone must stop. You must stop, park your car until the procession is over. If you are a passer-by, visiting from outside the state or from anywhere you are expected to stop and watch the spectacle. It is ONLY IT IS ONLY IN NIGERIA one finds such a demonstration of “respect and honor” for the dead. There may even be need to cheer the procession up for blocking a public road or highway. Why? It is strange enough and must surely attract the attention of all passers-by, who may even be expected to join the jamboree, whether they know the dead person, the family or not!

CHAPTER 2

THE PARADOX

It is not that Nigeria is the worst nation on earth. No. But her behavior is frustrating and often constitutes a nightmare. These anomalies may be taking place in other places, too. But **ONLY IN NIGERIA** they possess such dangerous and alarming proportions. There is need to take a look at what happens **ELSEWHERE** - in developed, developing and even under-developed countries that look like Nigeria.

Their ways of doing things, mannerisms, thoughts, philosophies of life, moral, social, political, cultural and spiritual attitudes are full of inconsistencies, contradictions, and absurdities. Most people elsewhere may think it impossible. But if you claim to understand them, namely Nigerians, then make up your mind, think twice and see whether the picture fits Nigerians and their nation! Our "Poem", the "Lamentation" continues.

30. It is **only in Nigeria** that **greatness** is measured by the number of titles and academic degrees one accumulates. And if you fail to address the owners of these borrowed robes *correctly* you may get into trouble. Name them - Prof., Dr., Engr., Architect, **K.S.M., K. S. J.** (They are too many to mention). Church ministers don't joke with their hard-earned titles which may include; Most Rev. Dr., Very Rev. Msgr, Prof., Associate Prof, Dr. - just on one person! **Elsewhere** people don't worry about titles. They don't attach titles to their proper and surnames.

31. **Knighthood** is an ancient international (religious) organization. It is only in Nigeria that members are identified or known by their groups and titles, NOT by their actions and words, in fact NOT by the way they defend their faith, religion or Church institutions and personalities. **Elsewhere** ancient and noble order of Knighthood is a revered religious institution. Knights are still crusaders who fight for the rights of the Church, protect the interest of the Church and their ministers. In Nigeria, recruitment into this organization does not take serious cognizance of the members' Christian virtues. Consequently the society is degenerating into insurance company or social club and continues to shed its religious hue.

32. Christ's exhortation on humility and 'common sense' has a perennial relevance **elsewhere**, in every society and for every people. "**If you are invited to a feast, do not sit down in a place of honor....(Lk 14.8)**". It is **only in Nigeria** that the reverse is true: "**If you are invited to a feast, go straight to the high table, occupy the front seat and first position....**" In Nigeria, at marriage feasts, launching or something, every guest craves for the high table.

Often the number of high table guests exceeds the number of “floor members”. Everyone wants to be recognized.

33. It is **only in Nigeria** that the paradox "**The first shall be the last**" assumes its literal meaning. If your number is **ONE**, surely the first person expected to enter the bus or airplane, if the number of your seat or ticket is **ONE**, take care to struggle; otherwise you lose both your seat and number assigned to you! Someone who arrived late, who came last, who had no number may grab your position. In Nigeria people (men and women, young and old) struggle for everything. **Elsewhere** the statement "**The first shall be the last**" expresses something seemingly absurd and foolish, yet in reality can be true.

34. It is **only in Nigeria** that **age** or **date of birth** plays insignificant role in people's life. Nigerians conceal their age; can change it at any time to suit their ever-changing life styles. To grab a job meant for those in their **early thirties**, he changes his age from 55 to 35 and shows a court-sworn affidavit to confirm his claim. In order to evade an on-going retirement drive in his profession or ministry, he changes his age from 80 to 40. The affidavit is always there to prove it. A young Nigerian of 25 attains the age of 45 overnight, simply to fit into the right "quadro" (picture or category). Elsewhere, age, date of birth is as changeless as the sun and immovable as the northern star. It comes next to your name in every important document you carry. It can never be concealed - or '**declared**' – **John Brown, 45**" "**Doris Williams, 28 Michael Pinks, 244**", **Emeka Okoro, 30.**

35. It is **only in Nigeria** that every lady expects to get a suitable husband. They fail to see that women outnumber men in both 'quantity' and 'readiness.' The 20-year-old lady does not realize that the 45-year-old 'boy' she has her eyes upon will not be ready for marriage soon. He is still being fed by the mother or grandmother. He has no money and has not even attained his life-dream, a job somewhere overseas, in greener pastures, **not here** in the country called Nigeria. **Elsewhere**, the slogan for most women is "**Education for life.**" Marriage may be one of the options in life.

36. It is **only in Nigeria** that Higher Education (university, poly, college of education) is for everyone. **Elsewhere** there are '**branches**' after Junior Secondary School Education. Established by law, as well as through counseling, students fit into right categories or 'branch-off' after the Basic Education - some vocational, some 'acada' and others get their daily bread by being hewers of wood and carriers of water. There is nothing wrong with such a system. What is important is self-fulfillment in whatever state of life.

37. It is **only in Nigeria** that elected lawmakers spend months and years in the parliament not to make laws but business. These elected lawmakers render insignificant service attached to their high offices to their nation and the electorate. They spend months and years in trifles like **impeachment** of any official they don't like. **Elsewhere** law-making is a serious matter. Lawmakers are revered politicians, whose work truly determines the future of their nation.

38. It is **only in Nigeria** that anyone can drive a car without undergoing training or taking a driving test - theory and practice. **Elsewhere** driving or testing is a serious business that takes a lot of time and resources of the future driver - time (at least six months) - brain (because you must pass a written test before practicing) - energy (because you must learn to manipulate a vehicle). In Nigeria you only need to pay the right amount of money to the right authority or their agents. Get on the steering and plow your way into the streets!

39. It is **only in Nigeria** that every type of medicine (drug) is sold in open markets, handled and administered by everybody - young and old, quack and professionals, including primary school dropouts. Everyone can open a medicine store, become a pharmacist overnight. **Elsewhere** there are strict rules on administration and selling of drugs. There is big distinction between “**prescription drugs and over-the-counter drugs**”.

40. It is **only in Nigeria** that "**diversity in unity**" seems to work. The reckless crave for autonomy and autonomous communities confirms the oxymoron. Every family wants to become autonomous kindred, every kindred autonomous community. The community has an eye on a town status, or local government area and even state!

In religious domain, every church station wants the status of a parish and every parish must be raised to a diocese! No wonder then many chiefs and traditional rulers as well as bishopric candidates are emerging in alarming rate and there is real tension, dissension, war, and confusion. **Elsewhere "Unity in diversity"** is the aphorism, the 'trend'. **United States, Arab League, European Union, European Parliament, European Legion, EURO** (one currency for many states). The trend **elsewhere** is to gather together, unify the scattered city-states, break down former barriers that separated peoples and nations, towns and villages. Nigerians don't want a united country. Every state wants an autonomous status that must operate like their counterparts in the United Nation Organization (UNO).

41. It is **only in Nigeria** that **computer technology** is still a **fairy tale**. Take a look in their offices, at local, state and federal levels - commissioners' offices, great ministries and parastatals, even governors' offices - the **archaic typewriters and carbon sheets, cyclostyling machines** are still manipulated by old stenographers and shorthand writers. Little wonder then that the quality and quantity of their jobs remain below standard. **Elsewhere** archaic Imperial typewriters have been discarded some 30 to 50 years ago. **Printers** of every brand have replaced carbon sheets. Have Nigerians not heard that Indian computer technologists and programmers outnumber their United States counterparts?

42. **Only in Nigeria** is smoking 'allowed' everywhere, in the airports and supermarkets. **Elsewhere** offenders face jail sentences. Lawlessness can never be tolerated in certain places.

43. Only Nigerians do it. Trust me. **Only Nigerians** break the international law - the aircraft carry-on luggage rules. Nigerians - **foreign based** as well as locals - carry with them into the aircraft they board as many as four or even more pieces of 'hand luggage' (some even would need extra hands to lift up.) They tie some on their necks and backs; hang some of their loads on their shoulders, while drag some with their feet. If you reprimand them, they pour abuses on you. **Elsewhere**, passengers carry-on just one piece of hand luggage (or two in rare cases, usually those in the first class cabin).

CHAPTER 3

“TOLERANT TO A FAULT”, “EXCESSIVELY PERMISSIVE”

They are ‘tolerant’ and too ‘permissive’ to an unwarrantable fault. “Permissiveness” here simply means allowing or enjoying the freedom to behave in ways others might consider unacceptable, not particularly in sexual matters. For the very religious among them, God, Allah has willed it so. It is foolhardy to try to change the impossible. So Nigerians don’t often take to the streets in protest against oppression and injustice. They take solace in fate. But it is their unconventional behavior, their idiosyncrasy that marks them out as a peculiar people to be loved and hated at the same time, to be avoided or ignored.

It is therefore not a lie to affirm that Nigerians are the ‘happiest’ people on earth compared to the wealthiest people of the developed countries – Black, White and Brown. This also confirms the saying that affluence and possession of life’s goodies may after all not count as sources of happiness. In their poverty and deprivation, Nigerians hold tenaciously and religiously to their faith and trust in God that whatever the case things will be better tomorrow. Frustrations, misfortunes, disappointments in life that lead other peoples of the world to commit suicide can never be part of the lot of Nigerians. But does their permissive lifestyle or lack of concern at what happens across the streets really rate them high among their neighbors and other nations? That is the question.

The lamentation continues.

45. It is **Only in Nigeria** that itinerant evangelism is 'permitted' in public mass transport vehicles and these religious charlatans molest and defraud innocent passengers with their sweet-tongued hot gospel of salvation and prosperity. **Elsewhere**, no religious preacher no matter how fanatical can venture it. He will be arrested for constituting a public nuisance.

46. It is only in Nigeria that the modern evangelists preach religion in public TVs and Radios. Tune and try over six locatable TV channels in Nigeria and discover that all the channels have been taken over by religious charlatans. **Elsewhere** religious stuffs are aired in private TV channels and there are not many of such channels.

47. It is **only in Nigeria** that evangelism (in form of churches, religious services, prophets and prophetism, pastors and healers, itinerant preachers and end-of-time gospel crusaders) occupy an incredible position and receive great attention, yet Nigeria is known to be the most corrupt nation! Such a paradox does not exist **elsewhere**.

48. It is **only in Nigeria** that War against Indiscipline (**WAI**) has been fought and totally lost. **Elsewhere** governments, and private agencies, including churches and various schools of thought report improvements in behavior of people and changes for the better are recorded everywhere. **NOT** in Nigeria. The Nigerian situation continues to worsen. Indiscipline continues to multiply by leaps and bounds as new cases are born or discovered and they take deeper roots everyday and everywhere, in every nook and cranny of the society.

49. It is **only in Nigeria** that the Trade Union Organizations, like - **NUT** (a.k.a. '**UNION OF TEACHERS**') ferociously wage war against true 'democratization' of education in their country and hence oppose the participation of private agencies in public education. Their primary motive is selfishness and inordinate personal aggrandizement. No wonder then Nigeria is reaping what she sows - slip back into illiteracy and Dark Ages. **Elsewhere**, such unions advocate freedom of choice by parents and communities. The Namibian Union of Teachers (**N.U.T.**) in South West Africa, Ghanaian Union of Teachers (**G.U.T.**), American Union of Teachers, (**A.U.T.**) and their counterparts in developed, developing and even under-developed countries send Memos to their various governments to beckon private agencies to help out in running public schools. In Nigeria, the reverse is the case. The **N.U.T.** fights hard to kill education in Nigeria. They say the government authorities are afraid of **N.U.T.** and so the authorities watch the deteriorating situation helplessly!

50. It is **only in Nigeria** that the best candidates fail in tests and interviews organized to select the **best** and **experts** in any field of endeavor. Ignoramuses are preferred. **Elsewhere** the best minds are chosen and imbeciles rejected.

51. It is **only in Nigeria** that **Poverty Alleviation Programs** (meant to help the poor, the needy, and the unemployed) are geared towards the impoverishment of the under-privileged in society. Only the rich gain from the projects. They share the booty and the poor go empty-handed. The Scripture has it right: *"Those who have will receive more and those who have not will have even the little they possess removed from them and given to those whose barns are full* (see Everyday Bible for the common man). **Elsewhere** the poor really benefit from such programs and projects.

52. **Only in Nigeria** one discovers that a "**rolling stone gathers moss.**" A Nigerian secondary school student can change schools at least four times each year. He may change from technical school to commercial school; and then to grammar school, and further more to a comprehensive secondary college. Within six years the student has equally 'changed' subjects. At a "Miracle School" or Center where he finally settles down for WASSC, NECO, GCE and JAMB examinations, he comes out of school in flying colors. **Elsewhere**, the truth stands out - "**a rolling stone gathers no moss.**" This simply means that **a person who never settles in one place will never be successful.** No principal, manager of a school will accept a candidate who does not present testimonials and results of subjects done in former school(s).

53. Only in Nigeria is the adage "**Time is Money**" given only a lip service. Go to any Nigerian **bank** and verify. Only in Nigeria do bank customers receive shabby treatments. Whether a customer is depositing or withdrawing money, he must spend at least half the day before receiving attention. Customers don't even complain or boycott the bank. **Elsewhere** customers are well treated and are given on-the-spot attention by awaiting friendly attendants and bank workers. Any report of ill treatment of customers or inappropriate behavior on part of bank-workers is a serious matter. Such workers receive immediate dismissal notice. **NOT** in Nigeria! In Nigeria such irresponsible bank workers are promoted to higher offices or grades for poor public work ethics and arrogance.

54. Nigeria has the largest number of **asylum-seekers**, as well as other groups of '**refugees**' (pardon me, citizens in search of greener pastures) all over the world even though no war is going on in their country, no serious drought, famine or any natural disaster reported; except the '**man-made**' ones. **Elsewhere** people flee their communities and countries in the face of danger. Immediately the 'state of emergency' is over, they return to their fatherland. Not Nigerians. They see the dangers facing them as perpetual and intractable. So wherever they find refuge they settle down there for life. They return to the discredited fatherland later and collect their families and belongings and settle in foreign lands for good and forever. Who will blame them?

55. Only in Nigeria are workers retrenched, sacked or retired for obvious or whatever reasons. But such dismissed workers may be quickly reabsorbed, immediately they 'settle', that is giving a bribe to a labor-employment official. **Elsewhere** such scenarios are rare and strange.

56. Only Nigeria is a rich oil-nation whose majority of citizens are among the poorest in the world. Otherwise why do her best minds, young men and women - able-bodied and weaklings - flee the land in search of greener pastures? Those who settle somewhere but still feel uncomfortable and unsatisfied are ready to leave for any other place except the country called Nigeria. **Elsewhere** citizens of rich oil nations swim in abundance of prosperity and enjoy great privileges which non-oil-producing nations do not enjoy.

57. Only in Nigeria is sexual harassment of female students by lecturers and teachers, and other officials in our institutions of learning **not** a punishable offence. To stay peaceful in the university, study and pass exams, female students must pay either in **cash or kind**. **Elsewhere**, sexual harassment of any kind is a serious offence for which convicted offenders receive heavy punishment. Not in Nigeria! You are free to treat students anyhow. They are at your mercy. If they resent your unkind approaches, punish them, hate them, and fail them in exams. Ruin their life in any way possible. **Elsewhere**, people still remember that a president of a rich nation nearly lost his job by just embracing a girl in public! That celebrated saga is a tough reminder of the seriousness of this evil called sexual harassment for those who care.

58. Only in Nigeria does **one-way-traffic-sign** mean nothing to motorists. To observe this simple traffic regulation, it requires people in-charge to set up an enormous task force of special police squad to enforce the traffic rule meant to ease traffic flow in any civilized society. **ELSEWHERE**, motorists observe all traffic signs, one-way or two-way with pleasure. But in cases where drunkards or lunatics break the rule they receive **red card** and heavy fines.

59. Only in Nigeria does **qualification** or **experience** play little or no role in political appointment of ministers and officials. It is a common feature in Nigeria to find a former **businessman** (importer and exporter of merchandise), with only a G.C.E certificate head the **Ministry of Science and Technology**; while a **Lawyer** becomes the **Minister of Education**. It does not matter if the former '**political stalwart**' (his only academic qualification) heads **Mines and Power Ministry**. What does it matter if the former '**running-mate**' (disappointed at the polls - his only qualification and wealth of experience), is settled with the **Minister of Finance and Economic Planning**? Who cares if the former **Minister of Tourism** is asked to take up the **Ministry of Health**? Perhaps the **Ministry of Research and Production** can go to a **Retired Army Officer or Police**. What of the numerous **ADVISERS** who will help the Commander-in-Chief articulate his government's programs and policies? Don't worry, my friend. Anybody can advise the president, governor and his ministers. **Age or qualification or experience** plays no role in the Nigerian political dispensation. This is why all is well with us here in Nigeria. **Elsewhere** the best brains are selected, experienced politicians are called upon to join hands, the Curriculum Vitae (CV) and past records of would-be ministers and advisers are thoroughly scrutinized. "The appointed minister had been doing that kind of job for many years!"

CHAPTER 4

60. FAIR IS FOUL, FOUL IS FAIR

In the country called Nigeria things are usually turned upside-down. But few people notice them or are aware of this quagmire. Many accept the situation as normal and a simple way of life. It is NOT really so. We have come to live with this sticky situation. It is in fact a great predicament, a great dilemma.

"WITH MONEY EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE"

"With God everything is possible" is a very familiar Biblical quotation. [Cf. Luke 18.27; Mt 19.26; Mk 9.23]. For many believers - Christians and non-Christians, including Moslems the dictum is a 'fait accompli'. The Almighty God, the Father of the universe, the Alpha and Omega, The Infinite Being is the most powerful God. One finds final succor in Him. For those who trust in Him everything is possible. Money is of cause good. But excessive trust in it is the problem. Hence the **warning** from an unknown author:

“Use of this product (money) may cause apathy, laziness, selfishness, ignorance, loss of identity, greed, gluttony, a false sense of empowerment, absence of individuality, self-centeredness, manipulative behavior, superficial values, lack of spirituality, environmental destruction, racial tension, murder, war and impoverishment of others. Excessive and continuous use could render a permanent state of indifference to the welfare of those around you. Use at your own risk!”

It may not truly be **only in Nigeria** that God is pushed aside by a majority of believers and non-believers and is replaced with that commodity that Christ Himself warned that corrupts and equated it to **mammon**, namely the god of greed; wealth, also regarded as an evil influence. That is money! But it is particularly only in Nigeria that the following apothegm is true “with money everything is possible.” It is not a fairy tale. Nigerians firmly believe that money resolves all their problems. In other words one can conclude without any atom of fear of contradiction that Nigerians have replaced God with Money. Money is their God and the following slogan confirms it: "It will only take money." [In Igbo - 'The oga ewe bu ego!'] To most people all over the world, a problem that constitutes a stumbling block to one's aspirations, to one's yearnings may after all be abandoned. There is no way out! Not to Nigerians! A solution can be in sight if one had the money.

"It will only cost money," is another way of asserting that the impossible becomes possible in Nigeria. So, no matter how difficult the task is - be it

spiritual or moral, physical or psychological, medical or religious - if money is available, the solution is easy! Money can resolve every dilemma, worries that give one sleepless nights. This nightmare that can block one's way to greatness can be removed with money and the sky becomes the ambitious man's limit!

It is all possible with money! There is no need to summon courage to achieve a difficult task, no sweat, no efforts. Money can work the miracle. This money can buy it - whatever it is - getting rid of a mortal enemy, snatching the poor neighbor's land, winning a court case, fighting an alleged court case over rigged election, passing any type of examination, displacing someone and taking up his post.

If you have eye on any political post, even the presidency, you do not need to worry about your qualifications, just get enough money and 'highjack' the desired post. You don't need to canvass for votes. With money, your victory at the polls is assured. With enough money distributed to the electoral officers - from top to bottom, including voters - begin celebrations for victory, even before results are announced! You want to become a professor, find enough money to go round the 'king makers' and you can grab the 'prestigious honor.' You are a Prof!

Even winning a football match, you only need to hand over a stipulated amount of money to a Nigerian referee and your team becomes victorious. Who should then wonder why Nigerians are never appointed judges, umpires, referees or even linesmen in international soccer competitions and other games! They are simply too desperate to accumulate wealth and of course too weak to resist the temptation.

What we are stating is only the obvious. But it gets most disturbing when it really becomes part of our lives - Pay and get what you want. We are all involved in this imbroglio. More than 95% of Nigerians do not know that they are corrupt or have been made corrupt by fellow citizens! Most of us without knowing it are daily caught in the web! You must understand it and that is why Nigeria, our fatherland has been declared "the most corrupt nation in the world." What is corruption after all? Oxford Dictionary tells us that "corrupt", as an adjective refers to persons, whose actions are immoral and depraved; dishonest, especially through taking, accepting or offering bribes." So we either take or accept or offer that tantalizing gold.

Look how they do it!

Consider the following stories:

(1) The students of one secondary school in Nigeria knew best how to deal with one **WASC** examiner, known to be very strict in the examination hall. The examiner always terrorized students, who hoped to pass their exams without tears. He always dealt severely with students caught in any form of examination malpractice. The boys however employed their wits. They contributed a large

sum of money and put it in an envelope. They wrote on the envelope: **“Sir this is just ‘kola’ for you. Have a nice time with us”**. Beaming with smiles when he opened the envelope, the examiner not only allowed the students indulge in any imaginable examination malpractice; he as well kept ‘vigil’ for the students and prevented any intruder or the so-called ‘flying examiners’ from approaching the school compound or the examination hall. Most of the students made ‘Alfa’ in the particular paper!

(2) A young First Holy Communion candidate of 12 failed the examination and was excluded from the list that would be making their First Communion soon. She wept loudly. The parish priest bluntly refused to pronote or allow her join those who succeeded. She went away and returned about an hour later and told the priest: "Father, I have brought some money. Can you take it, please and allow me make my First communion with my friends?"

(3) A young Nigerian of 30 got into trouble with white people overseas over his actual age. He needed a mended Birth Certificate desperately from his pastor at home. He phoned his brother in the village and instructed him to visit the parish priest whom he claimed was once his classmate in the seminary. Some Euro was placed in an envelope. And presenting the envelope, the brother assured the priest that it was just a gift - just **'bread'**, from his former classmate. The excited priest offered the visitor some drinks. Then came the request for a new Birth Certificate, as the original document has been lost!

(4) Another man had problems with the burial of his dead brother who lived at Lagos. A befitting burial was obviously not possible as the dead man had no **ID** card and had not been a wonderful practicing catholic. An idea came to the brother. He visited the parish priest whom he had not met since the priest was posted to that parish. After apologizing for not visiting him since he arrived in their community, he brought an envelope containing “just small bread or cola.” According to his story, he was a very close friend of the predecessor parish priest and used to support the priest with money and gifts.

The incumbent parish priest accepted the envelope and thanked the giver for his large heart. About to bid the generous visitor farewell, then came the request: If the priest could help bury the dead man with pomp and pageantry! Who says money does not solve all problems for Nigerians! The giver knows how to give and the receiver has no reason to refuse often the **Greek Gift**.

Nigeria won again! Not in the Olympics!

Once again Nigeria has won the notorious **first prize** of being the most corrupt nation in Africa and the whole world. As usual **Transparency International** awarded the **cup** to Nigerians. One Sunday during *Prayer of the Faithful* at Mass, someone prayed God to caution those Nigerians who have continued to

mess up our country with their nefarious and discredited activities to repent. I whispered silently to myself: "**Iso kwa**" (**You are also one of them!**).

Most of us are among those dragging the name of the country into the mud - christians and moslems, Non-believers and animists. How? When we accept money to cast our votes! When we stuff ballot boxes with fake ballot papers! When we collaborate with electoral officials in all their fraudulent activities! When we record **five thousand** votes at a polling booth with only **five hundred** registered! When we cheer the 'winners' even before ballot boxes are collected or counting of votes started! We are all corrupt then! And with so many millions graduating in fraudulent activities of every hue, why shouldn't we be rated **NUMBER ONE** in crime?

A 'Dash', a Bribe

Some sympathizers may claim that Nigeria is making progress towards eradicating bribery and corruption in the past few years. But read **TIME MAGAZINE** (Sept 8th 2008, P. 63/64 or Global 5/6). It writes: "But if you want to get things done in Lagos, it is often necessary to have a dash – a bribe ready. Paying bribes is part of the deal"

Surely rapid growth has added to a deeply rooted system of corruption that penetrates nearly every aspect of society in Nigeria and hobbles attempts at improving infrastructure. The corruption means billion-dollar electricity projects are left half done, so most of the city runs on expensive diesel-powered generators. It also means new hotel projects are left as empty shells, devoid of activity, so room rates at existing hotels are exorbitant. But business goes on.

Shylock landlords take pounds of flesh from poor Nigerians. Greed is at the root of their devise to extort money from people. Writes **TIME MAGAZINE**: "This has led to skyrocketing land prices. Rents can exceed 5000 dollars a month, and tenants must pay at least two or three years' rent in advance.....This is the only country, where you can make 25% interest on your investment in one year. Not many countries will give you that." (ibid.) If Nigeria still stands out as most expensive and corrupt nation, we have still reason to worry about the future.

Nigerians are 'experts'

If it were in Nigeria, John Kerry, the then challenger of George W. Bush, the incumbent President in the 2004 elections could have won with a landslide victory! Poor John Kerry, Poor Democrats! They did not consult Nigerian experts in election rigging? If Kerry or his collaborators or representatives had consulted Nigerians they could have won. They did not consult or hire those who know 'How to do it! The Democrats could have won the state of Ohio, which was decisive in the final results.

Kerry could have been declared victorious even before the counting of the votes began. Americans are not smart people. They claim to be the greatest

in everything. But alas! They don't know that greater people, more intelligent, smarter and sophisticated can be found in the third world, precisely in a poor country called Nigeria! And the Democrats lost and lost heavily! I have little or no sympathy for them, for failing to do their homework well.

The mammon of iniquity

In Nigeria money has become the most powerful weapon of destruction and oppression. One often hears the boastful utterances of the great possessor of money addressing his sworn enemy **"If you don't take care I remove the breath from your soul."** In Igbo: "M were ego mefuo gi." Again it will only cost money and nothing else to get rid of someone. No physical strength is required to accomplish this task. Money can do it.

In practice these threats are carried out daily in no unmistakable terms in the lives of many Nigerians and in very familiar scenarios. At police checkpoints or their toll-gates, motorists must pay their 'tithes' or face the consequences. Many have been gunned down as they failed to settle their 'debts' quickly and appropriately. Under rain and sun, darkness and moonlight, one must settle some unusual debts regularly, times without number; each time one passes a security check point. It has become worse now that the tax or tithe has gone up from the hitherto minimum sum of twenty naira to fifty naira. Multiple motor accidents costing hundreds of Nigerian lives take place on our roads regularly. For instance, some Okada people who try to flee the tollgates are mortally injured at checkpoints mounted by either police or Road Safety Commission toll collectors.

Money is the idol we worship and few people can resist it. Examiners, supervisors, invigilators, and teachers negotiate with students for a nice pay during examinations – internal and external. Then students are free to do funny things in the examination hall. No doubt after national examinations in Nigeria most supervisors and those who employed them smile broadly over the big 'catch'. Some purchase new cars while others spend extravagantly from their loot. Supervision in national external examination has therefore become a lucrative business through which school masters enrich themselves. Like clearing agents at Nigerian ports they make fortune out of their paid national duties.

Inspectors of education – men and women - are rich guys. They make a fortune out of school inspections and approval visits. From scratch to finish communities and agencies that embark on building of new schools must pay heavily for each inspection and approval by government inspectors of education. Even where in normal circumstances a school fails the approval tests and inspections, proprietors would not need to worry. Money can resolve problems and behold approval is quickly granted by the Ministry of education

after the proper payment has been made to the agents. Who says money can't resolve all problems in Nigeria?

In Nigeria one finds all sorts of quack and way-side schools – nursery to secondary - which operate in unhealthy private quarters and environments. Most of them have no fields or recreational grounds, no toilet facilities or classrooms. Yet these schools have received hundred per cent approval from the Ministry of education. Proprietors and operators of such schools are ready to produce letters of approval from the ministry. If such papers are not quick to come by, the sign boards inform any doubting Thomas that the shacks and the uncompleted bungalows around are school buildings and no doubt **“Government Approved!”**

A simple conclusion is possible; those who give and receive commit sin. Consider the number involved and the many fraudulent ways of giving and receiving this **mammon**, it becomes impossible to dispute the allegation that Nigeria is the most corrupt nation in the world. Who carries the blame? Government? Civil servants? Not just a few. These may be the ringleaders. But the actual fact is we are **Legion!** Men and women are all involved in one way or the other.

In money we trust

For some Nigerians, known locally as “Money Bags”, money is their shepherd. This mammon of iniquity, the devil is their shepherd and that is what they worship. One well-known extraordinarily wealthy Nigerian politician was quoted as acknowledging the devil as his grand master who answered his prayers when God, the Creator, the Almighty, acknowledged by most people all over the world to be the most supreme of all gods and idols failed to answer his prayers to get rich quickly. Hear what he told journalists: “I prayed to God for many years and he refused to answer me. I prayed to the Devil and he gave me wealth”.

This man is said to swim in wealth. He lacks nothing, and seeks political power which he hopes to purchase in the near future with his money. Perhaps the only thing he lacks is the Wisdom of Solomon, which may guide him to spend his money well. But he may need to read the psalm 48(49):

In his riches, man lacks wisdom; he is like the beasts that are destroyed..... This is the lot of those who trust in themselves, who have others at their beck and call. Like sheep they are driven to the grave, where death shall be heir shepherd. Then do not fear when a man grows rich, when the glory of his house increases. He takes nothing with him when he dies, his glory does not follow him below....In his riches man lacks wisdom: he is like the beasts that are destroyed

Money and “Men of God”.

Most Christians can recite the popular psalm 22(23) “The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.....Fresh and green are the pastures where he gives me repose....Have some Nigerians, including the “Men of God” replaced the title of the popular psalm with “Money is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want....?” If true, that is unfortunate.

Because money is conceived as the basic source of evil and conflicts”, “Mammon of iniquity”, many religious organizations require their ministers to take the vow of poverty. Some include the vows of obedience and chastity because the three seem to relate. Men of God, including women religious in various christian churches, including the new psychedelic church movements and assemblies blossoming all over the world, including Nigeria are expected by their superiors and grand masters to abstain from excessive love of money.

The old adage “amor habendi, habendo crescit” (The love of having, increases by having) reminds us all how addictive, enchanting, fascinating, enticing, admirable, and captivating money can be. The possession of one car, leads to an accumulation of many more, in sizes and sophistication. One family house may not be enough! Since the money is there buy more land and build many more houses. You can rent some out and become a land-lord. Build higher prison walls and stronger fences for security. Build swimming pools and fisheries even though you can neither swim nor fish. Money lures us to greater ambitions and goals, good and bad.

But, if we may ask, “is the war against this evil in Nigeria yielding good result?” The answer is No. The truth is that most of the founders of new religious movements in Nigeria today have the accumulation of wealth and power as their primary motive. They establish churches, evangelization and healing missions mainly to accumulate wealth. Some ministers and priests of the mainline Christian churches (Catholic, Anglican, Baptist etc.), have joined the Pentecostalism bandwagon of grand healing ministries that attract those in great need. Many Rev. Gentlemen have established new ‘religious ministries’ only because these seem to be fashionable and as well likely to be profitable. Members and followers flock ‘Adoration centers’ where miraculous events are said to happen. A lot of money is usually given as offering or tithes. Prophet Ezekiel has scathing words for these pastors and prophets who preach prosperity and wellbeing when all is not well with the fatherland:

These foolish prophets are doomed! They provide their own inspiration and invent their own visions. “People of Israel, your prophets are as useless as foxes living among the ruins of the city”They claim they are speaking my message. But I have not sent them. Yet they expect their words to come true....The prophets mislead my people by saying that all is well. All is certainly not well...(Ezk:13.3ff)

What about the religious leaders and superiors of the mainline churches? Have they succeeded in the war against materialism, greed and corruption among their ministers and priests? Unfortunately most honest observers accuse the leaders of the newly founded churches, assemblies and ministries in Nigeria of not joining in the world-wide crusade against materialism and bad political leadership. Most of the pastors spend time in running crusades to make money. Their gospel is that of “prosperity” and search for membership that helps to fatten the pastors’ purses and collection boxes. Surely Prophet Ezekiel had these pastors and gospel preachers in mind when he lamented:

The government officials are like wolves tearing apart the animals they have killed. They commit murder in order to get rich. The prophets have hidden these sins like men covering a wall with whitewash. They see false visions and make false predictions. They claim to speak the word of the Sovereign Lord, but I, the Lord have not spoken to them (Ezk: 22.27ff)

In Nigeria the concept of service and poverty has been thrown to the winds. Like the “People of the world” and prophets of the old the “men of God” have abandoned their vocation and lack wisdom. The two following stories summarize the attitude of Nigerian masses and their pastors with regard to material wealth, simplicity and arrogance.

An elderly priest rejects a car presented by parishioners.

This fascinating incident took place many years ago when a Peugeot car, 504 was the grand master of all cars in Nigeria and the following true story illustrates our dilemma. A priest from one of the Catholic dioceses of Nigeria returned from studies overseas. Widely known in his diocese and beyond for his simplicity, there was no doubt that his eight-year sojourn in Europe and America helped his growth in the rare virtues of humility and simplicity.

He saw how white people, especially the clergy, the religious and other “Men of God” practiced the virtue of simplicity, poverty and humility even in the midst of plenty. In the land of the Whites, most of their highly placed ministers, including bishops and politicians are usually satisfied with just a simple and inexpensive car. They rarely kept more than two cars in their garages. Most of these ministers have no drivers. They drive themselves and even wash their cars. They have few house keepers. They mingle with the common people in society. In public gatherings they join the queue for food and drinks. Even where special tables are set for them, they often prefer dinning with the common people.

Our humble and virtuous Nigerian priest who caused hue and cry in his parish after he returned from overseas, observed like some other Nigerian priests who cared that even bishops in Europe and America were never accompanied by grand entourages to pastoral visits. The bishops carried their miter and crosier themselves and were never served by altar boys, a.k.a 'page boys'. Those 'foreign' bishops never cared about gun shots during pastoral visits, to salute their arrivals and departures. Our 'revolutionary' priest meant to put all he saw overseas into practice when he returned to fatherland Nigeria.

The virtuous priest gets into trouble

In fact, back home from Europe, the first commotion humble priest caused was the rejection of the offer by his bishop to teach in any Nigerian university since he collected a lot of doctorate degrees and diploma certificates from overseas universities. He preferred a simple parish assignment in a rural surrounding like the renowned humble French priest and mentor Saint John Mary Vianney (d. 1859). The Nigerian priest wanted to help his people. He wanted a simple lifestyle. His bishop did oblige him. He became the parish priest of a small rural and agricultural community in one of the poorest dioceses of Nigeria.

At a 'Welcome' ceremony organized by the parishioners, the parish priest rejected a brand new Peugeot car bought by the people. He was not pleased and wondered how such poor people were able to raise money for such a car. He told them he was happy with the old Volkswagen which his predecessor left behind. He would get it repaired. But some of the people thought he would even require a higher grade of the latest car in Nigeria. The Peugeot was their 'widow's mite!'

No! It all backfired. The people felt humiliated and would report, in fact write a petition to the bishop. They could not accommodate such a priest who 'insulted' them. His action was 'un-Nigerian'. He must explain to the people why they should be seen by their neighbors as the poorest in that ecclesiastical circumscription! As far as the people (and most Nigerians) were concerned, humility or simplicity is not a virtue to reckon with. In Nigeria the converse, the reverse, is true! Sorry! Poor 'revolutionary and virtuous Man of God!' He thought he would be hailed by the people, Church authorities and fellow clergymen for his heroic action. No. He was disappointed. Not in Nigeria would a humble man be hailed!

Whatever the case, most people of the world, including many in Nigeria would have liked the story to be repeated everywhere. There will be a gratifying, in fact heartwarming lesson to learn from it always. People would like such a priest to be posted to their communities. He rejected what was due to him for a more honorable and lasting gift, the Kingdom of God. This is a better version of the story to recount. And Christ made it clear to all those who seriously embrace this religious vocation:

“You can be sure that when the son of man sits on his glorious throne, then you followers of mine will also sit on the thrones...And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake, will receive a hundred times more and will be given eternal life. But many who now are first will be last, and many who now are last will be first.” (Mt. 19:28ff)

What is honor?

