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Tiv Philosophical Thought and Heritage: An Outlook on the Value System of Communitarianism in the Light of Familyhood and Kinship

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Abstract

Family and indeed familyhood is very germane to the Tiv people of Central Nigeria just like the people of other cultures. As such, family is regarded as an indispensable, anchorage and integral part of Tiv ontology. This fundamental consideration of familyhood and kinship makes it possible to practice and demonstrate the Tiv communitarian heritage value of *ya na anigbian* (eat and give your brother or kin). The essay advocates for a deconstruction and reconstruction of the ambivalences and the inimical Tiv socio-cultural heritage resource of familyhood and kinship as being practiced today since they undermine the individual and the general societal development and rather mounts unnecessary financial and psychological pressures on the individual who assumes the responsibility of living by such inherited values. To effectively and meaningfully deconstruct and reconstruct the Tiv indigenous philosophical thought and heritage resource as a response to the contemporary global socio-economic exigencies and holistic development, the essay makes a case against early marriage while recommending birth control, education of the Tiv youths and planning, complemented with hard work. The essay employs philosophical analysis on the background of the concrete situation of Tiv individuals compelled to adopt familyhood and kinship.

Keywords: Tiv Philosophy; Thought; Heritage; Value System; Familyhood; Kinship; *Ya Na Anigbian* (Communitarianism)

1. Introduction

Normal human beings usually associate with one another for different reasons. One of the factors prompting the association of humans on a very general scale is based on ethnic consciousness. People

of same ethnicity share same worldview hence their cultural values become the hallmark of their identity. The Tiv people of central Nigeria besides being sociable are fond of the circle of their kin and family especially as their value system dictates the imperative of such a relationship. The companionship is immediately demonstrated in the Tiv socio-cultural institutions like familyhood and kinship which are genealogically defined. This is in alignment with Aristotle's contention that 'except for the gods and the beasts man is a social animal and therefore, needs the company of other men. The Tiv conduct and activities as well as belief system are all predicated on the inherited value system of '*ya na anigbian*'. This literally translates as 'eat and give your brother or kin'. This to the Tiv people informs the indigenous heritage resource system of communitarian existence that is *ya na anigbian*. *Ya na anigbian* is a heritage resource whereby the Tiv people exhume and apply their values of social being. It is a depiction of the indigenous philosophical thought of the Tiv people. Thus traditionally, the Tiv people adopted the value system of communitarian living. That is, living a life of communalized-relatedness where a brother/sister lives for another brother/sister, and family lives for another family in the conduct of their social and spiritual being. In spite of their seeming difference, the terms communitarian and communal, for convenience, are taken to mean one and the same thing here. For instance, Ike Odimegwu (2008, 119) insightfully captures the import of communion of a people especially the Africans saying: 'The communion of persons involves the common ownership of material property such as land, but it is essentially a spiritual unity of being, a fundamental belonging to a common spirit, shared ideals, system of values as well as a mutual belonging to one another'. The Tiv accordingly, in their existential ontology, value a collective way of living morally, physically and spiritually together. This is the mood of the Tiv existence. As E. A. Ruch and K. C. Anyanwu (1981, 381) explain, 'Communalism is an intense psychological and vital experience where the individual is face to face with a reality that goes beyond the physical world'.

Extending this line of thought, Odimegwu (2008, 120) stresses that 'communalism in question is essentially a spiritual communion which makes the individuality of each person to be, at the same time, an emphatic involvement in the personality of the other and of all the community'. This constitutes a reality to the Tiv people such that the people sustain an inseparable relationship with this belief and perpetually related to it. *Ya na anigbian* as anchored on the Tiv worldview expresses a web-like relationship of all Tiv people such that a Tiv person cannot talk of being in isolation of others. The Tiv people have entrenched values system based on the belief that such values are intrinsically good and therefore final values in themselves. In addition, the Tiv people are vehement on insisting that such values would catapult them to attaining further goods or desirable things in the life of the individual(s) and the society at large. The consequence of this thought system to them is that the Tiv society would become more cohesive and operate based on the fundamental tenets of *ya na anigbian*. The heritage resource of *ya na anigbian* as a value system that promotes the foundational structure of the Tiv society as a communalized-relatedness society is nourished by familyhood and kinship. In other words, the attraction and adoption of the communalistic existence is informed from the belief that the Tiv people are one people and therefore, there is a compelling need to foster this homogeneity by advancing a thought system that would embrace the Tiv people in oneness holistically.

