

**GODFATHERISM: LIFE AND SURVIVAL IN NIGERIA SOCIETY:
A PSYCHOANALYTIC APPROACH**

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Abstract

Godfatherism is an ubiquitous phenomenon in modern day Nigerian polity. The godfathers in Nigeria are sets of oppressive elites whose stock in trade is the installation of unpopular persons into political offices as chairmen, governors, president, members of legislative houses, Vice Chancellors and the appointment of University governing council.. They could be seen as political slave merchants while the godsons are political slave articles for sale. The godsons are purchased with big sums of money under demonic oath with the aim of gaining office/appointment and enjoying payoff as soon as the godson assumes office. These important agreements compel them to engage in actions that impoverish the people and the nation. Such actions include appointment of incompetent and unqualified persons into offices, embezzlement of public funds, corruption in all its ramifications and insecurity of lives and properties. This paper contends that “godfatherism” has impacted negatively on the lives of Nigerian youths. It establishes that there is a direct relationship between godfatherism and impoverishment of Nigerian youths. The paper argues that godfatherism has gone beyond the political scene veering into tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The godfathers use various student bodies to actualize their inordinate ambition. They use them as thugs, assassins, etc to outwit their opponents. Hence the Nigerian youths is encouraged or exposed to violence and because they pay them heavily they imbibe the culture of the end justifies the means in pursuit of wealth; knowledge, hard work, respect for life and cultural value system are thrown over-board. Values are considered so important that they affect everything we do. A value system is a coherent set of values adopted and / or evolved by a society, an organization, or a person as a yardstick or standard to guide behavior. Thus, some percentage of Nigerian youths graduate from the university without acquiring the necessary skill, knowledge and value system they need to contribute their quota to national development as future man powers. Any nation whose future leaders are made up of people who are not educated and lack value orientation are prone to underdevelopment. It is therefore being concluded that the menace of godfatherism should be checked to forestall it's negative impact on youth development in order to ensure that Nigeria as a nation would one day be extricated from the shackles of lack of value system and underdevelopment characterized by poverty, unemployment, corruption and dictatorship ,etc.

Keywords: Nigerian Politics, Godfatherism, life, and survival, Psychoanalytic theory

Preamble

“Godfatherism as a concept is one word that opens narrow doors when it comes to deciding who gets what into political scene. They make or mar potential candidates all over the country. In fact, the concept of godfatherism is firmly establishing itself as a guiding principle in contemporary Nigeria politics (Okoye, 2007). The term godfatherism according to Oxford Advanced learner's dictionary (6th edition, 1980) means a male godparent, a very powerful man in a criminal organization, especially a mafia or a person who began or developed something.” Mbamara (2004), define godfatherism as the invasion of the political candidate by discarnate powerful sponsor, tending to complete possession for the purpose of self gratification. It is a political slave trade or political sponsorship based on political manipulation with several evil agenda. Their aims and objectives include appointments, stealing,

robbery and looting of government treasury. The decision-making appointments and contract award is usually manipulated by the godfather. It is like drug abuse (Yinger,1980).

The etymology of the concept of “godfatherism” has its origin in Christianity according to Anakwenze (2004). He argues that godparents are chosen as surrogates to help biological or foster parents raise a Christian child to become a god-fearing, law-abiding adult of the society. Most Christians had godparents that helped to shape their moral development; particularly orphans who lost their parents early in their childhood were raised by godfathers or godmothers. Therefore, the relationship between a godfather and a godchild is a sacred religious responsibility in the Christian faith designed to guide and nurture the child to succeed in life. There is also economic godfathers-Those who brought up less privileged people through scholarship awards, apprenticeship in the field of trading, blacksmithing, artisan, etc and political godfatherism which is the topic of discourse in this paper.

From Christian perspective, the concept of godfatherism reflects in almost all spheres of the Nigerian society but has today been bastardized by the Nigerian factor to such an extent that the godfather, godmother and their innumerable children germinate iniquities and products of unrighteousness. In the Nigerian society today, the one who is regarded as a godfather is expected to service the inordinate ambitions of his wards. Such ambitions reflect in undeserved appointments, promotions, placements and assignments that manifest in more naira and less accountability by so doing *impacting negatively on the lives of Nigerian youths* . Instances abound in the Nigerian society where godfatherism is anchored on unconventional and diabolic relationships between a man and a woman and man-to-man. Such relationships are sometimes interlocked with tribal, ethnic, class, royal lineages, political and religious affiliations. Godfatherism as a concept in public or private sector is borne out of influences and affluences that the benefactors in most cases do not deserve. It calls for bootlicking, maligning of others, gossips, sliding tackles, destruction of opponents and perceived enemies and sometimes the killing of one’s adversaries through assassinations, maiming and what have you; using various cult groups in the tertiary institutions, thereby impoverishing the Nigeria youth.