What would have sounded honorable, inspiring, acceptable and exciting everywhere, (except in Nigeria) is that someone rejects a well-deserved gift in humility. It could be anyone. A government minister, a president of nation, a highly-placed church minister, the pope, a bishop, a parish priest or an Islamic religious leader. What are his reasons for rejecting a gift or even monthly salaries and remunerations? One would hear the one being honored exclaim: **“Thank you, thank you. I thank you so much for the honor being bestowed on me. I am humbled by this gesture. But please, I do not need to upset you if I tell you to direct this gift to the less privileged in society...Thank you please for your generosity....”**

Young priest rejects a car at his ordination: Money center of controversy

There is nothing particularly strange about the caption “A young priest rejects a car”. In any part of the world, among various peoples of our world, one is free to reject an offer or a gift. What can really attract readers’ or listeners’ attention in such a story, like the one above, should be the circumstances surrounding ‘a rejection of a gift’. This is why this part of our write-up may interest a lot of people. Our story sounds a bit ridiculous or scandalous and many may easily draw sad conclusions from the story. It is not honorable. It is simply intolerable!

“A young priest rejects a car at his ordination!” Elsewhere it would sound like a joke, a child’s play. But not in Nigeria! No! For those who know the place called Nigeria and its people well, this story can’t be funny and embarrassing. It was a drama played by a newly ordained young man who presumably spent at least 15 years learning to become a Catholic priest in a seminary or religious community. He belongs to a religious congregation. He would not accept the car given to him by his people at his ordination. The gift was ceremoniously presented to him after his first mass during the usual reception. In fact he threatened to set the car ablaze if anybody returned it to his village home.

He shocked his parish priest, the bishop, his superior general, his fellow religious by insisting that the car bought for him was either old (tokumbo) or

according to expert mechanics he claimed he consulted, the car would be costly to maintain. He demanded a brand new Toyota Camry, or Mercedes Benz Classic or Sequoia Land Cruiser Jeep. And to convince people he was not kidding anyone, he returned the vehicle's papers together with the keys. He was 100% convinced that some people, including the parish priest and parish counselors had duped him or misused or embezzled the over 2.5 million naira(!) he claimed his people had contributed to purchase a new brand car for him.

The young priest did not say "Thank you" to the people who contributed to the success of his ordination. Rather he poured abuses on everyone and accused the ordination committee of "sabotaging" his ordination and disappointing his visitors. A catalogue of sins committed by the parish priest and parishioners included the following: The parishioners did not spray money on him as he took on the royal priestly dance. He was not given enough cash for his personal needs. A cash of about 200,000 naira was for him a chicken feed. He complained that his visitors were not sumptuously fed. Large sums of money spent by various committees to make his ordination grand did not meet the goals for which he set out for the priestly venture. He cursed everybody and wished that "all those who let him down should die of heart attack!"

Naturally many questions were to be addressed to the young priest by every shocked parishioner and Catholic, far and wide. "Is that why you decided to embrace the priestly vocation? Why are you so ungrateful? Why not accept the "junk car" and throw it away later? By the way who owes you a dime?"

Then people remembered the bible story of the "Talents", about servant who hid the master's talent. (Matthew 25:15) He have it back to the master he described as wicked. But over to the master's reply:

Evil and lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I didn't sow and gather where I didn't scatter? Then you should have deposited my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received my money back with interest! Therefore take the talent from him and give it to the one who has ten. For the one who has will be given more, and he will have more than enough. But the one who does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. And throw that worthless servant into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

The long story must be cut short here. The report of this drama eventually reached the new priest's superiors and authorities. Another car was purchased and handed over to the guy. It seemed he won the battle!

Dear readers, this should not shock you. This is Nigeria. We are at least sure that this type of thing can never happen elsewhere. It can take place **only in**

Nigeria and nowhere else. It is almost impossible to contradict anyone who maintains that Nigeria is a strange place. Most of her people act strangely too.

Why does a young man or woman embrace a religious vocation? The answer is contained in a simple Catechism of the Church and is known by everyone. To be Christ-like. He is another Christ (Alter Christus). Go and find out what Christ represents for humanity, believers and non-believers.

One thing is clear from this saga. **Money**, the root of all evil, is at the center stage of the controversy. Often a chain of evils this mammon of iniquity generates can be deadly and enduring, the scars generated during the aggressive exchange of punches, indelible and unforgettable.

Gratitude breeds love and showers more blessings

“Emezie Nwanyi Akidi, Ya gwota Ozo”, is well known Igbo adage. It is a commonsense attitude which a receiver must always assume. Whether the gift you receive out of love matches your expectations or not, simply accept it with humility and shown an appreciation, even an ‘hypocritical’ one. Say you appreciate it. Say it is the best gift you have ever received in your life from anyone. Later you can throw the “rubbish” away, into a rubbish dump or a thrash bin.

Often a poor receiver goes extra mile in showing gratitude. A poor widow gives back in return what little thing she has. It can be a little basket of fruits and vegetables (a ‘widow’s mite). Surely the benefactor will never fail to increase his benevolence where there is need.

White people and surely many benefactors all over the world expect appreciation from a receiver, at least verbally. But try and show ingratitude to a white person, then know that your friendship with him and the family has been ruined. Even if the food you have been served tasted bitter and “poisonous”, commonsense and humility must bend you to confess that the food was the best you had taken in your life!

Greed and Avarice

The two related distasteful words, greed and avarice, have the simple Igbo language expression “**Anyaukwu**”. **Anyaukwu** (‘big eye’) points to every evil associated with theft, materialism, covetousness, acquisitiveness and even murder. The greedy fellow always has his eye on the biggest share of property or booty. The spirit of acquisition in the greedy person pushes him to acquire more and more. He rarely gives out or away even the excess he has; hence a greedy fellow is never generous. The antonym is generosity.

We don't need to over flog this commonsense attitude. To both the giver and the receiver, I believe with the Ancients that "a word is enough for the wise." Look at what the Preacher says:

Here is a terrible thing I have seen in this world: people save up their money for a time when they may need it, and then lose it all in some unlucky deal and end up with nothing. We leave this world, just as we entered it, with nothing. In spite of all our work there is nothing we can take with us. We go just as we came. (Eccle: 5.13ff)

CHAPTER 5

61. A STITCH IN TIME SAVES NINE

Those who write about the peoples of Nigeria say Nigerians exhibit carefree attitude in various aspects of life and in fact in great measure. One unmistakable area is their attitude to what they describe as ‘Government Property’, which for them belongs to nobody.

"A stitch in time saves nine". This is an elementary adage, figurative expression giving a directive on a line of action, a common sense behavior that would yield a bountiful result. "If we give attention to the little details of life, in the long run we will save ourselves considerable amount of time, worries and expenses". It tells you to repair that damage soon before the whole structure is ruined. You save yourself a lot of heartache, time and of course money. The Igbo have a similar expression: **"Emee osiso (ngwa ngwa) emeghara odachi."** "If you hurry up, quick in action, misfortune may not come your way".

"Promptness saves a lot of trouble". The Igbo adage puts the same call for quick action in another way: **"Choba egbu oji na ehihe..."** Begin in time - precisely in the daytime - to look for a lost black goat. If you wait until the nightfall the goat may blend with darkness and you may not find it any more. The Americans are always quick to say that 'time is money,' emphasizing a similar point. The amount of time devoted to business dictates the amount of revenue or reward one gets from the venture. Loss of time is equally loss of revenue.

Elsewhere, in most developed and developing countries, people, governments, communities, are companies are ever-ready to repair their roads, patch-up the pot-holes, repaint their signboards, remove debris that block the smooth flow of traffic. Electric bulbs serving public lighting systems, for example streetlights and traffic lights are immediately changed as soon as any passer-by, a good citizen observes a malfunction. Those concerned repair the damage in matter of time. Hurricane causes a lot of havoc, fallen trees bring down electric poles and wires, repairs are made without loss of time. A heavy truck collides with another vehicle; both are removed in a matter of time. Ambulances wail and remove injured passengers and motorists to hospitals in a matter of time. Hundreds of lives are saved.

Elsewhere, in most developed and developing countries, which we like to visit, or settle there permanently, countries and peoples we like their lifestyle do not wait for their roads to go bad before repairs are done. The roads are usually re-surfaced months before they develop cracks or holes. In these countries buildings are repaired before they show signs of old age. In some cases such decaying structures are pulled down completely and new ones put up in their places.

The above cautious and rewarding ways of doing things are not valued in the place called Nigeria! Very few people care. Even security officers and traffic wardens arrive at the scene of serious accidents many hours if not days, and only after the dead accident victims must have been deposited in the mortuary or even buried. Who cares about the crashed vehicles? The debris can remain there for weeks if not months. Other Nigerian motorists just find a diversion and continue their journey. There are few “Good Samaritans” in Nigeria. For most Nigerians the **Red Cross** is a foreign charitable organization that has not much to do with the indigenes. No one cares to save life!

Who cares to patch up the small pot holes on the major roads? It does not matter the amount of money it takes in the next few years when mighty gully erosion must have eaten up the near-by villages, when the disaster area has been turned into tourist centers for any visiting government minister or an aspiring political and community leader. The project now valued at millions of naira if not billions could have cost a few thousand naira to repair! Government must look for contractors who will repair the roads - a way of lavishing our diminishing resources. Who says that a stitch in time saves nine makes any meaning to Nigerians? A serious joke, indeed!

Buildings and Structures

Visit Nigerian school, college or university buildings and structures. What a sorry sight! You find leaking roofs, broken doors and windows. In most cases the structures can simply be described as dilapidated (broken-down, decaying, battered), not because of old age or overuse, but simply out of neglect. Nobody cares.

There is general apathy towards care of anything ‘government’ or ‘public’. Public water facilities, public toilets, government owned things - energy facilities. The authorities that are responsible for generating power and water in Nigeria are typical examples. Since the ‘privatization’ of public mass transit system in Nigeria, rarely does one find broken-down government vehicles on the roads. These ubiquitous mass transit vehicles are quickly removed from public eye immediately they break down and taken to mechanic workshop for repairs. Soon they are back on the road again. Unfortunately, any broken-down and abandoned vehicle lying on the road today must belong to government. I will not like to name the government departments that usually are responsible for these vehicles. You can check.

It is no more news to hear that thieves have vandalized **NEPA** or **PHC** lines, stolen transformers and looted the company’s workshops. No sooner the vandalized lines are repaired; one hears again that the same thieves and vandals are back on rampage. Every year many communities are affected by these NEPA tragedies. They remain without electricity for long periods of time. NEPA surely loses a lot of revenue!

It is unlikely that thieves or their allies would venture to vandalize phone lines or property belonging to the privately owned phone companies. Adequate care is taken of the companies' property by trusted agents and of course ordinary people who benefit from services rendered by these companies.

It may constitute an important homework for you and me to find out why people don't care for the welfare of government things. **Elsewhere** government hospitals and health clinics, postal services, roads, water facilities, energy facilities, schools, colleges and educational institutions are the best in every aspect - quality, output, and of course maintenance. Adequate funds are allocated to these institutions and they too must show results that must justify the extraordinary care and resources devoted to them. Not so in Nigeria. The case is simply a paradox.

Make hay while the sun shines

The adage “**A stitch in time saves nine**” has another side: “**Make hay while the sun shines**”. The obverse is **procrastination (pro - for, cras - tomorrow.)** Put the matter off till tomorrow. It will never be done eventually. This is a proverb, telling us to make the earliest use of opportunities God or nature has offered us. In cold regions of the world animal farmers must cut hay or grass and dry the stuff under the sun before winter sets in. The dried grass must be preserved for the animals to eat in winter before fresh grass can grow again. If an animal farmer fails to carry out this duty in time, he may have to pay through his nose to buy from other farmers.

The proverb asks any sensible fellow, worker of any type and grade to prepare in time for any venture one wants to embark upon. Do not wait until the last minute! It will cost you more or even a fortune if you wait until the last minute. In fact you will not meet up with those who started early enough to make preparations for any important venture.

Let us apply our adage to another familiar situation. **Elsewhere**, people, governments and institutions take time to plan their things. They want maximum results. So they sit down, plan, try, and experiment with little bits before stretching out the project. Take for example - to build a new city it is wise to take the development bit by bit. If you want to build a 100-kilometer road, take it bit by bit, taking note of the seasons of the year, time it will take to complete, and the amount of resources available. Build a diversion road.

Not in Nigeria! **Only in Nigeria** is it possible to plan the construction of 1000-kilometer dual-carriage motor express way and dream of completing it within three months. It is possible to pay compensation to all the people whose houses or property would be demolished on the way, and of course begin the construction at the middle of rainy season! What a mess! After the contractors had pulled down some trees and scratched the roads, the project is abandoned.

No! Nigerians think that white people who possess all the necessary equipment are foolish when they undertake just a 25-kilometer piece of the road project during the first quarter. Even under any sign of clement weather they put on mobile generators and work in shifts throughout nights. Not Nigerians. Nigerians in the first place do not plan their work.

Not even a faint idea of an estimated cost of quantity of stuffs needed is known. It is not unusual to find out that the amount of bitumen ready for the job may not go half way. Perhaps only half of the road, just half from the middle is done! The rest of the construction is abandoned forever! Watch well when you ply Nigerian roads! Worse still, whenever the contractors decide to do the work, they usually begin at the wrong time and season. For example, Nigerian engineers and authorities award contracts for the construction of bridges, gutters and culverts during the rainy season.

Olympic Games and world cup

Truly many developed and developing countries under the sun take note of this clarion call for caution and readiness. Years before the date of an international event - take for example, Olympic Games or World Cup, these other nations have started making preparations. They select their officials, teams and athletes. They begin in time to practice the arts and perfect in them. They spend time under heat and rain and practice to win the **gold, silver and bronze**. They travel to other nations and arrange football matches and athletic competitions with likely opponents. No wonder these wonderful people collect all the gold, silver and bronze and equally the coveted world cup trophy.

Not in Nigeria. Definitely not Nigerians! Nigerians do not make hay while the sun shines nor do they look before they leap. They normally wait till the last minute. No wonder our athletes usually return with nothing from the Olympic Jamborees. Nigerians select their officials and players and athletes a few weeks if not days before such events begin. The ministry of finance may release funds for the Olympic Games and World Cup a day or two before the opening of the world events. Some key players and officials may drop out really out of frustration! How can we compete with the world titans who come from well-organized societies and win? It is simply a crazy dream.

They say that Nigerian things and institutions are usually substandard in nature because Nigerians do not believe in adequate preparation or qualification. No time is devoted to intensive training for any office or business. Nigerians need a world class football, handball, basketball, netball pitch and of course other paraphernalia if she is to qualify to host the world event. When do we begin to prepare, award contracts for the event? Definitely not 'while the sun shines'!

People do not plant grass in dry season. Not Nigerians! Authorities prefer to begin cutting out lawns and planting grass a few months if not weeks to an

event that takes place in dry season. We need to hurry up. And to hit the deadline authorities and contractors import everything for the desired pitch of 'international standard' from overseas. Everything is imported - name them - German carpet grass, sand, concrete, cement and even water! Surely all the white workers are imported, including the drivers, cooks and other attendants. To meet the deadline, we begin late after getting up from our slumber. We limp and crawl, jump and run to become the first. Then we crash, bruised and disappointed. How much time do we set out for preparations?

Who says that Nigerian young men and women can collect gold and silver medals like their counterparts in the United States, China and Germany? Who says that Nigerians cannot sprint, jump, swim, wrestle, box, judo, dance like their counterparts from Jamaica, Kenya, Canada, Ukraine, Lithuania and France? Don't most of the world famous basketball players in the USA come from Nigeria?

The problem is not that Nigerian youths are lazy to learn and adapt to new situations; surely they can surprise you if challenged. Definitely, some individual states in Nigeria, like Lagos, Imo, Edo, Rivers, Akwa Ibom, can singly and conveniently represent the nation called Nigeria and return with trophies like smaller countries of the former Soviet block that compete well with other big nations in international sports events. Nigerian youths are not dunces. Most of them excel in academics and win awards in primary schools, high schools, colleges and universities where they study overseas. At home in their fatherland, who motivates them and at what stage in human development does the state or non-government-organizations come in? That is the dilemma.

Wait until your supply runs out

This is the philosophy, which generally guides the business acumen of Nigerian economists and businessmen. There is no need to check your diminishing supply until it completely dries up. Surely this is bad business method. Nigerian importers of fuel and other oil products do not remember to place orders for new products until the stock they have is exhausted. It is finished! Then they put up notices for customers: "No fuel. No gas. No kerosene. No oil!" And one must wait for months before any other product can be available.

Nigerian oil engineers do not remember to service the refineries until the engines crash. And when the contractors must service the engines, they do all the twenty or thirty of them (no one knows how many we have) at the same time! Then begins the lamentation over scarcity of fuel products!

There is nothing like storage system in Nigeria. There is nothing like emergency stock. We finish all we have and wait till a new era of salvation arrives. **Elsewhere**, people, governments plan and store for the rainy day. It is no fairy tales. We are told that Americans and other peoples of developed and developing countries store huge quantities of fuel products for emergency.

Emergency can erupt in times of war, economic disaster that can make business world stand still as if a total eclipse of the sun had occurred. The Americans, they say check their products reserve almost daily and make sure that a steady quantity remains that can last for more than twenty years, in case any emergency erupts. Only under strict laws can the president of the country order a drop of the oil to flow out in order to counter the possible irreparable consequences of shortage. So the Americans are ever-ready to fight terrible disasters like earthquake, hurricanes, and of course wars. They buy and stockpile oil products and other important minerals when prices go down. A stitch in time saves nine. “Begin in time to look for the black goat, otherwise you lose sight of it when darkness sets in”, is an African adage. If you hasten up you avoid disaster, we are told!

FRUITS OF IMPRUDENCE: SQUANDER MANIA & RECKLESS SHOPPING SPREE

The importation mania

Nigerians squander the little resources they have. They know how to lavish resources. The reason behind the overspending is lack of good planning. Will this be a viable project? Are the resources there to complete it? What materials can be acquired locally and which should be imported? We prefer imported materials to those we have locally and which in some cases are better.

No! Nigerians generally do not think that such meticulous calculations are necessary. Economically Nigeria has gone down. No industry is working. It is an era of Tokunbo (used-material) trade. Importation of everything possible into the country is the flourishing business and they come from every part of the world. They include used cars, clothing, used towels, socks, stockings, belts and underwear, cooking utensils, cutlery, toys, shoes, computers, electronic gadgets, and accessories. One finds also in the shopping carts of Nigerians some basic needs we have even in abundance, namely fruits and drinks.

While all sorts of fruit trees grow in Nigeria, Nigerian importers flood our markets and streets with fruits and juices of every kind from all over the world. They come in plastic, and paper packages, in cans and bottles. Nigerians have appetite for foreign drinks and juices while our mangoes, oranges, guava, pawpaw, banana, cashew, pear and others with which Mother Nature has blessed Nigeria rot away in the bushes and pathways. No one thinks that any meaningful fruit business could flourish in our land.

Also imported are tooth picks, all sorts of greetings cards prepared in Asian countries and of course various items you find in overseas 'gift shops'. Of recent they have started flooding the Nigerian markets with all sorts of **magic healing stuffs**. These include many types of **Indian and Chinese** herbs, oils and medicaments that cure all diseases. One finds, too, (holy) olive oil, 'holy'

water from river **Jordan, Dead Sea, Tigris and Euphrates** in Iraq or any of the other Arabian rivers and seas. You find 'holy' black stones, mustard seeds and stuff from **Garden of Eden**. These are marketed in Nigeria today. And fake prophet healers and religious interlopers make a fortune from their business, as they serve superstitious communities of squander maniacs and 'shopolics.'

In most cases the things Nigerian importers of merchandise bring into the country are old scraps, used and thrown-away materials. They come from Asia, Europe and America and the Far East countries. Of late a lot of used things are arriving from some African countries which used to be poorer than Nigeria.

Nigerian young business adventurers import all sorts of materials from Gabon, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Cameroon and Senegal and even Chad. Importation of rubbish, even toxic wastes, obsolete, and harmful materials into Nigeria has been for a long time now the stock-in-trade of many Nigerians and their foreign allies.

SQUANDERING SCARCE RESOURCES ON USELESS PROJECTS

Environmental sanitation gadgets

In the early eighties the slogan was "**Environmental Sanitation.**" The minister for environment imported all sorts of gadgets, including waste disposal bins and heavy trucks to help dispose refuse quickly. Wonderful idea! After a short time the project died by suffocation and was quickly abandoned. As usual thieves removed what remained of the environmental sanitation machinery.

Mobile toilets

In the early sixties, Nigerian governments and businessmen squandered a lot of money in the importation of **mobile toilets** for use in our townships. They thought such gadgets would promote environmental sanitation. But alas there were no provisions for water and disposal of waste materials. They failed to import water and toilet rolls for the toilets. Not one of the mobile 'toilet kiosks' functioned for one day. Thieves carted away any useful accessories that arrived with the mobile toilets. No one stopped them or asked for accountability.

Festac 77 - Black African Festival of Arts and Culture.

First held in 1966 at [Dakar, Senegal](#), it was a fantastic idea to host this festival in Nigeria in 1977. As a result of the experiences that Africa had gone through, it became a matter of necessity for Africans, Africans in Diaspora and People of African origin to come together and rediscover their roots as well as establish ties with Motherland Africa. Festac 77 became a means to this desire.

Festac town, originally referred to as "Festival Town" or "Festac Village", is a residential estate designed to house the participants of the Second World Festival of Black Arts and Culture of 1977. Consisting of 5,000 contemporary dwelling units and seven major avenues, the town was designed to accommodate upwards of 45,000 visitors as well as any Nigerian employees and officers working at the Festival.

The Nigerian government invested substantial sums of money and resources into building Festac Town, which sported state of the art electrical generators, police and fire stations, access to public transportation, supermarkets, banks, health centres, public restrooms, and postal services. The village was therefore intended to evoke the modern age and the promise of state-sponsored economic development fuelled by oil revenues.

There is no doubt that billions of naira was squandered in this project and today the Festac village is simply a reminder of Nigeria's investment in futility.

Truly after the Festival, the Federal Government of Nigeria allocated the housing and landed properties to eventual winners who participated in a ballot. But mismanagement and corruption seemed to have won the day. For quite some time the majority of Nigerian computer scams have originated in the cyber cafes of Festac town. Many people who engage in "419" [advance fee fraud](#) are said to work out of Festac Town.

New technology equipment

In the late seventies and early eighties, technical education was high in the Ministry's program. A massive importation of obsolete **technical equipment** finely packaged in wooden crates of various sizes consumed hundreds of millions of naira. The 'donor' nations - Bulgaria, Hungary, and Poland made a fortune out of the deal. Surely Nigerian money boosted their sagging economy. But alas! The importers perhaps forgot to include electricity in their budget! After many years of abandonment and neglect these high tech equipment were stolen by thieves and no one cared about them.

Amputation machines for Islamic shari'a

The restoration of democracy in the early 2000 did not usher in an era of economic progress and prosperity. Instead, the squander mania, recklessly executed through the importation of obsolete and useless hardware into Nigeria has continued unabated. To make sure that **Islamic code of moral laws** reigned supreme, Governors of Islamic states in Nigeria were ready to suspend any meaningful development project embarked upon by the earlier administrations. Their priority became the implementation of the Shari'a laws drastically

executed with ‘modern’ **cutting machines or guillotines**, which were designed for cutting off the condemned limbs.

Those costly gadgets imported from Islamic countries helped Nigerian Islamic states deal drastically with Moslems caught stealing **goats and fowls** or committing **adultery**. The heads, hands and legs of those who stole government money remained in tact! Millions of naira had been spent in the importation of machinery for the execution of Shari’a laws.

National identity card

Lately for reasons best known to Nigerian political leaders, the National Identity Card project which had already gulped billions of naira since its inception about 20 years ago must be re-visited. As long as ‘importation’ business is involved, there is much to be gained by the contractors and their gangs. This time computers must be imported to execute the ID card projects! Who says Nigerians are not squander maniacs and grand masters in the execution of useless and unprofitable projects.

Iron and steel complex

Again we have been told that Ajaokuta steel complex is to be revived. The steel complex has since been moribund or was actually in deep coma. Who knows the amount of money that will be required to revive the dead project that has been in the mortuary for years? We expect a miracle of the first class order! While Nigerians through dishonest means enrich other nations, our own economy continues to dwindle. No wonder then we have become a beggar nation whose citizens are fed with fouled crumbs that fall from the master’s table. Who will argue then that today we are not the ‘least of the nations of the world’?

Abandoned projects and machinery

Consider why someone who says Nigerians are squander maniacs may not be said to be lying. Take a good look at abandoned vehicles and heavy road-construction equipment that lie in the bushes or along the roads that had been haphazardly completed or abandoned. Is it possible that these spoiled and abandoned machinery - tractors, graders, caterpillars, heavy rollers and many others have gone beyond repair? Why should such costly machinery be left to rot away by the wayside?

At a close look or inquiry one may discover that the contractor who did or was doing the job was after all no engineer, economist or anybody. Surely the contract had been sub-contracted to the third, fourth and even fifth generation of contract-seeking members of a political party or close relation of the one who awards contracts. As a means of gratifying a friend, a party member, a close

relation, such expensive road construction business had been given to the most incompetent and unqualified fellow of non-existent company. Immediately a mobilization fee is collected, damn the road project.

When you drive along our terrible bad roads, have a careful look - left and right. You may agree with me that contracts for the reconstruction of such roads (now death traps) may have been awarded to some local contractors many times. How would you know? The number and amount of deteriorating and diminishing heaps of red sand lined along the corners of the roads point to the answer. Someone had done the job by hiring and paying some tipper-men to dig red earth and deposit at the sides of the road. No one talks of spreading the sand to fill the pot holes; not even grading the roads. Who disputes the point that Nigerians are first class squander maniacs? Surely, if we calculate the amount of money we waste in these few ways pointed out here, national lamentation or mourning should be declared as atonement for our sins!

Visit some of the so-called Universal Basic Education (**UBE**) modern school buildings under construction, a noble undertaking by government - state or federal. You will weep seeing how the nearly-finished structures were abandoned to rot away because a contractor for whatever reasons decided to abandon the work uncompleted. Many multi-billion-naira road construction projects have been abandoned halfway and no one cares. We talk about more new roads when the old ones could not be repaired or those under construction completed!

Ballot boxes and voting machines

Since the last fraudulent elections were held in Nigeria, many worried Nigerians and non-Nigerians have been wondering whether it was worthwhile spending large sums of money on elections when the results were usually discarded or manipulated. What is the use in purchasing thousands of ballot boxes, when most of the boxes are abandoned at the polling centers while the names of winners are prematurely announced? The votes are usually not counted. Why buy registers and voters' cards that cost millions of naira when neither the registers nor the cards are taken into consideration before results of voting are announced?

Surely this is another exercise in squander mania. Nigeria could have saved hundreds of millions of naira if these expenses were never made since they do not serve any purpose. Perhaps Nigeria can invent another system of selecting her political leaders without spending such huge amounts of money. It is not late yet if some radical re-examination of how we spend public funds is made.

Political Party Secretariats

In the late 1980s one army general took over power in a bloodless coup from politicians he described as ‘corrupt’ and decided to bring ‘sanity’ back into government. To prepare the hungry politicians well for “fair and credible” elections and return power to political leaders, he banned all political parties and formed only two political parties by himself, namely the **SDP** (Social Democratic Party) and **NRC** (National Republican Convention) and urged all Nigerians to join either of the parties.

To realize his objectives he embarked on the construction of massive party offices in each local government area of Nigeria (then numbering over 600) for each of the two political parties. He decided that only two political parties were good for Nigeria. During the 2011 elections Nigeria had more than 30 registered political parties.

Only few Nigerians questioned the rationale behind the establishment of only two parties for Nigeria without any type of consultations with political leaders of the land. Then why this military dictator embarked on the construction of such gigantic political party offices that gulped billions of naira without approval by other competent leaders remained a mystery and part of Nigerian history today. Because there was enough money in the state treasury, the kind military leader believed that his two political parties needed administrative departments that would carry out the administrative and clerical works of their organization. The military dictator was surely suffering from squandermanian fever.

It may interest readers to note that after the botched transition to civilian rule in 1993 in Nigeria the two-party-state secretariats were abandoned and left to rot away. That was just an undisputable exercise in squander mania; in our case here, a psychiatric disorder characterized by excessive urge to spend recklessly and rapidly changing ideas, and impulsive behavior.

Least value for money

We rate ourselves highly when our performance is substandard. Our ‘Maintenance Culture’ is rated zero or even below. A true son of Nigeria had about 20 years ago written it down. He pointed at where our trouble lies. That was Chinua Achebe. Was he right? In his booklet - “**The trouble with Nigeria**”, published in 1983, he wrote:

Nigeria is not a great country. It is one of the most disorderly nations in the world. It is one of the most corrupt, insensitive, inefficient places under the sun. It is one of the most expensive countries and one of those that give least value for money. It is dirty, callous, noisy, ostentatious, dishonest and vulgar. In short, it is among the most unpleasant places on earth (P 9 – 10).

Our attention here should be turned to the highlighted statement. That was in 1983! And the situation has today deteriorated a hundred-fold! Because Nigerians do not plan well or do not plan at all, our performances are always below standard. And they will remain so, as long as we worship mediocrity and glory in our backwardness. Inefficiency, poor management, mediocrity - these are marks of our performances both at home as well as in international competitions. Nevertheless we claim high marks for ourselves and make our little institutions a laughing stock placed side by side with others **elsewhere**.

Are Nigerian poorly managed ragtag schools not tagged "International?" Name them: International Nursery School, International Secondary School and others. Are our polytechnics and universities not of international standard, too? What would make them 'international' in outlook, surely must include - the superb learning environment, the beautiful hedges and flowers lining the entrance to the schools, the neatly cut lawns and of course the dilapidated buildings! Are our markets, hotels and parks not of international standard? Never! Those developed countries that have institutions of international standard don't need to advertise them. Did the Scriptures not tell us that "by their fruits you shall know them"? Because we do not value or maintain what we have as they show signs of old age or neglect, we end up squandering the little we have in replacing and building new ones.

CHAPTER 6

62. "CURE IS BETTER THAN PREVENTION."

"Prevention is better than cure," is a conventional counsel for caution. It is an accepted principle of action everywhere. To prevent, simply means to impede, to obstruct, or to hinder. Do not allow it to happen. As much as possible avoid its occurrence. By successfully thwarting the evil plans of an enemy, one can be satisfied and in fact reassure oneself of safety, and possibly saving oneself some losses.

A little mistake, error, an oversight can cost millions of lives and property. For example forgetting to switch off an electric gadget or locking a safe can cause a company or a community an irreparable damage.

So, one finds often in most offices and complex buildings warnings and reminders in red letters, addressed to workers and security men: "Have you switched off your gadgets?" "Check again!"

Lack of caution and avoidable errors have cost humanity great losses and unforgettable tragedies. Therefore to forestall, prevent and guard against tragedies people all over the world try to hearken to this old adage, a conventional Wisdom - "Prevention is better than cure."

Even in situations where certain disasters by their nature are unpreventable, man should still remain alert and do everything possible to minimize losses and damages. Some natural disasters can be unpredictable - earthquakes, flooding, hurricanes, and tsunamis yet man takes every precaution to 'forecast' their coming. Because of the extent of damages, simple wisdom is preferable. Repairs can be effected soon, donor nations can rush to save life and property, donate millions of dollars to effect repairs, and even to repopulate communities wiped out in the disaster, yet prevention is preferred to the 'cure' or repairs.

Most developed and developing nations accept and embrace this age-old clarion call to prevent evil instead of allowing it to overwhelm you and then you run to look for solutions.

Fruits of the counsel

Elsewhere, except in Nigeria, this conventional wisdom directs people's actions. The 'counsel' is taken seriously. Take for example, governments and people all over the world have been working round the clock to see that their citizens are not wiped out of the face of the earth by the killer disease called **HIV/AIDS**. Only very tiny groups of experts and researchers are looking for a cure. So far they have not succeeded. They warn that it would take years before a true solution or cure could be found for the disease.

Since no good news is around governments and non-government organizations fight tooth and nail to prevent the damage being done by this disease. In many countries their efforts are yielding positive results. In some countries experts claim that the killer disease has been checked. In some cases less than 1% of their people are suffering from **AIDS!**

Experts work assiduously in medical research institutes counseling suffers on how to deal with certain killer diseases like hearth attack and stroke, diabetes, liver diseases and cardiac attacks. There may not be any permanent cures for these diseases. But the attacks which may lead to death can be prevented.

The emphasis is always on prevention. "**Prevention is better than cure,**" nations of the world tell their citizens. They have largely applied, put into practice those preventive measures and these 'remedies' have worked out for them! Hurrah! A small cautious measure taken by a wise people can save millions of lives!

In Nigeria - cure is better than prevention!

Only in Nigeria is the obverse applicable. The counterfeit position is in vogue, namely "**Cure is better than prevention!**" There are many examples to sustain the Nigerian idiosyncrasy, or mannerism. You only need to think about it for just a while and see why we are different from the rest of the world. You can in fact unlock the mystery behind our lopsided attitudes. Let us consider just few examples, to illustrate our contention that Nigerians prefer direct 'cures' or 'remedies' for their problems. They have no time to waste on 'experimentation' or on what they consider to be 'useless speculations'.

Cure for aids

Recently in one state in Nigeria, one big 'Oga' went for **HIV/AIDS** test after he reported some unusual feelings. Unfortunately he tested positive. When the nurses communicated the bad news to him, he was angry. "But who did it?" He shouted. Recovering from the shock of the news, he requested some drugs from the nurses, who of course told him there was no medicine for the disease. "But I thought they said a **cure** had been found!" the man snarled, fumed, and ordered his driver to move away.

This is a typical Nigerian way of looking at things. "Who did it? Who knows the number of unfaithful wives and wayward concubines he has! Nigerians, like the Israelites of old always ask for a signs; never prevention. Christ has harsh words for the incredulous generation that always asks for signs and wonders. "This generation is an evil generation; it seeks a sign, but no sign shall be given to it except the sign of Jonah....The Queen of the South will arise

at a judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon... [Luke: 11:29-32]

Nigerians do not listen to the Wisdom of Solomon. They look for signs and wonders. And behold the wonder workers in their thousands all over the nooks and crannies of the nation. They are never in short supply. They are founders of churches, healing homes, occult centers where they work *signs and wonders* for their ever-believing clients - young and old, educated and illiterate. Masters of all diseases and ailments are all over Nigeria. In the television, public squares, churches and miracle centers. If you need a solution for any problem including those the Almighty in Heaven will never venture to listen to, go to a Man of God anywhere in Nigeria, or someone who claims he has power to redeem you wipe off your tears.

If you are a sufferer, please stop weeping; Nigerian pastors and miracle workers including priests and other ordained ministers in the mainline Catholic and Protestant Churches can cure you. They have panacea for every disease, including the one called AIDS, which they claim the white man is unable to cure. One greater than the white people and even Christ and His Father is in your midst. Look well. He is around you. But beware you must have a blind faith to find your redeemer!

Unwanted pregnancy

Few unwanted pregnancies are reported in the developed and developing world. How do they do it? You may ask me again. There are too many measures - old and new. In fact one needs many pages of newspapers to discuss just a few. But I know one measure, which is now in vogue. They call it "**Zip Up.**" Many young ladies in America, Europe, Near and Far East countries are trying the method "**Zip Up.**" They report positive results. Unborn children are no more untimely sent to their graves through abortion.

Not in Nigeria! Who has even heard about "Zip Up?" Do young people know what is involved? Who encourages or challenges them to 'zip up'? Like their fathers and mothers young Nigerian ladies who get into trouble by indulging in illicit ex-marital sex always look for cures for their problems. How can they stop school and carry babies? So they get their problems solved in abortion clinics all over the countryside. The expert abortionists are simple village 'chemist men or their boys.' As long as you have the small fee, you get the anesthetics and in a few minutes your sorrows are gone. So if a cure is cheaper than prevention why bother at all?

Malaria

Nigerians do not look for preventive measures against malaria attacks. They are always bent on getting a cure. **Elsewhere**, in countries where malaria used to

cause havoc, the killer disease has almost been eradicated. Some of the common, simple measures taken by these wise people to prevent malaria attacks include, clearing of bushes and debris where mosquitoes breed, clearing stagnant dirty water spots where mosquitoes lay their eggs and multiply in thousands. These wise people of course insist on clean environment as the ultimate assurance that the killer disease called malaria is overpowered by a more superior force, a true cure for malaria.