Communitarian system of living constitutes an integral value to the Tiv people. They regard it as a dependable socio-cultural heritage which confers uniqueness on them as a people. The Tiv people's belief in and reliance on communitarianism as being indispensable to their ontology would be explained shortly. Indeed, it is on this premise that the essay critically examines the ideals of the Tiv heritage resource and philosophy of communitarianism and its consequences. More so, the write up, x-rays the impact of the value system of communalistic acts especially on the benefactor making both the moral and financial contributions. In other words, the work takes a cursory look at the dictates of the Tiv heritage resource towards the sustenance of oneness in the Tiv society which aims

at upholding the inherent harmony in the Tiv worldview and the question of the beneficiary(ies) of the value system. It accordingly, builds on the background of the communal living to argue that communitarianism which finds praxis in familyhood and kinship constitutes inherent ambivalences when evaluated from the prevailing national and global socio-economic challenges in relation to the conduct of most beneficiaries of the value system.

In view of the foregoing, the Tiv heritage resource system without much ado beckons for some interrogations. The following questions shall serve as guide to this investigation: Is the Tiv heritage resource of preserving familyhood and kinship via communal living sacrosanct? Are there checks and balances in the system? Do familyhood and kinship as nurtured by communitarianism satisfy the general thinking of the Tiv people in the contemporary times? In other words, is familyhood and kinship equitably beneficial to all Tiv people (benefactor and beneficiary)? Are there inherent ambivalences in the system? How possible is it to resist this heritage? Are the consequences of liberating oneself so severe that one is better off staying put in this system? What if an individual escapes to the city to avoid the effect of familyhood influences?

The contemporary practical human existential condition of the Tiv people which anchorage is on communalistic ontology cannot be isolated as it underpins their justice system and socio-economic life paradoxically. The contemporary socio-economic life of the Tiv is an open manifestation of comprehensible difficulties arising from the heritage resource of communitarianism which finds illustration in *ya na anigbian*. Despite the plain difficulties, the Tiv value system of *ya na anigbian* with its attendant maze remains invaluable especially to the beneficiaries. To some Tiv people the practice of familyhood and kinship is sacrosanct even in the contemporary times. Those who argue in this manner maintain that it is a practice that had been bestowed on the Tiv people by the Tiv ancestors and therefore, it must be jealously protected. John W.T. Gbor (2006, 47), in his book: *The Concept of Culture and Tiv Cultural Values* remarks that “it is the responsibility of the practitioners of the culture to make the necessary adjustments to ensure that Tiv culture and its values are not obliterated on the face of the earth”. Gbor is here, like others scholars, making a strong case for the wholesale preservation of Tiv values which includes the *ya na anigbian* heritage.

2. Tiv Philosophical Thought and Heritage: An Exposé of the Tiv Worldview

It suffices to state unequivocally from the outset that the Tiv value system of communitarianism is an inextricable aspects of the Tiv worldview. Worldview is regarded as the broad mirror which captures the picture of the world of a people and the position of everything in it, inclusive of man, whose responsibility it is to interpret this broad picture. However, worldview is seen to be either communal or philosophical. According to Olusegun Oladipo (1993, 3), ‘in the communal sense, “worldview is unconscious and non-rational”’. This is because worldview is taken as being the product of the collective or common experience which is informed by the people’s interaction with themselves, among themselves and nature. This worldview as prompted by the empirical conditions of life and experience Oladipo (1993, 3) states is ‘handed down from generation to generation and is acquired by the subjects via the process of socialization’. What follows is that worldview in the communal sense is validated by absolute reliance on tradition and authority. Though, largely unconscious and non-rational, communal worldview prompts or stimulates action as it provides the intellectual framework within which things or phenomena are perceived, examined and transformed. ‘Philosophical worldview’ on the other hand which is the negation of communal worldview Oladipo (1993, 3) says ‘it is acquired consciously or reflectively and its method of validation is usually theoretical’.

Oladipo (1993, 3) adds that ‘though the philosophical worldview may disclose some categories of communal worldview, it reveals them consciously, conceptually and logically’. This situation calls for a method of identifying certain aspects of the communal worldview to be eliminated and the ones to be retained in the new worldview instituted by philosophical thinking. This process does

not only provide a consequential platform for perceiving, interpreting and changing the world but additionally, it serves as a mode of reflection on the intellectual foundations of the value systems of the society. Accordingly, Oladipo (1993, 3) declares that ‘philosophical worldview is both systematic and prognostic’. He maintains (1993, 3) that ‘in its systematic sense, it attempts to provide a definite categorical scheme within which various components of values and culture and their interconnections can be interpreted’. He further (1993, 3–4) explains that ‘when philosophical worldview is prognostic, it offers society or mankind some alternatives to its current mode of being’. Thus, the examination of the Tiv indigenous philosophical thought system and heritage resource is solidly predicated of the foregoing thinking. The prognostic function of philosophy is taken as a critical theory for x-raying the Tiv worldview in order to purge it of the inherent inadequacies leading to mazes. The Tiv worldview without any equivocation, is communal. It is imperative to reconstruct this Tiv idolized or revered thought in line with the contemporary times. Thus, the interrogation of the Tiv worldview is to ascertain if a new understanding could be added to the prevailing conception of the philosophy of *ya na anigbian*.

