



Bringing our Cultures Home:
**FESTSCHRIFT FOR
BADE AJAYI AT 70**

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YORUBÁ PROVERBS AND MORALITY (*ÌWÀ ỌMỌLÚÀBÍ*): THE PAST, PRESENT AND THE FUTURE

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Abstract:

In traditional Yorùbá society, there are strong moral codes that prescribe acceptable standard of right or wrong. The moral codes equip the Yorùbá person with the ability to resist evil and behave well. At present, "ọmọlúàbí" standard is almost collapsed; the level of moral decadence is high due to a number of factors. This paper examines the role of Yorùbá proverbs in Yorùbá moral education (ẹkọ ìwà ọmọlúàbí) in the past, present and possibly the future. It is aimed at identifying why Yorùbá proverbs are no longer recognized as effective means of moral training, its effects on the society and the way out of the mess. The methodology is descriptive. It includes library research and internet browsing. The study adopts the sociological theory as postulated by Carl Marx and Fredrick Engel. This is to allow for a clear understanding of how the Yorùbá moral values are fast being swallowed by foreign ideals. Our focus is the role of Yorùbá proverbs in inculcating the Yorùbá moral values in the past, present and future. The paper concludes by suggesting ways forward.

Key words: proverbs, morality, *Ọmọlúàbí*, sociological theory

Introduction

Every society has its own codes of conduct, which is supposed to guide the moral behaviour of all members of the society. This may differ from one society to another. Nevertheless, one cannot deny the existence of universal morals such as respect for elders, hard work and anybody who fails to behave ideally is not accorded any respect. Failure to do the ideal thing is usually met with protest and the result is chaos, anarchy, killings, maltreatment and so on.

'Morality' is sometimes referred to as "ethics" or sometimes as "moral philosophy" in relation to generally accepted principles or customs of the society. In so far as the moral beliefs and practices which constitute the whole body of ethical philosophy are conditioned by the culture or economic conditions of the relevant society, it is right to say that every culture has developed an ethics of its own.

Looking at it from the Post-colonial Yorùbá discourse, there are disturbing evidences of serious moral decadence in the contemporary Yorùbá society. There is a negative change in the people's attitude towards the observation and preservation of moral values which has precipitated a downward degeneration of such values, hitherto esteemed.

The importance of morality (*ìwà ọmọlúàbí*) to the Yorùbá people of Nigeria as the major component of its world view driven by moral philosophy cannot be overemphasized. Morality to the Yorùbá simply means "*ìwà*" hence; they refer to good

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morals as “*ìwà rere*” and bad morals as “*ìwà búburú*”. To them, the good or bad nature of a person is often determined by his or her closeness to or departure from “*ìwà rere*”. (Abimbóla 1975:394) clarifies this point when he writes that:

A man's “*ìwà*” can be used to characterize his life, especially in ethical terms.....“*ìwà* is regarded by the Yorùbá as one of the very aims of human existence. This is why the Yorùbá regard “*ìwà pẹ̀lẹ̀*” as the most important of all moral values.

“*Ọmọ́lúàbí*” is the accumulation of a lot of training and learning that results in the in-built shock-proof ability to resist evil. The concept of “*ọmọ́lúàbí*” is vital for the sustained welfare and development of Yorùbá and encompasses the moral values listed in the later part of this paper.

Before the coming of the Europeans, Yorùbá people had their accepted ways of behaviour on which the foundation of the Yorùbá indigenous system of education rested. Awóniyi (1978:2), opines that “the philosophy of Yorùbá indigenous education system is enshrined in the concept of “*ọmọ́lúàbí*”, the end-product of education”. A person with good character is called “*ọmọ́lúàbí*” while the opposite is called “*ọmọ́langidí*”, literally meaning a “good-for-nothing” child and such a person is not given recognition in the society.

