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## A Thematic Study of Some Selected Wisdom and Exhortion Poems of Buniyamin Matala of Ibadan Land

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By

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### **Abstract**

*The thrust of this paper is on the thematic study of some selected poems of a Nigerian poet, Buniyamin Matala, whose poems have been over the years be beneficial to the people. Some of the selected poems include wisdom and exhortations poems among others. Also, literary appraisal of the poems were done to appreciate the richness of those poetical words.*

Shaikh Buniyamin Tahir Matala was born in Ibadan about 1901, during the reign of Bashorun Apanpa as the Olubadan of Ibadan. His mothers name is Awcro while his father is Tahir Malik of Oke Adu in Ibadanland. Buniyamin Matala of Ibadanland was a very learned man. He was an outstanding prolific Arabic Scholar who was respected for his poetical compositions. The focus of this paper is to examine some of his wisdom and exhortation poems so as to guide us against corruption dishonesty and embezzlement.

### **His Education**

Buniyamin received sound education from his father. Under his father he learnt the arts of reading Qur'an off head and writing Arabic correctly. He studied Islamic Jurisprudence, Quranic exegesis, rhetoric, etymology, grammar and Arabic Literature.

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### **His Activities**

At 20, Buniyamin started teaching Arabic at Lagun where he established an informal Arabic class where he taught a cream of student youths, likewise he equally organized Arabic lessons for his brothers and students who patronized him in his house. After he learnt teaching in 1940, at Islamic mission School Odoye Ibadan, Tahir Matala served as an Arabic Instructor. Later he bolted out in 1946 because of obvious management problems and thus became a textile merchant at Gbag Ogunpa market which he left in 1949.

Consequently he started teaching Arabic and Islamic studies at Ojc, in Ibadan after the close of business in the evening. His students and most of those who even passed through his fathers tutelage scored Buniyamin higher than his father in terms of scholarship.

He spoke and wrote Arabic with astonishing fluency to such an extent that conversation or discussion with him did not bar him from writing. There is an assertion that he assisted in scholarly works of other Ulama in the fields of Islamic and Arabic Literature. He was the secretary of Zumuratul-Udaba committee of scholars in Ibadanland.

### **His Marriage**

He got married to 'Atiqah Amoke in 1929. Later he married Jarau and both women were blessed with children. Atiqah Amoke the first wife gave birth to Kafilat and Mas'ud. Unfortunately, kafilat died at 7 leaving Mas'ud as a survivor. Atiqah again gave birth to twins, but they did not live long to see their naming.

Jarau, the second wife also gave birth to two children, the first was Murtala who died in prime of his youth while the second was Sekinah who died after wedding and left no child.

### **His Works**

Buniyamins works can be divided into two

- (a) His personal compositions.
- (b) His commentaries on the works of other authors.

### **His Personal Compositions**

1. Sword of proof against the people of aggression. (Sayf-burhan ila Ahl-t-Tughyan)
2. Guidance of students to the door of repentance. (Murshid - t - Tulab ila bab-1 Matab)
3. Guiding the Heedless to the lenience of the forgiver. (Dalil-Ghafil Ila afwil - Ghafir)
4. Guiding friends on the\*way to brethrens. (Hadiyatul- Khilan fi tarshid - 1 Ikhwan)

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5. Grammar book in the knowledge of 'hrab. (Kitab Targhibat Tulab fi ilm-1 -1 'Irab)
6. The Easy knowledge in (knowing) the names of animals. (Tashil-L-1-Uluum fi Asma' L -Hayawan
7. A book on the knowledge of Islamic religion (written in Yoruba language)
8. Poem Dictionary, (al- Qamus - ash 'iriyah)

### **His Commentaries on the Works of other Authors**

1. A grammar book which is a commentary on 'Rai yatul-ihrab. 3 Volumes.
2. The Guidance of Lovers to the Composition of our Intellectual master which is a commentary of Hadid - The author being Ismail
3. Easing of difficult in the composition of Ibn SuhayL.
4. The way of comfort in the explanation of the light of age.

### **His Death**

Buniyamin died on November 27, 1959 at his residence Matala compound in Oke Adu Ibadan.

