

Didacticism and Philosophical Tenets in Ọbasa's Poetry

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Abstract

Projection and promotion of Yoruba cultural ideology and philosophy are motifs in D.A. Ọbasa's poetry. As an ingenious poet, Ọbasa adroitly blends the tropes of didacticism and philosophical tenets in his poetry. Existing works on his poetry have explored the thematic preoccupations of his poems, as well as their forms and stylistic features. However, little attention has been paid to the correlation between didacticism and philosophy in his poetry. This essay, therefore, identifies the basic tenets of philosophy in the form of ethical, metaphysical, and epistemological aspects of Yoruba philosophy in Ọbasa's poetry with a view to establishing the way Yoruba philosophy is used to teach morals in the poems. Ọbasa's philosophical inclination is anchored on Yoruba philosophy. Some of the philosophical tenets identified are ethical issues, like obedience, truth, hospitality and being respectful. Virtues are extolled, while vices, like jealousy, pride, disobedience and deceit are condemned. The metaphysical beliefs of the Yoruba in death, destiny, and life after death, as well as the belief in the Supreme Being (Olodumare) are also discussed. The epistemological values of Yoruba communal system and *iwà*, and *omolúàbí* concept are also entrenched in Ọbasa's poetry. It is also revealed that satirical elements, especially humor are used to project Yoruba philosophical belief in order to imbue the reader with moral rectitude. There is a close link between Ọbasa's poetry and the Yoruba sociocultural milieu. The essence of didacticism and philosophical tenet in his poems is to advance the social development of the Yoruba society and the larger Nigerian society.

Introduction

The works of Ọbasá, a veteran Yorùbá poet, have been the focus of literary critics. Notable among the critics are Ọlambitan (1974, 1975), Ogunsina (1991), and Akinyemi (1987; 1991; 2017). All the three scholars have examined the issues of form, style, and themes in Ọbasá's poetry. It has been established that Ọbasá aims at a systematic collection of Yoruba traditional sayings in order to bring to the fore Yoruba beliefs and thoughts for preservation and documentation (Akinyemi 2017). Citing Babalola and Gerard (1971), Akinyemi (2017) emphasizes the fact that through Ọbasá's poems the inter-relationship between the traditional beliefs and writing in the modern era has been established. Ọlabimtan (1975) avers that "Ọbasá's greatness consists in his ability to assemble traditional sayings...which embody the traditional wisdom of Yoruba society" (1032). Many of the Yoruba traditional sayings which Ọbasá assembled in his poems are products of the Yoruba philosophy, hence, Ọbasá sub-titled his poetry collection "Yorùbá Philosophy." According to Akinyemi (2017), Ọbasá aims at popularizing Yoruba cultural values. He argues that:

Ọbasá deserves credit for popularizing a vision of poetry that assigns it definite social value, especially in its utility in instructing, correcting and influencing conduct. This implies that Ọbasá is placed on an elevated moral platform that enables him to use his poetry to inform, correct and educate his readers. This is exemplified by unique didactic precepts from Yoruba oral literature inscribed in many Ọbasá's composition ... (9-10)

The above position corroborates Olatunji's (1982) claims that entertainment and didacticism are central to poetry in Ọbasá's era. Specifically, he states that "didacticism syndrome" started with poetry of Ẹwáńdẹ (Ẹwáńdẹ Aróbíodu), Ọbasá, Ajísafẹ and Ọdúnjọ (24). The didacticism syndrome, according to Olatunji, could be traced to missionary education, which aimed at moralizing. Trends in the Yoruba creative writings at inception affirm the above opinion, hence, earlier Yoruba writers pre-occupied their works with didactic elements.

It could be deduced from the above position that both Yoruba traditional sayings assembled by Ọbasá and his own original creation, which formed his poetry, are composed for didacticism. Using an eclectic approach combining philosophical and sociological insights, this paper, therefore, examines the philosophical tenets in Ọbasá's poems. It discusses the didactic import of Ọbasá's philosophical disposition with a view to determine the correlation

between poetry and philosophy as well as the correlation between the identified philosophical tenets and didactic elements projected in the poems.

Oḃasa: A Philosopher-poet

The moral question as it affects social, political and human development, is the focus of poems (Olabimtan 1988). Even in the traditional Yoruba setting, the desire to have good governance, peace, harmony, and sustainable development are the focal points on which the traditional poems are composed and performed (Adeleke, 2007; Adejumo, 2008; 2017). Yoruba philosophical thoughts and beliefs are the pivot on which these traditional poems rest. Oḃasa poems are rich in Yoruba worldview. Aspects of global philosophy are also projected in his poems. The three aspects discussed here are metaphysics, ethics and epistemology. However, aspect of ethics and moral values are preponderant in his poems.

