

**ETHNICITY AND POLITICAL LEADERS IN 2023 ELECTION: AN EXAMINATION OF
CHUMA OKEKE *MMADU KA A NA-ARIA*.**

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Abstract

The spate of Ethnicity and actions of political leaders has become a global concern in Nigeria. These social vices have increased as preferred tactics to the politicians. Experienced showed that the just concluded 2023 general election was with abuse of electoral process. The Incumbent government refused to shift power to the opposition party, due to recurrent manipulation of election under democracy. It was obvious to people that their vote does not count. People's vote was different from the emerged winners. This paper aims to use Chuma Okeke's Mmadu Ka Ana-Aria to illustrate the truth through which a literary work becomes a speaking entity in the actual world. The type of research was survey. This study explores the actions of political leaders in 2023 general election, the effects of ethnicity to the governed as showcased in Mmadu Ka A na- Aria. It was recommended that ethnicity should be totally removed from Nigeria political system. Again, constitution should be amended to state a number of years that a political party should hold power in Nigeria.

Introduction

Leadership is the capacity to influence others through inspiration, passion and vision. It is the ability to direct others by influence. This influence may take the form of influence of one's friend on another, one's spouse on another, a parent on their children, a teacher on their students, a pastor on the congregations and so on. Leaders are believed to have emerged from popular votes of the people. Since time immemorial, the leaders come to power as a result of popular ballots of the people. These leaders, held power on behalf of the electorate who choose them and that is democracy. Dahl(1997) in Mbuba(2012:355-356) notes that democracy "... is the right of the people to choose at regular intervals among competing leaders whom to represent them." The electoral process in Nigeria has been characterized with the missing relationship between the peoples' wishes and aspirations. This is because there had actually no regard to orderliness, what persevered was gerrymandering and distortion of electoral processes over the years. Electoral rigging and ballot snatching, have rendered useless the efforts at arriving to a democratic governance, resulting in political leadership that lacked the people's mandate.

Ethnic according to Hornby (2020:528) "... is connecting with or belonging to a nation or people that share a cultural tradition while ethnicity is the fact of belonging to a particular nation or people that shares a cultural tradition." In Nigeria, until 1999, the country had been more under military than civil rule. The return of the democratic rule on 29th May, 1999 and subsequent successful transition from one civilian government to another is a thing of celebration and reflection. The Ethnic factor in Nigeria's politics has become evil which characterizes the manner in which political parties are formed. According to Dareng(2017:55) "Nigeria ethnic(tribal) groups, geo-political zones and sometimes even religion is placed on admission lists, employment offers or political appointments." This paper examines ethnicity and attitude of political leaders, how they jeopardized Nigeria's quest to grow on its democracy. Ekuonwa (2010:89) says "... problem envisaged is the ethnic locality among Nigerians when national issues are considered." Political parties in Nigeria have always been regionally and ethnically based. The country's extreme factionalism led to an incoherent party system with a large number of parties that deepened ethnic and religious cleavages. After the military rule, the following parties are the most recent producers of major presidential candidates in Nigeria. The people's Democratic Party (PDP)- one of the most established party since 1998. It was the party of Olusegun Obasanjo, who received about 62% of the vote in 2003. In 2007 Umaru Yar'Adua received over 70% of the vote. Ebirim et al(2015:86-87)says from 2011 to 2015, there was an alliance between AC, AD and other political parties to form APC which emerged Buhari as the new president of Nigeria, after defeating PDP the ruling party in the just concluded 2015 general election. In 2023, Tinubu of APC was declared as the winner of presidential election held in Nigeria.

Actions of the Political Leaders in 2023 Election in Nigeria

A leader can be defined as a designated individual who assumes a position, accepting the responsibility and the accountability it entails. A leader exemplifies through his words and actions. Munroe (1993:34) says "... a leader always serves to the benefit of those whom he is leading." This means that he can never demand the right to lead, rather is given the opportunity by others to serve them. The privilege of leading is earned through the cultivation of trust. Avinash, Rajendra, Nishith (2013:321) notes that "An intelligent leader helps people to expand their capacity, to understand the complexities of work and inspire the vision for the organization, and motivate followers. Leaders must get in touch with their core values and communicate them to followers through vision and personal actions. They should avoid inequality and discrimination. In Nigeria, the principle of equality is always violated, people are denied equal treatment simply on the basis of irrelevant characteristics such as sex or tribe and this led to preferential treatment. Mappes & Zemby (1977:189) says " in preferential treatment people were not accorded the same treatment as members of the same society. The unequal treatment given to some ethnic group in Nigeria called "reverse discrimination." This is used to describe actions or practices that discriminate against an individual or a group, on the basis of irrelevant characteristics. In Nigeria, preferential treatment was given to some ethnic group. Each ethnic group in Nigeria has core political leaders and they are in all the political parties. It was tragic to observe the disgraceful actions of many political leaders in just concluded 2023 election. By their own indiscretion, lacked discipline and abuse of power. They indulged in corruption, tribe segregation, intimidation and exploitation of the poor masses with massive rigging. During general election, the political leaders made Nigeria uncomfortable for the poor masses. They encouraged inequalities of right and opportunity for the citizenry, exploited insecurity of lives

and properties, tribal and intertribal hatred, religious and political discrimination, making the country filled with chaos and anarchy. Dike (2010) in Okafor (2014:189) says

I am tempted to tag the Nigeria one of the most dangerous country in the world. An unhospitable country where the record of death from violent attacks has always kept rising, the right to life is subjected to constant attacks from every side. Suffice it, on this point, to mention the most recent ethnic/religious conflict.