It is pertinent to understand the origin of godfatherism in electoral politics. According to Gambo (2007) ‘the origin of godfatherism in electoral politics could be traced to the city of Chicago in the United States of America in the pre-World War II era. It was within this period that “the heads of criminal gangs sponsored politicians in elections, manipulated the results to get them elected and in return, received protection and contracts from their political godson”. It can be seen from this account of origin that the key defining characteristics of godfatherism in the USA and in Nigeria are broadly speaking similar. Undoubtedly, godfathers employ whatever means, legitimate and illegitimate to ensure victory for their godsons in return for unlimited and intangible benefits. The concept of godfatherism is firmly establishing itself as a guiding principle in contemporary Nigerian politics (Umahi, 2013). Besides, godfatherism is a welcome development in a decent political playground. The young has to go under the tutelage of an experienced and elderly statement to acquire the skill of governance and imbibe the charisma of his godfather as political ingredients in his career as well as groomed politician. For instance, Chief Obafemi Awolowo mentored millions of Yoruba nationals without mortgaging the interest of the Western Region; Alhaji Ahmadu Bello and Sir Odumegwu Ojukwu mentored Honourable Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe who in turn groomed many younger politicians without using them as stooges (or state money-making machines). This noble trend in our political history has been recently bastardized by the crop of political godfathers and “puppet” politicians seeking elective offices through these political shysters. The abuse and wrong application of the phenomenon of godfatherism by the key political players in Nigeria have made nonsense of the democratic and leadership values of responsibility and accountability. The interests of the people are mortgaged and the business of governance is survival of the fittest. If one could volunteer to sponsor a gubernatorial aspirant into the office of the governor of a state, the state automatically becomes his personal estate and the toothless-governor becomes the estate manager responsible to the estate owner-political godfather. He accounts to his mentor who appointed him governor and jettisons the interest of the electorates who know nothing about his journey to the state house. This stunted human and poor infrastructural development in most states of the federation is the result of the fact that most political office-holders no longer see themselves as holding their offices in trust for the people, but rather in trust for their godfathers, themselves and their relation. Consequently, it encourages corruption, breeds unemployment, poverty, political instability, electoral malpractices, etc. Hence the Nigerian youths is encouraged or exposed to violence and because they pay them heavily they imbibe the culture of the end justifies the means in pursuit of wealth; knowledge, hard work and respect for life are thrown over-board.

Moreover, in a situation where the “governor” of a state refuses to respect the terms of agreement with the godfather, the godfather will do everything within his power to frustrate the efforts of the government (the godson’s administration) to direct dividends of democracy to the people of the state. Incidences of overt confrontations of godfathers by (godsons) executive governors of some states of the federation abound. The cases of Chief Emeka Offor and Chinwoke Mbadinuju; Chief Christ Uba and Dr. Chris Ngige of Anambra State and Chief Lamidi Adedibu versus Senator Rashidi Ladoja of Oyo State; Chief Jim Nwobodo versus Dr. Chimaroke Nnamani and Dr. Chimaroke Nnamani versus Bar. Sullivan Chime of Enugu State is example of overt political conflict (Umahi, 2013). Ibrahim (2007) cited in Okoye (2007) elucidates godfathers as men who have the power personally to determine both who gets nominated to contest elections and who rule in a state. Invariably, the political playground is dominated by few powerful individuals known as political godfathers. In their bid to strengthen their political forts, they invoke the sentiments of the existing parochial cleavages such as ethnicity and religion. Often, they succeed in mobilizing supporters on that platform through material inducements to retain their loyalty and pathetically inhibit the gullible masses from reasoning critically as citizens. Political godfathers move extra miles at all costs by all means to retain and sustain their conquered empires. Godfatherism thrives in lawless society like Nigeria where state power is perceived as a commodity for sale and its acquisition puts one in good position to amass wealth. The godfathers act through surrogates who are not saleable to the electorates. The godson also believes that one cannot rely on the people to win democratic elections.

However, Nigerians are not happy with the abysmal performance of a large number of godsons (for instance, governors, legislators and local government council chairmen); who unfortunately cannot be called to order as long as they remain in the good books of their political godfathers. This has translated into bad governance with the failure to socio-politically and economically transform our societies regardless of the huge amount often allocated to the various levels of government that have not been able to justify or calibrated such government spending. As long as political sons continue to pay homage or remain loyal to their mentor and godfather their stay in office is guaranteed regardless of their performance or the people interest (Ome , 2014). Thus, the several fighting between godfathers and their political sons that has occurred in several states of the federation were carried out by the youths; using various campus secret cult groups such as Pyrate Confraternity (National Association of Sea Dogs), Buccaneer, Black Axe, Black Berret, Beta Sigma, Viking, KKK, Temple of Eden & Trojan Home etc (Okorie,2014) . A secret cult has been defined simply as, “a system of religious beliefs and practices” (New Encyclopedia Britannica, 1973). It could also be variously described as a system of religious worship; devotion, homage to a person or thing etc. Besides, some youths accept being used by godfathers for some quick material gain and survival in a difficult or hostile environment like Nigeria. It serves as a place of refuge and source of succors for their personal worries. By searching for, and having the quasi psychological satisfaction of self preservation in the occult, the godfathers use the youths to malign their political opponents they feel are a threat to them. This is one of the maneuver tactics use by godfathers, and this kind of attitude is most often in the necks of the youths who are approached by godfathers as “angels or guides”(Ogbonna,2012). Ogbonna (2012) opined that the youths rush into cultism without knowing the exact consequences, and in this way; they trade their souls to godfathers for such mean prices as: wealth, honour, power, vengeance, knowledge or pleasure. Again, being a cult member helps in getting elected into offices of campus politics and it gives the image of a “tough guy” and guarantees protection.

