

THE PRACTICE OF GODFATHERISM AND THE CHALLENGES OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA: A CALL FOR SOCIO-POLITICAL LIBERTY

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Abstract

In Nigeria, the phenomenon of the practice of godfatherism has been a central characteristic nature of democratic governance over the recent years. The significance of this reality as a socio-political problematique has been most amply occasioned by its manifestation in the present democratic system in the country. The extent of conflicts and crises, which has been associated with this phenomenon since Nigeria's returned to democracy in 1999 has generated and continued to call for critical reflections. Going by the current wave of the evils of the politics of godfatherism and its attendance negative impact on the quest for a true democratic dividends, the study therefore explores the problem of godfatherism in post-contemporary Nigerian politics with a view to relate how such practice has hampered and continued to militate against democratic governance and the desired for effective leadership drive by the godsons towards delivering people's oriented projects. The exploratory nature of the study necessitated the adoption of library and textual methods of enquiry, which is largely analytical in nature. The study through its philosophical lens discovered that the practice of godfatherism in Nigerian politics has negatively affected the thrust for good governance. Hence, as a panacea, the study recommends that those saddled with leadership responsibility should be allowed by their godfathers to freely deliver their mandate to the people, rather than continually determining the fate of Nigerians on the altar of their personal aggrandizement.

Keywords: Democracy, Godfatherism, Good Governance, Nigeria, Liberty, Politics

Introduction

The growing currency of ‘godfatherism’ in Nigerian politics calls for critical reflections. Thus, the ills associated with the practice of godfatherism in Nigerian politics, particularly within the confines of its democratic tenet has necessitated more scholarly explorations. Thus, political thinkers and analysts have looked at the concept from varying points of view. However, it is observed that in spite of these scholarly contributions, it is sad that in this post-contemporary period, the practice of godfatherism and its evils continued to negatively affect the quest for good governance in Nigeria. From a general socio-political point of view, Ukhun states the nature and feature of the hallmark of godfatherism in the following words:

The feature of godfatherism is about relationship which exists between two or more unequal entities. In this relationship, one occupies a position of power or influence. One of the entities plays the piper and dictates the tune more or less on constant basis, while the other dances. Admittedly, power is the determinant or fundamental feature of godfatherism... This power could be economic, political, spiritual voodoo etc (2004:82).

In the light of the above, William presents the concept of godfatherism in politics as a relationship between superior and subordinate; whereby the former represented by the godfather has the upper hand because of his superior status. This assertion, clearly points to the argument that the entire edifice of godfatherism in power is circumvented around the quest for power control. The view of Ukhun shared a common solidarity of opinion with William’s thought when he confessed that; “...godfatherism can be generally seen as a practice which entails the sustenance of a kind of social and political relationship in which the subordinate looks onto the superior for the propagation and fulfillment of certain roles, desires and interests which bind both together or in which both have equal stake but with the superior determining what the subordinate gets in the process” (2004:167).

It is imperative to state at this juncture that while scholars had consistently spoken against the dangers of the politics of godfatherism on governance, it is however sad to note and most worrisome that in this post-contemporary era, the phenomenon of godfatherism continued to play in the body of Nigerian politics. In lieu of the above background, the study is propelled with some fundamental socio-political curiosities. Thus the present research asks the following question; what is the moral justification for the practice of godfatherism in our democratic arena? Has the practice of godfatherism fare well in the Nigerian political history? What is/are the effect(s) of godfatherism style of politics on the welfare and wellbeing of the State? Next, should the godson continue to owe allegiance to the godfather while downplaying the primary duty to carry out policies that will tend toward the *summon bonum* of the people? These questions leave much to be desired. Hence, the study aims to examine moral debate and justification of the practice of godfatherism within the Nigerian context. It also explores historically the phenomenon of godfatherism in Nigerian politics. In addition, the study intends to establish the socio-political implication of the practice of godfatherism on the current democratic practice in Nigeria. Lastly but most importantly, the study calls for political liberty in Nigeria; where those

saddled and entrusted with leadership role should be recused and free from the bureaucratic bottleneck of the godfathers on the godsons.

