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RASCOLITHOGRAPHIC PRINTS
08036084070

A JOURNAL OF THE NIGERIAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGIONS

VOL. 25 NO. 2 JULY, 2015

ISSN 0794 – 3989

RELIGIONS

JOURNAL OF THE NIGERIAN ASSOCIATION

FOR THE

STUDY OF RELIGIONS

VOL. 25, NO 2 JULY, 2015

instituting Leadership Reforms and socio-Religious Transformation in Nigeria in I.O Akao et al (eds.), *Biblical Studies and Social Transformation in Africa* (Ibadan: Nigeria Association of Biblical Studies (NABIS), 2012), 63.

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RELIGIOUS CRISIS AND SUSTAINABLE DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA: EXPLORING THE HINDU CONCEPT OF TOLERANCE AS A PANACEA

BY

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Abstract

Reckless "massacre" of human beings and the unwholesome destruction of goods and properties all in the name of "religion" is not a new feature in Nigeria. Desires or were on the lake of the minds otherwise known in the sanskrit as the *vasanas*, ignorance, the modes of material nature, cognitive deficit and mending daily stress have driven almost all Nigerians high and low to the brink of "religious" disaster. The media, gang, unemployment, poverty, drug abuse/alcoholism, denial of basic civic and human rights and pseudo – religiousity have contributed immensely to religious crises in Nigeria. At the stage when religion is practised under the checks and balances of authentic scripture, an exemplary anti-material mentor, and holy men or women, it creates cohesion, which engenders sustainable democracy and national development. Hinduism holds that there is another kind of tolerance, which is very positive and divine. It is accepting and respecting willfully the differences that exist in the world as part of God's creation and diversity. This paper therefore viewed the foregoing amongst others and proffered that if we repose unadulterated love on the supreme personality of the Godhead, automatically religious crisis becomes historical remains and sustainable democracy and national development will thrive in our nation Nigeria. The paper adopted historical and analytical approaches in its presentation.

Key words: Religious Crisis, Sustainable Democracy, Hinduism, Insurgency and Tolerance.

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Introduction

Attempting to sacrifice the nation's democracy on the "altar" of religious crises as seen in the time past will be a suicide mission as it becomes essential for all of us as citizens to harness our God-given resources to be able to resolve the nagging religious crises for sustainable democracy and national development to blossom. The bedevilling crises rocking the boats of the nation in recent times readily come to mind of any right thinking Nigerian in the face of our nascent democracy. A very notable irony of more than a few Nigerians revolves around the means of passing information across the citizenry. We have all been experiencing a lot of information culture but the power of some of us to communicate succinctly and affectionately with others of different religious faiths has deteriorated, thus causing much agonising hurt, anguish and calamities.

Krishnapada once said that, an important function of any leader is to create a congenial atmosphere in which people of differing religious inclinations have the opportunity to address conflicts honestly and resolve them for the benefit of all.¹ Nigeria's two major religious faiths: Christianity and Islam have had and probably are still having quite a number of conflicts among themselves. The consequences of such religious disturbances cannot be dissociated from drastic toll on lives and properties as are being experienced leading to loss of lives and properties through the notorious Boko Haram sect/group, who had almost taken over the major parts of the nation. Going back in history, we recall with trepidation the Jos carnage of September 2001, a very intriguing case. This work examines the causative factors of religious crises in Nigeria's democracy and then suggests ways of resolving the crisis for sustainable democracy.

Defining the Basic Concepts

Crisis: The term crisis has its dialectological root in the Greek word (*κρίσις* – *crisis*) meaning 'decisive moment', from (*κρίναι* – *krihein*) that is 'to decide'. Crisis is seen as a dangerous or worrying time; a situation or period in which things are very uncertain, difficult, or painful, especially a time when action must be taken to avoid complete disaster or breakdown; critical moment; a time when something very important for the future happens or is decided.² Mobile edition of the *Oxford Dictionary* also defines crisis as a

crucial or decisive point or situation; a turning point; an unstable situation, in political, social, economic or military affairs, especially one involving an impending abrupt change; a traumatic or stressful change in a person's life; a point in a drama (of life) *etc* at which conflict reaches a peak before being resolved.³

Crisis is a situation which invokes unstable equilibrium in the minds of the citizenry that needs to be addressed; a situation with an unpleasant incident or event with dire/dismal consequences, which pose a significant threat to the strategic objectives of an organization or society such as ours. The term "crisis" is usually applied to situations, which are perceived (usually quite subjective) as involving an immediate threat of unacceptable adverse consequences.⁴ Such perceptions appear quite urgently, decisions and actions aimed at providing or forestalling such extremely undesirable developments.

Hermann Kravitz and Peluso⁵ opines that crisis, whether religious or whatever appellation it carries with it, is mainly characterized by three major elements: threat, time, and surprise. Threat is taken to be a potential hindrance to some state or goal desired by an organization or individual – as seen in the cases with the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger-Delta (MEND) and other ethno-religious groups in the nation some years back till present time where we now have the Boko Haram sect/group. Threat occurs if the decision-makers recognize it and believe that it will hinder attaining goal. Decision time is short when the situation will be altered in the future, after which no decision can be made, or decision can be made only under less favorable circumstances. Surprison its own refers to lack of awareness by the decision-makers that the crisis situation is likely to occur, but is not equated with the lack of planned response to the situation. Even if plans exist, an individual can be surprised. For a religious crisis to take place, all these elements must be present. Almost all if not all religious crises this nation had witnessed were with the three variables – Threat, Time and Surprise.