By and large, the Tiv worldview has a very close affinity with the broad African worldview. Zaato Nor (Ihuah 2010, 135) avers that ‘The Tiv people like the Bantus entertain a worldview that everything that exists is a life-force. These life-forces or spirits... do not exist in isolation. Though hierarchically arranged, the life-forces interrelate and interpenetrate other life-forces on the rung of the ladder based on their vital power or force’. Even though these life-forces intermingle, they do not cause friction, disharmony or disaffection. What this means is that a mutual co-existence prevails among the existing things or forces leading to the view that African worldview is one of extraordinary harmony. It is this harmony or equilibrium inspired by physical and spiritual relatedness that the Tiv man relishes and cherishes and accordingly, jealously guides his value system of *ya na anigbian*.

As it is conventional with all systems and institutions, there are inherent tenets, principles, norms and indeed, values seen and unseen that make such systems what they are, without which such a system or institution will not be regarded as being such. Familyhood and kinship meaning the same thing in the Tiv context; on principle they (familyhood and kinship) have to do with descent, genealogical relationship or marital relationship whereby the in-laws become extended family members. There is however, a much more expanded understanding of familyhood and kinship in the Tiv context. The Tiv people numbering more than four million based on the 2009 National Census regard themselves as one person because they are all sons and daughters of their forebears called Tiv and more so, they speak Tiv language. Thus, there is Tiv as an ethnic nationality and Tiv as a language spoken by the sons and daughters of Tiv. Tiv as the progenitor of the Tiv people handed down the institutions of familyhood and kinship to his offspring hence they have to live in accordance with the philosophy of communitarianism as a consolidation of the essence of heritage received. To reiterate, it is this intertwined relationship that anchors the institution of familyhood and kinship. Familyhood and kinship knit together a feeling of fraternity physically (socially, economically and materially), morally, psychologically and spiritually arising from the overbearing conviction that the Tiv people are one and must jealously guide and preserve their common heritage. Anthony Giddens (1991, 384) patently submits that, ‘a family is a group of persons directly linked by kin connections while kinship ties are connections between individuals, established either through marriage, or through the lines of descent that connect blood relatives (fathers, mothers, other offsprings, grandparents, etc)’. In other words, familyhood or kinship is a relationship that is brought about between individuals based on lineage. Familyhood as an institution is a further demonstration of the Tiv worldview as it arose from the metaphysical as well as ontological thinking of the Tiv people that their existence must be predicated on harmony of all the existing “forces” (everything there is; animate and inanimate beings) otherwise there will be an infringement on their worldview.

Familyhood in Tiv culture as a heritage resource which gave rise to a peculiar communalistic philosophical thought of *ya na anigbian* finds expression and application in the Tiv man's concrete existence. Family members do often solicit for assistance from extended relatives for farm work like weeding, planting, harvesting and the likes. No monetary charges are demanded for such assistances rendered. The import of this is that even an affluent member of the family too gets some benefits from the family members that are indigent. Thus, the communalistic practice largely spreads benefits across family members; some are assisted through physical labour, some receive, apart from cash donations, assets and properties from their benefactor relations. This consideration emanates from the positive consideration of familyhood.

However, *ya na anigbian* is not restricted to sharing of material wealth, food and edible items but extends to the spiritual relatedness where an individual could due to kinship ties, as may thus far be appreciated, positively affect the individual(s). The Tiv worldview as an intertwined one also inheres the aspect that is negatively demonstrated and experienced. An individual could be, by means of malevolent witchcraft, be harmed by his/her kinsman/woman. This aspect shall be given elaborated shortly.