Classification of Concepts

On the Meaning of Democracy

It is not our thrust here to cajole our readers with all the existing meanings in the literature of the concept of democracy. This decision is akin to the fact that today, plethora of thinkers and scholars had offered scholarly discourses into the subject matter. In this sense, Campbell (2008:4) noted that; “there exists not only one theory, concept or model of democracy, but clearly a of different theories, concepts and models.” Partially these varying theories or concepts could be integrated by a meta-theory or meta-concept; at the same time, however, it also should be acknowledged that some of those theories and concepts of democracy clearly contradict each other. For Bühlmann et al. (2008:5): “There is an abundant literature relating to democracy theory, with countless definitions of what democracy should be and what democracy is.” In sum of this, Laza Kekic (2007:1) tells us that: “There is no consensus on how to measure democracy, definitions of democracy are contested and there is an ongoing lively debate on the subject.” Etymologically, the concept of democracy» is a term that comes from two Greek words, namely *demos* (People) and *kratein* (to govern or to rule). Textually speaking, democracy can be understood here as a form of government that allows for popular participations.. it could be direct or indirect form of democracy. Different countries adopt any of these forms in practice. In Nigeria of today, the indirect form of democracy is encouraged. We must also bear in mind that the concept of liberty, which is another important concept in this study, are synonymous. In most cases, they are used interchangeably. The same applies to the concept of freedom and liberty. Democracy, no gainsaying, is indeed a set of ideas and principles about liberty or freedom, per se but it also consists of a set of practices and procedures that have been molded through a long, often tortuous history. In short, democracy is the institutionalization of political liberty.

The Concept of Godfatherism

According to Igbini and Okolie, (2020), “like most concepts in the litany of socio-political philosophy, the term godfatherism employed in the social sciences, for which a straightforward definition is problematic, does not lend itself to an easy definition.” Therefore, in trying to understand the concept of godfatherism, Adeoye (2011:5) opines “we must start by questioning the term. Hence, a pertinent question to be asked in trying to understand the concept is who is a godfather? Who is a godson? It is in answering this that we can easily graft the answer to the question, what is godfatherism?. Ugwu and Ugwuja, (2016) therefore clarified that; “The term godfather takes its root in Christianity. In the Christian tradition, at Baptism which is a sacramental practice of the church, a godfather stands in as the child’s sponsor. He serves as a role model whose lifestyle is worthy of emulation” He performs the function of co-parenting with the parent of the child. He contributes primarily to the spiritual growth of the child, who is considered his spiritual son. He contributes to raising the child to become God-fearing, law-abiding and responsible in society. Wenibowei, (2011) contends that; “The godfather usually shows love and kindness towards his godson and sometimes practically expresses his love with expensive gifts, moral suasion and so on”. It is in the same spirit of understanding and interpretation that Edigin (2010:174) similarly to opines that a godfather is a human being who

plays god to his people. He provides their basic needs for them, protects them and assists them to secure and achieve their objectives. Edigin (2010:175) particularly and specifically stresses that “his support could be seen as an investment, which he believes must yield some profits in the future”.

The Concept of Liberty: Its Conceptual Meaning

It is imperative for us to state that the concept of liberty is considered a one of the core concepts and fundamental principles in democratic value in modern socio-political discourse. Thus, it can be said that the notion of liberty emerged in the context of the formation of modern civil society and political authority. While the concept is intimately associated with liberal thought, liberals have looked at the notion in different ways. The term liberty is derived from the French word- *liberta*. It literally means freedom. As a philosophical concept within the purview of socio-political philosophy, liberty was developed by philosophers like Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Mill and Berlin. As mentioned in the penultimate brief remark above, liberty entails freedom from, or absence of restraints. A person may be considered free or at liberty to do something when his or her actions and choices are not hindered or constrained by those of another. It is important to understand that constraints refer to impediments imposed by political and other authorities. Thus, imprisonment, bondage or slavery, subjection to the influence of godfathers are inimical to good governance and democratic spirit. Within the context of this study therefore, we conceptualized liberty to imply the freedom of the political godsons to freely govern the country or in their respective States without the unholy coercion of the godfathers in their leadership responsibilities to the people.

