

DEDICATION

To my late Dad, Nazarius Muriithi Mwaniki, who proudly depicted himself as 'AN ASSERTIVE AFRICAN', to whom the title of this book, I am indebted, and to all gallant sons and daughters of Africa who are faced by an inevitable assignment of crafting an AFRICAN CIVILIZATION

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INTRODUCTION

In the highest peak on the refined layer of our consciousness, and upon the basest chambers on the bedrock of our consciences, as well as on the deepest wells of our souls, we weep when we contemplate of thee O AFRICA! O thee Motherland!

The chilling disgust is becoming more and more unbearable as the days passes on, with our hearts tending to melt within us, worry and strain are written in each of our faces, as bitterness and resentment threatens to occupy our every cell and nerve.

Like a house hidden away in the depths of the valleys, where the sun never penetrates, a gloomy dwelling permeated by numbing chill, ever fireless, ever shrouded in thick darkness, the sanctuaries of our minds seems to be cramped and beaten down by cowardice, ignorance and superstitions.

Our paths seems to be strewn not with positive stimulants but negative aberrations, as the continent continues to single itself out as the 'sick man' of the world, a 'laughing stock' of human race and a 'painful embarrassment' to mankind. A sizeable number of Africans have come out as infernal 'cursed creatures' with majority of them becoming every more and more abominable, as the days passes on, always wearing the slavish chain, deprived of all created possible bliss, and languishing through hardship, toil and pain.

Lacking the creative resources to exploit our immense natural resources, thus paving way for the people of other continents to exploit these resources benefiting nobody but themselves, we have become like a shameless beggar with a begging bowl and sitting on a bag full of foodstuffs. The painful and remorseful words of Okot p' Bitek, in '*Song of Ocol*' (1969), paints the *pathetic picture* of our African society:

“What is Africa to me?

Blackness, deep, deep fathomless darkness.

Africa, idle giant basking in the sun, sleeping, snoring

Twitching in dreams;

Diseased with a chronic illness;

Chocking with black ignorance.

Chained to the rock of poverty,

And yet laughing, always laughing and dancing

The chains on his legs jangling...

Stuck in the stagnant mud of superstitions,

Frightened by the spirits of the bush, the stream, scared of corpse.

Child lover of toys,

Look at his toy weapons, his utensils, his hut.

Toy garden, toy chickens, toy cattle, toy children.

Timid, unadventurous, scared of the unbeaten track,

Unweaned, clinging to mother's milkless breasts,

Clinging to brother, to uncle, to clan, to tribe,

To blackness,

To Africa.

Africa, this rich granary of taboos, customs, traditions...”

The reason why a terrible darkness seems to have fallen upon us, is not that 'existence' has selectively switched off its eternally shining lights upon us Africans only, but precisely because, the clumsy importunity with which we have paid our addresses to a 'Luminous Life' have been the most unskilled and unseemly method for winning this existential prize. It has become apparently clear that, we have not only failed to understand the distraught world in which we live, but seems to be convinced that, we are not stakeholders in enjoying 'the salt of the earth'; always at the peripheral of 'world's center of gravity'.

In a society which is poorly endowed with those psychic values and resources necessary for its healthy development and real progress, a good number of Africans may be refereed to as steeped in pre-modernity.

Having portrayed ourselves as a provisional backwater contemptuously left behind by the swift flux of events, always at the ebb of the tide of world affairs, much of what defines us is poverty, dirt and a miserable ease. Being victims of chronic indecisiveness, we do want to get somewhere, but unsure what to do once we get there. Restless with our heads turned backward, we can't keep still and contemplate our present situation for any length of time. As a result, we keep jumping from issue to issue, groping in the dark, never arriving at a meaningful conclusion; skirting around facts and eventually ducking them altogether with no answer. In *'The Second Round'* (1966) Gambian poet Lenrie Peters (1932-2009) depicts our situation thus:

"The trouble with our African society into which we are struggling like roosting hen is perpetual weightlessness. Not light enough to take wings and soar, but at the same time not heavy enough to settle on any firm foundation. A people at the middle way; the turning point, who cannot see round the corner, hovering like evil ghosts and restless enough to be confused."

If nakedness is never a promise of clothes, we should come into terms with all aspects of our lives and avoid all sorts of hide and seek games with ourselves, and arrive at an honest assessment and undistorted view of our warped society and our individual shortcomings. It is only in this way that we will develop the creative courage to travel this long and difficult road towards maturity of purpose.

Terrible as it is to die of thirst in the sea as its salty water cannot quench our thirst, we have salted the truth of our human 'existence' in as far as our African situation is concerned, and consequently, our hearts are *scornfully soured*, our spirits *firmly fettered* as our aspirations *dangerously dislocated* by *illusory ideologies* and *dehumanizing dogmas*, such that in our *poisoned percepts*, little nourishing can be squeezed from our society, and therefore we are dying of thirst.

The manifestation of our explanation here is clearly evident: When the pipeline of our general 'Societal Sorrow' is followed keenly, it ultimately leads back to individual's 'Psychic Purge'; the sum total of our warped thought forms, inclinations, predispositions and perceptions.