Philosophical Issues in Oḃasá's Poetry

Metaphysics, a branch of philosophy that addresses the issue of being and existence as well as reality of things, is projected in Oḃasa's poems. Some of the metaphysical concepts identified are the Yorùbá belief in the Supreme Being (Olodumare) destiny (*àyànmó/àkúnlẹ̀yàn*), death (*ikú*) and life after death (*àṣẹ̀yìnwáyé*). In four of his poems, "Oore," "Ifẹ̀ Ètè," "Ọ̀rọ̀ ẹ̀hìn," and "Èrè-Iṣẹ́," the nature and attributes of Olodumare are revealed. The Supreme Being is revealed as the giver of life and the one who sees everything and who will reward human deeds here on earth:

Excerpt I

Ọ̀lọ̀run nii sẹ̀san
Igbá tá a bá n wín kà
Òun làá fí sán ọ̀kà.
Ọ̀lọ̀run Ọ̀ba kòkòyí bẹ̀èrè
Òun lolórí Eléèésú
Òun lọ̀ba Èlẹ̀san (Oḃasá1927: 8).

God is the rewarder
 The measure that we used to measure (for others)
 It is the same that will be used to measure back to us
 God, the unquestionable King
 Is the master thrift collector
 He is the Avenger

The above belief is further emphasised in “Erè Isẹ”:

Excerpt II

Olórún láílái ní i ti í pé

Kí o tó mú ní

Olórún tìwòyí kò pẹ

Èsin ní n gùn gbèjà

Èni tá ò lè mú

Olórún là á fí fún!

Ká fìjà Fọlórún jà

Ká fọwọ lẹrán. (Ọbasá1934:16).

The God of olden days

Takes time before he avenges

The God of nowadays is quick in action

He avenges in a lightning speed

Somebody who is more powerful than one

Should be handed over to God

Hand over your battle to God

And stand aloof.

The attributes of God as King in Excerpts I & II, are in line with the Yoruba worldview on the supremacy of the institution of *ọbashi*. *Ọba*, the Yoruba king, is a powerful and respected leader. He is referred to as *kábiyèsí- ká-bi-í-ò-sí*. (No-one-can-question-his-acts-and-doings). In the Yoruba belief, handing over one’s life challenges to Olodumare will yield a more profitable result than finding human solutions to the challenges. The philosophical question that may come to mind now is: Why is it more dangerous for a villain to be handed to God? One, God is the Supreme Creator; he created all humans; he knows their weaknesses and strengths; and it is his life that humans are using to breathe. He knows best to punish an offender and the degree of punishment to be awarded to the offender. Nobody can query him. If a victim decides to avenge himself it may even get him/her in trouble. In order not to get oneself in trouble while avenging for oneself, it is better to allow God’s judgment to prevail. The didactic import of God’s existence and his Supremacy in the affairs of man is depicted in the last portion of Excerpt II: *Ká fìjà fọlórún jà, ká fọwọ lẹrán* because He (Olodumare) will avenge man of his enemies more than what man could do. The above position is in tandem with Olajide’s (2012) view of Olodumare:

The existence of God (Olódùmare or Àjàlórùn) as he is usually called) is taken for granted as given. He is conceived of as the giver of life, the sustainer of the universe and the ultimate source of which man and all other things must return... God is conceived of as the greater and source of being. He therefore made man (37).

God as the source of being is also paramount in the poetry of Obasa. In "Ìkà-Èké" he highlights how God created all things and with his omniscient attributes he decided to measure the extent of innate ability, resistance, power, and physiology he gave to all his creation.

Excerpt III

Olórùn kò dá kàinkanyin

Kó ní òlá bí ẹsin

Àtapa ní ì bá ta ni

Àtapa ní ì bá tàniyàn!...

Adiẹ ì bá lókó

Ìbá fàkitàn ẹ ǹnkan!...

Ìmàdò ì bá ẹ bí ẹlẹdẹ

A bà'jú jẹ,

Erú ì bá jòba Ènià ì bá ti kuù kan ẹso! (Obasa 1927:9).

God did not create the ant

To be as big as the horse

It would have kicked and trampled one to death

It would have kicked and trampled human beings to death!

Had it been that the hen has a hoe

It would have dealt brutally with the dunghill

Had it been that wild boar is like the pig

The city would have been destroyed

If a slave is enthroned as a king

He would have ruined the city!