Not Nigerians! They can cure malaria with drugs and all sorts of fetish concoctions. That is why we spend hundreds of millions of naira importing drugs into this country to cure malaria. Now they say that the tiny wicked parasite has developed great resistance to almost all the known-malaria-drugs under the sun. What are we to do now? Today you find poor villagers roaming about open fields and hedges looking for **new miracle herbs** they claim are today more effective than quinine and chloroquine and other newest drugs in curing malaria. Who will doubt them!

Worms

Every year intestinal worms claim the lives of thousands of Nigerian children. Worms of every specie multiply in the bodies of these pot bellied sick children and suck their blood and food meant for human nourishment. The other day an announcement in one of our state-owned radio stations revealed that millions of Nigerian children still die as a result of anemia brought about by worms. The announcer thanked a certain donor drug company or good Samaritans who sent cartons of worm drugs meant to "**de-worm**" Nigerian children. So we are looking for a cure and not means of preventing our children from contracting worms. Should the children simply not be given good food and drinks? Should they be served with rotten food and fruits that breed worms, ants and other dangerous pests?

Preventive measures: not spiritual attacks

People in our midst who have the magic wand for all diseases have now found new name for what they describe as 'incurable diseases.' Demons and malignant spiritual forces are now responsible for diseases! One who has been bitten by mosquito may after all not be suffering from malaria. Evil spirits have simply gripped one who is dying of **AIDS!** He has a spiritual attack.

This is the new name for any ailment that cannot be diagnosed with the usual apparatus - foreign or local. And only a man of God claims the power to get all spiritual attacks under control! So, my friend, when you are ill or feel any sort of discomfort, do not worry. You may not have AIDS, malaria, gonorrhea,

syphilis, tuberculosis, high blood pressure, diabetes or any of those deadly deceases. No! Why go to the laboratory to spend your money on tests?

The generic name for most diseases or malignant disorders in Nigeria today is "spiritual attack". And only one man can cure you. A "Man of God!" He uses all occult means, orthodox and unorthodox methods to cure you. How do you identify the man of God? A warning! Do not be deceived by their appearance or religious leaning, namely the church or religious movement they run. They are mixed and are found in all church denominations and occult establishments. "By their fruits you shall know them".

Take a look at polio, sickle cell, and other children's related health problems. Instead of vaccinating or inoculating their children, some Nigerian mothers resort to occult practices in order to get rid of child-killer-diseases. They claim as usual 'diabolic attack' as the cause. The child is an 'Ogbanje' 'Abiku'. Simple vaccination or inoculation could do the miracle when carried out at the proper time.

It is by paying heed to simple **preventive measures** that we can eventually get at the root of our problems causing sickness or ailment. Experts and men of God have little or no role to play. We need not cite many more examples and see how Nigerians ignore the clarion call for caution and dabble into expensive, primitive and costly means of getting rid of our preventable ailments.

In the seventies, the Lagos Bar Beach used to be a tourist attraction. Today, it has rather become largely a death-trap as the Atlantic Ocean has encroached on and even eaten up the nearby express road. No one cares, even when it is threatening to wash away the nearby skyscrapers housing banks and other important institutions. We are waiting for the catastrophe to occur before we stampede about for the solution.

Talking of catastrophes! What if a Tsunami decides to strike in Nigeria today? God forbid! But what rescue and emergency provisions do we have? Perhaps it is not late for Nigerians to join the rest of humanity in accepting the redeeming conventional wisdom "**Prevention is better than Cure!**"

CHAPTER 7

REVOLUTION: NIGERIA'S BRAND - THEY CRY LOUDER THAN THE BEREAVED

“Revolution” here does not mean insurgency or revolt. It has to do with development, transformation, and innovation in methods of doing things. Rightly carried out revolution can bring about progress, in social, cultural, spiritual, moral and political life of a people. Nigerians know what is good. As for lifestyles, they feel at home with their hosts in Europe, America and Asia. Nigerians who find themselves in search of greener pastures in Japan, China, America, Greenland, and even in Iraq and Chechnya, speak the languages of these people in a couple of months after arrival.

But do not be surprised if these Nigerians cannot speak their native language. They may not even know the history and Geography of their fatherland. They are at their best when in word and deed they “sound” foreign! They copy and imbibe other people’s lifestyles and despise their own culture and way of life. In most cases they can be described as “more Roman than the Pope!” They can exaggerate. They are too ‘loud’. As the ancients put it, most often ‘they cry louder than the bereaved’. This Nigerian attitude can upset their visitors.

Their pompous lifestyle is best illustrated by their “brand of revolution”, excessive exaggeration of the obvious, in the following chapters, namely “Mobile Phone” (Handset) Revolution” and the “Computer Revolution”.

63. HANDSET REVOLUTION - THE NIGERIAN STYLE

Nigerians embrace change and new products with alacrity. They quickly abandon the old order. This is their attitude towards novelties. Their craftsmen quickly ‘imitate’ foreign designers and flood rare commodities all over the local markets. Their only fault is the way they exaggerate; the way they overstress the obvious, their liking for popular needs. The way Nigerians join in or carry out ‘revolutions’ can irritate a passer-by. At the same time it can amuse and set one wondering what the commotion or excitement is all about! In this part of our write-up, we examine Nigerians’ attitude to the Handset and Computer Revolution. We will also examine the Movie Industry.

Nigerians are known for “loudness”, loud in talking (when they discuss and quarrel in public), loud in music (you can tune your music gadgets to the highest volume, in market places, churches and streets), loud in colors – in what they wear – (colorful, variegated, gorgeous, stylish, and often expensive), loud in comportment, (they like to attract the attention of all and often exhibit

boorish attitude. They exaggerate a lot and usually don't worry about the feelings of those around. The way they "handle" the most cherished **cellular phone** says it all.

It is a welcome development everywhere. But it is Nigerians' way of 'handling' the gadget that attracts attention. It is no exaggeration to say that everyone has got a handset or what is referred to as mobile telephone or cell-phone. It can be true because I saw a primary schoolgirl talking into a handset and at the same time holding it very close to her ears. She was indeed talking to someone and as well receiving a reply. Or was it that type of thing that happens in movies. Imagined conversation? I can't exactly say. Was she holding a real handset or a 'toy'?

Nigeria is a strange place. You may not blame her people, or anyone, for taking special interest in this gadget called mobile phone. People that have been starved of everything 'good' in their fatherland will definitely get into a state of hysteria or confused madness when a door is opened and a little bit of fresh air is allowed in. Indeed little children who are always locked up in rooms usually run amok in search of playground when they get a little escape route. They wish to play outside! Those children, too who never had more than a cupful of water for their bathe rush outside naked when it begins to rain.

The welcome revolution

Check everywhere; at least most Nigerians - men and women, young and old - have got this rare instrument meant for easy and quick communication. Since two to three years now, one does not need to travel often to Abuja, Owerri, Aba or Lagos to deliver an urgent message to a brother or close relative and get disappointed with a response on reaching his destination, "He traveled to Badagry a few hours ago. You would have met him if you arrived an hour earlier! Sorry!"

That is a thing of the past. Now you just 'call' to find out or just give the message right away! Save yourself uncomfortable hours on the road in a luxury bus or Taxi, and of course police checkpoints you would have to cross! Beware of armed robbers, especially if you are taking night bus! No more of these troubles! Welcome, Cellular phone to Nigeria!

Many Nigerians have got the 'handset.' Some have more than two, or even three. Someone told me the other day that his friend had four! I can't prove it. But he explained that one was for 'MTN'. Another, 'GLO'. **Yet another** "CELTEL", then Etisalat. I can't remember the other names.

Why the extravaganza?

But to be honest with you I saw a girl the other day. She had two handsets on her two ears. She was standing right at the middle of the road listening and

talking loudly. I was horrified. Supposing these mad "Okada" people knocked her down! Why on the middle of a very busy street? I was told it was only at that point, at the middle of the road that she used to get **SERVICE!** If she stepped aside, communication would be cut off! What a terrible way of communicating?

I have heard that some people climb **treetops** to **get full service!** One of my friends told me that whenever he gets a call he used to climb to the **third floor of his house** to get full service and talk longer with the caller. Another says; he used to climb the top of the **underground tank** in front of his house to make a call. Then of course you are sure the whole village will hear you! All are in search of full service or some 'manageable service". But how can one use two handsets at the same time, by the way? The scenario is not rare. It is the Nigerian style of doing things. It is only in Nigeria you find it! Nowhere else.

I confirmed however that what I used to see everywhere is 'real'. And not 'toy', when I started seizing handsets in my school. I didn't like the idea of secondary school boys and girls carrying handsets to school and disturbing everyone with "hallo" "hallo." It is worse even in Church. I heard even that it is banned in the senior seminaries. And that students have been expelled from the seminary because they possessed or abused their rights to have handsets.

My fears were confirmed when I was told that '**Area Boys**' a.k.a. "**gang or cult members**" use handsets to operate. So I started seizing handsets in my school. I took the two I seized to my room. The boys - the owners - cried and begged but I never cared to listen. I placed the handsets on my reading table. What a terrible experience when the phones began to ring, almost simultaneously. The handsets wailed and yelled. The music coming from one was pleasant, while the other was weird. But I couldn't tolerate the noise. I could not stop them however, since I had not learnt how to operate these brands - NOKIA or what? I have one handset and know how to handle this type properly. When the seized phones rang again; I pulled out a drawer in my closet and hid them inside - right inside - and went to sleep - a sound siesta? Never!

The abuse - the misuse

My siesta that day was a disaster! I had a terrible headache. But no sooner had I put the two handsets away into the closet, than they started to yell again. But peace returned to my brain when at last I decided to put the two handsets away - far away - into the visitors' room, quite a distance from my own room.

But who were calling the owners of these handsets, almost every other minute? I could have verified by answering one of the calls. But I didn't know where to press or the button to punch! I was an ignoramus and really felt ashamed of myself. Most of these modern gadgets and minicomputers are really sophisticated. But most Nigerian youngsters know how to operate them!

They get many calls a day - some over thirty - I was told. Many university girls - especially those who get admission by crook and means are 'masters' in handset operations. Most of them, I was told spend more time punching the buttons every minute than on their books. They know how to 'steal' credit-minutes and hours from others who have enough credits in their accounts.

"It is becoming a dangerous business", a worried friend of mine warned. Nigerians are good at turning good into harm to gain advantage. Now it has been confirmed that handsets play important role in examination malpractice in Nigerian schools. Examination authorities should therefore make sure handsets are banned at examination centers. That is why you may not bring out your handset when you board luxurious bus. Thieves use the sets to communicate. 'Cult students' use the sets to communicate and commit atrocities. The handset revolution has become a lucrative business in Nigeria. That is why thieves always have an eye on you if you own one.

However, let us return to a more fundamental troubling question. How do these bad guys in Primary, Secondary Schools and Universities get the money to buy the handsets? How are they able to buy the phone cards? If one only 'flashes' a call, who pays for the real things? We need to investigate. When I questioned one of the boys I seized their handsets, he told me that his mother bought it for him! "For what purpose?" I went further. Mute!

Now, it is time for parents to find out why their children should handle phone sets. One can understand a company manager, a government official, Principals of schools, lecturers, clergymen, or other important adults possessing and operating two or more phones - hand or conventional ones. Why should a student possess one at all?

By the rate the buying and selling is going on in Nigeria, it will not be long before the number of subscribers exceeds the number of phone lines. And of course our foreign suppliers of handsets may run short of the commodity, Mobile Phone! Welcome to Nigeria!

THE HANDSET REVOLUTION - A FEW YEARS AFTER

The topic we examined above has continued to excite and generate discussion among most Nigerians, young and old, hence the need to re-visit the **‘The Hand set revolution – the Nigerian brand**

No doubt the phone companies have made fortunes from this business. We have always been told that investors have been reluctant to invest in Nigeria. Many reasons have been invented – the endemic fraudulent lifestyle of Nigerians and their business partners – the perpetual state of insecurity – and most importantly lack of power supply. Without continuous power supply, no doubt no business – big or small – can survive anywhere.

Surprisingly enough the phone business seemed to have survived to the greatest admiration of the foreign investors and their Nigerian counterparts. Many questions arise and must be addressed! Have Nigerian con-men, tricksters and swindlers changed overnight and become honest and patriotic? Has the insecurity problem in Nigeria been miraculously resolved? What of vandalization of electric cables and related power accessories? What of power, the ultimate survival of any business? Has Nigeria or Nigerians over night been cured of these menacing and debilitating diseases?

The truth is that the phone companies have at last discovered that Nigeria could after all be a very “conductive” and “friendly” nation as far as gainful business enterprise is concerned. Even in the face of obvious problems created by complete lack of public generating power the phone companies have made billions of naira in Nigeria within a short time. The fact that they are not complaining confirms this assertion. Rather than complaining or threatening to close down or quit Nigeria for other greener pastures for lack of patronage or other problems, the phone companies have been expanding and are vying for more space in Nigeria for their products and business. They are extending their services to every nook and cranny of Nigeria. Why this development?

Reckless patronizing

The phone companies in particular are succeeding in Nigeria because Nigerians are reckless spenders and squanderers of rare resources. Who should blame the Nigerian ministers of petroleum and oil products who continue to hike fuel prices on the pretext that most Nigerians are able to buy mobile phones and spend fantastic sums every week on calls? The phone companies have in a short time sold millions of handsets in Nigeria because even school children own handsets and carry them to class. Market women who fancy this gadget they refer to as “Ekwenti” always carry their handsets to market.

Hawkers of pure water, bread, groundnuts, fruits, chewing sticks and all sorts of emergency hardware and food items at motor parks and highways carry their handsets along. Nigerians talk too much and long on the phone. They spend hours discussing their family problems on the phone. They like to talk

and no one would like to miss a call. No wonder they carry their handsets to Churches, gatherings and of course to classes in schools and colleges. The first thing the Nigeria Church-goers remember to put into their pockets on Sundays is the handset – never the Bible, Prayer Book or even the Rosary.

They are infatuated with the mobile phone. Most don't care to observe the warning often pasted on Church entrance doors: "switch-off your handset". But why should they carry their mobile phones to Church? They don't care. Often you find some of these fellows rush out of the Church to answer calls. One report has it that one priest who truly cannot part with his handset usually carries it to the altar during Holy Mass. When a call comes he stops whatever he is doing and answers the call! He cannot afford to miss a call! Crazy! It is true too that some students take theirs into the classrooms. The 'reasonable' ones often leave the class and go out to answer the call, while some crazy ones do not mind shouting like mad fellows in class. Those who bring theirs to class claim they try to avoid the ringing sound by putting the set in "vibrating mode". I hope you readers understand what that means. Many report that they carry theirs always with them because they always wait for international calls they cannot afford to miss! "Who is calling them?" One may ask. How important are those calls?

Truly only in Nigeria!

Whether the handset is set in a vibrating mode or quaking mode while one is in an assembly, meeting, Church or class, the disturbing question remains: "Why can't Nigerians leave their handsets at home while attending a group gathering? Surely the white people who invented this gadget some 20 to 30 years ago never abused this powerful gadget meant to serve many useful purposes. I have celebrated masses in many American and European Churches for many years and had never for once heard any "teeo teeo" or "hallo!"

One understands why the phone business has become a success story in Nigeria. The companies have come to stay in Nigeria! As Nigerians talk too much and long on the phone the companies sell their cards and make billions. What a bonanza, a bazaar! Do they really have any "special offers" for their docile and extravagant clients? Is there anything referred to as "long-distance calls" or "short- distance calls". Overseas and in most developed and developing countries people don't even pay a dime or kobo on "short distant calls". But in Nigeria one has to pay the same to call a family member in an adjacent room!

Yes! The phone companies, their agents and operators know how to dupe Nigerians. They encourage them to call every minute and buy more cards. The

reward? A lucky Dip! Someone with the magic number **02x580p2q** has won a Mercedes Benz car! Another has won a holiday trip to London! So Nigerians if you want to win a brand new Toyota Jeep buy as many re-chargeable cards as possible. Continue to call your friends everywhere – in America, Greenland, Oslo, Abuja and discuss with them. When your calling card ‘expires’ someone, usually a lady’s voice will remind you that your time was up. What? Why?

You need to recharge, my friend. In order not to disappoint anyone you are calling always keep a big bundle of cards with you! Look at this ‘wonderful’ offer from Rainbow net: “Rainbow net has introduced N100 (one hundred naira) recharge voucher. Buy your now! Call more! Save more!” They do not tell you how much you spend. You can just buy and buy and buy! Participate in the latest ‘promos’ and win millions! So we have always maintained that Nigerians cry more than the bereaved. They stretch little matters to some miles simply to let people know that they (Nigerians) are around and should be noticed. They make a fly look like an elephant. If “**glo**” is not serving you well, why not hook up with **mtn** or **econet**? Try **etiselat** as long as you want to gain some “Credit Hours?” Join the **celtel** or **v-mobile** family too as long as you have the money.

All these Mobile Phone companies know that Nigerians are reckless squanderers. So they also promise some more “credit hours” if only Nigerians can get up in the middle of the night and call and chat with their boy or girl friends – free of charge! The free hours are between 1.00 a.m and 4.00 a.m. Surely only infatuated idle teenagers and lovers can afford the luxury of keeping such vigil in order to “gain” from the Mobile Phone bonanza available to Nigerians!

In the developed world most people switch off their handsets while going to bed so that they can enjoy their sleep. In the world of such people who know the value of money an offer like this would be meaningless. In the developed world phone companies that wish to express gratitude to their clients for patronage gained usually give them “reasonable offers”. There are weekend free calls from Friday evening to the wee hours of the Sunday! In the United States and Europe you find families and people who put off their long-distance calls to weekends when the calls are cheaper or completely free!

Not in Nigeria. Virtually no one represents or speaks for the exploited Nigerian phone users. No one asks for some legitimate rights which phone users elsewhere (except in Nigeria) enjoy. The indigenous Nigerian representatives of phone companies and their promoters are only interested in filling their own pockets and care little about the benefits Nigerian phone users can reap from these rich phone companies. Nigerians help foreigners to dupe fellow Nigerians.

When the phones stop working – network failure

No one cares to apologize when the network develops problems. What is ‘Network Failure’ by the way? How does an ignoramus like me, one of the

customers of **mtn** know that something serious has gone wrong with the phone ‘engineers?’ Often one hears the soft lady’s voice telling you to stop trying because the number you have dialed is not available. Please try later. Or the number you have dialed is switched off. Please try again later. How can you believe these voices, when actually the ‘number you have dialed is not really switched off’. Perhaps if the desperate dialer continued, to his bewilderment the set may automatically switch itself on! What a magic! This is the type of magic that works only in Nigeria and in black African world!

Like the usual peculiar power problem which Nigerians are used to, the phone network problem can last weeks and even months. Nigerians are of course patient to a fault. “Why have the phone lines gone dead? One complains: “For over a week now I have not been able to get my brother in Lagos. I don’t get calls any more.” The answer is obvious: “Network problems.” Why worry? Like total power blackout in Nigeria, Nigerians are ready to ‘forgo’, ‘forgive’ and ‘understand’. As for the oppressed people who are used to tough life, suffering and exploitation, it is the usual tragedy which we all have got to put up with. When eventually the powers are turned on again, the phones begin to ring, what a tumultuous joy for Nigerians! Their period of liberation has arrived! Hurrah! Like dazed fellows recovering from some shell shock, they forget their moments of sorrow, torture and anxieties and begin once again to hail the phone companies and their agents.

The phone companies are of course hundred per cent more sensible and profit-oriented than their counterparts - The Nigerian Power Holding Authorities (**phc**). Realizing the millions if not billions of naira their companies lose when Nigerians stop punching their phone buttons for a moment, the phone companies honestly work round the clock to restore ‘power.’ Not the **nepa** (or their successor **phc** – old wine in a new calabash)! The Power Holding Authority will not hasten to restore the broken lines because they don’t lose any kobo. At the end of the month they send their fat bills to Nigerians who must pay whether they enjoyed power or not.

Need for caution

Every Nigerian – young and old – enjoys the Mobile Telephone Revolution. Some Nigerians who care to give any credit to the Obasanjo Administration believe that this is the only memorable legacy the out-gone regime has left behind. Bravo to PDP alias Winners’ Peoples’ Party (**WPP**) government. But fellow Nigerians must learn from the users of phones in the developed countries. I am not asking anybody to stop patronizing the phone companies. Far from that! I advise Nigerians to use the phone ‘with moderation’ in the way we handle and abuse it, in the way we spend scarce resources, just to demonstrate our uncalled-for-exuberance in enjoyment and reckless spending habits simply because the money is there. Americans and Europeans rarely

discuss trifles on telephones. They prepare for long-distance calls. They use the best and cheapest offers and opportunities to call. Of course the phone companies provide them with special “Call Cards” which cost so little per card and can lead you through hours until you get tired talking or your ears begin to hurt!

Sensible ‘bonuses’ for Nigerian phone users

While Nigerians learn to apply caution in the way they patronize phone companies, it will not be out of place to insist that these phone companies should endeavor to show some appreciation to their clients in some ways this is done in other overseas countries. Why, for example can’t their consumers enjoy free calls at weekends as it is the case in some European countries and the United States?

It will save a lot of talkative Nigerians a lot of naira if they put off some of their “long distance calls” to weekends as most Americans do. From noon on Fridays to wee hours of Sundays people make calls that cost them absolutely nothing. “I will call you back during the weekend”, is the usual information one receives from a friend as the caller cuts a conversation short on a week day.

By the way, should one not ask whether for Nigerian phone users there is anything like “**short**” or “**long**” distance calls? Why should a call made about a kilometer away to some one living in the vicinity cost as much as that made from Abuja to Lagos, Owerri to Port Harcourt? What is “inner city” and “out of city call”?

Surely many phone companies which took the “risk” of investing in rural communities in most African countries; including Kenya, Ghana and Nigeria are reaping a fortune from their venture. Cell phones are now a booming market in the developing world, but historically companies vastly underestimated their potential.

In the year 2000, when **Vodafone** bought a stake in a Kenyan cell-phone company, it figured that the market in Kenya would max out at 400,000 users. Today the company, **Safaricom**, has more than 10 million users. Safaricom is making a huge profit, and it is making a difference.

Surely the number in Nigeria must be a staggering figure! No doubt most women and unemployed Nigerian youths who sell “Akara”, “Mama Put” and Pure Water have Mobile Phones. Who can even point at any Nigerian student and even pupil in primary school who has not got at least one Handset? Phone companies in Nigeria must package reasonable incentives for their clients and not stop at exploiting them. A few luxury cars for an insignificant number of winners in a lottery can’t be a substitute for this “bonus” enjoyed by great number of phone users overseas.

CHAPTER 8

64. COMPUTER REVOLUTION - Nigeria's contribution

The revolution began elsewhere in the developed world many centuries ago. But it took an unprecedented and momentous turn some decades ago. With the proliferation of Desktop computers and of course the birth of the Internet, poorer countries like Nigeria began to enjoy the benefits of the white man's ingenuity.

Nigerians are not the last to acknowledge the role of the computer in the modern times. The Igbo of Nigeria in particular have never ceased to express their awe at what this piece of gadget - computer - can accomplish. "**Bekee wu agbara,**" – (The white man is a spirit!) is the usual expression of amazement. All Nigerians - young and old - have embraced the computer. It is a welcome development.

But what is peculiar, certainly bizarre, with the computer revolution and with special reference to Nigeria is the nature or 'style' of the revolution or the excitement. Most Nigerians, no doubt, very later-comers to this scenario now claim to know all about computer than the Americans and Europeans who first invented or discovered this scientific gadget and are truly the masters. White people have continued to show that they are masters by bringing to the world almost everyday new ways of putting this gadget into maximum use and benefit.

Without the world knowing it, Nigerians have 'out-paced' Americans and Europeans in the establishment of **computer centers** and **colleges** and as well claim to have grand mastery of the workings of the computer. If any one has the time, and cares to count the number, one may not be wrong in concluding that the number of computer houses, places of manufacturing and fixing parts should compare favorably with the number of Churches and Healing centers in Nigeria. Their locations and activities are advertised in the televisions, radios and of course in front pages of newspapers and magazines. As in Nigeria, all claim to be the best, offering the best services one can get elsewhere. Fantastic!

Best teachers, best graduates

All the computer training centers found at all nooks and crannies of our villages and towns, and which take many funny names and motto, claim to offer the best training in the world. Their tutors are the best. Their students graduate within three to six months! These computer training schools are of course opened and run not with the approval of any government or any recognized accreditation board. Everyone is free to open any center, run it as he wants, charge any amount of fee, conduct exams and award certificates. **Only in Nigeria** such freedom of conducting business takes place!

Often the certificates which these computer colleges award are the most bogus and worthless: Here is a sample from one of these institutions that claim excellence in one of the Nigerian cities: Having completed the approved course of studies for (6) six months, or (3) three months, and passed the prescribed examinations, you have under the board of trustees been awarded a **diploma in computer and desktop publishing**. The final grades which usually are all in A's follow - General Computing and programming, Operation System, Spreadsheet Software (Microsoft Excel), Word Processor (Microsoft Word), Page Maker, Corel Draw, Microsoft Power Point, Data Processing/Management Information System. Since the innovation by Apple more Nigerians have started approaching greater heights in computer engineering.

Hurrah! A computer expert has thus been born. And overnight! The diploma certificate is worth nothing less than a Phd in computer engineering! Almost all their graduates make "**Upper Credit**" or "**Summa cum Laude**" or something even better! Why not? Their 'excellent performance' will surely attract more students. If they fail the exams there is no doubt that the center would close down and the lecturers would lose their jobs. Then follows the expensive parties after convocation or graduation ceremonies. In less than a month the celebrating students collect their certificates which they frame and gorgeously hang in their living rooms. Pictures taken in their convocation regalia are distributed to friends and well-wishers. Some hang their photos in graduating hood splendidly in the living rooms.

In the Facebook, a [social networking service](#) and website launched in February 2004, owned and operated by [Facebook, Inc.](#) Nigerians should truly be the largest registered users. As of May 2012, it was speculated that Facebook has over [900 million active](#) users and more than half of them using Facebook on a [mobile device](#).

Chatting: Online chat which may refer to any kind of [communication](#) over the [Internet](#), offers a [real-time direct](#) transmission of [text-based](#) messages from sender to receiver. Most Nigerian youths, especially university students chat regularly online. They have their fingers on their set keyboards day and night. **Electronic mail**, also known as **e-mail**, may not be very popular among the students as a result of abysmal lack of electric power in Nigeria. Many who however may need the services provided by the electronic mail are unable to purchase desktop or laptop computers; hence the incessant demand for laptop today among Nigerian youths.

Skype, which allows users to communicate with peers by voice, video, and [instant messaging](#) over the Internet, is not foreign to Nigerians. As calls to other users within the **Skype** service are free of charge, Nigerians, wherever they are, are always quick to exploit its services. Nigerians constitute a large number of over 800 million users of Skype as of July 2012.

Jack-of- all-trades

Many Nigerian computer experts, operating from Abuja or Lagos claim they have connections with the proprietors and companies owning and providing these services. But wait, dear reader, hold your breath. The certificate cited above is just a very modest type you find issued in most Nigerian computer colleges. Some other certificates indicate that the holder of the certificate has also qualified in **computer programming and computer maintenance!** Not only that, he or she can write **software** for companies, institutions, business entrepreneurs and all those who need such important and often sophisticated handiwork of human brain. One can also find among Nigerian young computer engineers - male and female - new **Bill Gates and Steve Jobs**. Some may claim to perform better than these renowned computer wizards!

Computer miracle schools

Like their counterparts all over Nigeria, Nigerian computer experts and engineers graduate in less than six months and are able to dismantle and re-assemble computers, effect any type of repairs. They claim they can eject new life into dead hard disks or memory chips and upgrade any imported scrap system to any latest operating system or model! No one should be surprised that such miracles are performed daily in Nigeria and our economy and industries still remain in ruins.

Such things are possible **Only in Nigeria**. After all one Nigerian presidential aspirant once promised to manufacture cars and airplanes and thus stop automatically any further importation of such gadgets into Nigeria. He forgot that he should first of all be sure of good roads and airfields before looking for the parts!

Are there not many **miracle secondary schools** in Nigeria where students obtain the most coveted WAEC, NECO, GCE or JAMB certificates without tears? In these schools it is possible for a blockhead to obtain 'A 1' in English Language, Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics. But after all it becomes clear that 'all that glitters is not gold'. The certificates are simply worthless.

Most of these computer training schools have become in reality 'Miracle Schools.' They mostly accommodate students who have dropped out of school or have not made any grade in their secondary schools career, if ever they got to that level. In an opinion survey conducted in a few selected schools by this author, it was not surprising that more than 80% of students interviewed, mostly girls claim they would undertake computer studies after their secondary school. Those who manage to get the necessary credits will like to do Computer Engineering in the University. Those who fail WASCE woefully or fail to get a

manageable pass hope to realize their life dream at the computer center anywhere in town or village.

Surely those who enroll in the computer center - there are too many of them - do their 'IT' (Industrial Training) after two or three months. In the next six months they graduate and look for job. Asked why they prefer computer studies, they confess in all honesty, it is the 'cheapest' course around and takes little time to complete! Wow! And truly they get some job after. But that the course is cheap and so requires little effort needs to be proved.

New brand of business entrepreneurs

Most of the newly qualified computer experts, mostly young ladies - are readily employed by another interesting set of business men and women who make fast money by establishing **Business Centers**, now littering most busy street corners, some in uncompleted buildings. With one or two computers, printer, a scanner, photocopier, and a portable generator, a big thriving business center has been set up in a twinkling of an eye. Customers can equally make phone calls here - national and international. Who can beat the Nigerian business managers and directors in the art of making fast money?

The managing directors of the centers employ the already-self-made computer experts. These are responsible for carrying out the bulk of work and contracts, the manager secures from both public and private sectors. Most areas of specialization are: Almanacs, Posters, Calendars, Packets, Labels, Stickers, Complimentary cards, Sales Invoices, Hand Bills, Vests, Envelopes, Files, Receipts, Book Covers Lithographs, Plastic I.D Cards and so on. What a lucrative business! They are never in short of customers who come for their wedding, funeral, and graduation souvenirs, just to name a few areas of urgent needs.

Do they perform nice jobs? That is an important question. Some do. Others do shabby jobs. Most jobs done with Page Maker Program or the Publisher or Corel Draw are good. The intellect does not play a big part here. Just press the correct button on the keyboard and you get a calendar on the screen. Press another button and the number is multiplied ad infinitum! Choose any color from all shades and hue. The same one button rightly pressed can do most other jobs. What are you then looking for?

Where our computer experts are put to the test is in the script work - typesetting a book, newspaper, magazine, or a brochure no matter how small the volume. Language plays the big part where the document is in English, Igbo, Hausa, Yoruba or any of the European languages bearing the Latin alphabet. The producer must as well be an intelligent and meticulous professional proofreader! This is where we know our computer experts - the managers and employers. The Bible concludes the warning well: "By their fruits you shall know them". Be warned, the owner of the printed matter! You must get down

for a more serious business before you distribute copies to your guests and friends. You must use pens and pencils to correct the spellings, fill up the omissions, and retouch the pagination. Most of us get disappointed when we open a document typeset and published in Nigeria. Who has erred - the author or the typesetter? Or has the computer 'performed illegal operation and must be shut down? "By their fruits you shall know them".

Back to the basics

Nigerian run before they learn to crawl. This is not good. We must go back to the basics and consolidate slowly and cautiously before we out-run the makers and the grand masters of the computer in Europe and America. Should we not start now to teach our primary and secondary school children to learn conventional typewriter and computer keyboard? Is one's ability to push around the mouse a proof of one's computer expertise or ingenuity? Many young Nigerians spend hours at Internet Cafés browsing. Most times they are not there for any serious business. But any one who sees how they click the mouse may conclude that wonderful computer experts are spending precious hours at these ubiquitous business centers. Should these computer college managers not establish English classes for their students and make sure they pass well in both Languages as well as in keyboard manipulation before the students begin to write programs and other softwares.

Like in Night School environment, it would surely yield a lot of dividends if those of us who are old and need to be computer literate went back to 'Night School.' This is necessary, at least to master some of the computer and Internet tools and get a gentleman's knowledge of this important world famous gadget which they call computer.

CHAPTER 9

65. WORLD MOVIE INDUSTRY – Nigeria’s brand

The terms **film, moving pictures, movies, or cinema** are commonly used synonyms for the term motion pictures. During the decade following the advent of projected motion pictures, films were shown as part of vaudeville or variety programs, at carnivals and fairgrounds, in lecture halls and churches, and gradually in spaces converted for the exclusive exhibition of movies. Many were comedies or actualities. *In recent times* Videotape recorder/playback systems have become far more popular in the movie industry, as a business, as an art form, and as a means of delivering entertainment and information to audiences in theaters and at home. The advent of Videotape as well as its proliferation has brought entertainment to many homes in the modern times.

Nigerians know what is good. They, too, have men and women of great talents in every field of human endeavor. So Nigeria is not left out of this Movie revolution. **Videotape** recorder/playback systems for domestic use which are connected directly to a television receiver are found in most Nigerian homes. Old and latest movies made on cheap tapes and the latest brands of Videodiscs - **VCD** [Video Compact Disc] and **DVD** [Digital Video Discs], also referred to as “Digital Versatile Disc,” are within the reach of average Nigerian families today. Unlike motion picture film, videotape and compact discs do not require processing and may be played back immediately. Today Nigerians stockpile movies of various family and community celebrations, including wedding, chieftaincy ceremonies, priestly ordinations and many other gatherings. At religious ceremonies, the menacing crowds of ubiquitous camera people, as well as video-men and women add an aura of importance to the occasion. The fact that an occasion can be covered and viewed thereafter is a thing of great joy!

A welcome revolution

Cinema industry is a fascinating development. The growth in the recent times has been tremendous especially since Nigerian artistes joined the fast moving movie business industry. Movie companies leave their foot prints in every part of the world. They revolutionize the lives of peoples all over the world and in various areas of human endeavor - education, culture, music and particularly theatrical arts. They touch the lives of the young and old in literature and drama.

Most students who have not read Shakespearean plays now know the great English author and playwright - Shakespeare through the movies bearing the names of his famous plays - Macbeth, Merchant of Venice, Hamlet, Julius Caesar, Romeo and Juliet and many others. Nigerian students who have watched Romeo and Juliet, The Merchant of Venice, or Chinua Achebe’s

Things Fall Apart, Charles Dicken's Oliver Twist, or Peter Nwanna's Omenuko on video, no doubt have done better in Literature in English in public examinations.

Students of literature appreciate the hitherto dry and hard volumes of literature books and novels as these are now available in motion pictures. With the Internet revolution and with the press of a button one can now download any type of material from anywhere - movies, music, and entire library of books! People only need small movie cameras to make their own movies and view them on the spot! This is welcome revolution, indeed.

Not only have filmmakers made other peoples of the world know their culture, music and in fact their entire way of life; they have made money, too! This is indeed a cheap way of reaching out to other people living in other parts of the world. Moviemakers and actors have broken language barriers. The Americans no doubt have dominated the world film market and today some three-quarters of films screened around the world come from the United States. Even before the world war, the United States had made its mark on the world. United States moviemakers had begun to congregate in southern California in the Los Angeles suburb of Hollywood creating a film community apart from older urban centers of politics and the arts, and a magical new symbol for popular entertainment and glamour.

Thus Hollywood became a movie "colony," with a lifestyle that emphasized leisure, sports, and other outdoor activities. Hollywood offered varied terrains for filming. Sceneries - the beaches, nearby mountains, and deserts were part of nature's gift to Hollywood. What nature cannot provide, man makes up. Man creates bushes, rivers, roads, shrubs and gigantic trees and whatever helps to give the movie the desired *color* and environment. The environment tells a lot about the movie, where it takes place, culture and history.

Flaws in Nigerian movie industry

Nigerian filmmakers and producers should be given a pat on the back for their enviable efforts in the modern movie revolution. There is a tremendous growth in the industry locally since the end of the civil war. An upsurge, however has been witnessed since the early eighties. Nigeria's contribution has elsewhere been noted. However the flaws – defects, imperfections – found in Nigeria's movie industry have attracted our attention. Its peculiar features make them typical Nigerian, and perhaps, distasteful in some parts. Hence the need for some critical overview!

