

Effects of Non Indigene Discrimination on Contemporary Nigerian Society: Christian Religious Knowledge Perspective

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Abstract

This paper was designed to look into the non-indigene discrimination that migrated into Nigerian society from European countries. Non indigene saga is a new trend that has threatened the unity, peace and progress of Nigeria as a pluralistic nation. The paper further explores the causes, forms and effects of non indigene discriminations. It also considered the role of religion as a stabilizer of the social problem that has eaten deep into the socio-cultural life of Nigerian society.

INTRODUCTION

Human beings have established progressive contact across the globe long ago. Those contacts have helped to showcase the way of life / behaviour, religious practices, cultural differences and political lifestyle of others. Recently, the rate of global integration has been spurred by technology and communication that accelerates the exchange of ideas, creates the sense of immediate neighborhood irrespective of distance and turned the world into field of constant movements without direction and engenders unequalled interaction in the geometrical progression of societal networking. (Ajayi, 2004). As money, technologies and raw materials move more swiftly, so do changes in behaviour and patterns of relationship are affected either negatively or positively.

In this global move, wide spread suffering, disorder, injustice and unrest as social vices are not left behind. For instance in Nigeria society non-indigene syndrome abound. Yet Nigeria considers discrimination or indigenization as a social evil that cannot be heard of or practiced. According to Njoku (2010) religion is a universal phenomenon that pervades human societies both ancient and modern. The understanding of the term religion varies and definition highly controversial. The essence of religion is the existence and belief in the supernatural being that has governing effect on human life. Njoku stressed his awareness that the Theravada Buddhism does not contain belief in the supernatural being. When religion is understood as the human enterprise, through which a sacred is established, it is given the motion of the activities of human being in relation to the sacred realms that are separated from the mundane world. Religion has further been described as a system of belief and practices through which a group struggle with the ultimate problems of life.

The import of religion in governance of the affairs of human society abhors racism that advocates denials and unjust treatment of people based on colour or race void of content of character of the individuals. Racism has been seen as a social problem in most European countries, Asia and South Africa, where it has been perpetuated by the minority white settlers. For instance, racism in America has led to segregation, conflict, aggression, violence and relocation to political partitioning inspite of the civil right registration of the late sixties that prohibited discrimination in education, employment and religion yet it still thrives (Van De Berghe 1970).

In Nigerian context laws have been passed upholding the freedom of speech association, human rights, justice, fairness and equality before the law; that a Nigerian has right to own property in any part of the country, study any where, belong to any religious group, be employed in any governmental firms without prejudice but zero tolerance has eluded these laws in a pluralistic nation.

Conceptual Approaches to Non-Indigene Discrimination

Discrimination as a literary word refers to a practice of treating one person or group of people less fairly or less well than others. Discrimination in the words of Robbin Williams in Merton (1969) is a differential treatment of individuals considered to belong to a particular social group, ethnic or state. It connotes an unfair or unequal treatment that is accorded to individuals or groups based on ethnic, religious, sex and status as background of the unfairly treatment. In the context of this study, it involves a state of being unfair on some group informed by prejudice. Discriminative behaviour leads to denial of people's opportunities to participate solely because they belong to a particular ethnic group or state. It is a differential treatment characterized by indigenization. From these points, non-indigene discrimination involves some forms of irrelevant criteria as a base for participation in societal frame. Non-indigene however, is a state of not being a member of a given state or perception of stateism.

Moreover, discrimination is based on state or ethnicity. The advocates of non-indigenes in Nigerian society usually do not base their discrimination on colours, language or culture as in racism in America. Non-

indigene as a form of discriminatory treatment could be open or disguised, formal or informal. For instance in America, racism attracts official policy in many states, while in Nigeria non-indigene discrimination is built into a social system as in the case of quota system in education sector (Onwuka, 1994). But even when such practices are not legally entrenched, informal discrimination may be perpetuated in every aspects of societal life.

Forms of Non-Indigene Discrimination in Nigeria Society

Non-indigene discrimination has penetrated into Nigerian culture. The syndrome can take many forms, but few are more prominent and crucial in the country because it affects the entire structural relationship. Non-indigene discrimination could be found in employment opportunities, education at the tertiary level and political appointive position.

