

# Significance of Trickster in Igbo Folktales in Education of the Child: A Lesson to All Nigerians

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**Abstract:** *Folktale is universal. It is found in all parts of the world. One of the outstanding characteristics of folktale is the possession of trickster. Trickster has different name in the tales of different ethnic groups of the world. In Hausa, he is “ereke”, in Yoruba he is “ijapa”, in Ashanti (Ghana) he is “ananse”, in Trinidad, he is fox, in other parts of Europe, he is either rabbit, monkey or hare etc. A trickster is often something of a rogue. He manages to extricate himself from intrigue and sometimes saves himself from dangerous situation by a display of mental ability. The trickster of the folktales of the Igbo people of Nigeria is tortoise ‘Mbe’. Tortoise is not an outstanding animal. In the case of gathering of animals, he would least be noticed. There are large, ferocious, and beautiful animals that would make the presence of tortoise unnoticed. But when it comes to folktales, tortoise is the smallest among the characters. He so much defeats other characters by his deceptions. His greatest weapon is lies. Most of Igbo folktales are moral tales. They teach moral, yet trickster plays prominent role in the tales of Igbo people. In other words trickster is used in the education of the young. The writer investigated to find reasons for such development through reading books and journals relating to the topic. She studied six Igbo folktales and also through oral interviews of some prominent Igbo people of ages ranging from 20-70 yrs of age. The writer found out amongst other things that Igbo world view on life is responsible to the use of tricksters in their education of the young.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Pakistan is ranked world’s sixth most populous country. Its population growth rate is 2 percent with an estimated population of over 18.6 million (Pakistan Economic Survey, 2013-14).

### 1.0.1. Definition

Folktale is fiction. It is one of the components of oral literature. Obiechina (1993:39) defines folktale as:

*Distinct, imaginative stories told for amusement, entertainment and education. They may deal with the experiences of individual human being or animals. They often contain some moral or clinching exemplum, even though they are told essentially to provide entertainment, a strong didactic purpose is implicit in them.*

Folktales are distinct, imaginative stories told by the folks. These stories play vital role in education of the young, they provide a common line for action to members of the society. Folktales also provide for the members of the society a character models for them to emulate. They also provide a form of entertainment for the members of the society.

Nwaozuzu (2006:29) sees folktales as, “a traditional prose narrative which evokes several images in the minds of the audience.” This means that the characters in the folktales are representative of certain characters in the society which portrays the theme or the lesson of the tale. Thus a tale may paint a picture of evil, goodness, laziness or industry,

innocence or guilt according to circumstances or natural characters of creatures implicit in the story. From these themes and the characters, one learns how to live his life as a useful member of his society.

Amongst such characters that feature prominently in Igbo folktales is tortoise. He is the traditional trickster. Tortoise tale accounts for over eighty percent of Igbo folktales.

## 2.00 People’s View about Tortoise Tales

Tortoise tales are those tales in which tortoise plays prominent role. The tales are fictitious and usually based on human or animal experiences and sometimes a mixture of the two. The tales are set on natural or supernatural environment. They deal mainly on adventures and incidents usually master minded and championed by tortoise or quest hero. These stories invariably have some morals or ordinary lessons to teach.

Various authorities have attested the deceptive character of tortoise or Africa tricksters in general. They show how tortoise uses deception in defeating characters in folktales. Egudu, (1973:73-75) discusses how tortoise was trying to dodge the burial ceremony of his father, for his father was at point of death and he had no money to take care of his burial ceremony. Since one’s inability to give his father a befitting burial was a taboo, so tortoise dodged by pretending that his profession of medicine making had taken him to a distant land irrespective of his father’s health. He told his people to handle any usual matter that occurred in his absence but send for him when an unusual matter happened. His people knew his intention, so when his father died, they sent for him telling him that a man from his

community was pregnant and that palm trees have borne palm fruits at their palm fronds. When tortoise heard the news, he returned and they showed him his father's corpse for him to make adequate preparation for his burial.

