THE ROLE OF AFRICAN TRADITIONAL MORALITY IN PEACE EDUCATION FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

It is observed in this paper that no society can experience an enduring national development in an atmosphere of chaos and break down of its basic values. Therefore the foundation of true development does not lie strictly on scientific, technological, socio-political and economic knowledge, but on the combination of sound moral base. Thus, the Tiv of central Nigeria through the use of folktales, riddles, proverbs and other traditional worldviews are able to introduce the young generations to basic moral values and responsibilities that facilitate the process of peace education capable of laying the foundation of true community development. The paper suggests that these moral values enshrined in and derived from African traditional religion if given a pride of place in the educational systems, it will go a long way in promoting non-violent, peaceful and harmonious society for national development in Nigeria.

According to Okpeh (2010: 307), an attribute of the human being which sets him apart from other primates is his capacity to introspect on the past, assess the present, and think about future. As human society evolves from the past and gravitates in the present, its experience informs the way and manner it imagines and prepares for the future. From the distant past, the tribal customs and traditions in Nigeria have remained an unchallenged source of moral actions and behaviour that has prepared their members for future challenges of vicissitudes of human experience. This means that, the customs and traditions follow the path of the past generations, providing unquestionable source of practical actions that emphasize the realization of peace and development of Nigeria societies.

The problems facing Nigeria under-developing today are merely due to negligence of basic values that guarantee peace for community development. These challenges add a basic dimension to an understanding of the problems of Nigeria generally today. The purpose here is to evaluate the distinctive characteristic role of African traditional morality in peace education for national development.
Theoretical Framework

Conflict is a term which implies differences, disputes, opposition, antagonism, crisis, tension, war etc. Osakwe and Union (2013:51) described conflict as the starting point of any discord that breeds differences. Conflicts are intrinsic in human relationships; and are visible expressions of differences which can generate antagonism, violence, war etc. Afaor (2012: 19) collaborates this view adding that conflict is the struggle over values or claim to status, power, and scarce resources between two or more parties which can bring about opposition, disharmony, injury and elimination of rivals.

Conflicts are bound to occur in society as long as people compete over resources, power, and status. The analysis of human associations and communities over the ages by Gotan (2006:10) have shown that conflicts are inevitable in human society and are an inescapable outcome of the interactive dynamics of human existence. However, man is imbued with the greater capacity to understand and appreciate the importance of conflict resolution and the sustenance of peace as the non negotiable imperatives of any development. Therefore, the ability to manage conflict is fundamental to existence, peace, justice and integration. Peace can only be experienced in a state of quietness, wellness, calmness and absence of war or violence. Thus positive peace implies the elimination of the root causes of war, violence, injustice and a conscious effort to build a society that reflects these commitments.

Despite the position of Christianity and Islam in relation to peace, peaceful coexistence is still elusive among the adherents of these religions. However, African religion which has been relegated to the background by these religious traditions has the basic pragmatic peace as one of its essential frameworks for development. Peace building activities creates an environment supportive of self-sustaining, durable peace, reconcile opponents, prevent conflict from restarting, integrate civil society, create rule of law mechanism, and address underlying structural and societal issues. It is therefore important to state here that the satisfaction of these needs helps to create an integrated and humane social order that in turn reinforce peace in the Nigerian culture.

Against this backdrop, Nwaogu (1994:18) stresses that for all intents and purposes, education is regarded as the liberalizing force in human change capable of ensuring sustainable peace. Education is regarded as the most important instrument of instituting the culture of peace. This is true when one realizes that education has been highly rated in the national development plans in Nigeria. This implies that the aim of education is to promote good life through self-determination, self-realization, and self-integration accomplished through deliberately formed intellectual habits.

Integrating the above viewpoint, Yawe (2004: 1) agreed that education can be seen as a process by which an individual acquires ways, beliefs, habits, values and standards of the society into which he is born and contributes to its development from the day of birth to the day of death. This means that man inherits the acceptable norms and values of a society and contributes to its sustainability through education. Although Oshita (2001:19) cautions that educational values and instructions that are important can
make one wise if properly applied towards achieving it set objectives in human culture. Education becomes meaningful if individuals participate in the social consciousness of the community. This process begins unconsciously almost at birth, and continually shapes the individual's powers, consciousness and habits, training his ideas, and arousing his feelings, emotions and moral obligations towards his society.