Brief History of Nigerian Politics

Since its attainment of independence in 1960, Nigerian political history over the years can be equated to a rat race. This is akin to the fact that in the civilian and military regimes alike, the control of state power has always been an object of intense, reckless and normless struggle. Hence, the underdeveloped state of the Nigerian socio-political affairs and its attendance entrepot character of the state have made politics in this context a unique and rather perplexing reality. From historical evidence, in Nigeria, the quest for the control of State power has been and is presently being sought by all and sundry usually with cruel desperation, and with the least regards for both ethical (moral) and legal considerations. With such approach, here, it can simply be said therefore that it is the means that justifies the end and the end being acquisition and control of State power together with its resources by all means and at all costs. Nigerian political history, no doubt has spanned through three if not four major era. These may include the pre-colonial era, the colonial era, and the post-colonial era. Often, in political philosophy, we also attempt to classify or divide the eras of Nigerian political development into the First Republic, the Second Republic, The Third Republic and the Present, which is the Fourth Republic.

The politics of the First Republic of Nigeria to a large extent demonstrated the above attributes. The cruel, normless, unethical and desperate struggle for State power among politicians in this era plunged the country into a state of political anomie and chaos in the early 1960s. Remarkably, it was this situation that ultimately resulted in the collapse of the First Republic in 1966. This was followed by the advent of military rule which further exacerbated this situation. In practical term, the military rule also brought alongside more of anomies into the Nigerian political arena. In these years of Nigerian political experiences (both in the civilian and

military), there is no gainsaying that governance in the country is has been tactically institutionalized with abuses and misrules. This has been amply exemplified in kleptocracy, corruption, and patronage syndrome and political of cabals.

Origin and History of Godfatherism

The thrust here is to lay the foundation and background leading to the practice of godfatherism in the Nigerian politics. To undertake this primary task, suffice to say that within the broader scope and perspective, most scholars and analysts contend that the notion of godfatherism originated from the Christian tradition. According to Anakwenze (2004:1); “The concept of ‘Godfatherism’ has its origin in Christianity. Godparents are chosen as surrogates to help biological (or adopted) parents raise a Christian child to become a God-fearing, law-abiding adult.” Similarly, Odivwri et al (2003:1) have offered something more comprehensive. For them, the concept of godfatherism has its roots in the traditional practices of the Orthodox Christian Churches. In this context, it represents a practice whereby a new Christian convert is nurtured in the faith after baptism. The essence and the significance of the practice, in the views of Odivwri et al, are explicitly captured down in the following passages:

But because the expected new life (of the convert) is likely to conflict with the society and his/her old ways of life, a guarantor is usually needed. Such a guarantor will undertake to keep a watchful eye on the newly initiated to ensure that he/she does not donate (sic) from the treasured way of the Lord. The guarantor is called the godfather; one, who oversees, supervises and guides the actions of the convert. But he does not take over the running of the convert’s life. Sometimes, he answers for the fallibilities of the convert (2004:1).

The words ‘donate’ (sic) as used by these ebullient scholars was meant to say deviate. So the godfathers were primarily and principally introduced to help and guide the new converts through their faith in order that they do not deviate from the teaching and practice of the Church faith. The above citation generally therefore underscores the original practice of godfatherism within the Christian religion. It stresses the idea of Christian guardianship and sponsorship, whereby an elderly Christian assumes responsibility of catering for the moral and spiritual welfare of a younger (newly baptized) convert. In the same vein, the position of Coker is not in any way different from the above opinion. In the words of Coker (2004:33); “The Church as the custodian of morality, holds in high esteems the institution of God-fatheristy as an instrument of Christian guardianship.”

Furthermore, the above position has been further expatiated in Volume 5 of *Encyclopedia Britannica*. From the standpoint of Christian God-parentship, the *Encyclopedia* (Vol. 5, 326) sees a godfather as “one who stands surety for another in the rite of Christian Baptism” *Encyclopedia* (Vol. 5:326) echoes further thus; “In the modern baptism...the godparent or godparents make profession of faith for the person being baptized (godchild) and assume an obligation to serve as proxies for the parents if the parents either are unable or neglect to provide for the religious training of the child, in fulfillment of baptismal promises”. Hence, emphasizing the cradle of godfatherism as an instrument of Christian sponsorship, the *Encyclopedia* goes on

to aver that the practice “originated not in infant baptism but in the custom that required that an adult pagan who offered himself for the rite (of baptism) should be accompanied by a Christian known to the Bishop; a Christian who would vouch for the applicant and undertake his supervision in the faith” (Vol. 5:326). A lot have been said regarding the origin of the practice of godfatherism within the purview of Christian tradition. We cannot capture all the views of the different scholars in this regard.

