

Restructuring through the Appreciation of Cultural Values and Re-orientation

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Abstract

Restructuring is the process of corporate actions that involves reorganising, remaking, or modification of a thing or system in order to make it more effective and productive. Nigeria is fast sliding to becoming a failed state in need of restructuring. This is occasioned by a plethora of problems such as insecurity, industrial unrest, political instability, ethnic and religious tyranny among others. The proposition of this paper is therefore a wakeup call for the remaking of Nigeria by reflecting on the philosophy of the Nigeria's cultural ideals and values. In the process, the study adopts qualitative research methodology using interviews as instrument of data collection. The study recommends and concludes that, we can remake Nigeria if the citizens allow themselves to be influenced by the philosophy of value re-orientation and cultural ideals vis-a-vis respect for one another's culture.

Key Words: *Restructuring, Cultural values, Re-orientation, Dance, and Folktale.*

Introduction

It is evident that Nigeria is witnessing an avalanche of cultural modifications arising from the influence of new technology, social media, television, and films amongst others. These modifications have their negative and positive impacts. The negative impact has its traits on the behavioural pattern of the Nigerian citizens especially amongst youth. The devastating effect of this new media on Nigeria's cultural values is occasioned by the exposure to these media thereby eroding cultural and moral value system which are germane to the progressive development of Nigeria. Within the praxis of African cultural value system, one is perturbed on how the Nigeria's cultural ideals and philosophy are enmeshed as a result of criminality, various forms of vices and anti-social behaviours emanating from the neglect of cultural values and ideals. The eroding of moral and cultural value system affects national unity, tolerance and peaceful co-existence among the Nigerian populace. As William S. Onogu and Peter O. Salifu rightly posit:

Moral decadence and antisocial behaviours are on the increase today. This is evident in the prevalence of unrest and criminality;

banditry, rape, insurgency, cultism, kidnapping, cyber-fraud, drug abuse...the drift away from cultural values in Africa plays an adverse role in the proliferation of crime in Africa and consequently, in its pace of development (258).

The above statement suffices that, Africa's cultural values are rich enough to envelope ethical and moral standard if one is well cultured. African cultural values among other things are more often noticed from interactions with one another coupled with the level of camaraderie that often exists through one's sense of hospitality, morality, language, songs, poetry, folktales and proverbs within a particular environment. From all these interactions, one would notice whether one is well cultured or not. This often comes from the way and manner such behaviours are exhibited in the course of interacting with others. Nigeria is currently clamouring for restructuring because it appears people are not well cultured. People seem to ignore moral values and respect for one another because they are treated unjustly. For instance, if Nigerians are treated fairly especially in the distributions of the nation resources, there will be less agitation to restructure the existing political system in Nigeria. Due to disorderliness and injustice that characterised the existing political structure in Nigeria, citizens are now clamouring for better life through restructuring of the existing political structure. For instance, Rudolph Kansese opines that;

The desire to restructure a system is based on two major shortcomings of that system: one is the dislocation of the system or structure whereby it is no longer working to produce any result or good result and two; where the system or structure has worked to reached its maximum level and so there is no further development, or that the progress is hindered by its achieved peak. In that case, the operators of the system can advocate for restructuring whereby the old structure will be tinkered in order to achieve accelerated development (56-57).

The above declaration suffices that, no system will just clamour for restructuring except something is fundamentally wrong with the existing or the old structure. It is a common knowledge that, every nation has its system or structure which is often made visible by the existing social order. This existing structure is made visible by the political order, government operation, private organisation, culture and religious practices within such political space. It is evident that, the moment there is records of distrust of the system by aggrieved citizens and general disregard for the system, citizens will clamour for change. In this case, many persons would want to advocate for restructuring where the citizens can chat a way forward in other to prevent the total breakdown of law and order within the system. It may not be out of place to say that the current political structure in Nigeria is yet to produce a desired result. This is because; the present structure appears to be a product of colonial administration and influence and could no longer produce a desired meaningful progress.