Irrespective of our *religious realization*, *social standing*, *economic elevation*, *academic authenticity* and *professional penetrability* we cannot fail to note how 'Psychic Purge' 'ferociously facilitates' the 'current conspicuously conspiratory' state of our African society. The *sordid song* of this 'Societal Sorrow' flows thus:

*A formidable content of our **Joblessness** is just a contradiction in terms, for nobody with a sound mind can allege that he or she has nothing to do, besides having in the words of King Solomon eaten 'the bread of idleness';*

*A formidable content of our **Employment** only qualifies us to be hardworking slaves where all our efforts and energies devoid of creative investment benefit anyone else – the corporation or government - except ourselves;*

*A formidable content of our **Work** is a curse and a condemnation we must live with without any sense of meaning besides getting that pay as the job is absolutely out of synch with our traits and temperaments;*

*A formidable content of our **Entrepreneurship** is an unjust legally sanctioned robbery without violence, whereby the chief drive is a murderous desire to reap super-profits as altruism is melted away from our lives;*

*A formidable content of our **Art Industry** is full of decaying debris with the matter of fact credibility gone clean out of them and devoid of any aesthetic dose of awakening the soul and keeping it refreshed and energized;*

Hence the pathetic poverty amongst our people.

*A good ration of our **Theologies** are empty soothsayings accompanied by idolatrous rites impotent in radiating spiritual truths vital in making us happy in this world and potentially blissful in the life beyond the grave;*

*A good ration of our **Philosophy** imprisoned in logical futilities and conceptualizations is intended at contradicting and confuting others rather than a suitable survival strategy to be won in the service of the individual;*

*A good ration of our **Morality** is outmoded as it reproaches us with the infidelity and shabbiness of failing to absorb the transiency and relativity of values by only lionizing the past without a fertile future view;*

*A good ration of our **Ethics** is a manifestation of the highest level of hypocrisy owing to the fact that in the present curse-like bastardization of our natural vital instincts, it is impossible if not inhuman to bless;*

*A good ration of our **Culture** does not have within it mechanisms for survival and its general spirit does not allow for the utmost individual search for oneself as a veritable vehicle towards self-actualization;*

Hence the hideous hemorrhage of our society.

*A substantial percentage of our **Education** is painful accumulation of data and dates in ignorance of developing individual potential capacities for the comprehension, control and appreciation of the world;*

*A substantial percentage of our **Science** is so rudimentary and pedestrian that in the crippleness of our creativity, defenses against the inclemency of weather and food self-sufficiency remains pathetically deficient;*

*A substantial percentage of our **Industrialization** has become not substitution of brawn for brain towards mass-production but a daily toil where people are herded together in industries and farms with very little pay;*

*A substantial percentage of our **Intellectualism** is a hotchpotch and collection of long-dead fossils with very little to contribute to the world pool of knowledge and very little new to offer in regard to the 'Spirit of Age';*

*A substantial percentage of our **Ancestral** past suffices out as something null and vain; to be looked with contempt and shame as every progressive mind becomes impatient and disgusted when a word is said about it;*

Hence the African civilization's catalepsy.

*A large measure of our **Laws** only impose legal penalties which have no force of controlling crimes as they fall short of creating a more just society in which people can connect humanly with each other;*

*A large measure of our **Justice** is an organized conspiracy to oppress, to break all the ladders for other society members to climb to high helms, such that poverty has become enforced and disillusionment prevails;*

*A large measure of our **Politics** is precisely bare-toothed oratory and charlatanism where the small minority of exclusive oligois, organizes themselves to rob and parasite the larger unorganized gullible majority;*

*A large measure of our **Electoral** process is the shameless act of raising money from the rich in order to buy votes from the poor and promising to protect these two antagonistic groups against each other;*

*A large measure of our **Democracy** is the most banal lie where through tribal alliances, leaders choose voters other than voters choosing leaders such that all our institutions are hallowed out of all meaning;*

Hence the blunted blade of our social organization.

*A reasonable extent of our **History** is characterized by darkness with its hysteric reaction to light (rejection of new ideas) which in our myopic rigidity we perceive to be offensive without any justifiable reason;*

*A reasonable extent of our **War** is waged against ourselves and our fellowships as we are always battering and parasiting ourselves with corruption, thus eating away and weakening a good portion of our inner strengths;*

*A reasonable extent of our **Families** use punishments which produce bitter children and unconsciously condition them to use the same mechanistic and counterproductive methods on those who may anger them;*

*A reasonable extent of our **Policies** are promulgated by ignoramuses whose abomination is analogous to quack physicians who would pour drugs of which they know little into a body of which they know less;*

*A reasonable extent of our **Progress** is contained in the unanimous unconscious vow that inaction is the most perfect of all states, as our habitual inclination to useless movement has become the highest good;*

Hence the stagnatory state of our general aspirations.

More worse, having sunk at the lowest bottom of decadence in regard to general level of Civilizations attained by other societies in the modern world, we have tried to justify our wretchedness by falsely trying to persuade ourselves with illusory self-preservative measures, anxiety reducing defense mechanisms and security operations that, our limitations are our visions, our observances our

dexterities, our timidities our good taste, our inhibitions our missions, our rigidities our festivities, our superstitions our nourishments and our traditions our comforts.

Compared to modern Civilizations the world over, the current African Civilization is what a pencil sketch is to coloured painting; it lacks that variety, that amplitude, that abundance of life which is the condition of perfectibility. Possessing very minimal fecundity, having attained only the most mediocre virility, we have failed to achieve maturity, towards the fullest flowering of our potentials.

Therefore, those vital 'psychic inner forces', freed of tradition and convention, vital in influencing conduct and shaping character have not yet been fully utilized. Without those inner strengths, many individuals lack an autonomous inner core as counterbalance in facing the NEW WORLD, with very few amongst us daring to defy tradition and stand alone. Having stripped ourselves of steadfastness of personal freedom, which was the instrument of Western Progress, as triggered by the era of Enlightenment, we have created a static, frozen kind of society, sunk in the degrading life of mere custom. We have portrayed ourselves as a people incapable of movement and evolution as we are caught in a process of virtual circular development.

