

THE INTEGRITY QUESTION AND ITS REFLECTION ON CORRUPTION

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Peter Macintosh in one of his reggae music gave a rendition, ‘‘Everybody talks about crime, crime tell me who are the criminals?’’ this music by Peter Tosh keeps recurring like a decimal each time corruption, wars and skirmishes of war are raging in battle royale against corruption in Nigeria. It is quite unfortunate that corruption seems to be an alias name for Nigeria.

Except in self deceit and hypocrisy, it is difficult for any right thinking Nigerian to deny the fact that corruption has brought to fore Bob Marley’s adage ‘‘in abundance of water the fool is thirsty’’. We have so much to enrich the entire citizenry of our great Nation Nigeria but the gluttonous life ambition of a very few Nigerians has made mess of aspirations for a glorious Nation without the blemish of corruption.

In every mundane sphere of our National life, corruption glitters like gold, in religious and political realms, it shines like diamond and in areas of ethical values, and corruption has made us blind like the Biblical Bartholomew.

It is pertinent therefore to admit the fact that corruption has been a great worry to many great minds in Nigeria. The late sage, Obafemi Awolowo, once took an eagle’s eye view on corruption and said ‘‘ I have never considered myself as having a monopoly of wisdom but the problem is when people in position of rulership and leadership are in clubs, mingling with men of shady characters and ladies of easy virtues, I and people of like minds are in our rooms thinking about the problems of Nigeria and how to find solution to them.

General Yakubu Gowon at the all Nigeria Conference on September 12, 1966 described the crossroads at which Nigeria has found itself at. According to him, ‘‘the truth is that there is so much pretence in our society, so much posing. We like to always appear better than we are, but we do not always work hard enough to be better.

Those who placate zero tolerance for corruption when unmasked become more corrupt than those they initially implicated. The incorruptible judges are today falling victims of filth and odor of corruption to such an extent that the question of integrity keeps recurring at the battle fields of war against corruption in Nigeria. Obviously, pretense and hypocrisy among public office holders is the order of the day.

Politics has become a portal of corrupt enrichment and religion an estuary for anything humanly corruptible. Religion in Nigeria according to Kenneth Idioidi ‘‘has been politicized, politics religionized, while both religion and politics have been commercialized’’. It is the

commercialization of both that has messed up Nigeria to such an extent that a resting place no longer subsists for the mind of an honest Nigerian who truly detests corruption in soul and mind.

In governance, military or democratic it has become to the political elites a mere avenue to enrich themselves at the expense of a suffering large populace. It is like we are back in the era of Sodom and Gomorrah and like a time the Holy Prophet Mohammed (SAW) described as a time of "dimming light of honesty". According to him, "A person will sleep and honesty will be taken away from his personality. He will sleep again and truthfulness will be removed from his personality. Its impact will remain there like a burn mark on the skin cause by scrolling down a burning wood on your foot. It seems to be embossed but nothing is inside it.

Nigerians are getting disenchanted daily because those glaringly corrupt are having field days and running miles free of charge with their corruption and those honest ones are being pressed and pressured by poverty and a temptation to join the band wagon.

Many people think that all in government should be all honest at the same time and though it is essential and crucial, hardly achievable. The question of integrity and credibility of those who aim at stemming the tide of corruption but yet are robbing everything they can find even the blind therefore arises.

Whatever be the case with corruption and integrity question, we must learn to align our thoughts with the right way on honesty as a panacea to corruption. The advice is that we should not wait for our government and functionaries to be honest. We ourselves should become the first drop of rain, beginning with our personality. There is no obstacle in becoming honest and uncorrupted in our personal and public dealings.

Honesty and incorruptibility are good virtues that the individual Nigerian should possess taking into cognizance the saying of a Rosicrucian sage, "Envy not the appearance of happiness in any man for thou knowest not his secret grief.

Bryan's claim cannot be denied as he jests "we have been cursed with the reign of gold long enough. Many constitute no proper basics of civilization. The time has come to regenerate the society".

We should all remember that the dividends of corruption may taste sweet to those that swim in corruption but it is a truism that, "some things that are sweet to taste prove sour in digestion". Nigeria belongs to us all and we *must all remain here to salvage it together from corruption.*