3. Tiv Philosophical Thought about Familyhood and Kinship Heritage Resource

Unlike the conception of familyhood and kinship in the Western societies as illustrated by Giddens which restricts relationship to brothers and sisters, that is, strictly by immediate blood ties, the contrary is the ideal in the African and Tiv contexts in particular. J. T. Erumevba (1985, 195) reviews this understanding stating that 'within the extended family system of the African society, family kinship would literally extend to uncles, aunts, cousins, nephews, and nieces'. Erumevba (1985) stresses that to the African in his/her indigenous set-up, there is no loss of meaning when he/she refers to his/her uncle as a "brother" or to his/her aunty as a "sister". For sure, the use of the word uncle and aunty to imply brother and sister, respectively will create confusion in the Western world. Largely, familyhood and kinship to the Tiv could be seen as a fraternal relationship that is found or established in the community; it seeks out for what is desirable, what will give a sense of belonging to members (brotherhood), instill harmony and promote oneness/unity physically and spiritually among other ideals. In a reinforcement of this view, Erumevba (1985, 195) states that '...kinship ... in its ideal manifestation, the fact of common kinship inspires a feeling of oneness and belonging that transcends such contingencies as personal qualities, social status, religion, race etc'. For instance, to allow a sense of oneness and belongingness to manifest, it is not morally or legally wrong in the indigenous Tiv social setting for an individual to help his/herself by harvesting from someone else's farm to feed the self especially when such an individual is in transit and becomes weary along the way. Such an individual takes what he/she can consume on the spot without wasting it. While he/she may be processing the harvested foodstuff to eat, and in a situation the farm owner turns up, he/she (the farmer owner) would exchange pleasantries with his/her 'guest' he/she met on the farm without raising an eyebrow based on the conviction that he/she is a kinsman/kinswoman. Though this remains the practice, the communalistic orientation forbids individuals who would adopt it as an avenue to lazy away and then go to feed on other people's farms or crops. As a matter of fact, the Tiv value system of communitarianism as predicated of justice, spirituality and morality, expects all individuals to be hard working especially working very hard on their farm in order to have enough to feed the immediate family and extended family members when the need arises. In an event any family member records poor harvest or harvest losses, the other members would rally round such a distressed family member by donating food and even seedlings to him/her to enable him/her farm in the next farming season. In yet another illustration of Tiv communalistic living, the indigenous or traditional homes normally sit in the open to eat in a group. Eating in the open and not inside the hut is an open invitation to any passerby to join in the eating of the meal served. In another illustration, the Tiv people being largely agrarian farmers would readily take their guest to the farm

by giving him a hoe or other farming implements to till the land or cultivate crops even as a guest. This however, depends on the season; there is a period for tilling, planting/cultivating and harvesting, etc. These and many more are typical of the Tiv based on the communalistic heritage belief. The Tiv people in their indigenous thought system adopted communal way of living to strengthen and fortify the institutions of familyhood and kinship.

Pantaleon Iroegbu (1996, 47) in the book: *The Kpim of Politics Communalism: Toward Justice in Africa* maintains that communalism is 'a theory of just society in which the community is the foundation of the political life ...' To the Tiv people, communalism transcends political life to offering the ontologico-metaphysical foundation for defining the social, economic and religious life of the Tiv generally. Iroegbu (1996, 47) adds that 'communalism is a theory of justice for a particular type of society'. This addendum by Iroegbu appears woolly and the question is; does this imply that once a particular society adopts a particular theory of justice that has become communalism or communitarianism in nature? The deafening answer here is no. Iroegbu (1996, 51) himself is conscious of this hence he makes some clarifications saying; 'In communalism, the individual is viewed as being in community and shares certain basic values, history and tradition with the other members: both constitutively and operationally...' This aptly describes the situation of the Tiv individual in the community and in the immediate family. Furthermore, Iroegbu (1996, 50) succinctly notes this scenario of relatedness saying 'The private good is defined in the communal good. ... the private good is always related to, and is in part constrained by, and determined by the communal good'. The import of this consciousness is that an individual's conviction or belief must not undermine the feeling of oneness and sense of the collective. The Tiv in their unadulterated belief express unalloyed conviction about the values of oneness and belongingness as dictated by *ya na anigbian*. Thus, concerned with harmonious co-existence of life-forces, the Tiv man himself as a life-force, does not deliberately do anything to dislocate the enshrined coherence. Zaato Nor (2007, 236) explains this saying that 'the Tiv man is a life-force who must relate and interrelate with other life-forces. He is also a member of a family, clan, community (society) and the universe'. Nor stresses that to the Tiv therefore, the interpenetrating relationship is a physical, moral and spiritual responsibility to promote the ontological equilibrium in the society through the sustenance of the collectivist/communal living that is embedded in familyhood. This macro relationship as contained in the larger society is equally demanded at the micro level of familyhood relationships. The implication of this is that members of a particular family lineage must necessarily, as life-forces, sustain the existing congruence which is promoted by upholding the socio-cultural values, beliefs, integrity as well as prophecies, if any, that are associated with the family.