Disgusting as it is to swallow, the bitter pill of our situation is that our African society remains poor amidst the increase in world wealth as well as pale amidst the global meteoric improvement in luxury; our material privation dwarfs our moral as well as our psychical stature. It should therefore dawn upon us as an imperative necessity, to take our own case in hand; for we cannot rely on others for remedy. We have found ourselves on a non-negotiable point of *seeking sweeping but opulently outlined* answers to our dilemma.

As we trend upon the enigmatic world below on our shaky legs, with our blurred vision focused on the incredible heaven above, almost naked of supernatural creeds, a general theological predilection, a persuasive ideological conviction, a comprehensive philosophical outlook and an enduring transmitted moral code, the chief assignment of this uncertain, amorphous and tense generation is to rebuild everything as if we had been cast into the wilderness and forced to begin everything a new. Moreover, at the very outset whereby we are plunged into the thorny center of two worlds; one dying, the other hardly born, the words of Nigerian Poet, Christopher Okigbo (1930-1967) in '*Limits*' (1964) seems to be very inspiring:

“And this is the crisis point
The twilight moment between
Sleep and waking;
And the voice that is reborn transpires,
Not through pores in the flesh
But the soul's backbone.”

But all is not burned and consumed to ashes! And the little that is in ash form we still have the potential to rebuild and get beauty from it.

In other words, our African life may not be a bed of roses, but it is neither a road full of thorns and invested with vampires. It is a great consolation to note that, the lamentable failures in our society are not due to absolute shrinking of our inherent vitality, to the complete exhaustion of energies of our people, or to the total depravity of our people, but springs primarily from defects which can be

removed; from failures of understanding on the dynamics of human nature as well as the paradoxes inherent in the human situation. There is therefore no lack of means out of this predicament – there is only lethargy in bringing to the fore our vitality towards life. As human nature is forever gripped in the process of perpetual becoming, forever confronted by the challenge of choosing our moral values in the process of living, the choice squarely lies in our hands, and so is the responsibility. If we may work through life's obstacles we are apt to attain a better, stronger personality.

Unlike the grass in the house top which withers before it grows up, the fact that some misfortunes have affected us does not mean we should poison our present and our future with despair and give in to the virtual darkness engulfing us. Upon the ruins of our shattered past, and disgusting present, there is an ever possibility flowing through our nerves that we can lay a firm foundation for a bright and promising future.

In this confusion in which we are thriving in, we are faced with a critical decision of making an accurate diagnosis of our patterns of perception, which is the only sure springboard to finding a cure for all the ailments bedeviling us with an aim of attaining a more fulfilling, healthier life. As a positive step in this direction, we are bound to arrive at the inevitable conclusion that, the cause of this hopelessness and helplessness we have unfortunately found ourselves in lies not in the outer world but in ourselves; not in the problems we have to solve but in the hypothesis with which we approach their solutions. The onus is on us to be problem solvers and solution oriented creatures rather than defeated grumblers.

In these early days of 21st Century, we have found ourselves in a fast paced world, with myriad options to choose from, and where the imperative of doing more and more in less time reigns supreme. As cognitive burden of making swift, responsive, valid and reliable decisions weighs so heavily on us than ever, we require as little emotional burdens as possible, if we are to remain afloat in this highly competitive world.

I do not say it in a boastful spirit, although I am proud to exhort to my fellow continental men and women that, to assert ourselves as human beings worth of dignity and to cultivate a new civilization in our African society is the *Prima facie* duty of our generation. But before we would plant the seed of this new African Civilization, we will have to first clear the bush of poor self-efficacy and then proceed to plough or rather loosen the soil by making our minds as open and as receptive as possible, so that the rainfall of progressive ideas may easily infiltrate into our psyches as well as improve the soil aeration of responsiveness to new opportunities.

Besides acknowledging that, sowing of a seed, watering it, propagating it and shielding it from pests, towards its optimal fruition and ultimately harvesting it, is a continuous cautious process, and by appreciating what American historian Arnold Toynbee (1889-1975) taught, that 'civilization is a movement, not a condition; it is a voyage, not a harbour', our endeavor at crafting a new model of managing individual selves as well as our general African society, irrespective of the speed of its development, is an arduous work that must in the very nature of things, stretch over a long period.

This process of rebirth, this intervening period of deep crisis, is a prolonged, stormy process, which by its very nature is infinite, indeterminate and ambiguous. But as a beginning, we have to humble ourselves to the inescapable historical compulsion of setting forth a thought system so comprehensive

that it would distill and encompass the positive ideas of the universal pool of knowledge and create a uniquely African conceptual framework in terms of both the present and future. Such an aim would require nothing short of a full account of reality itself – the total developmental process of everything that is.

When appropriate attention is paid to those vulgar circumstance which largely influence human character, it therefore goes that, if we correct these tattered social schemas and dysfunctional stereotypes, we should rest assured that ‘Civilization’ shall shed its genial influence on everyone by bringing aliveness to the young men and women, make the old people less cross-grained and fault-finding, the rough edges of our leaders shall be polished, the righteous and pious people shall be a little more tolerant and the thrifty less hoarding in their money. In a word, all darkness shall start turning into light as the hearts of everyone shall start opening up.