According to, the formal Governor of Central Bank of Nigeria, Sanusi Lamido at a dinner organized by the old boys association of the Kings College, Lagos on Sunday the 16th of August 2009. The Governor was quoted by several daily news papers, (including “The Guardian” and “This Day” of the 19th and 20th August 2009), as saying that the country spends time talking about political and economic problems and seldom discusses the eroded value system of the good old days. He went on to say that Nigeria was at a cross road and we needed to change our value system or our children would have only one role model and that would be “the person that has the money.”

Sanusi concluded that Nigeria had let the good old values die and it is almost getting too late to retrieve them but that we must rise up and fight a war to retrieve them, a war for the value system that we would leave for our children.

On the other hand, the formal late Inspector General of Police, Mr. Ogbonna Onovo has blamed the trend of crime waves, especially kidnapping, on parent’s inability to inculcate morals to their children. This again was reported to the national dailies, (Guardian of Wednesday 9th of September 2009). The formal late IGP who was parading a ten man gang of alleged kidnapers to journalists, called for stiffer sanctions against kidnapers as well as legislation on strict surveillance and purchase of communication gadgets to facilitate the checkmating of hoodlums using telephones for their crime.

Several dissenting articles, also in the dailies, (Guardian Sunday 13th September) have requested the formal IGP to go deeper into society's problems to realize that the crime waves he is talking about have roots beyond poor parentage to godfathers. Such articles have advocated gainful engagement of the youth through a good and sustainable educational system and massive employment.

No doubt all of the above mentioned publications are a manifestation of the concern of the general populace over the value system of Nigeria as a society and the family in particular.

Thus, the scope of this paper is to outline that godfatherism is a major factor in impoverishing the Nigerian youths. The future of our Nigerian youths is so dark because they were led wrongly; which has a very serious negative psychological implication on our youths. Some psychological theories help us to understand the situation in Nigeria.

Traditional Collectivism and Western Individualism

In the first place our traditional society emphasized collectivism, which emphasized communal goals and welfare. This is gradually giving way to individualism, characteristic of western civilization and which emphasizes individual fulfillment and achievement. Sometimes we find that we have retained one to some extent and have imbibed the other also to some extent and this shapes our perceptions, social relations and child rearing, (Triandis, Brislin and Hui, 1988, Hui, 1988). This has contributed a lot to some of the conflict giving rise to the societal breakdown we are experiencing, kidnapping, insurgency, and armed robbery etc). However, one can say with some certainty that the civil war of the '60s and the military interregnum of the '70s saw a turn in events in the country. The upsurge of the series of the United Nations Conferences on Women and Children in the last half of the 20th century, (Eya, 2006), the subsequent rights of gays and lesbians, global upheavals, globalization, the so called economic meltdown and the bombardment of our media with western values all contributed to the psychological shake up the youths is experiencing all over the Africa. Poverty and corruption of course have compounded the issue in Nigeria. The major challenge of the Nigeria society today is a moral one, a value orientation especially on our politicians.

Social Learning Theories

These have emphasized environmental factors in moral development, (Bandura, 2004). The theories also emphasize moral conduct more than moral reasoning. The social learning theories admit the effect of developmental advances in cognitive abilities but place emphasis on reward, punishment and observational learning like modeling and imitation. As such they do not expect a child's moral behavior to be consistent across situations and between knowledge, (moral competencies) and conduct, (moral performance). The latter is dependent on motivation and reward and incentive to act in a specific moral way. The former is referring to awareness and skills but not the actual deed. Since the conduct is influenced by reinforcement or punishment, and since moral behavior has been found to vary with situations, the behavior that is rewarded will be prevalent. Through rationalization and fear of intimidation the wrong behavior and the wrong reward could be perceived as right and adopted. People pay lip service to morality but practice immorality. Thus we hail people with tremendous wealth and rich purses encouraging corruption. Such people are recognized in public and preach morality. Such people make their way up the material ladder of success while the masses mutter under their breath. Desperate people like the youths run after them seeking the crumbs that fall from their tables. Through observational learning, the youth imbibe this as the way of life and try to join them the best and quickest way they can- making money through vice. Through interaction with peers and relations such behavior is spread around. There is research evidence that individuals who have friends or siblings who are delinquent are at risk for delinquency, (Santrock, 2007).

