

Chapter I-5: *The Way of a Stranger and How a Stranger Should Live in Dagbon*

Yesterday we talked about the character of Dagbamba, and I told you that we Dagbamba know how to give respect to strangers.¹ We Dagbamba watch many things on the part of strangers. And you yourself, you are a stranger and you have come to Dagbon. And so today I want to add to the talk I talked yesterday, and I am going to tell you more about how we Dagbamba look at strangers, and what is inside traveling and being a stranger. As you want to know the talks and the way of living of the Dagbamba, it will be good if you also know how to live with us. And so my talk will come and join how a stranger should also live in Dagbon.

If you get up, it is good you travel. Don't sit at one place. Dagbamba say that a child who travels is wiser than the father. And Dagbamba say again that a person who climbs a tree will see something that a person who is sitting down will never see. The one sitting down will only see what is in front of him. The one who climbs the tree will see far, and he will look left and right, and he will see whatever is there. That is why a traveler and somebody who does not travel can never be the same. If somebody travels, he sees many things, and so you the one staying at home without traveling, you can't compare yourself to him. If you don't travel, you don't know what is in the world. I think in my heart that if somebody has never traveled to a different place to see what is happening there, maybe he will have some sense, but his sense will not be much. To get sense, you have to go outside. A person cannot sit down in his town and get sense. It's not because of anything. What is in your town is not in another town. What you have seen in your town, if you go to another town, you will catch more and add. If your townspeople were doing things, if you go to another town, you will see a type of it, and you will see something that is more than that. And so roaming itself is sense-learning. And it is eye-seeing, and it isn't that you have read or you have heard. There is no one who will travel and not learn something. Even if you don't want to know anything about a certain town, and you travel there, at least before you leave there you will know something about that town. It is inside traveling that you will know the way of good living, and it is in your traveling too that you will know how you yourself are. If you are a good person, you will know it in your traveling; if you are a useless person, you will come to know it. When you travel, you will know if you are fit to be a person. It is inside traveling that you

1. sana: stranger, foreigner, visitor

will see the wisdom of others and you will also get wisdom. And it is inside traveling that you will see the foolishness of others and you will also know your own foolishness. That is how it is.

Why have I said that it is inside traveling and being a stranger that you will know your wisdom and your foolishness? Maybe when you were in your town, you thought that you had a lot of sense, but when you travel to some places, the people there will take you to be a fool. Maybe you yourself will disregard your sense at that time. Maybe you are a learned person, reading much or doing something very well in your town. You may be thinking that you are the only person who can do what you do. You will get to some towns, and you will be surprised to see people who are more than you, and they are doing things that you have never done before. Maybe you are a rich person, and you are sitting in your town thinking that you are very rich. You won't know that you can travel to a different town, and somebody will just catch you and throw you into his money and no one will ever see you again. Maybe you are a farmer making a big farm, but you have never traveled to another town to see other people's farms. When you travel to see some people's farms, you will think that you are using somebody's house compound as a farm. And we drummers, as we beat the drums some of us are also singing, and maybe you will think that you are the best singer in the town. You will one day travel to another town and hear someone sing, and you will think that you are a deaf and dumb person who has never sung before. And those who beat the drums and don't sing are there, and maybe you will think that you are the best person who can take a stick and beat the drums in your town, and no one can beat a drum like you. When you travel to a different town, you will see somebody beating a drum, and you will stand there and look at him, and you will think that you have never held a stick in your hand to beat drums but that you have only been holding the stick in your anus and been beating. Can you imagine somebody beating the drum and making you think that you have been putting your stick in your anus and beating? At that time, you will disregard yourself. And so traveling brings out many things and finishes many things. The idea you were holding about yourself is just gone. Your traveling has finished it. And so it is in this traveling that you will get to know that you are more than somebody and somebody is more than you. If you don't travel, you cannot know this. And that alone is sense. And so the sweetness of being a stranger is there.

But truly, we Dagbamba say that to be a stranger is like death. Why have I said that? We Dagbamba have our proverbs. If you want to watch the way of death, you should travel and leave your room and not put someone to stay in your room. When you come home, you will know that death is bad. When you come,

it doesn't look as if there was somebody in that room. And whatever happens, even if your room is very clean, you will want to sweep it.

