

PROPHET MUHAMMAD'S (SAW) LEADERSHIP QUALITIES: A PARADIGM FOR NATIONAL INTEGRATION IN NIGERIA.

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ABSTRACT

The Nigerian nation, in the view of many, is today on the verge of disintegration. This is because of the many happenings that threaten the unity and peace of the country. The incessant arms' struggle between the Fulani herdsmen and famers in various parts of the country, the Niger Delta Avengers' bombing of oil pipes in the oil regions, the Boko Haram insurgency in the North-east are few of signs of disintegration of the country. It is believed that the unfavourable situation in which the country is due to the bad leadership given in the country. Most Nigerian leaders exhibit "the winner-takes-it-all-syndrome", injustice and greed among others. Hence, the aggrieved parties take laws into their hands as a way of squaring it with the government to get justice and a fair share of the national cake.

Islam, on the other hand advocates peace in all human endeavours; social, spiritual, political and economic. It kicks against acts of violence, tribalism, racism, ethnic and religious sentiments etc. This peaceful life style was demonstrated by the Holy Prophet (SAW) in his leadership of Muslim *Ummah* at *Madinah* as he fostered unity among the inhabitants of the city despite their diverse cultural, religious, and ethnic backgrounds. Hence, the *Muhajirun*, the *Ansar*, the Christians and Jews and the rivaling tribes of Awz and Khazraj of *Madinah* lived together harmoniously.

The study therefore aims at using the Prophetic paradigm of leadership to engender National Integration in Nigeria despite its diversity considering the fact that Muslims constitute a significant population of the country.

The work adopts historical survey cum analytical research methods. It is divided into six sections. Section one contains the introduction and section two discusses western concept of leadership. While section three deals with Islamic concept of leadership, section four analyses Prophet Muhammad's leadership qualities as a paradigm for National Integration in Nigeria. Section five draws the conclusion while the work ends with recommendations based on findings of the study.

Key words: Prophet Muhammad, Leadership, Paradigm, National Integration.

Introduction

The recent threats of cession by various ethnic groups in Nigeria are indications that the Nigerian nation is moving toward disintegration. The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) threatens to declare Biafra Republic, staging series of protest against Federal Government in its attempt at making their objectives unrealizable. Many lives were lost in the struggle, many people sustained various degrees of injury while many members of the group were arrested by security operatives. As if that was not enough, the Arewa Youth in the northern region issued a quit notice to all Igbo people living in the region. This created a lot of anxiety in the minds of many Nigerians. The Oodu People's Congress (OPC), a pan Yoruba ethnic group in the south also threatened to retaliate the brutality of the Yoruba by any ethnic group in Nigeria. The incessant arms' struggle between the Fulani herdsmen and farmers in various parts of the country, the Niger Delta Avengers' bombing of oil pipes in the oil regions, the Boko Haram onslaught in the North-east are few of signs of disintegration of the Nigerian nation.

Despite various attempts by the government which include; dialogue, constitutional conference, arms struggle against the militants to stop all these crises and have a united Nigeria, the calls for cession is on the increase. It is this that arouse the interest of the writer whose aim is to use the Prophet Muhammad's (SAW) leadership qualities as a paradigm towards achieving national integration in Nigeria.

Western Concept of Leadership:

Studies on leadership have progressed far and diversified into handling issues involving multi-disciplines. Issues on ethics, morality, soul and emotional intelligence have been incorporated in leadership (Abdullahi et.al, 2004). Leadership could also be perceived from regional, religious, cultural, political and economic development angles (Abdullahi et.al, 2004). According to Seriki and Lawal (2004), concept of leadership is often mired in controversy due to its subjective nature since it can be applied in a multiplicity of circumstances either in negative or positive terms or to a variety of individuals. Leadership according to Mullins as cited in Akanni, (2011:109) "is a relationship through which one person influences the behaviour or action of other people". In the words of Graham and Bennett (1992: 111-112), leadership is of two kinds: official and unofficial. The unofficial leadership is "the ability of a person to influence the thoughts and behaviours of others",

while the official leadership is “the motivation and control of subordinates to work towards goals which are regarded by the organization as desirable and possible”. Ukeje et.al (1992:194) in their own view defined leadership as “the influence of the group towards the achievement of group goals by planning, organizing, directing and integrating the institution of demand and the needs of members in a way that will be both productive and individually fulfilling”