These flaws fall in line with most other negative factors peculiar to Nigeria and which we have continued to point out in our write-ups titled "**ONLY IN NIGERIA**". If these criticisms are positively considered by those concerned, surely a success story of Nigeria's movie industry will be told before

the end of the next decade. What we intend to examine here are mostly the negative features of Nigerian movies which most Nigerians as well as non-Nigerians point out. The critics are not wicked, unpatriotic or unappreciative. Not at all! They are not even professionals in this field.

Simple minded as they are, I guess they only wish the makers and producers could take note of some of the flaws. No one is perfect. Perhaps at the end of the day Nigerians, young and old, could be asked to express their views on "Nigeria Movie Business". Has it done more harm than good?" Has it enhanced the social, cultural, moral image of Nigeria, within and outside our fatherland? We are at the crossroads! Which way forward! Can Nigerian movie industry flourish like other successful ones all over the world?

Content and style – what do they promote?

Most Nigerian movies endeavor to tell a story. How palatable are their contents? How provocative or challenging and didactic are they? How rich are their contents? Rumors have it that some African countries have banned the circulation of Nigerian movies in their parts of the world. Have Nigerians, in their *419 style* again come to *invade* them? Does *invading them*, cynically mean *corrupting their people*? Truly movie pictures – white and black, local and foreign, can corrupt. Surely this is not the intention of moviemakers!

What measures do moviemakers and adults take to protect kids, as done in other parts of the world from dangerous materials movies carry? Not in Nigeria! In Nigeria there is no separation of evil from good, wheat from cockle, and play from brawl. Everything is allowed. Nothing is illicit, and so forbidden to some set of people. Adults and kids can watch any type of movie, **blue, white**, or any color. Kids and adults are free to watch movies carrying 100% hazardous materials: -

- **Domestic violence**
- **Murder and kidnapping**
- **Dirty business intrigues**
- **Nudity and sex – often live!**
- **Armed robbery and fraud**
- **Witchcraft and poisoning**

While other countries prohibit smoking and alcohol consumption in movies, another way of discouraging the evil habit, Nigerian actors – male and female, young and old - smoke and drink with reckless abandon. Nigerian movies seem to promote or encourage what is anathema in other nations and cultures:-

- **Polygamy**
- **Infidelity in marriage**
- **Incestuous or promiscuous life**
- **Concubinage**

In “ALL MY LIFE”, Mr. K. (a wayward womanizer), marries her wife’s sister – Chinenye, when the first wife – Ihuoma failed to conceive a child after five years of married life. The couple needed a boy desperately. Ihuoma initiated the deal for a second wife and begged her sister to succumb to the pressures. Both families – parents, husband and wife, including relations approved the deal. “God is a mysterious being,” they say. When at last both sisters ‘took in’, they brought into the world two bouncing baby boys! But Mr. K. loved Ihuoma really and **never** Chinenye. Now that the beloved wife has born a male child, Chinenye should be chased away. Again it was Ihuoma who initiated the plan and drove her sister and child away! What a moral lesson on marriage and love.

Those who criticize Nigerian movies insist most Nigerian movies usually tell evil and scandalizing stories. Some point at other factors *peculiar to Nigerian movies*. These include:

- **Juju or witchcraft,**
- **Occultism,**
- **Fast-money syndrome**
- **False religious movements.**

“Business” – Nigeria’s brand

Nigerian movies overemphasize Nigeria’s brand of business enterprise. In this context, business simply means fraudulent dealings with persons or organizations and which will always generate quick dividends. The end justifies the means, as Machiavellian plots are carefully laid out. In a short time the fruits of the labor are reaped and there are structures that manifest the new found wealth – mansions, most of which look like international hotels are set up in home towns and villages. Extravagant show of affluence is seen in the fleet of cars purchased and driven around, in the accumulation of chieftaincy titles, and of course in celebrations and society parties. How or where the connections were made is not hard to find out. Trips to Japan, Taiwan, London, New York, Singapore, Korea, Dubai and some other tiny countries with fast growing economies have been made in several occasions. Surely someone or company must have been duped, otherwise how can this young man, formerly a barber, photographer, a secondary school dropout or simply a nonentity be writing checks of millions of naira and dollar? How can his house boy be given a check

of N20,000,000 to cash in a bank? The master is swimming in money, so also his wives and concubines.

What will millions of young school dropouts in Nigeria and elsewhere learn from these movies. Who will blame them if they enroll in the university to study business administration and not agriculture, engineering or medicine? Who will blame them if they ignore any skill the Creator gave them from birth and ‘go into business?’ That was how “Okey” “Chudi” or “Tin Cutter” made it. These young millionaires do not spend years in a workshop or school to arrive where they are now. The ‘way’ or the ‘how’ is clear from the movie. The lesson, the goal of the movie: You have seen it. You have heard it. If you understand, go and put it into practice! In the movie “Spanner Goes Jail”, the protagonist, Spanner, the dwarf actor, confessed he got all the immoral *skills* he invested in the movie from television and movies.

Perhaps it was not just luck or con-man’s mental alertness that placed this young rich man in the revered position he now occupies among his former peers. It is through the action of the witchdoctor. Concoctions prepared by juju priests work wonders! Fair is foul and foul is fair. No matter the cost, pursue any course that would enroll you into the millionaire club. The concoction could have consumed some human heads to prepare. Only the goal, not the means matters in the struggle to succeed in life. Then one is bound to ask whether these phenomena associated with accumulation of wealth are part of the stuff with which African mentality and culture had been fashioned by the Creator right from time immemorial or are they man-made?

Worried Nigerians also complain that most Nigerian movies exhibit **same story line syndrome**. How the movie begins points immediately to the way it will end. **Suspense** is not employed in most of the movies. This is why some of the movies are boring and soon become *obsolete*. Why watch a movie, with irresistible passion, when you know the result of the initiated action right from the start?

Perhaps this young millionaire who began his career in business with consultation with a juju doctor, connived with another friend, duped the master or killed him and *inherited* the multi-billion naira business will die a violent death. Nemesis will catch up with him. Fine! Perhaps this is a good lesson for those who care! Behold a lot of damage had been done before we come to this funny end of the movie. The end, the outcome is known right from the start.

Juju and witchcraft syndrome

In content, critics point out that Nigerian movies usually tell stories of village and family feuds, intrigues, land disputes, struggle for titles and leadership positions which lead to acrimony, hostility and bad blood. Dangerous plots and conspiracies unveil themselves in the act of juju poisoning with the intention to kill an opponent and take over his or her possessions, including wives and

husbands, land and property. If poisoning fails, assassins are hired to execute the ugly deed.

Witchdoctors are routinely consulted as in the remote past - some hundreds of years before the advent of Christianity. Those days uncountable number of gods and deities ruled the earth, mountains, seas, and the great forests. In moments of disaster, sacrifices were made by witchdoctors to appease the angry deities. In those dark ages spirits played great role in human destiny. Evil spirits directed bad acts on man. No event came by any natural means. Death, disease and disasters were results of wicked acts of the man's enemies, both seen and unseen.

Impotency, childlessness or barrenness, are attributed to the wicked machinations of the enemy. The antagonist could be a jealous second or third wife, a former girl or boy-friend. The impotent man or the barren woman is under a spell or has been bewitched. The person who prepares this magic formula and pronounces the curse is no other *god* but a village witchdoctor. A bewitched man loses all sexual powers and his wives and friends only make a mockery of him.

Africans and perhaps some white and brown people all over the world may still hold fast to these primitive beliefs. They are free. Our worry however is, why Nigerian movies should present or uphold these beliefs as impeccable truths or realities. It all means that civilization, religion and science have not touched the lives of the actors and viewers who seem to agree with them!

Romantic love - sex and murder

Most Nigerian movies tell pedantic stories of wicked intrigues between lovers. The type of love affair they relate has no resemblance to that of Shakespearean **Romeo and Juliet** - *Amorous union*. No. The Nigerian type is centered on false love with juju as its contraption. The girl-friend usually poisons the man. Normally a concoction is delivered or simply put in a liquid. The man who drinks it immediately loses his senses. In the most bizarre manner the *infected* man drives away all his good friends and even brothers and sisters, including his very mother to make room for the sole lover who now has won his heart. The man has been bewitched. The juju has worked!

How can the bewitched person recover his senses and lost glory? Another juju priest is consulted. Traditional sacrifices and rituals are performed. This time it is not the village witchdoctor who carries out the cleansing exercise or **exorcism**. Ashamed to go to the juju priest for consultations and sacrifices, family members of the bewitched man may prefer the present day Juju priests who have almost succeeded in replacing the old witchdoctors. These are the modern pastors, healers and founders of new religious movements. They are miracle workers, healers and seers. They smell out witches and evil spirits and claim to have power over the unseen forces that threaten lives and property.

They ‘plant’ and ‘uproot’ bad medicine and claim control ‘in the name of Jesus’ over all devilish powers. They earn a nice fee for this business.

With ‘**Holy Ghost Fire**’ abracadabra the bewitched fellow receives miraculous healing. It is possible for watchers to behold when the possessing demonic powers actually leave the victim. In mysterious and debilitating **heavenly flashes**, and like pressing a computer button, the diabolic powers abandon their victim, who after the spiritual ordeal regains consciousness, and perhaps too, all his lost possessions. God has won. The devil has been defeated. All is possible as the bewitched man is found again in the midst of his people. Halleluiah!

Bad medicine: juju - generates wealth

Many do not believe in this type of stuff called **ogwu ego** among the Igbo people. But Nigerian movies accept the reality that money can be made or multiplied using diabolic forces. Their movies in content seem to encourage young people to look for this magic wand, Ogwu Ego, this rare pearl that must be possessed if one wants to laugh at poverty. Like real medicine it cures one’s *pains* and other *ailments*. For most young and ambitious Nigerians there is no shortcut to opulence except by fraud. If your wit, your con-man tactics can’t help – as in *419 saga* – look for Ogwu Ego. But be ready to meet with the demands of the juju man who concocts this medicine, panacea for all problems:

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- **Dragon’s teeth**
- **Liver of a new-born child**
- **Tail of a viper**
- **Fifty-year-old grave digger’s shovel**
- **Entrails of a scorpion**
- **Breast of a 15-year-old virgin**
- **A hundred-year-old widow’s cloth**
- **Tongue of a bat**

There are many more catalogues of some frightening objects. This magic medicine for money may at last help enroll you into a secret society, a.k.a. ‘**Millionaire Club**’. To be sure you may also be ready to lose or forego a very important part of yourself – may be – **your dear wife, mother or even your very life**. Yes, your life, too! You must choose to die early in order to enjoy the huge wealth into which the members of your new club will lead you to swim. It may not matter much if you live for a year or two after accumulating the much-coveted treasure. The important thing is the enjoyment of your newfound wealth no matter how brief the period!

When you jam the jackpot and money begins to flow like water, spend extravagantly on useless ceremonies and feasts. Marry as many glamorous women as possible. Buy the most luxurious cars on earth. Build mansions and equip them with furniture imported from London, New York, or Paris. It is one of the dictates of the god of the Millionaire club with which you must put up. You may not use any part of the money to execute useful projects or help the poor people closest to you. No. The mammon of iniquity you have acquired is only for devilish purposes. When eventually you die, your wealth goes back to its source.

Is the type of ‘get-rich formula’ the movie writers propound fake or real? Does it work? It may. If you believe! Why not believe if many have gone through those rituals and made it. Are the mansions they left behind not standing there as evidence? But the owner has died and no one had any opportunity to interview him before his death. And worse still he left no will! That is part of the secrets of the secret society!

Rating problem

Ronald Rolheiser, an American author of the book, *God’s Politics*, has predicted that the next century will bear a lot of evil fruits that will affect everyone. One of the promoters of the great evils is television, which he describes as ‘soulless television.’ Television is accused of corrupting the world through what it shows – violence, pornography and hatred. Most of the **shows** are described as **movies!** And the rate people are consuming the contents is simply breathtaking! This is probably why in developed and developing countries, except in Nigeria, movies are ‘rated’ [ranked, valued – who should watch it or not].

In our world today, if movie producers were to expunge all “dirty materials” – including *sex, love, violence, murder, bank robberies, terrible accidents, death, intrigues, deceit, and nudity* from their movies surely they may lose lots of money in the business and as well lose patronage. They may equally lose in every sense if their movies **teach or preach** only good morals and Christian love. A lot of people watch movies for various motives, good and bad. If it is not so, Internet web sites promoting pornography would have closed down for lack of visitors! No. Many, millions of people, spend fortunes to enjoy what some other people call ‘evil’. Yes, you find it in Biblical history: What the ancient Hebrews called sin or abominable vice was for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah simply virtue!

But most adults, especially parents, no matter their beliefs and moral convictions, always do everything possible to protect their children from much exposure to these *dirty scenes*. They believe when the kids are old enough, they can make their choices. To shield their young ones from what people generally accept as *unorthodox*; this I guess is why movies generally are rated. Some are produced for adults only. Adults and parents are held responsible for the evil

consequences of lack of protection of their children. In the United States **Adult Library** refers to sex shops and theatres which can be visited only by adults. Young people below the age of 18 seen around *adult library* can be arrested! According to statistics recently released in the United States, more than 62% of High school and College students have access to guns, drugs and pornographic materials. Movies shown in the television are primary promoters of violence, dangerous drugs and guns and of course, pornography. The warnings by security officials are clear: **“Parents to share their children’s jail sentences when caught and convicted!”**

Depiction of Africa’s primitive past

Many Nigerian movies should be banned from circulation and never be exported to other countries. The movie, **No More War** and **The God to serve**, belong to this category of Nigerian movies telling gory stories of Africa’s unfortunate past. What is the plot of the Nigerian movie **The God to Serve**? What did the producers mean to teach Nigerians and non-Nigerians? The more than three-hour movie rehearsed the *story* of the **Primitive Peoples of the Lower Niger**, as Chinua Achebe put it in his *Things Fall Apart*. Generations yet unborn during that era of savagery, warfare and slavery could learn all the facts from *The God to Serve*. It was the era when the gods and forest and mountain deities ruled the black man’s world. Their oracles or revelations and orders were never challenged. That was how Okonkwo’s god ordered the beheading of Ikemefula. Okonkwo must carry out the wishes of the gods, even though the lad Ikemefula called him ‘father’.

The *God to Serve* told the stories of the killing of twins as well as stories of human sacrifice. Evil-looking, stone-faced executioners carried out the dictates of the oracle diviners to the letter. Twins were snatched from the breasts of their mothers and mercilessly cut to pieces. A husband who supported the agitation of his wife was beheaded for challenging the messengers of the evil forest god. Incredible number of human heads must be cut and to appease an angry god or to avert a natural or man-made disaster. Those days even the orders of the gods must be carried out for burial of a local chief. The dead must be buried with the living! Some human slaves had to accompany the dead chieftain to the abode of the ancestors! A vivid picture is drawn by Buchi Emecheta in her novel **The Joys of Motherhood**. It was at the burial site of Ona Agbadi:

Then her personal slave was ceremoniously called in a loud voice by the medicine man: she must be laid inside the grave first. A good slave was supposed to jump inside the grave willingly, happy to accompany her mistress. But this young and beautiful girl did not wish to die yet. She kept begging for her life, much to the annoyance of most of the men standing

around. The women stood far off for this was a custom they found revolting. The poor slave was pushed into the shallow grave, but she struggled out, fighting and pleading, appealing to her owner Agbadi. Then the eldest son of Agbadi in anger gave the girl a sharp blow with the head of the cutlass he was carrying: “Go down like a good slave!” he shouted. (p. 21)

During those dark ages terror of the unseen powers reigned supreme. The story of **The God to Serve**, however did not end there. The lesson it wanted to teach, the new religion it wanted to introduce came too late. It came after all the disgusting scenarios had done a great damage to the psyche of the audience. It was a wrong way to teach certain truths! Why, for example should a teacher of English language teach students ‘bad’ English in order to introduce them to ‘good English?’ In other words the students learn by heart ‘*what not to say.*’ Thereafter they are taught the right thing, ‘*what to say.*’

The reactions of white people who watch such movies are never good. It is hard to convince them the movies are for entertainment too! They are full of blood, wickedness and every type of evil. Producers of such films as well as all Nigerians have a lot of questions to answer. “Did this type of thing really happen in the history of your people?” Do they still happen today? “Why did your people kill twins?” Were things really as bad as that?” White people are convinced things have not really changed even with the advent of Christianity!

Movies such as the one cited above (and many others) serve little or no good purpose as far as *history*, *civilization* and *culture* are concerned. It is not always useful to teach what is good by revealing, unveiling all that went wrong right from the beginning. Where does the emphasis lie – the failures of the old religion or the successes of the new one?

“Osuofia in London”

Nigerian comedians and movie producers should contribute positively to the cultural, social, spiritual, moral and economic development of our country. They should not undermine them. **OSUOFIA IN LONDON** seems to have portrayed not only Nigerians, but the black race as *still uncivilized folks*. One would wonder what **Osuofia** went to London to do; to sell our primitivity, backwardness, ignorance and shame? If Osuofia went to London to sell Nigeria’s good social, cultural, moral and spiritual values, Nigeria could have gained economically. Osuofia went to London to tell the white people, the whole world that civilization has not reached the part of the world called Nigeria. In modern times how can one expect to see pit toilets in the land of the white man? How can one get into the zoo and begin to hunt animals and birds there? Why should a buyer expect to see *Osuofia’s Agege bread* in a London bakery? *Osuofia in London* stuff is not good for Nigerian movie industry.

Most Nigerians in Europe and America complain that Nigerian movies portray Nigeria as a country still in Dark Ages, a country where only evil thrives, a country morally, socially and spiritually bankrupt. Do we need to make a movie of the *Okija Shrine* and sell it abroad? What will our European and American friends think about us and our culture? Shall we get angry if white people call us bad names? One worried Nigerian woman in United States cautioned: “Our Nigerian film producers should not always portray Nigeria and Nigerians as primitive, bush, ignorant, uncivilized bunch of cannibals.” Let me hope that those being addressed should take note!

Language, time, and place

Another flaw in Nigerian movies has to do with language and time. Most of the Nigerian movies are in English. Only few are found in local dialects. The use of English – Pidgin or Queen’s most of the time, no matter the type, time and place of the movie – instead of local dialects is a great flaw in the Nigerian film industry. The language or dialect spoken by witchdoctors in Nigerian movies does not seem to take into account time and place. Why on earth should the witchdoctor of the pre-Christian and pre-colonial era speak English, and often ‘Queen’s English’ and not Igbo, Yoruba or Efik?

How translatable into English are Igbo traditional religious incantations and aphorisms? How does it sound when young Igbo ladies of Umuofia in the sixteenth century Igbo community, dressed in Igbo traditional attire, as they head to the local stream to fetch water, with pots balanced on their heads discuss in Queen’s English? Who taught “Okonkwo, Nwoye and Ezimma” English they spoke just to make viewers understand them? It is simply a blunder of anachronism – literary genre from a different period of time wrongly placed in a modern historical setting in fiction or drama.

Look at how the **Indians** have left deep impression of their music and culture on the lives of Nigerians who never understand a word of **Hindi, Gujirati, Punjabi, or Malayalam or any of those languages spoken in the Far East countries!** The Indians have truly made a fortune out of the movie industry. One may equally ask why the Indians whose movies flood the Nigerian market do not speak, dance, and perform in English *to help non-Indians enjoy and patronize their films*. Surely we all buy, enjoy Indian movies without understanding a word of what they say. Some may have translations sub-titled for those who care to grab details of the story. I know many who purchase Indian films because of their sweet music, acrobatic shows and dances.

Through movies, Nigerians – Hausa, Igbo or Yoruba and other ethnic groups can export our good culture and traditions to other peoples of the world. The vehicle for this cultural exportation is language, precisely the original language of a people, which must be handled by those who know and speak it well. Perhaps it is as a result of their imperfection in the local Nigerian

languages, especially Igbo that actors and actresses prefer English, Pidgin, or *Engli-Igbo*. Nigerian movie makers can learn a lot from the Indians.

Setting

While no one would expect movies made in Nigeria to show Hollywood, New York, Paris, or London scenarios, common sense should guide the Nigerian movie makers to make their films ‘for export’ not in the primitive village environment, bushes, thick African forests, swamps, poverty stricken hamlets, ghost and ancestral spirit infested communities. Africans, as well as Nigerians have been known by these phenomena and scenarios. Although most of the Nigerian movies are shot in the big cities, unfortunately many more are shot in dilapidated buildings, most of which portray Nigeria as yet a country that has not made any improvement in civilization and economy since the first white people set foot on the black African soil.

While one would not advocate Nigerian film makers shooting all their films in and around skyscrapers and big international hotels of Lagos and Abuja common sense should direct the makers to select scenes that would at least portray Nigeria as a developing country. Ajagunle and village slums, surrounded by shacks of the 1500s or bushes full of ghosts and wild animals may not be the ideal. Some serious thoughts should be given to an idea of *Hollywood* in Nigeria!

Currency and obsolescence

Another serious problem with the Nigerian movie has to do with “out-of-date syndrome.” Before you hear about the movie’s debut or first appearance, you are told that it is old, namely, no more in vogue. What a farce! Surely Nigerians generally do not like “old-fashioned” things. This is why museums are virtually non-existent in Nigeria. We have few artifacts or works of art to show our roots and history. We do not make collections of anything. “After use throw into the trash!” This seems to be the slogan. Who will drum it into the ears of Nigerians that many ancient epic movies of the Greek and Roman civilizations are still rented in blockbusters or sold in movie stores in Europe and America?

Actors and actresses - dramatis personae

Most of them are truly wonderful and compare well with counterparts elsewhere. But unfortunately, many Nigerian actors and actresses often play the **devil** and the **angel** at the same time. Perhaps not in the same movie. How can an actor, a well known face, play the role of **priest, bishop or religious person** and soon after PLAY a **devil, witchdoctor or an armed robber?** The actors and actresses, particularly comedians should be gainfully employed.

Most Nigerians who enjoyed **Zebraudaya** and his troupe in the past will definitely appreciate the man's chief and consistent role as "**Father of the family**". His wife – **Ovreria**, continued to play the usual "**House wife and Mother**". The "**House Boys**" remained always **Gregory Akabuogu, Clarus Mgbeojirikwe of Ndi Olumbe**"; **Nath** was always the **old man and messenger**, while **Jegede Shokoya**, represented the **flamboyant Nigerian artiste**.

Rarely did these great Nigerian comedians change roles at random. Perhaps, it is not a bad idea to recommend that **Osuofia** remains the average 'raw, uncultured, vulgar, but humorous entertainer' he handles well. He may not jump from that role to that of a *king* or a minister in government. Should **Pete Edochie** not remain *a great polished father, a respectable man belonging to an aristocratic class*? Should he at the same time play '*A Village Witchdoctor*', or '*A Village Warrior*'? Let the gentleman "X" in their **Romantic Movies**" consistently be **Romeo**. Let the beautiful "Miss Y" continue to play "**Juliet**" or "**Helena of Troy**". The list of reorganized Dramatis Personae can continue.

The comedians

"I use uplifting humor to effect positive change in the world", asserts Regan, a renowned American comedian. It is principally from their entertaining and humorous content that most Nigerian comedies derive their popularity among the local and international audience. Sit down and laugh. Fine! It can help mend faces. Victor Borge says "Laughter is the shortest distance between two people." For great comedians, therefore humor is an effective weapon used to effect a change. Regan stresses the point further, when he said: "I use uplifting humor to effect positive change in the world." So is the role of a comedian, a person who attempts to make people laugh through a variety of ways very important in any play, especially in a comic relief.

Most popular Nigerian movies are comedies, usually plays, full of humorous scenes, witty sayings, jokes and ridiculous situations. Surely the impact of comedians has remained tremendous in the current Nigerian movie industry. Most children and adults enjoy their comedies. Most Nigerian movie lovers enjoy "**Osuofia**" - **real name - Nkem Owoh** whenever he performs in any movie. How forward will "**Osuofia**" as an entertainer move the movie industry in Nigeria? This is a nice question. The same question can be asked about the two **Bad boys a.k.a. Agwo na Akpi** – **real names – Chinedu Ikedieze and Osita Iheme**. These two 'boys' have most of the time been assigned negative roles in Nigerian movies. Their antagonists have called them names that identify them as mischievous boys and crooks or names that portray them to their admirers as distasteful fellows – Two bad boys, Two small boys, Two small rats, Briefcase men, Two Lilliputians, Two half-men,

Two chimpanzees, Two monkeys, Two con-men, Two rabbits etc. Could their managers allow them play better roles in their movies?

Lessons from the past

Nigerian actors that make people remember the days of **Zebrudaya Okoro Igwe Nwogbo alias 4.30**, - real name **Chika Okpala** - may compare well with some other popular comedians of international repute, ancient and modern. Such actors when given much more positive roles to play in Nigerian movies will remain abundantly and for long relevant. Well-groomed, their stature can comfortably match that of, “Charlie Chaplin”, for example. **Charlie Chaplin - full name - Sir Charles Spencer Chaplin (1889-1977)** was an English motion-picture actor, director, producer, and composer, one of the most creative artists in film history, who first achieved worldwide fame through his performances in silent films. Born in London, as a child Chaplin appeared in music hall and pantomime performances. In 1910 he toured the United States with a pantomime troupe and decided to remain in the country. Chaplin perfected an individual style of performing, derived from the circus clown and the mime, combining acrobatic elegance, expressive gesture, facial eloquence, and impeccable timing.

If we use “**Agwo na Akpi**” to illustrate our point here, Nigerian producers may get award in a movie fiesta. The *duo*, *Agwo na Akpi* match well and are good comedians. Their appearance provokes laughter and surely both have perfected individual style of performing. But have *Agwo na Akpi* been able to communicate in more serious satires which would deal consistent blows on the ills of Nigerian society? Children and adults who admire the *duo* in spite of their mischievous roles, still identify them, from moral perspective as deceivers, fraudsters, con artists, cheats, liars and swindlers. Such actors, as far as enviable role model in society is concerned, have not much in terms of good morals to offer the Nigerian younger generation.

Right from the start their admirers always watch out carefully to detect their evil plans. Some get amused, while some get disturbed. Most disturbing is what such ‘little kids’ or dwarfs are able to accomplish at such ‘young age’! When they have succeeded they express their joy in happy embraces. Fine! One could argue that such is part of the ‘show’. But there should be more to that. In the production of such materials for home videos, producers, screen writers, directors, unit managers, editors and designers must work together to teach this generation of Nigerians some bit of morality and decency, especially now it is one of the most accomplished and respected actors that is delivering the message.

Selling our good products abroad

It is a well-known fact that many African countries and leaders spend millions of dollars and euros contracting foreign agencies and companies to help mend the bad image of their country or leaders abroad. Many African countries and leaders have dented their images as a result of corruption and draconic governance.

If this costly exercise can actually produce good results, film producers in developing countries like Nigeria can help out a bit. A lot of useful materials can be embedded in the movies to promote the genuine interest of the masses and communities. What ‘products’ can we sell abroad?

Some customs, ways of life, traditions, and ideologies can be good and must be preserved for posterity. They have to be preserved from undue corruption, and be taught and transmitted to the younger generation – the tradition of our ancestors. Not only that the younger generation should master the ‘Credo,” they should equally ‘tell it’ to the other people and nations.

There is no doubt that Americans have ‘infested’ the rest of the world with their culture – good and bad. Are they not selling their brands of democracy, freedom and justice to the other nations? Don’t they insist that theirs is always the best that must be copied by the rest of the world? Surely Hollywood has played a key role in the ‘*Americanization*’ of the world. Accept it or reject it, love them and hate them at the same time, the fact remains that they have succeeded in great measure in ‘converting’ the world to their new religion, namely “Americanism.” Thanks in part to their movie industry.

Nigerian movie industry – which way forward?

Our main worry in this write-up is the impact of Nigerian movies on Nigerians and the outside world since the sages say a picture paints or speaks one thousand words. What do Nigerian film makers try to sell at home and abroad? Whether feature, documentary, or animated films – commonly called cartoons, the producer has a story to tell, a message to communicate to the audience. Reactions are expected from the audience. The work of the American D.W. Griffith was said to exemplify the transformation of motion pictures from the early days of one-reelers to an era of Hollywood worldwide dominance. In his feature film *The Birth of a Nation* Griffith planned a historical epic of the *American Civil War*. Three hours in length, *The Birth of a Nation* stunned its audiences with its dazzling spectacle of a still-recent event and established motion pictures as an art form for cultured spectators. It set up a lot of lasting reactions.

The Americans, Europeans, and the Asians have sold a lot of their ‘stuff’ to the rest of the world. We have consciously or unconsciously embraced some of them – good and bad. What has Nigerian film makers to sell to the outside world? What are they up in the business of culture promotion? Nigeria offers an interesting case-study for sociologists and teachers of religion and culture. With

its millions of people, speaking over 250 different languages and dialects, Nigeria has a lot to offer or 'export' to the rest of the world; some fascinating traditions of its peoples – their music, sports, religious practices, crafts and so on. Many Nigerian ethnic groups can proudly tell the world – in motion pictures - much about **extended family system, Nigerian brand of 'life and health insurance system', marriage, hospitality, and sacredness of life.** Most of these have perennial values that speak well of people that make up the entity called Nigeria and African in general.

Movie, a weapon for change in Nigeria.

Laughter should not be the only result of a well-planned drama, developed into moving pictures. Nigerians actors and comedians have a lot to learn from their counter-parts, ancient and modern. In history of movie industry we learn how many actors and producers used their art to teach moral lessons, attack evil and evil men.

Terence (190-159 BC), Roman playwright, whose plays were said to be the forerunners of the modern comedy of manners, is still a revered comedian today. Terence's plays were light, witty dramas satirizing life among the wealthy and sophisticated classes of society.

Aristophanes (448-385 BC), Athenian playwright, was considered one of the greatest writers of comedy in literary history. His plays have been produced through the centuries and have remained popular because of their wit, comic invention, and poetic language. Aristophanes was first and foremost a satirist. During his lifetime Athens underwent a period of convulsive cultural and social change, and he found a ready target in the politicians, poets, and philosophers of his day. **The Knights** (424 BC), the first of the plays of Aristophanes to be presented under his own name, was said to be a devastating satire about Athenian politician and military leader called Cleon. In **The Wasps** (422 BC) Aristophanes satirized the courts of justice of the day, and in **The Peace** (421 BC) he again argued for peace between Athens and Sparta.

Ethical Revolution in Nigeria

Many past political administrations in Nigeria have at one time or the other embarked on **ethical/moral revolution** in Nigeria. But no positive results have been registered. Rather the situation has deteriorated. There is no doubt that Nigerian movie producers are already carrying out the crusade for moral emancipation in our country. If they put more energy and inject more resources into this industry there is hope the younger generation can learn at least to

criticize evil and not embrace it. A few examples in the crusade for moral and ethical revolution by the Nigerian movie makers point to the right direction: **Bed of Roses**. This movie sends the right message to Nigerian young men and women who marry not out of true love but money. Money does not bring the ultimate happiness and can be sources of our woes.

Daddy must obey condemns unfaithfulness in marriage and the hypocrisy of many a Christian and loud halleluiah pastors and church-goers who even hide condoms in their Bibles. Men, even those with many wives still have the morbid passion pursuing other men's wives. Mothers with as many as eight children have still time and interest in chasing sugar daddies. **Bed of Roses** and **Daddy must obey**, and many others like them, I was told sold like hot cakes in the United States and Europe where those who bought the movie and got the message summoned friends to watch. Surely both Nigerian men and women who marry just to get **green card** and stay put in the United States - the *Promised Land* will learn a great lesson from these movies and many others like them. Unfaithfulness in marriage, broken promises, and disillusionment have ruined the lives of many Nigerians living in the United States and Europe.

Spanner goes to jail is just the *converse* of the above two movies. In this movie, immorality, love intrigues, lies, deception, double-standard in marriage, seemed to be the *lesson taught*. Whatever the script-writer wanted to achieve this brand of movie should have the warning '**not for export**', '**for adults only!**' Nigerian movie producers must consider the serious aspect of using their moving pictures to carry out political, social, cultural and ethical revolution in our country. They should not be satisfied with the hackneyed comedies, showing the faces of the same boring actors and actresses, telling the same fire-side stories of love and hate, get rich quickly, celebrate and die tomorrow.

More political documentaries satirizing the lives of bad leaders should be undertaken. **Rise and Fall of Idi Amin** and **No Coffin, No Grave!** are still useful movies that have something to teach African dictators. And there are still many of them around. They either stage a 'come-back', after a short 'vacation' or 'break' or they devise means of seeking a third or fourth tenure, thus perpetuating their draconic rulership in a type of government they describe as 'democracy'. Nigerian movie makers must borrow a leaf from Michael Moore, the author of **Fahrenheit 9/11!**

"Fahrenheit 9/11" – in America, where democracy works

Americans truly practice what they preach, namely, Democracy! *Fahrenheit 9/11* is a documentary on 9/11 a.k.a. "*September 11*" or "The Terrorist bombing of the twin towers in New York." The whole world heard it. But why should the present president of the United States become the target of devastating criticism leashed by the movie? Michael Moore, the writer,

producer and director of Fahrenheit 9/11 through this controversial documentary exposed, lashed out at, criticized, and ridiculed, the president of United States. The president was accused of all sorts of incredible crimes in political and economic life of United States. The great president of America is not immune to criticism.

Conclusion

Nigerian movie promoters should be encouraged in this business. If they are able to sustain the ‘revolution’, and produce better ‘polished’ materials that are marketable abroad, there is no doubt they will be doing a lot of good service to our fatherland. Good movies that are rich in content and measure up to the expected standard will help the once-giant of Africa regain, recover her lost glories. Then one can be proud to affirm that **‘something good can also come out of Nazareth.’**

Economically Nigerian nation will gain a lot of foreign exchange from abroad. Apart from their numerous white and non-Nigerian friends, millions of Nigerians living in Europe and America will patronize good Nigerian products, including movies and music. As in sports, other African nations and the rest of the world look on Nigeria to take the lead in movie industry. Nigerian film companies should therefore take over markets overseas using the tactics of higher volume production and lower prices.

But they should equally realize that “Rome was not built in a day.” While aiming to achieve, to succeed, Nigerians should not be in a great hurry. The production of a good movie can take years, enormous resources - in terms of money and materials - studies and research that would go into such a movie can never be underestimated.

This is why stakeholders should guard against the syndrome of obsolescence. Most young Nigerians who enjoy these local movies rarely like to watch them twice. They brand them ‘obsolete’ or ‘old!’ These are movies that had been released just a couple of months or weeks ago. So you find many Nigerian families stockpiling movies that are never watched again, since ‘they are old.’ Even where a movie is truly old, it is not a reason to throw it away as worthless. There may still be a lot to learn from old movies!

Will the ‘revolution’ last? That is a good question. Those who wish Nigeria well in this industry can only pray and hope that the ‘idea’ would not be abandoned so soon. If that happens, the writer of this ‘essay’ would have been vindicated. Such would surely make the issue truly ‘Nigerian’, Nigeria’s peculiar ways of doing things, hence **Only in Nigeria**, such a thing would happen and few people would get worried.

CHAPTER 10

STRANGE ATTITUDES AND TRADITIONS

66. WOMEN ARE WORTHLESS FOLKS – ONLY IN NIGERIA

There are some “strange attitudes” or “traditions” that are exceptionally Nigerian. They say “old customs die hard”. Nigerians’ Stone Age forebears thought like that. Yes. Once they believed it was unnatural for a woman to bear more than a child at a time. Twins were murdered and offended Mother Earth was usually appeased with sacrifices to avert more terrible disasters.

Most Igbo people of Nigeria still accept the “Osu Caste System”. Most Igbo educated and practising Christians would not take the risk of failing to find out the caste system of an intending suitor. If the intending in-law has any tint of the “Osu Myth”, his offers are immediately rejected. If any anomaly is discovered even after the consummation of the marriage, the union is automatically dissolved. Christianity has not succeeded in changing the old attitudes.

Here we examine the general attitude of most Nigerians towards women and the handicapped, especially lunatics. In their bid to imitate the Western World, we see the type of democracy Nigerians practice, the way they choose their political leaders. How Nigerians mourn their dead can amuse and as well stun strangers. Nigeria’s Ghost Workers and Money Launderers tell the rest of the story about their strange attitudes.

Women, worthless folks really?

