Ọmọlúàbí

The Virtuous. A person of rare character, honest, respectful and trustworthy, who shows the best a human being can be.

ỌMỌLÚÀBÍ

Build a Name Worth More Than Gold

Ayo Fatubarin

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CHAPTER 1

An Ọmọlúàbí Is a Rare Kind of Person

What the Yorùbá mean when they say Ọmọlúàbí

“Orúkọ rere, ó sàn ju wúrà àti fàdákà lọ.”
A good name is more precious than diamond or gold.

Call Ọmọlúàbí a phenomenon, you will not be wrong. After all, a phenomenon is something, or someone, remarkable because of a rare quality or ability. An Ọmọlúàbí among the Yorùbá people is a rare breed of humankind, a unique personality and an embodiment of those values of life that make such a person stand out in a crowd.

So many are the virtues an Ọmọlúàbí possesses that he or she is often described as “the Virtuous.” An Ọmọlúàbí may be scarce to come by, because to the Yorùbá people an Ọmọlúàbí is the best that a human being can be.

In this book, “he” is used for ease and stands for a man or a woman alike. An Ọmọlúàbí is as likely to be a woman as a man.

But the truth is that Ọmọlúàbí once existed among the Yorùbá people. They were not in twos or threes, but in myriads within the diverse communities that make up Yorùbáland. That was in the not-too-distant past, when the people cherished values and, as such, did all within their power to promote them and reward them. That was an era when people valued their family names and would go to any length to protect such names. That was an era when people truly believed that "a good name is more precious than either diamond or gold." They would say:

> *"Orúkọ rere, ó sàn ju wúrà àti fàdákà lọ."*

That was the good old days of the pre-eminence of Yorùbá cultural values. No age was perfect, but these values were prized. That was before many of them

began to fade under the pressures of modernity and of contact with other cultures through trade and business, in the country and far beyond it. That was before some youths and young men took to violence and militancy to express their grievances, while others took to armed robbery, vandalisation, drug business and smuggling as means of livelihood. That was before bleaching of the skin, “toning” you will say, became a search for beauty. That was before some married people started to be unfaithful to their spouses. That was before fashion, for some, came to mean display more than dignity.

If the concept Ọmọlúàbí were limited to modes of behaviour, it would not have meant much to people. It would not have lasted till today. The Ọmọlúàbí culture goes beyond the ways of life of a group of people. It is a culture that manifests in

the thought, speech and actions of the people. It reflects in the totality of their life and their interactions, including those that occur among themselves and with all other people of other tribes. It also extends to their interactions with the Almighty God.

These virtues are not for the Yorùbá alone. Honesty, respect and a good name are prized in every culture, and anyone, of any people or faith, can aim to be an Ọmọlúàbí.

The point being made on this unique phenomenon of Ọmọlúàbí among the Yorùbá people is that Ọmọlúàbí is more than a name. It is more than a mode of dressing or a manner of adorning the body. It encompasses the totality of the ways of life of the Yorùbá people. It goes with honour and respect. It contributed to

orderliness in Yorùbá communities. The young ones were born into this culture. They grew with it, learning it from their parents and elderly people within their communities.

People who are themselves Ọmọlúàbí know what Ọmọlúàbí is when they come across it and, on each of such occasions, they eulogise it. They eulogise Ọmọlúàbí when it is demonstrated by a person. They will say in Yorùbá:

> *"Ó ṣọmọlúàbí" or "Ọmọlúàbí ènìyàn ni."*

The truth is that the Ọmọlúàbí phenomenon is not restricted to a single act. It is a phenomenon of life that has incorporated in it several actions, behavioural attitudes and ethics. It is a demonstration of all the actions, attitudes and ethics that make a person a true

Ọmọlúàbí, an embodiment of virtues and an “akandá nínú ọmọ ènìyàn.” He is someone who must be reckoned with and accorded much honour, for being specially and richly endowed by the Almighty God.

There must be something significant about the Ọmọlúàbí phenomenon, that has made it come up frequently in recent times, when people are comparing notes on the standard of behaviour in the past and the present. There must be a lot worth learning about this phenomenon. There must also be a lot about it worth regenerating among the people. It is thoughts similar to these that have led people in recent times to ask the following questions:

- What features characterise the Ọmọlúàbí people?

- How are these features reflected in the values such people carry?
- What examples typify the manifestation of Ọmọlúàbí in people?
- What has made Ọmọlúàbí a rare phenomenon among the people of today?
- How can Ọmọlúàbí traits be regenerated among the people?
- What are the possible strategies to adopt in doing this?

These and many other questions are what this book is set to provide answers to.

Ask yourself: Who is the Ọmọlúàbí you remember from your own life, and what did that person do that you still carry?

END OF THE FREE SAMPLE

Ọmọlúàbí

by Prof. Ayo Fatubarin

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