Sustainable democracy: This means continued reasonably high and stable level of democracy. A mechanism which can be used to maintain something or keep in existence for a very long term without any hitch.⁶

Hinduism: Hinduism by simple definition and for the purpose of this discussion means those traditions, belief systems and schools of thought, which originated in India, which do not form part of other major world religions and which regard the Vedas as the final authority in ascertaining

spiritual truths. The knowledge of Hinduism is derived mostly from the Vedas, the Sutras, the Sastras, the epics, the Bhagavad-Gita and the Puranas.⁷ This makeshift definition is necessary to extract the basic tenets of tolerance extant therein in order to apply such as probable solution(s) to our nation's incessant crisis in the name of religion.

Insurgency: In a simple term of usage, it is an act of rebellion or revolt against an authority or leadership, especially a rebellion against the government or rulers of a country, often involving armed conflict thus leading into devastating consequences in the said country.

Tolerance: This is the acceptance of the differing views of other people in religious or political matters, and fairness toward the people who hold these different views. It is also the act of putting up with somebody or something irritating or otherwise unpleasant; the ability to put up with harsh or difficult condition.

Notable Characteristics of Religious Crises

A religious crisis is most often than not a turning point in an unfolding cycle of events or actions. It is a situation in which the requirement for action is high in the minds and planning of participants. It is followed by an important outcome whose consequences and effects will shape the future of parties to the religious crisis.⁸ Religious crisis is a convergence of events whose combination produces a new set of circumstance. It is a situation in which control over events and their effects decreases. It is a period in which uncertainties about the assessment of the situation and activities for dealing with it increases. It is also characterized by a sense of urgency, which often produces stress and anxiety among people. A religious crisis could also be characterized by increased time pressure for those involved.

Evidence of intolerance

Speaking of the intolerance of Hinduism in the same vein as the intolerance of Islam or Christianity towards other religions will be grossly inappropriate. Hinduism's intolerance is mostly symbolic, subtle, scholarly and subdued in both tone and temperament. Hindu scholars in the past often vented their anger and displeasure towards other faiths but mostly in response to the criticism and abuses heaped upon Hinduism by their opponents.⁹ For a long time in its history, Hinduism had no distinct religious identity. The different traditions and sects within Hinduism competed with one another and acted

independently. They dealt with one another in the same manner as they deal with the organized religions such as Buddhism, Jainism, Islam and Christianity. A Vaishnava and Saiva showed the same level of distrust and animosity against one another as they showed against a Buddhist, Jina or Muslim.¹⁰

Faces and effects of religious crisis in Nigeria

Some of the religious crises Nigeria had witnessed and which had taken their grievous toll on the nation's democratic setting include; the Maitaisine sectarian crisis of 1981, the Kaduna and Bulunkutu (Maiduguri) in 1982, the Ilorin Muslim-Christian riot during Christian Easter procession of March 1986, Zaria and Funtua religious riots of March 1987, October 1990 clash between Christians and Muslims in Kano sequel to the invitation of a German Christian preacher-Reinhard Bonnke to Kano at the instance of the Christian group which the Muslim group felt cheated at due to the fact that one Ahmed Decad, a Muslim preacher had previously been denied such a preaching mission in South Africa that year. Another Kano civil disturbance of December 1991 and Jos crisis of April 1994 among several others cannot be overemphasized.¹¹ But the most worrisome account so far is the recent large scale of unimaginable bomb attacks by the Boko Haram movement whose *modus operandi* is akin to the Maitaisine sectarian group in terms of philosophy and objectives coupled with its organizational planning and armed resistance. Until recently when the new regime of Muhammadu Buhari is trying all means available to square up with the group by announcing on the inauguration/swearing day that the military base be moved forthwith to Maiduguri in order to withstand the incessant insurgency. Even at that, the menace did not abate as on several occasions afterwards, many bombs were detonated at Gombe, and some other parts of the northern hemisphere of the nation.¹²

Before now, bill on anti-terrorism had been passed by the Nigerian National Assembly on February 17, 2011 alongside the efforts made by President Goodluck Jonathan to negotiate with the Islamic sects to cease fire. All efforts proved abortive and instead saw the spreading from the North-Eastern Nigeria to other regions of the insurgency.

The increase in the wave of ethno-religious bigotry in Nigeria can be linked with the birth of the fourth republic. Nigeria successfully found her way back into the community of democratic nations of the world on May 29,

1999 when president Olusegun Abacha was sworn in as the president for the fourth republic Nigeria and since then ethno-religious conflicts have been on the increase due to reasons not unconnected with the freedom provided by democratic rule.¹³

The introduction of Islamic Legal Code (popularly known as Shari'a law) by Governor Ahmed Sani Yerima a former governor of Zamfara State in October 1999, (later a senator in the National Assembly) greeted the pockets of unscrupulous protest at the initial stage but the hitherto calm fire was ignited when Governor Mohammed Makarfi tried to introduce Shari'a Law in Kaduna State in February 2000 between the Muslims and the Christians because both religions are almost at par in population.¹⁴

The Jos crisis is one of the long lists of ethnic and religious crises, which had rocked the country since the inception of democracy. According to a report,¹⁵ the immediate cause of the mayhem was attributed to an attempt by some Islamic zealots worshipping in a mosque at Congo-Russia to discipline a lady. The lady, reportedly sporting a mini-shirt had passed by a mosque where some Muslims were having their Friday jumah prayers. This singular act of the lady in question infuriated the worshippers who saw it as a slight on the Islamic faith, they got hold of her and flogged her. However, some Christians, who were observing the scenario immediately got mobilized, invaded the mosque and launched a counter attack on those found. The Muslims retaliated and the fight spread to the streets. Consequently, hundreds of people were slaughtered.