Indeed, the communalistic living of families is regarded as a norm which is preserved and subsequently bequeathed on future generations of such a lineage as its heritage. The essence of *ya na anigbian* is to demonstrate the Tiv tradition of sharing and benefiting from what an individual owns with his/her family members and extended relations. This is the point at which certain individuals from a family with the where-withal are put to task in accordance with the inherited values of *ya na anigbian* which are to a large extent dictatorial and imposing in character.

No doubt, the different assistances and trainings given to, and indeed, provisions made to the indigent members of particular families by their kin(s) have gone a long way in socially and economically transforming the lives of such benefiting individuals and the larger family. On the basis of this, one could unequivocally say that the familyhood/kinship communalistic heritage as practiced must be cherished and preserved. However, there is more to this when further consideration is made of the institutions of familyhood/kinship. What becomes clearly manifest is a situation of labyrinth in the Tiv heritage resource of *ya na anigbian*.

4. Some Mazes in the Tiv Socio-Cultural Value Systems of *Ya Na Anighbian*

Values are regarded as things or items or norms, attitudes and even beliefs that are taken as having some worth. It also means anything that is highly cherished or held in high esteem by an individual, group or system/institution because it is good on its own or it enhances the goodness of another thing. 'Value' according to G. O. Ozumba (2004, 4), in an echo of William Frankena, is 'something that is desirable either for its own sake or for the sake of other ends which it will aid in actualizing'. In another submission, Zaato Nor (2007, 163) defines value as 'the inherent good quality in anything or quality that is capable of producing or achieving a desired effect or good result... it is both a means to attaining economic or pleasure benefit and/or end in itself that is economic or pleasure benefit'. Thus, the Tiv communalistic value system as earlier acknowledged is indeed invaluable in the Tiv society. However, it is essential to point out the inherent socio-economic practices in the system that are inimical and indeed, threaten the very philosophy of Tiv communal living. Predicated on the imperative to protect the ingrained equilibrium of the life-forces; no matter how reckless or irresponsible a particular member of a family lineage is, if such an individual bears children, irrespective of the number, the family member with the where-withal would be subjected to intense pressure by his/her kin to take up the responsibility of providing for the children and wife or wives of his/her reckless/irresponsible relative. The pressure is fiercer from the family lineage and community especially when such an individual dies and leaves behind a family. It suffices to make this clarification that the pressure that is usually mounted is not forceful but rather subtle and persistent. An individual under pressure to address some family issues would always receive different emissaries with the message on a family issue until he/she succumbs. As a matter of fact, appeals are often directed to his/her emotions and not reason in order to achieve their aim of ensuring that a benefactor member of the family complies with *ya na anighbian* philosophy as a linchpin of the Tiv heritage resource. There are situations where a family member acts so irresponsibly leading to his/her abandoning school, refusing to learn a trade, avoid work on the farm but rather marry and produce many children. This unfortunate situation is often not taken up with the culprit by members of the family. Some would simply conclude that children are gifts from God. Thus, they must be accepted as they come. The point being made here is that the Tiv communal value system of *ya na anighbian* appears to encourage the beneficiary to do anything but restrains the benefactor from not providing for the beneficiary. The question at this juncture is: what is the value of the Tiv communalistic heritage when considered from the foregoing scenario? Does it mean the idea is to frustrate the bread winner or the one that works hard and is responsible? It is arising from these considerations and ambivalences that *ya na anighbian* cannot be sacrosanct since it does not satisfy the broad thinking of the Tiv especially in the contemporary times. Thus, this work is calling for a deconstruction of the prevailing familyhood system.

5. Metaphysico-Ontological View of Tiv Familyhood and Kinship Lineage Systems Under the Prism of Witchcraft

Lineage refers to ancestry of an individual or individuals. In other words, lineage is regarded as the ancestral roots of an individual as it is traceable through his/her descendants. Lineage as such is the basis of familyhood or kinship in Tiv culture. The Tiv people have usually traced their lineage to the Tiv as their progenitor. However the foundation of family lineage in the Tiv context is seen from both the patrilineage and the matrilineage. Patrilineage is traced to or identifies ones lineage or blood ties through ones father and his relations while matrilineage is the location or identification of family ties through ones mother and her relations. All these are reduced to kinship or familyhood. Shagbaor F. Wegh (2003, 41) identifies three kinds of kinship among the Tiv. These include: 'blood kinship (consanguinity), kinship by marriage (affinity) and secondary kinship'. It is the first two that have link to blood ties. Consequently, kinship from these two perspectives is very significant to the Tiv. As a matter of fact, it is members of the family from those lineages that are by