Why do I say so? When you leave your home, you are just going. When you come back home and you look at your room, you will see that if death catches you and you die, that is what your home is going to look like. If somebody dies, all the property the fellow had, they leave it down when they go and bury the dead body. If you die, they take you alone. They don't add anything of yours to go and bury you. And so it looks like the same thing if you get up and travel: you will leave all your property in your house or room. As a stranger, if you travel and you go to some place and you die, they are also going to bury you like that. And so the room you are sleeping inside, you should just travel a little and come back, then open it and look at it, and compare it to the way you were always there. When you travel, at that time your heart is not in the room again. You will travel to where you are going and you will be there. The time you return back to your house, then you will put your key and open the door: you should just stand by the doorway and have a look at the room before you go inside. You won't recognize the room. It is there you will start to think, "Ah! Is that how death is? I am not dead. It was just traveling that I traveled. But now I have returned back. Look at the way my room is looking." And so that is the reason why we say that to be a stranger is like death. As for traveling, if you travel and you come back, and you are somebody who has sense, when you look at your place, you will know that when you die, your house is going to look like this.

And again, maybe you don't know a town, and you don't know anybody there, but you have been hearing the name of that town. One day, you get up, pack your things, and you will be traveling to that town. You are just like a dead body. Whether or not you will get a place to sleep, you don't know. Maybe you will be going and something can kill you on the way, and people will look at you and not know you, and because you are a stranger, no one will ask. I want to show you the way of strangers. When you get to the town you are traveling to, those who are in that town, if their heart wants, they will say you are a bad person. If their heart wants, they will say you are a thief, and inside that, they can beat and kill somebody. But you have not stolen. They have thought of their bad thoughts, and because you don't know anybody in that town and no one knows you, if someone tells a big lie like that about you, they can beat and kill you. A liar will say, "He is a bad person. If we don't remove him from this town, the town will not be good." If they drive you away, what have you become? If they kill you, what have you become? You are a dead body. That is the way of strangers.

And so here it is: as we have come to this world, we are also like strangers. We believe that if we die we are going to heaven or we are going to somewhere,

but no one has seen it. If we die, we don't know where we are going. We have been praying and praying that we will get to the next world or to heaven, but no one has ever seen it and no one knows how it is. And so all of us who are living in this world, we are strangers. We are traveling on a road, and we don't know what is at the end of the road. If you are traveling, and you don't know the place where you are traveling to, you are the same as a dead body. You are going to a town and you don't know the town. No one knows you in that town, and no one has sent you to that town. You and death are one. There is no difference. And so to be a stranger is like death. This is the meaning of it.

And again, there is some traveling that is not like death. You travel and you know somebody. That is the good traveling. It's like somebody who is in the world doing good works, and if he is coming to die, he is not a stranger in heaven because his good works have already gone there before him. When you know somebody in a town and you are traveling there, your heart is white. Today, if I get up and I am going to America, and I am going to your town, I have not gone there before. But you John have come to know me in my town. And others who are your friends have come to know me in my town, and others know me through you. If I go, and you are not there, and your wife is not there, and your friends who have come here, Stuart and Nadav and Melissa, maybe none of them is there. If all the people I know are not there, maybe your friend Sulemana will be there. I don't know him, but as he has written me, he has shown that we know one another. If Sulemana alone is there, that will be all right. As for that traveling, if you are going to travel it, it's not like death.

And so to be a stranger is good and bad, and it is standing like that for every human being. It is on everyone. I can tell you that when they give birth to a child in Dagbon here, and they have not yet given that child a name, they have only one name for the child: they will call the child *Sandoo* if the child is a boy or *Sampaya* if the child is a girl. And the meaning of the name is "stranger," because as this child has come, we don't know the child, and the child too has just come to meet us. And so being a stranger is on everyone. As for being a stranger, only someone who refuses, or someone who is sick, or someone who hasn't got the means, such people cannot travel to look for what they want. If not that, whatever happens, you will travel to some place, and at that place you will be a stranger. And sometimes you will lose and sometimes you will gain.