Boko Haram Insurgency

This group had been mentioned earlier in the course of this paper. But for the sensitivity it parades today, more emphasis needs be given to it. "The fear of Boko-Haram is the beginning of wisdom in some states of the northern parts of Nigeria and Nigerians as well."¹⁶ The word Boko-Haram has become a tension to almost all Nigerians and also sends waves of fear into others' psyché because the nooks and crannies of Nigeria feel the presence of the word. The group – Boko Haram – might not have explicitly given the name to itself but rather the name could have come from the external view of its basic beliefs. It therefore becomes imperative to complicate the two words i.e. Boko and Haram in understanding the ideology and philosophy of the group epitomized as a movement.

In Hausa language, the word *Boko* is an equivocal term which means either "book, western or foreign" and the word *Haram* is an Arabic derivative meaning "forbidden", "ungodly" or "sinful". Literally, the corollary of the two words connotes "western or foreign book is sinful". But from a deeper understanding of the two words we could assert that forbid everything Western and thereby, western education is sacrilegious and ungodly, hence be forbidden.¹⁷ What one can deduce from the above is that the movement is not only characteristically opposed, but completely opposed to Western education, Western culture and modern science. Alternatively, it embraces and advocates the propagation of and strict adherence to Islam by all and sundry regardless of anyone's personal wishes. From this objective, Boko-haram seeks to impose Shari'ah across all Nigerian states. Judging from the foregoing, the intent of the movement is aimed at replacing modern state formation with the traditional Islamic state, because Western values run contrary to Islamic values.¹⁸ The philosophy of the Boko Haram movement implies that the moral decadence and evil in the society is as a result of the embrace of Western education and civilization, and in order to ameliorate the evil that this moral decadence has caused, an Islamic society must be entrenched by destroying modern political institutions and infrastructures. Thus neglecting the constitutional provision of Nigeria (section 38 (1) (2), (3) & (4), regarding the freedom a citizen has concerning thought, conscience and religion which include freedom to change one's religion or belief "and freedom (either alone or in community with others, and in public or in private) to manifest and propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance".¹⁹

The movement opposes to anything western, but in actual fact, all weaponry used in carrying out their activities are western oriented since the bombs so manufactured are not Islamic or Christian. They are end products of researches done through western education and civilization. The citizenry for long had expected the leadership of the nation to have brought the orchestrators of this movement to book, but till now only a few number of their leaders were said to have been hacked down thereby making it on the rise daily by the sects to carry out their deadly acts. Sadly enough, many national leaders who are supposed to proffer solution to this menace in the interest of the nation tend to see to their ethnic cases or better still exhibit their political affiliations in times of national crisis.



Causative Factors of Religious Crisis

What are the reasons attached to the high increase bigotry of the activities of Boko Haram at this time most especially in the last administration of Goodluck Ebele Jonathan and the bane to the democratic sustainability of Nigeria? To effectively discuss the effects of religious crises on sustainable development in Nigeria, there is need to put into consideration the role of the leaders (ethnic, religious and even political) vis-à-vis federalism. We talk of true federalism in terms of organization of the states in such a manner as to promote unity while at the same time preserving existing diversities within an over throbbing national entity. Federalism is a system which mediates the potential and actual conflict that often arises from the heterogeneity within a political entity. Nigeria's democracy is problematic in that many factors have reduced its practicability. These problems include that of ethnicity, resource control, religious crisis, electoral crisis, legitimacy crisis and such likes. In this context, the effect of religious conflict on sustainable development and Nigeria's democratic set up shall be fully discussed.

Foremost, we must note that religious conflict does more harm to the nation's democracy than good. Religious conflicts in Nigeria have presented many challenges that border on security and the corporate existence of the country which is the fundamental reason for the adoption of a federal system. What we are witnessing through the Boko Haram insurgency in the last six years or so in the country could be likened to a transfer of aggression from one aggrieved party or group to innocent Nigerians.²⁰ Experience has shown that ethnicity, religion and federalism are more likely to be together than separated. This is because federalism is the only system of government that accommodates and satisfies the desire for a national identity.