To the Yorùbá people, good morals are cherished and imbibed from youth. They inculcate in the child, the act of behaving uprightly and decently through their oral literature such as folk stories, taboos, myths and legends, proverbs, drama and theatre, ifá literary corpus to mention a few. This paper examines the role of proverbs in the training of good character in the past, present and probably in future. The training of good character (*ìwà rere*) is the joint responsibility of the entire people. No wonder why the Yorùbá will say: “*ẹ̀nìkàn níi bímọ, gbogbo ẹ̀niyàn ní í tọ ọ*” meaning “only a person gives birth to the child, but the whole society nurtured the child”. The system according to Akinjógbin, (2009:11-12) is divided into three categories namely, home training (*ẹ̀kọ́ ilé*), vocational training (*ẹ̀kọ́ iṣẹ́*) and communal training (*ẹ̀kọ́ ilú*). Despite all these, the situation is different today. A lot of changes have been brought into the political, social, moral, religious and economic lives of the people.

Ògúnṣínà (1995:299), using Ládélé's *Ìgbà Ló Dé* explains how the introduction of colonial rule had eroded the powers of the king, the traditional head of the Yorùbá people. He writes:

The colonial masters have seized power from him and he lived in morbid fear of the “*Àjẹlẹ̀*”. He is often filled with a deep sense of uncertainty and insecurity. When the “*Àjẹlẹ̀*” visit Ògbojò, there is always one problem or the other.

In like manner, Akínjóbín (2009:20-24) asserts that:

the influx of foreigners from different parts of the world into Yorùbáland punctured her ethical principles, new religion, new system of education and policies, new trade and professions different from those of the pre-colonial era have emerged.

This implies that the advent of foreigners marks the beginning of a new orientation not only in politics, economic and social life, but also in the ethical principles of the Yorùbá people. These experiences and the results that emanate from them have made the resuscitation of the classic, social life of the Yoruba people imperative.

Theoretical Framework

A theory is an instrument used to analyse and explain a literary work. It is needed to solve emerging questions from a literary work and to guide the interpretation and analysis of a literary work so as to give the work associated meaning and interest. It helps in managing reality and also exposes and publicises the writer and his work.

Various theories are available to literary critics, however, the theory adopted for this work is the sociological theory as postulated by Carl Marx and Fredrick Engels in *The Communist Manifesto* which states that human history is that of struggle for freedom or conflict of power. It concerns man's struggle to free himself from another man's domination or oppression. It concerns the efforts of both man and woman to be free from oppression. According to the theory, life changes from time to time, from stone ages, to the capitalist and to communist period, each with its own characteristics. The most popular however, is the capitalist period which gives prominence to technological development which improves the economy. However, it also gives room for cheating and oppression on the part of those who are interested in politics. This is because only the rulers are in charge of the economy.

The theory postulates that there is a very close link between literature and society. It is therefore essential to have a deep knowledge of the social life, economy, history and the entire life-style of a society in order to fully understand the society.

There is no doubt that Yorùbá moral values come in conflict with foreign ideals, hence, those values are almost completely relegated to the background. For this reason, there is need to fight for the resuscitation and survival of the society's culture and ideals in order to move the society forward.

In the past

Yorùbá has her own set of cultural norms, values and beliefs which are inculcated in any child born into the land. The child is taught how to greet or address older folks by using "ẹ" instead of "o" (the Yorùbá language being a language of respect). The child in addition, is taught to fear God, the Almighty. He is taught how to behave himself, how to shun social vices in order not to bring shame to his family.

The child that behaves himself or herself in manners acceptable to the society is called an "omólúàbí" while the one who behaves contrary to the norms of the society is

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called "*omolangidi*". Akinjogbin, (2009:16-17) gives four reasons why children are educated. These include:

- i. For individuals to know the language, culture and religion of his people which helps to see themselves as a group different from the other group of the world.
- ii. For individuals to be useful to himself and his community.
- iii. To help people to be able to lift up the glory of their land when they are grown up.
- iv. To be prepared to fight the enemies and antagonists who would want to destroy the glories of the land.

