

African Proverb of the Month August, 2001

Amaadhi amasabe tigamala ndigho. (Soga)

Maji ya bure hayakati kiu. (Swahili)

Water that has been begged for does not quench the thirst. (English)

Soga, Ganda ([Uganda](#)) Proverb

Background, Explanation, Meaning and Everyday Use

The Soga people (also known as the Basoga), who number nearly 2 million, mainly live in an environment on and surrounding the north-central shores of Lake Victoria in Uganda. The Basoga have a wealthy tradition of oral literature, although it has not been as well published as that of their more populous Baganda (Ganda) neighbors who live to the west of them. But the two ethnic groups share many of the same proverbs, personal names and words. Fortunately, there has been an increasing drive to document Lusoga language and literature. Lusoga-English dictionaries and a *Bible* are now in print and lots more is being written. The Ganda equivalent of the proverb above is "

amasabe tegamala nnyonta

Amazzi

."

Begging involves a lot of courage and perseverance, and it can take a while for the person who often begs or unduly asks for help to be given what he or she wants. In most cases the items received that were begged for turn out to be below the standard of what the begging person needs or desires. Something that was asked for is likely to be limited, below what was required or unsatisfactory. Receivers also tend to exercise less care in utilizing things that were given to them free of charge. Begging can indeed worsen the spirit of slothfulness on the beggar's part. It perpetrates a spirit of not having definite commendable goals in life. It is, therefore, best for one to put in adequate effort to achieve and obtain what he or she wants. People who work hard rather than habitually ask for favors turn out to achieve more and be more materially and psychologically contented than those who often look to be pitied and done favors. At the same time those people from whom things are begged are inconvenienced since they may not have enough to give out. They also may have to put in effort on behalf of a person who is simply lazy and unduly dependent. The giver would then not be in a position to give away much to the beggar.

Biblical Parallels

The Judeo-Christian tradition discourages idleness which can perpetrates the spirit of over dependence on others that are not be equipped to always help. Laziness can encourage lots of sinful ways that include stealing and drunkenness. One who habitually begs could likely turn out to be a dissatisfied and brazen soul. The *Bible* calls us forth to work hard and honestly and to help those who are genuinely in a position of need other than that of needless over-dependence. Those in need can include the sick, the handicapped and those suffering through adverse conditions (such as famine, pestilences, money shortages) that are so overbearing. Rather let the person labor, doing honest work with his or her hands so that he or she may be able to give to those in need (

Ephesians

4: 28). By so toiling one must help the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus when he said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (

Acts

20: 35) and "Give to him who begs from you" (

Matthew

5:42).

Contemporary Use and Religious Application

None of us can meet all our needs without the help of others. Requesting help is encouraged where appropriate. Indeed this Soga proverb functions to discourage people from becoming over-dependent and exploitative of others. Working hard in a personal effort to gain and achieve is, at the end of the day, psychologically and materially satisfying. People who work hard tend to have commendable goals. It is such hard work that tends to reap significant fruits. One who lives on relying on others not only becomes a dissatisfied soul, but also is a nuisance and a burden to society. The effort that such a person uses to beg for pennies could well be put to use for actual work that pays reasonable dividends.

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