

# Isese Spirituality Workbook

The Ancestral Wisdom of the

Ifa Orisa Tradition

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## DEDICATION

This is dedicated to the ones who search for the wisdom of their ancestors and seek out elevation , healing, and enlightenment. To the children of cotton in America. To the children of Olokun whose ancestors traveled through the belly of the Atlantic Ocean to arrive in New Worlds. It is dedicated to my physical and spiritual descendants.

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## **16 Core Values of Ifa**

1. There is one unifying intelligent source that expresses as all things to all people and through all of creation seen and unseen. We call it Olodumare.
2. We are all endowed with personal power and choices and must take full responsibility for our own actions.
3. For every problem we encounter , there is a solution and that we have the power to effect positive change in our lives .
4. We each have a divine purpose and destiny, It is our responsibility to discover it and live in alignment with it in order to live our best life.
5. At our core, we are spiritual beings inhabiting human bodies. Our divinity is manifest through an indwelling intelligence (Ori) that is always connected to our source.
6. We do not die but continue as ancestors in the spiritual world and come back through reincarnation into our blood relatives.
7. We live in a spiritual universe that it is governed by universal laws that ensure divine order and balance.
8. Character directly impacts our destiny. We must each do the internal work to cultivate integrity and honorable character in our lives. There is no real gain, joy, or peace from wrong doing.

9. Spiritual technologies such as therapeutic ritual, Oracles, innate spiritual gifts, initiation, and indigenous medicines can be used to heal, empower, receive guidance, support, and insight in and for our lives.

10. The universe is governed by primordial intelligences we call Irunmole and Orisa who manifest as light and forces of nature. Our bodies are made of the same substances and therefore always connected.

11. Earth is our Mother who provides all living beings food, water, clothing, medicine, shelter, and substance our entire lives. We are custodians of the Earth and must respect the laws of nature.

12. Good fortune in life can be attained through Ebo. We must give up something of lesser value for something of greater value.

13. The spiritual world and physical world are interconnected and interdependent . Nothing comes through the physical world without coming first through the spiritual.

14. We are the sum total of our ancestors who came before and continue our relationships with them in the spiritual world. world through our ancestors and (Egbe) spiritual mates.

15. The world is abundant and should be lived with joy and free of fear.

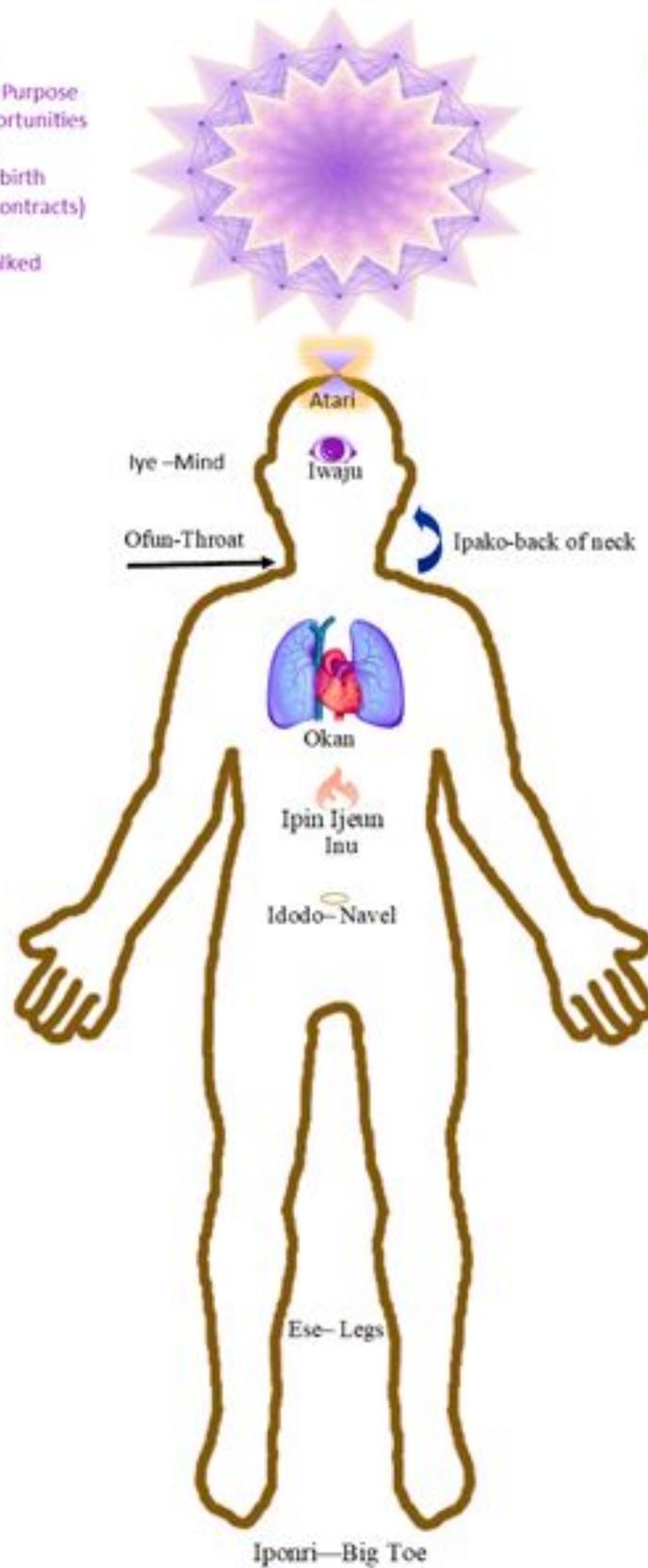
16. Women must be respected. The only way we come to Earth is through women.