And truly, there are some strangers who receive bad things they never thought of. And sometimes these bad things are coming from the stranger himself. Maybe you are coming from your town and taking yourself high, and you are thinking that if you arrive in a different town, the people there are also going to take you high. But when you arrive in that town, no one minds you. It will come

to the point that you believe that they are doing bad to you. And so if you are traveling, you should say to yourself, “Where they respect me, I will get respect; and where they don’t respect me, it doesn’t matter.” But if you take it that you are going to be respected throughout your traveling, you are telling yourself a lie. That is why we drummers beat that God takes one town’s prince and turns him to be another town’s slave.

And so if you are a stranger, you have to be watching. And I want to tell you yourself that any place you go, if it’s not in Dagbon where everyone knows you, you should be watching. There are many bad things inside being a stranger. I am going to count some of them for you. If you arrive in a town and you don’t stay long, you won’t know about the house where you are going to stay. You don’t ask anybody because you are not going to stay long in that town, and no one will tell you that the house you are going to enter is bad or good. You will just go and sleep there. Maybe there is a house in that town, and the householder is not having one mouth with the chief, or maybe the townspeople fear that house. Even though you are a good person in your town, you will come to sleep in that house, and the next morning the people of that town will see you and take you to be a bad person. You are a good person, and you didn’t know that the house was a bad house, but they will take you to be bad like the householder. And it’s not your fault. You have arrived and somebody is giving you a place to sleep in his house; you can’t just come out and ask people, “The house where I am sleeping, is there anything bad with that house.” There is no way for you to ask that. Even if you ask, no one will tell you.

We have a proverb in Dagbon that says, “They only show the bad ways of a town; they don’t show the bad people of a town.” Have you heard? Every town has its talks. Maybe there are some areas where there are forbidden things, and a stranger does not go to those places. For example, you see Tamale: they have many gods here, and these gods are for the land, and they have their places in the town. Inside that town, there are certain things you don’t do or certain places you don’t go, and it is only the people of the town who know. You the stranger, you don’t know. And so as for that land, we can easily tell a stranger that “This place is bad.” If not that, maybe there are some places where there are thieves, and if the stranger goes there, maybe he will meet trouble there. And so you will tell him not to pass there. You have shown him the bad ways of the town. Or in your town, don’t you have such things there? If a stranger enters your house, and something bad happens to the stranger, it is on your head. And so you will tell him about the bad ways of the town. But they don’t show a stranger that: “This person is bad.” They won’t tell you.

How they don't show a stranger a bad person, the reason is there, and it separates. As we are sitting down now, if you receive a stranger, you don't know the character of the stranger, and you turn to show him that this man is this house is not a good person. But you don't know the character of the stranger yet. The time you are talking to him, maybe he's also a bad person; you don't know, and you start to show him bad people. So don't tell him anything. You just keep quiet and stay together with him. And on the part of the stranger too, he also doesn't know your character yet. Whether you are a bad person or you are a good person, the stranger doesn't know. If someone comes to tell you that another person is bad, who is the human being? If you are not a bad person, how will you know that somebody is also bad? And so why is that you can just show him that such-and-such a person is bad? Maybe you will say that this person is not a good person, and his house is a bad house. Maybe the stranger you received will go outside and start to roam, and maybe the house you showed him as a bad house, the people will stop him. They will ask him, "Are you the one in that house over there?" He will say, "Yes." Then they will say, "Ah! It's not good. That house you have entered, you haven't got a good house. Why have you come as a stranger, and you have gone to live in that house? We can't say anything, because you have already entered that house. But your householder is not a good person." You have told your stranger that in that particular house, they are bad people there, and now those same people are telling him that you too, your house is not a good house. You have shown him bad people, and now they are also showing him that you too are a bad person. They will let the stranger sit down, and they will tell him all the talks about what you have been doing in that town. So that is why we say that we only show the stranger the bad ways of the town, but we don't show him the bad people.