Psychoanalytic Theory

This theory states that identification leads to internalization of the parents' standard of right and wrong which reflect social prohibitions and hence children develop a superego, made of ego ideal conscience. The psychoanalytic theory puts emphasis on the development of the feeling of guilt to motivate an individual to resort to moral reasoning and moral behavior. Thus it is your feeling that motivates you to moral behavior. Now with the increasing difficulty parents experience in taking care of their children, these children go out to fend for themselves. By so doing they may lose the opportunity to identify with parents and certainly will lack the feeling of guilt necessary for moral conduct. How can a 10-year-old truck pusher who brings his wages home for feeding the family begin to identify with parents that have not been able to allow him to enjoy his childhood? When the youth conclude their studies and face a stark future with no opportunities offered by society to play the appropriate roles, then feeling of guilt gives way to audacious behavior against society. This brings us back to where we started, godfatherism: life and survival in Nigeria society. The ideal

Nation requires the input of godfathers, godsons, politicians, and schools. The youths at the moment are beleaguered and struggling under the burden of societal ills. Thus, the distortion of the youths affects the society. For instance, Agoha (2009) contends that Almajiri is a system created by religion that has overtime been deployed by godfathers as instrument of oppression and repressions. Thousands of lives and properties with millions have been wasted by the illiterate, largely economically unproductive Almajiri. The politics of settlement and oath taking that make the headlines on Nigerian national dailies are also some of the manifestations of godfathers. Nigerians generally think that to achieve any form of meaningful success politically in life one must scratch the back of some “godfathers”. This has factored into the Nigerian psyche in all sectors; thereby impoverishing the Nigerian youths. It must be realized that development goes beyond handing out some millions or billions of naira without free education, building industries thereby securing the future of our youths. To guarantee sustainable political development a resounding programme for our youths must be guaranteed and prevailing mindset must be addressed unless a greater underdevelopment and crisis is being planned for. Thus, godfatherism is not without theoretical framework.

Theoretical Framework

The work has as its main theoretical thrust on the fact that those godfathers in the Nigeria political scene have no sanguine interest in their godsons. They have their own hidden agenda and selfish corrupt interest to gag their godsons and give them no breathing space to enable them “get it all”.

The problem associated with the cancerous phenomenon is that the perpetrators are no less a people in the society. The paradox is that these godsons are like undergraduate students undergoing training from their lecturers/mentors; when they graduate, they will equally torture others in the same manner even worse than they received (Thovoethin 2004). The extraction of Igbo culture in the South-Eastern part of Nigeria called it “Aru gbaa afo, oburu omelala” meaning (when a particular bad behaviour or act stays longer it becomes a cultural value). Besides, the political parties lack the capacity to act contrary to the wishes and aspirations of these godfathers because they look up to them to bank roll their campaigns and to use their influences to see their candidates through elections. Their influences at certain points even overshadow the judiciary and court orders are seemingly not regarded. Equally rule of law does not apply in their scheme. It is indeed a bizarre political scenario. It is evident at every nook and cranny of our Nigeria society but is more pronounced in some states like Oyo, Anambra etc.

The godfather phenomenon as a structure in Nigeria’s democracy should rather be described as unfortunate. The game plan of the godfathers, since the return of democracy in 1999 is somewhat retrogressive to the long awaited democracy in Nigeria. The conventional civic sense of godfatherism, which is inclined to posturing a credible candidate and granting him a mentored support to enhance result oriented governance, is however opposed by entrepreneurial sense of politics obtainable in Nigeria (Umahi, 2013). It is a term now reserved for God forsaken criminals who will go to any length to achieve their set goals of wielding political power. They engage in such acts like arson, intimidation, warning, flogging and sometimes assassination using various student bodies. This objective of godfatherism and its associated negative consequences in Nigeria is loathsome to our youths. Godfatherism is one of the pandemic that is endangering Nigerian polity. It compels elected official to siphon funds made for public infrastructural development to private accounts of their godfathers, and can never be calibrated, thereby jeopardizing and mortgaging the future of our youths. The modus operandi of the Nigerian political godfather is clear even to the blind. They service the campus secret cults in Nigeria. This is just the life of godfathers and the life of the Nigeria politicians. The godson occupies an exalted position in government, rather than spending the available fund to establish a factory or set up a process that will employ the youths (eg. Graduates), the money is diverted to Swiss bank and other European or American banks. Hence, School leavers or university graduates remain unemployed and provide fertile ground for youths to continue their evil deed (Ogbonna, 2012).