Due to ethnicity in Nigeria, 2023 elections were massively rigged in favor of the political leaders. When the result was announced, the poor masses were in perpetual anguish because, it was not what they expected, it shows that their vote did not count, this means that democracy in Nigeria is false.

Ethnicity And Actions Of Political Leaders In Okeke's *Mmadu Ka A Na-Aria*

Mmadu Ka A Na-Aria by Okeke is a fictional prose like *Animal Farm* by George Orwell, that depict the character of the animals especially in politics. It attempts to create appearance of life as it is socially experienced. *Mmadu Ka A Na-Aria* presents the agonizing experience of animals in Mejo Udemba farm. Mejo Udemba who is the owner of the farm always maltreat the animals even though he earns his living through the products from the animals. Mejo who was a drunkard, always starved and exploit the animals even after heavy work. The animal started planning for their own independence so as to be free from Mejo's Udemba's maltreatment. One day, Udemba was chased away by the animals including every human being in the farm. Now the farm which formally owned by Mejo Udemba now belonged to the animals. After some weeks of victory over Mejo, the animals celebrated their independence because they are now free from Mejo Udemba's intimidation.

Mejo na ndi oru ya huziri onwe ha ebe a na-agba ha ukwu, na-aga ha mbọ, na-adu ha mpi. Nke a bu izizi ha na-ahụ umu anumanu n'udi iwe a. Mbọ niile ha gbara iji chekwaa onwe ha lara n'iyi, nke mere na ha niile gbara osọ ukwu eru ala. N'azu ha, umu anumanu juputara n'onu na-achuso ha n'ike

Okeke(2012:26-27)

Mejo and his worker saw the animals fighting them with their legs, claws and their horns. They were surprised because they have not seen the animals angry before. They made effort to defend themselves but to no avail, then they took to their heels.

The animals were happy running after them. .

This plight is applicable in Nigeria. When the colonial masters were in Nigeria; Nigerians experienced intimidation, exploitation, divide and rule initiatives. Prominent people like Nnamdi Azikiwe, Tafawa Belewa and Obafemi Awolowo fought for independence. Nigeria was given her independence in 1960. During that time, there was jubilation in Nigeria as one can see in *Mmadu Ka Ana-Aria*. Shortly after the animal's independence like in Nigeria, constitution was made to checkmate the behavior of every animal in the kingdom. Some of the constitution were as follows-

1. Ihe o bu la ji ukwu abuo bu onye iro.
2. O nweghi anumanu o bu la ga-eyi akwa, arahu n'elu akwa, nuo mmanya o bu la.
3. O nweghi anumanu o bu la ga-egbu ibe ya.

4. ụmụ anụmanụ niile ha nha . Okeke (2012: 32-33)

1. Whatever that goes upon two legs is an enemy. (that is human being)
2. No animal should wear cloth, sleep on the bed or drink alcohol.
3. No animal should kill a fellow animal
4. All animals are equal.

This is similar to Nigeria, after her independence, constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria was made to be a guiding principle to every citizen in Nigeria. After the constitution as the guiding principle in *Mmadu Ka Ana-Aria*; political leaders, opposition, ethnicity and corruption emerged. In *Mmadu Ka Ana-Aria*, Agumba and Akirika are the political leaders. Agumba was a leopard and Akirika was a lion. These two political leaders always opposed each other in every decision in the animal kingdom. Each of the leaders has its own supporters. Agumba is known for intelligence and a good speaker. Akirika is known as a distractor who opposed every comment made by Agumba. Though few members are always in support of him but Agumba gathered more population than he does. One incident happened, during a meeting in animal kingdom. Agumba was attacked by Akirika's thugs. He narrowly escaped death and ran for its life. He never returned to animal kingdom.

Ndị ogbuu kwogara ebe Agumba nọ, ọ malitere ọtọ, si n'obere oghere dị n'aja mifee; a hụkwaghi ya anya ọzọ.(pg 69).

The thugs move straight where Agumba was sitting, seeing what was about to happen, Agumba jumped up through a small hole in the wall and vanished into the air.(pg 69)

This is what one was experiencing in Nigeria, political leaders aid political thugs. Political leaders use their thugs to kidnap, intimidate or kill any citizen who try to oppose them. When Agumba was chased away , Akirika appointed himself as the leader of the animals. He made another constitution in favorable to some animal especially his fellow lions, but unfavorable to other animals. He never considered constitution that was previously made in any of his decisions. He killed many animals, drank alcohol and used things that Mejo Udemba left in the farm, including cloth, bed and made human beings his friends. Finally, he transformed to human being and abandoned the animals. This is what is happening in Nigeria, Constitution in Nigeria is favorable to some ethnic groups but unfavorable to the other. Constitution of the country is not for the political leaders and the cabals. They operate irrespective of the country's constitution as seen in *Mmadu Ka Ana-Aria*. Finally, the colonial masters who are supposed to be the enemies of Nigeria is now where political leaders and their cabals are going to; for advice. All these affects 2023 election and the new Nigeria one was dreaming to have.

Recommendation

Law should set aside to check mate the excesses of political leaders in Nigeria. Ethnicity should be removed totally from Nigeria politics. Constitution should be mended to state the number of years a political party should hold power in Nigeria. Every citizen should be given equal right.

Conclusion

True democracy is government of the people and for the people. Political leaders should remove ethnicity in Nigeria politics. The lawfully elected candidate in just concluded 2023 election should commit themselves to quality leadership. Individual or group who are not comfortable with 2023 election result should go to court for redress. Court should stand for justice and transparency. Government should institute polling organization in the country to minimize election malpractice, ethnicity and actions of the political leaders, this will help in fledging Nigeria democracy.

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