Akporobaro (2004:127) discusses the deception of tortoise in "the tortoise and rabbit." Rabbit dug a tunnel from his house to the market and uses it to cart away wares of others into his house. Tortoise trickishly got the information from him. By the threat of blackmail, tortoise forced him to dig the same tunnel for him. I doing this work for the tortoise, tortoise attempted to kill him (rabbit) by blocking the two ends of the tunnel while the rabbit was inside. The rabbit however dug out an outlet. He retaliated and tortoise died in the tunnel because he could not dig. Akporobaro then sums up;

*It acts as a constant reminder that those who plan evil for some other people have evil waiting for them at their door steps as it is manifested by the fate of tortoise who wanted to pay a good act of generosity with evil intentions.*

Referring to deceptive characteristics of African tricksters, Dundes (1971:180) says "while American Indian trickster tales like African trickster tales do employ deceit and deception, motifemes (Dundes 1964b-72-77b) the friendship frame is conspicuously absent.

## 2.0. Meaning of Trickster

Hornby (2006:1276) sees trickster as "as person who cheats people; a swindler" in African folktales, a trickster is often something of a rogue. He manages to extricate himself from intrigue and sometimes save himself from a dangerous situation by a display of his mental ability. Okpewho (1990:203) referring to trickster says, "Trickster represents what is feared but secretly converted." A trickster is often associated with forces of disorder within the society. He breaks the laws, tramples on customary usages and subverts established social conventions. Trickster features prominently in Igbo traditional folktales.

In Igbo folktales, tortoise is the trickster. He represents both positive and negative values which are cherished by Igbo people. "Mbe" is represented as greedy and wicked. He also represents breach of reciprocity of norm which is "aka nri kwọọ aka ekpe, aka ekpe akwọọ aka nri" meaning, one good turn deserves the other. Tortoise in one of tortoise tales, answers "unu nile, all of you after the birds lent him wings with which he flew to the sky in their company for a feasting invitation. Since the food presented to the birds in heaven is for "unu niile" and that being the tortoise new name, tortoise ate all the food leaving none for his companions. The birds were angry for tortoise action and so, they took back the wings from the tortoise. Tortoise became stranded. He fell from the sky to the earth and his shell broke to pieces, he begged snail to patch it for him snail

did so. This accounts for the reason why tortoise shell is checkered to this day.

The coming of European missionaries in Igbo land can be likened to the activities of 'mbe' (tortoise) in Igbo folktale. In view of this assertion, Obierika in Achebe (1958:124) laments:

*The white man is very clever, he came quickly with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now, he has won our brothers and our clan can no longer act as one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together, and we have fallen apart.*

This goes to support the view that the character of 'mbe' is ever present in our society. It can be found in relationship between man and man in his environment and between man and foreigners in his environment In Ubesie's *Juo Obinna*, Ubesie endows the character traits of tortoise 'mbe' to Obinna the hero of the novel.

Ubesie says in page one:

*E jiri okwu ndi a kowa akuko maka unu anumanu, a si na unu a na-ama atu ya bu mbe. Ma, na nke a, o bu mmadu ka a na-ekwu maka ya ihe a. Naani ihe di iche n'etiti mbe na Obinna bu na mbe bu anumanu, Obinna buru mmadu na-ekwu okwu. Nke ozọ, ma nke mbe mere ma nke mbe emeghi, o buru na aghughu adi n'ime ya, e bo ya mbe. Mbe anaghi ekwu okwu P. 32*

### Translation

*When these words are used in story about animals, it would be understood that the animal in question is tortoise. But this time, it is human being that is referred to. The only difference between Obinna and tortoise is that tortoise is an animal while Obinna is a human being that talks. Another being that in folktales those evil actions done tortoise and those not done by him are attributed to tortoise. Tortoise never talks<sup>p.5</sup>.*

The character of 'mbe' instructs the members of the society on how to live one's life wisely and how to make proper use of wit in tackling various problems of life. With proper use of wit, one can read another person's intention and arrive at conclusion on his own line of action.

## 3.00 Samples of Tortoise Tales

### 3.01. Tortoise and Women

One day, tortoise went to buy beans with out knowing the name of the commodity. The woman he first met asked him to tell them the name of the commodity otherwise they would not sell the commodity to him. He did not yield for he knew they would laugh at him since he was known as the father of wisdom. What he did was to go to another section of the market where he matched the beans spread by women. They quarreled with him and said the name of the commodity. He then went back to the section at which he was insulted. He said the name of the commodity and told them that he did not want to tell them at the initial time. In this tale, tortoise used trick in learning the name of the beans in order to prevent being insulted.