# Ori Isese

## Ori

- Ori Apere**
- Choices
  - Ajala {
    - Akunleyan - Soul Purpose
    - Akunlegba- Opportunities
    - Ayenmo— Fixed
  - Onibode {
    - Adamo— fixed at birth
    - Akosile— ( soul contracts)
    - Ipin Ijeun -Drives
    - Iponri— Path Walked

- Ori Eleda**
- Choices by Creator
  - Orisa
  - Eewo- Taboos



#### Excerpt Chapter 4; Iwa and Path of Character

Ifa supports this process by helping us to become aware of situations or problems we may be facing and potential solutions to either prevent negative outcomes or to achieve our ultimate goals. It helps us to identify those areas of deficiency and excess that may be causing us problems. When a person receives a Dafa (Ifa Divination) they will be told what forces of nature or other spiritual energies are out of balance. They will be told taboos and behaviors that must be avoided. They will be told specific attitudes they must have to maximize their situation. They will be given solutions and remedies to counter negativity or restore balance.

As we practice Ifa as a spiritual path, we further cultivate our weak areas into strength and minimize our excesses into balance through our work with Orisa as forces of Nature. As primordial forces of nature we can find nature inside of us as well. Some show up very strong. Others show up weak. So Ifa can help to bring wholeness by balancing all of the forces of nature inside of us. Within the Odu corpus, are all of the Orisa which is why when consulting, solutions may be found with any of them. When wholeness is reached, a fully integrated personality emerges. We stop being a slave to the human condition and are able to become aware of a greater awareness. From that point one is able to reach the state of the witness self which is able to detach from personal interest alone and do what needs to be done at any moment. This is how one develops wisdom.

Wisdom sends us on an inner journey of consciousness through self mastery. Self mastery calls for us to take full responsibility for our lives... good, bad, and ugly, and full responsibility to our actions and responses. By doing so, we are able to find a progressive sense of peace.

#### Irosun Iwori on Self Mastery and character

*Let's do things with joy. Those who wish to go may go. Those who wish to return may return. Definitely, human beings have been chosen to bring good fortune to the world.*

*Omniscience, the diviner of Orunmila, divined Ifa for Orunmila, who was told that human beings would come and ask him a particular question. He was advised to offer a sacrifice. Orunmila heeded the advice and performed the sacrifice. One day, all kinds of people, including robbers and other evildoers, gathered themselves together and went to Orunmila'*

*to complain that they were "tired of going back and forth to Earth, Orunmila! Please allow us to take refuge in heaven." Orunmila said they could not avoid going to and coming back from the Earth until they had attained the good position that Oduduwa had ordained for every individual; only then could they reside in heaven. They asked, "What is the good position?"*

*Orunmila asked them to confess their ignorance. They said, "We are ignorant and would like to be given knowledge by Olodumare (olu wa)."*

*Orunmila said: The good position is the world. A world in which there will be full knowledge of all things, joy everywhere, life without anxiety or fear of enemies, attack from snakes or other dangerous animals, without fear of death, disease, litigation, losses, danger of accidents from water and fire, without the fear of misery or poverty, **because of your inner power, good character, and wisdom.** When you refrain from stealing because of the hardship the owner suffers and the disgrace with which this behavior is treated in the presence of Odudua and other good spirits in heaven, who are always friendly and often wish us well. These forces can turn their backs on you and allow you to return to the darkness of the world.*