In the opinion of Beach (1985:332), “it is the process of influencing others to act to accomplish specified objectives”. As one cannot deny the fact that these definitions captured the meanings and essence of leadership, it is imperative to note that none of it represents the Islamic point of view. This is because some of the common features in definitions have negative effects on the meaning of the concept. In other words, the ideas of objectives, shared values, and instrumentality of persuasion could mar the better understanding of the concept. For instance, a group of armed robbers would be said to have objective (i.e robbery), while their gangs would have been formed through agreement and instrumentality of persuasion by one of them who acts as their leader.

Islamic Concept of Leadership

Leadership in Islam is derived from concept of *Khilafah*(vicegerency). It is a democratic way in the true sense while in essence and function, it is diametrical of the monarchical, theocratic, feudalistic, dictatorial, despotic and totalitarian etc forms of leadership (Muhibbu-Din, 2004). In *Khilafah* system, people have only delegated powers which they are required to exercise on behalf of the Almighty Allah. On this the Almighty Allah says:

Allah has promised those of you who believe and do righteous deeds that He will surely bestow power on them in the land even as He bestowed power on those that preceded them, and that He will firmly establish their religion which He has been pleased to choose for them, and He will replace with security the state of fear that they are in. Let them serve Me and associate none with Me in My Divinity. Whose thereafter engages in unbelief, such indeed are the ungodly (Quran 24 : 55).

In another chapter Allah says: “Muslims are those, who if We give them power in the land, establish regular prayer and regular charity, enjoin the right and forbid wrong. With God rests the end (and decision) of all affairs”.

Islamic concept of leadership as it could be understood from the above Quranic verses is that sovereignty belongs to Allah and leadership position is *Amaanah* (trust) from Him to few people who are Allah’s representatives on earth. Power in Islam is, therefore, ephemeral for it has to be rotated among people as tenure of office and that Allah’s Law should be the *modus operandi* for governance. It also revealed the leadership qualities in Islam which include; piety, financial prudence, justice and fairness, service to Allah and humanity. When all these are achieved then the shared objective of leadership in Islam which is security of lives and property would be achieved.

Leadership position in Islam is also considered a test for the leader as indicated by Prophet Sulaiman who was also a king. The Quran 27:40 reads: “When Sulaiman saw the throne placed firmly beside him, he cried out: this is by the grace of my Lord so that He may test me whether I give thanks for (His Bounty) or act with ingratitude...”. Similarly, Quran 6: 165 reads: “For He it is Who has appointed you vicegerent over the earth, and has exalted some of you over others in rank that He may try you in what He has bestowed upon you...”.

Furthermore, Allah portrays leadership position as a gift from Him alone to whomever He wishes. Quran 43:32 reads thus: “Is it they who distribute the Mercy of your Lord? It is We Who have distributed their livelihood among them in the life of this world, and have raised some above others in rank that some of them may harness others to their service. Your Lord’s Mercy is better than all the treasures that they hoard”. The implication of this Quranic verse is that leadership position though is worth vying for but should not be at all cost for it is a gift from Allah to whom He wishes.

Makinde (2004) re-examines the popular western concept of democracy “the government of the people by the people and for the people” and then concludes that this concept of democracy is not a God-based one because the Almighty Allah is completely omitted in the scheme of politics and authority is totally ascribed to the people. In an attempt to situate it within the Islamic framework, he re-defined democracy in the words of Akintola “as government of Allah by the representatives of Allah, for people created by Allah, on behalf of Almighty Allah” (Makinde, 2004). In the opinion of Akanni (2011), the idea of leadership

in Islam is for the first among equals to guide and control the activities of a group towards shared goals or objectives of service to God and humanity within the confines of the shariah.

