

## **THE SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF SOME NIGERIAN YORUBA AND IBO PROVERBS ON CAREFULNESS**

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**ABSTRACT :** *The purpose of this Article is to show how the Yoruba and the Ibo people of Nigeria often use proverbs to express the need for people to be careful in whatever they do in life. This research work focuses on the proverbs that Nigerian Yoruba and Ibo people often use to express carefulness in people, so as to guarantee better life for them, and of course to make the people stay out of trouble at all times. This research work therefore aims at exploring the social implications of the usage of the proverbs that instill carefulness in people, within the Yoruba and the Ibo people's cultural terrain.*

**KEYWORDS:** Culture, Warning, Correcting, Oral, Carefulness, Checking.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Carefulness implies the act of taking care regarding issues of life in order not to encounter problem in whatever one does. Without doubt, the Nigerian people, particularly the Yoruba and the Ibo people believe that it is always good to be careful for the avoidance of problems of any sort. To make their idea about carefulness in life very vivid and much more impacting, the people of these two Nigerian tribes often use proverbs to imprint on the minds of their fellow people carefulness, so that people can live fruitful and problem free life. To buttress the need for carefulness in life, Chinua Achebe, a Nigerian novelist once made use of an instructive proverb in his novel "Things Fall Apart" which anchors on carefulness: "when a hand shake is getting to the elbow, then something else is coming". This proverb means one should take care of someone who is over magnanimous towards one, for he might not mean well. Achebe in using the above mentioned proverb is indirectly pinpointing the fact that it is particularly expedient for one to take care in dealing with people. For these two tribes of Nigeria being careful in ones' dealings is of utmost importance and so, they often use proverbs to express this.

It is our contention therefore that the Yoruba people and the Ibo people of Nigerian believe in the efficacy of proverbs in message delivery, the more reason they use proverbs in instilling carefulness in people.

### **Some of the Core Yoruba proverbs on carefulness and their interpretations:**

#### **Oju ni alakan fin sori'**

**Meaning** – you must always watch over the happenings around you to avoid being caught up in danger.

**Interpretation:**

The above proverb suggests that there is wisdom in being conscious of one's environment, so as not to be neck deep in problem. Within the Yoruba context in Nigeria, a man who is unaware of the goings-on in his environment is considered a foolish person, or a man who lacks wisdom. The Yoruba people of Nigeria believe that it is expedient for one to watch his back in case of any danger.

In addition, the effect of one not conscious of his environment is falling into potential problem in the final analysis, talking about the Yoruba cultural milieu.

**Eni abiire kin rinru**

**Meaning:**

It is bad for someone to walk or move in the night, for the avoidance of possible danger.

**Interpretation**

The Yoruba people of Nigeria consider the night as a period that exposes people to danger and the Yoruba people forbid night movement, so as not to experience any untoward development. The Yoruba people consider that night is no respecter of anybody, and any respectable person should not see the night as time of movement, for danger may be lurking around. The Yorubas believe that movement in the night may lead to death, and so, no one is expected to move around in the night.

**Ti a ba ta ara ile eni lopo a o ni rira lowon**

**Meaning:**

If one says something negative about someone that is close to one, it may be difficult to redeem the already battered image of that person.

**Interpretation**

The above proverb in the Yoruba society of Nigeria presupposes the fact that one should be careful about what one says about others negatively. The Yoruba people forbid one to tarnish the image of others, for if done, it might be difficult to redeem the image of that person. The culture of these people goes against assassinating the character of others. The Yoruba people of Nigeria believe that saying something good about others is a step in the right direction and so hypocrisy is a forbidden phenomenon within the Yoruba cultural milieu. In Yoruba land, anybody who damages the image of others is seen as a bad person.

**Akii fi ise Igbonse ran omo eni**

**Meaning:**

It is not good to expose children to anything that is bad in all ramifications

**Interpretation**

The Yoruba people are of the view that children are innocent and as such, should not be made to see or notice things that are indeed eyesore. The Yorubas believe that when you expose your children to bad things, automatically you tend to corrupt them. From the Yoruba people's point of view, children should possess good behavior and we must not do some things in their presence, as

this can make them to be morally bad. The Yorubas believe that anybody who tries to corrupt the children is an unwholesome person.