It is expedient to note that, arts are part of Nigeria's culture. Arts in all its forms cannot change the society directly; but it can change people who in-turn are capable of changing the society in a positive way. Therefore, there is a tendency for changing human beings (stake holders) that may be engaged in the business of restructuring because arts have tremendous influence on individual behaviour. For instance, folk tales, songs, dance, poetry, music and proverbs are parts of the artistic forms that are subsumed in one's culture through which the members of a society can be influenced. These artistic elements are parts of Nigeria's cultural institutions which often teach moral lessons and philosophical ideals of Nigerians. The orientations of the masses through these artistic forms that are subsumed in one's culture and its efficacy in influencing attitudes of Nigerians to behave well are the subjects of this paper.

Conversely, due to the technological advancement and innovations, Nigerians watch movies and videos using devices like mobile phones and camcorders and other electronic gadgets which can easily corrupt their minds. Some of these technologies and innovations have adulterated African cultural values and moral ideals and therefore needs value reorientation. The negative implications of these movies have also influenced the attitude and behavioural patterns of Nigerians to the point that most Nigerians are now celebrating European-cultural practices that are alien and inimical to the well-being vis a vis the progressive tenets of Nigeria. People are no longer humane neither do they have much value for one another. For instance, most Nigerians copy the European ways of doing things especially in their dressing code in order to show off. Europeans are quite different from Africans in all ramifications. Some of the uncultured attitudes by some Nigerians are product of imitation. Some of the Nigerian youths imitate Western culture to the extent that there no longer wear their trousers properly on their waists. They nickname the style of their dressings as (*Sagging*). Nigerians before this time (21st century) know nothing about "*sagging*" which the youths are currently considering as a new way of life. Some indulges in cyber crimes to defrauding people. Some of these borrowed habits and attitudes are destructive to Nigeria's cultural institutions. Culturally trained Nigerians are known to be modest with their cultural patterns of dressing. Unfortunately, Nigerians and most African countries are now living borrowed life styles which has ultimately negates African cultural institutions, moral ideals and values. It is therefore expedient to retrace one's step for a reorientation of cultural ideals and values that will build respect for one another.

Deduced from the above, the clamour for the restructuring and remaking of Nigeria's political, economic, socio-cultural system through the appreciation of cultural and moral values becomes imperative and expedient. There is a need therefore to rebuild Nigeria by reflecting on the philosophy of Nigeria's moral values and cultural institutions. For instance, in the past killing one another is considered sacrilegious. Today it appears that killings are so rampant amongst Nigerians with little or no emotional feelings for sniffing life out of somebody. Some of this unthinkable action is partly due to European influence on the behavioural patterns of Nigerians. This study is therefore aimed at remaking Nigeria through culture, value and attitudinal re-orientation and respect for one another.

In view of the above, this study is advocating for a re-orientation that is anchored on African cultural values and the philosophical ideals of Nigeria's political system. The re-orientation in this process is based on the appreciation of proper attitudes and behaviours in Nigeria's cultural environment. Fidelis Elejo Egbunu, in his book, *Igala traditional values versus modernity*, laments that, due to the influence of colonialism, technological advancement with its attendant Western/European culture... its impacts have left the atmosphere somewhat very tensed, abused, and confused (1). Parts of what Egbunu is advocating in his book shows the enormity with which moral decadence has taken the centre stage in Nigeria.

Overview on the Need for Restructuring

The outcry for the restructuring of Nigeria's political, economic and social system has garnered much momentum. It has become more glaring that Nigeria needs restructuring, especially due to the persistent leadership deficit which has precipitated consistent agitations across the nation. It is a common knowledge that political leaders, religious leaders, well-meaning Nigerians and political activists from all the nooks and crannies of Nigeria have aired their diverse views on the need to restructure Nigeria. It is pertinent to observe that the issue of restructuring may not have generated much dust by the masses without finding dissatisfaction on the existing structure and behaviours of the Nigerian people. The existing structure in Nigeria appears to have corrupted the minds of every Nigerians. The socio-political growth of a nation is dependent on the structure of its organisation and the behavioural patterns of her citizens. No organisation, group or association has ever achieved economic, social and cultural growth without being engineered by the behavioural patterns of her citizens. Also, the centrifugal force of indecisiveness and perverted judgement in Nigeria has taken over the modus operandi of the organisational structure in Nigeria. Therefore, people are clamouring for restructuring in order to reorganise the existing structure. Restructuring when appropriately done will pave way for the alteration and reorganisation of the existing constitution in Nigeria for a preferable and more beneficial one, be it politics, economic, social, moral and religious affairs. For this to happen, Nigerians must change their current behavioural pattern and thread on the part of cultural values and respect for one another. Nigerians need to change their current value system to a more proactive endeavour where fairness, equity and justice are the watch words.