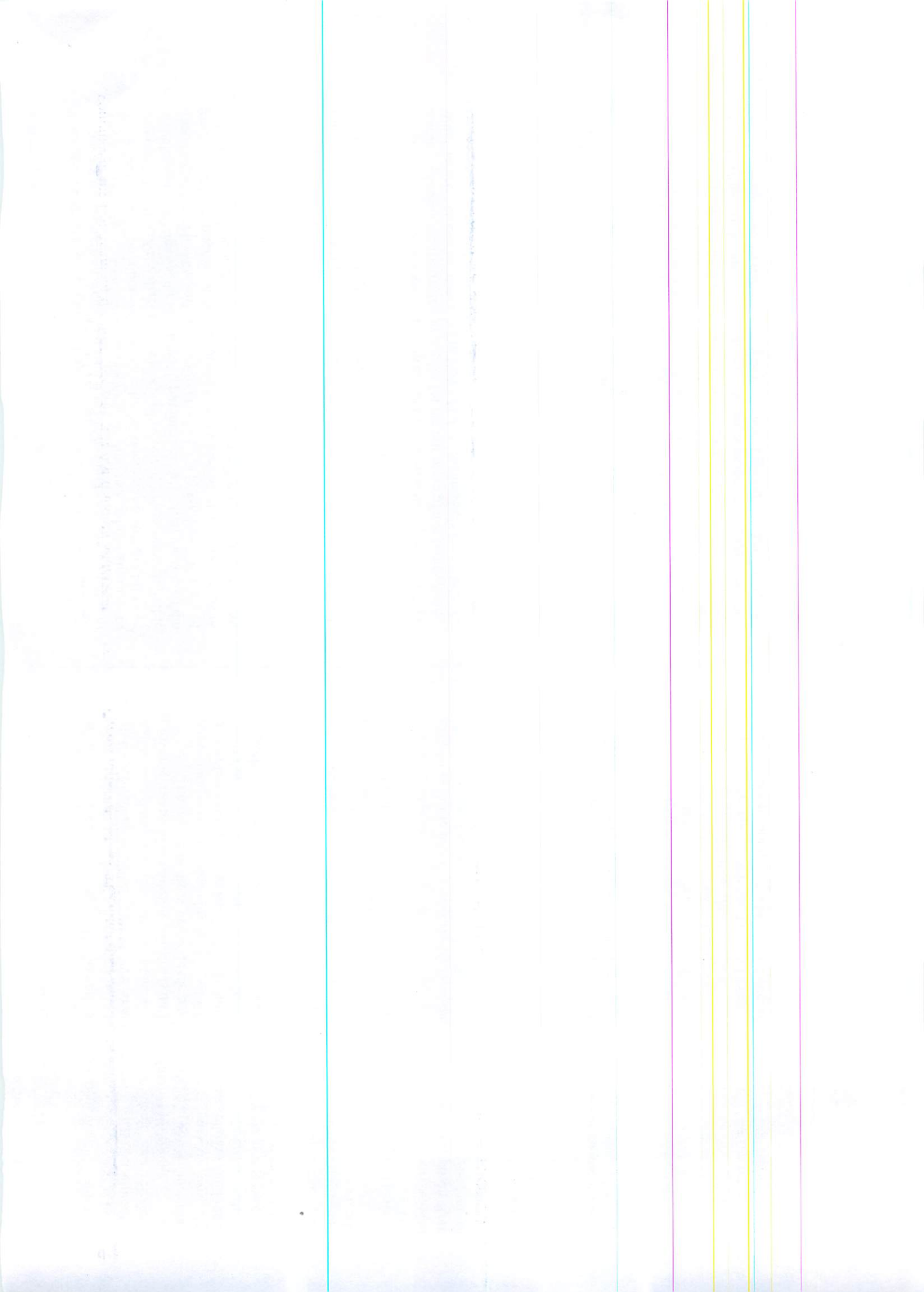
One major cause of what we now see as religious crises in Nigeria has to do with the accusations and allegations of neglect, oppression, domination, exploitation, victimization, discrimination, marginalization nepotism and religious intolerance on the side of a section of the country.²¹ In every nation (including Nigeria), there is no complete and unanimous agreement on how wealth, power and status are to be shared among individuals and component groups. There is no agreement also, on how to effect necessary changes and reforms. This is because, there are diverse interests associated with the different groups and individuals and in which case, some groups will have their aims met, while others will not. What this means is that conflicts (ethno-religious inclusive) usually occur when deprived groups and individuals

attempt to increase their share of power and wealth or to modify the dominant values, norms, beliefs or ideology. Thus, in Nigeria, there seems to be a divisive interplay of politics, ethnicity and religions, which has consequently led to the rising hostility and militancy of various ethnic and religious movements and of paramount concern is the Boko Haram Movement.

The failure of the Nigerian leaders to establish good governance may have hampered national integration which has led to mass poverty and unemployment. This has resulted into communal, ethnic, religious and class conflicts that have now characterized the entire Nigerian nation. Poverty, underemployment and/or unemployment have therefore served as nursery bed for many religious crises in Nigeria because the country now has a moral decadence to negative exposure to technology and warped societal values. This has left the hopeless poor people to be used by warmongers and belligerents as mercenary fighters. Meaning that poverty and unemployment increase the number of people who are prepared to kill or be killed (suicide bombers) for a given course at token benefits.

Further, institutional decay and porous Nigeria's security agencies and network is another reason for the escalation of Boko Haram violence. The existence of politicization of the security is leading to most of the myriads of problems in the country majorly by hoarding of sensitive information from security agencies in the country. Even though the passed Freedom of Information Bill was meant to ease the difficulties and hazards of investigative reporting, it has not been effective due to the typical attitude of Nigerian politicians and those in position of authority as a result of regarding some issues as "classified issues" that must not be divulged. Billions of naira are being expended in the name of security votes by both the federal and some state governments in the North-East to deal with a common threat to national survival, peace and security, scores of Police and military officers are nursing various degrees of injuries mostly sustained during attacks by the radical "Islamic" sect.