The above excerpt, clearly reveals that God, with his supreme power, has set order in the world. Through his omniscient power, he knows the frailty of his beings and he has carefully set a control in order to set a social order that will promote peace and tranquility. For instance, as small as the ant is, its venom is painful. One would now begin to imagine if the ant had been bigger than the way it is, it would have been dangerous and harmful. Also, the tiny feet given to the hen is used to scavenge the dunghill, while the wild boar deals with the mud much more than the pig. In essence, the control of power and

power relation is in the hand of the invisible and Supreme God who created all humans. The didactic import of this is that whoever is bequeathed with a measure of power should use it right. In concluding the poem *Ọbasá* says:

Excerpt IV

Ìkà kò jẹ́ paramólẹ̀ ó dàgbà

A níkà nínú b'ì baakà!

A-ta-kóró wọnú àdó

ọmọ rẹ̀ ní kọ́

Aya rẹ̀ ní kọ́?

Àgbà tó gbièbú ikà

Lóri ọmọ rẹ̀ ní yíò hùlé...

Èni tí ń se rere

Kó múra sí rere í se;

Èni tí ń síkà

Kó máa seèkà òsò;

Atoore, àtìikà

Ọkan kì í gbé! (Obasa 1927: 12).

Evil did not allow viper (night-adder) to grow
 The man that is callous as the Mule
 I am- armed with metaphysical power!
 Are your children also armed?
 Is your wife armed?
 An elderly person that plants wickedness
 His children shall harvest evil
 If you are virtuous
 Continue to be virtuous
 If you are wicked
 Continue in wickedness
 Both virtues and vices
 Shall be rewarded!

Another existence of being is also deduced from Excerpt IV above. Human beings are created by *Olodumare*, but humans also have a part to play in making sure that they exist for long. Hence, the issue of marriage. In the Yoruba worldview, anyone who does not have children is regarded as a failure in life. Hence, one of the things the Yoruba desire from *Ọrúnmilà*, the witness of every human destiny, is children. *Olatunji* (1984:118) aptly captures the above view, he asserts that “Desire for children appears to be the most recurrent in *ẹṣẹ Ifá*, for the Yorùbá consider childlessness a misfortune, and children

are regarded as a major part of a man's greatness and success" (118). Oḃasa's poem corroborates the above view when he says for human to exist he/she has to have his/her own children:

Excerpt V

Oḃo dá'yá rẹ̀ lójú

Bí a bá lọ s'ájò

Bí á kò sí nínú ilé

Oḃo ẹ̀ni , á wo'lé de ni ...

Bẹ́kọ bá kù kán

Oḃo ẹ̀ni un la á fún un jẹ!

Abiamọ̀ kì í kú, Èhìn ní fì í t'òpó! (Oḃasa 1934:18).

The mother trusts her child

If one goes on a journey

If one is not around at home

It is the child that takes care of one's home

If the pap-ball remains

It is given to one's child

A mother never dies

She only goes on transition.

Three philosophical thoughts will be discussed from Excerpts IV and V. One is the importance attached to procreation and bearing of children among the Yoruba. To the Yoruba, anybody that has a child is believed to exist forever; hence the prayer *ò ò ní kú láéláé*; (you shall never die). A person is believed to be in existence for life, if he or she has children that live after him/her; hence the saying *abiamọ̀ kì í kú* (A mother never dies) in Excerpt V.

Excerpt IV shows that it will be disastrous that after all the desire to have children in order to prolong one's existence in life, what one now bequeaths to one's child is curse and evil, because *àgbà tó gbin èèbu ikà, orí oḃo rẹ̀ ní yòò hù lé* (an elderly that planted evil, his children shall harvest wickedness). If this is the case, the essence of existence of such a person is already jeopardised. The didactic significance of this excerpt is that for human to really exist, they must conform to what is acceptable as "good" always.

The second is the fact that man is on earth to assist God in re-creation of man through procreation. However, as man's creation and re-creation continue, death is imminent. Here, *ájò* (journey), within the context of the poem can mean physical travelling or eternal travelling because, as God is the giver of life, he is also the "ultimate source to which man and all other things must return." If man now lives with this consciousness, it is pertinent to conform

to what is regarded as good always and train one's children in a way that they will keep one's existence for life. This is encapsulated in the poem "Àkẹ̀jù and Òmùgò":

Excerpt VI

Gòngòsú Èdìdàré
Èni tó bímọ ti kò gbọ́n
Iná jó o tàbí ko jó o?
A ni "ọmọ rẹ kò gbọ́n"
O ni kí ó sa ma kú"
Kíni ni hà á p'ọmọ
Bí kò ọsagò
Orí n' fọmọ kò lè wí
Inú n' run ọmọ kò lè sọ
À ní Níbo ni n' dùn ọ?
Ọmọ n' sunkún sá...
Gbàwo lọmọ ò ní kú? (Ọbasá 1934: 19).