And so you just allow the stranger to be there. If he goes out and roams in the town, if you are a good person, people around town will tell the stranger. And if you are not a good person, if only the stranger truly roams in town, maybe he will get to know. But if you spoil the name of other people's houses to the stranger, and if he gets to hear in town that you too are not good: what will it bring? The stranger will be at one place, and start to think: is it my householder who is not good or the people outside who are not good? why is it that there are talks between him and the people outside? This is why we Dagbamba, we talk like that. And so you should just leave the stranger to stay like that. He will be watching you and watching the people who stay with you. If you happen to be a good person, the stranger will know. And your friends or the people who come to you, whether they are bad people or they are good people, if the stranger is very watchful, he will be able to tell who they are.

As for a town, it is the people of the town who will come and tell you the problems of the town. But it is only if you are staying in a house for some time that you will know something about the people of that house. If not that, you won't know. And so there is nothing bad like being a stranger. And so because of that, we Dagbamba say again, "To be a stranger is like the night." If you come and enter in a town, whether it is midnight or daytime when you arrive in that town, it's all the same to you the stranger, because you don't know the way. And so old Dagbamba used to say, "To be a stranger, you are in darkness." Inside Dagbani, this is another way we used to say it. Inside Dagbani, this is how it is. If you are a stranger, wherever you reach, you are in darkness.

A stranger is a stranger, and so Dagbamba say again: a tall stranger follows a short townsperson. If you are a stranger and you travel to a town, even if you are very wise, when you reach that town, you are a stranger there. And as we say a short townsperson, it isn't that he is just a short person. It is sense we are talking about. The sense you are carrying from your home town and coming, maybe your sense is more than the sense of the person you are coming to meet in that town. But this short townsperson, what he knows about that town, you don't know it. You are only carrying the sense from your town. If you want to know about that town, it is this small one you are going to ask. That is the meaning: a tall stranger follows a short townsperson. That is our Dagbani. If you are stranger, if you want, you can know everything in your town, but you can't know what is inside somebody else's town unless you travel.

As I am telling you that a stranger does not know the town he travels to, it can be a bad thing, and here is another example. Sometimes a man will travel with his wife, and someone will collect his wife from him. Maybe you are a useless person in your town, and no one respects you there, and no one regards your wife either. When you reach another town, and your wife shows her good character to the people of that town, these people will see that her way of living is good and think that she is very beautiful. If they see that she is more than you, and they think that you are not fit to hold such a wife, they will collect her away from you. Someone will show her something and turn her eyes. And so if you are a stranger, you can lose. I don't know of your place, but here in Dagbon, it's just common. If you carry your wife from Dagbon here to the South, somebody sitting there will collect your wife and let you come back here alone. And it is just because you are a stranger and you don't know the town. He knows all the ways of the town, and he will run and not fall. If it is knowing the big people or the chiefs of the town, he knows them. And you are a stranger, and you don't know anyone. As you are a stranger, you are just a stranger.

If you are a good stranger, and you have the bad luck to arrive in a bad person's house, maybe you didn't know that he was a bad person, and you didn't know that he was not having one mouth with the townspeople. As you are a stranger, if some talk should come and meet you, whether it's a bad talk or a good talk, they will know that you are staying in that bad person's house. If it is a bad talk, that person's badness will come and attach itself to you, and no one will take it that you are a good person. If it is a good talk, and something good comes to you in that town, the people will not agree for that good thing to come to you. They will say that if you were a good person, you wouldn't have come to stay in that bad person's house. But you are a stranger, and you didn't know.

If you are a stranger and you are staying with a householder, it is good you watch the way of living of your householder. A householder can be sitting down and he's not living well with the people he's staying with. If you sit with him for three or four days, you will know his way of living on the part of the townspeople. If not that, if your householder is not a good person, you will take his name to ask for something inside the town, and you won't get. Or you will ask him to buy something or get something for you, and you won't get. You have no fault. As you have come to enter with him, you don't know that he is not a good person. It can happen, if you get up to say you are traveling, you may reach some town, and by God's will, if you happen to go and enter the house of a bad person, everything will be difficult for you. Maybe you will come to suffer some suffering that you have never suffered before in your own home town. And all the things you are suffering to get, maybe you have some of them in your own home. But what you have at home, as you are traveling, you can't carry all the things in your room and go. And that time you will turn to say, "How I'm coming to suffer to get something like this, at my home, I have it. I never thought I would face difficulties to get it, and all my suffering is useless." And so sometimes a stranger will think in his heart about the difficulties at the place he traveled to, and he will look at himself like that. And so it is good you watch the way of living of your householder before you take his name to go and ask for something. This is its way.