### **3.02. Tortoise and Ram**

Once upon a time, ram wrestled in the land of goats where he defeated goats and took them home for meals, as the rule of the land permitted. Tortoise begged ram to accompany him during his next trip and ram agreed. When they reached, ram defeated many goats, but tortoise, against ram's advice, fought a big goat that floored him. Tortoise begged ram to help him. Ram agreed and exchanged tortoise with two of his goats. Tortoise then won one skinny goat.

As they were going home, tortoise slashed the ears of his goat. He ate one and gave ram one. When tortoise felt that ram had eaten it, he demanded that ram should pay him. Ram gave him one ear from one of his goats. Tortoise refused tortoise rejected even a goat. He later took all the goats won by the ram. Ram went home empty handed.

Ram learnt a trick from the wise one. He placed mounded foo foo like a human being in the house of tortoise. When tortoise returned, he greeted the structure thinking he was his grand father. The structure said nothing. So he ran away. Ram took all the goats. Tortoise tried the same trick on ram but ram understood the trick and started eating the food. Tortoise rushed out from his hiding and begged ram to give him back portion of the food but Ram and his kinsmen finished the food.

This is one of the tales in which 'mbe' is a breach to Igbo belief in reciprocity of norm. Ram helped tortoise to get what he would eat during famine. Tortoise trickishly paid him by taking away all his goats because of the ear of his skinny goat he gave ram. But tortoise fell prey to ram's trick.

### **3.03 Why Tortoise has a Checkered Shell**

Once upon a time, animal decided to build a palace for their king. They contributed money which rat kept. It was tortoise that nominated rat as the treasurer. One day, tortoise convened a meeting of the animals and told them that God told him in a dream that all animals should pray hard else they would not accomplish the building of the palace. He asked them to face down and that nobody should stand up until God touched them. He rushed out and carted away the money in rat's custody. Later he returned and spread sand upon the animals as the touching of God on them. No sooner

did they leave than rat raised an alarm saying that the money in his possession had been stolen.

The animals then appointed wren as the treasurer. Tortoise repeated his trick of praying hard at the square. When he climbed the tree in which the wren kept the money, he fell down and broke his back which bears checkered scars to this day.

Tortoise by trick, invited all animals to the square where he told them to face down to enable him steal the public treasury in the custody of rat. On another occasion, he tried it and fell from the tree on which the wren kept the money. This tale exposes Igbo belief in retributive justice. If one is practicing evil, evil deed will surely visit the person, but if one is doing good deed, good deeds will visit the person.

### **3.04. Why Tortoise lives in River Swamp**

Tortoise and Beetle lived together and did every thing together. One day, they killed an antelope. Tortoise wanted a lion share of the meat as they were eating it. Beetle refused and tortoise smacked him and he fell into the bowl of stew. Tortoise ran into the bush for fear of being killed for murder. Beetle came out and ate up the meat. He went out and discussed with different people saying that tortoise killed beetle and ran away. He also said that a price has been put on his head. This made the tortoise run inner and inner of the bush always for fear being caught (Egudu, 1973:45-8). This is myth that explains why tortoise runs inner into the bush. He is doing so to avoid being caught and consequently punished for his alleged murder charge against beetle.

### **3.05 Why Fowls Scratch the Earth**

All animals agreed to build a parliament. They selected officers. Tortoise was the chairman. Fowl was the treasurer. The animals contributed their levies in three installments. On the day of the third installment, tortoise put a packet of ashes in the bag. When fowl carried the bag of money home, the ashes dropped along the road and so left a trailing line. Tortoise traced the money with the help of the line. He took the money away. When the animals needed the money for the project, fowl could not find it. When fowl told other animals that the money was missing, tortoise asked them to beat fowl to death but they refused. They give him time to search for the money and that is why chickens scratch the faces of the earth in search of the money (Egudu 1973:49-51).

This is one of the tales in which tortoise is successful in his mischief. He stole the money from fowl and suggested to the animals that fowl should be killed. The animals did not honour his opinion but rather they left the fowl to look for the money and bring it to them when he found it.