A fool of Edidare
 Whoever bore an unwise child
 Is he doomed or not?
 We say your child is unwise
 You responded that he should not die
 What kills a child like lack of wisdom
 A child is suffering of headache
 He could not express himself
 He is suffering of stomach ache he kept mute
 We enquired from him of the
 actual place he is suffering pain
 He keeps on weeping
 Will the child not die?

The following excerpt is an emphasis of the essence of wisdom and child's proper upbringing.

Excerpt VII

Bọmọ ẹni kò bá gbọ́n
A kì í fẹlọ rán an nísé
Baba ni bí e ti n' lọ yí,
Bí ẹ bá disú tán
Kí ẹ tan ná ran'ba oko

Omùgò a fífún rin
Ọmọ disu tán l'óko
Ọ tanná ran'ba dandan
Nwón ni Ha ha ha!
Èmi ló sè yíí?
O ní Bàbá on ló ní
B'on bá diṣu tán
K'on tan'ná ran abà oko!
N jẹ bọmọ ẹni kò bá gbọn
A kì í ran a nísẹ lẹlẹ-ń-lọ! (Oḃasá 1934: 20).

If a child is unwise
 Do not speak irony to him when sending him on errand.
 Father said 'As you are going'
 After tying the yams
 Make sure you set the barn on fire
 A fool that walks with his intestine
 He tied the yams
 And set the barn on fire
 And after a great pandemonium
 The question was asked 'why did you set the barn on fire?'
 He responded "it was father's instruction that
 I should set the barn on fire after tying the yam".
 If your child is not wise
 Don't speak to him ironically!

From excerpt VII above, the vivid illustration of the behavior of a foolish child is to emphasize the essence of training a child properly, in order to affirm the Yoruba philosophy of real existence. The action of the unwise child in the excerpt above could lead to both material and spiritual death and this may end one's existence physically and eternally. The peak of the didacticism in the excerpt is the last line. It could be averred that different strokes should be for different people. Parents should nurture their children in wisdom. They should take cognizance of the level of knowledge and experiences of their children.

The third philosophical issue revealed in Excerpt V is the issue of death. This is further exemplified in his poem titled "Ikú."

Excerpt VIII
Aiye lajò, Ọrun nilé
Bí a bá kú láiyé

*A ó ò rọrun re simi
 Àsikò la ò mọ̀
 Ọmọdẹ a máa kú
 Àgbà a rìn rìn a sọ̀nù
 Kò sẹni tíkú kò lẹ kàn (Ọbasá 1934: 22).*

The world is a journey , heaven is our home
 If we die on earth
 We shall go and rest in heaven
 It's just that nobody knows the time of his/her death
 Young children die
 Adults also die
 Death is inescapable

The above excerpt aptly explains the Yoruba existential belief in death as an inevitable end of man, as all humans will return to Olodumare the giver of life. It is also revealed that death is not limited to the elderly, anybody can die at any time. The question of dying at a younger age or at old age, is also answered in the same poem, as seen below:

Excerpt IX
*Şákùnlẹ̀ yàn òun làdáyé rí
 Ìgbẹ̀yìn ayé kò lu mọ̀ (Ọbasá 1934: 22).*

That which is chosen kneeling down
 Is what one is seeing on earth
 Nobody knows the end of the world.

The above excerpt is in line with the Yoruba belief in destiny. According to Abimbola (1975) and Ọlatunji (1984), and other African Philosophers, like Olajide (2012) and Bamikole (2016), man's success, failure, exploit on earth and death have been predestined by the person's *orí* (the inner-being). *Orí* is a detailed blueprint of one's earthly life till death. If a person chose a good head (inner-being) from Àjàlá Alámọ̀ (Abimbola 1975) while coming to earth, such a person will do well on earth. But if a person chose a bad inner-being such a person will not prosper on earth. This explains why somebody can die young and another person can die at old age; it is what they chose while kneeling to receive their destiny before birth. This metaphysical doctrine of determinism is also portrayed in Ọbasá's poem titled "Èwà":

Excerpts X

Ìwà lẹ̀wà
Morí lọ
Má mẹ̀wà lọ
Òòjọ̀ lẹ̀wà á bọ
Orí ní i bá ni gbélé ọkọ. (Oḅasá 1945: 24).

Character is beauty
 Go with your inner being
 Do not go with your beauty
 Beauty will return the same day
 While your inner being will
 Ever remain with one in one's matrimonial home

Within the framework of Yoruba philosophy as portrayed in Ifa literary corpus, it is only one's *orí* (the inner being) that can accompany one on one's farthest journey in life and will never forsake one. This is as portrayed in Odù Ògúndá Méjì:

Ọ̀rúnmilà ló dọ̀dẹ̀dẹ̀ ní bẹ̀rẹ̀
Ifá, mo ní 'Ta ló tó Alásàán bá rokun?
Orí ònkan
Ló'tó Alásàán bá ròkun
Bí mo bá lówó lówó
Orí ní ñ ó rò fún
Orí i mi iwọ̀ ni
Bí mo bá bímọ̀ láyé
Orí ní ñ ó rò fún
Orí i mi iwọ̀ ni
Ire gbogbo ñ mo bá ní láyé
Orí mi iwọ̀ ni (Abimbola 1983: 92).