Within the context of socio-political thought, one would ask; how does the idea of godfatherism emanated? In response to this, let us avail ourselves with the writings of Ibrahim. In his wordings Ibrahim (2003:2) readily recollects that the practice of “godfatherism in which kingpins of the criminal underworld played a major political role first featured in political science literature in relations to the US city of Chicago in the pre-World War II era.” Establishing his point further, Ibrahim continues; “The heads of criminal gangs sponsored politicians in elections, manipulated the results to get them elected and, in return received protection and contracts from their political godsons. This process is consecrated in American political science literature under the euphemism of ‘party machine’ politics”(2003:2). In a related view, Williams traces the advent of political godfatherism to the rise and evolution of the Mafia. Williams shared solidarity of opinion with Ibrahim as he puts it *inter alia*:

In US political literature, godfatherism is often rendered as Godfatherism meaning the leader of a gang or criminal group (sic) whose high stake and interest in politics includes the advancement of personal interests through the adoption of cruel means including the sponsorship of subordinates or surrogates to position which are subject to the manipulation of the Godfather (2004:166)

Godfatherism and Democratic Governance in Nigeria

The thrust of this section is confined on the practice of godfatherism within the Nigerian Fourth Republic. That is, we selectively looked and unraveled the issues bothering on the politics of godfatherism since the time Nigeria returned to democracy in 1999 through the present 2023/2024 political currents. On this note, focusing his lens, Oghuvbu (2023:59) writes; “Since the country's democratic transition in 1999, Nigeria's democracy has remained incredibly dysfunctional, with politics becoming increasingly partisan and patronage becoming necessary to retain power. Democracy, as a moral and legitimate means of governing a nation, has spread to many parts of the globe but it's yet to take root, in Nigeria.” In their solidarity of opinion, Igbini, and Okolie (2020:93) held thus; “Multiple political parties, frequent and competitive elections, which would otherwise be called irreducible minimum requirements for democratic rule, have not resulted in a corresponding flourishing of fundamental liberal ideals that are vital to democracy's survival.” These ebullient scholars (2020:93) further adumbrated that “the politics of godfatherism, which denies peaceful coexistence, law and order, and all the tenets of democratic process by obstructing candidate selection and even executive selection once government is established, has resulted in a transmutation of authoritarianism rather than democratic consolidation in Nigeria”.

Accordingly, the development of the contemporary practice of political godfatherism in Nigeria started within the context of the military rule. It is to be mentioned in this study that the first to attain the status of political godfather in Nigeria, particularly in the case of Anambra State is Prince Arthur Eze. Commenting about him, Uka (2005:3) had this to say; “Prince Arthur Eze,

a multi-millionaire businessman, undoubtedly assumed the role of sole and ultimate political godfather in Anambra State between the end of the failed (aborted) Third Republic and the coming of the civilian in 1999". This fact was illustrated by the near monopoly over government contracts and patronage, which Prince Arthur Eze enjoyed under successive military administrations in the State during the period under review. Particularly, the 1998/99 electioneering saw the rise of new-breed power brokers in the State. Amidst the grand politicking and maneuver that attended this electioneering, Dr. Chinwoke Mbadnuju emerged as the State Governor, alongside a political godfather, Sir Emeka Offor.

