

## *The Meaning of “Bad” and “Good”*

I was seven years old before I understood the meaning of “bad” and “good”, because it was at that time I noticed carefully that my father married three wives as they were doing in those days, if it is not common nowadays. My mother was the last married among the rest and she only bore two sons but the rest bore only daughters. So by that the two wives who had only daughters hated my mother, brother and myself to excess as they believed that no doubt my brother and myself would be the rulers of our father’s house and also all his properties after his death. My brother was eleven years old then and I myself was seven. So it was at this stage I quite understood the meaning of “bad” because of hatred and had not yet known the meaning of “good”.

My mother was a petty trader who was going to various markets every day to sell her articles and returning home in the evening, or if the market is very far she would return next day in the evening as she was a hard worker.

In those days of unknown year, because I was too young to keep the number of the year in my mind till this time, so there were many kinds of African wars and some of them are as follows: general wars, tribal wars,



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burglary wars and the slave wars which were very common in every town and village and particularly in famous markets and on main roads of big towns at any time in the day or night. These slave-wars were causing death to both old and young of those days, because if one is captured, he or she would be sold into slavery for foreigners who would carry him or her to unknown destinations to be killed for the buyer's god or to be working for him.

But as my mother was a petty trader who was going here and there, so one morning she went to a market which was about three miles away from our town, she left two slices of cooked yam for us (my brother and myself) as she was usually doing. When it was twelve o'clock p.m. cocks began to crow continuously, then my brother and myself entered into our mother's room in which she kept the two sliced or cut yams safely for us, so that it might not be poisoned by the two wives who hated us, then my brother took one of the yams and I took the other one and began to eat it at the same time. But as we were eating the yam inside our mother's room, these two wives who hated us heard information before us that war was nearly breaking into the town, so both of them and their daughters ran away from the town without informing us or taking us along with themselves and all of them knew already that our mother was out of the town.

Even as we were very young to know the meaning of "bad" and "good" both of us were dancing to the noises of the enemies' guns which were reverberating into the room in which we were eating the yam as the big trees and many hills with deep holes on them entirely sur-



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rounded the town and they changed the fearful noises of the enemies' guns to a lofty one for us, and we were dancing for these lofty noises of the enemies' guns.

But as these enemies were more approaching the town the lofty noises of their guns became fearful for us because every place was shaking at that moment. So when we could not bear it then we left our mother's room for the veranda, but we met nobody there, and then we ran from there to the portico of the house, but the town was also empty except the domestic animals as sheep, pigs, goats and fowls and also some of the bush animals as monkeys, wolves, deer and lions who were driven from the bush that surrounded the town to the town by the fearful noises of the enemies' guns. All these animals were running and crying bitterly up and down in the town in searching for their keepers. Immediately we saw that there was nobody in the town again we stepped down from the door to the outside as all the while we stood at the door looking at every part of the town with fearful and doubtful mind.

So first of all we travelled to the north of the town as there was a road which led to the town of our grandmother which was not far away from ours.

But as these animals were giving us much trouble, fear, and disturbing us so at last we left to run to the north and then to the south where there was a large river which crossed the road on which we should travel to some protective place to hide ourselves.

And as the enemies were approaching nearer, we left the river at once and when we went further on this road we reached a kind of African fruit tree which stood by



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the road, then we stopped under it to find a shelter, but as we were hastily turning round this tree perhaps we would see a shelter there, two ripe fruits fell down on it, then my brother took both and put them into his pocket and started to carry or lift me along on this road as I was too young to run as fast as he could. But as he himself was too young to lift or carry such weight like me, so by that he was unable to lift me to a distance of about ten feet before he would fall down four times or more.

When he tried all his power for several times and failed and again at that moment the smell of the gunpowder of the enemies' guns which were shooting repeatedly was rushing to our noses by the breeze and this made us fear more, so my brother lifted me again a very short distance, but when I saw that he was falling several times, then I told him to leave me on the road and run away for his life perhaps he might be safe so that he would be taking care of our mother as she had no other sons more than both of us and I told him that if God saves my life too then we should meet again, but if God does not save my life we should meet in heaven.

But as I was telling him these sorrowful words both his eyes were shedding tears repeatedly, of course I did not shed tears at all on my eyes as I put hope that no doubt I would be easily captured or killed. And it was that day I believed that if fear is overmuch, a person would not fear for anything again. But as the smoke of the enemies' guns was rushing to our view, then my brother left me on that road with sorrow, and then he stopped and put his hand into his pocket and brought out the fruits which fell down from the tree under which we were about to



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hide ourselves before; he gave me both fruits instead of one. After that he started to run as fast as he could along this road towards the enemies unnoticed and he was still looking at me as he was running away.

So after I saw him no more on the road I put both fruits into my pocket and then got back to that fruit tree under which we picked them and I stood there only to shelter myself from the sun. But when the enemies were at a distance of about an eighth of a mile to that place where I stood I was unable to hear again because of the noises of the enemies' guns and as I was too young to hear such fearful noises and wait, so I entered into the bush under this fruit tree. This fruit tree was a "SIGN" for me and it was on that day I called it—THE "FUTURE SIGN".

Now it remained me alone in the bush, because no brother, mother, father or other defender could save me or direct me if and whenever any danger is imminent. But as these enemies had approached us closely before my brother left because of me he was captured within fifteen minutes that he left me, but he was only captured as a slave and not killed, because I heard his voice when he shouted louder for help.