My composite picture here of an ‘ASSERTIVE AFRICAN’ is the ideal manifestation of an individual endowed with those psychic and ego strengths facilitative in the flowering and thriving of an AFRICAN CIVILIZATION, towards an AFRICAN RENAISSANCE.

An ‘ASSERTIVE AFRICAN’ must not be regarded as a fanciful figure, or a nebulous hope which is to be realized at some indefinitely remote period; many coming decades or centuries. An ‘ASSERTIVE AFRICAN’ is neither a ‘new species’ (in the Darwinian sense) of which we can know nothing, and which it would therefore be somewhat absurd to strive after, nor a ‘superman’ (in the Nietzschean sense) who is the epitome of ‘transvaluation of all values’. ASSERTIVE AFRICANNESS is meant to be a practical possibility which present Africans could realize with all their spiritual and physical energies, inasmuch as they ‘Abhor Bedeviling Critical Derailments’ and ‘Assimilate Beneficent Cardinal Determinants’.

Scholars of Islam distinguish between two broad traditions of Jihad: *al-jihad al-akbar* (the greater Jihad) and *al-jihad-al-asghar* (the lesser Jihad). The greater Jihad is the struggle against weakness of self, in the direction of living and attaining piety in a contaminated world; it is inner oriented and directed. The lesser Jihad, in contrast is about self-preservation and self-defense; it is outward oriented and directed. Whereas Islam sanctions rebellion against an unjust ruler, whether Muslim or not, and the lesser Jihad can involve a mobilization for that social and political struggle, Tomaz Mastnak of Ljubljana university argues: “Jihad is a doctrine of spiritual effort of which military action is only one possible manifestation”.

Consequently an AFRICAN RENAISSANCE rests upon two pillars as its monumental sap and fiber; inner individually-directed effort at Ego and Psychic strength and outer societal-directed effort at self-expression and self-advancement. It is at bottom intended to harden the inner core and to temper the outer surface. This is the original conception of Jihad in its pure Islamic conception.

Ego and Psychic strength, in our context here is that organizing capacity, the unifying factor of the individual reflected in ones synthesizing power to reconcile discontinuities and ambiguities, all in a simple alternative, in order to make one battle and one strategy out of bewildering number of skirmishes, the chief propelling yardstick for moving forward in spite of myriad retrogressive forces. The key word for Ego-strength is enduring tolerance, the ability to refuse to be put off by stress, frustrations, or disappointments, which implies the potential to deal with reality without falling back

to infantile defense mechanisms. It is our ability to play the 'Game of Life' according to whatever curves life throws at us; the power, determination, road ability to engage reality for whatever we find it to be; to hold still upon the swing of things and to eventually look at the world situation in the face without caving in or being overwhelmed.

The nectar and juice that nourishes the call for an AFRICAN RENAISSANCE, is not a theological doctrine, a political ideology or a philosophical school of thought, but an invocation to let loose new mode of valuation and provoke positive patterns of perceptions. While the former category is tantamount to dew trying to clean a greased dirty fabric, of our African society, the later category is analogous to a detergent that will dissolve all the greases and leave the linen sparkingly clear.

The keynote of ASSERTIVE AFRICANNESS is that, *economic emancipation* is a function of *psychic precision*, which involves not merely skills and techniques, but states of mind, such that, what is vital in any developmental agenda is the person behind the machine; the one handling the test tubes; the one in front of a computer working on or designing a program. This explains why African countries can obtain loans and technicians and still lag behind, simply because, it is not possible to borrow a spirit of adventure, or to obtain on credit, enterprise and inventiveness.

ASSERTIVE AFRICANNESS is premised on the basic hypothesis that, investment in human capital is not less valuable than investment in physical assets; indeed if anything, it is more valuable as it is the chief driving force of progress. As such, to inspire imperial imaginations in every African from the humblest peasant or peddler to the high ranking business people and government officers, which will be collaborated by deep passionate sense of self-direction, is the central creed of this work.

For us AFRICANS in particular, and for any other human being in general, in voyaging through this vast sea of LIFE, we may not literally possess the navigational skills of a submarine coxswain, but the hypothetical extent of our enjoying the *nourishing natural nectar* of our human 'existence', shall be the measure of our success in 'Abhorring Bedeviling Critical Derailments' which is at the same time, the degree of 'Assimilating Beneficent Cardinal Determinants'.

As far as any sowed seed is concerned, a pest or a weed is any organism or plant that is destructive or interferes with its developmental process, either directly by damaging it, or indirectly through the introduction of disease-producing organisms such as viruses. Likewise, in our context here, 'Derailments' are in one way or the other VICES that send us off-course from our *essential evolutionary entitlement* or waters down our interpersonal relations. 'Determinants' on the other hand, are in one way or the other VIRTUES that entrench us on our *essential evolutionary entitlement* or solidifies our interpersonal relations.

In the '*integral infinite intensity*' of the 'extensive existential equation', the terms 'VICES' and 'VIRTUES', are simply descriptive labels assigned to actions, behaviours and percepts hindering or favouring the mutual well being of society in general and of an individual in particular. Our moral regard to VICE and VIRTUE is simple: *A wrong way of apprehending and appreciating ourselves, the people around us and our immediate world will eventually either see us doomed or see us through almost in anything.* All in all, our 'Categorical Conviction' runs: *while VICE is a psychic purge corresponding to solitary confinement in a psychic prison, VIRTUE is a psychic baptismal*

corresponding to breaking away the cocoon and flying away in the immensity of psychic expansiveness.