Arabic Text of the Selected Poem

من الرحمان تذكرة العقاب	هلا تهدي فقد جاءكم نذير
لحشد المال صرت لها اكياب	لقد صرت جوابة كل ارض
ستورته بغيظك والعياب	الا تدري نأت المال فان
لقد نبذوك في حفر الجداث	ويحصل بعد ركسك كل فرح
ذهلنا من هو الخل الموات	وبعد يوم او يومين فاسمع
وتنتعش الجوارح بانسلات	ستعلم حين نلحقك الدلت
وفيها ذنب جهر سر الموات	ستندم حين قد اوتيت طرس
وتدهش من تكاثر في العصات	ترمن كان يفتحر افتحارا
ولا يدري اناس ما الممات	ويحتفون الصفوة بكل فرع
وحلوا بالنساء وبالصفاء	وأهل الله في ذا اليوم علو
ولا تجديك مالك في الجداث	فرغت العمر في الطلب المعاش
جميع المال ذالك في البعاث	ستسأل عن فتيل او قليل
اصابعك بدون انى الغياث	ستفرع ثم تبكى او بعض
فاوداك تحاملك الحراج	وقد وقرت وزرامرنا
تهرع بالتماسك عفوناج	فإن الله غفار سخر
ولكن بحر ذنبك ما يغيض	وهل تجديك الناصح كل حين
الى الوعاظ تذكرة الحفاظ	لقد كتبت لكم تذكير فأصغى

### **Translation of the Selected Poem:**

1. Will you find the right path? Verily a Warner and reminder of punishment from the Beneficent has conic.
2. You have gone round all places, in order to accumulate wealth, you are looking for wealth at all cause..

3. Don't you know that (wealth) shall perish?  
And it shall be inherited by your inferior and criticizer.
4. They will be very happy after you might be buried. They will all abandon you  
in the barren grave
5. Listen. After one or two days, we all forget  
Who have been a real friend
6. You will know when you are resurrected, All the detaching parts of the body  
will re-assemble with fear and dread (of God)
7. And you will regret when you are given (your) paper, therein evil deed and  
secrets will manifest
8. You will see special people boasting in pride. And you will be astonished by  
those engrossed in disobedience.
9. They (Angel) shall surround in queues with frighteness and people will not  
know. What to say after death.
10. People of God (will be) on top on the Day, and they (will be) beautified with  
ornament and neatness.
11. You have spent (your) life running after wealth. Your money will not benefit  
you in the grave.
12. You will account all the money for and where you earned it on the Day of  
Resurrection.
13. You will be terrified and later weep or bite your finger over all (your) sins.
14. You are over burdened with sin which you commit every lime, it had destroyed  
you.
15. Allah is ever Forgiving, Magnanimous. Hasten to seek pardon of the Saviour
16. Why not at all times take advantage of the admonisher the ocean of your sins  
cannot berthed.
17. Verily, the reminders have been compiled for you; listen to the admonishers

### **Appraisal of the Poem**

The poet discusses the futility of amassing wealth Similarly righteous and good conduct will benefit man on the Day of Judgement.

The poet makes use of Iqtibas (Allusion). This is when something is referred to parallels from other sources. The allusion gets its name from the source it is referred to. When a poet or writer composes a piece of writing with direct quotation from the Quran or Hadith without using his own words, then it is known as pure or direct quotations. When a prose or poetry contains an element of Quran or 1 hadith with a mixture of the writer's own words then the former is called *al-hitibas tit-Tad in in* while the latter is referred to as *al-Igtibas al-ffallu*,

The poet says:- You will account for all the money from where you earned it on the Day of Resurrection. He is referring to Quranic verse that says "Then shall ye be questioned that Day about the joy (ye indulged in). Q: 102:8

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The whole message of the poet is meant to dispel acquisitiveness and encourage nice and just kind because of accountability on the Day of Judgment. Allah's knowledge is Full and Vigilant at all times. On that Day Allah, He will reveal to men, secrets which they had long forgotten, for the Books of their Deeds will be made manifest at the Judgement place.

If the good predominates, he will be ushered into a life of good pleasure and satisfaction. This will of course be on another plane. The harvest of evil deeds is obviously a biting poisonous snake in the pit of Hell-fire. Therefore one should not allow honesty to be deceived by worldly desires.

By and large the techniques employed by the poet in putting his message across are very effective. Apart from adding beauty and colour to his composition, it creates a lightened sense of social and religion realities.

### **Conclusion**

Buniyamin Matala's poem advocates for principles of conduct. He wages war against unwhole some practices in the society. He throws light on the proper accountability on the Day of Judgement. If one is made a leader in this world, he should know that the people's welfare and wealth are entrusted to him. It is his responsibilities to take care of them and discharge his responsibility equitably.

According to the messages of Matala's poem, there is a need to reinforce justice and fair play within the government functionaries. Social justice is also necessary. We should also be partners in progress to eradicate crisis, oppression bribery and corruption. We should be aware that kickback, 4, 1, 9, produces false Unity, hinders development, encourages political apathy and constitutes a cog in the wheel of political stability. Corruption breeds mass poverty and thus in turn creates widespread social disconnect that spills over into social crimes. Regrettably some of our leaders are so greedy that they have subverted the entire machinery of the State to serve their needs. Large scale frauds are found in the Public- Sector. Buniyamin Matala's poems serve as a warning to them. By following the messages of our poet, we will be able to assure our people of a better future.

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