Against this background Gambo (2007) was right when he opined that “the Fourth Republic political godfathers are essentially predatory in their motivation to influence electoral politics”. Indeed from the look of things, godfathers are a major plague of party politics in the country. Ejikeme (2013) in Anambra Guber: stated that its business as usual; it is the same people doing the same thing for the same reason, so, why would anyone expect a different outcome? Money is the name of the game even as a war like situation was created before and during the exercise. Regretting that godfathers are prancing about the stage again, he said that the control of the resources of the state is the motivation for the impasse and war-like situation rather than genuine desire for service. He also wondered if INEC could handle the situation in 2015 (Ejikeme, 2013).

However, politics in Nigeria is unique; you may not see its kind in any other African countries. To start with, Nigerian people are republican by nature. In elections at all levels, the local, state and federal produces more candidates vying for any given position than other countries in Africa. For example, over 95 aspirants obtained the PDP form for governorship; 50 aspirants obtained the form for local government four years ago and they all paid millions of naira. A particular politician bought 15 forms for his acolytes and they started trading in them. That's the real political horse-trading (Ejikeme, 2013). Again, if candidate A does not get the ticket to contest from one political party, he will decamp to another party where he will continue to pursue his ambition. And those who lose in the election proper always challenge the results in court. In fact, Nigerian people can play what one could call never-say-die politics. Other major characteristics of Nigerian politics bother on money and apathy of the electorate who do not question their leaders because they voted on the basis of what entered into their pockets. Having sold their conscience, the people resign themselves to fate on the issues of governance and leave everything to the mercy of the leaders.

Of all the godfathers Nigeria have had none of them is involved in raising the level and standard of life, increasing social interaction, maintaining postal services and communications, and coordinating economic activities but rather impoverishing the Nigerian youths and making their pockets heavy. Real and true politics is all about nation-building. Instead of building our nation they help in destroying the only country we have. The godfathers help in making things so difficult for the citizenry. Then, what have the godfathers to show to the Nigerian youths and as the future of Nigeria? What legacy do they leave behind? What are the Nigerian experiences?

The Nigerian Experience

Nigeria has had men and women of ideas but none of them has become pivotal in the philosophical and political consciousness of the entity called Nigeria. Thinking deeply, there are hardly any Nigerian godfathers or political leaders that could be pointed to as the architect of the idea that made Nigeria. It is hard to identify any individual Nigerian godfather that could constitute a counterpart to Socrates, Plato, Aristotle for ancient Greece; Rousseau, Hobbes, Locke, Bodin, Mill, and Marx for modern and contemporary Europe.

In contemporary times Mao Tse Tung stood redoubtable in China, Fidel Castro stands in Cuba Charles de Gaulle in France, Francisco Franco in Spain and Winston Churchill in Britain. In East Africa there was Jomo Kenyatta in Kenya, Julius Nyerere in Tanzania, Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana, Ahmed Sekou Touré in Guinea and Nelson Mandela in South Africa. Who stands for Nigeria as a whole? Is there any individual whose intellectual and ideological activities can be synonymous with the political entity called Nigeria? It seems quite obvious that Nigeria cannot easily turn around and produce a single individual who could truthfully be referred to as paradigmatic for the whole of Nigeria, whose mode of thought or pattern of perception forms a blueprint for others, on the philosophical, political and ideological plane (Onyeocha, 2000).

Talking of politics and godfatherism in Nigeria society, a lot of political activities go on and involve a lot of people. Most of those involved wind up as sectional chieftains, or even self-seeking opportunists. What one sees is mostly cheap, largely uncoordinated, free-for-all, jungle politics of hassle and intrigue. Neither in intent nor in its unfolding does it hold any promise or perspective on any meaningful national scale. As a result, there seems to be little serious thought given to policies and their implications for the progress and growth of the country. There is little evidence of any national goal, and this lack can be borne out in the successive military regimes that have afflicted the Nigerian political climate. Nigerian politics is one of acrimony, dissension, division, sectionalism, and political sleight of hand. The staking and getting of money seems to be a primary motivation for most of those who engage in politics in Nigeria. Nigerians value money more than human life. The value attached to money in Nigeria makes it possible for almost everybody to go into politics in order to be recognized, to leave above poverty level. As they get into political power they enjoy power, money, security etc. Nobody wants to resign rather they shift from one position to another. Hence, some root causes of godfatherism in Nigeria are as follows:

1. The Culture of Poverty and Underdevelopment

In a society where the majority of the people lack the basic needs of shelter and food to live in their day to day life, such a society, by modern standard, is said to be poor. If this mode of life becomes a custom that constitutes itself into a structure of living-it becomes a culture. This type of culture is what Oscar Lewis defines as the "Culture of Poverty". According to Lewis as cited by Ekwuru (2000), contends that?