In Nigeria of today, the reason for the politics of godfatherism is not far-fetched. Some of these reasons are contained in the words of Ahmed and Ali (2019:14) as they submitted thus; "power of incumbency, influence, political thugs, money politics, lack of political knowledge, selfishness, greediness, lack of publicity, over-ambition, nepotism, and politics of regionalism are among the factors that led to the politics of godfatherism in Nigeria." According to Rasak, Oye and Ake (2017: 79) it was revealed that a onetime governor Chimaroke Nnamani, affirms that godfather is "an impervious guardian figure who provided the lifeline and direction to the godson, perceived to live a life of total submission, subservience, and protection of the oracular personality located in the large, material frame of opulence, affluence, and decisiveness, that is, if not ruthless...strictly." it beholds to say therefore that since the political godfathers who will enormous power and influence use their resources to put their godsons and relatives in various positions of power, it is understood that corruptive tendencies exacerbate the godfathers' economic base by causing a wide variety of difficulties in governance. Such government would rather deviate from the moral responsibility and constitutional oath of office taken to uphold always the democratic tempo for the good of the people. in most occasions, these political stood and godsons tried to at all cost to massage the ego of their godfathers.

Reaffirming our earlier position, while decrying against the politics of godfatherism in Nigeria, Oghuvbu (2023: 59) buttresses that; "Godfatherism is not a recent phenomenon in the political history of Nigeria, however, after returning to democratic rule, the country has seen a rise in godfatherism politics, which continues to erode government credibility and render citizens' electoral worth void. Also, Godfatherism according to Nkwede, Ibeogu and Nwankwo (2014:139) is the "political merchant while the political godson is the slave who is bought with a huge amount of money under a democratic oath." There is no gainsaying that "Godfatherism is amongst the most dangerous challenges to democracy today, and it persists only with the help of the government, resulting in unresponsive leadership." Hence, in their averment, Ohiole and Ojo (2016:3); "In Nigeria, democracy is not yet completely developed, and the phenomenon of godfatherism has jeopardized the political process as well as citizens' livelihood." This paper is therefore, aimed at filling this void in literature." In addition, it was against this evil that Kpodee Neemene ThankGod (2022:60) in his article maintained that:

The Nigerian politicians have also been known for severally and grandiloquently opaque language to give the impression that they have something good to tell the populace, whereas in actual sense, their intentions are far from what they professed; they rather meant something quite different to. For instance, within the Nigerian parlance, words and phrases like national interest, one Nigeria, freedom, Resources control, 13% derivation, federalism, and other

forms of political grammars are mere barriers employed by the Nigerian political class in their intention to continue to dominate the masses and rob them of their rights.

The point to note in Kpodee's assertion above is that, within the Nigerian politics, dishonesty, deception, and all forms of unhealthy as well as unethical behaviours are the order of the day. Godfatherism as a political parlance and phenomenon has continued to cause more harm on Nigerian quest for democratic liberty. Thus, they political boys or godsons are mere tools used by them to amass what was supposed to be the common wealth for their selfish interest. This attitude is not telling well on our democracy, as a people.

The Socio-Political Implication of the Politics of Godfatherism in Nigeria

In the penultimate section discussed above, we generally looked at the interplay between the politics of godfatherism and its parallel relationship with democratic governance in Nigeria. This section, as the sub-titled suggests, delves into a critical reflection on the implication of the politics of godfatherism on the post-contemporary Nigerian socio-political situation. Obviously, Godfatherism in post-contemporary Nigerian politics takes away the voice of the people. Accordingly, Ugwu, Izueke and Obasi (2013: 139), espoused that; "the politics of godfatherism has made growth inaccessible to the majority of the population. As a result, godfatherism politics is one of the main forces orchestrating Nigeria's fourth republic's socioeconomic and political crises. Godfatherism politics has had a devastating impact on state democracy and political progress in Nigeria today." It is unethical to note that in the present day Nigeria, the masses whose interest democracy and democratic governance supposed to protect are not allowed or given adequate representations in the decision making process of issues that affect them. This, no doubt, has eroded the gains and tents of democracy. The evidences are glaring as the people's power to decide the affairs of their state is wrestled off their hands and concentrated in the hands of a minority (godfathers): a group of self-seeking individuals poised on using the government for the achievement of their personal goal and aggrandizement.