We cannot blame the security agents because of the greed and corruption that has eaten deep in the system. Why will they sacrifice their lives when the so called army Generals, Inspectors General of Police, Deputy Inspectors General, Assistant Inspectors General and Commissioners of Police are intimidating them with their alleged loots; the loots that are supposed to cover their welfare and hazards? Since leaders have failed to address institutional rot which has become less powerful and good, most



especially in the North and the country in general. There is possibility to continue in the Boko Haram terrorist acts which if not urgently addressed might cause disunity and national disintegration. Recently after the new government of Muhammadu Buhari took over, some service chiefs were dropped and replaced. The Director of Security Affairs (DSA) tendered his resignation letter but was declined on the basis of unaccounted billions of naira yearly voted for security of the nation and in spite that the nation still suffers the menace of the dreaded Boko Haram sect/movement. The nation's borders were unsafe at any time since through them came into the country members of this group from neighbouring countries to perpetrate these acts.

The causative factors of religious crisis could also be viewed under two categories namely, extrinsic and intrinsic factors. By extrinsic factors we mean those forces outside of the organism that impact on the organism to elicit response from the organism that are counter productive to religious tolerance, national integration and cohesion such as religious violence.²² Intrinsic or organismic factors refer to those factors, which lie inside of the embodied soul, or organism, which are instrumental to religious crisis.²³ Let us take a look at the intrinsic factors that are responsible for religious crisis.

Intrinsic factors of Religious Crisis

The Vasanas

According to applied Vedic science, when the name of an object is heard, a subtle form arises in the mind.²⁴ The mind cannot conceive of a thing without projecting it in subtle form. The mind tends to repeat and dwell on those desires, thoughts and recollections, which it has found enjoyable. When thoughts arise in the mind they do not end there but produce a series of related desires and thoughts, gaining momentum until they finally compel the embodied soul or organism to perform actions that are even against his or her better judgment. This sounds philosophical.

Prabhupada²⁵ states that *vasana* in Sanskrit – the ancient Indian language – means a wave on the lake of the mind. No matter how vigilant or watchful we may be, *vasanas* are bound to occur. *Vasana* agitates, and can turn a beautiful, calm lake into a stormy, dangerous one. Due to *vasana* we experience attraction, repulsion, and attachment for mundane things and activities. Our mind goes from imagining peaceful things to disharmonious ones. Applied Vedic science posits that when one contemplates an object of the sensory modalities, finds it attractive, and begins to desire it, a *vasana* is

forged. As the desire intensifies, it becomes lust and a strong determination to enjoy the object develops. The mind then attempts to experience that object through the sensory modalities: by seeing it, feeling, tasting, smelling or hearing it. Even if one successfully resists a *vasana*, it is no guarantee that it would go away.²⁶ It might arise again and attack occasionally with double effort. And unless we are undergoing some sonic therapy, it is most improbable to resist such constant agitation.²⁷

In the case of religious crises, when a bigot contemplates attacking a "non believer", attachment develops, leading to lust and the end product of such is anger. Arising from anger is complete delusion out of which comes bewilderment of memory. Prabhupada²⁸ says, when memory is bewildered, intelligence is lost, and when intelligence is lost one falls into the material pool of activities which are counter productive to the ethics of religious tolerance, love of Godhead, sustainable democracy and national development. However, a religious adherent who is free from all attachment and repugnance and is able to control his or her sensory modalities through regulative principles of freedom can be a useful tool in sustainable democracy and national development.

Element of Ignorance

Vasudev states further that ignorance of man's original identity has continued to be the bane of religious crisis. Our original identity is that we are spirit souls, parts and parcels of God (rendered variously in different names and languages among different ethno-cultural groups and nations).²⁹ When we wander from this basic knowledge of our original position, we are bound to encounter lots of problems such as ethnic hostility, religious crisis, and other related ills. In as much as a conditioned or embodied soul is devoid of transcendental wisdom, he is bound to contemplate and act on bodily identification. One affected by the *avidya*, or 'state of ignorance' of bodily identity thinks: "I am a Muslim", "I am a Christian", "I am an Afrelist", "I am a Hausa", "I am a Yoruba", "I am an Ibo", "I am an American", "I am Briton", "I am a Japanese" etc. Plainly speaking, ignorance of our real self has eaten deep into our bone marrow creating adverse effect such as religious crisis, ethnic hostilities, marginalization, nepotism, political killings and disaffection. The Boko Haram insurgency is a typical case of the *avidya* of bodily identity. Religious uprisings which has resulted to loss of lives and property worth billions of Naira constitute ignorance of our non-material identity as spirit souls.³⁰

According to applied Vedic science, persons imbued with mundane knowledge understand that we are not these bodies but spirit souls, parts and parcels of the supreme personality of Godhead. Transcendentalists therefore see the entire global community as one family, in the circumstance, therefore, look upon all living entities as sparks of God worthy of love, respect and care.³¹

Another aspect of the ignorance is non-eclecticism of theologians and lay religious adherents. More than a few religious adherents know very little of their scriptural teachings, without caring to have broad based knowledge of other scriptures. They are spiritually ignorant of other religions around them and the scriptural teachings of these religions. This reinforces their fanaticism as they believe and see their own religion as the only best in tolerance, sustainable democracy and national development which we all tend to preach and champion.