This portends that the only true education comes through the stimulation of the individual's powers by the demands of the social situations in which he finds himself. Through these demands, he is stimulated to act as a member of a unit, to emerge from his original narrowness of action and feeling, and to conceive of himself from the standpoint of the welfare of the group to which he belongs. This educational process has two dimensions—psychological and morality (sociological) and that neither can be subordinated to the other, nor neglected, without negative results following. Of these two sides, the sociological is the basis because without insight into the morality structure and activities of the individual, the educative process will be haphazard and arbitrary. This means that if the moral factor is eliminated from the individual he will be left only with an inert and lifeless mass. This is why education that would provide the needed actions for a peaceful society must begin with a moral insight into the individual's capacities, interests, and habits.

The implication of these is that the moral worth of an individual cannot be evaluated outside the moral character of the kinship group to which he belongs and deeply related. This whole idea is strongly embedded in the perspective of personal identity which is intimately bound up with descent group membership; hence Igbum and Apenda (2002: 206) described the individual's position in the corporate existence of all life in the traditional environment thus:

Only in terms of other people does the individual become conscious of his own being, his own duties, his privileges and responsibilities towards himself and towards the people. When he suffers, he does not alone but with his kinsmen. The individual can only say 'I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am.'

African religious culture emphasizes on wholesome human relations among people, hence the idea of peace and its educational value depends on individual's identification with the community morality.

The Function of Peace Education in the Development of Traditional African Societies

Peace and education are two terms whose interfaces inevitably attract each other and they co-exist with conflict which has become a global characteristic of enduring environment for development. In all traditional Africa societies, development is a product of painstaking and methodical application of various inputs such as moral education, scientific and technological inquiries which have a bearing on the concept of development which in turn is founded on the concept of peace.
Concerning the general instability and lack of peaceful society it is observed by ASUU (2002:26) that the character of the Nigerian ruling class and the nature of the political process are the major factors that have brought about the collapse of the welfare state. These have combined with other social factors to produce a discontent and disgruntled citizenry especially among the youth who are plunged into pervasive poverty and widespread unemployment. Sogolo (1993:155) observed that there are social mechanisms through which the tendency to eliminate moral education as value system of society that would uphold peaceful environment capable of engendering development are counteracted only when:

The general object of moral evaluation must be to contribute in some respect, by way of action of rational beings to the amelioration of the human predicament... that is, of the conditions in which these rational beings, humans, actually find themselves.

Turaki (1999:75) agrees with this view adding that moral problems do arise on account of man's desires for personal advancement in spite of the welfare of others. This problem can be seen when the desire to be successful over and above one's fellow man opens the door to all kinds of exploitative, unjust, unethical, and dehumanizing practices. This account for the reason the traditional concept of the hierarchy places every human being in his place in life. One has to accept and live by whatever destiny or status the gods have bestowed upon him. This moral concept fundamentally influences one's social status, condones or strengthens the maintenance of the traditional status quo of peace which affects individuals and societies.

Traditional education and citizenship: A citizen is a member of the community with certain rights and privileges as well as responsibilities. If a citizen is a member of a community, in that wise education for citizenship is the education of members of the community. Experience has shown that every community, no matter the stage of development, needs education, formal or informal for its advancement and the perpetuations of its cultural heritage. Traditional education has been a tremendous asset to community development because it inculcated in the citizenry the right values, knowledge, skills, orientation and dedication. When right values and attitudes are acquired, the ability to train individuals' minds to understand, live and contribute to the development of his society becomes more meaningful.

Group moral responsibilities towards peace and development: African traditional religion is built upon certain foundational beliefs and they form the essence of African morality. The religious beliefs generate and establish corresponding religious practices and behaviour enshrined in the communal view of society governed by the law of kinship. Man is not an individual who lives in a state of independence but he is communal; that is, living in a state of relationships and interdependence; he is a member of community; he relates to other human beings in community; he relates to the spirit world and he relates to nature and the world. To forestall crisis of interests, man does not claim personal rights and freedom but fulfils communal obligations and duties.
founded upon the characteristics of African communalism or group harmony. Turaki (1999:65) sums up these communal obligations that bind man in unity for peaceful co-existence and development as follows:

Man relates not only to people, but almost everything else; man does not see himself as an individual but believes that his real life is in community with his fellows; man believes he is incomplete and inadequate without his fellows; man needs the support of the community and only feels normal when he is in relationship with it; man fears a broken relationship between persons of the same group; the community sets parameters of the normative in life because community is designed by harmony and for this reason everything must be done to maintain this harmony; diversity or non-conformity is costly to the community and may signal the activity of evil spirits and there is overt and covert pressure to conform to community norms.

From this perspective, man's morality and accountability in African societies are to be understood in terms of his relationship with community. Therefore, his claim for not being held responsible for his actions is based upon the belief which states that 'man is the product of what the family, the clan, the tribe and the spirits have made him'. This traditional belief has very fundamental moral and ethical implications for morality in pursuance of peace education in African societies. Making reference to social development theory to buttress this experience, Ekei (2001:86) re-echoed that "multitude is power or strength". Here again, the emphasis is on the collective and communal dimensions of man's existence in society. It is through communal cooperation that limitations surrounding human actions are reduced to the barest minimum to ensure peace and development.

