

Anyiam-Osigwe's Group Mind, Gender And The Quest For Development In Africa: Nigeria In View

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Abstract:-This paper argues that African nations have been unable to attain sustainable development and are held bound in the arms of poverty, more so, the women, in spite of programmes and policies developments, because African governments have refused to look inward into the value system of their people in resolving their multifaceted existential problems which have impeded their development. The epistemic foundation of the programmes and policies of government embarked upon are in western culture [1]. We therefore argue that for the attainment of sustainable development, there's the need to integrate the people's cultural values, such as espoused by Emmanuel Osigwe Anyiam-Osigwe in his philosophy. This task may not be an easy one, as Machievelli avers "there is nothing more difficult to carry out, nor more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to manage than to initiate a new order of things. For the initiator has the enmity of all who would

Keywords:-*Sustainable Development, Africa, Group Mind, Gender, Values, Government*

I. INTRODUCTION

There is no gainsaying that Africa nations are riddled with poverty, hunger, unemployment, under employment, ethnic rivalry, debt challenges, electoral malpractices, corruption, misappropriation of public funds, and the most recent and most daunting problem of insecurity, caused by terrorists activities in almost all countries of Africa. Nigeria, in the west of Africa confronts the problem of insecurity from the religious fundamentalist, Boko Haram. And Kenya in the East of Africa also confronts the problem of insecurity unleashed by another religious fundamentalist group, called the Alshabab. The implication of the above is that there is need for African nations to chart a new course of life for themselves so that they will not go into self-immolation.[2] The question then is how do we move the African countries away from the quagmire they have sunken into? Many of these countries had put in place some mechanisms, with the aim of overcoming these problems but which are unproductive. In Nigeria for instance, the government put in place EFCC (Economic and Financial Crimes Commission) and ICPC (Independent Corrupt Practices Commission) with the mind to ameliorate, if not completely eradicate corruption. However, the corruption witnessed ever since is unrivalled at other periods in the country. This has made some to submit that Nigeria is a failed country.

The objective of this paper therefore is to chart a new course for the development of African states, especially Nigeria, through a critical exploration of the Osigwe Anyiam-Osigwe philosophy of group mind and gender construction in pre-colonial and contemporary society. In doing this, the section after this introduction is the conceptual analysis of operational terms; the third section is an examination of the Osigwe' philosophy of group mind in relation to gender and development; the third section examines how the principles in Osigwe philosophy of group mind and the construction of gender in the pre-colonial society can set the foundation for development in Africa. The forth section features recommendations and conclusion.

II. DEVELOPMENT: CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

The Advanced Oxford Learner's dictionary defines development "as the gradual growth of something that it becomes more advanced, stronger, better ..." [3].Involved in development is the element of change. For something to become advanced, stronger, and better shows that it has undergone a process of change. This change often requires some fundamental structural transformation which include reorganisation and reorientation of the entire social and administrative structure, as well as radical rearrangements in installations, in popular attitudes, customs and beliefs ... development constitutes both a physical reality and a state of mind in which society has through some combination of social, economic and institutional processes, secured the means of obtaining a better life. [4]There are different faces to development, the social, economic, technical and the technological. However, the ultimate significance of these different forms of development is human development. Development in any form that does not focus on human development is nothing but mere propaganda and a waste of time. That is why Osigwe asserts that if individuals because of the impairment of their mind-sets are unwilling to use their 'ability to produce and contribute to the development process, the

comparative yield of society falls short of the expected total sum', and this in turn endangers and increases poverty in the land. [5]

According to Unah (2009) development can generally be conceived as the unfolding of events, some of which are without the intervention of human agents such as the eruption of earthquakes and volcanoes (these are negative developments). And some are ordered and directed by human agents such as the decision of persons to cultivate a piece of land, thereby generating employment for others is a positive development that is caused by human agents. It is this kind of development that we are concerned with in this work. [6]

The objectives of development are: one, to improve the availability and widen the basic life sustaining goods such as food, shelter, health and protection to all members of the society; two, to participate in decision making and its implementation, in addition to better incomes, the provision of more jobs, better education and three, more attention to cultural and humanistic values. These objectives not only serve to enhance national wellbeing, but also to generate greater individual and national self-esteem. [4]