There is a way, and this talk I am telling you can separate. It is only if God likes you, if you have good luck, maybe there will be people who sit and listen to what old people say, and such people will come out and say, "It's not his fault. He is a good stranger, but it is his householder who is bad. And so you townspeople should give his good to him. He doesn't know, and that is why he is staying there." And again, truly, if a good stranger should come to stay at a bad house, sometimes this person's good will let the householder become good, too. Sometimes the householder will do something bad, and at that time the stranger is

still in his house. If what the householder has done becomes a talk, this good stranger can come forward to defend the householder. If the people of the town are good, they will say, “You the stranger, because you are a good person, you can defend your householder. If we disagree with you, it shows that we are disgracing you, and as you are a stranger, you are not somebody to be disgraced. We cannot disgrace you, and because of you, we are giving your bad householder back to you.” It can also come like that in Dagbon here.

And again, if you are a bad stranger, the householder will not know that you are bad. Maybe you are a bad person in your town, and you come to stay in a good house in a different town. The householder won’t know whether you are a bad person or a good person. Whatever happens, in Dagbon here, he is going to receive you very well and welcome you into his house. Since you are coming for the first time, he won’t know that you are a bad person. It is just because you are a stranger that he is receiving you. And maybe your bad way will come and attach itself to the householder himself. If you are bad and I receive you into my house, not knowing that you are bad, if you go out and do something bad in the town, the townspeople will come and ask of me and not you the stranger. They will call me and ask me to come and bring along my bad stranger. Has your badness not attached itself to me? At that time, I will think that had I known, I would not have allowed you to sleep in my house. Because I didn’t know, I received you. But “Had I known” is always at last.

And so the talk of strangers is too much. To be a stranger, or to be traveling, you will be watching many things, and your watching will let you get sense. All the good luck and bad luck of being a stranger, it is in traveling that you will be seeing it, and a person can only know it to his extent. A stranger can meet good or bad, and a stranger can bring good or bad. A bad stranger, his bad thing can go and meet his householder; and a good stranger, his good thing can go and meet his householder. And this is how being a stranger is. All this, as we have been watching, we have been seeing it, and that is why I say that the talks of strangers are many. One person’s luck can catch or join another person. And it can also come from the householder to the stranger. And a bad householder, his bad thing can come and meet a stranger, and a good householder, his good thing can come and meet the stranger. A good stranger will enter a bad person’s house, and if the stranger gets trouble it means the householder’s bad luck has caught him. And good luck can catch, too, but only it is not common. If you the stranger are a bad-luck person, and you enter a good-luck person’s house, it can happen that you will do something that will let people catch you, but because of the good luck of your landlord, they will leave you. His good luck has attached itself to you. And so it can come in different ways.

And so if you are a stranger, you should stay a few days just to know what is happening in the town and just to let the people you are staying with know something about you. That is better than coming to sleep for one night and then going away the next day. The stranger who only comes and sleeps one night is truly a stranger because no one can get to know his character or way of living. He only stays with you a few hours, and the next hour you won't see him again. How can you know anything about him? You can't. Whether he is good or bad, you don't know. Whether he is a thief, or he is somebody who does bad to others, or he is a good person, you cannot know. And if you are the stranger, maybe the house where you sleep is a bad house and the townspeople fear the people of that house, or the householder is bad, or there is something bad in that house. You can never know what is inside that house. And you have come to sleep there. And so if you are a stranger and you are going to stay for some time in a town, you also have to open your eyes and be watching to know good people and bad people. If you do that, even if you are a stranger, you can see the bad people of the town with your eyes.