The Yorùbá say "*ilé ní a tí ń kó ẹ̀ṣọ̀ rọ̀'de*" meaning "charity begins at home". As earlier mentioned, the Yorùbá traditional education is divided into three categories namely: home training (*ẹ̀kọ́ ilé*), which involves teaching the child his language and the behaviours acceptable to the society, the do's and don'ts, respect for elders etc., vocational training (*ẹ̀kọ́ iṣẹ́*) which involves given a child as an apprentice to a master (who himself is morally upright) to learn a trade that will make him self-employed and communal training (*ẹ̀kọ́ ilú*) which involves grouping all children according to their age groups with each group given a role to play in the development of their community. Dàdà (2009:59) attests to this when he writes that:

The whole community was collectively responsible for the up-bringing of the child and his integration into the society. The up-bringing was achieved through parental discipline, peer-group interaction, close supervision by the adult world, provision of worthwhile examples, transmission of knowledge, rules, regulations, customs, mores, conventions, traditions, etc. by means of instructions, moonlight tales, practical demonstrations, apprenticeship, communal and individual discipline, proverbs, adages, etc.

Ọ̀gúndẹ̀jì (2009:82-83), buttresses this claim. He opines that one cannot rule out the vital roles the Yorùbá proverbs play in the training of good character ("*ìwà ọmọlúàbí*"). According to him, the rules and the processes of revitalizing the world among the Yorùbá was entrenched in the Yorùbá proverbs before the introduction of school education by the Europeans.

Yorùbá moral philosophy includes: respect for elders and constituted authorities, wisdom, helpfulness, gratitude, truthfulness, kindness, gratefulness, to mention just a few. Wisdom is not knowledge per-se but the application of knowledge of how to understand one's physical, spiritual and social environment. Adébọ̀wálé (1995:106) states that:

It is only by wisdom that the normative standard set for regulating social and individual behaviours among men and also between super-natural and natural forces, may be maintained and complied with in the world.

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Yorùbá people believe that possession of wisdom is a prerequisite for any man who will live a good and peaceful life on earth. To them, wisdom is worth than wealth, power and that possession of wisdom can confer not only human worth but also wealth and all other good things of life. Yorùbá has a large number of proverbs that teach the need to be wise. These include the following among others:

- i. *Ogbón ológbón ni kii jẹ kí a pe àgbà ní were.*
'Another man's wisdom makes an elder look not like the mad person'.
- ii. *Ogbón ọdún yíí, were èmú ni.*
'Current wisdom, is future's madness'.
- iii. *Ogbón ahun gbón, èyìn ló n tọ ìgbín.*
'The tortoise's wisdom is very little compared with that of the snail'.

These proverbs are either portraying the need to apply wisdom in anything we do, or to be weary of the fact that other people are also wise.

Another moral value is hospitality/helpfulness and service to others. Yorùbá say: "*ẹnikẹni ti iwọ bá nípá láti ẹ irànlówọ fún, ọun ni ẹnikẹjì rẹ*". Helpfulness is not for any expectation of gain or reward of any kind, but for the sake of a person or situation needful of help. There was the belief that if we get accustomed to such act of helpfulness, the natural law of compensation will return our good deeds in kinds of like quality. Hence, they say: "*ẹni tóbá fi tire sílẹ gbọ t'ẹni ẹlẹni, Olórún Ọba ní í bá a gbọ tirẹ*", meaning "whosoever devotes the whole of his time for helping others and thus having no time left for his own affairs, it is God Himself that will personally help such to oversee his own personal affairs.