The Three Gunas factor

The three gunas refers to the three modes or qualities of the material world.³² These are *sattva* or goodness, *rajas* or passion, and *tamas* or ignorance. Every embodied soul is inherently imbued with these qualities in different permutations. And every human species is being acted upon by these *gunas* or qualities consciously or not. These gunas are always vying for supremacy. By the influence of the gunas, even an apparently peaceful person sometimes acts passionately. The mode of goodness is characterized by illumination and free from sinful reactions. Persons under the influence of *sattva* or goodness are attracted to piety and are conditioned by a sense of happiness and knowledge. *Rajas* or the mode of passion is born of unlimited desires and longings or hankering and as a result persons under the auspices of *rajas* are bound to material actions. *Tamas* or the mode of darkness is born of ignorance, and it is the delusion of all embodied entities. The results of this mode are madness, indolence and sleep, which bind the conditioned soul.

Ignorance in the Vedic literature is given that when anyone is under the spell of ignorance, one cannot understand a thing as it is.³³ For example, everyone can see that death is inevitable still people are seriously committed to wicked acts in high degree in a bid to accumulating money more and more without preparing themselves to meet death. They do not care to figure out the objective criterion of human existence, which is to attain *prema* or pure love of the Absolute Truth or Godhead. This is the inherent nature of *tamas*.

Applied Vedic science asserts that the state of consciousness of parents at the time of making a child determine very much the type of kid that would be born. If the consciousness of the parents are overwhelmed by the modes of passion and ignorance, then it is not unlikely that a child with bizarre mentality of religious bigotry is procreated, the socio-economic and political status of the parents notwithstanding.³⁴

Extrinsic Factors of Religious Crisis

Television

Higher levels of viewing violence on television are correlated with increased acceptance of aggressive attitudes and increased aggressive behaviour. A review of several studies arrived at the conclusion that violence on television does lead to aggressive behaviour by children and teenagers who watch the programs. Undoubtedly, watching so much violence hardens a person. So, how can we expect a child to develop into a compassionate adult with a sense of religious tolerance and respect for life if he is daily being exposed to violence? Television is helping to aggravate religious crisis situation.³⁵

The truth is that concept of reality of how others live is also affected by viewing television programming and commercials. Low-income and ethnic minority children and youth are presented with television world often quite different from their own. The contrast between "haves" and their own "have nots" can trigger off strong mundane desires in youth eager to share in the consumer products shown in programs and commercials. In most cases, television demonstrates how these desirable commodities can be obtained through the use of aggression, violence and robbery. And sometimes religion as a façade is used to generate violence so as to meet with people's non-religious motives. This is quite evidence in the Boko Haram and other religious crises the nation had witnessed over the ages. They came up initially as religious group and along the way metamorphosed into individualised sects fighting for their selfish course.

Gang/Peer factor

Some youths are enamoured to join gangs for the sake of a sense of connection, belonging, and self-definition.³⁶ In the gang they hope to find peer friendship, pride, an identity separate from their families, self-esteem enhancement, status, excitement and the acquisition of resources. Gang armed robbery and/or gang religious violence result from a variety of internal

and external "provocation" and gang members may be hyper-vigilant in the attention to possible slights. Bewildered about the objective criterion of religiously, some youths and more than a few religious "back-benchers" have fomented religious crises through the agency of gangs. However, it is worth reminding us that inevitably everyone would be cheated out of his/her so-called opulence, family connection, material position, society, friendship and "love" by all-devouring death. This is the ultimate end of everyone.

Unemployment factor

Religious crisis is also associated with lack of beneficial employment as it is asserted that "an idle mind is the devil's workshop". More than a few religious disturbances are carried out mostly by persons/youths who are not gainfully employed and are virile. It is not uncommon to see energetic graduates from our high schools roam the streets unemployed and they very easily become useful tools in the hands of agents of religious crises who cares to give them daily square meals as well as a peanut amount to keep their body and soul together. Government, inspite of its effort at ensuring that policies that would assuage the unemployment problem are in place still find this menace a hard nut to crack. However, they should not rest on their oars.

Poverty

Aliyu states that many social science disciplines, in addition to psychology, have firmly established that poverty and its contextual life circumstances are major determining factor of armed violence. Religious violence is most prevalent among the poor, regardless of race. Poverty is not just lack of economic development, it means also "to be segregated, often in decaying inner cities, in which crime and threat of crime confine the poor to fear and isolation at best and to injury and death at worst". Many of these violence-ridden environments are where the innocents poor citizens abide. "The big guns" of the society live in the choiced areas of the nation tagged "GRAs" – Government Reserved Areas – or other terminologies as may be dimmed appropriate by the government of the time.³⁷

Drug Abuse/Alcoholism/Drug Addiction

The perpetrators of religious crises ensure they are heavily under the influence of hard drugs; so as to assume boldness to dare even the devil himself whenever they are on course. Alcohol and other drugs play important

role in youths' involvement in religious crises. Alcohol and other drugs appear to lower inhibitions against religious violence cum violent assault and other anti-social violence. It gingers them to action. Because some drugs are both addictive and expensive (e.g. heroin and cocaine), many users of these drugs commit violent crimes to support their addiction. Due to the influence of hard drugs, sometimes drug consumers deliberately foment religious crises so that they could kill, maim, loot and destroy in order to achieve their desires in the society at large.