Orùnmilà said that on entering a room
 One stoops down at the doorway
 Ifa, the question is ' who among the
 gods can accompany his devotee
 On a distant journey over the seas
 Without turning back?
 It is Ori alone
 Who can accompany his devotee
 To any place without turning back
 If I have money

It is my Ori I will praise
 My Ori, it is you
 If I have children on earth
 It is my Ori to whom I will
 Give the praise
 My Ori, it is you
 All good things I have on earth
 It is Ori I will praise
 My Ori, it is you. (Abimbola's translation)

According to Yoruba belief and as portrayed in Excerpts IX and X above, *ori* is unalterable and irrevocable. However, some scholars hold contrary opinion, arguing that one's destiny may be altered. As noted by Idowu (1962) and Makinde (1983) there are different ways in which one's destiny may be altered. These are highlighted in Olajide (2012) as follows:

- (a) Appealing to Orunmila the arch-divinity can change one's destiny from bad to good.
- (b) *Ọmọ ará-ayé*, the children of the world, known as earthly re-creation can change one's destiny from good to bad.
- (c) One's own unpleasant character (attitude) like pride, laziness, impatience, inordinate ambition can change one's destiny from good to bad.
- (d) Becoming a devotee of *Ọ̀rúnmilà* can changed one character from bad to good.
- (e) One's destiny may be change to worse by the machinations of the 'ẹnikẹjì' one's heavenly replica from good to bad (146-147).

It is obvious from *Ọbasá's* poetry that he does not get involved in the argument of whether a destiny can change or not. However, in his presentation of ethical issues, one can deduce that he also is of the opinion that one's unpleasant character can bring misfortune unto one, and even one's children. A father that is virtuous automatically extends the benefits of "good life" his children, while a father that embraces wickedness will also bring evil upon his children.

The poet also projected hospitality, kindness, respect for elders, truthfulness, patience, and hard work in his poems. Equally, he condemns vices like lying, adultery, pride, laziness, covetousness, theft, envy, thuggery, and disobedience. It could be averred that one of the things central to *Ọbasá's* poetry is the moral values as well as their relation to the existent of society. For instance, in the poem titled "Oore", humans are encouraged to do good, because failure to be good will have negative effect on the members of their families.

In "Òtító", the poet also admonishes people to be truthful. The negative impact of getting oneself involved in some vices, like pride and overdoing things is seen in "Alásejù", where he discusses the power tussle between the British government and the Germans during the second World War.

One thing that is glaring is that many of the moral values raised in Oḃasa's poem fall within the ambit of Yoruba philosophy of iwà ọmọ́lúàbí. In one of his poems, using external coloration from Ifa literary corpus, he extols iwà rere (good character) above other things:

Excerpt XI

Ìwà rere lèsó ènia
 A-bá- mu-rágbá- tagbá
 Ìwà, iwà là n wá, iwà...
 Ọmọ to dára tí kò níwà
 Ọmọ-lángidi ni !
 Bobinrin dára bí Egbára
 Bí kò níwà
 Ọmọ lángidi ni!
 B'ọkúnrin sunwòn, sunwòn
 Bí eja inú omi
 Bí kò níwà rere
 Ọmọ lángidi ni!
 B'enia jọba, bí kò níwà
 Ọmọ lángidi ni! (Oḃasá 1934: 12).

Good character is human's beauty
 It is good character we are looking for
 A beautiful child without character
 Is good for nothing
 A lady as beautiful as a beautiful rat
 Without character
 Is good for nothing
 A man may be very handsome
 Like a fish in the river
 If he is without good character
 He is good for nothing
 If a man is crowned as an Oba
 And is without good character
 He is good for nothing!

We can argue from the above excerpt that Oḃasá recommends the exhibition of good character to every member of society. Children and adults, males and females, as well as rulers and the ruled. In essence, in discussing the issue of Yoruba philosophy about character, the various components of the society are addressed in his poem. Oḃasá believes in the fact that the true existence of each individual in the society could be found when people relate in moral uprightness with one another. In essence, he is an advocate of everybody having a sense of community in all that is done. If people have a communal sense they will walk in truth, kindness, and hospitality.