“And God went on to say: ‘Let us make man in our own image; according to our likeness... And God proceeded to create man in his own image. In God’s image he created him, man and woman he created them...’ [Genesis: 1:26-28]. We all are familiar with the creation myth as the Holy Writers recorded it in the Book of Genesis. Although we are told in the second creation account [2:21-24] that God used a rib from the man to make the woman, it was never implied that the woman was in any way inferior to man. This second account went to emphasize unity between man and woman in marriage, in the building up of family.

There is no doubt anyway that primitive culture [way of life] and tradition [things handed down] have influenced peoples of all races, including ancient Church leaders [among them Paul and Christian teachers] and writers to assign inferior position to women. But the trend is changing in most developed and developing countries. Elsewhere women have risen to fight for their rights and equal treatment with men. They can no more be relegated to the background. In

America, for example, the designation ‘man’ which used to represent human race has almost been completely deleted from books – sacred and profane.

No one will blame the Hebrews – the chosen people of God for downgrading the worth of women and upholding the worth of the male folk. All was “according to the Holy Writ.” “It was the word of God.” Who will equally blame the Moslems for asking their women to cover themselves in masquerade costume? The Holy Prophet or his successor ordained it so. Any one challenging the Holy Writing may face instant death.

Nigerians and progeny

For whatever reasons Nigerians in general have continued to show in word and deed that they value men-folk more than women-folk? They prefer sons to daughters. In certain circumstances, given the choice, the average ‘desperate’ Nigerian married man and woman would prefer a male issue to 100 daughters. They seem to agree with the Psalmist: “Truly sons are a gift from the Lord, a blessing, the fruit of the womb. Indeed the sons of youth are like arrows in the hand of a warrior. O the happiness of the man who has filled his quiver with these arrows! He will have no cause for shame when he disputes with his foes in the gateways” [(Ps126)(127)].

So you find lamentation (never feasting) when the new wife consistently gives birth to baby girls. The man must double efforts so that at least out of the possible 12 – 15 pregnancies, the wife could produce a boy. Who says then that the population of Nigeria will not double or even triple in the next 20 – 30 years if the trend does not change. In one village in my local government area, I know one woman who made 11 baby girls. She prayed hard, and called on Sarah, Hanna and Elizabeth to intercede for her before the Almighty God who gives life to grant her the joy of carrying a baby boy.

She and her husband were wedded in Church and were devoted Catholics. The man had rejected all temptations to take a second wife. At the twelfth pregnancy, the woman hoped for the best. Unfortunately it was a girl again! Even as the nurses were pulling out the child the woman was quite awake and full of anxiety to ask the nurses what it was she bore. “A girl!” said the voice. The woman fainted. It took time to resuscitate her. It was only at the thirteenth pregnancy that God “blessed” their marriage. It was a baby boy. And they named him “Miracle” (Ogbara Igbo Ghaarii). Surely it was not the making of man. All miraculous events have God, Jehovah, as their author.

Lord, we are asking for a boy.

When Nigerians pray for fruit of the womb (mkpuru nke afo), they simply mean a male issue. They are not just **asking for the gift of any human person**. They do not make the mistake in their prayers **asking that the Lord’s will be done**.

That will be a disaster. They pretend they are open and have no choice. Never. They will not want the Lord to make a mistake of giving them the wrong choice. How do you know they are not appreciative of the gift of the fruit of the womb (precisely female)? They don't announce it to friends. When unfortunately asked by a concerned neighbor, they give the answer in subdued tones. How do you know they are happy with the outcome? They broadcast it abroad. "My wife has been delivered of a bouncing baby...." With broad smiles on his face and in state of frenzy he pronounces the 'outcome' – **(bbb)** a bouncing baby boy!

They are appreciative. Husband and wife celebrate the naming ceremony of the much-wished-baby-boy extravagantly. These days such celebrations look like traditional wedding (igba nkwu). Friends and relations, far and wide, are invited. Printed invitation cards are sent out in time and true friends are begged never to fail. Here is a sample of such invitation I received recently. It was a celebration organized for the fourth child and the first male! Happy Christening and Birthday of EMENIKE. Please join us in giving God thanks for the gift of Emenike, in celebrating the birthday and baptism of our son **Nathan Emenike** on *.....Reception follows service at.....*(Then a photo of Emenike with angels surrounding the baby boy). May heaven's angels watch over you, at your birthday and Christening. The celebration was taking place in far-away Lagos and I was to travel from East to Western Nigeria.

None of the first three daughters ever received such attention. Asked why he and his wife chose the two names Emenike Nathan, the father, beaming with smiles said, **Yes, I have been telling my wife to take it easy. With God everything is possible. No force should be applied.** Emenike, indeed! As related later, the man had suffered untold hardship, sleepless nights under pressures from the wife to consult witchdoctors to find out who was bewitching her; who was preventing her from having male children. The wife had secretly been to various Pentecostal child-giving Churches but to no avail. She had accused so many other women and men of witchcraft responsible for her state of 'infertility' (here, inability to bear male children). "Nathan", shows that God had answered the man's prayers. It is an ancient Hebrew word meaning "God has given." Did they mean that it was not God who gave them the first three daughters?

Nigerian husbands and wives (particularly those who have been starved of male issues) get intoxicated with joy when the rare pearl arrives. Their joy is not only expressed in the amount of money they lavish in celebrations and thanksgiving ceremonies. The boy must be taken good care of. He must be well-clothed and shoed. Already as an infant learning to crawl, he has at least two pairs of suits and countless number of shoes. He has a suitcase alone for his clothes, when the (other) girls, more than 6 or 7 in number are poorly clothed and must sometimes walk barefoot.

The wonder boy, the joy of his parents, **the golden goal – Obi Nna** – the heart of the father – **Nnam** – the **reincarnate of the mother’s father** receives first class medical attention when he takes ill. The mother will be seen panting with fear and horror if Obinna refuses to eat when he is sick. Obinna is taken to the best hospital or physician in town if he is sick, while his siblings could be treated at home or at the local chemist.

The only son of the family must be well educated. He cannot be sent to any ragtag public school. He takes his place among the children of the well-to-do people in society, in the most expensive nursery, primary, or secondary schools in Nigeria, which are usually boarding schools. He may not after all be a very bright child, but come what may, everything possible must be done to give this only son the best training within and outside the reach of the proud parents. As far as they are concerned no sacrifice is too much for this child.

A misfortune to beget a girl

There are many Nigerian husbands and wives who believe that their inability to produce male issues is as a result of witchcraft which had been planted by their enemy. This bad medicine is responsible for the consistent bearing of female children by the wife. The true story was related by a man himself; a well-educated construction engineer, this man maintained that it was the wicked brother’s wife who bewitched his wife each time the wife got pregnant. The sex of the fetus always changed from male to female!! The wife gave birth to seven girls and no boy. It was only after the consultation of a medicine man (today’s ‘pastor’) that the wife gave birth to her only bouncing baby boy! It was indeed timely intervention, for after the eighth pregnancy the woman never took in again. She had reached her menopause! The man took two more wives, but **alas** none was able to get a boy!

If an enemy, a witch had not ‘locked up’ the womb of the childless mother, or had not been turning the possible males into females to punish the mother, then the wife must be responsible for this damned misfortune of begetting only female issues. Or could it be the man? Science teaches that a man can be impotent, (unable to impregnate a woman). But it does not specify that a couple’s ‘misfortune’ of begetting only female issues can be described as *impotency* on the part of the man. When this ‘misfortune’ continues to occur, someone must however take the blame, either the man or the woman in her village.

Here is a “proven” case. A man was happily married to his young and beautiful wife. Within the first 4 years of their marriage they had already 4 beautiful daughters. Unfortunately the man died in a car accident. The woman was worried. Since they had no boy, she and her daughters could not inherit anything that belonged to the husband. Unfortunately the husband’s father was

still alive, a young man full of life. She was the type that maintained that women were worthless creatures.

Well, the woman had no option than to try it out with any other man, since her very husband could not make it. She was convinced her husband was responsible for their misfortune of begetting only daughters. She took in and had her fifth daughter! Is the man vindicated or what?

To maintain the ancestral lineage! The shameful stuff such as that told above is never a strange phenomenon among Nigerians. They claim that they are looking for a male issue who will maintain the ancestral lineage. The boy – fully grown – educated or illiterate – wise or imbecilic- is expected to take over the rulership of the ‘Obi’ and the family at the death of his father. He maintains the name of the father. The girls are worthless. If they are fortunate they get married and bear children for their husbands. They, the girls have no important role to play in the family. Is it true?

This is precisely the ‘message’, the ‘theme’ of Buchi Emecheta’s novel – **The Joys of Motherhood** – selected for Secondary School Certificate Literature in English. Only three out of the 8 children Nnu Ego bore were boys – Oshia, Adim and Nnamdio. The family used all their resources to train Oshia and Adim in school. Both studied further in United States and Canada. There was no use sending the girls to school. They were worthless! Behold how Nnaife and Nnu Ego celebrated the birth of their second son, Adim:

*The first thing to attend to was the celebration at which they would give their new child a name. All the Ibuza people living in Yaba, Ebute Metta and in Lagos Island itself were called to the feast. Palm wine flowed like spring water from Ibuza streams. People sang and danced until they were tired of doing both....The guests marveled at the amount of money Nnaife was spending. He and his family had been without money for so long that the thought of saving a little was pushed into the background. As for the proud mother, Nnu Ego, take a look: Nnu Ego, that thrifty woman threw caution to the winds and really enjoyed herself this time. She bought four different kinds of outfit, all cotton from the U.A.C. store. One outfit was for the morning, another for the afternoon, when the child was given the name, **Adim, Adimabuo**, meaning “now I am two”; Nnaife was telling the world that now he had two sons, so he was two persons in one, a very important man.....Not to be outdone, Oshia and his father changed their clothes as many times as Nnu Ego. It was one of the happiest days of her life. [P. 110, 127-128, 166]*

But when Nnu Ego took in again and had a set of twins, both girls, there was lamentation. When the husband, Nnaife heard of the birth of the twins, he laughed loudly as he was wont to do when faced with an impossible situation, and questioned: “Nnu Ego, what are these? Could you not have done better? Where will we all sleep. What will they eat? Yes, for girls, a problem of space

and what to eat could lead Nigerian couples to plan early retirement, in fact think about family planning! But for boys one does not need to worry about space, time and money. As we are told, he [Nnaife] did not even suggest names for the girls. Nnu Ego moaned: *Twins don't deserve special names. This one came first so she is **Taiwo** and this one **Kehinde** – she who came second.*

There is no doubt that search for male issues has driven many Nigerians to the madness of marrying many wives; damn the consequences. It does not matter if a man is excommunicated from the Church for taking a second wife, since it is against Christian tradition.

Things fall apart

Nigerians in general and Ndi Igbo in particular, no matter the level of their education and status still cling to the tradition of their ancestors, namely one boy = 1000 girls [one thousand is a magic figure meaning also 'ad infinitum']. In other words there is no sense drawing up any equation or making a comparison. Most of them still believe their matrimonial union is not fulfilled if they failed to beget a boy. In **The Joys of Motherhood**, Adaku, an inherited wife of Nnaife, who had two girls made the point clear. She was not kidding. When being consoled by the young proud Oshia over the death of her only son, she moaned. **I had a boy, my only son, and he did not live. O God, why did you not take one of the girls and leave me with my male child? My only man child.** "But you still have Dumbi," Oshia said. **"You are worth more than ten Dumbis,"** Adaku snapped at the boy.

But it seems the scales are falling from many eyes as the hopes they place on their **only son or first son** are being dashed against the rocks. With the rapid migration to the urban centers of the country, sons and daughters are losing touch of the ancestral home, the village customs and traditions. The ancestral lands are shrinking and old parents leave little or nothing for the children to share hereafter.

With the exodus of Nigerian young fellows, including the only sons and first sons, from fatherland and immigration to Europe and America in search of greener pastures, there is no doubt that the ascribed traditional roles of the sons are fading. Most Nigerian young men struggling to survive in Europe and America are no more in touch with village life in Africa. Some of them have nationalized in their countries of abode. Many of them have taken foreign wives. Their children, male or female don't know their countries of origin. They don't speak or understand their African mother tongue. So, what **is** all this fuss about ancestral lineage? They are not returning home to settle in Nigeria. To do what? Struggle over land and property, chieftaincy titles? Do business? No! As Ndi Igbo put it sarcastically **"Ama ha echiela!"** The lineage is dead. Today, these may have become the hard realities facing Nigerian families who still

maintain the tradition of the superiority of the men folk at the detriment of their female counterparts.

Elsewhere: right attitudes

As a developing nation and people, Nigerians should change their old-fashioned attitude towards female issues. What does it matter to the white man if he and his wife received 5, 6 or more daughters from God? Even Indians and some South American countries that cherish children like Nigerians do not worry if they got all female issues.

Even where they pay any special attention to their boys, it is precisely on the basis of professionalism. The man, a medical doctor, and engineer, a university professor, a scientist or a lawyer would wish that his son took up his father's profession or business when the old man is no more capable of carrying on. Where there is no son, why worry; a brilliant daughter can equally do it!

Nigerians of today, like the Ibuza people of the olden days still cherish male children and look down on the females. They too, invest much on male children with the hope that these children will take care of them when they are old. This only boy, priceless pearl, worth more than ten girls will take over from the father and play the big man of the future family.

Does the 'plan' always work out in reality? Those Nigerians who still hold firmly to the tradition of the ancestors must listen to Nwakusor's remarks and advice to Nnu Ego. The advice is also for those parents who feel that without children, male or female their life is not fulfilled. For these it is not worth it toiling for success in this life if there are no children to hand over the accumulated wealth. **Children were all very well, but they would only enjoy and glory in their parents if those parents had made sure to leave a good, clean name behind them.**

Nigerians should be grateful to God for blessing them with children – male or female. Proper upbringing given to these children is what matters most. It is wrong to ignore the importance of female folk in family and society today. Today, in developed and developing world women are playing active role in every area of human development. Many women have assumed leadership positions even in religion and politics and in some cases have performed better than their male counterparts.

In most Christian countries of the world today powerful women leaders are founders of Churches and religious movements and command a lot of respect from their followers, most of whom are male folk.

Days are gone when women were relegated to the background in family and society. Nigerian women should join their counterparts elsewhere in asserting their right to equal treatment with the male folk. In Nigeria too, it is valid to affirm that "what men can do, women can equally do it."

CHAPTER 11

67. LUNATICS ROAM THE LAND UNCHAINED – ONLY IN NIGERIA

Ugly spectacles or ‘shows’ are never rare in Nigeria. In the middle of the highway, inside busy markets, street corners, and crossroads, passers-by watch these ugly sights, sounds and shows with interest. Motorists – passengers and drivers stop and join the spectators.

No one should be surprised if told that the cause of the traffic jam at a busy city center was exchange of blows between two young bus conductors. What is the cause of the fracas? It could be a five-naira change. The ‘misunderstanding’ which begins like a ‘child play’ soon develops into a big brawl. The stronger gladiator may succeed in carrying the less robust fellow up, above his shoulders and throwing him down, right at the middle of the road. Sometimes two such fighters can end up in a ditch or dirty gutter. Surely traffic flow comes to a halt.

You may not be surprised to see other passengers descend their vehicles to approach the arena and watch the show. Most Nigerians – young and old – enjoy such shows. Who will blame them? In America such scuffles or broils are also known as ‘wrestling’. Spectators pay heavily to enjoy such shows *live* in the ‘wrestling theaters’ or television. When and where they will be shown on the television, you don’t need to smile if you are lover of American wrestling. It is never free. It is Pay Per View! The channel you turn to will be blank if you did not pay ‘online’.

But see Nigeria’s brand of wrestling shows and how they enjoy their brand of wrestling without paying a kobo. But elsewhere such shows are truly well organized and serve useful entertainment purposes, not different from boxing and soccer. Not in Nigeria! Nigerian type of ‘wrestling’, ‘fight’ is a public show and is usually ugly. Only lunatics and the show-promoters enjoy that type of show. To men and women – young and old – in their right senses, the show can only be nauseating.

Naked lunatics in public places

But the most horrendous *show* Nigerians enjoy can make people elsewhere – white and black – sick. It can make the stomach revolt. It is the sight of naked lunatics in public places. It is **only in Nigeria** you find lunatics – men and women, young and old – parade public places and neighborhoods stark naked. As for the familiar faces of these fellows, said to be insane just few people around, perhaps strangers in the neighborhood care to take a glance.

Lunatics who show their faces for the first time may attract a few remarks from those who care: *“Oh! When did Juvvy, the daughter or wife of Pupuu become insane? So it has reached the point of going completely naked in*

public? If it is a man, no one may show pity. “It is good for him.” “It is retributive justice.” “Surely marijuana he smoked heavily while in school has turned his head round!”

Truly lives of many young Nigerians have been ruined through the consumption of dangerous drugs. The situation today is worse as young school children have joined the show. The situation has equally been bad in Europe and the United States. Young people, who smoke marijuana, when heavily drugged by the substance, often run amok. They go into shooting spree destroying lives and property. Today at the airports customs officials search not only weapons of mass destruction; they pay more attention to dangerous drugs. When convicted of taking such substances one receives heavy jail sentence. This is another way of discouraging the consumption of these dangerous substances, generically referred to as ‘drugs’.

Are the international agencies waging war on drugs winning or losing the battle? Whatever the case may be, governments all over the world do not fail to help those who have put themselves in ridiculous health situation through drugs. Rehabilitation centers are established for them. Many church sodalities engage in the rehabilitation of victims of drugs. Many victims who go through rehabilitation programs recover and once healthy again also help others.

Those said to be mad, insane, deranged or mentally crazy may have inherited the disease from forebears. They say it runs in families. Yes. It could have been a result of the ‘sins of the forefathers.’ The great-grandfather, in-law, uncle, aunt exhibited some traits of madness. So it has been passed over to the grand children, even donkey years after those forefathers joined their ancestors in the netherworld. Who knows the truth? Who are we to judge? In some cases madness is described as ‘spirit possession’. The well-known cure for it is referred to as exorcism. The possessing spirit is cast out through prayers and incantations. But how the evil one takes possession of someone is another question.

Some Nigerian lunatics can be aggressive and dangerous to be left alone roam the streets. Some in great rage are known to have given knife cuts to innocent people, set houses on fire. But behold how they are allowed to roam the streets. These lunatics truly resemble those described in Gospel stories as ‘possessed’ by the evil one. This particular one described in the Gospel according to Saint Luke fits well into the Nigerian scenario:

The Demons of Gerasenes” [Lk.8.26-34]: “A certain man from the city who had demons met him. And for a considerable time he had not worn clothing and he was staying, not at home, but among the tombs. At the sight of Jesus he cried aloud and fell down before him.....For a long time the evil spirit had held him fast, and he was repeatedly bound with chains and fetters under guard, but he would burst the bonds and be driven by the demon into the lonely places.

Such lunatics we are familiar with in this country carry around bundles of assorted rubbish, or debris (**mad person's belongings - 'Ibu onye ara'**). They are usually unshaven. If not completely naked, some put on rags or just funny underwear. They have foot of big trees as their abode, and under rain and sun sit 'comfortably' in these places. They cook, eat, and drink rubbish. Their public life clearly shows that most of them do not belong to our planet.

While some of these lunatics are known to be 'sober' or 'passive', others can be very aggressive and could inflict a lot of damage on humans and property. One unchained lunatic, usually described as 'submissive' had shocked his community one day. He used to go his way and never disturbed anybody unless provoked. So people used to give him food. He never talked to anybody. He was '**dumb**'. He was popularly known as "**Right Man**". In his secondary school days he was known to be a smoker. Surely he got intoxicated with the drug and became 'mad.'

But one day 'Right man' 'spoke' and unleashed terrible aggression on all who went his way. One woman who never cared about Right Man's raving behavior and refused to run away received knife cuts all over her body. Only the intervention of some strong men of the village saved the woman from death. It took time before they overpowered *Right man* and brought the lunatic under control. Only then was he chained.

"Chained" lunatics

It is however not only in Nigeria that one finds mad people. They are found all over the world – civilized and uncivilized, developed and developing. But in most of these other parts of the world these 'mad people' are not allowed to roam the streets. Where do Europeans and Americans hide their 'mad people?'

Well-informed social workers maintain that there are more dangerous lunatics, ten times in number in the United States and in Europe than in the whole of Africa and Asia. But one may not know or identify them unless one is told. Most of them, even the most dangerous ones have been rehabilitated. Absolutely! 'Rehabilitated! That is the word they use 'rehabilitation.' They have been transformed, reformed, and changed.

As Nigerian comedians would put it "**Their knives and guns (weapons of war) have been removed from them.**" Their dangerous weapons of mass destruction have been removed. The Americans and Europeans do not stop at removing the dangerous knives and missiles from their 'mad persons' in the literal sense. They send them to rehabilitation centers – psychiatric hospitals and group homes where special doctors and nurses take care of them like ordinary patients suffering from other ailments. Those whose mental disabilities result from drug abuse are separated from those whose problems are hereditary.

Immediately signs of mental and physical disorder are detected, sufferers are taken good care of. Who will believe it, after some period of rehabilitation the mad fellow is wholesome again. Unless you are told you will not believe it; the lady clerk in company's office, the young electrician, or road contractor doing his or her duty before you was once a dangerous lunatic! He has now been made whole!

How do they do it? It is all clear from the above. Such mentally disabled people are not sent to healing homes run by pastors, spiritual healers, and modern exorcists. No one subjects them to shameful and torturous cleansing rituals or exorcism. They are not said to be 'possessed' by evil spirits. Their people do not send them to healing homes before they get well again.

Elsewhere a large part of tax payers' money is used to support the physically and mentally handicapped persons. Signs of abnormality when early detected are taken care of. Sufferers of disabilities are given first-class attention by government, religious bodies and philanthropic organizations. In Europe and America special schools are established to take care of persons with various physical and mental disabilities. Younger persons with disabilities are taken care of while they attend schools like other normal persons. Parents and families of disabled persons are always grateful to government and those who care by helping to lessen the lifetime burdens of taking care of such persons.

Mentally handicapped people, no matter the level of abnormality they exhibit, are never allowed to roam the streets in the civilized world. Those mentally handicapped persons who react violently or aggressively and thus are dangerous are never allowed to show up publicly. They are quartered in rehabilitation homes or what the Americans refer to as '**Group Homes.**' There is no type of 'mad' person one may not find in group homes.

But rarely can a visitor differentiate between the normal and abnormal fellows who find themselves in such rehabilitation centers. They are well clothed and well fed. Of course they receive their medication regularly and doctors and nurses are always around to cater for their needs. Like a boarding school they are interned. Special trained social workers take care of the inmates of such **Group Homes** twenty four hours. After a short time many recover and are sent back to their families while those with severe mental disabilities remain longer.

Nigerians do not care

But what does the 'sane' do to help the 'insane' in Nigerian society? Elsewhere such unfortunate fellows are referred to as 'handicapped'. Some are 'physically' or 'mentally' handicapped. They are known by other names and are said to be suffering from various disabilities, including, schizophrenia, epilepsy, seizure, fits, tremors, insanity or madness.

Our chief concern in this write-up is care for the handicapped among us, in Nigerian society. Does it speak well of our level of civilization in this part of the world to let handicapped persons roam the land ‘unchained?’ By ‘chaining’ we also mean ‘put under control’ and helped as it is done all over the civilized world.

Individuals and public officials entrusted with the care of public health and the disabled do not perform. The situation is compounded by the fact that we do not generally value human life. Europeans and Americans will mourn for a single citizen who dies in warfare or in an accident or natural disaster. They spend even millions of dollars in search of a missing individual – drowned in a river or abducted by a con man. The wounded people – in combat or accident – are given first-class medical care. If any person eventually loses any part of his or her limb, an artificial one is made for the person, no matter the cost.

Nigerians do not care for her ‘unfortunate’ victims of accidents and man-made disasters. In Nigeria, a dead person can lie by the side of the road until the ‘government paid sanitary officials’ arrive the scene. And it can take the sanitation officers days and even weeks before they receive the information. Perhaps it can take months before they take a decision to organize a ‘fact-finding’ mission to the scene to remove the skeleton of the dead fellow - what remains after vultures and birds of prey had had their banquet. Often nothing, no debris is left to be carried away for burial.

Reasons for the sanitation officer’s lack of performance and nonchalant attitude are many. There is no government vehicle to bring them to the scene. The only available vehicle is out of order. It may not have tyres, brakes or even an engine. Where there is vehicle around, the driver may be on leave or there is no fuel. So the sanitary officials sit down in their offices, tell tales, drink or take snuff and collect their salary at the end of the month.

Charitable organizations and the handicapped

Nigerians are not wonderful cheerful givers, especially when donations are ‘voluntary’ and ‘*only God who sees in secret rewards the giver in secret*’. In Nigeria very few charitable organizations, church, social clubs, and companies truly donate cheerfully towards the welfare of the poor, the less privileged, the homeless, orphans, and handicapped. When they give, it is only a tiny fraction from the abundance of their riches.

Our radio stations blow the trumpets and instruct managements of the handicapped organizations to come to the capital city to collect amounts of money for the homeless, motherless babies’ homes, the blind, the deaf, the crippled, leper colonies and others. What do these rich organizations and individuals donate? It is usually a ‘chicken feed’. Take for example; a total sum of ₦5000 could be donated by a famous social club or a political stalwart to be shared among 10 to 15 needy homes. Some may get a miserable sum of ₦100!

In developed and developing countries the rich give out in abundance to the less fortunate persons in society. Donors make little or no noise and of course there is no fanfare in the distribution of charities.

Most Nigerians are Christians. There is no doubt that charity is one of the most important virtues that every committed Christian should practice. Scriptures recommend the practice of charity for the sake of the Kingdom of God, to those who want to gain eternal life:

What does it profit a man, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has no good works? Can his faith save him? If a brother or a sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.
[James:2:14-17]

Christ recommends that our virtues must excel those of the 'ordinary people.' But alas, most of us Christians do little or nothing to help our handicapped brethren. We hear stories of natural disasters happening here and there, in other parts of the world. People without any religion, agnostics and communists rush into the devastated areas and help the helpless and the hopeless. When they decide to help, often Christians arrive last to offer their services. Individual efforts on the part of Christians are always lacking. We wait until our poor donations are collected in Churches.

There is need for Nigerians – government and individuals – to donate generously towards the rehabilitation of mentally and physically deranged people in our communities. It is not enough to rush such victims to healing homes where they are chained to trees and heavy objects to suffer untold hardship under sun and rain. It is not enough to send such victims to Juju doctors who brand all mental problems 'spirit possession'. Since modern science teaches that such disabilities can be treated with drugs and other therapies, it is high time Nigerians took serious interests in the rehabilitation of victims of mental and physical disabilities in our midst instead of ostracizing and stigmatizing them.

CHAPTER 12

68. FLOODS FLOW UP HILLS: ONLY IN NIGERIA

Perhaps you have observed it or not. Many have two eyes; some have four or even more but often don't make proper use of them. But if you think we are kidding take a short look at the sides of our so-called 'tarred' or 'asphalted' roads in our communities, on major and minor roads all over Nigeria, some constructed with staggering sums of money – billions and trillions of naira.

Some of our road engineers - local and foreign - have double PhDs or more in civil engineering and road construction behind their other titles. They often begin the road constructions with digging of side gutters, which they believe, will surely take care of floods that menace roads all over Nigeria. Most of us even admire their hard work, wondering at the amount of money that is dumped into such road projects. Alas all that glitters is not gold.

In Geography we learnt about floods, where certain rivers and streams take their rise and where they empty themselves. Floods usually flow down hills, passing through forests valleys and lands, and at some places flow under bridges. The water usually descends, flows down and never upwards.

Elsewhere, all over the developed and developing world, road engineers take meticulous note of the topography of the land before they begin work. Especially where there is need to control the flow of flood that might damage the road, gutters are rightly dug. They usually serve the purpose, mostly to prevent floods of water crossing and damaging the roads, and of course too, the gutters serve some esthetic purposes even when they carry little or no water.

Miracles of the Red sea in Nigeria

Have you not read about the miracles of the Red Sea, where commands were given to seas, and winds and these obeyed. "Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. (Exodus: 14.21ff). This singular event that recalled the mighty hand of Yahweh will be recounted without end by the Israelites. "When Israel went forth from Egypt...the sea looked and fled, Jordan turned back. The mountains skipped like rams, the hills like lambs...What ails you, O sea, that you flee? Jordan that you turn back?" (Psalm 114: 1ff).

Judging from the ways Nigerian road contractors construct their gutters to check erosion, and floods, they expect that 'Jordan should turn back' when it begins to pour! Most of the gutters are simply flat burrows that hold water for sometime. When full, water rushes out and spills over the land. What a disaster! In a few weeks, even days, the gutters are filled up with mud and sand. People and vehicles are able to cross the covered gutters without any hindrance. What

was meant to be gutters are now part of the culverts or smooth roads. After a few more months no one may be able to differentiate the gutters from the dry land.

Miracles are never in short supply in Nigeria. It is only in Nigeria floods flow uphill. By the way our road contractors design and execute their road projects, including gutters you know they are wonder workers. Whether the gutters are of level shape, slope East, West or North, the contractors and many of us believe the floods, when they come would flow ‘down’ or ‘up’ the way we wish. They say it is wishful thinking. Wait until the floods come. By their fruits you shall know the handwork of the engineers!

Funny enough some gutters on Nigerian roads stand out high above the grounds and rarely any drop of rainwater drops into them. Other gutters stand below sea level. This is the Nigerian style and no one cares. Even where the gutters slope how are you sure some rubbish will not block the flow of water. Who thinks about maintaining the roads? Should the clearing of rubbles and debris from gutters not be part of the maintenance culture that could help prolong the life of the roads?

Because of the poor execution of road construction business in Nigeria – in the local and urban cities, many communities suffer from flood disaster. Lives are lost. Property worth millions of naira are lost as a result of man-made flood disasters. Unplanned ‘guttering’ and complete neglect of landscaping projects have made nonsense of the billions of naira and dollar dumped into road projects in our country. Our newly constructed roads last but a few years and become death traps as a result of uncontrolled flow of floods.

Not in Nigeria! Nigerian road engineers and contractors do not usually ‘design’ their new roads on a drawing board before they begin their work. One does not need be literate or a fellow engineer, a PhD holder in road construction to find out that either intentionally or unintentionally Nigerian engineers and contractors, for example decide to dig gutters, surely to protect the wonderful roads they construct any way it pleases them. They don’t care to know the topography of the area (in our case here – descriptions of the features, e.g. rivers, valleys, and rivers of the place or district).

The way Nigerians want it!

Obviously the multi-million naira gutters he was constructing did not slope in any way. The foreign road construction manager working on a Nigerian road was questioned by one concerned citizen of the state where the construction was going on. The questioner wanted to know precisely why the gutters did not slope or were his eyes deceiving him? The manager (a Chinese) replied angrily: “That’s how your leaders, your people want it. I can do nothing. Water can flow up or down!” “**The way Nigerians want it!**” It was a similar response from another ‘white’ construction manager (not a Caucasian, just a Lebanese): “I am

following the instructions of your government and their engineers. They want it **anyhow**. Don't blame me".

So, no one may blame the contractor. Before the floods come he must have been resting in his fatherland enjoying his money. When the floods come the gutters are quickly filled with sand, mud, and debris. And when full, the rubble can overflow and cover the remaining parts of the new road. What a disaster!

Disappearance of streams and brooks in Nigeria.

"The way Nigerians want it" explains, too, why most of our local streams and brooks, crossing some major roads in our communities have disappeared. Instead of building bridges across the roads and allowing the natural streams and rivers to continue their course, fertilizing lands and providing water for various uses to the community users, road engineers – local and foreign counterparts - block the flow of rivers and streams or cut the flow. Surely they expect one half to flow uphill back to the source, while the second half vanishes from existence after the last drop had emptied itself into ocean. Why do we lament the rapid desert encroachment in many parts of our communities?

In developed countries road engineers and contractors build bridges over the smallest brooks to preserve the flow of streams and rivers. Committed European and American environmentalists will drag to court any government or agency that tampers with natural beauty of their surroundings. Tourists visit little brooks, still protected by man and nature deep in thick forests. Many like to drink from such streams uncontaminated by modern man.

Not in Nigeria! Who cares about the environment? Who worries about the consequences of destroying our natural environment, including rivers and streams? What of the millions of fishes that that lived in those waters? In very extreme and painful cases our oil engineers equally destroy the natural habitats in oil producing communities for the sake of oil.

Those who award contracts may not gain billions after executing their shabby jobs if building of bridges and culverts were part of the contract! So cut-off projects that would lessen the contents of the heavy purses - the take-home reward for one who had won a multi-billion dollar road or oil contract. Nigerians don't care about such 'trivialities.' They will not take to the streets in protest.

Planning before execution

Should a road designer not sit down first and plan the work? Should the project not be awarded to competent contractors? Surely one who wants to include gutters in the road project should take into account the topography of the place.

Honest experts maintain that the digging of gutters should begin from the lowest part of the land where the flood is expected to empty itself. Gutters must slope thus pointing to the direction of flood. They should run down hills thus exhibiting a clear bearing. Most of villages and cities are submerged in water during rainy season because of the poor execution of road projects in Nigeria

Landscaping and grassing: Can Nigerian engineers not learn from their foreign counterparts? Who says that every bit of our roads must be protected by gutters? Have our road and civil engineers not heard about landscaping? Don't engineers in developing and developed countries plant grass – left and right – to protect their roads from flooding? Perhaps billions of naira could be gainfully used in Nigeria if our engineers employed thousands of youths in search of jobs to plant grass, which often controls or checks erosion better than gutters. Grass plots not only check flooding. They add beauty to the whole landscape, all areas surrounding large estates, churches and cathedrals. There is no need to dig gutters around our Churches to check erosion.

We don't need to import German, Italian or British grass into Nigeria to check erosion that devastates our roads and lands. We have abundance of this natural commodity in our fatherland. We only need to uproot and replant during the rainy season. They survive and to some large measure we are done with flooding, as nature takes control, grass swallows flood or at least slows down its devastating fury.

CHAPTER 13

69. VICES ARE EXTOLLED AND VIRTUES ABHORRED

You find a few countries where a few people adore vices and detest virtues. People with clear records of goodness, perfect performance in duties, known for their transparent honesty and hard work are never considered for high posts in governments and even in Church. Citizens with criminal records of untold magnitude are worshipped, given positions of honor and titles. Such abnormal situations or phenomena exist everywhere, but in Nigeria you find them in very terrible and frightening magnitude.

The Sodomite queen in the Bible absolutely ridiculed the Israelites' concept of evil and good, when she declared: "What you people call vice is among us virtue." Even the Israelites themselves were not free from that inconsistency or contradiction in their moral behavior. Read **Genesis Chapter 19: 30-38**. Lots' two daughters never thought they were committing any evil when they decided to make their father drunk so that he could lie with them and they conceived and bore sons. Their reason was simple: "Our father is old, and there is not a man on earth to come in to us after all the manner of all the earth. Come let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve offspring through our father." (Gen: 19.31). Today in many cultures that would be an abominable act.

Choosing the bad – rejecting the good

Most Nigerians worship the 'Baal'. While other developing and developed nations go for the best, Nigerians go for the absurd. In politics for example, names of virtuous, best-qualified, honest, hardworking Nigerians – great professors and professionals, experienced and well-lettered politicians, great economists are never mentioned as possible presidential or gubernatorial candidates or even worthy of minor ministerial posts. They are never employed as 'advisers' to political and even ecclesiastical ministers.

Mediocre and non-professionals are preferred for important jobs. Woe betide you if you ever suggest the name of any professor, honest and veteran politicians to run for an important post. No! They will fail. Unlettered and inexperienced candidates will surely humiliate and disgrace the best qualified ones at the polls. A contractor with only a Primary School Leaving Certificate will disgrace our learned professor who attended the London School of Economics or International School of Strategic Studies.

In institutions of learning, universities, colleges of education, polytechnics and others, the VCs, Chancellors and Rectors of our high institutions may not always be the best. In our efforts to install 'our own candidate' (not the best) most often standards are compromised. What often determines the candidate's selection is not qualification or competence. Yes in

Nigeria! The winner must be well connected. He must have many godfathers to speak on his behalf. His party affiliation may play a major role in his selection. Naturally his religion must count. From the shortest list of possible candidates for the high education office, the winner that eventually emerges may be the last in row carefully drawn by competent and disinterested ‘masters in education management’ to avoid mistakes. The best is not always good for Nigeria.