Clearing the rubbish heap of all those valuations that makes us weaklings and despicable and entering the treasure house where all great, unselfish and heroic motives of human beings abide, should be the supreme end of any ASSERTIVE AFRICAN.

According to ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle (384-322 BC), the conditions requisite for the attainment of happiness is VIRTUE which refers to the excellence of a thing (for example, a 'virtuous' knife cuts well) and hence to the disposition to perform effectively its proper function. VIRTUE being the only true nobility, makes the human characters persuasive as long as their feet are trending upon the soil, illustrious as their bodies are resting in the graves, and immortal when their souls ascend to heavens, as Kikuyu (Kenyan) proverb goes: "Virtue is power".

As our VICIES may be in the form of personality flaws, emotional handicaps, self-negating biases, irrational assumptions, cognitive errors, psychic weaknesses, ASSERTIVE AFRICANNESS implies believing that we have 'answers' to the problems besetting us, and assuming total responsibility for the sacrifice required in order to achieve the solution.

A fundamental 'existential' fact is that in the back of our minds, in the album of our consciousness, there is a page which when keenly looked at may reveal various answers to most of our problems, that our only difficulty is identifying the page. So we are called upon to seize the moment and take an inventory and a catalogue of ourselves by outlining and striving to fight those militating forces and obstacles which stand on our road towards attaining our essential natures and prevent us from living up to our potential. Identifying and naming these VICIES is the springboard upon which we can liberate ourselves from the bondage of their inhibitive as well as downgrading influence, as Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) cautioned: "If a man cannot look evil in the face without illusions, he will never know what it really is or how to combat it effectively".

In human 'existence' one cannot avoid to marvel at the endless flexibility of human character and destiny; on the ability to transform negativity into positivity; on the potential to reconstruct one from a social rat into a social lion. And Austrian psychologist and psychiatrist Alfred Adler (1870-1937) was not mistaken when he maintained that, all human beings begin life with feelings of inferiority which then evoke in them a need and a dominant motif for superiority, that, the basis of genius lies in some organic defect, whose inescapable presence stings the soul into a struggle to conquer the imperfection: "This feeling which the individual has of his own inferiority, furnishes the inner impulse to advance." English philosopher and statesman Francis Bacon (1561-1626), was also very insightful in this regard: "Whoever hath anything fixed in his person that doth induce contempt, hath also a perpetual spur in himself to rescue and deliver himself from scorn".

Unlike the salt which has lost its taste, and which must be thrown to be trodden under the feet of people, one of my objectives here is to teach that when the shirt is dirty it ought to be washed rather than throwing it away, that all we need is to inject a new blood in our blood streams. When we talk of 'Abhorring Bedeviling Critical Derailments', we are essentially talking of saying 'NO' to those behavioral patterns and responses that turns precisely against the needs of life; basic aberrations from our natural instincts and from a positive system of valuation.

By honest articulation and proper representation of the deformity of VICE and the beauty of VIRTUE through a thorough exposure of critical DREAILMENTS and an incessant proselyting of cardinal DETERMINANTS, this work is aimed at teaching any one of us a duty; begetting and embracing correspondent progressive habits and modes of valuation, while avoiding, shunning and discarding regressive ones.

The core objective here shall be to invoke the direct inclination to maintain and preserve our life because *duty requires* and not *as duty requires; from duty* as opposed to *according to duty*. So long as we are endowed with VIRTUE, we should say that we are almost indispensable; and no human being is useless while he or she is blessed with VIRTUE.

The call for AFRICAN ASSERTIVENESS is an invocation to be a spirited people, a people seasoned and ready to withstand loss – in order to gain – always scrutinizing what is unnecessary and needs to be laid off; to find in ourselves that which needs to be ‘overcome’ in order to set free our spirits to soar higher and higher.

‘I like the dreams of the future better than the history of the past’, so boasted 3rd U.S president, Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826). In line with the Biblical teaching that ‘whatever a man soweth that shall he also reap’, ahead of us stretches our future, like the road leading into distance and along that road are duties to be performed, ambitions we wish to accomplish and desires we wish to gratify. To bring these endeavours to fulfillment, we have to affirm and ‘Assimilate Beneficent Cardinal Determinants’ which are fundamental ingredients and a structural basis for a fully functional life.

‘The wicked can have only accomplices, the voluptuous have companions in debauchery, self-seekers have associates, the politic assemble the factions, the typical idler has connections, princes have courtiers. Only the virtuous have friends’, so exhorted French philosopher Voltaire (1856-1939). It was Dutch rationalist philosopher and religious thinker Benedict de Spinoza (1632-1677) who said: ‘The more every man endeavors, and is able to seek what is useful to him – in other words, to preserve his own being – the more is he endowed with virtue’. To continue pushing ourselves forward in this ‘existential evolution’ we should constantly impregnate our ‘psyches’ with the conviction that, general well-being is our reward for achieving a *concrete character* and *positive perceptual patterns*.

By ‘Abhorring Bedeviling Critical Derailments’ and ‘Assimilating Beneficent Cardinal Determinants’, for the young men, as their *puerile passions* surrenders to realities of social order, reckless carefree play shall be replaced by volitional creative responsibility. On the other hand, young girls should be guaranteed of conscious graduation from being idle girls who are either mere ornaments or sexual utilities for men or maternity machines, into maturely proud and productive women.