### **3.06. Tortoise Friendship with Rabbit**

The story goes thus:

The tortoise and rabbit were friends. They agreed to host each other once in a while. Then tortoise opted to host his friend first. He then collected ash, mixed it with other ripped plantains to sweeten it. When the rabbit came to his house, he ate it and the taste was so fantastic. Rabbit asked tortoise where he got the food. Tortoise told him that he got the ashes from the burning of his barns of yams and coco yams. Rabbit ran home and set his barns of yams and coco yams on fire. He collected the ashes, tasted it and it was bitter. He knew that tortoise had tricked him. In his turn to host tortoise, his wife threw him into the cooled soup as he instructed her. When tortoise arrived, the wife of rabbit told him that rabbit had gone out. She gave tortoise food to eat. Tortoise tasted the soup and it tasted rabbit. Tortoise on finishing the soup, went into the kitchen to take more soup. He lifted the spoon to take the soup, the rabbit kicked and filled the tortoise face and body with soup. Pains from the pepper could not allow him open his eyes. Tortoise was humiliated and decided to retaliate. He then invited rabbit to his house for a feast. Tortoise instructed his wife to throw him inside the soup as the soup was boiling and cover it. The wife obeyed. When rabbit arrived and enquired about the tortoise, the wife replied the he had gone out. She served him some food to eat. Rabbit tasted it and knew that tortoise was used in the soup making. He went into the kitchen and brought out the dead tortoise and finished the meat. (Ogbalu 2009).

This is one of the tales in which Obiechina (1967:163) says, “Trickster in some cases get tricked himself or even die as a result of his mischief. From the stories so far, one can see that tortoise cannot work for a decent living. He does not plan how to work and earn honestly. He does not feel that his honest effort is enough to feed him and his family. His ideas are how to take away other character belongings so that he would feed himself and his family. He can only succeed in cheating by deceiving others. Igbo people hate this character of ‘*mbe*’. They hate his fraudulent practices. In story telling session children are told that such actions of tortoise should not be emulated. They should rather work hard to achieve greatness.

#### 4.01. Characters in Folktales

Folktales make use of characters in telling their tales, Emenanjo (1971:XV) asserts, “one can say that all the characters in the folktales be they human beings, animals or spirits are stock characters. For every often each character represents a motif in the framework of the tale”. Emenajo cautions that the character in the folktales should not be judged in terms of realism as people understand them to be in the creative work because these characters rarely grow to become rounded. Forster (1927:73) adds that the characters are “constructed round a single idea or quality” The characters in folktales are created to illustrate a point and the view of the author. For example, tortoise is a symbol of injustice, greed and wickedness. In most cases, tortoise is used to illustrate Igbo man’s belief in retributive justice “o metere buru”. Whatever one sows that he will reap, lion has

the image of force, spider symbolizes avarice, bees and ants portray hard work and industry, child is the symbol of innocence and credulity; rhino is for monstrosity; elephant is the image of unruffled strength, hugeness and ultimate in any series, hawk is the indicative of agility and ruthlessness; eagle represents beauty and excellence while ram represents strength, extreme endurance and wisdom.

#### 4.02. Tortoise Role in Igbo Folktales

The activities of tortoise are, indispensable in Igbo folktales. There is an Igbo wise saying that a narrator when fails to include the name of tortoise in his tale, his tale lacks “salt.” This means that, just as salt is indispensable in our daily meals so also is tortoise role in dispensable in every folktales. The children are exposed to admire and at the same time despise the activities of tortoise. The children are meant to cultivate these traits observed in tortoise but to use them wisely. The experiences of folktales are introduced to the children at their infancy so that when they grow up, they continue to apply such experiences in their adult lives. This is in accordance with proverbs 22 verse 6 of the Holy Bible which says “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it”

Tortoise is a role model for bringing up children to act in a way approved in Igbo culture. In Igbo world view it is expected that one should come out of trouble by hook or by crook just as Obinna in Ubesie (1977) had escaped from conscription into the army by pretending to be an artillery, shock victim.

#### 5.00. Themes and Motifs in Folktales

Folktales generally have themes and motifs. Onyekaoonu (1986:249) explaining the reasons for the existence of numerous themes and motifs in Igbo folktales says “It is because folktales are invariably didactic in purposes, it teaches one moral lesson or the other which is reflected in the tale. The tales contain the people’s code on the conduct of life, their world view, custom and their total way of life” the stories operate through such themes as, “evil acts do not pay”, ‘good name is better than riches; ‘orphans should not be maltreated,’ ‘disobediences brings suffering’, kindness brings fortune etc. the stories operate through such motif as, ‘the wicked step mother motif’, ‘the wicked co-wife motif’, ‘the benevolent spirit motif,’ lack of male child motif etc. Through these numerous themes and motifs, folktales mirror the activities of the societies or the activities of members of the society.