Impeachment syndrome in Nigerian politics – hard to separate wheat from cockle

It is never good news to tell Nigerians that their president, governor, local government chairman or other minister in government is being impeached. Usually impeachment syndrome in Nigeria sends confusing signals to the electorate. “What has he done?” is the usual question asked by concerned citizens. While some rejoice that their man is being harassed, others are sad. No doubt dusts are raised and peace, progress, and unity are disturbed in the affected region. Reactions vary.

Often the notorious, callous, incompetent, immoral performers are rarely listed for impeachment. The hardened looters of public funds, the care-free and irresponsible leaders who have contributed nothing to the development of their people and communities are not thought worthy of impeachment. They are sacred cows who may not be criticized, reprimanded or be voted out of office. Some are thought to have talisman and are mighty in power to be opposed or dethroned. Alas!

But it may not surprise any one that the ‘best’ leader may be the one to be impeached! The rector of a college, town union president or any other official in government and Church may be singled out for punishment and disgrace through impeachment procedures simply because the official is ‘too honest’ and does not share some booty and public money equitably among his comrades. He may honestly be a good and hard working man or woman but may not be good in the eyes of the enemies. “He is too strict on the staff or students.” It could be he refuses bribes! In the political scene, this ‘good’ man in the eyes of many may have stepped on the toes of some grand masters whom he has refused to carry out their immoral orders.

In Church, too often a chunk of the members of his congregation in a parish Church, prompted by an aggrieved chief, well-renowned ‘Heavy Weight’ in the town may call for the removal of their priest or even for his head. The priest’s heinous crime that may warrant impeachment procedures to remove him from office may be his condemnation of some evil. He may be too outspoken, impudent and uncompromising. The Man of God does not admit mixture of good and bad, lies and truth. He insists that our ‘yes’ must be ‘yes’ and ‘no, no’. And so since the people extol evil and abhor good, the Man of God must be punished.

Clergymen who wish to join in the task of nation building are not usually welcome in politics. Their ambition to help cleanse the sins of their fatherland may be dashed to the rocks as they may be impeached and disgraced out of office. Yes! Not in Nigeria where honest people are usually rejected. If clergymen are presumed to be honest, and many are truly honest, their bid to join in the fight against corruption is rejected both by grandmasters and even the electorate, the members of his own religion.

Such honest men and women who wish to take to politics must count their teeth with their tongue before they dabble into this unfamiliar terrain. “Steer clear! They will reject you and your doctrines of righteousness. They will disgrace you. A word is enough for the wise.” The good is not good for Nigeria.

How can men of God who condemn evil be loved by politicians as the Man of God prophesies doom for the nation? Check the scriptures, the prophets of old! Jeremiah was known as ‘a prophet of doom’ in contrast to the prophets of Baal who always prophesied victory, prosperity, and peace for the king of Israel. No! Only the truth must be told. “Israel you must repent or face Yahweh’s wrath.” “Your nation will be destroyed, your temple razed to the ground and your people made slaves, unless your kings, princes and people changed their lives!”

Question of credentials

No one should be surprised because in Nigeria only the bad is good for the people. Nonentities with no virtuous and enviable records in the Curriculum Vitae are preferred! Evil is preferred and good abhorred. Because Nigerians do not go for the best, our system is glued to the cult of mediocrity.

Elsewhere before a politician decides to run for any office, he first of all examines his past life and records, from family to his last place of public assignment. He begins from the “negatives”. Has he committed any crime – known or unknown in public? Even if his crime had been hidden for some donkey years, he may still have to be slow in declaring his intentions to run for any public office. Perhaps, some opponents, seasoned and fearless writers, pressmen and journalists may dig into the past records of the would-be politician’s life and jeopardize his ambitions to rise to power and grab an office.

Immediately any of his past sins is uncovered – true or false – his political ambition is already dented. Has he been convicted of any crime? Usually such ‘honest’ politicians begin in time to recoil to their shells. They don’t like to come out publicly to declare their innocence against numerous criminal accusations leveled against them by their enemies – seen and unseen. Their deep-rooted fear lies in the fact that some further revelations may occur! So it is only common sense to get back to the village and keep away from people of the press.

Not in Nigeria! No, in Nigeria everybody is qualified to seek for public office. Is that not one of the gains of democracy? In Nigeria, even if you have committed heinous crimes in the past and present, embezzled billions of naira, murdered or arranged assassinations of enemies, engaged in drug trafficking, belonged to secret societies, abused public office, you don't need to fear. Who will mention your crimes? Are there responsible and fearless journalists in Nigeria? In spite of your stinking past and present records you can even vie for the highest political or even ecclesiastical office in the land. Your supporters are many and you should not entertain any fear of failure.

Collaborators and henchmen: How they promote evil!

How are the sins of those who seek public offices in Nigeria covered? There are many hirelings (Ndi Otinkpu) – musicians, great singers, fifiers, and dancers hired to do the job. Even though the leader – the promised messiah - cannot produce more than a page of good deeds and achievements in life, there are Nigerian or foreign intellectuals and authors of books employed to conduct research and produce saleable volume of the grandmaster's biography. Their work is to make sure that evil is turned into good, vice becomes virtue. They use some news media to paint the devil white. They endorse all the crimes of their master converting such crimes into virtues. If the master had held public offices in the past, in which surely he performed poorly, he could still try again, at least to "complete his good works!" Otherwise some else may grab the office and mess up the good works the former officer had begun. So the vicious cycle of installing and sustaining mediocrity continues in the country called Nigeria.

The enthusiastic followers easily intone warlike songs manifesting their infatuation with their leader. As if they had won the world cup, crazy crowds of followers sing and dance around: "**JJJ is our man. He is the only leader we have. Wherever he is leading us to, we are ready to follow. Whether he is moving forwards or backwards, we follow him.**" The refrains outline the achievements of the grandmaster. The followers are always ready to obey his commands. Even if he leads them down a ditch they follow.. The collaborators are too many. They are Legion! If not, how is it possible for **one man at the head, the big 'Oga'** to collect all the monetary allocations made to his office, department, Local Government Headquarters, state, and other ministries, and redistribute the sum in any ratio he determines okay for himself and his family: One quarter of the allocation (monthly or bi-monthly), to his bank in London, one fifth to his bank in New York, one sixth to his son's bank in Hong Kong, and another one sixth to go to his wives for shopping in London, Paris or New York.

What remains for the workers' pay and major projects? But one may have to stop and ask whether there are no other paid civil servants who could shout at the bird of prey each time it swoops to snatch the chickens from their mother?

Where are the accountant generals, the auditor generals, the government treasurers, the secretaries, the advisers and hundreds of messengers? If one man is able to dispose funds, as he likes, and no one cares to stop him, then we have to examine our consciences.

Not even “ten good men in Sodom?”

And the Lord said, “If I find at Sodom fifty righteous in the city, I will spare the whole place for their sake”. (Gen: 18.26). One may ask if in Nigeria, too the country cannot find even ten righteous men to lead. In the old Sodom, not even ten righteous men could be found. Alas! So the city was destroyed. But unlike the old Sodom, surely more than ten righteous men and women can be found in Nigeria, even fifty! There are reputable politicians, lawyers, Judges, economists, tough and brilliant honest people in Nigeria.

If laypeople fail there are many Imams – great, honest scholars in Islamic law and religion. There are too many ordained ministers of Christian religion, who are even better equipped than most lay politicians to salvage Nigeria from some impending doom if the God they serve wishes to unleash his anger on the nation. Did Archbishop Makarios not lead his country, Cyprus in politics for years? Like other nations Cyprus hadn’t only one ‘state’ religion. We ask these questions as a result of the mess in the political, economic, religious, and social scenes that had been the lot of our fatherland for long now.

Recycling the old brigade: need for a revolution

If we can find some ten men in Nigeria who are truly qualified for the job of leading this nation, why then do we continue recycling the old brigades? Why ‘reuse’ them? Why treat the already used commodities, namely the ‘old’ politicians so that further use is possible? Why should some old names that sound distasteful continue to re-surface in the Nigerian political scene when there are too many new faces to consider?

If the old faces, some former army generals, former commissioners of police, former customs officials – turned politicians, and multi-billionaires who rose to power through money politics are no more beautiful, why don’t we try the younger and more handsome or beautiful ones – experienced or fresh from school of international and strategic studies? Should the era or tradition of recycling business in Nigerian politics not come to an end?

People that have tasted pills of oppressive governments, poor management of their economy, scandalous embezzlement of public funds, callous display of affluence in communities bedridden with poverty, and arrogant abuse of political power, must hunger for a change of faces of those politicians who have never cared for their welfare. Why should the people not

rise, in peaceful demonstration against forces that had left them in perpetual servitude and agony?

Revolution involves change for the better and ‘experimenting’ on other possible choices. Some risks may be taken, but, no doubt they are often worth the trouble. Oppressed people should in anger or suppressed emotions outline the qualities of future leaders they need. Their protests should manifest their frustrations, boredom with the antics of old politicians and political parties that promise economic boom and soon after replace their goals with economic doom. Rhetoric aside, new politicians who wish to take up reigns of power and make a change must be the leaders of the revolution, and must be ready to deliver the products with some convincing and transparent lifestyle, right from the beginning of the revolution. It must be crystal clear that the new breed politicians are the men-of-the-people and not wolves in sheep’s clothing.

Endorsing evil: we, too, are culprits

Most Nigerians must share the blame today and hereafter as evil continues to thrive in our society, as they have given support to the corrupt practices that have bedeviled our political history since independence. How?

- When we endorse political aspirants that are unworthy in terms of good governance, honesty, hard work, integrity, and vision.
- When we put on badges and vests of discredited politicians and as well mount their portraits on street corners, thus presenting the grandmasters as the best for our fatherland, the messiahs.
- When we (as ministers of religion and lay followers of Christ and Mohammed) refuse to speak out against evil. When the prophets of Yahweh predict prosperity for the nation as disaster looms at the corner.
- When we refuse to speak out in condemnation of evil or when we warn or threaten those who speak out. After all there is no need to talk about evil for among us evil is good.
- When we caution those who speak out against evil, and tell them to ‘take it easy.’ After the entire situation has been like that for long. “You will not be the one to change it. Take care. Life is precious. Leave evil to thrive! The enemies of the state you condemn are too dangerous to confront.”
- When we accept huge donations from billionaires whose sources of income are dubious. We say to them: ‘steal as much public fund as you can. And since we benefit, your action can never be evil.’
- When we bestow honors on ‘philanthropists’ whose sources of income are disturbingly questionable. We sing their praises, call on the Almighty God to bless their activities, give them long life and more prosperity, the

knowledge and strength to continue in their ‘good work’ which may include, emptying the nation’s treasuries, engaging in 419 activities, duping people, and even belonging to an infamous drug cartel.

Evil abhorred and punished: Elsewhere – in the primitive and modern times, people all over the world used to detest evil in its ramifications. Avoidance and condemnation of evil has been the good mark of every good person, who hopes to be rewarded or otherwise punished by the God they worship. In the olden times, the criminal was publicly punished and disgraced as a serious warning to future offenders. Moslems, applying their Shari’a laws even cut off offenders’ limbs to deter criminals from attempting to commit such evils. Even in the present era of political and democratic dispensation, some local communities still apply scorching punishment for certain offenses. Ostracism, including banishment may be applied in very serious cases. The Mother Earth may be appeased with sacrifices for offenses committed by evil people. An ostracized fellow rarely shows up in society. He carries the shame of his crimes all his life. Even at death no one shows up for any decent burial.

Evil should not be celebrated. Nigerians usually roll out their drums for celebration when evil thrives in society not when evil is defeated or overcome. In the past one of the worst offenses in communities used to be theft. One could hold one’s head up and speak up in public as long as one had not been convicted of any sin of theft. In traditional Igbo society, even the stealing of a cock, yam, cocoyam, or cassava was a serious crime. So when one is free from any crime of theft, you may accuse the person of any other evil and such may not worry him so much. One hears such statements: “What evil have I done? What have I stolen!

Not in Nigeria today. Theft, violent crime, embezzlement of public funds and condoning such evils can become an occasion for celebration as villagers, men and women of every rank and file, political and business associates – educated and illiterate troop out to welcome their great and admirable son who had jumped bail to free himself from some punishment his crimes deserved. Red carpet receptions are organized in stadiums and public places to welcome a ‘**prodigal son.**’ No. Not a ‘**prodigal son!**’ The biblical ‘prodigal son’ was repentant. The Nigerian ‘**prodigal son**’ is unrepentant and aggressive. He mounts the podium and addresses his people, lamenting the ill treatment that had been meted on him by his enemies. In the midst of thunderous ovations from the supporting and enthusiastic fans, he vows to take revenge on those who uncovered his crimes or even uttered a word in condemnation of his criminal activities. He receives overwhelming support from his kinsmen and women, business and political associates.

Lavish parties are organized in honor of a “**worthy son of the land**” who had been caught stealing, perhaps jailed and later released after serving his jail tenure. He could have escaped from prison. It is quite a familiar scene in

Nigeria to see the criminal carried shoulder high by able-bodied young men. He is paraded the whole town in grand jubilation and pomp. A criminal becomes a hero!

The ‘prodigal son’ becomes a ‘hero’ only in Nigeria. “Everyone does it. Why should his own sin be orchestrated? Is he the only culprit?” When we make such statements we justify evil. We condone evil. Through such rhetorical questions we aggressively question the reasons for arresting or jailing a money launderer, an embezzler of public funds or one caught in drug trafficking and other heinous crimes.

But does the fact that “others do it” justify the evil? Perhaps the right attitude would be to call for the arrest and punishment of others who are like the convicted criminal. At the unveiling of a crime of a public officer, really the populace should troop out in the streets calling for the arrests of “others.” Some placards they carry could read: *“Arrest them – all who embezzle our public funds!” “Give them life-sentences with hard labor!” “Government should close and freeze the accounts of public officers in overseas’ banks!” “Confiscate their ill-gotten wealth and investments!” “These are the real enemies of progress, justice and equity!” “Banish them from the land – all who steal our money and keep the masses of this country in perpetual poverty”.* .

Not in Nigeria! Placards usually carried by angry Nigerian sympathizers may read odd inscriptions and graffiti. “Why persecute an innocent man?” “What wrong has he done?” “Why single him out?” Further embarrassing actions may be taken by the angry sympathizers, like burning down government and private people’s vehicles and houses, while incessant calls are made for the immediate release of a criminal from detention.

Let your yea be yea and no, no. If the choice of good leader is an important civic duty of the electorate, then all Nigerians who vote for candidates of questionable records and character are accomplices in crime. And when great number of Nigerian electorate decides overwhelmingly in ‘**free and fair**’ elections to install notorious corrupt leaderships at whatever level and arm of government, then something is fundamentally wrong with all of us. When we deliberately endorse the candidature of leaders who evidently never performed well in their first term of offices, what do we collectively expect to reap from such a dispensation? Evil surely! Our idiosyncrasies, double standard, selfish motives often lure us into making bad choices.

There are millions of ardent Christians and Moslems in Nigeria. Surely more than 99% of the leaders belong to either of these two great religions whose systems of belief have root in doing good and avoiding evil. It becomes a double tragedy when those who should teach good moral behavior take lead in supporting or justifying evil. In the Christian moral code three ingredients must be present to give an undisputable proof that grievous sin or “evil” has been committed, namely “The matter must be grave. It is indisputably known to be a grave matter – mortal sin. Then we choose to indulge in it.” Further, the same

Christian faith (I am sure other world religions teach it, too), enunciates that “One single mortal sin – crime – evil” suffices in the offender ending up in hell to burn in an eternal fire – an adequate punishment for those who choose evil instead of good.

CHAPTER 14

70. EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE IN NIGERIA: WHICH WAY FORWARD NIGERIA?

I am sure most Nigerians must have been shocked to the marrows when one Nigerian Daily in an editorial asserted that election rigging had become an institution in Nigeria. That was at the heat of the debate whether the April 2007 election results were in any way credible by any standard or was the exercise just another sham. Sure the Nigerian Daily was writing from the experiences of the 2003 election. By that assertion we Nigerians were being reminded of the realities of the ugly situation associated with dishonesty, bribery and corruption, injustice, fraudulent activities and total loss of direction by the leadership in our fatherland.

Can the ugly monster referred to as fraud, malpractice, cheating or ‘wuruwuru’ ever be rooted out of our nation’s history and life? As far as ‘wuruwuru’ is concerned can this despicable lifestyle of Nigerians even change in any foreseeable future? A person can be said to have become an ‘institution, in a very admirable sense when he has become well known to everyone because of long service, knowledge and integrity. Of course people revere him as one who should always be consulted in important matters. He is well-established person. In a negative sense a ‘personified institution’ is one that must be hated and feared. Although abhorred by any decent person, there is little doubt that society cannot do much to change this ‘establishment.’ What a terrible thing to imagine!

Has fraudulent practice become an institution, well entrenched in Nigeria that we have all become addicted to the killer-drug which we must always sniff at all times in order to survive? My fear is that we are all in trouble and there is need to raise the alarm louder and louder to see if the kite can drop the chick it intends to devour. The stunning story of the encounter between a “Flying Examiner” and students of one Nigerian Secondary School during the **WASC** examination offers nice food for thought. In a nutshell the students were violently protesting the visit or presence of the so-called ‘Flying Examiner’ or even presence of any serious exam supervisor.

They warned the Flying Examiner and his men never to approach their examination hall if the authorities concerned would not like to lose their dear lives. The students’ contention: “You people rig elections, steal ballot boxes, take bribes, fix up fake results, swear in any ‘winner’ you like into office and think we young boys don’t take note of the evils you perpetrate.” The students maintained that no one should disturb them during their exams. They should be left alone to steal, copy from books, call in friends to help and write their exams! Who will stop them then? The students came to school with daggers to

deal with any intruder and they were serious! Alas! The hounded examiners could not throw stones to those they caught in examination malpractice!

Examination malpractice & waec

From Nursery to the University level, Nigerians – young and old – students and their teachers are immersed in the dirty game popularly referred to as Examination Malpractice in Nigeria. It is no more news to hear that examiners force pupils and students to contribute money and pay if the students are to pass their exams. Toddlers in Nursery and Primary Schools are initiated into this dirty game and exercise in their younger years and as they grow up they and their parents do not see anything wrong with cheating in exams. Parents are ever ready to pay any amount of money provided their children scale through their exams without much struggle. If Nigerians in Nigeria have accepted the practice, the matter becomes very sensitive when we consider other countries and people with whom Nigeria associates in regional and international examinations, for example, our neighbors in English speaking countries of West Africa.

The West African Examination Council (**WAEC**) must tell us whether the level of examination malpractice recorded in Nigeria is the same in Ghana Sierra Leone, Gambia, and Liberia. If the level of examination malpractice as carried out in Nigeria by both students and their teachers, invigilators, supervisors and the so-called Flying Examiners equals that of the other West African countries in our ‘union’ then we may change the title of our write-ups “Only in Nigeria!” It means therefore that Nigeria has got friends and accomplices and is no more alone in these odd and shameful fraudulent activities. Have we really got partners who perform like us? There is need to investigate and **WAEC** must give a response. **WAEC** must give a yearly report of its conduct of examinations in all the countries involved in the West African Region. Are these evils perpetrated **ONLY IN NIGERIA**, really? If so we are on the right track in our investigations.

Flying examiners and their collaborators

The Flying Examiners, Supervisors, Invigilators, Area Inspectors of Education, Custodians of questions papers, Security officers and the rest of them are supposed to be trustworthy agents of the examinations bodies, which hire and pay them to conduct hitch-free and credible examinations in Nigeria – **JAMB, WAEC and NECO**. Unfortunately these men and women have in deed become the telltale dogs that eat the bones tied on their necks or cats that devour the meat they are meant to guard.

These educated men and women who in the past used to be revered like gods in terms of honesty, and decency have in short constituted themselves into

a syndicate that promotes examination malpractices instead of curbing the evil. They have thrown integrity, self-respect and decency into the woods, as they use every available means and opportunities to collect illegal fees and tolls from students to fatten their purses. No wonder most of them make thousands of naira out of the shoddy business each season public examinations are conducted in Nigeria. Pupils and students who refuse to pay are punished while those who succumb to the demands are rewarded.

Most Nigerians who carry out their official assignments usually expect extra remuneration even where the job is poorly done or not carried out at all. Very few are ever satisfied with their regular pay. In one way or the other one must ‘make up’ or ‘grab’ something more and fraudulently, surely. This is the bedrock of the corruption saga. Even if one gets into trouble or is caught perpetrating evil, one may not need to worry about the consequences of one’s actions – jail sentence, a fine, or dismissal from office. No! There is no need to worry. There is always a way out of the predicament. Find someone to help and “settle” the “official” holding you at ransom and you will be let off the hook!

In the public examination hall if a student is caught cheating he settles the supervisor and gets free. If a Flying Examiner ‘flies’ in and catches an entire school officially conducting examination malpractice he may get angry for a while and write a report and recommend a punishment in his report. He may threaten that the school should be closed down. He fumes in anger. But wait! In a few moments, perhaps at the intervention of higher ‘officials’ in government and private sectors, he calms down and smiles away with a heavy purse. He has been settled! And that is how they do their work.

Students must settle all examiners before they are allowed to write their exams, even when they receive no help from anybody. “It is the tradition”, they will let you know and your school may not be an exception. To stamp or endorse each student’s script the examiner must be settled with at least N200 for each script. To collect each student’s script an examiner must be settled with at least N300, depending on how important the paper is. English language, Mathematics, and Science subjects require heavier ‘settlements’. Check the amount. Now we are told, too, that in ‘ascending order of magnitude’ all the other officials must equally be settled by the examiner. So that is how the booty is shared and each person grabs a chunk and smiles away.

Need for sanity in Nigeria’s examination sector

Many nations of the world – big and small – (except Nigeria) do not toy with good conduct of public examinations. It is a crime punishable with heavy jail sentences to abet examination malpractice in whatever form. It was recently reported in many news media including **BBC and VOA** that the Ministry of Education of a small African Island nation called Madagascar was thrown into turmoil because some examination papers for Junior Secondary Schools in that country were leaked to some students before the examinations. It was a serious

matter and government decided on very severe punishments for all involved in that 'distasteful' and 'un-heard-of' tragedy after a board of inquiry appointed to investigate the matter had submitted its report. Not in Nigeria! Leakage of examination papers and all sorts of examination malpractice in Nigeria do not even make headlines in Nigerian Dailies any more.

Certificates and miracle centers

Parents and guardians are among perpetrators of examination malpractice in Nigeria. Such adults usually look for and send their children to secondary schools "whose results are always good". They don't care to send their children and wards to "schools where learning is done and knowledge acquired." Some poor parents and students spend fortune in search of "Miracle Schools and Centers." At last either the results are cancelled or students come out in flying colors! No wonder most of Nigerian universities embark on more tests, exams and screening of students before final admission. In some cases where such 'preliminary tests', devoid of further abuses and malpractices are well conducted, many of the screened students are advised to pack and go. Surely they need to go back to school and begin again.

If education authorities in Nigeria fail to take serious action against examination malpractice, soon certificates issued to students in Nigeria will become worthless. Already celebrations for "success in examinations" do not attract smiles on the faces of the graduating students. There is nothing like "congratulations for job well done!" Congratulations for what? Merriments for what accomplishments?

CHAPTER 15

(71) ELECTION JAMBOREE 2007

The 2007 election remains a landmark election that cannot easily be forgotten in the history of Nigeria's experiment in democracy. A Jamboree indeed? Truly yes! It was just like a merry-making gathering, an exercise in futility. It didn't worth all the pains and money. Much has been said and written in both local and foreign press about the April 2007 elections in Nigeria. Who can question the assertion by the winners that the elections were free and fair and best since Nigeria gained her independence in 1960? I was not however among the millions of Nigerians –home and abroad – who mourned for our dear fatherland as people all over the world poured abuses on our leaders and fatherland for making a mess of what was referred to as democratic elections. I did not expect anything different from what happened in 2003 elections. Rather I expected the worst to happen and it did.

It was simply a Nigerian phenomenon, Nigerian system, and Nigeria's way of doing things. Because we were all involved in the entire process – losers and winners – there was no need to lament and point accusing fingers on 'election riggers'. Everyone was involved – responsible and irresponsible adults, electoral officers, including **INEC**, political parties, and contestants for various offices. As usual everyone who cared to go out and vote did not actually go out to exercise his or her franchise. Months and even a year to the elections almost every Nigerian registered voter as well as electoral officers – high and low – hoped to make a fortune out of the exercise.

Young men who have remained without jobs for years, armed thugs, and swindlers were ready in time to carry out orders from contestants who thought they could never win in any free and fair elections. ALL the political parties and contestants had designed plans to rig the elections. Every party, every contestant was sure to emerge victorious. This really can happen Only in Nigeria. It was a game of wits, coupled with 'Nigerian factor'. One better-organized party outwitted the rest and won! Hurrah! Why should they not celebrate? Why lament over your losses? Who is to blame for your failure or party's misfortune?

Battle of all battles - survival of the fittest

THE ELECTION RIGGERS WERE LEGION. Consider this: If we had 50 political parties contesting the elections at various levels, it surely followed that the number of people to be 'settled', in other words 'to be bribed' would be a lot. Count them – voters (both registered and unregistered Nigerians), party agents, and custodians of ballot boxes and papers, **INEC** officials and their scribes. Even drivers of **INEC** trucks as well as aircraft pilots who would fly

election materials to their destinations – for security reasons – namely, to avoid any hijacking of ballot papers on the ground by hired tugs must receive their share of the booty. And these and many more must be ‘settled’ to assure victory. They must be involved in the election rigging for any meaningful victory.

The money involved in the entire process must surely count in billions if not in trillions. Losers must commit suicide. What a calamity! Which political party in Nigeria would claim it did not ‘map out’ huge sums of money for ‘settling’ their hired tugs, electoral officers, party agents and of course voters? How can any independent observer understand that one electoral officer was offered a whopping sum of seven million naira by each of some unnamed 4 political parties as ‘settlement’ to help assure victory? And who would believe that the said electoral officer rejected the amount calling it a ‘chicken’ feed! He demanded something higher. One political party, the highest bidder had to increase the sum to win the favors of the officer? Who cries foul them? Who runs to the court and tribunal to seek redress?

Winners’ peoples’ party [wpp] on top!

“Join the winning party!” This is **MTN**’s advertisement slogan wooing Nigerians to patronize the phone company. It seemed that right from the beginning or perhaps from the experiences of the 2003 elections, Nigerians – leaders and followers - had decided on ‘One Party System’ in practice. In fact it would be foolhardy not to join the winning party. There were too many political parties, presidential and gubernatorial aspirants. But only one and perhaps two more were really prepared for any meaningful competition. Fortunately or unfortunately the party known as **PDP** (Peoples’ Democratic Party) a.k.a. **WPP** (Winners’ Peoples’ Party) ‘won’ the elections with incredible margins and overwhelming majority! The results were clear in 2003 and the handwriting was clearly written and pasted everywhere in Nigeria. It read, “If you want to win any election join the PDP”, namely “The Winners’ People’s Party.

Those who could not secure a good position in that party merely decamped and formed ‘other parties’ which could only win a seat anywhere by an intervention from the above! The smart contestants heeded the clarion call for sanity: “If you cannot beat them join them”. The question then for the ‘losers’, “Why did you not join the ‘Winners’ Party?” No one should be surprised then if any PDP flag-bearer who lost nomination at the primaries went to the highest court of appeal in Nigeria or in The Hague. He has been robbed of victory at the pools even though the real exercise had not been carried out. A daylight robbery! The cheated candidate must fight to reclaim victory even with the last drop of his blood, even if his tenure in office after tribunal’s decision would last but one month or even a week!

Election malpractice - the Nigerian style

Electoral malpractice is a phenomenon witnessed worldwide. It is not only Nigeria that indulges in it. The developed world, developing nations and most nations that have practiced democracy for long are not free from accusations of manipulating electoral systems to suit their political ambitions. “Power”, it is said “intoxicates”. Hence we find presidents and ministers of various nations adopting all sorts of tricks and malpractices to pave ways for themselves to continue in their offices as their nation’s number 1 citizen when it is really time for them to vacate their offices. These sit-tight presidents often through fraudulent means change the constitutions of their nations to allow them ‘over-time’ to govern even till death.

In some nations that claim to practice democracy leaders who through armed struggle or coup d’état succeed in dethroning a hated ‘dictator’ make themselves life-presidents. Others through intimidation and bribery force their followers to adopt them as sole candidates in mock elections organized to install another dictator. There are many examples of such fraudulent means of achieving political ambitions through or without ballot boxes. Nigeria as well as many other nations of the world has many examples of such ‘traditions’ and ‘practices’. But there is something special with the Nigerian system and styles. It is these factors and phenomena that help to single Nigeria out as ‘special’ in electoral malpractice. These we have set out here to enumerate. The catalogue is long. Although ‘funny’ in a way it induces sympathy for the oppressed masses and anger for a revolutionary change. They happen Only in Nigeria! They are rare in other parts of the world! Take a litany of anomalies and absurdities for which our nation is known!

The government house for sale

Nigeria and Nigerians are locally and internationally known to suffer from squander mania. Although more than 80% of Nigerians are truly poor in the real sense of the word the affluent and leaders spend the nation’s wealth with reckless abandon. You only need to receive an official figure used by a road contractor to grade a two-kilometer road in Nigeria and you can draw your conclusions. It is these days out of fashion in Nigeria to say that someone is a millionaire. You must be kidding! We have billionaires and trillionaires. Their search for wealth and accumulation of the same is insatiable.

It is really dangerous to ask Nigeria’s political office holders to declare their assets. A lot of dust will be raised. If they truly tell the world what they are ‘worth’ most hungry Nigerians – young and old will faint. Some of our political leaders are too rich to imagine. However it will be interesting to ask our lecturers and professors in the universities also to declare their assets and one can place the results in two columns for better evaluation.

It is only in Nigeria you find political leadership squandering billions of dollars in an exercise known from the start to be a failure. Such money could have been used for some useful purposes. Nigerians are known to spend recklessly and invest in useless projects. In most cases only con men gain from the grossly inflated contracts. As long as some people benefit from such an exercise, the amount involved is of little importance to those charged with the disposal of the nation's wealth. Who renders account after all?

Multi millions are spent on importation of ballot boxes most of which are not even displayed during elections. The amount said to have been spent in printing and reprinting of ballot papers in foreign countries 'to avoid fraud if printed in Nigeria' can help feed millions of hungry Nigerians. What of the computers and accessories imported from China, India, South Africa and Singapore which the INEC claimed would solve the problem of election rigging? What has happened to those ballot boxes, computers and all the sophisticated gadgets ordered by INEC? Have they been recycled or re-sold or put into other uses? Who cares to know as long the elections were over – won and lost?

Like the disposal bins ordered by state and federal governments and soon after abandoned who cares for accounts. Why should thieves not cart them away and put them into their private use? What of the caterpillars, graders and all sorts of road construction equipments abandoned at road sides after contractors had collected their pay? Who will be surprised when such officials decide in buying off our refineries, airports, seaports, iron and steel plants and any public commodity or structure the government wants to dispose of or should we say 'privatize?'

Political party manifestoes

It is only in Nigeria that political manifesto in reality has little or nothing to do with election agenda. In developed countries, which Nigeria has adopted their systems of government, politicians, founders of political parties make public declarations of principles, policies and purposes of their political parties – which they intend to accomplish if voted into power. In developed countries where politics is a serious business, political parties draw realizable working agenda and outline projects to be executed and even give time limits for the realization of their set goals. Where they fail, many don't show up again in politics. Not in Nigeria.

It is Only in Nigeria that politicians make mockery of manifestoes. Their campaign promises demonstrate ignorance of what the matter is all about or rather their evil intentions to dupe the people. By their fruits you shall know them. The litany of their hackneyed election promises tells a lot about their frivolous antics. Most of their promises need heavenly intervention to accomplish in a lifetime. Name them – Free education at all levels – from Nursery to the University. Books and school uniforms will be provided free.

Three square meals will be served and parents do not need to pay a kobo. Even ‘merenda – tea and snacks’ will be served during recreations in schools. All is free! There is no need to talk about power supply. Light will be provided in all cities and villages 24 hours a day.

Power failure, which has bedeviled development in Nigeria, will become a thing of the past. What about roads? Politicians who aspire to leadership positions in Nigeria promise to build roads in all towns and villages in Nigeria, when very important roads like Benin-Ore roads (just to name one example) have remained deathtraps since Nigerian independence. And politicians who had ruled there for years are ready to make further promises if voted into power – this time , Number One Citizen of this nation! In the area of health, free-medical care will be available to all Nigerians. There are too many funny promises Nigerian politicians make during their electioneering campaigns. Whom are they deceiving?

Their “redemption” party

PEOPLES’ REDEMPTION PARTY [PRP], and AFRICAN LIBERATION PARTY [ALP] are among the new parties formed by emerging Nigerian politicians during the 2007 elections. It is only in Nigeria you find political parties like **PRP** or **ALP** exist only in name. In most countries where politicians seek the people’s mandate for political posts, former guerillas and war-lords turn quickly to politicians principally to ‘redeem, to liberate their people from bondage imposed on them by former oligarchic and monarchic oppressive governments. Having taken up arms and disappeared in the bush to fight the gorgon medusa, these bush fighters emerge from the jungles when a conducive atmosphere has been created for free and fair elections in their country. If they succeed these new brand politicians endeavor to carry out reforms, people-oriented governments that would once again put smiles on the faces of the people.

In Nigeria political aspirants do not promise to run people-oriented government in practice. Who says there is nothing in name? What of Peoples’ Redemption Party (PRP)? Who will form such a party and liberate over 90% of Nigerians in bondage? The Nigerian masses – persecuted, duped, denied any access to decent livelihood are looking for a redeemer who would loosen the hook of bondage which the past administrations have placed on their necks for long. Nigeria and Nigerians are in real need of liberation.

The masses are in agony. Even toddlers and young school children feel the burden when they mutilate the verse of the National Anthem – when they turn the verse ‘Nigeria’s call obey’ into “**Nigeria koro n’obe – “Nigeria hanging on the cross”**”. Nigerians continue to cry for liberation and no one cares to come to their aid. Nigerian youths, professionals and best of brains that have fled this scorching desert and find themselves in foreign countries as exiles

are looking for redeemers to bring them back to fatherland. There are millions of Nigerians living abroad and some are languishing in prisons in the lands of their exile. If their fatherland were to be a ‘paradise’ why do they flee their land? No political aspirants promise to bring Nigerian exiles home and make life better for them in their fatherland. How can the exiles return when the old Pharaohs continue to harden their hearts and heap more burdens on the already collapsing citizens?

Power to the people – an empty slogan

It is only in Nigeria that the slogan “Power to the People” is completely an empty hullabaloo. It is only in Nigeria that political parties maintain that the people have the power, since democracy implies government of the people, by the people and for the people, when the reverse is the case. They end up de-franchising the people. The slogan “Power to the People” is simply an empty refrain to deceive the masses. Alas! It is all deceit. The people are soon made powerless. The deceived people troop out under rain and sun to exercise their civic duties, to use the ballot box to enthrone credible leadership, but get disillusioned so soon. The marks they award to possible winners are completely discarded. What would the people do to prove that power belongs to them? Should they take up arms in violent revolution as in the Old Russia or France to overthrow the wicked dictators? No! Nigerians are too complacent to contemplate on any meaningful revolution. A few disgruntled and marginalized sections of the nation are content with their MASOB, MELOP, MODUP, DPLM and such like movements. The powerless people can only watch and suffer in agony. The people are powerless. It is the party’s board of trustees and party stalwarts that have the power. They decide on whom to put on the throne and those to unseat. That is Nigeria’s brand of democracy.

Stone for bread, scorpions for fish

“What father among you, if his son asks for a fish will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg will give him scorpion?”[Luke 11.11]. That was a challenging question from the loving and merciful Lord who knows how to treat his children and is ever-ready to offer them whatever their wishes not even minding their naughtiness. Many world and community leaders, especially the political elites – Christians and Non-Christians take these words of the Lord seriously while struggling to satisfy the innumerable yearnings of the people they govern – their sons and daughters. Their “meat”, their commitment is to do the will of their people, to treat them kindly so that these children will see the fathers as truly loving and caring.