In examining the allegory of the Nigerian nation on restructuring, it is imperative to draw from Nasir el-rufai's widely published article titled, "*A federation without Federalism*". His article reflected on the broad consensus amongst Nigerians that the country's Federal System of governance "has been dysfunctional, more unitary than federal and not delivering public goods to the generality of our people" (el-Rufai 3). Akin to his published article and other variables, there is no doubt that Rufai's position, perhaps re-echoes and reinforces the whole politics of Nigeria's restructuring narratives that has hitherto dominated the public domain in the nation. It is evident that Nigeria is found on the principle of federalism where power is supposed to devolve to the federating unit, but due to over concentration of power in the centre that runs contrary to the tenets of true/real federalism, coupled with the engendered imbalances in governance with the associated

discontentment from some federating units, the agitation for restructuring the political framework of Nigerian nation has continued to gain momentum. The contention is that, the present federal structure is not functional in the true sense of federalism, which demands devotion of power to the federating units. Within the context of this paper, it is pertinent and imperative to understand exactly what restructuring entails. In this regard, Samuel Okworonkwo Chukwu-Okworonkwo opines that;

To restructure Nigeria means that all the states or regions would properly become federating units. A federating unit is a part or section of the federation that has willingly agreed to be part of a federation. It would generate its resources, contribute to the national coffers through taxes and develop at its own pace. The different constituent parts would decide on how they want to fund education at all levels, the importance of religion, the importance of trade, and generate its own power. In the real sense, power would really be in the States or Regions (8).

The above submission by Chukwu-Okoronkwo undoubtedly re-affirms the reality of the improper structure of the present Nigeria Federation which makes the current agitation for restructuring absolutely imperative. The idea of restructuring Nigeria has come at an auspicious time when some opinion leaders or schools of thought feel that the younger generation would have no hope for a bright future should they continue to live with the existing structure in Nigeria. In the opinion of this researcher, it appears that, the old structure is characterised with corrupt practices, injustice and man's inhumanity to man. Some of these attitudes and behaviours are basically copied or borrowed from Western ideologies without recourse to African moral value system and traditional institutions. Similarly, Emmanuel Iroh avers that, "to restructure is to change the way in which something is organised or arranged. It is to reorder, reorganise, reshape, redistribute, reform, or reshuffle" (86). He stresses further that, what needs reshuffling is faulty or may not be working as planned or structured so it needs to be looked into a second time hence the prefix, re-structure. This invariably means that, attitudes of policy makers and opinion moulders who are supposedly responsible for making Nigeria a better place are faulty and needs cultural values and moral orientation for a better life.

Akin to the above, this study is therefore advocating for reorganisation of Nigeria in order to produce a peaceful coexistence. The study is a wakeup call for egalitarian society where peace, justice and equity reign supreme. This may not be possible to achieve unless Nigerians decide to change their present conceived mindset about one another from different geopolitical zones. They need to re-examine their current misbehaviour and disrespect for one another especially in the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria. The current structure needs to be revisited with a humane disposition in order to douse political tension that the state is currently witnessing. This paper is equally voting for value reorientation, teaching of tribal languages and their traditional values in both primary and secondary schools in Nigeria to enable the younger ones learn morals from their kindergarten stage. This can also enable the Nigerian children to imbibe attitudes that are progressive and

development oriented amongst the masses. For instance, Egbunu stresses that, the best way of inculcating positive Igala cultural values in the younger generation is to teach moral education (xii). This can be taught through folktales, proverbs, traditional dance and songs etc. The teaching of moral education can therefore encourage all agents responsible for the formation of children and youths vis a- vis parents, teachers, pastors, community leaders to brace up and inculcate the right discipline in our children through cultural values, since they serve as role models. The promotion of Nigeria's cultural values and moral orientation is imperative especially now that cultural activities and its importance are no longer given much attention in nursery, primary, and secondary schools.