*Bear in mind that you will not receive any favors, and whatever is stolen will be repaid. All evil acts have their repercussions. Individually, what will be needed to attain the good position is: **wisdom that can adequately govern the world as a whole; sacrifice or cultivating the habit of doing good to the poor or those who need your help; desire to increase the world's prosperity rather than destroy it.** People will continue to go to heaven and return to Earth after death until everyone attains the good position. There are a lot of good things in heaven that are still not available on Earth and will be obtained in due course. When all the children of Odudua are gathered together, those selected to transfer the good things to the world are called **eniyan, or ascended human beings.***

This passage speaks to mastery of self and self sabotaging behaviors that lead to undesirable states. This is why commitment to self mastery is critical to ultimate success not just in life but for the elevation of the world.. Many people think that learning Ifa is about learning divination and worshiping orisa. Others think it's about attaining power, wealth. Others perceive it to be a way to master life or build community. The above passage helps us to understand that as we strive to create a better world, everyone can get what they are looking for.

- Everyone wants to be loved and accepted
- Everyone wants to be free from fears
- Everyone seeks greater connection with their source.

- Everyone wants an over all sense of a well being, physically, mentally, emotionally.

Through inner work on ourselves, we can achieve these things. So in mastering ourselves, we are able to ascend. Ascension evolves us to higher levels of being. Eniyan are ascended humans. It is often translated as human only, but there are two definitions. The other is chosen ones who are perfect humans or evolved. Orisa are ascended or elevated beings. As Orisa, were once human beings, we too have the ability to become Orisa through massive spiritual development. This is the work that Odudua has ordained for every individual. It may take many lifetimes of work...as this level of mastery is not just outer experience but inner transformation through extensive lessons each time we come.

The goal is to, as souls, master the human condition... Being in the world of Aye without succumbing to its outer trappings. Trappings often motivated by those attachments and negative emotions and thoughts spoken of earlier. Thus, we reincarnate over and again for thousands of years trying to reach the goal. Reincarnation is called atunwa in Yoruba. As mentioned in the above Odu Ifa, this is why we have to keep coming back and forth to the Earth ie reincarnating here.

## Asaro The Art of Meditation Excerpt

We are reminded in the Odu Ifa Irete Ofun and in the verses on Ori that Ori is responsible for reaching the perfect state called Apere. This perfect state is self mastery. The process of self mastery is not instant though. It is a bit by bit process and it takes practice to change the habits formed over the years and even over lifetimes. It is an **Ajo inu aye** ... an Inner Journey in the physical.. The inner journey moves you out of the focus on the external elements in aye and toward the internal elements within your being. Its best seen as a journey than a destination because it never really ends. Its a lifetime process of growth, ascension, and elevation. This is where the more esoteric aspects of Ifa begins. Because it's not so much about outer religious worship so much as it is about self realization and spiritual awakening or Ifayelele.

According to Chief Olayinka Babatunde Ogunsina Akano Kokumo Adewuyi of Ondo State:

“Ifayelele is the quality of spirit and mind enjoyed by Olodumare and the Irunmole/Orisa. It is characterized by certainty, serenity, wholesomeness and freedom from all that defiles, impurifies, taints, perturbs, and oppresses the heart/mind. It is a state of abiding positivity, joy, peace and clarity. It is also the state of being in which the powers of ones soul begin to emerge and manifest in original diversity. Ifayelele in its highest and most developed state is the condition of spiritual-moral-emotional and intellectual maturity.”

He also says:

“This is what happened to the holy sage and seer of Igeti, Orunmila. At the height and climax of this attainment due to many years of learning, perseverance, study, training, struggling, pondering and applying the inner heart mysteries of Ifa, Orunmila with great ecstasy, extraordinary wonder, heroic victory and joyous rapture entered the highest, final and most complete state of Ifa consciousness, the fusion of his developing and perfect Ori with his own spirit/mind (Ifayelele).”

It is with this thought that we begin to explore actual methods for meditation and sacred technology for achieving these higher states.

## **States of Consciousness**

One of the things that your journey will bring is the ability to pay closer attention to the world around you and your experience of it. This is determined by your state of consciousness which is awareness. Psychology understands that the mind has the ability to enter different brainwave states and this determines consciousness or state of awareness. They have identified 5 basic states we can enter. When a person is fully awake, they are considered to be in a Beta state. When they are asleep and dreaming, they are considered to be in Theta state. Alpha state is when we are deeply relaxed, daydreaming, and almost sleep. Delta state is when they are in deep sleep and completely detached. Gamma state is when we receive burst of enlightenment or flashes of insight.