"The poor, by virtue of their exclusion from the mainstream of the societies in which they live, develop a way of life their own, entire one that is qualitatively different from that of the middle class

societies in which they live. Like all cultures, the culture of poverty is a “design for living” that is adapted to the existential circumstances of the poor. The pressure of coping with everyday survival leads to a present time orientation; the lack of opportunity, to low aspirations; exclusion from the political process, to feelings of powerlessness and fatalism; disparagement of the poor on the part of the society at large, to feelings of inferiority; the inability of men to provide adequately for their families, to mother-centered households; unrelenting poverty, to passivity and a sense of resignation. Thus, for Lewis, the culture of poverty comes into existence as a reaction and adaptation to conditions of poverty”p 77.

When the members of a society seem to be adjusting to the hardships, the austere conditions, and the wretched outlook that such poverty brings and sustains, then, it has the tendency of halting a steady and progressive form of cultural development. The structure that is prompted by this culture of poverty by modern standard and definition is that of underdevelopment. Thus, the culture of poverty promotes and sustains underdevelopment. In any society where the majority of the population is poor and live in subhuman condition, the basic form of cultural development in terms of its economic definition is stagnated and stationary. When one knows what it means to live in a culture that is poor and underdeveloped, it becomes easier to understand why people from poor families seem to be perpetually adjusted to it. It is like being in a cave where one is socially conditioned and psychologically brainwashed and blindfolded. One does not see anything else- there is no alternative experience to compare it with.

Most of the people within Nigeria, by modern standard and calculation, are said to be poor. Many of these people live below poverty line. And this means that they lack the basic necessities of life- food and shelter. It is simply unimaginable that at the beginning of the 21st century, when the core capitalist nations of the world are scientifically fantasizing and romanticizing with the idea of “humanizing” other planets, the Nigerian is still battling with the bare necessities of life- the quest to producing enough to feed himself, and building a befitting house to shelter himself. This is the price that one pays to be born as a Nigerian in the African continent. One has to spend most of one’s precious time daily to struggle and search for what to eat. Expressing this fact of poverty and backwardness in his book, *Black Man’s Dilemma*, Oyebola (2012), remarks that:

“One such fact is that no black country has ever made a breakthrough to modernity. As black peoples, we have no country to be proud of in terms of its great inventions and discoveries, its technical equipment and political power. No black country has successfully developed or adapted the technology of industrial civilization to assure its citizens of a high standard of living. I don’t know of any black country which has made any meaningful beginning in the development of, at least, parts of modern technology and science. No black country has solved the problem of poverty among a great majority of its citizens.”

In this sense, Nigeria seems to be one of the countries where the majority of human beings still bend so low, like other wild beasts of the forest, to look for what to eat in the crudest and unscientific way this is a typical case of living *face down* and not *face up*. On the one hand, to live *face down* is to live by instincts, and it depicts that level of human life, where humans like other lower animals, search for what to eat.

Nigeria, seem to be the only place and the only country where poverty seems to be bliss; where people, by their looks and visions, seem to be enjoying the state of being poor (suffering and smiling). People can “celebrate” poverty by the way they try to adjust to numerous traps set by developed nations as clear instruments of collective poverty. Poverty and underdevelopment have become the dual emblems of the identity of the Nigerian people. In the present world, both the name and the image of Nigeria evoke nothing else in the mind of the rest of the world than these two treads of shame and unworthiness. Needless to say, what the Nigerian child of this century inherits as a lot is the cultural baggage of poverty and corruption.

2. Inordinate Ambition for Material Acquisition

Poverty and underdevelopment, as the conditions of absolute lack of the bare necessities of material goods that guarantee a relative comfort of being human, generate the instincts for excessive pursuit of material things. In every culture where the majority is poor by every definition, the inordinate desire to

become wealthy is made the very essence and ideal of existence. In such a cultural situation, there is a mad rush for the grabbing and possessing of the few available things that are meant to serve the common good. Of course, in every situation where there is a notable rush for the acquisition of material things, the usual instincts of the “survival of the fittest” are generated by installing its attendant jungle law formula of competitive action. In Nigeria today, this ordinate pursuit of material things has placed the value of things over that of a human being. Things of great societal value as money are given primary place in every human venture. They are regarded as the ideals of life that could, in effect, confer worth and value to man. Consequently the worth of any human being does not lie on what he or she is, but on what he or she possesses. With this baseline logic of instrumental philosophy of life, “to have “is “to become” truly human; and the more one has the more he becomes. The person that has money is the person that exists in the true sense; he wields more socio-political power and is given a prominent position of privilege in every socio-religious gathering. The worst part of this materialization of values is that man has been reduced to the worth of an instrument as a means to an end. This type of materialist ontology has led to the social division between the “haves” and the “have-nots,” and this gap increases daily by geometrical proportion. According to Ekwuru (2000), by virtue of birth, therefore, one acquires one of these social definitions of status ascription. A socio-economic battle rages on in all fronts of societal life between the few “haves” and the mass of “have-nots”. As the few “haves” try daily to fortify their economic empires and social dynasties, the mass of the “have-nots” struggle in the mash mud of their dungeon life to cross this bridge of social status definition. Such struggles of the “have-nots” are most often futile and useless. It is easier to drop down in this ladder of social definition than to climb to the top. This tie the have-nots to the apron string of the haves who become their godfathers.