Theoretical Framework

This study leans on Sam Ukala's theory of "*Folkism*". The word *folkism* is derived from the word "folktale" which simply means a story about the traditions of a people passed from one generation to another through speech or word of mouth. As observed by Clive Krama, "the popular or folk theatre as a genre of African theatre developed from secular rites and draws heavily from oral tradition and festivals" (11). According to Tekena Gasper Mark, the theory of "*Folkism*" was developed by Sam Ukala, a Nigerian playwright, poet, short story writer, actor, theatre director, and a film producer. In his opinion, many Nigerian's plays irrespective of the fact that they draw their subject matter from the history, culture, concerns, and aspirations of Nigerians, are made inaccessible to the audience because of difficult dictions, and highly imaginative yet alienating distortions of their source materials, and usual abstractions of characters, or complexity or strangeness of structure. Consequently, the audience cannot understand the plays; hence they become void of relevance, defy identification, and loose popularity (Ukala 285). More so, folktale narratives are simple to understand and this advantage makes it appeal to a wider audience because it is composed of elements which are very common to African peoples (culture) and which they easily and readily identify with. In addition, folktale and the literary play are narratives realised in performance; both are largely secular, unlike most African ritual and festival performances, and also temporal, mimetic, interpretative and synthetic in their integration of speech, music, dance, mime, ritual etc (Ukala, 285).

The current study benefits from Ukala's theoretical postulation as a wakeup call for the remaking of Nigeria by reflecting on the philosophy of cultural ideals and values. Folktales, proverbs, songs and music are artistic forms through which one can reflect on the right attitude to exhibit. The orientations gotten from these artistic forms can influence ones behaviour positively. The younger one's could learn the right moral attitude from the consequences of killings, cheating, injustice, tribalism, nepotism and all forms of vices that are inimical to the progress and wellbeing of Nigerians. The orientation gotten from the artistic and cultural practices through the philosophy of "*Folkism*" could also be a source of encouragement to Africans to discontinue the attitude of copying Western ideologies that are alien to Africa's cultural institutions. There is need therefore to look inwards and make do with Nigeria's local materials in order to reflect on the cultural and moral values of Nigerians. The orientation through cultural values is a philosophy that will

engender and re-awakes the consciousness of Nigerians to reorganise their behavioural patterns and concentrate on moral value system. If Nigerians behavioural patterns are well cultured through African songs, proverbs, folktales and philosophical ideals, there may be respect for one another, justice and fairness within the ambience of African socio-cultural milieu. This will ultimately reduce agitations for the restructuring of the existing social order in Nigeria.

Culture, Art and Value reorientation

Culture has been defined and conceptualised by many scholars over the years. Culture is a way of life. It is the common beliefs, customs and behaviour of a specific people or community. The word culture is derived from the Latin word *colere* meaning to tend or to cultivate. In Medieval Latin, “*Culture*” was used to mean “cultivation of religious worship. During the renaissance, the word “*culture*” was used in connection with literature and the arts but not until the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries did it come to be more generally used in English and French to denote “cultivation of mind”. With the development of anthropology as a science, culture came to be regarded as “that complex whole which included knowledge, belief, art, law, moral, customs, and any other capabilities acquired by man as a member of society”. The Cultural policy for Nigeria defines culture as:

The totality of the way of life evolved by the people in their attempts to meet the challenge of living in their environment which gives order and meaning to their social, political, economic, aesthetics, and religious norms and modes of organisation thus distinguishing a people from their neighbours (7).

It is imperative to note that, art is a product of culture, and as a product of culture, it influences the way of life of the people, both the present and future generations. Adefunke Adegbeye avers that, “art, being manmade is a product of behaviour reflecting perception, imagination, skill and also as the product of the spirit based on the values of the society” (166). This means art is capable of influencing the moral ideals of a society.