**Bi isu eni bata, nseni a afiowo bo o je**

**Meaning:**

It is not good for one to over expose unto others one`s personal fortune.

**Interpretation**

In Yoruba culture it is a misnomer for one to expose his successes unto others excessively. The Yoruba people believe that when you expose your successes for too much, you may be putting yourself in danger, as human beings are always jealous of others` successes. To avoid jealousy, the people are of the view that you have to keep your secret, secret, to avoid moving on a head-on collision with others. In Yoruba culture, anyone who tells others about his successes every time tends to play with danger, as devilish minded fellows may plan to harm such a seemingly careless person.

**Ibo Proverbs on carefulness**

**Some of the Core Ibo Proverbs on Carefulness and their interpretations:**

**Okukona-adu- umu- yaoduka ha n`elun`ihina o` buebeonwnna- egbu ha siabia**

**Meaning**

The chicken advises her children to look up because that is the place from which comes the death that kills them.

**Interpretation**

This proverb presupposes the fact that it is expedient that one watches over the happenings around him. The Ibos believe that if one refuses to look around him for possible dangers, one may end up being caught up in a catastrophic situation. This proverb is highly instructive as it pinpoints the fact that showing awareness to the goings -on in ones environment is a step in the right direction.

**Agadi Nwanyidaa mgbeabuoaguoihe o bun`isiya**

**Meaning**

If an old woman falls twice, the third time, the number of things she is carrying will be counted.

**Interpretation**

This proverb above in the Ibo cultural milieu epitomizes the fact that it is always good to learn from one`s past mistakes, so as to use that to normalize one`s actions in future. The proverb above presupposes the fact that it will be seen by people as an act of foolishness for one to repeat a mistake of the past twice. The proverb suggests that a mistake of the past should be a correction one`s action for the future.

**Ukwukaejiachoihedanyerenammir**

**Meaning**

One should always use the feet to look for something which has fallen into the water,ie (carefulness is a method of success)

### **Interpretation**

The above proverb exemplifies the idea that it is not always good to dabble into any venture without proper checking. This proverb gives the idea that in whatever we want to venture into in life, proper investigation about the possible success or failure must be put in place. Thus this proverb points to the fact that it is only a foolish person who will take a particular step, without proper look into what he or she intends to do. The proverbs above also attests to the popular aphorism “look before you leap”. In Ibo land, it is wrong for one to do anything without looking well into it.

### **Nwataetoghietojuwaihegburunnaya,ihegburunnayagaegbukwaya.**

#### **Meaning**

An immature person asking for what killed his father will likely be killed similarly.

### **Interpretation**

The above proverb suggests that we should always do things only at the appropriate time. Within the context of the Ibo people of Nigeria, it is wrong for anyone to do things when the time is not okay for that thing to be done. The Ibo people believe that it is only a nonsense headed fellow who will attempt to do things at the wrong time. Actions, the Ibos believe must be taken at the right time for whatever thing that is to be done.

### **Ngwrehapuukwuosisi, nkitaеjiya, mere nri**

#### **Meaning**

If a lizard runs away from the tree trunk, the dog will use it as food

### **Interpretation**

The above proverb in the Ibo cultural milieu suggests that it is always not good for one to go beyond his or her limit. The Ibo people believe that he who over steps his bound will surely encounter problem. The proverb above is indicative of the fact that it is always good for one to stay within ones limit as stepping off bounds may lead one into terrible danger.

These people are of the view that there is wisdom in staying within ones limit as everyone knows his or her personal limitations in life. The above proverb also presupposes the fact that it is better for one not to pry into what does not concern him or her at whatever time, for one to keep himself or herself safe.

### **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, it is indeed germane to say categorically that both the Ibo people and the Yoruba people of Nigeria value the use of proverbs so much, and so often use proverbs as weapon of putting people on the right track in terms of behavior, particularly in making them to realize the fact that carefulness is a matter of extreme importance in their lives, so as not to go off course.

To the Yoruba people and the Ibo people, being careful about the actions we put up in life is indeed one of the parameters for living a good life. The people of these two ethnic groups in Nigeria do have the consciousness that a man or a woman who is careful in whatever venture in life is one who has a base in wisdom.

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