Above all, Oḃasa is also an advocate of the African family. The communal philosophy of what Mbiti (1969) refers to as “I am because we are and since we are therefore I am” (108) drive the ethical issues in his poems. Therefore, in many of his poems, Oḃasa contends that human does not suffer the outcome of his/her attitude and character alone. Oḃasa’s philosophical position is in tandem with Sartre’s (1975) view:

Thus the man who becomes aware of himself through the cogito also perceives others, and he perceives them as a condition of his own existence. He realizes that he cannot be anything unless others recognize it as such. In order to get any truth about myself, I must have contact with another person. The other is indispensable to my own existence, as well as to my knowledge about myself (37-38).

The above position can be vividly seen in Oḃasá view in “Àwọṅ Ejò”, where he encourages working in unity:

Excerpt XII
 Ìbẹ̀rù kò jẹ́
 Ká tejò mọ̀lẹ̀
 Bí ẹ́ ti ń rejò tí ń sá
 Bẹ́l Èjò ń sá pamọ́!
 Ojú tó bá rọ̀
 Un na ni rorẹ́ i sọ!
 Şe nj Ejò níyà
 Oḃkan ni ni, ẹ́ pá á
 Òun ni yí, ẹ́ pa á
 Tani ha jẹ́ dúró?
 Báwọṅ Sèbẹ̀ tèle wọṅ
 Káwọṅ Òjòlá má wọ́ bọ́ lẹ́hìn
 Tani ha jẹ́ dúró? (Oḃasá 1945: 31).

Fear prevents people from
 Trampling on snakes
 As the man that spots snakes
 Is fearful
 So, the snake also is hiding
 It is a soft face
 That breeds pimples!
 The snake suffers because it moves alone
 Here is a snake, let's kill it
 Here is another one, let's kill it
 Who can dare to confront snakes in their multitudes?
 Many snakes, with cape-cobra (spit-snake) coming in front
 And python-constrictor coming behind,
 Who can wait to confront?

The moral lesson in the above excerpt is unity in diversity. Instead of being individualistic, the communal philosophy of the Yoruba should be the watchword. This will have good implications for the growth of Nigeria as a whole and it will promote sustainable development.

Through the use of satire and humor, Oḡbasá' also addresses the philosophy of harmonious living. For instance, Oḡbasá is not a Muslim but he uses his poem to teach religious tolerance, in "Onímòle":

Excerpts XIII
Bísímìláì, Lau! Lau!
Lo dífá fún Mòle
Abẹ̀wẹ̀ rẹ̀gẹ̀ jẹ̀!
T'ó faiyé gbogbo sẹ̀ fẹ̀ jẹ̀
Bìsì kì í là lásán!
Ọ̀rẹ̀ Onímòle l'èmi. (Oḡbasá 1934: 9).

Bísímìláì, Lau! Lau!
 Divine for Muslims
 Who uses long garments
 Who enjoys every good things
 Who just don't pray for fun
 Am a friend to Muslims.

Hence, he extols tolerance, and living harmonious life. These are virtues that bring peace and tranquility to society.

Didacticism in Obasa's Poems

Presentation of didacticism identified in Obasa's poems is in tandem with Bamgbose's (2007) classification on Fagunwa's novels. The five types of didactic presentation are direct, indirect, scenic presentation, reference to folk narratives and humor. It is very difficult to draw a line among these forms of didacticism because there are times when Obasa juxtaposed two or more forms in a poem. However, the form that pervades all the poems in Obasa's poems is indirect didacticism. This is because most of the traditional sayings he assembled are primarily meant for social charter. The sayings are meant to instruct, teach, and moralize. For instance, in the poem "Ahun", a juxtaposed form of didacticism is deployed to teach on the negative side of being stingy. The use of the folktale on Tortoise, the Trickster, is adapted to project a miser and to highlight this basic attribute:

Excerpt XIV
Abahun, Àjàpá
Tírókò, ọkọ Yánníbo
Ìn ijàpá kì í sọsọ
Tani pe ẹ s'Ahun l'óge?
Ayán te mi jọ
Èrà ta mi jọ
Atele igi moogun jẹ !
Ahun kò pilẹ raşọ ewu
À fi bó bá rigbero
L'ára aşọ-aláşọ! (Obasa 1934: 4).

Tortoise
 The husband of Yannibo
 The destiny of tortoise does not decorate
 Who asked you to decorate Tortoise?
 Cockroach, please gather me together
 Ants, please gather me together
 Who follows trees to make medicine effective!
 Tortoise cares not to buy clothes
 Except if it is able to collect
 From someone else's clothes.