Hospitality/helpfulness can be equated with Kindness. Kindness means to live successfully, giving others a hand in order to enable them realize their life goals, giving a helping hand to help retrieve others from their besetting woes and difficulties. Cultivation of this way of life, constitute a virtue which brings divine blessings and material prosperity. *Ìròsùn Méjì* of the *Ifá Corpus* attests to this. It reads:

Àkùkọ fí ogbelébélébése'yì
A díá fún ọ̀pìlìkí
Tí ó fí tiẹ sílẹ
Tí ó máa ńgbọ t'ẹni ẹlẹni káyé kiri
Ọ̀rúnmilà ní ó bá a tún tí ẹ ẹ
Wọ̀n ní kí ọ̀pìlìkí ó rúbọ
Kí ó baà lẹ níyì láyẹ
Ó sìrú u
Ìgbà tí Ọ̀pìlìkí rúbọ tán,
Wọ̀n ní kí ó máa tún tí ọ̀mọ ọ̀lọmọ ẹ
Jù bí ó tí ń tún tí ọ̀mọ tirẹ ẹ lẹ
Ìgbà tí ó ẹ gbogbo rẹ tán
Orin awo ní ń kọ. (Adébòwálé, 1995, o.i..97)

(The cock uses its head to beautify itself

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Divined for Ọpilíkí
Who abandoned his own
And took care of other people's problems
It is Ọrúnmìlà who will help him out of his own problem
Ọpilíkí was asked to make sacrifice
So that he can prosper on earth
He made the sacrifice
After making the sacrifice
He was asked to start helping other people's children
Far more than he was helping his own children
After he had observed all
He started singing the device song). (Adébòwálé, 1995:97)

Below are few examples of Yorùbá proverbs that preach hospitality:

- iv. *Oore kii se ifà*
'hospitality does not imply gain or advantage'.
- v. *Oore lópé, ikà kò sunwòn*
'hospitality is more profitable than wickedness'.
- vi. *Oore níwòn*
'there should be limit to one's hospitality'.
- vii. *Bí a bá dijú kí ẹnì ibi kọjá, a kò ní mọ̀ ẹ̀gbà tí ẹnì rere yóó kọjá ẹnì.*
'if you close your eye for the wicked to pass, you wouldn't know when the good person will pass you bye'.

The examples above teach us why we should be hospitable, at the same time we are warned to be cautious about the level of our hospitality to people.

In response to kindness, the Yorùbá expects gratitude. Gratitude is thankfulness. One needs to be thankful for a good deed by another person. The Almighty God also applauds gratefulness. It is always good to be thankful for any favour received from another person. This will encourage the giver to further give and even others to be prepared to give.

There are a number of Yorùbá proverbs that teach us to always be grateful to God and to our fellow men. Examples are:

- viii. *Eni tí a se lóore tí kò dúpé, ó dà bí ọlọsà kó'ni lẹ̀rù lẹ.*
'Whosoever is ungrateful for a good deed is equivalent to the thief that stole one's property'.
- ix. *Bí a bá dupe oore ànà, a ó ò rí òmíràn gbà.*
'If we are grateful for the good received the previous day, we would have another one'.

Love as a metaphysical concept, is the spontaneous conscious and selfless feeling of benevolence, affection and devotion towards God and towards individual creations of

God. It is an ethical concept implying such feelings from individual human creatures towards one another. Love, truth and harmony may respectfully be manifested, expressed and substantiated as secondary virtues of kindness, loyalty, wisdom, humility, honesty, peacefulness, generosity, cheerfulness, perseverance, temperance, etc.

The major Odù Iròsùn Méjì of the ifá corpus reads: "*bí o ti fẹ mi sí ni Olódùmarè máa fẹ ọ*" meaning: "you will be loved by the Almighty God only to the extent of your own love for me". Love does not wish evil; rather, it moves one only to wish the other fellow well even as he wishes himself well. The Yorùbá teach the young ones to love themselves and their neighbours. Any society where genuine love is not visible, such society cannot progress.

On forgiveness, the Yorùbá say: "*bí a kò bá gbàgbé ọrọ ànà, a kòní í ri ẹnì bá seré*" literally meaning "if we do not forget the past incident, we may not have anybody to chat with". Ọrúnmilà's own experience as found in *odù ọtúrá méjì* of the ifá corpus gives a good example. In the verse, Ọrúnmilà forgave his perfidious friends who seduced and had canal knowledge of his wife, Onípupa, sold her into slavery and claimed she was dead. An unforgiving person is equated with "satan" who is not supposed to be anybody's friend.