Denial of basic civic and human rights by the power that be

Denial of basic civic and human rights prod some people to carry arms in a bid to fight for their rights but subsequently are cajoled into religious crisis by their uncontrolled mind and sensory modalities (*the guns*). Human rights denial is worldwide phenomenon. Over one-third of the countries of the world employ systematic torture. In the early 1990s, atrocities in such countries as Panama, South Africa, Somalia, Ethiopia, Liberia, Kuwait, Ireland, and former Yugoslavia demonstrated that these are all pervasive. Today in Nigeria, many states of the federation and their citizenry are crying against denied rights and basic civic amenities. This had led to insurgence of many ethno-tribal organizations such as the Movement for the Emancipation of Niger-Delta (MEND), the Movement for the actualisation of the Sovereign State of the Biafra (MASSOB), the O'dua People's Congress (OPC), The Arwa Youth Movement (AYM) etc.

Pseudo – Religiosity

A pseudo is anything not genuine, pretended or insincere.³⁸ By Pseudo religiosity, we mean the so-called religious practices devoid of checks and balances in bonafide guru or an authentic living anti-material mentor, sadhus or holistic practitioners and shastras or authorized scripture. According to applied Vedic science,⁴⁰ when a religious system does not take cognizance of shashtra, sadhu and guru, it creates disturbances in society in the form of religious crisis. When two many doubtful religious leaders are involved in preaching and practicing materialism, and exploiting their congregation to amass personal wealth, requital wave of negative polarity sets in. This invokes anti-social values and demonic manifestations in the form of religious violence, which is opposed to sustainable democracy and national development. Oguagha⁴¹ argues that conflicts between Islam and Christianity

have quite often revolved on political power sharing. Okoloche⁴³ posits that political power is seen as a tool for protecting the religious interest of office holders and advancing the spread of such religions. Cabinet positions are therefore shared with care to avoid accusations of religious domination.⁴³

It has been observed that Nigeria has the highest number of churches than anywhere else in the world but the irony of it is that she is at the same time rated one of the most corrupt countries in the global village. Bankole, contends that it is obvious that what goes on here cannot be unconnected with pseudo-religiosity.⁴⁴ Swami asseverates that religious crisis, mundane attachment, debauchery and anti-material bankruptcy, some of the bitter fruits of pseudo-religiosity have driven the masses to the brink of disaster.⁴⁵

Religious tolerance in modern times

The religious tolerance of present day Hinduism is partly influenced by conventional wisdom and partly by the values of democracy and modern education. Not all Hindus practice religious tolerance equally. On the one end you have the enlightened and knowledgeable ones who want to display extreme tolerance in the face of extreme aggression. On the other end you have those who want to retaliate and answer violence with violence. In between the two groups fall the majority of Hindus with varying degrees of tolerance and intolerance. This group remains largely peaceful and tolerant, but when passions are incited, one can feel their frustration and anger in public and on the social networks. The intolerance of many present day Hindus, in fact, is an acquired trait, learned in response to the intolerance they get to see in other communities. A section of Hindus have reached the end of their threshold of tolerance, holding that enough is enough and it is time Hindus begin to assert themselves and stand united. By and large, Hindus are amiable and peace loving, who display remarkable pride in their religious identity and its historical distinction. They have suffered enough, sacrificed enough and endured enough to understand the agony of religious discord.

Amidst the tumult of discordant voices, they also recognize the importance of living in peace. Many Indians are politically conscious. They display a remarkable knowledge of the world and the events that happen in the other parts of the world. They are well aware of the divisive nature of religion and its adverse effects upon the interests of a nation. Therefore, they understand well that for the order and regularity of a pluralistic society, religious tolerance is a compelling necessity. No country can make progress,

if its people remain divided. A majority of Hindus recognize this fact and try to get on with their lives ignoring the stray incidents of communal violence that keep happening in various parts of the world such as Nigeria. Social, political and economic compulsions also make tolerance a compelling case for the members of a pluralistic society to follow. A lesson our nationals should imbibe and incorporate into their systems.⁴⁶

Without any form of propagation, Hinduism is a tolerant and flexible religion. It is free from the oppression of dogma and the pressures of an organized religion. It is very tolerant, lenient and forgiving towards its own followers and gives everyone great freedom to practice their faith according to their convictions and convenience. Today, anyone can join Hinduism and to practice it without any official or baptismal ceremony as we have in any other religions especially the western religions. In a very broad sense, it is a democratic tradition which verges on the side of anarchy. Therefore, the concept of tolerance is nicely integrated in the way of life it upholds.

The Way Forward

The frequency of religious conflicts and their impacts on the socio-economic life of the Nigerian people have always challenged sustainable development which is the sole aim of our democracy and have thus, demanded for one form of management strategy or the other to put them under control. What is often common to Nigerian government in conflict management is the use of coercive and judicial strategies which have been ad-hoc and were not organized. In view of these facts, there is a need for a bit integrated and more articulated programmes of conflict resolution and conflict prevention which should be able to effectively resolve and prevent religious conflicts as the case may be. Hence, the paper declares the following conflict management suggestions that will help to resolve or prevent religious conflicts with a significant effect of Boko Haram in Nigeria as means to sustain its federalism, maintain national integration and peace building which have greater relevance on sustainable development and democratic sustainability.

As a first step towards solving the problem of religious conflicts and the insurgency of Boko Haram in Nigeria, given the serious response by the world to terrorism related events, the Nigerian government needs to embark on more comprehensive and all-involving drastic measures that aim at addressing the remote and immediate causes of the Boko Haram attacks.