Not in Nigeria. Most Nigerian leaders, especially those that exercise political offices in whatever level of government in fact offer Nigerian masses scorpions instead of bread or fish. They offer the people mud water instead of

potable water and let them scavenge for food in refuse dumps. They harden their hearts and device all sorts of plans to heap more burdens on the oppressed people. They close their ears to the people's cries. They and their henchmen hoard the scarce oil products – fuel, gasoline, kerosene and all essential commodities and when they are available sell them at exorbitant prices. Their sole motive is usually to allow their sons and daughters to die a slow miserable death.

What a callous, coldhearted father can perpetrate such evil son on his 'beloved' children. In spite of their cries 'Pharaoh' would still not let the Hebrews go. He would not let "My people go". Either they loot the remaining fund in the government coffers, dump them in their foreign accounts or they decide on doubling the prices of essential commodities. Even a day or an hour before they finally vacate their posts for in-coming political administration they send out more plagues to ravage the people. What is their aim? It is the last effort of a 'loving father' to squeeze the soul out of the already exhausted children!

One man one vote – not in Nigeria!

It is Only in Nigeria that one person can cast thousands of votes at a time and all the ballot papers are declared 'valid'. The results do not stun anybody. It is only in Nigeria that the number of votes cast in an election can exceed by hundreds if not millions the number of registered voters in a community. Nigerians' computing methods and systems are quite different from those of the rest of the world. In a split second Nigerians can 'round' numbers to millions, even billions. It is enough to allow them access to any number from 1 to 9. It is not only in voting exercises that this absurdity is tolerated in Nigeria.

During census exercises Nigerians – from North to South, East to West - to win economic, social and economic advantages over other ethnic groups purposely inflate the census figures. We can never in this generation know the actual population of our nation. They count their dead fellows and domestic animals just to inflate the figures. Credible economic planning which requires actual population figures of each community in Nigeria has remained an uphill task because each community or ethnic group tries to outwit the other in order to gain the advantage of being regarded as very populous. So, when the sharing of the national cake begins, they would get a lion share. It does not happen only during elections and head-counts in Nigeria.

In examination halls it is normal to find one-hired student write examinations for three or more idle ones. Such hirelings make a fortune from this strange phenomenon during national examinations like **JAMB**. You only need to pay the right sum of money and settle the examiner. The soldier of fortune, a.k.a mercenary smiles away with a fat pay package! Government wants to share some crumbs that fall from the oil windfall. Schools – Primary or

Secondary Schools - could benefit and there is need to know the number of schools and school children. How can one beat Nigerians?

Before the announcement from the government is made, communities have started converting their town union halls, civic centers and even market stalls to schools and the signboards bearing the names of the new schools are there to direct you. Who should be surprised if a miserable village school that registers not more than 100 school children in the year presents a fat number of over one thousand when school authorities are told by aid agencies that the amount of financial aid to schools will depend on population of school children! What of teachers? They appoint ghost teachers who usually outnumber the 'living ones'. Who says such government projects would not crumble after a short time. That is the 'Nigerian factor'. Honesty is not the best policy. Cheat, grab whatever you can and no one will stop it. It is an accepted way of life.

Mid-night voting – possible in Nigeria

Only Nigerians troop out to vote in the night - from dusk to dawn. Daylight voting will definitely expose a lot of rot in the system; so it is better to organize voting in the wee hours of the night. It is only in Nigeria that elections scheduled to begin by 8.00 a.m. in the morning actually begins by about 2.00 a.m in the night. It is never strange to report that “people turned out in large numbers” to exercise their civic duties to their beloved nation.

Candles and flash lights illuminate the rooms. Since most of the votes are cast in the night and there is usually no public power supply available, it is not strange in Nigeria for electoral officers to employ the services of any gadget or material that can emit some light no matter how faint, including candles, torch lights, re-chargeable lanterns, and straws. You cannot find it in any other part of the world, except Nigeria! It is only in Nigeria that intermittent tiny lights from mobile phones can illuminate an office or a collating center for counting of votes in the middle of the night. No one may blame the conmen if they use such opportunity to perpetrate electoral fraud. Since the Public power is dead anything that can emit light can be used to do some counting. It works only in Nigeria. In other places such is an absurdity.

Election petitions and tribunals

After each election jamboree in Nigeria, those who lose badly are directed to the courts and tribunals where they are asked to seek redress. It is hoped that the justice system will correct all the anomalies, nullify most of the election results, if not all and then order for fresh elections. It is one of the most horrible situations that should worry every patriotic Nigerian. Nigerian courts and tribunals are not trustworthy. Will true justice emerge from the lengthy

litigations? A lot of worrying “suppositions” will surely create a state of instability for losers and winners and in fact for the entire nation.

Supposing the No 1 Citizen of the nation – the President who has been sworn in and had set up his cabinet since the past one year loses in the courts? Supposing the Governor of the state is ordered by the courts to vacate the state house, and surely together with his entourage and then his bitter enemy takes over after two years of litigation in the courts? Supposing the Senate President is ordered to bow out of office, since his ‘alleged’ victory in the polls had been turned down? Supposing three quarters or more of the lawmakers – upper and lower chambers must vacate their posts because the courts had ruled they actually rigged the elections? That may be chaotic for the nation, joy for some and sorrow for many others. What a nightmare? In Nigerian politics and elections all ‘winners’ should have the ‘tag’ “alleged”, like thieves caught in robbery case, who must be tried in the courts before conviction.

In fact no declared ‘winner’ should take up office until all election petitions have been disposed of! Since the elections are never free and fair, declared ‘winners’ must wait until they are ‘cleared’. If already sworn in, it all follows that all they have been doing as far as formation of new governments is concerned should all be tagged “temporary”, “ad interim’. They must remain worried and pant for most of the time until their qualifications to govern must have been approved by the courts. As the Igbo people put it ‘Ha chiri ume na obi na aka’ – They remain restless as they wait for the true results of the elections? What a tragedy! The court is believed to be the last hope of the oppressed. Some greedy politicians outwitted by other tricksters hire the services of the best attorneys.

No one should be surprised if some of the election petitions are struck out right from the start on what they refer to as ‘technical grounds’. Perhaps the deadlines for filing of petitions were not met; or some clauses in the petition were not fine-tuned in the appropriate language and style. Some other frivolous reasons can be given for striking out the petition. Where some petitioners are lucky to have their petitions heard they may have to wait for as many as 3 years before a final verdict can be rendered, and perhaps in the supreme court of appeal! In Nigeria electoral litigation can last years as Nigerian judges and lawyers take their time to examine electoral petitions or protests. It does not matter if the former verdict is over-turned as the loser is about to end his tenure of office. The winner is free to begin his turn while others take up their second or third tenures. Elsewhere election petitions are treated with utmost dispatch. They are seldom delayed for the obvious reasons.

CHAPTER 16

(72) ELECTORAL REFORMS IN NIGERIA – LIMP INTO A BLIND ALLEY

One of the major aftermaths of the 2007 elections in Nigeria was the unquestionable failure of the so-called ‘Independent’ Electoral Commission (**INEC**) to conduct a credible, fair and free elections that would usher in worthy leaders of the people onto the political stage. The exercise was an unmitigated disaster. Everyone – natives and foreigners – who cared about the political future of Nigeria was disillusioned. Reasons given by observers, critics and aggrieved political leaders and representatives suggesting cancellation of the elections were too many.

The most disturbing one was massive rigging (fraudulent control and manipulation of electoral results, figures and processes for the profit or advantage of one candidate or party). State of insecurity, compounded by the presence of hired party brigands, bandits and party tugs marred elections in more than 80% of all places and states where voting ever took place. In some places where some voting really took place, innocent Nigerians and even ‘official security agents, including the Nigerian police watched helplessly as armed bandits fired shots in the air and sent people scampering away for dear lives. They swooped down like birds of prey and made away with ballot boxes! In most polling stations elections were never held at all.

Where elections were carried out late (as a result of failure on the part of electoral officers, the results could never be accepted as ‘credible’. In short, many honest and patriotic Nigerians believed that some other time, Nigerian political leaders and their **INEC** would fix dates for the exercise. Many Nigerians surely were waiting for further ‘announcements. So no one is amused as electoral tribunals announced the annulment of many results, one after the other and ordering fixtures for new elections. Who have been vindicated?

Some people were responsible for the mess. But no one was arrested and prosecuted. Even though it was clear the **INEC** performed a very poor job, the commission was not disbanded nor did its chairman show any remorse or resign. Those politicians who felt cheated at the polls were simply advised to seek redress in the election tribunals and law courts. All said and done most of the measures taken to correct all electoral malpractices and reestablish confidence in the entire system of government Nigerian has chosen may after all not yield any lasting results.

Electoral reforms in Nigeria! An opinion survey?

Nigerian and most African governments are always quick to copy from American and European systems, but only those ‘parts’ that serve their hidden agenda. No agency in Nigeria, not even the press cares to imitate their counterparts in Europe and America. Do they know what ‘Opinion Pool’, ‘Gallup Poll’ or ‘Opinion Survey’ means? Has this survey of public opinion by putting questions to a representative selection of persons any relevance in Nigerian politics? Does the Nigerian press seek the opinions of ordinary Nigerians in important national issues?

In most developed and developing countries of the world journalists interview their citizens just to know a likely outcome of election results, for example. With small margins of errors it is often clear to the nation and the entire world who the winners would be! “Can the devil speak the truth?”, a doubting Thomas would ask. The people have spoken and no one rigged the election! Not in Nigeria or in any other African country where winners are declared by INEC or god fathers of politics even before the votes are counted.

Whether Nigerians cherish this system of finding out the possible outcome or results of an election or any other issue of national and international importance, touching the lives of millions of their people and people all over world, this writer single-handedly completed an opinion survey on ‘Electoral Reforms’ in Nigeria. You do not need to ask me how I accomplished the Herculean task alone. The question put to every person I chose to interview was a simple one. **What purpose do you think electoral reforms would serve in Nigerian politics today?**

No one I questioned – educated and illiterate - had any doubt that the reform measures would be an exercise in futility. Many simply dismissed my question with angry remarks, adding, “**Electoral reforms?**” “**Rubbish**”. Others, who cared to listen to me further were so skeptical retorting, “**Forget it! Another way of squandering millions if not billions of naira!**”

I agreed with them. We must state right away without any hesitation or any fear of contradiction that Nigeria does not need electoral reforms but a new system of government that is suitable for Africa and the Black world. The bold step one time taken by the administration of the late President Musa Yar’dua to set up Electoral Reforms Committee could be commendable. In the first place the action was demonstration of honesty and as well an admission of our corporate failure and guilt. “*Mea culpa, Mea Culpa!* We have gone astray. Is there any way out of the mess?” There may be. But an establishment of Electoral Reforms Committee is not in the right direction. The work of the committee may after all be an exercise in futility and will end up in a blind alley.

Nigeria does not need to reform our electoral system, or enact new laws which may be only a little part of the entire system of Western Democracy we have adopted. It is the entire system of government that needs total overhauling. It is not only the eye, or the ear that is diseased. The entire body, from head to

toe, including the soul, the heart and all the internal organs are diseased and need some healing. A committee that Nigerians who care about the future of their country should set up must be given the task of suggesting, selecting, compounding, or composing a complete system of governance suitable for Nigeria and Nigerians of today and tomorrow.

Western democracy – not for Africa!

A Chinese government spokesman, reacting to the disastrous consequences of the flawed ‘democratic elections’ in Kenya December 2007 blamed the Western nations for the havoc the colonial rule together with the imposition of the so-called western democracy on Africa has unleashed on Africans and their nations. It is the same story of election malpractice, rigging, chaos and mayhem. The Chinese and most Africans – within Mother Africa and in Diaspora – may not be wrong. Many questions will continue to disturb African political leaders who thought and continue to think that Africans must always copy from the West.

Why should Africans not retain their Kings or traditional rulers(tribal and religious titles by which these leaders are known notwithstanding)? For peace, rule of law, unity and development to be achieved in Africa is it necessary to run a Presidential or Parliamentary system of government, following the American and other European systems? By not adopting the western democracy have the ‘Kingdoms’ of Saudi Arabia and other rich Arab nations vanished in anarchy? Are their various tribes and religious fanatics not showing respect to their political and religious leaders? Are the Saudis ignoring orders from their King Abdullah? Who asks for elections? What of Libya and Muamur Ghaddafi? Are Libyans, poor and rich – not happy in their villages? Do they need the Senate, Upper and Lower Houses of peoples’ representatives to run their ‘democratic institutions?’ Before his death was Yassah Arafat not the King or President –For-Life of the Palestinian nation? Why should Africans call their kings ‘president’ or prime minister just because this is the fashion in the Western World? Why should this leader of the people be elected by ‘majority vote in ‘free’ and ‘fair’ elections like in the Western World? Does any person who posits these “undemocratic questions” be pitied for “being out-of-tune with reality, modern life, and way of thinking?

The day Nigeria opted for Western System of Government was the day the wrong choice was made and ‘things began falling apart’. Nigeria, after more than 47 years of independence had never recovered from that fatal blow. We have no other option now than to reverse the gear. That is the most ‘revolutionary step’ a government with vision must pursue and not that of reviving a system which like a corpse has been lying in the mortuary for long and in fact is overdue for burial!

Nigeria has little in common with the west

There is not much the Black World, which Nigeria claims to be the grand master, in size and resources has in common with the West, the White people, the Caucasians. Let us examine some ‘uncommon’ issues in mentality, ethics, social life, and culture. Nigeria has nothing in common with the English, the Americans, the Swiss, the Germans, the French, the Russians and the rest of the World of the Whites.

Ethics and rule of law:

In ethics and rule of law we are Lilliputians before the White Giants. The entire moral life of the Westerners we are imitating is based on the rule of law. Although not all of them are saints. Those who break the law receive very severe punishments and no one is above the law. They try to obey the law and respect rules and regulations established by government for the good of the people. As one enters the American city of Los Angeles, the eye beholds a large inscription on a large bill board: “No littering. Any one caught must pay one thousand dollars (\$1000)! Do they mean it? O, Yes!

In Nigeria there is no rule of law. If any laws ever exist in Nigeria, every Tom, Dick and Harry, no matter how highly or lowly placed in society tries to break it and thus makes nonsense of its prescriptions. There is little or no remorse if a Nigerian breaks the law. In the first place he does not think that that law is reasonable. He sees it as an obstacle to his progress and tries to evade it or destroy it.

Referendum - consultation

Referendum, an integral part of democratic principles, the referring of a political (can also include moral, social or cultural) questions to a direct vote of the electorate is often employed in the West to resolve a lot of contentious issues. This democratic principle embedded in the system is that of consultation, hence the government of the people, for the people and by the people. In controversial and serious issues affecting the life of the nation and people, Western governments conduct referendum to ascertain the people wishes.

Not in Nigeria or anywhere in Africa! Little or no consultations are made and the people are always left in the dark. Look at this. In Nigeria any Governor of the Central Bank can come up with any new idea about the country’s monetary system. Before the people come to know about changes, currencies of various denominations, faces, shapes and sizes have flooded the economic market. Naira Coins must be preferred to paper currencies like in American Dollar, European Euro or Japanese Yen. But Nigeria’s Central Bank experts forget that Nigerians’ ethical behavior does not rhyme with that of the Europeans. Nigerians do not handle or respect the country’s currency or coins like their European counterparts. A \$100 or \$50 dollar bill put in circulation in the early sixties can still look clear, fresh and attractive today. White people do

not use their paper money as writing pads or rags and for cleaning dirt. Nigerians do not respect their Naira! Decency and rule of law are no virtues in Nigeria and don't enjoy any patronage.

Moreover before the Westerners indulge in such exercise or changes that affect everyday social, cultural and economic lives of the populace, some sort of referendum is carried out years before embarking on such reforms and projects. Not in Nigeria! It is not government of the people, by the people and for the people. In short we do not practice democracy and can't adopt it as the system best for our people.

“President for the West”: “King for Africa”

“There is something in name,” the ancient maintain. In Africa personal names and titles are not chosen at random. They have deep-rooted meanings and connotations. The African “King”, (sorry! ‘President’ according to the dictates of Western democracy) does not, for example accept change in leadership. As an African chieftain of clan or tribal leader, rules his people and kingdom from West to East, North to South. He does not believe anyone can replace him any day in the so-called democratic elections. He is president for life!

The African King does not need a ‘Vice’ or ‘Deputy’. Members of his cabinet or ministers have no portfolios. They are simply selected loyalists meant to accompany the royal entourage during important royal outings. He does not need such ‘Ancillary Ministers’ or even Special Advisers. Like a ‘dictator’ or a ‘demagogue’ he is equal to the task of rulership his age notwithstanding! At 90 or above and even on a wheel chair he is ever-ready for another tenure of 10 years! You upset him when any impression is given that he would step down for another leader. This is one of the reasons why they fight each time to extend their tenures of office till death! Nigerian presidents, governors chairmen of Local Governments have never had it fine with their Deputies whom they always see as threats to the ‘stability’ of their government. The African King or President-for-life does not tolerate anyone seen around his throne as a possible successor.

It is not hard to find out why political and tribal upheavals rock African nations when strong African ‘tribal chiefs’ vacate their posts by force or death. They have never been ‘democrats’ in any sense of the word. Take note of some such powerful African chiefs who ruled their nations in western democratic garb: President Houphet Boany of Ivory Coast, President Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, his successor Arap Moi, President Eyadema of Togo, Idi Amin of Uganda, Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, President Mobutu Seseko of Congo, President Obasanjo of Nigeria, Ahmed Ahidjio and Paul Diya of Cameroon, Mwai Kibaki and Raila Odinga of Kenya, Mbeki and Zuma of South Africa and many others. Even at their eighties and nineties Chief Obafemi Awolowo and Nnamdi Azikiwe still wanted to become African Kings in Western democratic

garb! These understood their tenure of office as a life-long rulership (till-death-put-an-end-to-it) and nothing that could be disrupted by elections and new political affiliations and gang-ups.

There would have been a much more ‘comfortable and lasting peace’ in Nigeria, for example if the religious and political leaders of the North (Emirs and Sultans) ruled that part of Nigeria according to the dictates of Moslem Code of Law and Shari’a. The mayhem in the Niger Delta (if located in the North) would have stopped a long time if their Sultan or Emir had issued a decree banning kidnapping, vandalism, banditry and destruction of oil pipelines. Perhaps the people of the Western Nigeria would have listened and gladly taken orders from their Oba whom they trusted more than the politicians who practiced modern western democracy.

In Nigeria, the Western democratically elected president” of the country can change the constitution at will, appoint and dismiss ministers as he wishes. The African King (in western presidential garb) is the ‘Father’, the ‘Chief’ and over-all head of the ruling political party. Everybody must obey him. If you ever fall out with him and you are an ambitious political aspirant, you know that your political ambitions are doomed. If you want to contest any political office and fail to get his endorsement, your hopes are shattered. Political parties, which the “King” heads, can change electoral laws to suit their whims and caprices. So, it is the old African traditional leadership, akin to the Arabs’ politico-religious system of governance that is seen in practice and not the western democracy. One can easily say why this strange western system does not work in Africa and in many other non-western nations.

Men of the people

In countries where true democracy is practiced, Members of the Upper and Lower Houses (Senators and House Representatives), Chairmen of Local Governments are the men of their people. Senators have permanent offices in their constituencies where they serve the people they represent. Most Nigerians do not know those selected to represent their senatorial zones and constituencies. The honorable members equally do not care about the people they claim to represent. These honorable members are not “Men of the People”.

The same can be said about Supreme Court Judges in Nigeria. Supreme Court judges are appointed by ruling parties and most Nigerians do not know who they are. In America, to qualify for a ‘Green Card’ you must know the names of all the Supreme Court Judges, their political, social and moral orientations. In America, the Senator’s office in his senatorial district is open 7 days and week, 24 hours a day. All citizens in need of help are regularly offered assistance by the “Man of the people” in that zone. In Nigeria more than 90% of Nigerians do not know who their senators are and what they are up to!

In the West losers at the polls accept defeat with humility.

In the Western brand of democracy losers in elections do not usually go to court to seek redress. For better or for the worse most western politicians accept defeat even before all votes are cast and counted. They send congratulatory messages to their opponents and even embrace them. Not Nigerians. No one accepts defeat. Litigation must be carried to the Lower and Upper courts of the land and eventually to the Supreme Court of the land! In Nigeria every contestant in any election believes he must win; even leaders of unknown minority parties go to court to contest their loss. Nigerians are bad losers.

Resignation not impeachment

In the West, most political office holders accused of any crime or scandal do not wait to be tried in court or be impeached before they resign their posts. They are always ready to accept responsibilities for their unethical behavior and immoral actions, even when a junior officer in the department committed the offence. The man at the top apologizes to his country men and resigns his post and moves back to his village. He rarely shows up in public nor would he dare to contest a political office of the land.

Mr. Newt Gingrich, one time Majority Leader in the United States Government was accused of irregular payment of taxes. The matter was investigated and found to hold some modicum of truth. He resigned his post, packed his things and moved out of Washington **DC** to live in his village. In the same United States, Don Siegelman, the former Democratic Governor of Alabama who was convicted on corruption charges received an eight-year jail sentence. A colleague of his, Clayton Lamar Young, who was also found guilty on corruption charges, pleaded guilty to bribery-related charges received a short two-year sentence and fine, in recognition of his cooperation with the government. (See **Time Magazine, October 15, 2007, p. 52**). This is democracy in action! Not in Nigeria!

Immunity for high office holders

In Nigeria, we are told that all office holders (including the president, governors and other ministers) have 'immunity' and can never be prosecuted. They are well protected or shall we say are exempt from any observance of the laws of the land. In other words they have official license to steal, plunder the nation's wealth at will, open accounts in banks all over the world. Even if they are caught in armed-robbery no court can convict them and they have no place in the prisons. Nigerian presidents, governors, senators and the executive office holders can never be prosecuted if they abuse their offices.

No punishments for crimes

Elsewhere, in the developed and developing world, some persons who play major roles in the failure of elections and in the squandering of the nation's

money in useless exercises are usually dismissed with ignominy from office. They may as well be jailed. Not in Nigeria! In Nigeria when thieves, including armed robbers are caught, arrested or detained, one may not be surprised to hear later that they had been released. They were not found guilty? Perhaps those responsible for the execution of justice had been settled! So if you break any law or commit any punishable offence, embezzlement of public money, money laundering, a felony, abuse of office or any heinous crime, do not worry about any judgment that might lead you to hell or at least to jail. One can go free after all. This is Nigeria's brand of democracy. It happens in Nigeria!

A Nigerian caught in a heinous crime, tried and condemned continues to protest his innocence and sits tight in office. He has no shame and even goes on gathering supporters in order to remain in office and continue to do his business whether the people want him or not. Punishments for public abuse of office and scandalous public lifestyle are enshrined in countries' constitutions and are carried out after due process of law. That is democracy in practice.

People who commit crimes or abuse their exalted offices in Nigeria are never punished. Rather when out of pressure they are forced to step aside or are actually impeached, many Nigerians take to the streets. They rejoice and send congratulatory messages to the convicted criminals. Fellow politicians of the disgraced official embrace the fellow and hug themselves. For what reasons do they behave like that? No one, for example saw the 'impeached' Honorable Speaker of the House of Representatives, Patricia Ette, handcuffed and led into prison after her ordeals. No one cared about what happened to the reported misappropriated funds. What of those governors, political office holders accused of some heinous crimes, ranging from abuse of office, massive embezzlement of public money and money laundering?

Elsewhere, the honorable speaker and all involved in that case would have been prosecuted, tried and sentenced. To receive any mild sentence, they must have returned a large amount of the stolen money. Further sanctions could follow. The offenders could have been barred from any participation in future elections.

Electoral reforms: futile exercise

In Nigeria when a judgment of an electoral tribunal or 'Lower Court' is turned down by a 'Higher Court' in election litigations and another 'winner', another con man, is asked to take up office there is wild jubilation by friends of the leader. His lawyers and party stalwarts, claim victory for the success of democracy in Nigeria! Justice has been carried out.

No one should take them serious! They are talking about Nigeria's system of democracy! No one remembers the charges leveled against the new messiah who takes up office since he had been "vindicated". We therefore can in fact wonder if Nigeria's brand of democracy really functions and if it is credit

worthy. If it truly works like that of the Western World, why the setting up of Electoral Commission for Reforms? This is typical way Nigerians look at the formidable problems facing the nation. No heads rolled! No lessons learned?

In fact it could be another bogus, futile and dubious exercise the government of Musa Yar'a Dua claims would bring sanity to the bastardized electoral process in our fatherland and bring us to a level where we will match and compare well with most developed countries of the world, including The United States of America and most European countries we imitate, copy or mimic their ways of life and systems of government. We try to look like these developed countries only in theory.

The Electoral Reform Committee said to have been set up to sanitize the flawed electoral system in Nigeria is no doubt another exercise in futility. It will surely lead to a blind alley as most of their reforms and projects have gone, ended, died and were buried or are still laying in the mortuary. In the immediate past it was the National Identity Card project. How many Nigerians have received their identity cards up to day? Who questions the Identity Card Committee? How much money, in billions if not in trillions had been squandered?

Instead of engaging their committee in meaningful projects most of the highly placed leaders take big interest in squandering the dwindling national resources in the renovation of their official residences and offices, raising and trimming their monthly and annual salaries, benefits and allowances while millions of Nigerians families live in shanties and shacks in slums and many others sleep under bridges.

How and where does the Electoral Reform Committee begin with this exercise which seems to have attracted the present administration's priority attention? Does the committee begin with **INEC**, which they say is 'Independent' because that is what the 'I' stands for? Perhaps they may have to start this thankless job by first removing the 'I'. Then the committee must arrive at an inevitable resolution that the members of the **INEC** may not pay allegiance to any party. Surely only men and women of integrity will belong to the commission. Who will assure the rest of the skeptical Nigerian population that the commission members will be men and women of honor and integrity who will take true oath of office never to abuse the trust reposed on them. Most Nigerians will never be convinced that there are many citizens with such integrity and honor. This is the first set back or failure "Number No One" for the Electoral Reform Committee (**ERC**).

Most of **INEC** members in Nigeria are usually appointed by some grand political masters to whom they owe allegiance. They are usually con men with dubious character who cannot lay claim to the virtues of honesty, truth and justice. How can they resist making billions of naira out of the business through the well-known venues when the real conduct of 'free and fair' elections arrives?

Which moral personality or body will establish a school of morality and ethics where the other officials to be involved in most other election processes and programs will be trained at least to shun bribery and corruption? If such a school could be established in the future, there is no doubt that the first candidates or scholars to graduate from that such have not yet been born. It may take many years for them to train and graduate! These officials will include party agents, custodians of ballot papers, printers of ballot papers, various registrars, vote counters and collators.

What of the Nigerian electorate, said to number more than 80 million? Who will train us to vote honestly, shun bribery and corruption, and refuse even little tips from politicians who induce us never to vote according to our consciences?

It all means that the task before the ERC is enormous. As Ndi Igbo put it “Obughi egwu ana achi anwuru(utaba) na aka agba”, namely that commission’s work is not a simple one. It is a Herculean job! Some one may put it bluntly this way: “It will be easier for the head of a Carmel to pass through the eye of a needle than for the ERC to succeed in that assignment of reforming the Nigerian Electoral Systems which must fall in line with those of the developed nations!

A cumbersome democratic system

There are enough reasons to conclude that efforts geared towards reforming the present system of governance in Nigeria is an exercise in futility. It is necessary to reiterate our stand without mincing words that Nigeria and the rest of African nations cannot operate a Democratic System of Government, Presidential or otherwise modeled on American or any other Western government political philosophy. We are simply not capable. Check and see the Herculean task involved in running such a system like the Americans!

- (a) The money involved is just beyond our reach no matter the number of barrels of oil we export every hour at \$100 a barrel or above. In the last American ‘Primaries’ we were told that each contestant, Democrat or Republican spent millions of dollars only on television and radio adverts. How many Nigerians have television sets or radios that operate 24 hours a day? How many Nigerians know or care about who wins or suffers defeat at the Primaries?
- (b) Nigeria cannot organize ‘Primaries’ in 36 states like America in their 50 states.
- (c) Nigerians cannot organize caucuses and **Super Tuesdays** like Americans. We cannot organize pre-election Primaries in all the states in Nigeria without dangerous, costly and scandalous hitches. Such complicated political maneuvers and abracadabra are just beyond our imagination and copycat political philosophy.

- (d) Americans organize debates for political aspirants, where more than 70% of their citizens listen carefully and make their judgments about the best qualified candidate. Not Nigerians. Our ‘best candidates’ are **never elected**. No! They are handpicked and usually **‘tribe, tongue and religion** receive great attention.
- (e) Americans do not rotate the presidency nor do they talk about South South, South East, North West, North North or West South alignments or factors, when they elect their senate leaders, party leaders or ministers. An office goes to the best and most qualified candidate, irrespective of color, tongue, and creed.

Political system suitable for Nigeria!

If one rules out the possibility of reforms and is so pessimistic about constitutional reforms what other solutions or options would one offer? Good question. This is what I am about to do right away. The solution I am proffering or recommending has some characteristics which must align well with the Nigerian psyche. They are:

- (i.) The electoral system that is best for Nigeria must be Nigerian in flesh and blood. This simply means that it must be peculiar to the Nigerian mentality and character.
- (ii.) The electoral system will be practiced and practicable **ONLY IN NIGERIA**. When it begins to work other countries may come to copy from us.
- (iii.) It must be truly African in nature and suitable to all and sundry, the educated and uneducated, the city fellows and village dwellers.
- (iv.) It will never consume a lot of money.
- (v.) It will be very simple
- (vi.) It will be very reasonable all things taken together.

Community based system

Here we are! The most suitable electoral system best for Nigeria should have its base in the community, rural and urban. It finds its base in the African philosophy of ‘community life. The saying “It takes a village to raise a child in African”, is a typical African aphorism. The African village child belongs to the community and the community is charged with its good upbringing.

Representation based system

This is government of the people, by the people and for the people – true democracy! Nigeria is not ONE nation. It is conglomeration of tribal units with hundreds of tongues. No tribe or community can be left out of any government and those who find themselves in power pretend that all is well. When any political appointments are made the first thing every Nigerian who can read tries to find out is the number of ‘ministers’ from their own tribe. Are we represented? Are our own men and women there?

The community, the small recognizable unit in which all members are naturally registered by birth or length of sojourn must select a ‘worthy member’ of the community to represent them on the state and national levels. The system of making this selection is entirely that of the community leaders. If they want to make their selection in order of seniority or in turns; that is their concern and nobody else’s. They are free to send a good, educated, hardworking, lovable and trustworthy son of the soil. At the same time they are free to send a dunce, stupid, imbecilic, selfish, greedy rogue to represent them in national affairs.

To a certain level we must all confess that our communities will never send bad, selfish fellows to represent them in a serious business of ‘getting the community’s share of the National Cake!’ Such a representative must be accountable to the community. Many communities have demonstrated great maturity indirectly when they rejected certain well-placed personality right from the ward levels before such fellows had not represented them well in the past. We can trust the people who know who is who.

Problems of unworthy representatives have been with us for long. The majority of the officials, politicians and their allies have always been selected by strange bodies and imposed on the people. That is no democracy. Real and true democracy (“Government of the people, by the people and for the people”) has continued to elude Nigeria. Any representative selected by the people who fails to perform in the first tenure can never show up in the second or third tenure. “As one sows, one will reap”, the bible tells us.

Voting process

Any type of voting, resembling that practiced elsewhere in the developed world (that may be free and fair) can only be attempted at the state and national levels in Nigeria. Let the selected representatives of the communities and villages select or vote for representatives of the people on the state and national levels. Here fewer people are involved in the exercise and a lot of money can be saved. Mistakes, if any, made by the representatives of the people may be minimal compared with those by the whole nation involving the entire electorate.

From bottom to the top credible leaders of the people may emerge. Some at least may perform better than those the people have never known before but who grabbed power through intrigues and fraud.

Does my “thesis” make any sense? Perhaps an open debate in communities and institutions of higher learning may help to see a better Way Forward for Nigeria. Think about it. Having suffered great misfortunes in the hands of its leaders, Nigerians need words of consolation. There is need to convince them that God has not abandoned them.

CHAPTER 20

(73) OBITUARY GALORE: HOW NIGERIANS MOURN THEIR DEAD

All over the civilized world people express sorrow, deep grief and sense of loss at the death of their loved ones, young and old. Irrespective of cultural norms and differences there is always expression of sense of loss. In some cultures lamentation for the dead can assume an overwhelming magnitude in which close relations of the dead, especially wives and children inflict pains on themselves or sustain injuries as they express grief at the loss of loved ones. Some mourners in great shock tumble and roll over, wail in great agony and must be restrained by sympathizers if they should not sustain further physical injuries as they grieve over their dead.

Nigerians, particularly Ndi Igbo of Nigeria fit perfectly well into the above scenario, where grieving and lamentation used to be signs of heartfelt sorrow for the loss of a loved one. But that could have been in the past, many years ago! Perhaps the modern Nigerian Christians are hearkening to the consoling words of the Bible, namely that Christians should not mourn their dead like those who have no faith in the resurrection. But the Sacred Scriptures did not discourage mourning the dead or expressing grief for someone who has left this world. The Bible discourages excessive lamentation and grief.

Obituary galore

Nigerians (count out the Moslems in this case) in their strange ways of doing things always single themselves out as extraordinary people. They can make noise. They exaggerate and love carnivals and jamborees, in Church, community and societal celebrations. They celebrate in extravagant fashion and can embarrass their visitors. It is often difficult to discern their mood and purpose of action. Are they rejoicing or celebrating a victorious achievement? Are they lamenting, or mourning the loss of a loved one? Are they expressing joy that someone they loved or hated had passed away? “The Lord has given. The Lord has taken away. Glory be to Him, now and forever, Amen!”

I have not forgotten the embarrassing scenario one Nigerian priest from the Rivers State of Nigeria created in Rome when we were there for studies in the late seventies. News came from his family at home reporting the death of his father who was said to be in his early sixties. We were all sorry and went to sympathize with him. We carried mournful faces trying to console the happy man. He talked and laughed boisterously telling us that in their part of River’s state, Nigeria, people never weep or express sorrow when someone died. True!

We sat down quietly. Then came assorted drinks and blustering music. The entire college was quaking with music. He danced liked a drunken fellow

and asked us to join him. How could we! No! Like the Psalmist (137:1), all of us shunned and scorned our friend's offer" *"How shall we dance in foreign land when we should be mourning? If we should forget you, Oh the dead, let our hands wither! Let our tongues cleave to the roofs of our mouths if we fail to mourn for you, Oh! Papa, the dead beloved father of our dearest friend studying in Rome!"*

The drama did not end there. The rector of the college had heard about the death of the father of his student from Nigeria. He quietly came to the priest's camerata (apartment dormitory). The music was disturbing. The rector called one other Nigerian priest and asked him: "Is this how you Nigerians mourn their dead?" Good question! In great disappointment the rector went away exclaiming: "Questa é strana! Che usanza!" (This is strange. What type of custom is this?" Strange in deed!

Obituary, announced or printed notices of somebody's death, often with a short account of his life is an unmistakable sign of Nigerians' style of mourning their dead. Newspaper advertisements can take a lot of pages of newspapers and can often take more than half of the entire document. Radio Obituaries take more time than newscasts and documentaries. The actual date of burial receives an unprecedented publication as Obituary Banners direct any stranger to the right place. You can never miss your way if you take notice of the banners.

Mixture of joy and sorrow?

In Nigeria these days it is never easy to distinguish, for example between victory at the polls, coronation of a new Eze or chief and mourning the dead. The following scenario illustrates this point clearly. A long motorcade was heading to the palace of a great son of the town who had won a court case. It was a very long queue and as usual there was traffic hold-up. There was blustering of trumpets and live-bands playing from open vehicles. By-standers wondered what it was all about. One of them lamented asking: *"Oh! Who died? Are they bringing the dead man home for burial?"*

Who will blame the by-stander? It is the usual scenario when corpses are conveyed home for burial. In Nigeria, drummers, trumpeters and traditional dancers are at their best in each occasion, celebrating life and death! It is no more easy to separate the wheat from the cockle, sorrowful moments from wild community and Church celebrations.

Mourning the dead elsewhere

Moslems all over the world mourn their dead before and after the burial which takes just hours after the fellow breathed his last. Their grief is always felt from afar as they carry the coffin to its last resting place.

All over the world, America, Europe, Far and Near Eastern world people express grief at the loss of their loved ones. Their expression of grief is done in so many ways. There is silence and often close friends of the dead carry long faces of grief. They speak less and often can't express their grief in words.