Truthfulness is expressed by honesty which is itself, purity of heart. It is, at the same time, both a quality of the human heart and the expression of honesty. It is purity of heart with total elimination of distortions or falsehood in portraying the intrinsic nature of any aspect of the universe or life. The Senior *Olódù Èjìogbè* portrays truth as a positive directive or living. It reads:

Sòtító
Sòdodo
Ẹní sòtító
Ní'mọ lẹẹ gbè

(Speak the truth
Be truthful always
For the gods/divinities
Favour only those
Who speaks the truth).

(Adébòwálé, 1999:140-141).

The Yorùbá believe that liars will soon turn a thief. Hence, they insist on telling the truth always. This is partly because according to the Yorùbá, it is only truth that exalts a nation. Therefore, a liar is not given prominence in the Yorùbá society.

The importance of truthfulness as an attribute is portrayed in the following proverbs:

- x. *Òtító dọjà ó kùtà, owó lẹwọ ní à ń ra èké.*
'Truth has no customer in the market but you can buy 'lies' if you have the money'.

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- xi. *Ká sòótọ́ ká kú, ó sàń jù kí a purọ́ kí a wà láàyè lẹ.*
'it is better to tell the truth and die than to tell lies and live'.
- xii. *A sòtító kii lẹni*
'the truthful person don't have companions'.
- xiii. *Olóótító kan kò ní kú sípò ikà láéláé.*
'the truthful person would never die in place of the wicked'.

These proverbs explain that no matter the trouble involved, truth shall always prevail. A society where truth is no more cannot prosper.

Furthermore, the Yorùbá believe in hard work as a virtue. Among the Yorùbá, a lazy man has no recognition. This is why they say that there should be no food for the lazy man. To avoid this situation, they engage their children in partisan apprenticeship but with a master who is also hardworking. In the home, children are encouraged to be hard working. The males help their father on the farm while the females are engaged in domestic work in the home. This is reflected in the following proverbs:

- xiv. *A kii mú sẹ jẹ, kí a tún mú iṣẹ́ jẹ,*
'You cannot avoid work and at the same time avoid poverty'.
- xv. *Iṣẹ́ lònògùn iṣẹ́*
'Hard work is the antidote for poverty'.
- xvi. *A gbójú lógún fì ara rẹ fọ̀sì ta.*
'Whosoever relies on inheritance, subjects himself to abject poverty'.
- xvii. *Eni tí kò ṣiṣẹ́, kò yẹ kí ó jẹun*
'Whosoever fails to work, is not entitled to food'.

All the proverbs above point to the fact that laziness is a vice and should be discouraged. No wonder, the Yorùbá engage their children in apprenticeship in order to make them self-employed. No good parent would be happy to see their children idle, hence they say "*ọwọ́ tó dilẹ, lèsù n bẹ nísẹ́*". Meaning "the idle hand is the devil's instrument"

To the Yorùbá, home training is an antidote to family existence. The Yorùbá family system can be grouped into two namely: the nuclear family, which comprises the father, the mother and their children, and the extended family, which include uncles, aunts, cousins, brothers, sisters, grandfathers, grandmothers and so on. The head of the family is referred to as the '*baálé*' or '*olóri ilé*'. The training of the child as we earlier mentioned, is the joint responsibility of the entire family/community. Yorùbá people also believe in the saying "*ọmọ tí a kò kọ ní yóó gbé ilé tí a kọ tà*" meaning "the untrained child will sell out the house one builds", hence, parents are advised to train their wards to imbibe the society's moral values because this is the only way by which the children can give them peace of mind.