Efforts had been made by the government of Nigeria to enter into international collaboration with those countries like USA, France, United Kingdom, Italy, among others that have first-hand and direct experience of terrorism and have been able to proffer credible and scientific solution of reducing the menace to a reasonable extent over the years. Yet, the results are yet to be felt by the teeming Nigerians. Thus government at the national level must intensify integrated efforts and get these world powerful nations involved in the national polity while at the same time avoiding unnecessary persuasion into any policy/agenda detrimental to the national development such as the issue of "Gay" that was purportedly introduced to President Muhammadu Buhari at his recent visit to President Obama on the Boko Haram insurgency.

Government at all levels of governance must encourage effective and functional platforms for religious leaders, so that through them establishment of a network for conflict prevention and management would be easily possible. This call becomes imperative since it could be observed that no where in the country for some years back where religious, political, traditional rulers, etc, do regularly meet together to discuss issues bothering on the causes of religious crises in the society and how probably they could be prevented. What this means is that, in Nigeria, with a bad history of religious conflicts, leaders hardly meet to build bridges of understanding that could lead to the establishment of mutual confidence that would sustain a multi-ethnic society. Thus, rather than being part or initiators of the solution, they (leaders) often become part of the conflicts, which they supposed to resolve. The religious scholars and leaders should be used as agents in their various mosques and churches, communities and organizations and be foremost in promoting equality, social justice, tolerance, brotherhood and peaceful co-existence in the country as a whole. In addition to this, government should establish a National Council of Traditional Rulers to complement those of the states and find a formidable solution to these frequent insurgencies. This will serve as a move in the right direction, which will go a long way in building bridges among religious and ethnic divides. Such body when formed, should be expanded to include ethnic leaders, opinion leaders and religious leaders, while the government should strengthen the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIRI/C) already extant.

The government should be pluralistic, representative, and just in their treatment of the citizens. It should discourage all forms of discrimination, neglect and marginalization in dealing with ethnic and religious issues. The government should also target to reduce poverty among Nigerians so that the reservoir of recruits for religious conflicts will be punctured and abated.

Government must as matter of urgency arrange for the gainful employment of school leavers so that they turn not to social misfits/miscreants. Parents, educators, political administrators, religious adherents, should cultivate anti-material knowledge of the soul, self realization and have broad based knowledge of other scriptures with a view to actualizing proper respect, service, and care for all forms of life. Poverty in the country should be reduced to a barest minimum through job creation, access to education and health for the people. This will reduce the rate at which people get recruited as members of Boko Haram/other sects since an idle hand is a tool in devil's workshop.

The presidency needs to appoint a coordinator for each of the six geo-political zones of the nation to monitor their affairs as a mark of enlightened leadership and courage. There is need to articulate a national response to the socio-political and economic divide between the south and the north engendered by the zoning arrangement of offices in the entire country. We must need note that where justice is denied, poverty enforced, where ignorance prevails and where any one class is made to feel that society is in an organized conspiracy to oppress, rob and degrade them, neither persons nor properties will be safe.⁴⁶ In seeking for solutions, there is a need to be open to new ideas no matter how uncomfortable they may seem.

Grassroots education that targets youth that easily become willing tools in the hand of Boko Haram and other violent groups' patrons needs be embarked upon seriously by the government as a panacea for sustainable democracy and national development. Youth and grassroots education is by no means a gradual process, properly packaged and delivered. This will disabuse the minds of Nigerians from scheming that Nigeria is a secular nation and tone down morality. Nigeria cannot afford to close her eyes hoping to recover from her negative headlines that will metamorphose into sweet jingoism of one nation, good people being championed by the late Dora Akunyili.

Besides, Nigeria government should strengthen the existing institution of Public Complaint Bureau in each state of the federation through appropriate legislations, so that the parties in dispute will be able to showcase their grievances for onward transmission to appropriate government agencies for necessary action. Above all, government should not embark on any form of dialogue and/or negotiation because the act (dialogue and negotiation) is morally wrong and politically suicidal. Government exists to protect, provide and secure lives and properties of her citizen. To dialogue or negotiate with terrorists (Boko Haram or any other groups whatsoever), who has turned murderers and subverted the authority of Government by killing, maiming, looting and destroying the lives and properties of others in the name of fighting against modern/western education, fighting for "Allah" (God) as claimed and a systematic way to Islamize Nigeria is out of the way.

Good governance requires that government should discharge all their functions to the citizens wherever they reside to do legitimate business not to negotiate or dialogue with those who kill and destroy properties. Announcing and extending a hand of fellowship by attempting to dialogue with faceless terrors will amount to government pampering and promoting lawlessness in the country. It will be erroneous to say that Federal Government should dialogue with the Boko Haram movement as it did with Niger Delta Militants. Niger Delta Militants' agitation was logical and needful because it was based on genuine reasons, although, they made use of illegal means at some point, cannot by any standard equate to Boko Haram. Niger Delta Militants agitated for the control and management of resources in their territory. It was not an agitation to subvert governance or to kill innocent people or Islamize the entire nation.

Efficiency and effectiveness are prerequisites of sustainable democracy and national development, O'Keeffe⁴⁷ asserts that efficiency is doing things right, and effectiveness is doing the right things. When activities in mundane culture are transformed into Vedic culture (God conscious oriented culture), sustainable democracy with all its benefits, and national development are evoked. Nigeria needs this cultural transformation to emancipate her from incessant religious crisis, economic woes and political impasse.

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