Analysis of Prophet Muhammad's Leadership Qualities as A Paradigm for National Integration.

A thorough examination of Prophet Muhammad leadership traits revealed many of his leadership qualities which serve as model for he who would be a leader either in an organization or a nation most importantly in a multi-religious nation as Nigeria. It is an axiomatic truth that the Holy Prophet (SAW) became not only the spiritual leader at *Madinah* but also a statesman. He was able to integrate different tribes like Awz and Khazraj, different religious groups –Muslims, Christians and Jews- into one nation. They all lived together harmoniously. In order to achieve national integration in Nigeria, the following leadership qualities of the Holy Prophet should be taken into consideration. They are; training/mentoring, leadership by example, consultation, deputation, monitoring, justice/ fair play and magnanimity to the opposition.

Consultation:

One of the qualities of effective leadership found in Holy Prophet (SAW) is the principle of consultation. History of Islam revealed that Holy Prophet Muhammad consulted his companions on a number of issues. The example of it was when the unbelievers of *Makkah* planned to attack them for the third time in the city of *Madinah*. The Holy Prophet (SAW) called the companions and sought their opinions on how to save the situation. Several opinions were given but he (SAW) favoured the suggestion of Salman-al Faris who advised that a ditch be dug round the city of *Madinah* to fortify it. A new method in the war strategies then. Consequently, the enemies' plan to gain entry into the city proved abortive. In fact in realization of the significance of consultation, Almighty Allah reveals thus:

“And those who answer the call of their Lord and establish prayer, *and who conduct their affairs by consultation* and spend out of what We bestowed on them for sustenance” (Quran 24:38).

Also in another verse of Holy Quran, Allah says:

And *consult with them upon the conduct of affairs*. And when thou art resolved then put thy trust in Allah (Quran 3:159).

It is important to note in the above Quran verse that a leader has right to weigh options and choose the best as in the case of the battle of Khandaq in which the Prophet considered the various suggestions given by the companions and went by the suggestion of Salman-al Farsi (Rahim, 2001). If however, none of the opinions is appealing to him, he could use his discretion as the Holy Prophet (SAW) resolved the issue on what to do with about seventy prisoners of war in the battle of *Badr*(Haykal, 1982). While AbuBakr suggested they be forgiven and set free with or without ransom, Umar Ibn Khattab opined that they should be killed for they had brutalized the Muslims. After thorough meditation, Holy Prophet gave his decision in his statement thus:

You have families to support. Do not therefore let any of these
captives escape before you receive a ransom from him.

Otherwise, strike off his neck(Haykal, 1982:237).

What the Prophet's decision suggests is that consultation is a means to an end not an end in itself. Hence, if the principle of consultation is embraced by all organs of government in Nigeria, a situation in which all representatives of all ethnic groups come together and express their opinions on how the nation should be united, it will go a long way in solving the problem of looming national disintegration.

Justice and Fairness:

The Holy Prophet (SAW) observed Islamic principle of justice and fairness among his subjects at *Madinah*. Despite the fact that *Madinah* city then was a multi-religious/ ethnic society, Holy Prophet (SAW) established Commonwealth of Islam which was based on the absolute equality of all the Muslims and toleration to other community living in or near *Madinah*. He issued a charter which banned tribal feuds and accord equal rights of citizenry. The non-Muslims in *Madinah* (i.e Jews and Christians) in collaboration with the Muslim community of the city formed a common nationality. Prophet (SAW) and the Muslims tolerated people of other faiths while the non-Muslims signed a contract with the Prophet pledging mutual help against their enemies. While Muslims paid the compulsory Islamic tax (Zakat), as one of the sources of revenue for the state, the non-Muslims were asked to pay *Jizya* (tax) and all enjoyed equal rights to infrastructural facilities in the state. In fact, the

Muslims were to help the Christians in the repair of their churches (Rahim, 2001). The Prophet settled the age-long tribal disputes of Aws and Khazraj of Madinah. He puts an end to tribal distinction, blood feuds and other social vices (Rahim,2001).