#### 6.00 Story Telling Session

Folktales were introduced to Igbo child at infancy. That means that the traditional Igbo child continues to be integrated to the events of folktales, myths, legends, riddles and tongue twisters from infancy. This exposition continues to his adult life. It therefore follows that by the time the child gets to adult life he had been deeply rooted in his people’s culture, worldview, spiritual life and the total way of life of

his people. Folktales are normally told in the evenings after members of the family had finished their evening chores. They normally gather at their mother's hut or their father's 'Obi' to hear folktales. Egudu (1978:35) commenting on significance of story telling session asserts:

*People learn through oral literature facts of social relationship between man and his community or immediate world, a child and his parents, a man and his friends and enemies. The learning process becomes effective because it is carried out in an atmosphere of relaxation and entertainment without rigidity and tears that mark formal school and pupils. The story telling session is an effective way of educating a child because it takes place in a relaxed atmosphere when the child is free to express his views without any fear.*

Emenyonu (1987:3) supporting the effectiveness of traditional story telling session asserts:

*The bond of affection between mother and child in Igbo culture is a very strong one, especially when the child happens to be a son. When the dishes of the evening meal have been washed ... children sit round the fire side to be entertained by the mother till bed time usually other children join and when the mother retires the children continue the stories.*

In most cases during the story telling session, children compete in proverbs, riddles tongue twisters and idioms. Ogu (1972:28) commenting on the impact of story telling session on traditional Igbo child says:

- i. It gives the child the opportunity of using imagination to decipher the truth and develop his intellectual ability. Their wits are tested by allowing them give quick answers to questions posed to them.
- ii. It helps the child develop creative thinking-a natural process through which a person becomes aware of problem, difficulty or gap in an information for which he has no learned response is developed early in children with the help of folktale and folklore in particular.
- iii. Obedience and respect are other important contribution of folktale to the children development. Most stories and songs condemn bad behaviours. In African folktales, good always triumphs over evil, truth over falsehood, honesty over dishonesty.

- iv. National consciousness and patriotism are inculcated into the child with the aid of folklore. Children learn bravely, selflessness etc from legendary stories and songs that tell how heroes suffered greatly or even died for their people. Children are usually attracted to such characters and usually they aspire to be like them.
- v. Every story has a lesson to teach just as the stories about heroes and heroines encourage children to be brave, those about ogres and ogresses remind them that the society is not full of angels alone rather there are other evil creatures that could harm them.
- vi. Folktales taken together in any society they occur are directed towards shaping the people's world, defending societal moral, values, beliefs, discouraging deviants from unacceptable norms and encouraging hard work and dedication to duty and perseverance.
- vii. Traditional African folktales as exemplified by Igbo experience contain perceptions of social realities which help to shape or reshape the world we live. Folktale point out inherent social problems by projecting on universal screen possibilities within a given social framework.

The role Igbo folktale play in the traditional society is innumerable especially towards the upbringing of the young. That is why Ebeogu (1983:83) is of the opinion that folktale should not be denied the stamp of pedagogic function in the society.

#### **7.00 Reason for Inculcating Trickster Tale in Education of Igbo Child.**

Folktale is didactic. It generally teaches one moral lesson or the other. Trickster tales account for over ninety percent of the traditional folktales. Bascom (1977:15) wondered why trickster tale should be used in education of Igbo child. He says; "How shocking events in narratives that run counter to cultural norms relate to well recognized function or narrative folklore in education". Bascom further adds:

*Many African explicitly recognize importance of folktales in teaching of young and a large proportion of African folktales are moral tales; yet in their trickster tales, we find tricksters lying, cheating and stealing, killing his benefactor, duping ... selling or killing his mother ... members of the audience apparently identifying with the tricksters and not the dupe and thus gave their unconscious approval to those acts which would be condemned in daily life.*

Okpewho (1990:263) giving explanation to this allegation says thus:

*We can afford to indulge in mild admiration of ruthless and selfish use of wit and craftiness because their world seems too remote from us. Thus gap becomes a kind of protective shield that shelters us from potentially catastrophic and humiliating machinations of ananse (tortoise) hence our willingness to be somewhat ambivalent about them.*

From the above extract, it follows that the reason why it appears that the audience give their unconscious approval to these acts of tricksters is because of great distance existing between our real world and the world under which the tricksters operate and this world is too remote from us. Again, this gap is a sort of shelter which protects us from the activities of the tricksters.