At Present

It is quite unfortunate that today, Yorùbá moral values are being replaced with vices. Yorùbá people are no more respecting their traditions. Instead, they encourage foreign ideas. They prefer to take foreign foods, wear foreign dresses, all to the detriment of their own culture. Reasons for this are many and vary from colonialism and its attendant civilization, love of money and material wealth, god-fatherism, mad rush for foreign ideals, slavery and slave trade, introduction and adoption of foreign religion, among others.

Akínjogbìn (2009:21) opines that during the civil war that lasted for about a century, all existing Yorùbá moral values were abandoned. The main objective of the introduction of foreign religions was to promote the religion and culture of the Europeans that brought the religion which was seen as better than those of the Africans. African languages in general were abandoned. Although, they were forced to reduce some African languages into writing, this was to ease the spreading of the new religion and foreign ideals they were out to propagate.

Gradually, the administration was taken away from the obas and chiefs by the Europeans through the use of consul/governor (*ajélè*). Ògúnṣínà (1995:301-302) gives a picture of what the situation was. He says that:

....times have changed; the messenger is from the
“*oba*” but the message is not wholly his message.
The authority of the *oba* has been disrupted.... The
people’s prayer is no longer limited to God, there
is no reference to the “*oba*” in the prayer. *Ajélè*, the
symbol of Colonial authority, has become a formidable
force to pray against.

In like manner, Yòlòyè (2009:45) observes that:

Most educated people and school children today
have a mixed culture-traditional and Western.
Formal Western education and modernization
have imposed the Western modes of thought;
values and culture on them. Various conflicts in
individuals personalities result from this mixing of
traditional with modern.

As earlier pointed out, the “*omolúàbí*” concept is rooted in the informal training of the home. Today however, most parents are busy in their daily struggle for survival that they hardly ever are able to set aside the time to inculcate the necessary moral values in their wards. The practice of listening to folk stories, proverbs, myths and legends, all aimed at teaching good moral lessons from the elders which get the young ones cultivated in the “*omolúàbí*” concept is no more. Instead, the children now occupy themselves with clips on television that pay no attention to the concept of “*omolúàbí*”. According to Adébáyò (2009:xxi):

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Even our own Nigerian film makers (Nollywood)
Hardly ever pay much attention to the concept
of “*ọmọlúàbí*”, as they seek to make heroes and
heroines out of actors who brazenly trample on
the principles entrenched in the concept.

We support this view because today, school pupils know nothing about Yorùbá legends such as Odùduwà, Ògèdèngbé, Kúrumí, Tinúbú, Mọ̀rèmi, Ògúnmólá and so on. The teaching of the Yorùbá language itself is given little or no recognition in the school curriculum today. In most schools (private and public), there are rules that forbid the use of the child's native language. Simple Yorùbá proverb look strange to school children, hence, they make fun of proverbs. A few examples are the following:

xviii. *màlúù tí ò nírù, Ọlórún ọba níí bá a lé eṣinṣin*

‘it is God that helps the tale less cow to drive away the flies’.

Children of today will say “tailless cows are plenty at the Fúlàní's harmlet”.

xix. *àitètè mólè, olè ñ mú olóko*

‘when you delay in arresting the thief, the thief arrests the farmer’.

They will say *àitètè mólè, olè ñ sá lọ* ‘when you delay in arresting the thief, the thief runs away’. This is how they make mockery of proverbs that are supposed to teach moral lessons all under the pretext of civilization and when they are corrected, they call you “old school”. Ògúndèjì and Àkàngbé (2009:5) opines that:

Though there could not but be some changes and modifications to the traditional system in the modern context, the changes and modifications should be guided so that the good aspects of it that has to do with the soul and existence of the Yorùbá as a people will not be eroded.

One thing that is certain is the fact that when a child's language is ignored in the educational process, it may manifest into a feeling of cultural and linguistic inferiority. It will then prevent the child from reaching the peak of his potential in personal development and in contributing to societal development. This is coupled with the fact that a child learns better in his or her native language than in another man's language. The neglect of the learning of the Yorùbá language for instance has devastating effects on the child's moral development.