This principle of justice and fairness exhibited by Holy Prophet (SAW) could be used to put an end to all accusations of ethnic, tribal and religion sentiments in the country. If all major religious groups _ Muslims, Christians and Traditionalists_ in the country should tolerate one another, and each ethnic group is given her rightful share in the resources of the nation, it will go a long way in eradicating all move by any tribe for secession as it is the case with the “Indigenous People of Biafra” (IPOB) calling for renewal of agitation for creation of Biafra Republic. Also, the Arewa Youths in the North and the Oodua Peoples’Congress in the south-west will not issue a threat of retaliation should Igbo people seceded from Nigeria.

Deputation:

The heavy nature of leadership responsibility demands that he who wants to become a successful leader should seek helping hands in sincere, efficient and technocrat lieutenants. The Prophet (SAW) exhibited this as he appointed Ministers who served in his cabinet. Few among them are: Zayd Ibn Thabit the secretary of the state, (Haykal, 1982), Abu Bakr was his vice/deputy, Uthman Ibn Affan was the external affairs minister. In addition to that was Usama his Chief of Army Staff while Qais bin Sa’ad became Inspector General of Police (Haykal, 1982). Though the contemporary world leader also appointed people into various political and administrative positions as Ambassadors, economic Advisers, special Advisers etc, the fact is that many of the appointees are not trustworthy and dutiful people. Many got such appointments as compensation for their roles during electioneering campaign of their boss or because of ethnic or family alliance with the leader etc. Credibility, integrity, honesty and efficiency are most of the time not emphasized in the appointment of helping hands. The resultant effect of this on the national integration is that the resources meant to develop the nation are concentrated in the hands of few and irresponsible people while masses are suffering.

Monitoring

While it is good and necessary for a leader to appoint helping hands in the running of administration, it is equally important that such lieutenants be properly monitored so that they

do not commit excesses while discharging their responsibilities. The Holy Prophet (SAW) displayed this quality in his leadership style when he said:

When Allah intends good to a ruler, He appoints for him a trusted minister. If he forgets, he reminds him. When He wishes for him other than that, He appoints for him a bad minister. If he forgets he does not remind him, and if he remembers, he does not help him (FazlulKarim, 1939:56).

It is equally on record that Prophet (SAW) advised Qadim not to aspire to be a ruler or a Chief if he desired salvation (Akanni, 2011).

Magnanimity to the opposition

The Prophet (SAW) sent a deputation to the Quraysh demanding compensation after Quraysh's violation of the term of treaty of hdaybiyah which states that the contracting parties would suspend hostilities against each other and against their friendly tribes a situation in which they helped their friendly tribe Banu Bakr in attacking the Banu Khoza, a tribe friendly to Muslims and massacred a large number of them (Rahim, 2001). The Quraysh under the leadership of Abu Sufyan rejected the peace mission. Consequently, the Holy Prophet (SAW) marched towards Makkah with 14,000 Muslim armies to seek redress. Abu Sufyan and some Quraysh Chiefs were apprehended by some Muslim armies at night as they were spying to know the strength of the Muslims. He was brought before the Holy Prophet (SAW) (Rahim, 2001). The Muslims were so happy to apprehend such an enemy who had killed and injured large numbers of Muslims. Their belief was that Prophet (SAW) would order that he be put to death but to their surprise, the Holy Prophet forgave him and ordered that he be released. The magnanimity of the Prophet torched Abu Sufyan's heart and he embraced Islam including many Makkans. Thereafter, the Holy Prophet (SAW) made a triumphal entry into Makkah. The lesson this post before Muslim Ummah is that Muslims should learn to be forgiving.