This position prompts Warren (1975:70) to state that for the purposes of peaceful coexistence, voluntary tribal associations have been vehicles for group social also as a societal change. This community morality serves as a mechanism for those in power to consolidate their positions and to maintain the status quo of peace.

Family responsibility in traditional societies: Yawe (2004:4) noted that the family can; wield great influence on the moral development of the child because mostly, children take after what is prevalent in their families. This accounted for the reason why Durkheim (1956: 42) considered education to be a systematic socialization of younger generation into traditional beliefs and feelings of nationality and collectivism.

This means that education helps to integrate the individual into the wider society into which he is born. According to Uche (1984:5), elderly members of the family made sure that children followed the moral code of the society. The elderly members would inculcate these values through narration of myths and legends to extol virtues and exhort the youngsters to follow their examples. Thus, the family has always been centre of social interaction where the children interact with both older and younger relations and learn social behaviour and attitude for peace and development.
Legislation in African Societies: The issue of peace cannot be considered in isolation of the importance of the rule of law and access to justice, because it is only when the rights of citizens are respected and provided for that there will be peace in the society. These rights include right to life, right to education, right to equal representation in governance and leadership, rights to social amenities, and right of religion and place of residence. His application of the just society in Islam might be applied to traditional African religion which seeks to secure and maintain respect for persons through various social arrangements that are in the common interest of all members.

From the relativist point of view Dzurgba (200:21) believed that these moral norms or principles are not valid at all times for everybody in every society and in every culture. People have always followed moral feelings, beliefs, opinions, habits and customs of their respective social groups. In African societies, it is believed that certain actions are good and when individuals do them, they are commended; while on the other hand, certain actions are bad and when individuals do them they are blamed and even reprimanded. Those who engage in bad actions are identified as recalcitrant, juvenile delinquents, deviants and criminals. Because of these set of people, there are rules and disciplinary mechanisms to check mate excesses.

Amadi (1982:15) stressing this point, added that improper behaviour is said to constitute a crime when acts of one man infringe the rights of another and causes him serious inconvenience, injury or death. Since crimes cannot be tolerated by any African traditional society, laws are made to punished offenders appropriately in order to forestall possible chaos in society. Apparently African societies frowns at behaviour that would destabilize existing peace, hence Amadi (1982:18) states that the Kanuri and Edo decapitate murderers; while the Abuan and Bassa force them into suicide; the Abaja from Igbo land kill the culprit in exactly the manner and place the victim was killed; while the Kalahari generally clubbed the offender to death; the Kwale of Igbo land required a girl as replacement and twenty bags of cowries as compensation; the Dakkakarri tribe required the murderer to substitute either two girls or a girl and a boy for the victim; the Gamawa required fourteen slaves as compensation; among the Gade, the Arago, the Burra and the Ikwerre tribes bargaining was possible, and the death penalty could be commuted to a heavy fine, usually involving replacement by a free-bora or a slave. In tribes like the Nkwo of Igbo land the murderer was simply handed over to the deceased family to do whatever pleases them with him; and in Tiv, the murderer was simply ex-communicated.

Nevertheless, traditional legislations that can guarantee peace is connected with morality, and morality cannot be effective except there are connected with education.

The Role of Moral Education in Sustainable Peace and Development in Nigeria

The Nigerian nation as a corporate entity is undergoing some turbulent times politically, economically, and socially. Olowonibi (2012:433) notes that the Nigerian nation is considered as one designated for greatness, but there is a growing state of insecurity and helplessness in the face of challenges posed by ethnic, religious and militia crisis which are abundant among ethnic groups. He stressed inter alia:
This will be true to a point whether we like it or not, we are all thinking of peace, ours is a tired, distracted and sound one daunting and recurring note: the world is in chaos. Confusion and violence walk the streets, the spectres of war are hunting mankind, there are war going incessantly in several; parts of the world and these have become the order of the day (also in Nigeria).

From this standpoint, Olowonibi also agrees that Nigeria is on fire and without resorting to God (religion), it will be difficult to control the embers of chaos and violence. It is in the face of these problems that the nation is searching for solution. On this note, religion is a necessity for peace because without it, it will be difficult to attain peace. Religion strikes at the core of society and invariably moved people towards working for common good and spiritual excellence. Hence, it is safe to assert that no religion proceeds with the primary objective of provoking chaos and precipitating social disintegration among people and communities, rather, all religions seek to integrate people and communities, ethnic, racial, class, age, gender, and national integration.