The goal of the Yorùbá traditional education before the advent of the Europeans was to make the individual, an “*ọmọlúàbí*”. This goal has been very difficult to achieve for the following reasons among others”:

1. The non-usage of the Yorùbá language as a medium of instruction.

2. The non-implementation of the language policy as entrenched in the National education policy document is a serious set back for achieving the desired goalsof mother-tongue education.
3. The formal system of education seems to have de-emphasised morality which is at the heart of Yorùbá traditional education.
4. The people's preference for foreign cultural materials including literature and even religion is a barrier affecting genuine moral development.

Our findings reveal that the Yorùbá society's moral level has deteriorated and is still deteriorating. The present education system which came as a result of the introduction of the Christian religion was aimed at making the people of Africa in general to abandon their customs and become like the Europeans. No wonder why in schools and even in their homes, the teaching and use of indigenous/native languages is not given serious attention compared with the teaching of English Language. Unconsciously and gradually too, the Yorùbá began to hate their native language. The young ones attach greater importance to imported ideas. By so doing, the Yorùbá language and customs are gradually eroding. The future of the Yorùbá language and customs, the training, upholding and sustaining of the Yorùbá moral virtues become dicey everyday.

People nowadays result to distorting history hence the simultaneous emergence of two or three kings (ọba's) in a village or town. This situation accounts for why it has been very difficult to revive the society from its present situation of moral degeneration and moral deterioration. There is the need to revamp it. One of the veritable tools for such exercise is through constant use of Yorùbá proverbs which call people's attentions to the values approved by the Yorùbá society.

The Future

Dàda (2009:68), believes that the boat of the Yorùbá cultural heritage is being seriously rocked from various directions. Babátúndé, (2009:105) also asserts that:

African countries have continued to be imprisoned by their past. They have not been able to shake off the yoke of colonial linguistic legacy. African countries still live under the illusion that colonial languages are rallying points for many ethnic nationals.

According to Babátúndé (2009), the problem a child faces when his language is ignored in the educational process plays vital role in the attitude of the child to his society. Such action, he states, to a large extent could prevent the child from reaching the peak of his potentials in personal development and in contributing to societal development. Since the child's language is the best for teaching society's moral virtues, it is expedient to encourage the child to have the opportunity to learn his language and learn in it.

In like manner, this claim is attested to by Bánjọ (2009, p.135) who opines that:

Indiscriminate cultural borrowing may produce deleterious effects and the degree of impersonality which results from

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large aggregation of diverse cultures may subtly encourage disloyalty to one's own culture particularly when little is done to reinforce that culture.

This may account for why Ìṣọlá (2009:111), suggests that the society must create the right atmosphere for children to acquire human virtues that develop the mind, like sincerity, accountability, transparency, honesty, love and truthfulness through one's culture because according to him, only this can make material development sustainable. The references above give us an insight into the problems facing the upliftment of the Yorùbá spirit of "*ọmọlúàbí*" in the Yorùbá society in particular and the Nigerian society in general today.

In a society where moral values are not respected or regarded but instead, are seen as the values of the "uncivilized", a society where god-fatherism, cultism, mismanagement of public funds, disrespect for the elders and societal rules, love of money and material wealth, high rush for foreign ideals, incest, murder and the likes become the order of the day. A society where Obas and community leaders who are supposed to bring sanity to the mores of the people, are co-collaborators of moral perversion, a society where the entire cultural life of the people is relegated to the background, one wonders what the future of such society would be. This implies that the aftermath effect of the neglect of the Yorùbá moral philosophy is what the Yorùbá society is experiencing today.