a. **Employment Discrimination:** This appears to rank first among all forms of discrimination practiced in Nigeria. For instance, people are limited to job opportunities in the state outside theirs on the ground of state of origin. In most cases available employment are shared among executive officers who usually fill in the vacant positions with their relatives whether qualified or not to the discredit of better qualified non-indigenes and possibly indigenes whose relations were not in sensitive position in office. For the American Negroes according to Mckee (1979) employment discrimination means denial of equal opportunities in economic order as a member of American society and as such could be interpreted as embittering reality that permeates every facet of life. Discrimination of non-indigenes on the bases of their state of origin or ethnic groups undercuts ambition and corrupt conventional moral values because these values are identified with respectable social status. When discrimination set in, attainment of social status is severely inhibited, therefore moral values which are associated with it has less meaning. From Christian religious teachings, denial of employment opportunity to one that merited it tantamount to injustice against humanity.

b. **Discrimination in Education:** Most predominately in Nigeria system of education, discrimination occupies a great seat hence non- members or non-indigenes are not accorded equal opportunity to study in the University of their Choice. Non-indigene syndrome has taken a new dimension in that admission into tertiary institution is limited to certain class of people based on state of origin. In the words of Onwuka (1992) admission into the Nigeria University as well as course of study depends greatly on quota system and who do you know. Onwuka emphasizes the effect of discrimination which he claims could lead to physical hostility and rejection and even non-compliance by members of the group. Onwuka noted that equal education opportunity would go a long way to foster unity and peace in Nigerian society. Most tertiary institutions in Nigeria have got a legal backing on quota system and catchments area laws to discriminate against members of another ethnic or state group as a rule for admission. Okeke (2002) observed that non-indigene syndrome especially in the field of education has contributed to half baked graduates hence people who are not qualified are given opportunities into areas they cannot study.

c. **Discrimination in Appointive Positions.** Discrimination in political positions refers to deliberate effort made by members of a given group to limit other non-indigenes participation in political offices or posts irrespective of their potentials, knowledge and experience. Iloka (2001) noted that in most states in Nigeria, non-indigenes are denied the right of franchise. The non-indigenes are reminded to go to their state of origin to cast their votes. In the Western world generally and America in particular non-indigenes are encouraged or persuaded to pass through the process of nationalization before they are qualified to vote. In Ebonyi State for instance non-indigenes/non members are not allow to canvas for any political position irrespective of the fact they are members of the same country. However, denial of political right caused by discrimination is a denial of opportunity to contribute to societal progress and access to better means of livelihood.

Non-indigene discriminations in job opportunities, education and political rights have been an issue national concern. Non-indigene syndrome was first noticed in 1969 in Nigeria and subsequently celebrated in 1994 by the then Enugu State Military Government under the leadership of Alison Madueke government who disengaged all non-indigenes in the state. Discrimination in admission at the tertiary institution was perpetuated in the country under the legal term of quota system. Looking at this global trend of non-indigene syndrome it becomes imperative look into the courses of the malady of non-indigene in our society.

Causes of Non-Indigene Discrimination

Non-indigene discrimination is a complex social phenomenon that has engulfed the progress of our nation Nigeria. Non-indigene discrimination otherwise known as indigenization has reached its climax in that you must be a member of that ethnic group or state before you will be given equal opportunity to participation. Popenoe (1977) have summarized three factors as responsible for non-indigene syndrome. These factors include cultural, personality and socio-economic factors.

i. *Cultural Factor:* Children are taught to hate, fear, shun and ridicule people whose customs, religion and ethnicity are different from their own. These stereotyped attitudes are transmitted from generation to generation through socialization. Patterns of socialization to a greater extent stand out as a cultural factor in discrimination. Cultural instilled stereotype behaviour has helped in magnifying discriminative tendencies in the life of these children, which in turn affect their behaviour in adult.

ii. *Personality Factor:* Most often due to frustration and aggression people tends to discriminate others who are non-indigenes. Discrimination, however, could be induced by the feelings that the other is extremely powerful and experienced and so to stage an open attack could result to self destruction hence discrimination seems to be a solution. For instance people tend to blame society's ills on the funky and welfare recipient, even though organized and white color crimes are far more costly for an individual who cannot cope with feelings of personal inadequacy or frustration. Such fellow sees non-indigeneship as a convenient and socially approved outlet to vent his failures. In addition to this, inferiority complex is considered a factor in non-indigene discrimination. In some given states such as Ebonyi non-indigenes who seem superior to others are regarded as suspects who if not properly checked could overthrow the indigenes. The fear of this makes some people feel more comfortable with their own people because values differ from place to place.

iii. *Socio-economic factor:* Discrimination could caused by poor economic forces. For instance whenever jobs are scarce or admission chances are few there will be likelihood of increase in discrimination against non-indigene. In this case, discrimination of non-indigene reduces competition and encourages segregation and hostility. The saga of non-indigene syndrome have been expressed in our country especially in areas like securing of jobs, political positions and inequality in education opportunities, and these problems led to stateism.

