LEADERSHIP AND TOLERANCE: TOWARDS PEACE AND NON-VIOLENCE

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Abstract

It is common knowledge that a society is more prosperous during the time of peace and non-violence. These elements lead to rapid developmental growth of any given society. To this end, peace and non-violence become desirable. In fact, lovers of peace preach non-violence; nothing could be more desirable. It is important, however, to ask: how can peace be attained? How do we maintain peace and non-violence? Can leadership bring about peace and non-violence? What about tolerance? These questions lead us to the problem this study seeks to address: can leadership and tolerance lead to peace and non-violence in the society? Nations have been torn apart in some part of the world due to poor leadership amongst other factors? Some leaders have gone to war just to massage their ego rather than broker peace and pursue non-violence. Some leaders too cannot accommodate dissident voices. This brings about chaos in the society and raises tensions. Thus, opposition can be cramped down and freedom, guaranteed by the constitution, is threatened. The practice of tolerance becomes important in this regard. This study adopts the analytic method. Thus, conceptual analysis of the words leadership, tolerance, peace and non-violence would be carried out with a view to evaluate the problems concerned with leadership and tolerance from a social political dimension. The study argues that tolerance and leadership cannot be devoid if peace and non-violence must be attained and maintained. The paper concludes that to keep the peace and non-violence leadership must embrace tolerance; leaders, as well as followers, are to have the virtue of tolerance to resolving crises and all forms of aggression.

Introduction

In every political environment there is always the question of leadership. Plato was concerned with this in mind when he raises the question who should rule, in other words, who should be a leader, who should govern the people? His quest led him to postulating a philosopher-king. Thomas Hobbes, on the other hand, posits that leadership should be provided by an "absolute sovereign" with an absolute power to ensure the security of the commonwealth as well as ensure common defence. But many philosophers disagree with Plato and Hobbes on the question of leadership. Karl Popper, for instance, is of the view that political leadership should be organised in such a way that "bad or incompetent rulers" can be prevented from attaining power and doing too much damage to the society. Another twist to the leadership question is tolerance. There are varied forms of government, ranging from democracy to monarchy and dictatorship. These various forms of government have their modes of operation and ultimately, a constitution which documents the laws of the land. Does tolerance play out in such constitution? In a democracy, for instance, the powers of government are a shared one with checks and balances. The checks and balances are to ensure that no arm of government oversteps its boundary. Also, the citizens are guaranteed freedom of speech and expression. These are pointers that the constitution

envisaged that those who hold elective (leadership) positions, especially executive powers, must be tolerant with one another and with the citizens.

Peace and non-violence are important factors in every society that seeks development, progress and unity. It is more imperative for a multilingual and multicultural society like Nigeria to continue to work for peace and non-violence. This would be the case when there is purposive leadership and the spirit of tolerance. This paper therefore explores and evaluates the concept of leadership and tolerance and how they can lead to peace and non-violence. The paper calls for a reorientation of the Nigerian political class who seek for power and leadership position by all means possible. The followership are not left out as they have to play their part in ensuring peace and non-violence in the society at large. Thus seeking leadership position as well as supporting a particular leader should not be made a do-or-die affair. Thus, this paper raises the question: can leadership and tolerance lead to peace and non-violence in the society? Why should one be a leader? What kind of leadership can lead to progress and developments? It is positive that Nigeria is a democratic society; embracing the right type of attitude in leadership would correct the anomalies and lopsidedness in "our democracy" and also guide against despotic and totalitarian leadership, while ensuring leaders lead by being responsible and exhibiting tolerance and true personal example.

Chinua Achebe (1983) attributes the problem Nigeria faces to "failure of leadership" which is "the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which are the hallmarks of true leadership"(p.22). Achebe is saying a leader must be responsible as well as show personal example of being responsible. To be responsible is to take up the challenges of leading and putting citizens' welfare at heart. It is this failure that made Achebe condemned the leadership style of Nigeria. It is a leadership style that is devoid of "intellectual rigour" and selflessness but filled with "a tendency to pious materialistic woolliness and self-centred pedestrianism" (pp.31-32).The political class are still embellish in this crave for material benefit to the detriment of purposive leadership. It is one reason that corruption has become ingrained in the psyche of the average Nigerian. Achebe (1983) believes that tolerance can be entrenched in Nigeria when tribalism has been put to check. In other words, intolerance in Nigeria and political atmosphere thereof is wrapped in tribalism, which is "discrimination against a citizen because of his place of birth" (pp.25-27).This promotes social injustice, disunity and mediocrity in the system. Achebe holds that a society imbued by lack of tolerance undermines its progress and civilization (p.28). Intolerance as well as selfish leadership attitude breeds distrust which can threaten the peace of society and hence, violence.

What is Leadership?