Using the Tortoise folktales on how the Tortoise depends on others creatures, instead of buying cloth for itself, Obasa projects the miserable and dependent life lived by a miser. This way, Obasa uses stories to deploy

didacticism. In the same poem, Obasa makes use of indirect didacticism. Indirect didacticism is used when the speaker wants the audience to personally draw meaning from a story or a saying. The indirect and scenic presentation of didacticism unfolds in the poem as the author uses symbolism to depict the end result of being stingy and miserly:

Excerpt XV

Má ba mi lo sọ mi

Ipára jẹ ẹ tán nínú okè

Ma bá mi jẹ su mi

Iṣu gbebè o rà si

Ma bá mi jẹkọ mi

Ẹkọ di bibu sínú ile!

Ma ba mi jeere mi

Eree di jiju sinu ile!

Ma ba mi Kọpẹ mi

Ẹyin dirà sòrun opẹ`

Iyán ahun ni idewu

Oḃẹ ahun ni i hohi (Obasá 1934: 5).

Do not wear my cloth.

The cloth in the sack was eventually eaten by termite

Do not eat my yam

The yam eventually got spoilt in the heap

Do not eat my pap-ball

The pap-ball eventually got spoilt

Do not eat my bean

The bean eventually lost its value

Do not harvest my plam kernel bunch.

The palm kernel bunch got spoilt

It is the pounded yam of a miser that also gets spoilt

The soup of a miser grows mold.

In Obasa's attempt to achieve the peak of the didacticism in the poem, he uses a combination of scenic presentation and direct comment to warn the miserly people:

Excerpt XVI

Ajá-nlapa nitori oo là,

O ko jẹun ka nú?

Ní gbogbo ara gbẹ bi awọ?

Owó ahun Esu nii ba, a na an
A beeri lójú ọwọ!
À ni k>Ahun o tètè
Fepo okòwó jàgà
O lon ko le
Fepo okòwó jàgá
Epo àrùn pọ ni t'on
Ahun fepo arun jàgà
Àgà wú mọ níkùn kalẹ̀
O disẹ epo mimu!
Inu Ahun wu rabata
O ran Yannibo lepo
Aṣehinwa aṣehinbọ
Kinu ahun to rọlẹ̀
Epo donigbiwo!
Njẹ tete fepo okòwó jàgà (Ọbasá 1934: 5).

Ajanlapa! Because you are poor!
 You refuse to feed well?
 Imagine your body as dry as hide
 It is Eṣù that spends the miser's money
 Someone with a soiled hand
 The tortoise was instructed to sacrifice palm oil
 The sacrificing palm oil was too much for his ailment
 Since he refused to sacrifice palm oil
 His stomach protruded
 Then force to lick palm oil
 When tortoise had protruding stomach
 He sent Yannibo for some palm oil
 Eventually before Tortoise regained his good health
 Palm oil had cost more
 One had better listen to instruction on time.

In the above excerpt, attitude of adoring money and saving money to the detriment of one's health is seen in "Ahun". The scenic presentation of the attitude of a miser, is topped with the direct moralization that a stitch in time saves nine, and that procrastination is the thief of time.

Also, in another poem, "Ọkànjúà-Olẹ̀", Ọbasá adopts a combination of scenic presentation, direct moralization, and indirect didacticism to moralize against theft and coveteousness. In this poem, he starts with scenic presentation; follows it with direct comment, and ends it with indirect moralization:

Excerpt XVII

Ọkànjúà t'on tolo
Ọgboogba ni nwon ise!
Ọkanjuwa bokele,
Oju re la mi!
Ma je su ma jeru
Nibi ayo lo mo
Kòtó, kòtó, ohun t'ole
A feru patie ni i to won (Oḃasá 1934: 11).

Covetous and stealing
 Are equivalent
 The covetous one bites a big morsel
 That makes his eyes draw tears
 Feeding on both small and big pieces of yam
 Ends up filling one's stomach
 The insatiable one
 Ends up not contented
 Until he is thoroughly flogged.

He follows the submission on the act of coveteousness and theft with a direct comment on the outcome such an act may have on the children of those involved in such vices:

Excerpt XVIII

Òní 'sònpònná ni o pa á
Ọlá, 'Sàngó ni ó pa á'
Ọtúnla "Ọya ni ó pa á"
Èpè kò jomọ olè ó dàgbà (Oḃasá 1934: 11).

Today, may Sanponna kill him
 Tomorrow, may Sango kill him
 The day after, may Oya kill him
 Curses as above make the children of thief die prematurely.

The metaphysical belief in Sonponna, Sango, and Oya among the Yorùbá is also reflected in the above excerpt. These deities are believed to detest stealing. Once they are used to curse a thief the repercussion, it is believed, will be on the thief's children. Hence, the direct didactic import of this excerpt is

that a thief should desist from stealing in order not to impaired the destiny of his or her children.