NOT IN NIGERIA, especially among the IGBO people. Nigerians do not mourn their dead any more. They mock them. They rejoice. They go on jamboree, especially on the day of the burial. No lamentation but jubilation.

Wailing, loud or suppressed, has become a primitive culture these days. Go to a place where someone has been declared dead (natural or as a result of accident), you rarely find people carrying mournful faces. The bereaved family members are surely the first to restrain any sympathizer from expressing sorrow. "Please we do not want any weeping!" sympathizers are admonished. Why? What do they want then?

What of the widow (where a husband is the victim)? In fine dress, the woman takes her place in a cage-like apartment carved out for her. A basin, big plate is placed in front of her. This is for collection of money. For what? I don't know. If a sympathizer tries to console her she takes no notice as she tries to push the whole idea of sorrow away. But she takes note of each kobo that is deposited in the collection vessel for her. This is Nigerians' way of mourning their dead.

What of the children? Few people may be able to distinguish them from by-standers and sympathizers. They are less touched by the tragedy that has struck their family. How can they cry when their mother, uncles, aunts, and elder brothers and sisters are rejoicing?

The period of "expression of sorrow" at the sudden death of a loved one does not last long. Late arrivals at the family a few hours and even minutes after the death has been announced obviously will never behold the dead one. "He/She has been deposited in the mortuary", is the next information sympathizers are furnished with. Then, next piece of information: "The date of the burial has not been fixed". No one will be surprised if told that the burial would not take place in any near future. It may take place in six months' time. No! It can be in the next 2 to 3 years and even more. The family will need time to prepare for the grand festival, the jamboree, the celebration of death? No! "Celebration of Life!"

A befitting burial in deed

Lengthy period of preparation for a burial is not only an unmistakable sign of a befitting burial. It is also the wish of all bereaved Nigerian families. It has also become a contentious issue especially in Christian burial. It is rare these days to find families or 'Chief Mourners' who would want their dead to be buried like the Moslems do; Moslems who bury their members a few hours after death.

No! They will like the prescribed period of time to be extended at all costs. Some families and Christians would want abrogated any regulation stipulating length of time the dead should remain on earth before burial. Their wish is simple: *“Leave us determine when to bury our dead. We do it whenever we are ready. Then we invite the Church to do their part. Period!”*

There is need to secure longer period of time to prepare for an elaborate festivity, whether the dead is young (in early thirties), old (in early fifties). If he has no personal house, money must be borrowed to construct one. Anyone or institution (e.g. the Church Community) suggesting a few weeks’ preparation becomes an enemy. The family needs enough time to prepare in order to give their dead one a BEFITTING BURIAL! A befitting burial in deed! To help curtail burial expenses and other extravaganza involved in Christian burial ceremonies Catholic Church Communities in some dioceses of Nigeria have stepped in to restore order by establishing some sensible rules guarding Christian burial. A maximum number of two weeks for example is enough to prepare for the burial of the dead person. But what a calamity! Many Christian communities and families do not see this Church directive as a step in the right direction. No! Not in Nigeria! The Church has now become an oppressor that has come to stifle the culture of the people. What a culture? Keeping a dead person in the mortuary for any length of time until elaborate preparations for befitting burial are competed!

Why families want “extra time”

Obviously not all Nigerians are Moslems who bury their dead a few hours after death. No! Nigerian Christians and Traditional Religionists need extra time. How can the dead man be buried in the absence of all his sons and daughters, including the in-laws (all, chief mourners) residing in America, Europe and other parts of world? No! That will be a calamity. He will surely never have any true rest in the land of the dead if a new befitting house is not constructed in a record time. In this newly furnished house, the dead must be laid in state as sympathizers get a last glimpse of him before he is finally laid to rest.

Among traditional religionists, period of preparation for the burial of a member could take months if not years. If preparations could not be completed in any unforeseeable future, the dead person could be “covered with sand” in a shallow grave until all was set for the big burial ceremonies. In the olden days, stories were told about dead people who finally received the ‘befitting’ burial 10 or more years after their first ‘mock’ burial was done.

In cases where the oldest son was yet a youth when his father died, more elaborate burial arrangements could be made by the son any time he got ready, often 30 or more years after the death of his father. Without proper and more expensive burial, it was usually believed that the dead person would never find restful mind in the land of the dead.

If the cause or circumstances of death became contentious, people must be ready for more years of delay before the burial date could be fixed. If ‘poisoning’ was suspected, the African ‘autopsy’ must be conducted. This can take a lot of time and many ceremonies directed by the voodoo priest.

Traditions and beliefs don’t easily die away or forgotten. One can understand why a period of two weeks or a month is too small for bereaved Nigerian Christian mourners. There is not enough money for the burial. The chief mourner, the family provider’s accounts or purse may not be in good shape. He needs time to make money or at least borrow. If the death was ‘sudden’ or occurred under some mysterious circumstances, some investigations may have to be carried out. All doubts and gossips must be cleared before any burial date can be announced. An accident case? A longer period of preparations must be needed. The police clearance report must be secured of course and this can take time.

What of a befitting **coffin** for the dead? For some ‘rich’ families locally made coffin may not fit the dead person. One may be ordered from overseas and that must take time. The shocking story of a rich man who rejected a locally made coffin for the burial of his only son who died in a ghastly motor accident is still told. A day to the burial the man rejected the coffin and placed order for one from London or U.S.A. A new date had to be fixed!

Nigerians do not only need extra time for preparations to lay their dead to rest; they need a most suitable time too! This is the time many people, especially the highly placed in society will be in town. The larger the number of ‘mourners’ the more befitting the burial! For many communities in Nigeria the most suitable time for burial is Christmas, New Year and Easter. Do not get surprised when guns boom all over the community at Christmas or Easter Sunday. They don’t celebrate the Christian festivities of the Birth of Christ or His resurrection. No! They prefer to celebrate the ‘Transition to Glory’ of their loved ones. When Christians all over the world celebrate Easter for example, some Nigerians in the name of giving their dead brother or sister, mother or father a befitting burial send mixed signals of utter contempt for Church directives on burial of their members. What a paradox! And what would pagans say?

The funeral brochure or magazine

This has become nowadays an important document that every sympathizer must take home. The more bulky and illustrated the funeral magazine or brochure is the better for the mourners and the family of the diseased. If you are unable to master the contents during a requiem mass or funeral service, take it home and study it carefully, especially if you have not known the family well. The Magazine contains the history of the family with important photographs of the

diseased, his sons and daughters, grand children, grand grand children, in-laws, relations and friends, far and near.

Study the family Magazine and learn how wealthy and numerous the family members are. You may not be able to count them because they are as numerous as sand on the sea shore. Surely Ndi Igbo don't mince words when they say "Igwe bu ike". (Number is strength!) The same Ndi Igbo say "Anyukuo mmamiri onu ogbaa ufufu." (When a great number of people urinate together the liquid foams).

All visitors and sympathizers must reckon with the number of those mourning this fellow that has already joined the ancestors in the land of the dead. The list of those who should be recognized may include infants and toddlers of the grand daughters or sons. Where they are residing or their academic qualifications and other records of great accomplishments may equally be crucial. The great number of those residing outside Nigeria counts most and tells more about the family. There is nothing wrong in letting those who struggle over copies of the family magazine in knowing that some of the grand children of the diseased are residing in Chad, Gabon, Niger Republic, Ivory Coast, Cameroon, South Africa or Algeria, or somewhere in a remote island. They are there making a decent living having abandoned the Fatherland, Nigeria in search of greener pastures! If some are residing overseas, like U.S.A., Germany, France, China, Malaysia, or in any other European country, all point to the 'greatness' of the diseased. If one does not know much about the dead person, what of these rich and well-placed relatives? These are important personalities that add to the grandeur of the celebration.

Chief mourners must make frantic efforts to collect "congratulatory" or "condolence" letters and messages from well placed individuals in government, church and business world. Their letters must all contain sweet memories of the diseased whether the writers have known the dead fellow or not. It is enough to condole with his son, daughter or a grand child, well-known within and outside Nigeria. All these trivialities are no doubt part of what goes with mourning the dead in Nigeria.

Weeping for the dead as tears dry up

At the end of preparations for burial begins the tumult. Is that sound of weeping? No way! Tears have dried up. The lachrymal glands can no more be stimulated. It has taken long since the dead was laid away in the mortuary. Surely the celebration does not call for weeping. Cheers, music, wild jubulations take over. Uniforms in elegant color and fashion are sewn for close and extended relatives. It is part of the befitting burial.

The period of mourning has been taken over by a period of extensive preparations for the reception of the corpse at the family home. Old and new houses, including those of neighbors must be re-painted or at least 'white-

washed'. Bushes surrounding the family house must be cleared. Permission, having been obtained from owners of land around, more rooms must be created everywhere to accommodate the overwhelming crowd of 'mourners' who will be around to give their last respects to the dead. Canopies can extend miles into bushes as stickers and banners direct visitors and groups to their rightful positions for entertainment.

The number of cows tethered around trees and bushes near the family house tells the rest of the story of fame and wealth of the bereaved family. The longer the list of in-laws and special friends present, the more numerous the cows. These days, goats and fowls are rarely accepted in this strange exhibition of wealth.

Welcome to the mortuary!

This is an important part of the ritual. It is now the right time to prove how wealthy the chief mourner (not the dead fellow) is. Who knows how long the dead person had languished in poverty in the village? But as from the mortuary he must taste the wealth of the family members, right from the land of the dead.

As a rule, modern Nigerians believe that their dead ones must visit the mortuary before they are finally laid to rest in a grave. The longer the dead stayed in the mortuary the more befitting the burial! But if any doubting Thomas wants to know how really Nigerians love their dead ones he must visit the mortuary where the dead are supposed to 'rest in peace' for a 'short' time.

Truly mortuaries or morgues in all parts of the world are no tourist centers. Even mortuary attendants are not revered human beings because of the type of job they do. But this is not the issue at stake. What is worrisome is the type of treatment the dead receive in Nigerian mortuaries. Stories that families have 'mistakenly' removed corpses that did not belong to them are many. The way corpses are deposited and treated in Nigerian morgues is enough cause for alarm. Another Nigerian 'factor' complicates the matter. If the owner of the dead fails to grease the mouths or hands of the mortuary attendants he must be ready for a rude shock on the day of removal. If a wrong 'property' is not removed, be sure a rotten or decaying commodity may trigger the shock. This is how Nigerians treat their dead ones as they plan a befitting burial for the dead.

The 'D' day: the triumphant return of a hero

The 'D' Day is the day the celebration of life truly begins. It usually begins with gorgeous display of banners at street corners announcing the final homecoming of the dead hero. Radio announcements orchestrate the event. Invitation cards to the burial ceremonies are sent to individuals and celebrities to grace the occasion. Hired and well paid Masters of Ceremonies of course take their turns to trace the glorious journey of the dead from birth to death. Camera Men (often

as many as 4 in number) are hired to document the event. They ‘video’ the dead fellow and often don’t fail to tell visitors that the video coverage could equally take them into the grave with the dead! Okada Men of course do not fail to exhibit acrobatic shows on motorbikes. It is part and parcel of a befitting burial for the dead, poor and rich, in the place they call Nigeria.

From the mortuary to the dead person’s house, (can extend miles), a triumphant procession home is led by Okada Riders, Drummers and Dancers. Every motorist on procession must carry the posters of the dead person which are usually plastered all over the vehicles. The procession must be slow and must block all roads through which it must pass. Who cares about other Nigerians going about their daily business? No! Everyone must stop. You must stop, park your car until the procession is over. If you are a passer-by, visiting from outside the state or from anywhere you are expected to stop and watch the spectacle. It is ONLY IN NIGERIA one finds such a demonstration of “respect” for the dead. There may even be need to cheer the procession up for blocking a public road or highway. Why? It is strange enough and must surely attract the attention of all passers-by, who may even be expected to join the jamboree, whether they know the dead person, the family or not!

Before the dead is finally lowered into the grave, behold the feasting has started. Scramble for food, drinks and other delicacies mark the end of the ‘mourning period.’ What of some prayers for the dead? Very few sympathizers exercise patience at the grave side for the final prayers as music and wild celebrations puncture the few sober moments that should normally be a mark of respect for the dead.

Entertainment galore – struggle for a pounds of flesh

It is almost clear that the Christian Churches, the champion of liberation, justice, truth, defender of the poor, the oppressed and marginalized are failing in the crusade for sanity in the way Nigerians spend extravagantly while mourning their dead. The “Opposition” to the campaign against extravagant Christian burial is these days led by the very Christians whom the Christian bodies are fighting to protect. These press and agitate for a return to the past.

They have easily forgotten that in the past most pagan converts decided to join the Church precisely to avoid excessive demands communities used to make when one of their loved ones (pagan) died. The list of items pagan communities and groups used to present to bereaved families, especially of aged and titled parents and grand parents used to be beyond the reach of any average family. So they decided to convert to Christianity, where they used to receive better and more humane treatment. They accepted the “way of the Christians” who mourned their dead and buried them with dignity. Few or no financial demands were made those days by Christians, especially Catholics.

Clash of cultures?

Today things have changed for converts to Christianity. After they had promised at baptism to reject Satan, his pomps, deceits, demands and ways, at death their families are forced to bear the burdens these fellows had rejected many years ago. In cash and kind chief mourners are forced to spend through their nose to satisfy the various groups that must benefit from the death of a mother, father, or a relation.

Stories of violent, nasty, scandalous and shameful scenarios played by hired young men and gangs at grave sides are too many to narrate here. In desperate efforts to get a pound of flesh of chief mourners, corpses about to be laid into the grave had been carried away by ‘aggrieved owners’ and buried elsewhere. Bereaved families must meet up with all the selfish demands of all and sundry that must benefit from the celebration of life, especially in Igboland.

If people see you as a rich person and your loved one dies be ready to spend. In Church circles, you must meet the demands of the **CFO** (Catholic Fathers’ Organization), whether on the Group, Station, Parish or Diocesan levels. Woe betide the chief mourners if their dead member owed a kobo in the Church. If you are burying your mother, (**CWO**) for example and she had received ‘**Ezi Nne**’ or **Nne Oma title**’, be prepared and accept your state of bankruptcy after the festivities. The list of materials that must be provided (chop-on-the spot and take-home) can really be long. Rice is measured in big coolers and each cooler must have at the least a cow leg on top. What of drinks? Assorted, really! Drinks will always flow like oceans, believe me. Everyone will have their fill.

What of the **UMUADA**? These must be well-fed for weeks during and after the burial. The list of items from Umuada (in some places referred to as “Okwu Ozu”) can be inexhaustible. They drink tea early every morning to begin the day. Then few hours before noon they take boiled yams. Those who prepare the yams must be careful to cut them in big sizes. Umuada must be fed with delicacies including fresh fish (pepper soup) or fried fish. Foo Foo must be abundant and assorted: pounded yams, garri, semolina and what have you! Care must be taken to supply them with whatever type of drinks they want, including alcoholic liquors and champagnes. Care must be taken never to annoy them. If the chief mourner fails to satisfy the Umuada, that can spell disaster for the family! One has no choice, as far as the women are concerned. That is an opportunity. They must take their time to grab what they can. It is part of the jamboree, a way of giving due honor to the dead.

The outing ceremony

The “Outing Ceremony” celebrated in Church and usually on Sundays seems to end the period of ‘mourning’ for Nigerians in general and Igbo communities in

particular. Elaborate preparations are made. Elegant uniforms are sewed for any one who cared. Gift offerings are in abundance and the announcement at the end of Church service beckons on all friends of the family and well-wishers to ‘lead the bereaved family home’ for the final jamboree. Live bands will normally grace the occasion as food and drinks will be inexhaustible. What a great way of mourning their dead! Mourning? Very doubtful! They mock their dead and that is bad a custom.

Memorial service

Some chief mourners after a period of six or 12 months organize another “Outing Ceremony” they refer to as “Itopu Akwa Nkpe” (Removal of mourning clothes). Don’t mind them. In the first place they have not worn any ‘mourning cloth’. So there are no ‘old’ ones to remove in the real sense of the word.

No! It is another time to call a feast. Invitation cards are extended to friends, far and wide, a repetition of what had taken place on the “D – Day”. Family members had in fact exercised patience for a few months after the burial. After the “Removal of the Mourning Clothes” the dead is finally forgotten.

Aftermath of expensive burial ceremonies

The aftermath of expensive burial ceremonies performed by Nigerians for their dead can be devastating. Bankruptcy is usually the first aftermath of a ‘befitting burial’. The next is misery. This can be followed by litigations among the ‘Chief Mourners’. How did they share the cost of the burial? Who paid up and who did not participate? In case of parents, the Igbo of Nigeria don’t believe every member of the family must contribute financially or otherwise. The aphorism “Onye Ji Aku Ya Kwaa Nna Ya” (One whom the Almighty has blessed with wealth, let him carry the onus. Let him bell the poor ones out) summarizes the tradition or their attitude.

But this can be painful for the “Aka Ji Aku of the Family” if he is not the first son. Some questions must be answered. A lot of controversies will emerge. Will the rest recognize and acknowledge his ‘supremacy’ when the successor of the dead father of the family must emerge? Who will take over the entire family house which the dead father built and perhaps, too some landed property? These questions and many more will always generate controversies and acrimony which may last long.

The ‘Chief Mourner(s) can go bankrupt after an expensive burial ceremony. One who cares will always hear it: **“Since I buried my father (mother), my business has crumbled. It will take years before I can recover.”** Another may add: **“My father’s (mother’s) burial took me tens of thousands of naira!”** You don’t need to doubt them. Some may exaggerate of

course when they try to pacify their creditors. Some children and wards of chief mourners are known to have dropped out of school because their school fees could no more be provided by their sponsors after expensive burial ceremonies in Nigeria. But when you calculate the cost of the following items, you may pity the miserable 'Chief Mourner'. Name them: the length of time the corpse rested in the mortuary awaiting a befitting burial, the cost of the coffin, obituary announcements and publications in the television, radio and newspapers, the invitations cards, hiring of seats, tables and canopies? What of food and drinks? Local women may not be invited to cook. No! Famous Caterers from one of the townships may have been invited to take care of food as well as service. Giant Cooling Vans usually supply assorted drinks. These cost money. Who will forget the number of cows slaughtered? What of souvenirs prepared 'In Memory of the Dead.' Every visitor or 'sympathizer' must take something home. What of Musicians and their Live Bands? What of traditional dancers and other entertainers and masters of ceremonies (a.k.a 'Onu Na Ekwuru Oha). They must all receive their pay. These and many more are parts of all that go with befitting burial for the dead in Nigeria.

CHAPTER 21

(74) GHOST WORKERS AND MONEY LAUNDERERS: ECONOMIC SABOTEURS

It can happen in other parts of the world. There are corrupt finance officials who from the coffers of government, Federal, State, and Local Governments, daily or monthly pay non-existent workers who after death or retirement still find their names in the government payroll. Organizers of this syndicate amass immense wealth for themselves while the poor and the unemployed masses languish under scotching pains. And poverty. But in Nigeria the magnitude of the 'Ghost Workers Tragedy' is alarming. It is not a joke.

In Nigeria, confirmed figures show that if care is not taken the number of Ghost Workers may exceed or at best equal the number of real human beings paid by government every month. In such situation unemployment rate continues to rise and jobless youths roam the streets, Many take to street trading, hawking pure water, chewing sticks and all sorts of hardware – local and foreign – counterfeit and genuine products. You find them at street corners and busy road junctions in big Nigerian cities. You find them at bus stops and at traffic hold-ups.

Under sun and rain they toil for a day's meal. For some of these able-bodied young men and women such could be their 'unofficial day's job'. In the night they take up their real business and terrorize villages and cities in armed robbery. Young ladies as well take up their 'more decent trade' later in the night and in hotels. Some young men who can't stand up to violent business take up even car-washing business. You see them too everywhere. Some have finished their university studies and would have loved to flee this 'bloody country' they call Nigeria, but there is no money for visas or transportation by land, sea or air to foreign countries. Those who succeed to escape their fatherland and land somewhere in Europe, America, Africa or Asia may suffer a humiliating deportation to a motherland they have hated. Why this ugly situation? Nigeria is a rich as well as a populous nation. Can her riches not take care of her population too?

Drain in the nation's purse: fishing out ghost workers

Ghost Workers' Syndrome in Nigeria is debilitating ailment which seems to have defied all available cures in the nation's corrupt history. Like in the education and examination sectors, the syndrome continues to dig in like cancer. It spreads. It develops fierce resistance to drugs. Any surgical operation even worsens the malady. Where does the hope of recovery lie?

Ghost workers in Nigeria's civil service usually take up a good chunk of all available job opportunities of millions of unemployed youths. Truly there are

millions of dead Nigerian workers that have really vacated their posts for long and are enjoying the face of God in heaven or are suffering in hell in the underworld. Dead and perhaps forgotten a long time ago, it is strange that most of them still receive their monthly salaries in Nigeria. Corrupt finance masters of iniquity arrange and make sure these salaries are deducted and kept safe for these ‘ghosts’. Their families may be receiving all or part of the monthly salaries.

The “living” ghost workers

But not all the Ghost Workers are really dead. They are alive, bouncing in good health. They are young and some are old. Some have other decent jobs and receive double salaries monthly. Many others are in for further studies, in the universities. Some are retired and collect their retirement benefits and at same time receive payments from their former jobs.

In Nigeria today, the ability of the local, state or federal government to pay workers’ monthly salaries or benefits has become a way of assessing the good performances of governments. During the colonial era or the short period when there was sanity in Nigeria’s civil service, who heard about payment of workers in the news. That was a private business of government to pay workers at the right time. No fanfare was involved.

In the many developed and developing countries which we mimic their systems of government, workers’ salaries are usually dispatched a week to the end of the month and are paid directly into the workers bank accounts. No one carries cash around. To open an account with a bank surely one must be alive and must have an address and definitely a ‘Social Security’ number. All deaths are registered in the government department for the dead. However some evil officials can play some tricks that resemble the Ghost Workers’ factor in Nigeria. When discovered however such con men receive heavy jail sentences.

Screening exercises – fishing out ghost workers!

In Nigeria, governments often are unable to pay workers salaries because Ghost Workers are legion. Those who provide the payment vouchers know that the country is in trouble. No wonder government often embarks of screening exercises to ‘fish out Ghost Workers’. Alas! It is often a doomed exercise! You cannot beat Nigerian con men and officials. On the day(s) of the screening exercise most of the Ghosts appear from their graves. Some send their representatives who are of course confirmed by the screening officials to be ‘real’. What a futile exercise! Students who had worked in the civil service for some years before taking up further studies usually take a leave of absence from studies to report for work on the screening days, weeks and months. How can they miss the exercise since it is that monthly payment that helps them in their further studies!

Poverty alleviation project and ghost workers syndrome

There is no doubt that the program referred to as “Poverty Alleviation”, instituted to help impoverished and jobless Nigerians was doomed to failure right from the start when greedy politicians and party stalwarts hijacked the program for their well-known selfish reasons. Surely some non-government organizations, especially the well-known traditional Christian Church organizations or Islamic Charities could have done a better job. Not in Nigeria!

Immediately politicians took over the job of assessing, appointing, and selecting those who qualified to receive the benefits of the charity, Ghost Worker syndrome took the center stage. As the ruling party members won the contract of making the allocations, fictitious names of beneficiaries (ghosts) started to outnumber those really in need. So at the end of each distribution of allocations more than half of the money would be collected by the corrupt officials. Who says that the sufferings of needy Nigerians will ever come to end?

Anti-corruption crusade – a failure?

The ministry exists only in name. It advertises no job opportunities. It never strives to create jobs for millions of young and energetic Nigerians, school leavers and craftsmen and women who are ready to take up any job no matter how menial and humiliating. These jobless millions are equally ready to accept any chicken feed remuneration as day’s pay provided they are not allowed to stay idle and languish in poverty. The rich get richer, the poor, poorer. Their appetite for massive wealth and lavish lifestyle is unquenchable among well-placed and privileged Nigerians. Their strategies for duping the government and the masses are unbeatable. They – the leaders in positions of power – raise the alarm; they initiate probes to fish out ghost workers, but turn round to collect their share of the booty! What a paradox and hypocrisy!

MONEY LAUNDERING – THE NIGERIAN CONNECTION

It is a chronic manifestation of affluence as well as morbid crave for long life and prosperity. When there is enough for the day, why not think about tomorrow? Conserve, preserve the excess and may you pray for long life and prosperity to enjoy the harvest.

There are obvious reasons to steal as much as possible and hide away the excess. There may be lean years ahead. You may be thrown out of office at any time. Check the story of the Wicked Servant in the Gospels. “*What will I do when my master dismisses me?*” Grab as much as you can when the opportunity is there. You may lose in the election petition and may even

languish in jail for corrupt practices. While you are still in office grab as much money as you can. Tomorrow is uncertain!

It is an anomaly. It is illegal. It is a crime. This is why many countries of Europe, Asia and America assemble their best customs officials and police to control their borders against money launderers. When caught by customs officials the criminals receive harsh treatments and music of the law. Many are forced to vomit their loot, forfeit them and equally face long jail sentences. Such harsh measures of the law are applied to deter other criminals from such nefarious activities.

Nations regulate and fix amounts of physical cash its citizens and friends visiting their countries or leaving them can carry in the purse. The control measures are applied to fish our criminals who stack away large sums of physical cash to 'safer havens' in foreign countries. Money laundering has its roots in illegality and fraud. "Illegality", Yes, simply because the large sums of money must have been acquired through illegal means, which include cheating and theft. The owner cannot prove his sources of income. He cannot point to any legal sources of the wealth. If by any chance he won a lottery the windfall must have been known by many people. It is an official matter and nothing clandestine. Surely such amount of money is subjected to tax-deductions.

Money laundering – the Nigerian factor

Greediness is often associated with theft. The greedy fellow, especially kleptomaniac (one who has an irresistible tendency to steal – an obsessive thief, habitual criminal, pilferer, neurotic shoplifter), has the habit of grabbing and stocking his loot for whatever purposes. He is never satisfied with what he has. He grabs and heaps his swelling wealth anywhere and everywhere he thinks is safer. He removes them each time its security is threatened. He never enjoys any rest of mind. It is often during this process that the thief gets into trouble.

Second to cocaine-pushing, Nigerians – home and abroad – highly placed and ordinary citizens - have often been involved or caught in money laundering. In spite of the shameful publicity given to such evils very few of the future criminals have cared to stay away from such evil practices.

The first and most notorious culprits are highly placed officials, who from the first day in office begin to amass illegal wealth, first from government coffers and secondly through illegal deals, Nigerians refer to as "419". Much of the officials' time is spent in meetings with all shades of fellow con men that troop into offices in psychedelic suits and dark glasses. The business being discussed with the 'minister of special duties' is nothing but ways and means of acquiring illegal wealth and how they could be hidden away to safer places overseas. When they have exhausted all the services of the banks in Nigeria, they turn to overseas. Since the business is 'illegal', only illegal means can be used to accomplish it. Physical cash, usually Dollar or Euro is involved and

must be hidden in trunks and cartons. And to avoid suspicion and perhaps be subjected to customs officials' inspection and harassment the minister or money launderer must have to accompany his luggage and loot. It is unsafe to send the loot unaccompanied or through any other official, no matter how trustworthy he may be!

Overseas trips and their goals

It is only in Nigeria you find political leaders of every rank make overseas trips on monthly or even weekly basis. Often in special flights public officers and assistants abandon their duties and troop out to Europe and America. Some fly to Asia and Caribbean and Canary Islands. What is the purpose of these trips? Perhaps some go to check their blood pressure or sugar level. They call it medical check-up. Others go on familiarization tour to different states of the world where Nigerian 'exiles' and refugees' dwell in large numbers. They go to brief the miserable Nigerians on the latest happenings in Nigeria, which no one can capture from the daily news or from the Internet. Surely many claim they travel out to look for investors and seek the support of Nigerians abroad for the wonderful agenda and projects their administration has embarked upon to make their states the best in the world.

Some lawmakers equally organize trips to the United States of America to learn from their counter-parts in that country how to go about the business of legislation in Nigeria. Not a few of course use such opportunities to do some shopping and buy some new winter and summer houses in Europe and America. Another most lucrative periods and opportunities for Nigerian money launderers are during the annual pilgrimages and hajj. They are on holy missions to their holy lands. Who will suspect them or dare to search their suitcases believed to be containing holy materials, including bibles and Korans! These are wise leaders. When the political concoctions they have fixed in their fatherland, in the name of political agenda and administration begin to boil and spill over they find places of refuge for themselves and their families elsewhere, in places where there is peace, security and order!

There is no doubt however that some travel out with huge sums of stolen money that count even in billions. These often get into trouble when the suspicious trunks of money they carry excite customs officials in Europe, Asia and America. They are then accused of money laundering. This is how the 'Pharaohs' continue to harden their hearts as the people languish in agony. There is plenty for them to enjoy overseas and no crumbs for the hungry Nigerians! Their collaborators are 'Legion' and always get their share of the loot. That is often the part of the job of the countless number of political assistants, advisers and spokes persons. They help their masters to plan and execute the nefarious activities. Check the number of officials that join the entourage, the jamboree to overseas every month on undisclosed missions!

Lawless nation, leaders lead by example

Laws made by nations are observed by its citizens for the welfare of all. Although criminals and jail breakers are everywhere but they are often in the minority. In Nigeria, the reverse is true. Law breakers are in the majority. Most of the citizens, young and old, educated and illiterate, are always contented when they have cheated government, community and fellow citizens. When laws are flagrantly broken by those meant to enforce them, surely things fall apart. This is the situation in Nigeria. Never in Europe or the United States or those others we try to imitate.

Not a few Nigerians have been caught at the USA airports carrying huge amounts of money on their travels, in whatever currency exceeding amounts stipulated by law. While traveling from the States to other countries of Europe and Asia, Nigerians living In the States comport themselves well. They keep the law. But when they travel back to their fatherland they throw away their moral tools of good behavior to the dogs and behave like true Nigerians. By their fruits you shall know them.

Customs officials at the airports and borders subject Nigerians to extra and most humiliating scrutiny and searches. Their entire luggage are opened and thoroughly searched, mostly for hard currency. If Nigerian money launderers succeed in escaping the watchful eyes of foreign customs officials, they celebrate victory. They know that at home no one would subject them to any controls. In Nigeria one can bring in any quantity of prohibited wares and currencies. And where one is unlucky and is caught one can always settle the custom's officials and go free.

False security – building new barns in foreign lands!

Nigerian money launderers and their counterparts in the third world countries build barns in foreign lands. They save their ill-gotten wealth where ants and moths consume them. They fail to realize that their strategy for enjoyment and survival is fraught with all sorts of danger and uncertainties. Listen to this biblical passage: *“The land of a rich man brought forth plentifully; and he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do for I have no where to store my crops? And he said ‘I will do this. I will pull down my barns and build larger ones and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul you have ample goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, make merry...”*. We all know the rest story.

Rich Nigerians whose barns are full do not pull them down and build new ones like the rich fool in the bible. Their special advisers are there to plan how to store ‘safely’, and squander embezzled public funds. After enough amounts have been deposited in Nigerians banks, it would be time to consider foreign banks. Alas! Anything can happen on the way. The money can be seized at the

ports of entry into the “Promised Land” where safety is assured. At the border town or port of entry the rich fool may get into trouble. Again he may not live to enjoy his rich harvest.

“But God said to him, Fool! This night your soul is required of you; and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?” [Luke: 12.16]

The Psalmist paints the dull picture of those rich Nigerians who store up treasures overseas while their kinsmen languish in abject poverty.

Then do not fear when a man grow rich, when the glory of his house increases. He takes nothing with him when he dies. His glory does not follow him below.....He cannot buy life without end, nor avoid coming to the grave. In his riches, man lacks wisdom; he is like the beasts that are destroyed. [Psalm 48]

One man’s meat: another’s poison

Surely the ancients are right when they insisted that “One man’s meat is another’s poison.” Rightly put too, is the saying “One man’s fortune is another’s misfortune.” It is frightening to note that (hard time) “The Isi Ike” for many Nigerians may not pass away soon! Once it was the fate of Ghanaians in the early eighties. There was a devastating famine, political instability, total economic breakdown, chaos and confusion. Many Africans in that neighboring West African country fled their fatherland, many found comfortable shelters in Nigeria. But the hard times did pass away and they recovered their breath, lost glory and almost everything that placed that nation on the world map as ‘great African nation.

Will the giant of Africa, Nigeria, ever come to life again? Will it recover from the rude shock inflicted on the people by the privileged few and their leaders? The answer to these questions are within the reach of every honest Nigeria. The truth is that since independence in 1960 Nigerians have been in bondage of poverty and frustrations. Both under the civilian and military rules the leaders had maintained the stiff grip on the throat of the harassed Nigerians threatening to strangle them to death. Matters grew worse during the Structural Adjustment Program [SAP] of one dictator after another. Most Nigerians were almost ‘sapped to death’. That was the beginning of the mass exodus of many – professionals and the best brains from the land in search of ‘Greener Pastures.’ Many thought their sojourn in foreign land, their exile would be short. No! As things got worse many settled permanently overseas with their wives and children. Those who could return home occasionally call in to sell off or collect whatever property they owned in their fatherland.

The oil boom cannot even put smiles on the faces of Nigerians. Only a privileged few continue to enjoy the wealth or squandered it. Rather the situation continued to deteriorate as those in power, the heartless leaders find one reason or the other to increase the prices of petroleum products, thus

tightening their grip on the throat of the dying people. Even as one regime vacates the seat of political and economic power, the incoming leaders organize more vicious strategies of keeping the Nigerian masses perpetually poor.

Taking refuge in politics

For political leaders of the nation there is nothing like hard times. One can understand why politics in Nigeria has become a ‘do and die’ game. Only those who either by luck or fraud find themselves in this ship or ark are safe. They can make a lot of money from it. They transport the excesses overseas. When they take up offices the first serious assignment in their agenda is fixing their salaries, remunerations, and allowances. They don’t discuss the welfare of the people but only theirs. Legislators grab whatever they can from the man on top. Where the big man rejects their insatiable quest for wealth a group mounts up pressure. Where that measure fails, a whole house can embark on impeachment process to unseat the intransigent leader. That is the modern coup-d’etat in Nigeria. The only difference is the term “Military”.

It is high time government seriously tackled the problem of unemployment in this country. If there’nt many new jobs readily available, it may be useful to begin creating some by checking the illegal activities of Ghost Workers and as well as those of Money Launderers. Success in these areas may help to ease tension and as well help to check the mounting restive attitude of unemployed youths in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

The last option – prayer of restoration

Even though most Nigerians feel that God has abandoned us and therefore they decided to give up praying for “Nigeria in Distress”, I don’t think we have any other option than to continue the petition. Concerned and frustrated masses have never ceased to ask the question” “When will Nigeria come out of this predicament, this sticky situation.” A catalogue of lamentation has continued to multiply everyday. Bribery and corruption in all its ramifications has continued unabated and well-placed Nigerians brazenly indulge in it and no one cares to stop the virus spreading.

Politicians and 419ers (also known as “money bags”) truly carry their loots in large “Ghana Must Go Bags” and spend recklessly, at home and overseas. The law makers don’t discuss the unemployment nightmare facing Nigerian youths. Violence, armed robbery, including kidnapping of adults and children to make fast money has continue to dash the last hopes of recovery from a messy situation to the rocks.

We began our write-up with a catalogue of shocking catalogue of lamentation. It was the 'song' of a poor and oppressed man in distress. Perhaps someone, his just God will listen to his cries and come to rescue. There is need to keep the hope alive and trust in the Lord. In spite of setbacks, and disillusionments and often humiliating defeats in the hands of their enemies, the Israelites of old kept hoping that one day the Messiah would come and there would be reversal fortunes, from defeat to victory over their enemies, from despair, utter hopelessness to joyful moments and liberation. Like the psalmist we cap our catalogue of lamentation with this desperate cry: "Lord for how long will anger last? Will you utterly reject us forever?"

Nigeria will recover from the wounds inflicted on her by her very sons and daughters, most of whom have remained unrepentant; but instead continued to harden their hearts. Surely that day will come and the oppressed Nigerians will sing songs of liberation, the happiness of those who put their trust in the Lord:

Put no trust in princes, in mortal men in whom there is no hope. Take their breath, they return to clay and their plans that day come to nothing. It is God who keeps faith for ever, who is just to those who are oppressed. It is he who gives bread to the hungry; the Lord who sets prisoners free...It is he who thwarts the path of the wicked. The Lord will reign for ever, Zion's God, from age to age. (Psalm 145)