The term "leadership" has been defined by different scholars in different ways. Some have defined it from the attributes of personalities, why others have viewed it form the goals leadership is to attain. However, leadership is basically concerned with how best to lead and govern a society in such a way that there is peace and stability. To this end, Ologbenla (2007) defines leadership to mean quality of being good at leading (pp: 97-118). This quality would include altruism, patriotism, moral

uprightness, sense of historical mission, comprehension of developmental challenges and how to overcome them, courage, boldness and determination (pp: 407-422). Ayodele (2006) defines a leader as "an individual appointed to a job with authority, and accountability to accomplish the goals and objectives of the society" (pp.221-227). A leader is not just given authority but also responsibility. Ayodele then asserts that:

> A leader must be astute with both man and material. A leader must possess the ability to create in the followers the necessary enthusiasm/motivation to put in every necessary effort to deliver on set goals. Thus the ability not only to conceive but also to communicate a vision or idea is of utmost importance as an attribute of leadership. Above all, a leader must first and foremost be a member of his own team, internalize their feelings and galvanize their potentials towards reaching the goal (pp.221-227).

Ebegbulem (2012), believes that one of the most important things about leadership is the ability to inspire. For him, this means a leader is one who can inspire, and instil passion and direction to an individual or group of individuals, using his position to affect that group consciously or subconsciously. A leader is the driver or force behind the progress of the people he is leading (pp.221-227). Plato on the question of leadership was more preoccupied with the kind of individual that should be place in the position of leadership. For him, leadership should be in the hand of the "philosopher-king" for he is the best to lead and govern. Stumpf (1994) argues that Plato was looking for competence and peculiar abilities to fulfil that function. Stumpf writes:

> The [leader], said Plato, should be the one who has been fully educated, one who has come to understand the difference between the visible world and the intelligible world, between the realm ofopinion and the realm of knowledge, between appearance and reality. The philosopher-king is one whose education, in short, has led him up step by step through the ascending degrees of knowledge of the Divided Line until at last he has the knowledge of the Good, that synoptic vision of the interrelation of all truth to each other (p.72).

In all, Plato advocates that a leader must be sound in education and must possess good sense of justice. Leadership quality in this sense is defined by ones level of education, tutorship and exposure to governance.

What is Tolerance?

For the purpose of this work, 'tolerance' is defined as "the ability or willingness to tolerate the existence of opinions or behaviour that one dislikes or disagrees with" (Tolerance Oxford Living Dictionaries). In simple terms, tolerance is allowing opinions and practices one do not agree with and not forcing one views on another. Experience has shown that every human association is characterised by people with

diverse opinions whether they belong to one group or not. This entails that we may not all agree on the same issue as each one holds his or her own opinion on the subject matter. This may leads to further debate and consensus, or to healthy rivalry in which each person opinion is respected and accommodated. It is in this sense one can speak of 'tolerance'. For John Gray, "when we tolerate a practice, a belief or a character trait, we let something be that we judge to be undesirable, false or at least inferior; our toleration expresses the conviction that, despite its badness, the object of toleration should be left alone" (p.19). In political parley, Patricia (2001) cited in Akindele *et al* (2009), defines tolerance as "the willingness to extend basic and civil liberties to persons and groups whose viewpoints differ from one's own" (pp.365-379). This calls for a provision that guarantees the rights of people, individuals or groups, to be free to have or hold opinions that may not be in line with that of the government of the day. When dissent voices are not accommodated by a government such government is viewed as tyrannical and trying to silence opposition or stiffens the freedom guaranteed by the constitution. For Akindele *et al*, "in a free and open society, public deliberation should oppose "bad" ideas instead of suppressing them" (pp.365-379). This position is collaborated by Popper (1966) in his *paradox of tolerance*. Popper holds that 'rational argument' should be used to engage intolerant views and keep them in check by 'public opinion' rather than try to suppress them (p.265). Thiswould be unwise to do says Popper.

Tolerance presupposes that there are those who are intolerant. Intolerance is the lack of respect and accommodation of others views and political leaning. According to Akindele *et al*, "political intolerance obtains when a group or an individual is not willing to let others act, speak or think differently from the opinion or views held by such an individual or group" (pp.365-379) this leads to violence and intimidation which Akindele *et al* say is the 'natural reaction' of people who cannot tolerate views that differs from theirs. Recognising this phenomenon, Popper states that the intolerant not willing to engage in rational argument results to the "use of fists or pistols" (p.265). To avoid such occurrence, Popper proposes that a tolerant society must be ready against the 'onslaught' of the intolerant and "should claim the right to suppressthem if necessary even by force" (p.265). Popper is not here recommending violence as he is against any form of tyranny and abuse of power. He is however of the view that the intolerant or "any movement preaching intolerance places itself outside the law, and we should consider incitement to intolerance and persecution as criminal" (p.265). This is because such incitement to intolerance leads to violence and breach of peace.