It is better, if you are traveling and you want to benefit, you try to spend a few days in a town. There is someone who will arrive in a town, sleep tonight, and when day breaks he is on his way again. The stranger who will come and sleep for only one night and move away will never learn anything from the town which will help him. How can he know something about the town where he only slept? He can't. Maybe you arrive here this evening and tomorrow morning you are coming out with your bag. Somebody might meet you on the way and ask you, "Are you coming from Tamale?" You will say "Yes." When that person asks, "What is happening there?", will you be able to say anything? No. They have told you a lie. You can't know anything. And so to be a stranger like that is useless. In the house where the stranger slept, no one knows anything about him. And he himself doesn't know anything about the people he slept with. Such a person cannot tell anybody anything about the town.

If your character is good and you are stranger in a town, when you sit in the town, you will know the bad people and the good people of the town. It also won't be long and the people will get to know of your good character. If you are a stranger, everything about you can be hidden, but you can't hide your character. Dagbamba say that a person will not leave his character, and they say again: what can you give a person and he will leave his character and not show it to you? You can hide everything, but you can't hide your character. I'm talking about your way of living, how you live with people, how you involve yourself with them and greet them, how you share things with them: whatever happens, as time goes on, you will bring it out; something will happen and you will bring it out. And so if

someone comes from another town, and he is holding bad thoughts, even if he is not going to keep long here, he cannot hide his bad thoughts, and his character cannot be hidden. Even if you give him thousands of cedis, his character cannot be hidden. When someone goes to a town, it won't be three days before he will show his good way of living or his bad way of living. Truly, no one will be doing bad and we will not know that he is doing bad. And if a person is doing good, we will know that he is doing good. And doing good is better than doing bad. As for doing bad, it doesn't add anything to a person. If a person is doing bad, no one will include him among people. But as for good, if you do good today, and tomorrow you do good again, it will light everywhere, and everyone will know that you are doing good work. And if a person is bad, his bad character is going to fill the town. That is why Dagbamba say that there is nothing you can do and nothing you can give a human being, and he will leave his character. If God has made him like that, there is no one who can change him. If you are hiding your character from the people you are living with, in Dagbon here they will keep patient and be watching you, and a time will come and you will show your character to them. A stranger is a stranger, but character is not a stranger. And someone with bad character, we don't get near him.

And so in Dagbon here, if they are watching you and they see that your character is good, it should not be a surprise if the people of that town just give a human being to you, and the one who gives you will not be related to you at all. As you yourself are here, John, we don't know whether you don't want it or whether it will come from you, but we would give you a girl right now to marry, or give you any child to be your child. We would just give the child to you, and if you are going to take the child away or if you are going to do whatever you want with the child, it's for you to know. It's not that we are looking at your face and saying this. Dagbamba say, "Get and taste: that is when you will know whether you will be satisfied." The reason why we could give you a child is because we the people staying with you here, we now know your character, and we know that you are a good person. There is nothing to show us that if we give our child to you, the child will receive any suffering or anything bad from you. And so we believe that we can give you a child, and you can do whatever you want with the child, and in our heart we believe that you will also be happy.

And so there are some strangers who receive a gift they never expected to get. The stranger who has respect will sometimes get a gift from the people he stays with. Maybe these people will be looking for something, and you will include yourself among them to help. You are thinking that maybe you will get and maybe you will not get, because you are a stranger and they are townspeople. Maybe they will find what they were looking for, but it cannot reach all of them;

somebody from the town will just come out and say that you are a stranger and your character is good, so you alone should get it and they will be all right. And so it is in being a stranger that someone will get something he never expected to get. And we Dagbamba say, “Good character can give you something big.” Because of your way of living, you will get something even the townspeople might not get.