III. AN EXPOSITION OF ANYIAM-OSIGWE'S ON THE GROUP MIND

Osigwe observes in his philosophical treatise on the cosmopolitan expression of the group mind principle that one attribute that sharply distinguishes man from the rest of nature is his highly developed capacity for thought, feeling and deliberate action. In Osigwe's concept of the Group mind, he brings to bear on our consciousness the inherently derived benefits of a group having a mental comprehension and evolving a practical manifestation of a common pool into which they all contribute their individual potential and attributes, and from which every individual in the group draws for his needs. Some basic questions readily come to mind, which are, can everybody have these kind of mind? Can we have a universal mind? Is Osigwe's group mind principle practicable in the modern day world? Can our leaders have the same mind? Can we have leaders who have our interest at the back of their mind? The germane question in this work is: how can we remove foreign gender construct that impede development and explore the group mind principle for the development of Africa? According to Anyiam-Osigwe the holistic development for all humanity requires the cosmopolitan expression of the group mind principle. To this end he avers: This principle states that the resulting force generated from the combining of like minds, is geometrically greater than the sum of its parts. In other words, minds that are focused together upon a common theme create a mutual force, which is not merely additive, but vastly more powerful than that of any individual or group of individuals. To that effect, man's creative propensity is enlarged when there is a synergy of the diverse attributes of various individuals who agree to come together and function as a group that is inspired by a common objective and guided by a common vision.[7]

The group mind, Osigwe says, is a natural phenomenon our people need to study, understand, and apply its principles towards the attainment of a genuine sense of nationhood and love of country that would enhance national unity, cohesion and a people-centered development. He asserts that, with purity of intent, the group mind possesses the potential for alignment, and even integration with the cosmic mind for as Socrates puts it, 'the soul (mind) of man partakes of the Divine. He made copious reference to Bible passages in explaining what and how the group mind works. Mathew 18:20, where the Lord said "where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them" and in Acts of the Apostles 2:1 which talked about the day of Pentecost. The Apostles "were all with one accord in one place" when they received the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Anyiam-Osigwe's concept of the group mind brings to bear on our consciousness the inherently derived benefits of a group having a mental comprehension and evolving a practical manifestation of a common pool into which they all contribute their individual potential and attributes and from which every individual in the group draws for his needs. The group mind refers to an expansive resource, a well-spring of ideas and thought processes that is created when a people of particular group or society intermingled their ideas, questions, perspectives, aspirations, knowledge and experience in relation to specific goals or issues.

Group mind according to him is in progress anytime two or more creatures either humans or animals come together for a shared purpose. These days we see insects such as the ants, termites and the bees coming together. We notice that a single insect is a weak creature but the colony of ant do many things in common. There is a saying in Yoruba that *anikanrin omo ejo lo n je omo ejo niya*, (meaning that a baby snake that walks alone is prone to danger). The same is true of flocks of birds and packs of hyenas. Troops of monkeys are much better equipped to survive through their mutuality of perception, one that goes beyond the simple combination of many watching eyes. The pecking order of dominance or cooperation in any animal group is an expression of its members forming a cohesive and smooth group mind unit. Anytime two or more persons share similar thoughts or ideas, whether in close proximity to one another, or are separated by great physical distances, some group mind effect is taking place.

In Anyiam Osigwe's thought, what necessitated the group mind principle, as we have the idea in Kant, and manifest in works of other social contract philosophers, was the concern of the early man in the state of crude existence. He (the early man) discovered the need to till the soil as a way of providing for his food. This

further brought about the need to settle down in order for him to nurture and tend his plants until harvest. However there was fear that he might lose his possessions if being attacked by others. This to him brought the idea of coming together of groups for them to fight the same cause. The group was required to act together to defend the territory of any member against poachers and attackers. As a way of strengthening the bond of community that was engendered by this initiative, cultures now evolved. Interests gradually assumed a communitarian dimension.

Confronted by more complex and sophisticated problems that burdened on daily existence, the group evolved a forum in which the mental and physical attributes of all were harnessed and applied towards the realization of goals that encompassed the benefits of all within the community. This made it clear that once we adopt this way of life, we would no longer live in scattered family units, but had to stick together and set up village communities. This would in turn give birth to statehood and patriotism. He emphasizes the deliberateness of the individual to participate in a group with an underlining knowledge that it will enhance his desires and potential better than when functioning as an individual. The coalescing of various groups into a larger entity is the manifestation of the modern nation state. The state is a group of much the same characteristics as the community since it promotes the collective good of the group and satisfies the yearnings and needs of the various individual it therefore engenders the same degree of solidarity, commitment and patriotism from male and female as members of the community.