The politics of godfatherism has adversely opposed the quest for political liberty within the Nigerian current situation. It has brought governance to its kneel. Every political decision to be taken are said to be approved by the godfathers in such scenario, there can be no true democracy, and there can be no political liberty. As a result, it promotes graft, breeds severe unemployment, electoral malpractices, abject poverty, and political uncertainty, endangering the democratic process as well as citizens' socioeconomic lives. In his words, Oghuvbu (2023:69):

One of the most alarming and destructive effects of godfatherism in Nigeria's fourth republic was to make a mockery of a genuinely democratic and transparent political mechanism in which electorates are supposed to openly nominate candidates of their choosing to represent their interests in public office. Our political leaders and their mentors (godfathers) exploit the constitutive and regulative instrument for a credible democratic struggle in order to accomplish their aims. Credible elections are important to stem the tide for democratic decay and rebirth in the nation.

This is because, according to proponents of liberal democracy, once elections are conducted correctly, democracy will bring consolidation and as a result of this, the country will experience long-term peace and security. Credible elections, in essence, result in security, political stability, and socioeconomic development. On the contrary, these requirements are lacking, hence, the Nigerian nation has no political liberty, in as much as those occupying political position today are mere handmaid in the hands of their political godfathers. Describing this sad scenario in the light of the Nigerian situation, Ejiroghene Augustine Oghuvbu (2023:67) decries that:

The resurgence of godfatherism in Nigeria posed a serious obstacle to political dividends, socioeconomic growth, good governance and stability. One of the most alarming and destructive effects of godfatherism in Nigeria politics is the campaigning for a genuinely democratic and transparent political mechanism in which voters are expected to openly nominate someone who will rule them and serve their interests. Considering the circumstances in which godfathers imposed candidates of their choosing on the general populace, the right of appointing citizens of their choice to rule them is denied.

This is, to say the least, diametrically opposed to political principles. When those holding public offices are not accountable to voters, who in any case did not vote in their election to public office, the allegiance of such public office is inevitably designated to their godfathers, negating one of the most important characteristics of governance and democracy, which is responsible and open government Osakede and Ijimakinwa, (2016:6) therefore argued out that; “This situation is therefore harmful to good government and political order, which are based on the rule of law, due process, responsibility, and openness of public matters.” As understood, the politics of ‘Godfatherism’ is an ideological footing based on the idea that a few people with significant wealth who have the power to arbitrarily decide who gets a party ticket and also determines who wins or loses an election. It is a characteristic nature of all godfathers to rule by proxy. As a result, they use violence openly and indiscriminately against those who stand in their way, including their godsons. Borrowing a leaf from Kpodee Neemene ThankGod, (2019:58) “...ideology and leadership factors remain impediment to the practice of democracy in Nigeria.”

In his *Two Concepts of Liberty*, Isaiah Berlin (1958:1) asks; “what is the area within which the subject-a person or group of persons-is or should be left to do or be what he is able to do or be, without interference by other persons.” Here, Berlin tried to set a limit to which godfathers should interfere in their godsons’ democratic process of governance. Today, a typical of this syndrome cum scenario is the case of the former Governor of Rivers State- Ezenwo Nyesom Wike (the godfather) and the incumbent Governor Sir. Amaopusenibo Siminalayi Joseph Fubara (godson). We are witnesses to the political crisis rocking the State as the godson tries to ‘pull his head’ from the overbearing control of the godfather. Siminalayi Fubara, being the Governor now wants political liberty from his godfather to enable him deliver the dividends of democracy to the people of the State but the godfather is bends on reminding him to keep to terms of contractual agreement.

Hence, the slogan “Iyende bea, Iyende bea” which literally means, ‘balancing and honouring the agreement.’ This Igbo derived coinage and term is now gradually gaining

popularity and now becoming a household grammar in the Nigeria political lexicons. Nigerian politicians are now popularizing the term and trying to to adopt it our political dictions (grammar), today. And that the Governor must keep to their original agreement. The character of Wike as godfather to the Governor whom he anointed and handed over power to is that of a fear merchant and power broker. This attribute is typically common to all political godfather in Nigeria.