Every folktale has a moral lesson attached to it. This lesson is announced at the end of the story by the narrator or the children are asked to say the lesson at the end of each tale. In the case where the trickster engages in immoral act in the story, the narrator makes it clear at the end of the story that the activity is bad. Again since our real world is full of ups and downs, good people and bad people, the activities of tricksters may inspire mild sense of admiration for their wit and craftiness and their ability to achieve the seemingly impossible task.

The trickster is often associated with forces of disorder within the society. He some times falls victim of his own cleverness for in an attempt too trick others, he may get himself tricked as is the case of his friendship with rabbit which costs tortoise his life (p 4) commenting on the characters of rabbit and tortoise in that tale. Akporobaro (2004:127) affirms:

*It acts as a constant reminder that those who plan evil for some other people have evil awaiting for them at their door steps as is manifested by the fate of tortoise who wanted to pay a good act of generosity with evil intentions.*

The cognitive focus of this story “Tortoise and the Rabbit” is on the notion of the evasion of justice or utter Machiavellianism. This is so because the primary aim of tortoise hosting his friend was to destroy his friend’s barns of yams and coco-yams through deceitful means. He tricked the rabbit to believe that the ‘sweet food’ he presented to him was the ashes from his burnt barns of yams and coco-yams. The rabbit retaliated by entering inside the soup pot from where kicked, filling the tortoise eyes and body with soup. The later plan of tortoise to do more harm to tortoise caused

him his life. This confirms Akporobaro’s view that, “those who plan evil for some people have evil awaiting them”.

The theme of this story is ‘evil do not pay’. This also explores Igbo belief that says; ‘o b̄jara egbu m, gbuo onwe ya’ meaning; the wicked must never go unpunished. This belief is inculcated to the child from infancy. Igbo child is brought up in such a way that he aspires to be upright in his dealings with other members of the society. This training forms the basic element that directs his adult life. Tortoise is the story is embodiment of greed, wickedness and injustice. From this story, it follows that wickedness, greed and injustice do not pay. Rabbit is used to show that whatever happens justice must have its way. This story portrays Igbo man’s belief in retributive justice.

The character of ‘mbe’ instructs members of the society on how to live one’s life wisely, how to make proper use of wit in tackling various problems of life. The character of ‘mbe’ instructs members of the society on how to live one’s life wisely, how to make proper use of wit in tackling various problems of life. With proper use of wit, one can read another person’s intention and arrive at conclusion on his own line of action. As folktales mirror the activities of the society from where the tale is taken, the events discussed in the folktale are the events in the society. The characters in the folktale are the characters in the society. There is tortoise in the society. These people dupe, kill, rob innocent citizens. They are extremely wicked and deceitful like the tortoise in Igbo folktale. The Igbo people are aware of such negative characters in the society and that is why tortoise tale accounts for over eighty perced of Igbo folktales. The creative writers of Igbo origin also incorporate the character of ‘mbe’ in their works of fiction for example in Ubesie’s *Juo Obinna*, Obinna is endowed with the character traits in ‘mbe’ the trickster. In Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* p.124, Obierika likens the character of the missionaries into Igbo lend to that of the tortoise. Tortoise tales feature prominently in Igbo folktales. The children are exposed to admire and at the same time despise the activities of tortoise. They are meant to cultivate these traits observed in tortoise but to use them wisely.

## **8.00 Implication of Trickster Tales to the Nigerian Society**

Amongst other significance of oral literature is education and entertainment, folktale is an arm of literature that instructs one on how to live a useful life in the society in which he finds himself. As folktale exists in every ethnic group in the country and one of the conspicuous characteristics of folktale is the possession of trickster hero. In other words trickster hero exists in folktales of every ethnic group of the country. The tales instruct both children and adults member of their society on how to live a useful life and how to make proper use of his wit in tackling the problems of the society.

Folktale mirrors the activities of members of the society. This means that folktale mirrors the activities of

Nigerian society. Folktale makes use of stock character in its mirroring. These characters are representative of character in the society. Amongst the stock characters in folktale are tortoise, rabbit, ram, fowl, lion, rat, monkey, spider etc. each of these characters act according to its type and according to the expectation role from the author. The organization and leadership in animal kingdom in the folktale represents the organization and the leadership in the present day Nigeria.