How the respect of strangers is, maybe you were a useless person in your town, but you will get to a place where people will take you to be very wise. You will show them a little bit of your town’s sense, and they have nothing like that, and they will even take you to lead them because they think you are wiser than they are. You yourself might not think that you would be a good person for that, but as you were useless in your town, you traveled to a different town and they took you high. And you too, you will be doing good work there. That is the respect of a stranger. Somebody from your town will also come and see that those people are taking you high. He will go back to your home town and say, “Oi! Some people’s eyes are still not open. Look at a fool from our town: he has been to this other town and they are taking him to be somebody.” And truly, sometimes it will take them a long time before they know your secret. But our Dagbamba say, “They say you cannot do anything; nothing has ever come to you.” And so maybe nothing came to you in your town, but when you traveled, that was the time you knew that you could do something.

It can happen like that, and sometimes you will even travel to a different town, and it will come to look like your own town. Maybe you are a *maalam* and you travel to a different town. Maybe the people of that town won’t want you to move away and leave them again, and they will let you be a townspeople and not a stranger. You are a stranger, but your work shows that you are not a stranger. What you have in your hand and you are showing to the people of the town will be benefiting them. Even if you leave that town and go away, what you have taught the people of that town will not be strange to them. Such people who have something they can give to a town are never strangers. Even if such a person is dead, his name is not dead in that town.

Apart from that, there is someone who is just coming to know something that is happening in that particular town. Such a person is a stranger in that town and at the same time not a stranger. What he is coming to learn from that town, the townspeople know it and he is learning it. When he comes to stay in that town, it will be some time and he will know the ways of the town. It will sometimes even happen that this stranger will come to know the town more than the people from the town. Such a fellow is never a stranger in that town. It may happen that he will even be teaching the townspeople about the way of the town.

The townspeople won't take it that he is a stranger, and they won't say that he has come from a different town to learn or that what he is showing them is not good. But at first he was a stranger. And I think in my heart that this is how our work is.

This talk I am talking, I think that maybe you have already been seeing it. Sometimes someone will be looking for knowledge, and he will have to travel from his town to a different town to look for it. It isn't that there is no knowledge in his town, but maybe the knowledge he is looking for is not in his town or the knowledge in his town is not good for him. Let me give you an example. I have always been hearing in town here that somebody is in school and doing certain courses, and then I will hear that he has gone to America to study. As he has gone to America, all the people in Dagbon think that America is the best place for a person to get any type of knowledge he wants. And today, you come from America to Dagbon here saying that you are looking for knowledge. Is it not very, very surprising to us? It is. It's not that we don't know that we are holding sense here; we know that we are sensible. It's just that we didn't know the time when somebody from your place would also come to know our sense. And as you have come, it is sweet to us.

And so today, as you are sitting with us, I want to tell you what a stranger should know if he wants to come to Dagbon. How a stranger should be living if he is coming to Dagbon, and he wants to live with people, he should look at how we live, and he shouldn't follow what we don't like. We say in our Dagbani that if you were dancing a dance in your town, and you get to another town and they are dancing another dance, you should leave your town's dance and dance their dance. Whether you know their dance or you don't know it, you should dance it. If you don't try to dance that dance, you don't know how it will look on you. Maybe you will dance it and it will be nice. And so if they are dancing a dance in your town, and you go to another town and they are dancing a different dance, you should leave your town's dance and take that town's dance.

If you are a stranger and you come to a town, if the food they eat does not harm you or disturb your stomach, it is good you also eat it. If you don't eat it, and you hold your own food and you are eating that, then we Dagbamba say that you are showing yourself. And this is its way. And so, in Dagbon here, when a stranger comes, it is good he cools himself and watches the ways of this place. If he were a useless person in his town, when he comes, he should cool himself and hold himself. He shouldn't bring his useless ways to enter here. And if he were a good person in his town, when he comes, it is good he adds more good works to what he was already doing. That one alone, if he holds that way of living, it is good, and he won't become fed up with the town.

Truly, when somebody is a stranger and he comes to Dagbon here, if you are going to sit with him, it is his way of living that will show how you will sit with him. Even before a Dagbana knows you, if you are a stranger who gives respect, a Dagbana will give you respect up to his extent. The good character you were holding in your home town, that will follow and come to show that you are a good person. If you are not a good person in your town, and you want to come here and take yourself to be somebody, it is your way of living that is going to show that already you were not somebody. We Dagbamba give respect to a stranger, but it all comes from the way of living of the stranger. This is the way of strangers.