the Tiv value system of *ya na anigbian*, immediate beneficiaries from any benefactor in their lineage. These kinsmen/kinwomen (either side) are important to their benefactor since they are like his/her custodians. If he/she has any issues with any side, the other kinsmen would intervene to resolve it. Thus, an individual's recognition of his/her lineage and the willingness to do their bidding based on the Tiv socio-cultural value system of *ya na anigbian* is a kind of insurance or security against the unknown and vice versa. An affluent member of the family and kinship who promptly responds positively to the demands of his/her kinsmen/kinwomen is always favoured by his/her people.

On the other hand, the one that does not take his/her kinsmen/kinwomen into consideration may not find favour before them. Such an individual becomes vulnerable to the wrath of the members of his/her family and kinship. The ire is often expressed through the medium of witchcraft. As a matter of fact, in most of the Tiv man's concrete existence, the belief of witchcraft looms large. It is in view of this that some people even though find the *ya na anigbian* practice despicable, they are all the same compelled to uphold the practice to avoid the fate of being visited with witchcraft. How is witchcraft as metaphysical and ontological concept viewed by the Tiv individual in respect to Tiv worldview?

5.1 Witchcraft

The concept of witchcraft attracts a lot of views from both African and European scholars. Some scholars affirmed the existence of witches and the act of witchcraft while others deny it all together. The arguments for the nonexistence of witchcraft are predicated on inadequate scientific proof of the existence of witchcraft as being real. In other words, the proponents of the nonexistence of witches argue that witchcraft cannot be subjected to observational enquiry, that is, observable using human senses of perception. Like the logical positivists, the proponents of the nonexistence of witches conclude that anything that cannot be practically tested or empirically observed does not exist. This argument may be logical but it is not sound; it like saying things are not real or unreal because they have not been practically demonstrated or undemonstrated. Witchcraft to the African according Sophie B. Oluwole (1992, 5) '... has metaphysical reality... it has a threatening reality, so much so that they project it to the level of reality as 'actual' or true'. It is consequent upon the understanding of witchcraft as a metaphysical reality that the advocates of the reality of witches and witchcraft anchor their claims. Proponents of the existence and reality of witchcraft regard it as a mysterious force or power possessed by an individual which he/she uses freely to achieve his/her aim which may be to settle scores, harm or cause pains to an individual. Witchcraft could be applied to the extreme of causing the death of someone or causing him/her a misfortune that may permanently affect his/her life. To the witch, the victim cannot escape the effect of witchcraft practice no matter the distance one may be staying from the would-be attacker. In other words, it is impossible to escape from the dictates of the witch/witches as he/she or they have the powers of getting at their victim irrespective of the distance in-between.

Giving an account of the origin of the belief and the practice of witchcraft, John S. Mbiti (1969, 194) maintains that 'Every African who has grown in the traditional environment will, no doubt, know something about this magical power which often is experienced, or manifests itself, in the form of magic, divination,... and mysterious phenomena that seem to defy even immediate scientific explanation'. In her contribution, Oluwole (1992, 2) says that 'witchcraft is usually regarded as peculiar power by virtue of which some people perform actions which the ordinary man cannot normally perform'. Continuing, Oluwole stresses (1992, 2) that 'The most unique and mysterious characteristic of this power is the ability of the witch to affect her victims, or perform actions, without any physical contact and using no medicine'. Nevertheless, witchcraft is classified into two; malevolent and benevolent witchcrafts. Malevolent witchcraft which is negative in intent is employed or applied strictly for destructive or inimical purposes while the benevolent one which is inclined towards what is positive, is used for good and rewarding acts which benefit individuals

and bring about development in the lives of members of the family. It is important to mention here that the positive application of witchcraft is a very rare occurrence in Tiv society now unlike the malevolent aspect. The reason for this is simple; the desire to destroy out of petty jealousy is higher and more so, the perpetrators of malevolent witchcraft are mostly lazy people who choose to be irresponsible. In fact, to them the possession of witchcraft is the only weapon they need to possess in order to be recognized in the community. Witchcraft powers may be inherent in an individual or may be acquired from people who possess it.