Emphasizing on the efficacy of art capable of influencing the people, Adegbeye opines that, “art is not useless, art is natural. Any society which is healthy will be a society where there is imitative art” (166). Therefore, it is appropriate at this juncture to contend that, art production and training is necessary for educating children which will be part of them till old age, since it encourages the imaginative manipulation of ideas. An art therefore becomes a focal factor that citizens could use for attitudinal re-orientation. When positive orientation is portrayed using artistic medium and cultural elements, the behaviour and ways of life of Nigerians can be influenced, reorganised and well cultured.

Dance Values and Social Restructuring

The enormous position dance occupies in the society is undeniably powerful and effective. Ahmed Yerima posits that, “if Culture” is define as the “way of life of a people” then dance which is a central part of culture, is also a way of life of any given people” (17). No man existed outside his culture and his environment. Dance is cultural and one can reflects on his cultural dance to re-organise his attitudes and behavioural patterns for a peaceful coexistence. Also, Ojo-Rasaki Bakare declares that;

In traditional Nigerian Society, dance is held in high esteem. He stresses further that, the dance art is arguably the most preferred of the performative trinity: music, dance and drama...(82).

In Bakare’s opinion three factors seem to be responsible for this; first is the centrality of dance to the mythogenic existence and cultural essence of the Nigerian people. He adduce reasons for the above submission that the dances of the Nigerian people are an exhibition of their psychological temperament, social attitudes, environment peculiarities, religious beliefs, political and historical experiences as well as occupational and commercial activities. The second reason for the above assertion is the natural and primordial tendency for man to express his hopes, fears, joy, sorrows, aspirations and intents in body movements makes dance an alternative language inherently appealing to man’s emotion. And the third reason is the musical nature of the Nigerian dances. Following Bakare’s submission, it therefore means that, dance occupies a central place in the lives of Nigerians and we should reflect on the positivity of dance in re-uniting ourselves for the benefit of Nigerians. With this, Nigerians from different geopolitical zones can come under the influence of Nigeria’s cultural dance practice to chat a way forward on a round table discussion.

It is worthy of mention that, beginning from the evolution of humanity on the face of the earth, Nigerian man engaged in various regular movements such as walking, running, jumping, spinning, gliding and many more to ensure his survival. These spontaneous movements are easily transformed into dance. This indicates that dance primarily evolved from man’s utilitarian movements. With these movements, Nigerians were able to freely express themselves and their emotions. The expression here did not promote evil or negativity, but rather positivity. According to Kansese,

To dance is principally geared towards the propagation of gaiety, and this is what our ancestors felt when they capitalised on natural movements to plunge into dance which eventually became benefiting to their general happiness and wellbeing. One can as well reflect on this origin of dance as a means to express joyfulness in our day-to-day existence (58).

Akin to the efficacy of dance as a means to expressing joyfulness in our day-to-day existence as pointed above can serve as a unifying factor amongst Nigerians to live in harmony. Nigerian dances are essentially communal in nature. It engages everyone as a unifying factor. It is

basically an expression of people's culture which the indigenous Nigerian is aware of and subsequently guards jealously. For instance, the desecration of a traditional dance in a particular local government area may be frowned at by indigenes that are well informed and cultured about their own culture from another Local government area of the State and from a different geopolitical zones. This sense of togetherness can be explored to achieve restructuring of Nigeria where the people can relive the community experience of caring for one another.

Also, Nigerian dances can help in the restructuring by encouraging the unity and togetherness of people especially in the villages. Dancers mostly meet at their leisure periods to relax by engaging in dances. Moments like these create room for bonding and strengthening of friendship. These days, especially in the cities, people with white collar jobs or those in similar professions find it hard to relax for various reasons: there are those who close late from work, those with multiple jobs, those who are too individualistic to associate. Nigerians should try to reignite the ideals of these associations as it was the case with Nigerian dance in order to encourage fruitful bonding and cooperation. When there is fruitful bonding and cooperation among citizens, no one will be thinking of cheating one another or possibly treating his neighbour unjustly.