It has been shown that that government sometimes result to intolerance against political opponents using the state law agencies to breakdown or quieten their opponents. For instance, Akindele *etal*narrates such situation which took place in Nigeria between 1999 and 2007. He says the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) became the tool for intolerance in the hand of the government who used the agency "to witch-hunt, harass and embarrass political opponents and those suspected to be anti-third term agenda" (pp.365-379).

> Political parties' primaries were manipulated in favour of the government supporters while people are being detained over unverified allegations. During this period, a lot of politically suspected and motivated killings were experienced within the country's body polity. Court rulings and decision were disobeyed at will. In fact, most democratic tenets and decency were thrown in to the mud as the constitution and its principles, which are supposed to be the fundamental basis of democracy, were being violated at will without any remorse or repentance. The system was characterized by mutual distrust and suspicion between the president and his Vice, between the executive and legislature and other political functionaries due to lack of tolerance. All these resulted in lack of hope, commitment and integrity as well as pervasive deceitfulness and hatred among the rulers, between the rulers and the ruled and among the citizens with its accompanying socio-political disintegration which are clogs in the wheel of democratic governance (pp.365-379).

The scenario painted above was all due to intolerance. Violence erupted in certain places as a result too. This is why leadership must embrace tolerance as principle and virtue to be able to keep a peaceful and non-violent society.

Peace and Non-violence

> Peace is like light, intangible but discernible either by its absence or by its sporadic and often startling appearances (like a flash of lightning against a black sky). Peace is a background condition for the perception of everything else, a physical phenomenon affecting all sentient beings, something whose presence or absence is best measured on a continuum or spectrum (pp.3-13).

Peace and non-violence are two desirable elements in human nature and co-existence. While peace may portray the absence of war, non-violence denotes the absence of conflict or the use of violence. Peace can also be seen as a general condition where there is calm and order in a specific society, environment, and the mind or body. War, conflict and violence have been responsible for the destruction and instability of nations thereby rendering several communities inhabitable, stalling development and progress. Peace and non-violence has both ethical and political nomenclature as well as psychological template (pp.3-13). What then is peace? What is non-violence?

(i) Peace

Webel (2007) says "peace is a linchpin of social harmony, economic equity and political justice, but peace is also constantly ruptured by wars and other forms of violent conflict" (pp.3-13). There can be no social harmony, economic equity and political justice in a society where there is no peace. Peace becomes a key element for a stable society. It also becomes the absence of war and violent conflicts. Wars, conflicts and violence make peace impossible. Peace is a theoretical term and not

easily defined. Webel (2007) holds this view and posit that "we often recognize [peace] by its absence" (pp.3-13).Dietrich Fischer (2007) collaborates this view when he states that "peace includes the absence of war, but much more. It is the absence of violence in all of its forms and the presence of mutually beneficial cooperation and mutual learning" (pp.187-205). Citing Johan Galtung and others, Webel (2007) explains that distinction has been proposed between 'positive' and 'negative' peace. "'Positive' peace denotes the simultaneous presence of many desirable states of mind and society, suchas harmony, justice, equity, etc. 'Negative' peace has historically denoted the 'absence of war'and other forms of widescale violent human conflict" (pp.3-13). But ultimately, Webel argues that peace is dialectical and not just the absence of war.

> Peace is also not the mere absence of war in a Hobbesian world of unending violent conflict.*Peace is both a means of personal and collective ethical transformation and an aspiration to cleanse theplanet of human-inflicted destruction*. The means and the goal are in continual, dialectical evolution, sometimes regressing during periods of acute violent conflict and sometimes progressing non-violently and less violently to actualize political justice and social equity. Like history and life, peace is a terrestrial creation struggling for survival in a constantly changing, and sometimes threatening environment (pp.3-13)

Peace as has been shown is not something tangible or an object that one can point at. But it is something within the human being which Webel compared to justice and happiness. "Peace is, like all desired and desirable human ideals and needs, always potentially within us, even if difficult to discern and seemingly impossible to accomplish. The quest for peace may seem quixotic, but that is part of it allure" (pp.3-13). It means peace can be attain but it will have to be worked for. It is a heroic call which is to be embraced by all individuals.