IV. GENDER AND THE QUEST FOR DEVELOPMENT

In almost all human societies, differences are often made between males and females. This also occurs in the non-human world of primates as well, for there existed distinctions between male and female primates. However, among human beings, culture exerts a decisive influence on the differences between males and females. Subsumed under the notion of gender is the notion of difference in hierarchy, position and power relations. [8]. Gender role differentiation on its own is not bad, the problem arises when differentiations turns into stereotypes, that is, when for no good reason a female is barred from playing certain roles for reasons of her femaleness and not for lack of skill to execute the task.8Stereotyping he maintains mig ht become a clog to developmental efforts in cases when women after acquiring a rare skill are nevertheless barred from performing tasks which require the skill so acquired.

The strong base for gender role differentiation has been identified as culture. The question we are motivated to answer at this juncture is: which culture, the pre-colonial culture or the post-colonial culture? In the pre-colonial period men and women are conceived as social complements, social roles and responsibilities define gender identity. [9] Pre-colonial Yoruba society was not a class society and as class terms in widespread today. The traditional social structure accords respect to women. Women in Africa have powers in some form different from what obtained in other parts of the world. For example, an Igbo woman or a Yoruba woman has rights in the father's house (compound), especially if she is the eldest child in the compound, a woman can take decisions about the mothers property or wage into the marriages of her brothers.[10] However, because the contemporary society has borrowed much from the values of the colonizers, women are perceived as 'second class citizens'

Gender is in everything we do because society creates the norms of gender, but the problem is inequality, this comes when we devalue some people just in the basis of their difference. Social thought was initially not only male dominated, but equally male centred. That is why more has been written about men than women and why some items written about women display open bias. This bias has its root in the development of western philosophy. [8] The works of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, among other western philosophers was not without prejudices against the female gender. They had preconceived notions of the ideal place of women in the society. Plato, for example, was of the view that only a philosopher king should rule in the society and not a philosopher queen. Aristotle in Politics was also of the opinion that "as between male and female, the former is by nature superior and ruler, the latter inferior and subject". [11] So we need to look into the history of our culture to make change such that our culture will begin to work for us because western norms do not necessarily work for us. [12] One of such norms detrimental to African development is the concept of 'full-time-housewife' a legacy that some African men have imbibed. There can be no development in a nation where half of the population (women) is held captive – they cannot think, they migrate, and they don't have the necessary financial capacity to take care of cogent necessity of life. [13]

In the pre-colonial society and to a great extent in the present day Africans do not behave as individuals. That is why talks about individual rights in Africa are laughable. Africans lean on one another, they crave and cherish relationship with others. And a sex is not considered inferior or a sub-human because of their biological difference. There was the realisation that no process of development can achieve its best unless it is based on the recognition of the common humanity of male and female. This common humanity of the male and female is expressed by Osigwe as the 'brotherhood of man'. In the pre-colonial era "the woman was the symbol of hope, a nurturer, giver of health, she was the pinnacle of reproduction and her honour of motherhood was

unparalleled in nature”[14] and from oral tradition, the mother politics was so strong that the worst that could happen to any reigning king was for the women, especially those past the age of menopause to go on parade without covering their chest. Thus, in the pre-colonial period, both male and female are taken to be complement of each other. Though the pre-colonial society we are talking about was predominantly patriarchal, yet the female is not relegated to the background. For example, the Yoruba social expectations and conjugal etiquette forbids the man to take his farm products to the market for sale by himself, the wife does this and whatever she declares as the profit is what it is.[15]

Nigerians, to survive, must ensure that they make truth and justice the cardinal principles of this nation. To see the light and call it darkness and comfort ourselves by saying it is a political decision is nothing but worshipping the devil

Overcoming the challenges to Africa’s development is dependent on imbuing the individual with the appropriate mind set.

V. CONCLUSION

Man as they say should not live in isolation, there should be interaction in order to move forward. Anyiam Osigwe is of the view that there can be meaningful development when people of same minds come together to chart a course for that. Nigeria as a nation should as a matter of fact key into that philosophy to move forward, and in charting that new course, women should also be carried along in that line of action because gone were those days whereby women are relegated to the background in decision making. Recent events have proven that to be wrong because what a man can do, a woman can do better. Women like the late Dora Akinyuli, Okonjo Iweala, Oby Ezekwezele etc have written their names in history as far as Nigeria is concerned. So for there to be any meaningful progress or development, one must jettison Friedrich Nietzsche’s view on women that referred to them as cows that men should always go to them with their whip. Women are therefore very important in quest for development

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