Folktale values and its implication for Social Restructuring

It is evident that most African writers in their work draw from their oral tradition which is the way of life, beliefs and customs of the people. It is a common knowledge that in the early traditional African society, much emphasis is often placed on child education and there were certain general principles that were handed down from generation to generation. Emphasis on the child education encourages one to teach the child moral values and traditions with which to grow with. This may be one of the reasons why Lilian Chidinma Agogbuo avers that, "in the past, *folktale* played a significant role in the traditional system of education as it enforced conformity to social and moral norms as well as validated social instructions and religions"(101). It is worthy of note that, folktales are regarded as authentic heritage and literary artists and playwrights continue to use elements from them in their work since they are used to educate and entertain. Folktales also reflect societal behaviours, norms and promote the art of good language usage. In view of the above, it is very important to reflect on the moral lessons that pupils often learn right from their kindergarten stage. This will help to shape their behavioural pattern and ways of life.

In the past, twilight was a story-time in Africa which usually served as a sort of evening entertainment where the children gather round the story-teller to listen to his stories. Because some of the children are already tired after the day's activities, the story-teller puts a lot of life into his narration lest they fall asleep. Most of the time, the narration is accompanied by musical performances. The listeners also participate in the performance by singing choruses, playing drums and other musical instruments such as the flute to heighten the drama of the story. The children are expected to derive knowledge and wisdom from the stories and through the stories, become acquainted with the customs, traditions and religion of their people. In essence, while the stories are told on moonlit nights or special occasions, the story-teller or narrator collaborates with the

audience and may change from speech to song and back again according to the requirement of the story. This is why parents through the tales give their children education because they are convinced that if a child must achieve greatness and a happy future, he/she must be taught to appreciate the ideas compatible with the achievements of greatness and happiness in the form of wisdom, obedience, heroism and religion. Thus the tales are geared towards teaching the child what to do and what to avoid, what to appreciate and what to disdain; as forming the mores, ethos and pathos of their people.

Extrapolating from the above, Nigerians appear to have forgotten values attached to folktales in the past. This study therefore admonishes Nigerians to reflect on folktales that teaches and encourages Nigerians to be obedient to the rule of law especially as it relates to the constitution of Nigeria and to be fair with one another. We should engage in dialogue to discuss how the country should be restructured in the interest of Nigerians. It appears people no longer have regard and respect for the rule of law not been sincere especially in the distribution of the nation resources, therefore people adopt whatever attitude and behaviour that pleases them. Appreciating one's cultural values and ideals will educate people in curtailing the excesses of people who are bent on disrespecting one another and the constitution of Nigeria.

Recommendation and Conclusion

This study explores the imperative of cultural values and the need for a re-orientation in the 21st century towards the reduction of agitation for restructuring of Nigeria's political system. Cultural values are an essential ideals or guiding principles that pattern a people's general way of life. If Africans must graduate from the so called "underdevelopment" especially as noticed in Nigeria, there is the need to moderate the deep-seated Western culture that are inimical and very glaring in one's behaviour, dressing code, music, dance, language, artwork, food, attitude to innovations and seek for the right attitude which made us Africans before the coming of the white man. There should be respect, fairness and even distribution of the nation's resources amongst the six geo-political zones in Nigeria to avoid discord and agitation. This we can achieve if Nigerians are morally cultured. There is need for value reorientation that will enable Nigerians to thread with caution to avoid action (s) that may cause disharmony among the citizens in the six geo-political zones in Nigeria. It is pertinent therefore to note that the folkloric vehicles such as the popular beliefs, customs, stories, music, dance, legends, festivals etc are able to artistically express themselves and morally prepares their offspring for the restructuring of Nigeria for a better society if adequately employed. As part of the efforts to open up discussions in this direction and to reawaken consciousness, this study highlights on the need to be conscious about one's cultural value system and reorientation as evident in dance, folktale, and their implications for social restructuring. This study therefore admits that, the pace of development across African nations can be faster in positive terms if more focus is placed on the appreciation of the right attitude, cultural values and attitudinal change towards a better society.

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