3 .Bribery and Corruption

One of the apparently social ills that results from the culture of poverty and underdevelopment is the vicious circle of bribery and corruption. The ambition to get rich quick is fuelled and fanned by the desire to get everything by all means. This type of ambition, when it is not properly geared toward a morally sound systematic engagement of personal effort, is the bane of every societal order and progress. It encourages the loosening of every nut and bolt that hold the entire society together. In their inordinate pursuit of personal gains, individuals force the common laws of the societal order to bend to the benefits of their personal whims and caprices. Through this means, the norms of common good and order are officially set at the disposition of those who have the means of buying and pocketing them as safety belts for looting the common treasures. In this case then, the society operates by the law of the highest bidder which works with logic of back scratching and the illegal consent of the greasing of palm. Indeed, to live in a society like this is to live in a situation, where every form of genuine personal effort in doing things has no place: the virtues of honesty and sincerity are discouraged, and the social incentives of meritorious rewards in public ventures are thrown overboard. Therefore, in order to succeed in this type of situation one has to work within the parameters of its notable social dishonesty and political brutality. It is not a world where right-thinking and straightforward men can live comfortably, but a haven for rogues and social miscreants. In fact, this culture of “bribery and corruption,” as it is called today, which has eaten so deeply into the fabrics of most Nigerian states, stands for nothing else but a situation of apparent moral decadence- a quasi lawless society where social order is replaced with a widespread anarchy.

4.The Politics of Dictatorship

The crude condition of life that characterizes a corrupt society invariably produces crude people. In every society that holds the principles of the jungle laws, and operates with their inherent logic, only those few who can survive by pulling down and crushing the heads of others, will qualify as the fittest that carry the flag of victory. In the present Nigerian situation, the daily struggle for survival has transformed every sector of the societal life into a battlefield. The logic of succeeding and winning by all means has converted the political landscape into a battlefield for personal enrichment. Poverty has turned politics into a potent tool for multiple cases of criminality. Today, this new brand of Nigerian politics is defined as a dirty one, and as a game of chance. Therefore, to succeed in this type of politics is to learn how to play its dirty cards. The dirty game thrives on fortuitous chances. Any least chance of grabbing a political post should be exploited by all means. Indeed, it is a new brand of political science, which provides not only the easiest means for the elimination of political opponents, but also the very scientific formula for becoming a dastard dictator. The African modern political institutions with their overt capitalist forms and structures have become potent frameworks for oppressive intrigues of systematic self sabotage and backwardness. One thing that should be noted is the fact that Nigerian dictators are not just power-mongers but reckless wealth-seekers. Ekwuru (2000), contends that If the Nazi and fascist leaders as Hitler and Mussolini, were true

symbols of power-saturated individuals, Nigeria dictators are symbols of wealth-saturated persons. They are the true products of a culture of poverty and underdevelopment. Just as wealth is power in Nigeria, the ambition to build a wealthy empire around oneself is realized by wielding a political power. Holding a political post in this case is viewed as the quickest means of feathering one's nest. This is the brain behind most attempts made by Nigeria leaders to make themselves life-Local Government chairmen, Governors, Ministers, House of Reps, Senators and presidents or to become political dictators. This brand of Nigerian politics that is described as politics of patronage is equally defined as the "politics of the belly". It is the politics of leaders at the biting jaw of hunger. Just as the great Bob Marley said that a "hungry man is an angry man," majority of Nigerian hungry politicians are mad, and the seat of their madness is greed and covetousness.

The Effects of Godfatherism in Nigeria Politics

The destabilizing effects of this for democratic consolidation, no doubt is loud and clear. Evidently, looking at the trend of event in the present political dispensation, one is not left with any doubt whether or not godfatherism in Nigerian politics should be allowed. Many political parties at various levels of government are structurally and financially weak to organize themselves for any free and fair electoral context without the unwieldy influence of these political entrepreneurs-the godfathers. This is so because godfatherism as it is practiced can be better described as plague. This plague like insurgence manifests in a number of ways. The reality of the two parties (godfathers and godsons) to fall apart is always eminent. When that happens, it is usually calamitous and good governance is thrown overboard.

The story of who installed who; as a governor or the like; and who accounts to who; has rendered political administration of some states in Nigeria morbid. In some instances, properties of the state government are set ablaze due to the unreasonable feud emanating from the practices of godfatherism. There is a breakdown of law and order. The Anambra state logjam during the Chris Uba and Governor Chris Ngige feud is a very wonderful example to the menace of godfatherism when the godson wants to be independent. And the godfather said no. Who made you what you are.