Similarly, in the same poem, Obasá deploys indirect didacticism to warn wives that support their husbands to get involved in stealing:

Excerpt XIX

Eḡemejì láya ole isun mú sí
Ijọ tọwọ ọkọ ba de
Aṣẹda ẹran àjẹyì!
T'on t'ata iganran
Ni imú wọn sun mú sí
Ijọ tọwọ ba tọkọ
Orí awe di gbii !
Nidi-ogun l'Oja ọba. (Obasá 1934: 11).

The wife of thief raises her nostrils twice
 The day the husband brings home loot
 She prepares meat in excess with no pepper
 Which makes her raise her nostrils
 The day the husband is caught
 And beheaded as a sacrifice to Ogun.

The aftermath of stealing in the above is the inferred moralization used to warn on the evil of stealing.

Finally, through the use of satire, Obasá directly moralizes. For instance, in the poem “Ilú Sojá”, using the rhythm of drum, he composes a satirical poem to condemn wasteful spending:

Excerpt XX

O tori obinrin búṣẹ́kún
Búṣẹ́kún, Busẹ́kún
Ó torí obinrin búṣẹ́kún
Ọmọ obìnrin ni ọ́
Sá máa yan nìsọ
Ṣe bi ọkùnrin
Bó bá jáfara
Ọwọ ọtá yo tẹ ọ
O jẹ̀bà, ó jẹ̀ raiṣi
O tún jiyán, ó jàmàlà
Ó jẹ̀ dodo, ó jẹ̀pà
Oníjẹkújẹ̀ nì wọ

Bo bá n̄ṣe bẹ̀jẹ
O ko lè ni sòkòtò. (Oḃasá 1934: 14).

He wept because of a woman
 Weeping! Weeping!!
 He wept because of a woman
 You were born of a woman
 Continue marching on
 Act like a man
 If you are careless
 You will be caught by your enemy
 You ate *ẹ̀bà* and rice
 You ate pounded yam and *àmàlà*
 You ate fried plantain you ate groundnut
 You are just eating, anyhow
 If you continue eating in this manner
 You will not have clothes
 If you continue eating in this manner
 You will not have any trouser.

The moral import is in the last four lines. It can be deduced in these four lines that if someone indulges in living a riotious life, such a person will end in penury. Also, in “*Ìrẹ̀jẹ*” or “*Ògbufò Kewu Ìbàdàn*”, Oḃasá deploys humor to condemn wickedness and to advance the importance of tolerance:

Excerpt XXI
‘A-la-mu, tara-kefa
Fa-a- la rà buka”
O ni:
Ọ́lórún yíò mu’ka sùgbón
“Alefí, Ba sin, Lamu
Nugunda, Mimu, Ra, Ja
O ní:
Ẹ̀ni tá bá jùlọ̀ l àá irẹ̀jẹ
Mo jù ọ̀ lọ̀, mo rẹ̀ ọ̀ jẹ
O ní:
“Lakum dinni kun
Wali a dinni” (Oḃasá 1945: 34).

‘A-la-mu, tara-kefa
Fa-a- la rà buka”

Which means:

God will apprehend the wicked but

“Alef, Ba, Sin, Lamu

Nugunda, Mimu, Ra, Ja

Which means:

One cheats on anybody junior to him//her

I cheat you because I am your senior

“Lakun dinni kun,

Wali a dinni

Meaning – practice your religion

While I should be allowed to practice mine.

The first two lines of the above excerpt is an introductory Arabic verse in the Quran that usually precedes prayer and call to Allah (God), but the poet changes its meaning to condemn the vice of wickedness. This teaches that the Supreme Being will deal with the wicked, hence, people should stop wickedness. He goes further to humorously pronounce some Arabic letters and change the meanings to project the evil of cheating an elderly person. In short, Oḃasá, through his poems, advances the ideology of *iwà omólúàbí* that gives prominence to respect for elders. He preaches religious tolerance in the last part of the satirical projection of the act of some imaginary deceptive interpreters.

Conclusion

This essay has examined how Oḃasa has successfully deployed his poetic creation to expound the Yoruba philosophy. The paper stressed that some of the philosophical tenets embedded in Oḃasá’s poetry are for didactic import. All the five forms of didacticism are deployed by Oḃasa to strengthen philosophical ideas of his poems. The philosophical tenets, apart from instructing, teaching, and moralizing are also for creating a social order. Some tenets of philosophy, like metaphysics, ethics and epistemology, are reflected in Oḃasá’s poetry. This essay affirmed that there is a close link between poets and philosophers. The ethical issues identified in the poems are for the promotion of authentic existence, a form of existentialism that is based on putting the society before an individual. Therefore, the paper advocates that the sustainable development desired by the Nigerian society would be a reality if the Yoruba philosophy embedded and moralized in Oḃasa’s poems are taught and imbibed by all.

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