Accordingly, the conception, understanding and practice of witchcraft within the Tiv family and kinship provokes some trepidation in the life of the Tiv individual especially the individual not disposed to acquiring witchcraft or that does not possess it. The individual who possess witchcraft feels gargantuan in his/her existence as he/she looks down on people he/she feels he/she could easily hew. The apprehension caused in life of individuals by the conduct of witches/wizards is terrifying. This is because the possessor of witchcraft who intends to cause death or misfortune to his/her kinsman/kinswoman does not necessarily need to pay him/her a physical visit to unleash his/her witchcraft powers (they sometimes do). The implication of this is that family members cannot escape the powers of their fellow family members who are witches/wizards because they are ever present and ever seen anyone who is their target such that to relocate to the city, a distant land or country is no solution to their affecting a particular individual. Family members who are economically or financially better-off are very often the target of witches/wizards based on the belief that 'the well-off members of the family are enjoying while the indigent ones who mostly embrace witchcraft/wizardry are not'.

However, the unleashing of witchcraft on the affluent members the family members appears to have received a tacit approval from the Tiv worldview. The worldview maintains that all existing things are life-forces which interrelate and influence each other. That is why an individual could be affected without any physical contact with a witch/wizard. Both animate and inanimate objects are employed to execute witchcraft missions. The victim's spirit is harmed using spiritual means; he/she may be inflicted with a strange ailment which may torment him/her till death. A spell could be cast on an individual to become involved in an accident. To simply explain, an individual is known to have been bewitched when terrible things happen mysteriously to him/her. There are instances where one is suddenly sacked from his/her job for no just reason. Sometimes one stagnates in his place of work despite working hard. In a situation where an individual consistently records poor harvest, death of a promising child, waywardness of one's children, bad luck and other unpalatable happenings, etc such a victim is described as being under the attack of witches/wizards.

As sketched above, the Tiv people recognize patrilineage and matrilineage as kinships that are borne out of blood kinship. These two primitive sub-institutions of kinship to some extent checkmate the practice of witchcraft attack on the part of their kin. The kinsmen from these lineages would normally play a very critical role in the life of an individual in an event he/she is attacked by witchcraft from either sides. It had been earlier pointed out that an individual's relationship in terms being close to these kinsmen and identifying with them or not identifying with them at their point of need, has a lot of consequences. In a situation where one is bewitched from the patrilineal side, the kinsmen from the matrilineal side would wade into the issue to ensure that their son/daughter does not die from the attack. The situation is vice versa when the attack is masterminded from the matrilineal side. It is still the same measure that is adopted when an ordinary member of the community carries out a bewitching act against another individual. The concerned members of the family would engage the services of the diviner to ascertain what may have happened to their kinsman/kinswoman. Once the problem is identified, spiritual methods are employed to ward off the problem facing such an individual. It is pertinent to mention that the visitation of a witch/wizard is usually heralded by some strange signs like one's clothes eaten up by rodents even when such clothes are not exposed to rodents, mysterious disappearance of an individual's items like money,

clothes, jewelries etc even when he/she lives alone, visitation of nocturnal birds/animals to an individual in the day time and many other odd happenings. If these facts are taken to a diviner, he/she consults and tells the family how to handle the impending doom. However, the disclosure of imminent danger by the diviner cannot halt the outcome. There are some cases where in spite of the uncovering of the likely doom, it would still take place and concerned lineage would have nothing to do. It may probably, pull out members of the deceased (in case of death) from patrilineal kin to settle somewhere else until further reconciliations are carried out.

6. Deconstruction of the Practice of Tiv Heritage Resource of Familyhood and Kinship

As earlier observed, the Tiv familyhood where it has been judiciously applied and utilized, it produces immense benefits for all. It culminates into the development of the lineage as well as the larger society. Nevertheless, it is obvious thus far that the Tiv kinship heritage is inimical to the benefactor. Most often, individuals are pressurized to the extent of sacrificing the welfare of their nuclear families in a bid to satisfy the expectations of the extended family members. Some individuals have collected loans to settle financial matters regarding their kin leading them to perpetual indebtedness in addition to being deprived of personal happiness and development of their selves and immediate families. The Tiv communalistic value system of *ya na anigbian* desperately needs to be purged of ambivalences to enable it perform the critical role of giving the Tiv the sense of collective existence and belongingness. The thinking that members of the family owe the others especially the irresponsible ones the obligation of providing for them cannot foster development in the familyhood and kinship. Certain individuals would purposely idle away based on the conviction that they have someone in the family that takes responsibility for their needs. Following from this, the idea of familyhood and kinship as nurtured by the Tiv communal ontology is unsatisfactory as it appears to encourage idleness, indolence and consequently, mount financial pressure on the responsible family member desirous of upholding the virtues of *ya na anigbian*.