(ii) Nonviolence

We live in a world that is filled with conflict and unrest here and there. Tuning to news on television or going through the print and social media, one cannot but hear or read of conflicts, acts of terrorism and communal clashes. This is on a daily basis. The panacea to these daily occurrences, as recommended, has been to embrace non-violence, peace and negotiation. Non-violence is closely related to peace. This is because it creates the same atmospheric condition like peace. Its use has been popular in political terrains especially where demands and/or protests are taking place. Hence, one hears of non-violent protest (or peaceful protest) to make demands on government or cause a change in society. Non-violence has been described as "the use of peaceful means, not force, to bring about political or social change"(Promotion of Tolerance and Non-violence.pdf.).It has also been described as "the personal practice of being harmless to self and others under every condition"(Wikipedia). Non-violence as shown above involves abstaining from the use of violence or force and refraining

from harming anyone in the process of making demands or resolving conflicts. GeneSharp (1973) discussing non-violent action went further to state that:

> Nonviolent action is a technique by which people who rejects passivity and submission, and who see struggle as essential, can wage their conflict without violence. Nonviolent action is not an attempt to avoid or ignore conflict. It is one[s] response to the problem of how to act effectively in politics, especially to wield power effectively (p.64).

Non-violence philosophy is action oriented not to cause injury or harm but right wrongs and resolve conflicts. It involves resolving conflicts without recourse to violence and causing physical harm or damage either to the individual or the society at large. Key figures in non-violence theory include Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Dalai Lama. These champions of non-violence used it as a means of achieving justice and peace in their various epochs and immediate environments.

Evaluation

Can leadership and tolerance lead to peace and non-violence in the society? This is the pertinent question this paper seeks to address. We have seen that leadership by and large is the act of influencing attitudes, institutions, behaviours, and groups; it also influences or controls the thoughts, feelings or behaviour of other human beings in society. Leadership is geared towards the achievement of good governance. Political leaders, religious leaders and ethnic leaders have influence on their followers and to a very large extent control the thought and action of the followers. It means that when these leaders give directives there is a higher percentage of it being carried out. Every leader usually has their mode of communication. Communication is important in human affairs. It is use to express ideas and feeling as well as imparts information on people. Leaders in every sphere of human organizations use their positions to pass on specific information and ideas with both intended and unintended implications. This sometimes leads to conflicts and violence. So when a leader communicates to those who look up to his or her authority it should be with the aim to maintain peace and nonviolence. The message he or she communicates should be simple and clear to the followers so that it does not lead to what is not intended.

A leader is always someone that is looked up to for directives before actions are taken. For instance, Martin Luther King was a leader that was looked up to by the marginalized Americans, especially the blacks, in their demands for equality and other rights already enshrined in the constitution. King uses the instrumentality of non-violent protest to achieve those demands. If King has called on his followers to take up arms, this would have led to serious civil unrest if not outright war in the America of his time. The attitude of King and other non-violent adherents was that of tolerance. Tolerance and leadership goes hand in hand. This is why Chinua Achebe (1983) decries the dearth of leadership in Nigeria which is characterized by tribalism and self-centredness. Tribalism does not preach tolerance. It rather negates it. Political

leaders in Nigeria are divided along ethnic lines and play the ethnic card whenever it suits them. This causes discord and disharmony in a multicultural society like Nigeria. It leads to distrust, suspicion and intolerance. Political leaders as well as other leaders who have great influence on their followers must as a matter of urgency imbibe the ideas of tolerance and communicate same to their followers. This will follow that a leader must guard his or her utterances such that only words of tolerance are what he or she speaks. It also means that a leader should not make statements that alienate other groups under his or her leadership. Peace and non-violence is obtain when leaders are tolerant and as well teach their followers to be tolerant too. The society would be better where peace and nonviolence are the order of the day.

Conclusion

The need for purposive leadership and tolerance in a society is important to keeping the peace and non-violence. No nation can exists or grow and develop in an atmosphere of war and rancour. This makes leadership and tolerance very important in building peace, especially in a multicultural country like Nigeria. Leadership and tolerance are also important in the peace process or during reconciliation talks after conflicts. Every leader at all levels should in the spirit of peace and non-violence embrace tolerance. This is very important as leaders have great influence on their followers. Those, especially in political leadership must always see the need to guide against acts and utterances that disturb the peace thereby throwing the nation into a state of violence and destruction.

Nigeria as a nation needs leaders who are tolerant and who avoid divisive measures so that the nation can be peaceful and rapidly development. Where there are crisis or conflicts negotiation towards peace talk should be set up to quickly douse tension and restore trust. For Nigeria, leadership and tolerance would be key factors in the pursuit of development and other goals. The political class must therefore work hard to ensuring peace and non-violence by embracing a leadership that accommodates all citizens. Tolerance and leadership cannot be isolated if peace and non-violence must be attained and maintained in society. So when political leaders seek power it must not be done in a warlike manner. The followership also has their roles to play especially in engaging their leaders to rational argument with the ability to think through every idea coming from the leaders. The followers should resist ideas that could lead to conflict. This way they would be playing their part in ensuring peace and non-violence in the society at large.

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