Describing the relationship between the godson and the godfather, Olawale (2005:80), notes that “In certain cases, the relationship between political godfathers and their adopted sons is transactional.” As Nigerians say, it's a case of “you rub my back, and I rub your back.” Just like every business man/woman, godfathers invest in their godsons and expect returns after winning election. This is most times accomplished by lucrative political positions, contracts, land grants, political control and power sharing with incumbents, and, if the allegations against some of them are to be taken seriously, unjustified requests for monetary backing.” Osayi (2015:6) narrated that; ‘On a regular basis, people throng in and out of their homes, running errands or requesting one favour or another’.

It is also in this same spirit of obedience to the practice of godfatherism; where Wike is being worshipped as a demi-god and served that led to not fewer than 26 members of the Rivers State House of Assembly to announced foolishly their departure from the political Party, The Peoples’ Democratic Party (PDP) that sponsored their elections, sworn on affidavit before the Court but later denied their defections. This litigation is still a matter subject before the Nigerian Court, hence, scholars are advised not to preempt into such subject matter. We has similar experiences in the case of Former Governor of Lagos who is now the President of the Federal Republic of Nigerian- Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu and one of his political godsons- Former Governor Akinwunmi Ambode. It was alleged that as the then Governor tried to deviate from taking orders from his benefactor, he was stopped and rigged out in his second bid to secure ticked as Governor of the Sate. The last to be consider here is the rift between the godfather-the continuous undue influence and interference of godfathers on godsons in governance in Nigeria, has not helped the country’s dream for a better and improved democracy. It is sad that even when Mill had earlier warned against such practice. Mill writes; “There is a limit to the legitimate interference of collective opinion with individual independence: and to find that limit, and maintain it against encroachment, is as indispensable, to a good condition of human affairs, as protection against political despotism” (1992:8). In other words, there should be limit to the extent to which the godfathers interferes in the governance of their godsons. Godsons, should be accorded political liberty and democratic license to govern their people.

This scenario continues, as the case of Adam Oshiomole of Edo State and his successor- Mr. Godwin Nogheghase Obaseki is another example of godfather-godson fallout crisis in Nigerian politics. It was revealed by Mr. Obaseki that he could no longer continue to take directives from his godfather, hence peace broke out between them, and that led to his defection and majority of his cabinet from the All Progressives Congress (APC) to the Peoples’ Democratic Party (PDP). To wrap up this development, we are constantly told and have seen in the character of Former President Olusegun Obasanjo towards all the succeeding Presidents after him. He was able to use the same influenced to installed former President Umaru Musa Yar’ dua. He tried exercising same drive of godfathers attitude on his successor if not for death that unfortunately took the man in less than two years in office. Same was extended to former

President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan and the relationship went sour as both godson and godfather went separate ways. This caused the loss of Jonathan's re-election bid to former President Muhammadu Buhari in 2015. With these, there is no gainsaying that the politics of godfatherism continued to permeates in Nigerian politics, and this has adversely stalled democratic process in the country.

Conclusion

as critically unraveled, it is drawn that the politics of godfatherism remains an impediment to Nigeria's nascent democracy. Political liberty is far-fetched in Nigeria, In as much as the so called 'godfathers' continuous exercising enormous but unholy influences over their 'political stooges' who were anointed and handpicked by them; imposed on party's members, against the popular candidate, as well as their forceful imposition on Nigerians at the general poll through electoral malpractice, democratic dividends and political liberty of these godsons remains elusive and impracticable. All of these ill-fated experiences, no doubt, deny our collective quest and call for political liberty. Therefore, as Kpodee (2024:29) earlier captured; "To grow and improve as a people, democratically, Nigerians are expected to engage in actions that are considered morally right and refrain from actions that are considered morally wrong. Today, within the Nigerian democratic experience, it is sad and a serious abysmal that morality is lacking."

It can be said therefore that godfathers –godsons approach to democratic governance in Nigeria does not allowed for political liberty; where neither the godsons could competently delivers on his campaign promises nor granted them political liberty; wherein, they can freely provide the dividends of democracy to the people. Hence, to come out of this political chain, or better still, the present democratic elusion, those saddled with leadership responsibilities; whether they came in through the back door (godfatherism) or popular choice of the people (free and fair election), must be granted full political liberty. They must be allowed by their godfathers to demonstrate their authenticity and originality, rather than being seen as inauthentic beings that can do nothing without the directive of their godfathers.

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