Besides, some of these beneficiaries being irresponsible, even when a member of the family sacrifices his/her comfort to provide for them financially, they would simply squander such resources on trivialities and remain worst off, thus, providing an opportunity for the emissaries to continue to mount pressure on the benefactor. Thus, familyhood and kinship do not guarantee equitable benefits to all members. Some members of certain families had acquired witchcraft to settle scores with their kin by causing their death or misfortunes in their lives based on the belief they are supposed to benefit from their earnings or resources. The consequences of this attitude as it inheres in the Tiv heritage resource system of familyhood blatantly project the obvious difficulties facing the Tiv in his indigenous heritage of *ya na anigbian*. The individual by being in community and partaking in the societal values more or less becomes a slave of tradition culminating into his being a helpless victim of communal dictates.

By and large, taking into cognizance the economic crunch in the country and the world at large, it is quite unjustifiable, for instance, for benefactors, especially meager salary earners to continue to spend their hard earned monies on people who are either lazy, reckless, do not plan and are irresponsible. Similarly, hard working farmers cannot be subjected to donating their farm produce to their lazy kin who despise hard work but would prefer to be fed by others. It is on this note that it becomes imperative to interrogate the Tiv communalistic value system in order to reform it for optimum result. The thinking which brands *ya na anigbian* as sacrosanct calls for urgent overhaul in order to purge it the inherent labyrinth. For instance, those who practice malevolent witchcraft carry out their acts with impunity. Even if they are cautioned there is no commensurate punishment to deter others.

The administration of the traditional Tiv society is characteristic of gerontocratic system of rule; the elders based on the lineage preside over the general affairs of the kinship. However, one may be very young but may have an opportunity to participate in the administration if he has no elder in

the immediate lineage to represent the lineage. Following this traditional arrangement, the elders and advocates of *ya na anigbian* as custodians of traditional values have to scrutinize the practice in view of the current comprehensible ontological realities of the Tiv man. To assist humanity in any way is a common virtue however, for one to strategically place him/herself to be assisted especially financially and materially is unacceptable. Anyone desirous of help should be doing something that is meaningful towards adding value to such an individual's life. If such an individual calls for assistance, one should be willing to extend a helping hand. The custodians should as well sensitize the youths on the imperativeness of hard work and industriousness and shone laziness. The Tiv being agrarian people provides an opportunity for the youths and other groups to cultivate the land and cater for their well-being. The custodians also have to inculcate the culture of family planning in the lives of people of child-bearing age to limit the number of children. The idea of acquiring witchcraft to bewitch and destroy should be mercilessly dealt with to uproot the practice out of Tiv land. The loafers should be plainly told that they should forget the practice of *ya na anigbian* if they choose to perpetuate their lifestyle of idling away but bearing legions of children for other people to cater for. Parents of young maidens should also help in orientating their wards on the consequences of early marriage. The Tiv communal worldview which is unconscious and non-rational had to be reformed to a philosophical one which is prognostic and rational. This involves the benefactors who would intimate the elders, Chiefs and Kings on their experiences so as to restructure the practice of *ya na anigbian*. Based on this, new ways of interpreting Tiv reality would emerge.

7. Conclusion

The essay argued pointing out that the Tiv people out of the concern for all the lineage of the larger family, evolved a robust philosophy of *ya na anigbian*. However, in the prevailing circumstances where certain members of a family have chosen to be irresponsible and even gone as far as perpetrating destructive and inimical acts against other members, the communalistic value system has been reduced to a phenomenon of ambivalence. The benefactors have been making painful sacrifices in order to keep the institution alive but clearly, the beneficiaries seemed to be frustrating it all together. To mitigate the responsibility placed on the benefactor kin, the ideals of the Tiv communalistic thought could be refined by calling on elders in the family lineages to employ the same zeal and persistence used when pleading for a beneficiary, to persuade and convince their kin to embrace hard work, shun early marriage and adequately plan their families. Besides, their kin should also not abandon school while the ones with children must see it as an obligation on their part to send them to school and fend for them. Besides, the Tiv people particularly the youths should engage themselves in meaningful activities in order to reduce the stress on other family members. The phenomenon of family members acquiring witchcraft to destroy their kin must be heavily sanctioned to discourage others. The custodians in the contemporary times include Chiefs and Kings who are educated and as such, they could help in re-interpreting the Tiv heritage resource in view of the lopsided concept of *ya na anigbian*.

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