One of the most absurd displays of political madness was the abduction of an executive governor, in Anambra state. This followed the defiant attitude of Governor Chris Ngige in rejecting the selfish terms of Chris Uba his godfather. This of course did not make for a good picture of democracy but an aberration. In Oyo state, Adedibu and the governor the Ladoja's quagmire is also a negation to the phenomenon of godfatherism and as a result of Ladoja's insistence to break away from such evil of godfatherism, there has been no peace in Oyo state. This could also be heard of Dr. Olusola Saraki (godfather) and Alhaji Muhammed Lawal (godson), the governor of Kwara state "between" 1999-2003. Dr. Saraki was purported to have endorsed the candidature of Lawal against other contenders as the governor of the state and also bankrolled his campaign expenses. But Lawal failed to reciprocate the gesture of Dr. Saraki by giving him adequate government patronage and by acting in other ways as a loyal "godson". "This resulted in the battle for supremacy between Saraki and Lawal, which seriously affected good governance in the state" (Umahi ,2013).

However, when the godson wants to compromise his integrity and to swallow the mess of his godfather, the story is rather unfortunate to the smooth governance and the delivery of the "almighty dividends of democracy". The syndrome of the winner takes it all arises. Those greedy godfathers would therefore "pocket" the state and decide who gets what and who becomes what in the state government. Since many of these godfathers have no knowledge, ideas and expertise to impart except that they assumed their current political position because of their enormous wealth, which they invested in to politics and expect a return or profit, such states where they unleash their terror are always described as unfortunate.

According to Joseph (1991) "this development has left democracy in Nigeria to assume the form of prebendalism". Within this context, state power is treated as a congeries of office, which can be competed for, appropriated and then administered for the benefit of individual occupants and their support group. This is the case of Anambra state under the regime of Governor Mbadiniju and Emeka Ofor. During that era, there were all sorts of evils in the state. Infrastructural development in the state was thrown overboard. Nothing was moving in Anambra state. It was on record also that during this period, schools were closed down for over ten months. Democracy became an illusion in Anambra state.

At this juncture, it becomes pertinent to turn to another side of godfatherism, which would serve us well in the bid to sustain and consolidate our democracy even as we are at the verge or threshold of another republic. This is the biblical pattern of mentorship. With this pattern of mentorship, godfatherism would be seen as a veritable tool in bringing about an enduring and viable democracy.

The Way Forward

There is need for all stakeholders in Nigerian political scene to rise to the responsibility of taming corruption and the power of political godfathers. To avoid crude political godfatherism as obtainable in Nigeria today from subverting Nigeria's democracy:

- i. All tiers of government must prosecute any person found plotting to destabilize any part of the country in a manner;
- ii. On the part of the governed there must be radical change of attitudes especially the urbanized segment and in the mindset of the power elite and the political office seeking buccaneers;
- iii. An intelligent and imaginative approach must be adopted to eradicate abject poverty and helplessness of the populace especially its rural components;
- iv. The rate of unemployment of most educated Nigerian youths must be reduced to the lowest level;
- v. Political awareness campaigns should be embarked upon by National Orientation Agency (NOA), civil societies, mass media etc; on the harmful effects of using Nigerian youths by some unscrupulous politicians to achieve their selfish goals.
- vi. Politics of money should be discouraged forthwith. By this much emphasis should be placed on the quality of the person vying for a particular position and not how much money he possesses.
- vii. The prospective godsons on choosing their godfathers should take much care. Experienced and prestigious person in politics should be sought for and not whoever has money.
- viii. Legislation should be made empowering the security agents to arrest and prosecute selfish godfathers. This would therefore be a deterrent for other intending gluttons and profiteers (Olufemi, 2011).

Conclusion

The political godfathers in Nigeria see governance and political power as the deepest and surest method of amassing wealth to the detriment of the governed. Sponsoring a weak and poor candidate "to win" election by appointment is seen as a lucrative business whereby the sponsor will invest heavily in imposing his candidate on the people as their leader, with all intent and purposes to make huge profit from the state coffer through the "sorry-status-puppet" the so called Governor. Godfatherism is a dangerous development in Nigeria politics. The electorates are impoverished the more, and the corrupt rich-godfathers are corruptly enriching themselves the more. The circle is endless. The solution to the menace is the serious problem facing Nigeria for example Boko Haram insurgency, kidnapping, crude oil vandalization, armed robbery, cultism in the tertiary institutions etc. until a morally sound committed and patriotic leader emerge to lead people honestly with the attribute of transparency, openness, people-oriented policies and programmes, Nigeria political development will be a mirage.

Again, godfatherism in Nigeria politics means that a politician may have sold his or her independence to a financier or party power-broker in order to win an election; thereby mortgaging the future of his/her electorates. It is important to note that the menace of godfatherism should be checked to forestall its negative impact on youth development in order to ensure that Nigeria as a nation would one day be extricated from the shackles of underdevelopment characterized by poverty, unemployment, corruption and dictatorship.

Finally, godfatherism has metaphorsed into hydra-headed monster, which if nothing is done is capable of truncating our hard earned democracy.

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