In Ifa Orisa Spirituality, these states are states of trance and through them you can tap into the spiritual world of Orun. This can allow deep connection and communication with our ancestors, Orisa, our Egbe and our Ori. African indigenous spiritual technology determined several methods for achieving these altered states. The following are a few:

1: Orisa dance where the Practitioner rhythmically imitates the sacred movements of a particular Orisa thereby invoking the Orisa . This allows the priest to enter a trance state once they are at a deep Alpha or theta level.

2. It can also be attained and or enhanced through rhythmic drumming . The Ifa Orisa Tradition has specific drum rhythms that are used for specific Orisa and these rhythms can facilitate an altered state especially when accompanied by dance.

2. Orin ( song) , Iwure (prayer) , Oriki (Praise poetry) , Ofo Ase (words of power) can be recited, chanted or sang and this can facilitate a heightened state of consciousness as well.

When all three are engaged simultaneously and with others building a community crescendo of spiritual energy or Ase, it can create multiple trance experiences where the participants receive direct insights from the spirits. This ritual experience is a form of collective or community meditation. The methods for its facilitation are taught in person by priest of the tradition.

The methods that will follow do not require a priest but can be done by anyone. They are beginning practices that can facilitate meditative experiences. This is not a one time thing or exercise. They are not intended to be rushed through in a couple of days. This is a workbook and is intended to imply ongoing spiritual work in terms of development. One exercise can build

upon another... but to properly grasp the depth of these exercises, it will take a minimum of months if not years. You should return to them periodically to assess growth. This is a start and a guide that can lead to deeper study and mastery later.

# The Way of Ancestral Centered Living

**We don't worship ancestors. We continue our relationship with them in the invisible world**

One of the greatest assaults in history on Africans in the diaspora is the severance of their ancestral families and relationships left in Africa their homeland. Throughout over 3000 ethnic groups and kingdoms, one thing that united continental Africans and really all indigenous people worldwide is their relationships with their ancestors. The ancestors is what allows us to understand who we are, where we come from, and where we are going. While many have suggested that ancestral veneration is worshipping the ancestors, I find it's not so much worship so much as it is continuing the relationship after the physical body ceases to exist. There is a recognition of the ancestral world and it's vastness that far exceeds this known world of the living. This is our true home in that it is where we come from and where we return to once we complete our missions on Earth.

There is a continuity that exists through the cycles of birth, life, death, and rebirth. We are closely connected to our ancestors because we are born in the same circle of life as them and born through the same channels of energy they have created. We must live with the results of their actions when they were living, Inherited mind-sets, predispositions and emotions that influence us and impact the destiny of the family. We often inherit eating habits, biological tendencies and even ancestral memory.

So strong are some of these things that the science of epigenetics has now documented that we inherited cellular memory up to 14 generations back. It is interesting to note how close this is to the Ifa view which views the impact of ancestors 16 generations backward and 16 forward. This includes trauma that is "remembered" and set in the genetic cellular structure. For African Diasporans this is of particular interest because of the level of trauma those ancestors were subjected to under several generations enduring human captivity and forced labor And the constant threat of death all the way up to Jim Crow and modern police brutality towards people of color. This intergenerational trauma plays out psychologically as well. According to Dr. Joy DeGruy Leary in her book, Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome, America's Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing, PTSS is when a population experiences intergenerational trauma from centuries of psychological and emotional enslavement and continues to face institutionalized oppression and racism. This has resulted in a marked pattern of maladaptive behaviors that were survival strategies. These behavior patterns resulted in patterns such as low self esteem, anger

and violence, addictions, chronic depression, self sabotage and so on. These behaviors are passed down through learned responses from what is witnessed in the family. These patterns undoubtedly impact our quality of life as well as create limitations in maximizing our potential and opportunities in life.

It should be clear now of the impact our ancestors have had on us and how we are significantly influenced by those who came before. This is why ancestor work is necessary, especially for those in the diaspora. It has the ability to transform these traumas and facilitate healing and empowerment for ourselves, our families, and our communities. . It's important to note that just as we are influenced by the 16 generations of ancestors before us, we have the ability to influence those 16 generations of descendants going forward. The work with ancestors are not just for healing the past but to progress future generations.