With their rough ends having been polished, when the two are united, armed with vital psychic strengths outlined in this work, they will reap most from the happiness to be gained from the free-play of their instincts as they interact in a higher plane of psychic refinement. The tenderness of the lady and her maternal sacrifice shall soften the man’s brutality, lifting him from his proximity to the brute and exciting and inciting him to see and seek in her some qualities more subtle and tangible as

well as spiritual and corporeal than those which had lured him to her in the first place. The adventuristic spirit of the male – whose vain tendencies is seeking new fields of glory when he has quite won - shall find inexhaustible areas of conquest for mutual glory in this ever-renewing woman.

Deepening the tap root of sexual attraction into the core root of parental association, sustained by the ever-refreshing and ever-energizing combat and chase of love, they will jealously guard against the fading away of the glory of clear sensation that binds them, and will not allow the sharp cutting knife of experience to be blunted with repetition and disillusionment. With each soul always hungering for the other partners soul, they will love every moment for itself accepting the world as an aesthetic spectacle for which one may thank the stars. Ultimately the conception that is gaining momentum that, marital vows are lifelong handcuffs and that entering into marriage is entering a house which at any moment may become a prison, incarcerating one for life, will be rendered absurd.

“It destroys one’s nerves to be amiable every day to the same human being”, thus pessimistically commented British writer and prime minister (1868 and 1874-1880) Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881). On the contrary, if we construe an ideal situation where a lady is in love with a man, endowed and blessed with money (economic capital), intelligence and education (human capital) and contacts (social capital), when this woman adds to this relationship’s armory the arsenal of ‘erotic capital’ both should be assured of sharing a table with the angels. For these dedicated seekers who have vowed to make the daring vertiginous leap into deep commitment, both treating each with as much respect and attention, for the man as he would a strange lady, and for the woman as she would a strange gentleman, guarding against being soured by the fatigue of familiarity (familiarity will never be allowed to beget contempt but to breed more adhesive forces), the rewards shall be immense and the fruits delicious; a goad supply of self-esteem, enthusiasm, loyalty, courtesy, patience, a rare tenderness, an exaltation, a highly charged erotic ambience, daily surprise, transformation, spontaneity and freedom.

“In the most primitive societies...the principal function of ritual, religion, of culture as it is practiced is, in fact, almost to stop change...The principal function of the most vital and living traditions today is precisely to provide the instruments of rapid change”, so taught U.S. nuclear physicist, J. Robert Oppenheimer (1904 - 1967). By opening our bodies and minds to higher powers besides amplifying awareness, by inducing a feeling of empowerment vital in moving through life, the central thread that cut through AFRICAN ASSERTIVENESS is ‘GROWTH’.

In our Human ‘Existence’ nothing is static, movement is imperative as everything is always in a state of motion; either backward or forward; either growth or decay. And plainly speaking, it is easier to change ourselves than to transform anyone else. “There is only one corner of the universe you can be certain of improving”, wrote, English novelist, essayist, critic and poet Leonard Aldous Huxley (1894-1963), “and that’s your own self”. We might refer this as the datum of our quest for a ‘*luminous life*’; an impetus to self-improvement and it implicitly lies on the realization of existence of a latent germ of being – a capacity or *potentiality* striving to realize and *actualize* itself.

Change is basically a movement from point A to B which may either be progressive or regressive. However, to impute the positive element to change and strip off all negative connotations I propose the use the term ‘Growth’.

'Growth' being an immanent condition of human nature, is the incessant realization of higher levels of order. "I mean", German mathematician, philosopher and statesman, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716) said "that each created being is pregnant with its future state and that it naturally follows a certain course if nothing hinders it." 'Growth' which is the natural course of universe and the very essence of life, was construed by Marcus Aurelius (121-180 A.D) in the manner of fluidity of time: "Time is like a river made up of the events which happen, and its current is strong; no sooner does anything appear that it is swept away, and another comes in its place, and will be swept away".

The hypothesis which I am calling upon everyone to embrace is plain. It maintains that, we have to reconcile ourselves to the fact that many of past African traditions, cannot and will not work in the modern 'Times' and if we are to remain blindly true to the mode of valuations of our forefathers, we will remain irresponsive to the demands of the moment.

A weed is any plant growing where it is not wanted; a plant out of place, which if left uncontrolled can have many adverse effects on the crop plants as well as on the quality of the produce. Likewise, in this new and yet unexplored era, we Africans are on the verge of absolute helplessness, as we stumble aimlessly equipped with inherited inadequate, primitive and obsolete social notions (weeds that are devouring the growth of the plant that is AFRICAN ASSERTIVENESS by competing against the available resources of responding to our historical demands and imperatives). Slowly it is dawning upon us that, few of our entrenched social notions are satisfactory in coping with the complex problems of today's fast evolving world.

It cannot be overemphasized that, the great confusion, we find ourselves engulfed in is due in large measure to the persistency with which we follow tradition in a world unsuited to it. We can modify a bit, however by applying 'the rule of reason' to our old loyalties and we may achieve a little adjustment. But there can be no progress for Africa in following scrupulously the inherited ideals of our forefathers, and the only possible progress is a loyalty that looks forward. "Change from forming ideas and judgements of value on the basis of conformity to antecedent objects, to constructing enjoyable objects directed by knowledge of consequences, is a change from looking to the past to looking to the future", thus taught American educator and philosopher John Dewey (1859-1952).