The animals have their leader - Leopard. They practice democratic system of government which Nigeria is practicing. Leadership in folktale is equivalent to the leadership of the country with president as the leader. All Nigerians are equivalent to the animals in the folktale. When there is problem in animal kingdom, all the animals come together to take a decision on how to solve the problem just as in tale (5) shows. Here, the animals in their meeting, decided to build a parliament. They contributed money towards the project and handed the money over to their treasurer, the rat. Tortoise went in the night and stole the money, thereby thwarting the animals plan.

Tortoise is rouge, a deceit and callous in actions. He breaks the law and tramples on justice. He is representative of injustice, greed and wickedness in the society. In like manner in Nigerian society, there are people like tortoise, they imbibe the quality traits of tortoise. These people can be found amongst the leadership of the country. They leak government secrets, they steal government fund and deceive his fellow members of the cabinet into taking wrong decisions. They play leading roles in the problems of the country such as, masters-minding the activities of Boko Haram, kidnapping, robbery incidents, pipe line vandalization, ritual killings and murder of innocent citizens etc. there are other members that perpetuate such evils in the country. They are responsible for the insecurity of lives and properties in the country.

It is on this note that every Nigerian whether a child or an adult should make proper use of lessons learnt from trickster tales but to use these lessons for the benefit of the society. One is expected to make proper use of wit while associating with people of the society so as to dictate the people with dubious characters. One should be observant and clever so as to notice these enemies of progress in our midst and consequently report them to law enforcement agency.

Every Nigerian is expected to be brave, hard working and outspoken. He will never succumb to intimidation and deceit from enemies of progress. He will always be guided by the principle of retributive justice in all his endeavours. This principle states that those who do good, goodness will surely be their reward while those evil, perpetrators have evil awaiting them. This is in consonance with Igbo saying that every day is for the wicked but one day is for the owner of the house.

Those in the corridor of power will be guided with the principle of justice, equity and fair play in all their activities so that every member of the society will cooperate with him. The activities of the trickster 'mbe' reveal that the

trickster is never at ease in his business of deceiving his opponent. In few cases, he is free. In some cases he falls sick for a long time before he recovers from his evil activities as is the case in tale (3). In some other cases, he dies.

The activities of these tricksters in our present Nigerian society are temporal. For the tricksters life is always in great danger. They never live long. Their minds are never at rest for they continue to live in fear of being caught by law enforcement agency. In some cases they die mysterious death which nobody can say what cause the death

### **9.01. Suggestion**

As we have noted before, folktale is traditional tale told for amusement and education. The trickster tales contain over eighty percent of tortoise tales. Folktales mirror the activities of members of the society. They are didactic in nature. They are used in education of the young and also they educate adult members of the society. Because of indispensable roles of trickster tales in the society, the author makes the following suggestions.

1. Folktales especially trickster tales should be revived in both primary and secondary schools. There should be a period in the time table specially set aside for the discussion on folktales especially trickster tales.
2. Students in tertiary institution should also learn these trickster tales for example those students in Igbo Department, Music Department should study the role of tricksters in detail. This will in no small measure promote the status of Igbo language and African languages in general.
3. Children and students should dramatize the activities of trickster. They should compete with other school on the set drama portraying the role of tortoise.
4. Those in radio house and in TV stations should also project such drama. These drama should always focus on the positive aspect of the trickster.
5. Those in power should help and finance competitions of this nature. The winners should be compensated while the losers should be compensated.

### **9.02 Conclusion**

Tortoise plays both positive role and negative role in the eye of the traditional Igbo people but they are used in education of the child because in every action of the tortoise, there is action that follows it. In negative actions of tortoise, tortoise suffers. Tortoise is clever and comes out of every difficulty by the display of his mental ability-cunning. This is what Igbo child is expected to emulate. More so in telling the tales the narrator makes it clear at the end of the tale that the character of tortoise is not good or the children are meant to say so.

Traditional Igbo child is expected to be wise, industrious, calculative in all his endeavours. He is expected

to come out of difficulties especially those difficulties, that will cost him his life, by hook or by crook just as tortoise had done Igbo people believe in the principle of retributive justice, they also believe in equity, justice and fair play in all their undertakings and that is why in using trickster hero in the education of their children, they make it clear to the children that they should be wise and calculative in the display of this agility.

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