Yorùbá literary works are not exempted from the crusade for moral diligence. Most literary writers are conscious of the importance of good moral values to the society. They point to this fact leaving their readers to suggest the way out of the dilemma. For example in Awóniyí's *Ayé kòótó*, a passenger who is busy going through a newspaper is fed up with news of moral bankruptcy that has begotten the society. He has this to say:

Èṣe tí ó fí jẹ pé òní olè, ọ̀la dánàdánà, ọ̀tunla
Gbómọgbómọ sàà ni ayé yí dà? Ọlórùn mò ni
yóò kó wa yọ. Gbogbo ohun tí à n rí nínú ìwé
ìròyìn kò ju bíi "àwọn olè gba àpò méèédógún
lọwọ onísòwò kan.... (o.i 54)

(Why is it that today, it is stealing, tomorrow it is highway robbery, next day, it is kidnapping news, what has this world turned to? Only God can save us. All we read in newspapers is nothing but how the thieves snatch three thousand naira (N3000) from a trader.....) (p. 54).

In response to this reaction, another passenger says:

Kò sí olóòtọ kankan mò láyé. Àti ọ̀lọpàá o,
àti olè o, àti ọ̀mọwé o, àti ọ̀lọsà o, àti ọ̀ṣẹ̀lú
o, ẹ̀lẹ̀tàn ni gbogbo wá dà pátápátá. (o.i 54)

(There is no more righteous person in the world again.
Both the police, the thieves, the educated, the armed
robber, the politicians, all of us have become
deceitful) (p 54).

These references clearly paint the picture of the level of moral decadence in the Nigerian society of today. We cannot exhaust them here. Unfortunately however, the influx of foreign values into the African society in general, and the Yorùbá society in particular has continued to have devastating effects on the mores of the people. These foreign values are gradually eroding and submerging the Yorùbá traditions thereby making cultural socialization of the people (young and old) extremely difficult, hence the paramount need to resuscitate the fading Yorùbá moral values.

The way forward

After discussing and analyzing the moral decadence level of the Yorùbá society in particular and the Nigerian society in general, we want to recommend the following among others.

- (i). that the Yorùbá language and “*omolúàbí*” related cultural materials should be used in modern telecommunication gadgets including the internet.
- (ii). that the Yorùbá “*omolúàbí*” philosophy and practice should be integrated into the school curriculum. There is the need to review the curriculum to reflect African needs in general and Yorùbá needs in particular.
- (iii). there is the urgent need for the introduction of communal training in schools. This will help the young ones to learn how to live in peace with others.
- (iv). Yorùbá language should be used in homes and schools to bring the children up in the ethics of Yorùbá culture. Yorùbá language and culture should be taught and used as medium of instruction at the nursery, primary and secondary school levels in Yorùbá land.
- (v). Movies and music production in Yorùbá should always be polite and descent, and should rigorously promote the concept of “*omolúàbí*”. It is high time the movies censor board awake from their slumber, and
- (vi). Any person identified as **morally** bankrupt (an “*omolangidi*”, the opposite of “*omolúàbí*”) should not be accorded recognition or respect in the society henceforth. For instance, the section that provides immunity for certain categories of political office holders in the Nigerian constitution should be removed. The practice of “all animals are equal but some are more equal than others” must henceforth be discarded.

Conclusion:

This paper has identified the neglect of the use of Yorùbá proverbs as one of the major factors responsible for the current moral decadence level among the Yorùbá society. Yorùbá use proverbs to remind people of what the society’s moral codes require of them, hence, its neglect account for why the Yorùbá spirit of “*omolúàbí*” which is supposed to be a panacea for national development is fast being defaced. The paper has

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also identified other factors responsible for moral perversion in the Yorùbá society in particular and the Nigerian society in general. Apart from the identified factors, people of the society are not helping matters. This account for why things have fallen apart and the center is no longer holding as far as the upliftment of the Yorùbá moral values are concerned.

Finally, we are of the opinion that unless we go back to the drawing board and enforce the spirit of '*ọmọlúàbí*' in our social, political, economic and religious dealings, in spite of the challenges, the society's moral situation may not improve. One of the veritable tools for achieving this is through the teaching, learning and using the Yorùbá proverbs.

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