A basic irony of life is that no one can ever go back to the 'same old things' again. What we return to however superficial it might be has changed simply because time has changed and we have also changed; our perceptions have been altered; and we cannot incorporate into the same body, status, or world we left behind. The river has been flowing while we were gone, such that now it cannot look like the same river. In '*Walden*', or '*Life in the Woods*' (1854)', American naturalist and philosopher Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862) writes:

"No way of thinking or doing, however ancient, can be trusted without proof. What everybody echoes, or in silence passes by as true today may turn out to be falsehood tomorrow, mere smoke that would not sprinkle fertilizing rain on their fields. What old people say you cannot do you try and find that you can. Old deeds for old people, and new deeds for new...Here is life, an experiment to a great extent untried by me; but it does not avail me that they have tried it".

"Close your eyes and look. What you saw at first is there no more; and what you will see next has not yet come to life", so affirmed Italian painter, sculptor, architect, engineer, and scientist Leonardo da

Vinci (1452-1519). It is unfortunate that, in some corners and levels of our African society, consistency and rigidity has been praised, appreciated and made respectable. But only in a state of mediocrity and idiocy that consistency and rigidity, can become fashionable. The more intelligent we are, the less is the possibility of remaining consistent, because we will see change, and be receptive to new ideas; and with the changing life and the changing universe, one cannot go on clinging to something, which is no more applicable. "I am not an advocate for frequent changes in laws and constitutions" commented the 3rd US president (1801 – 1809) Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826), "but laws and institutions must go hand in hand with the progress of the human mind. As that becomes more developed, more enlightened, as new discoveries are made, new truths discovered and manner and opinions change, the change of circumstances, institutions must advance also to keep pace with the times."

"I do not believe that the great society is the ordered changeless and sterile battalion of the ants" said 37th US President Lyndon Baines Johnson in his inaugural speech on January 20, 1965, "it is the excitement of becoming – always becoming, trying, probing, falling, resting, and trying again – but always trying and always gaining". We should stop being infantile adults who usually insist on one way or no way and work on building a mental pattern of finding ways of solving problems and when one way is blocked, we choose another. In 'The Anatomy of Peace' (1945), Hungarian writer, publisher and literary agent, Emery Reves (1904-1981) argues:

"When events and realities conflict with established principles, we must always think that such events and realities are in violation of the principles. Often the established principles are as false as Ptolemy astronomical principles and can be rectified only by giving up quixotic ideas and adapting principles and the realities as did Copernicus."

Our Human 'Existence' rests on the ladder of 'Growth' which always happens against the overwhelming odds of statistical laws and their probabilities; and which alone contain the germ of happiness. This is the fundamental reason why in fluid Tumultuous Times of constant and perpetual changes as in which we have found ourselves in, learners seizing the present moment to as a fulcrum for a *fertile future focus* are destined to inherit this Earth, while the learned encumbered by the burden of the past and fixated on the *status quo* shall find themselves beautifully equipped to deal with a world that no longer exists, as American futurist Alvin Toffler (1928-) noted: "The illiterate of the 21st Century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn". And as Confucius advised: "They must often change, who would be content in happiness or wisdom". Scottish essayist and historian Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) had this to tell us: "Today is not yesterday; we ourselves change; how can our works and thoughts, if they are always to be the fittest continue always the same? Change indeed is painful; yet useful; and if memory have its force and worth, so also has hope".

Universal history is full of profound and startling examples of the wholesale transformation of negative into positive characters; from savage Sauls to pious Pauls. There is abundant proof that, we can in a modest measure rid ourselves of negativity and weakness and take on some of that positive firmness which is secret idol of our hearts.

Woe unto those who want everyone else in the world to change but themselves. Woe unto those of us who do not wish to change their characters, which seem so sweetly perfect to themselves and their very faults are so lovable that the notion of making a few repairs in their foundation hardly appeal to

them. To transform others we must first transform ourselves.

This lesson can be derived from physics, in a process known as *magnetic induction* by which a piece of magnetic material get magnetized when it is near or touching a permanent magnet. A magnet attracts only a few substances called magnetic or ferromagnetic, which can be magnetized, whereas other substances like wood or plastics are not attracted by a magnet as they are non-magnetic and consequently cannot be made into magnets. From this analogy, it goes that if we induce and inculcate into us positive values, we will eventually attract others who mildly or remotely possess these values and through a kind of induction we will magnify these values in them and invariably they will induce to others and through this chain reaction, a kind of Domino effect will be transmitted throughout the society and at least a good section of society will be transformed.

“Inner harmony is attained” asserted John Dewey (1859-1952), “only when by some means, terms are made with the environment”. Each of us has potential latent traits and inherent predispositions, one of which is gradually selected and strengthened by physical or social environments, like iron filings, drawn by magnet from the midst of unresponsive piece of mattress. Hence to actualize all these traits and predispositions we are under compulsion to seek another environment or to indulge ourselves to various new social settings, and by opening up to these new forces and influences the unused chords in our beings may be played upon, thus drawing from us a better and refined music; an assignment which would necessitate total commitment, total involvement, and total physical, intellectual as well as emotional response.

Without being bogged down by environmental, deterministic factors which are not in our powers to mold, each one of us is what one does and our individuality is the sum total of our own actions and it is therefore self created.

As ‘Growth’ is the supreme end of all life, it goes that everything that lives, has an inalienable right to all the development it is capable of attaining; to actualize its full potential. Nature compels us to move through life; we can never remain stationary however much we wish. The purpose of Nature is the advancement, unfoldment and realization of the elegance, beauty and richness of life. So it goes without saying that, it is our ‘existential evolutionary entitlement’ to all fullest mental, spiritual and physical unfoldment. The essence of our human nature, to be our real selves, to be our deliberate selves, means to transcend the artificial restrictions of our social-political environment, as well as to rise above the impulse to become slaves of our passions and instead act with creative courage and deep devotion towards authenticity.