The spirit of forgiveness is lacking in many contemporary Muslims_ leaders and the led_ therefore the common practice is retaliation from the political opposition once a party gets into power. If Nigerian government or the ruling party be magnanimous to accommodate its oppositions it will go a long way in solving the problem of marginalization and disintegration.

Leadership by example:

Another leadership quality of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW) is his participation in building of *Madinah* mosque. So many prophetic utterances attest to the importance of leadership by example. The Holy Prophet (SAW) said: “The leader of community is their servant”. In another tradition he counsels leaders and employer of labours thus: Your subjects are your brothers whom God has made your subordinates...Do not burden them with what overpowers them. If you do so, then help them”(Chapra, 1976: 184). It is imperative to state that if Nigerian leaders should see their positions as a call to service for the citizenry and not an avenue to intimidate nor oppress people it will help in the integration of the nation. But the experience is that the leaders use their positions to oppress the poor masses. Once get into power, they seized to interact with the common people and become inaccessible.

Conclusion:

From the foregoing, leadership from the western perspective is totally antithesis to that of Islam. This is because in the western concept of leadership, God is totally omitted while leadership in Islam is service to the Almighty Allah and humanities. The study also established that Nigeria is moving towards disintegration as reflected in the various hurt words credited to various ethnic groups in the country. Therefore, it is believed that going by the significant population of the Nigerian Muslims, the looming problem of disintegration could be averted using Prophet Muhammad’s (SAW) leadership qualities at *Madinah* as model for the Nigerian leaders. Hence it is real that if this is done then the country will transform from its state of insecurity, hunger, poverty, ethnic and religious sentiments to that of peace, tranquility and prosperity as promised by the Almighty Allah in the Holy Quran thus: “He will change their state after the fear in which they (lived) to that of security and peace” Quran 25:5.

Recommendations:

The study therefore offers the following recommendations;

1-The Nigerian government should emulate the Prophet Muhammad’s (SAW) principle of consultation. Therefore government should consult with the representatives of all ethnic and religious groups in the country to find lasting solution to the national problems. Dialogue

rather than force should be employed to calm down the insurgents. National conference should be organized by the government to iron out pressing issues such revenue sharing formula, challenges facing each region etc. Even though one may not deny the fact that such effort was made in the past but it is also a known fact that its reports did not see the light of the day despite its huge financial cost.

2- Going by an adage that says: “an hungry man is an angry man”, government should provide food security for the citizenry. This could be possible through massive venturing into agriculture by the governments and by giving soft and interest free loan to farmers. While it is aware that government had worked in this direction, the efforts had not yielded desired results because most of the loans meant to assist farmers went into wrong hands.

3-Government should provide job opportunities for the youths for an adage says: “an idle hand is a devil’s work shop”. This will go a long way in eradicating the *Almajiri’s* syndrome in the north, among whom the *Boko Haram* insurgents are making recruitments, while the challenges being faced from the Niger Delta Avengers in the east and Area Boys in the south will reduce if not total eradicated.

4-Government should uphold justice and fairness to all citizenry irrespective of their tribe, ethnic and religious affiliation because what is good for the goose is also good for the gander.

5-Government should ensure thorough monitoring of its subordinates to ensure they do not commit excesses in the discharge of their duties. Through this, the corrupt and inefficient lieutenants would be detected and punished accordingly.

6-Government should stop playing politics of “the winner-takes-all”. Leaders should emulate Prophet Muhammad (SAW) magnanimity to his oppositions. This would bring unity among members of the nation.

7-Leaders should see their positions to be service to God and humanity rather than seeing it as business venture and avenue to amass wealth.

8-The Prophetic principle of leadership by example should be embraced by the leaders. Therefore they should deem it necessary to do proper assets declaration before and after their tenure of office as a way of accountability and transparency.

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