The Global Effect of Non-Indigene Discrimination

Non-indigene discrimination syndrome is a property of globalization. Moreover, as people, companies and governments of different nations are driven by quest for international trade, investment, knowledge aided by information technology; they introduce or bring in changes in way of life and culture interactions among the people. Non-indigene syndrome as a social problem has effect on the socio-cultural, economic, political and religious life of the people thereby prevents them from enjoying the full rights and privileges of citizenship and participation in the society. People are deprived participation in some social activities because they are not indigene. In addition to this, inferiority complex is considered as a factor in non-indigene discrimination. These effects could be outline in the following

1. The indigene ceases the opportunity of non-indeginship as a convenient and socially approved outlet to vent their failures. For instance local jobs and scholarship are given to only indigenes of the state even when they do not merit the positions while non-indigenes languish in abject poverty; and the hope of those discriminated against awaits for divine intervention through the instrumentality of religion that has always provided soothing effects in human relation.
2. Non-indigene discrimination had lead to unskilled cheap labours in the employment sector. Most often only the Mediocre are employed to work especially in our primary, secondary and ministries on the ground of stateism.
3. It has deprived our talented less privileged students from gaining admission into institutions of higher learning of their choice. Discrimination had lead to denial of admission to best qualified students in higher institutions through the law of catchments area and quota system.
4. It discourages and bridge preservation of cultural heritage thereby causing disintegration. Non-indigeneship has lead to separation even in most of the Northern states in Nigeria, the boko Haram sets in Islamic religion has insisted that the non-indigenes should relocate from their area to enable them Islamized the areas (CNN broadcast, January 12, 2012) This has lead to increase in conflict and violence in our country.
5. Sometimes non-indigene discrimination has created guilt and anxiety in the life of the discriminated persons. It had lead to rejection, physical/verbal hostility and aggression.

Christian Religion Knowledge as Stabilizer to Non Indigene Discrimination in Nigeria

Religion as one of the social institutions commonly found in every society seems to meet some basic human needs. According to Federico (1975) religion is a vehicle for human salvation. Religion in a bid to solve man's numerous problems provided him with opportunity to relate with others. Religion as a unifying factor according to Durkhein (1934) emphasized the basic similarity of human beings irrespective of tribe, race, colour, state, language, religion, status, sex and ethnicity. On the issue of non-indigene discrimination that characterize the society, religion offers a base for future hope in the face of unfamiliar regrets or rejection and lost of

opportunities. Through religion institutions people are made to understand that discriminative practices are not personal, peculiar but a universal or global trend. This awareness therefore helps to create a sense of community and belonging. Along with this shared interest arise a realization of mutual dependence that could be found in religion.

Christian religion helps to reconcile individuals to the hardship incurred by non-indigene, or racism as in the case of American society. Religion approaches the problem of status inequality and discrimination from other direction by attempting to affect the behaviour of those who are favored by the social systems. Christian religion help those discriminated against to readjust themselves and face future with hope. Certain religious beliefs are held by the oppressed and discriminated as a means for stronger bond that will help them survive by the social system that have placed them at the bottom. Christian religion at this point fixes them up by providing alternative sources of compensation or reward for maltreatment resulting from non-indigene syndrome. Drawing from the Christian perspective, all believers are made to believe that they are equal irrespective of sex, colour, religion, ethnicity, language, state and dispositions.

Christian religion as a social stabilizer helps to meet a variety of basic human psychological needs. It provides support and consolation that help the oppressed to overcome the human fear of discrimination and anxiety. Christian Religion emphasizes basic similarity of all human beings through reconciliation and worship.

Recommendations

The interest of the nation of Nigeria should be uppermost in that individual persons are first Nigerians before belonging to state, ethnic group or other affiliations.

If non indigene discrimination zero down it would reduce chance of violence or conflict in Nigeria.

The unity and peace of Nigeria shall become stronger` rather than prompting sense of segregation and tribalism through discrimination against non indigene.

Accommodation of indigene and non indigene service would provide expertise in various professions talented and highly skilled man power shall put Nigeria on fast lane of development.

For sustainable development in Nigeria efforts should be geared to avoid wasting valuable human resources, developing unskilled labour forces and create enabling environment that would foster peaceful co-existence.

Conclusion

Non indigene discrimination is a global trend that has act deeply into the fabrics of Nigerian nation. it is a menace with a political undertone capable of causing tribal war, hatred, disrupting the unit of the country to mention but a few. The impact of this ugly trend is felt in the nation's education socio-cultural, economic, political, and religious life of the people. Moreover, non indigene could result to disintegration as well as increase chances of violence. However, Christian religion knowledge as a social factor has been identified as a stabilizer of the effect of non indigene discrimination.

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