If we release our psyches from myriad scruples, impediments and obstacles, we will not only accrue to ourselves those vital psychic resources necessary for thriving in this world, but would also be a blessing to those around us as they also get liberated through our freedom, enriched by our wealth and enlarged through our greatness. And this is a practical possibility owing to the fact that, our destiny being our own, our characters can change because we can always act differently; meaning that all of us have made ourselves (or have allowed to be made) and can remake ourselves again. “The greatest discovery of my generation is that a human being can alter his life by altering his attitudes of mind”, so asserted William James (1842-1910).

Upon the **root** of ‘Abhorring Bedeviling Critical Derailments’ and upon the **wings** of ‘Assimilating Beneficent Cardinal Determinants’, we shall inculcate upon us a lyric interlude amid the prose of daily hectic life, and consequently, confidence shall stiffen our vertebrae, we shall add power to our freedom, honorableness to our conducts, persistence to our courage, will to our perseverance, and choice to our dreams. As the compulsion of responsibility continues to deepen us, we shall be able to cherish and nourish love with wisdom; we shall be able to deepen our devotion with sacrifice. We shall ultimately merrily sing like English Poet, Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822):

“Life may change, but it may fly not;
Hope may vanish, but it can die not;
Truth be veiled, but still it burneth;
Love repulsed, - but it returneth!”

Whereas we will strive to discern a lateral relationship between various VICES and various VIRTUES though not chronologically, a point of caution is that the stated VICE in a certain alphabetical letter does not point absolutely to its dialectical opposite in the VIRTUE, in the same alphabetical letter. However all the antidotes in the VICES are weaved together with the VIRTUES not in an organizational manner, but in an organic pattern to form an intricate cobweb that is an AFRICAN ASSERTIVENESS. As a final remark in their book ‘*The Great Traditions in Ethics*’ (1984), Ethel Albert, Theodore Demise and Sheldon Peterfreud acknowledges the arduousness of our task:

“Because human experience does not come analyzed for us, ethical theorizing persists as a vital enterprise. And because life is a complex matrix in which a wide variety of perspectives is formed, we cannot expect to find unanimity in ethics, save perhaps in the general, if sometimes unacknowledged homage to the power of reason...The last ethical theory has not yet been written, the last ethical insight has not yet been recorded. To think maturely on moral matters is the desideration and value of the study of ethics”.

To totally transcend this Herculean task, and to transform this seemingly hard endeavour into an entertaining affair, each particular VICE and VIRTUE is opened by a ‘granite gesture’ which excites and incites the reader to form rough assumptions regarding the topic in question. It also sets the positive climate, whereby the reader gets acquainted with the question to be discussed and build a psychological rapport. The vague hypothesis developed at the beginning will be slowly lighted up and the reader will be at liberty to reformulate, reconsider or drop and modify as one indulges in a thorough progress through the topic.

The debate in each topic is ignited by posing an operational, stipulative definition which is relevant in our peculiar African situation and context without ignoring the general etymological implication. The *justification* for putting that much effort in expounding the particular issue unfolds naturally as its *purpose* in regard to AFRICAN ASSERTIVENESS becomes slowly and clearly discernible.

By the time one has completed to identify the patterns or theme associated with the topic and has been able to focus it in its proper perspective, one is enabled to formulate ones unique practical strategies which are directed towards orienting the issue into his or her life; as a creative reflection of ones individual circumstances.

After a comprehensive journey through the particular case, offering a free flowing sense of self-evaluation throughout the discussion, in a sincere expectation that the goal of arousing a sense of duty has been achieved, the reader is aided in the termination process by a relevant ‘inescapable inference’.

It would be important to note that, neither the stated VICE is a problem unique only to Africa, nor the stated VIRTUE a requirement unique only to Africa, but issues which are a concern for mankind throughout history. However, I have been able sieve all those lasting and enduring attributes which are relevant in our particular moment in history, persuasive in thriving of the seed that is an AFRICAN CIVILIZATION.

The quest for an AFRICAN RENAISSANCE is not pursued in an informational vacuum; it is done on a base of relevant ideas and existing frameworks. While I derive a very immense illumination from the vast treasure of African proverbs and the variety possibilities of their every day use, a forceful impetus for an AFRICAN RENAISSANCE is derived from the universal pool of knowledge, from actions, ideas of mythological figures, religious leaders, philosopher, psychologists as well as fictional personalities from some plays.

My use of Biblical and Quranic quotes is deliberate. In the first instance, these are two major religions adhered to by majority of Africans including those in the diaspora. The second justification is that, I have found very persuasive inspirations for an AFRICAN RENAISSANCE from these two scriptures. Third, is to awaken upon everyone the notion that, an AFRICAN RENAISSANCE is sacred in nature. The fundamental conception that, God created us in His image goes towards explaining that, our chief assignment as human being is to strive towards the possible mortal perfection.

The motivation towards an AFRICAN RENAISSANCE is above all not explicit, for we are not obeying any person’s orders or trying to atone for any past mistakes. It is precisely implicit in that, the compulsion to have a covenant with our future is to have a rendezvous with destiny by utilizing present opportunities, through the use of all means at our disposal and all our God endowed faculties. The categorical imperative of an AFRICAN RENAISSANCE runs thus:

“We the present generation desires and are committed to moulding, cultivating and propagating a responsive, harmonious, well-integrated productive society, not because our fathers and our forefathers dreamed of it or aspired it, but because our children and our grandchildren demands it and are yawning for it!”