Peace is what all human beings need. Since the beginning of human existence, people have been searching for peace. The dire need for global peace has made of the name of peace to be naturally common in every household, tribe, language, and nation. In recognition of the need for peace from the traditional African perspective, -Shishima (1998: 110) noted that the understanding of traditional African sense of peace will help in getting to the root source of African feeling, kinship system and the implications of peace for African people. For him, peace in African perspective is psychological, spiritual and physical experiences that express joy and harmony within the human self and the entire human community.

Africans see the visible and the invisible worlds as one indivisible, readily intermix. None of the worlds exist in isolation; they are constantly at play to ensure peace for the African. Peace in a religious application involves a mutual concord between soul and body, between man and man, between man and God. This informs us that no society in the developing or even in the developed parts of the globe can evolve and grow in unity and peace without making the God of all nations and all people the corner stone of its sociopolitical and economic matrix; hence the African "wholistic" view is based on the principle of totality (peace or lack of peace for an individual affects all members of the community). For instance, in Tiv society of Nigeria, the concept of community and peace (aya tutu) is expressed in their solidarity songs in battles against the enemies as Shishima (1998.115) puts it thus:

Tiv: lyange ne alu ikurior a ban se oo! Hoon se kpe, hoon se kpe lyange ne a lu ikurior a hii se oo! Hoon se kpe, hoon se kpe! English: The day another people provokes us! Yes, we shall die, yes we shall die

The day another people insults us! Yes, we shall die, yes we shall die. This means that in African concept of peace, the sacred and the secular are seen as two necessary complementary aspects of life. The two exist and they are constantly at play
with one another to ensure absolute peace for their communities. This intrinsically attests to the general norm in Tiv religious tradition that, one of their original values is the community sense interpreted as "We" (aya tutu) as against the western culture which emphasizes individualistic philosophy of "I".

Therefore, in Tiv society, morality must be both physical and spiritual and in consonance with the fulfillment of one's obligation to society; morality must de-emphasize egocentricity and individualism; the morality must stress reciprocity and communalism; and the morality must stress a sense of mutuality that one's deeds affect the entire community. Because education shapes Tiv morality and forms a vital force to ensure peace, to achieve this set objective, right from birth, the individual was educated in values of peace in order to be fully integrated into the traditional religion of his community.

This is the reason why many scholars on peace and conflicts management have stressed that to ensure sustainable peace in any society, there is the need for a rethink and restructuring the educational process. Ronald and Johnson (1996:233) advise that 'necrophilia attitude'- overwhelming control of oppression of other people in society can only be restrained when education, which serves the interests of the society is utilized in transforming the youth into receiving societal norms and moral values that will embrace peace.

Ajilola (n.d. p. 85) on his part notes that, it is worth mobilizing Nigerians to realise that they are the best to prevent actions capable of provoking ethnic, religious and sectional bigotry, manipulations and chaos. According to him, every society that eyes growth must place a searchlight on individuals that make up society; besides, the mutilated values of education in Nigerian society need a thorough re-appraisal, because no conscientious reformists have ever been known to sit on the fence. It is either there is a total war or a poor imitation of war against agents of chaos. Since no society progresses without a thorough examination of her antecedents, the Nigerian peoples must identify their misdemeanour which has wheeled the entire society into the present challenges of robbery, religious fundamentals and insurgence, pen-pushers, saboteurs, drug-pushers, human traffickers, kidnappers, human ritualists, abduction of innocent citizens, and organised terrorist in Nigeria.

**Conclusion**

When considering the relationship between morality and peace education particularly in Nigeria as the paper has done, one would not think of Nigerian peace without a feeling of disappointment and utter disgust. Consequently, the paper posited that the reconnection of peace education to its moral roots would bring about social and political re-engineering urgently needed in Nigeria. It is evident that Nigerian leaders have invented numerous concepts of peace education and one key to understanding it lies perhaps in the feelings it inspires. One would believe that a common sense of unity can be achieved despite the personal rivalries of some Nigerian leaders. Thus, Mackay (1963:131) expressed a variation of this idea saying that:
There was something which all black men held in common, something which
cuts across opposing points of view, and placed in the same context their widely
dissimilar experience. What they held in common ...was the necessity to remake
the world in their own image, to impose this image on their world, and no longer
be controlled by the vision of the world, and of themselves, held by
other people.

From this perspective, it can be deduce that among the facts that stand out in
peace education in Nigeria is the part played by morality in enforcing peace concepts.
This has clearly shown that a substitute for morality which could have the emotional
appeal for peace, harmonious integration and development will be hard to find. Thus,
efforts in Nigeria today must focus on rebuilding the basic social welfare facilities
such as moral education, community health care and general security of the citizens.

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