And so how it is in Dagbon here, anyone who is coming to enter with us, he shouldn't bring pride and enter. When a person is coming to Dagbon, if it is a person who shows himself too much, he shouldn't take that way of living to come here. We Dagbamba, we want someone who has patience. And we want someone who has respect. And we want someone who fears people. And we want someone who holds himself. And we want someone who knows what is good. In Dagbon here, this is what we want. If your eyes are strong, and you are very proud, and you are going to another town, then the day you are leaving your house, you should let your pride go inside your house and lie down there. If you have been giving a lot of respect to people in your town, then the day you are leaving your house, you should let your giving respect to increase. These two things, they follow one another. If you take pride to enter a certain town, you will not get all you want. But if you take patience and go, you will get even what you would not have got. As for patience, it gets everything. That is its way.

I want to show you what we want in Dagbon here. If you know a person or you don't know him, if he is a Dagbana, a Gurunsi, a Frafra, a Mossi, or any tribe or person in Dagbon here, and he has come to enter a Dagbamba house, it's good you greet him. In Dagbon here it's nice, when it's daybreak, you will find a way to greet him. If you are a white person and he doesn't hear your language, you raise your hand and greet him. If he is in the house where you are staying, if you greet him and go out, when you are coming home, if he sees you, he will greet you. If he has not seen you first, and you have seen him, then you should greet him. As you have greeted him, it has added to you. You will turn and go somewhere, and he will say, "Look, this stranger is not a Dagbana and he's like that. Although we don't hear one another's language, when he comes from somewhere, he will greet me." That alone will make your name nice. If you want to go home to your town, the people of that town will not want you to leave.

But if you are a stranger and you come, and you enter a house, and you don't know anyone, and when it's daybreak you come out and you don't greet

anybody, if you become sick, you will be sitting in front of them and they won't mind you. But if you have been greeting them every morning, every day, if it is daybreak and you are not able to come out from the room, they will come and knock on your door. They will say, "When it's daybreak, this person will come out and greet us. And where is he?" And others will say, "Maybe he has gone out." And they will say, "No! If he had gone out, he would have greeted us." They will come and knock on your door to see what is wrong. It is your good work that has brought this. And we Dagbamba, this is what we want.

And again, this greeting of people will help you on the part of your work. Any day you come, you don't look like a stranger. It will look as if you are just with them all the time. We Dagbamba, this is what we want. And what we don't want: you come, and everyday you will be turning your face. You don't give gifts to anyone, and you say you don't understand their language. You just go out and you roam. But if you have been greeting people, and some talk happens to you, whether a bad thing or a good thing, then you yourself will think that how you were living with your own people at home, you are still living like that in Dagbon. The Dagbamba themselves, because of the good works you have been doing for them, they will not leave you to be alone. If it is that you are sick and you need medicine, whether you have money or you don't have, they will even steal from their children to get money and buy medicine for you. When they do that and you become well, they are not going to tell you, "We paid this for you." We Dagbamba have that.

And again, with us Dagbamba, when you are a stranger and something bad happens and the people are going, it is good you go with them. If something good happens, like a wedding or a festival, it is good if you are inside it. And if a funeral happens, you will also go there. This is the way of us Dagbamba. If a stranger comes and some bad talk happens inside the town, it is good for the stranger to enter into it with the townspeople. He will go with them, but he has no way to bypass them and say any talk. Some talk like what? He has come and the townspeople are having their quarrel. If you are a stranger, your medicine is: you close your mouth and follow them. Or your medicine is: you try to separate them. But the talk they are talking with the mouth, you have no way to say it. If you follow that way, then you can stay with us.

A stranger who is a black man, if he's a Dagbana, you will take him round and greet people. And he will pull out money and say, "You get this; this is your cola. And you get this; this is your cola." If you are a Dagbana and you are from Tamale here, and you are going to your relative or your friend at a place or a village like Nanton, the people there will all open their mouths and say, "You are from the town." They will know that you have come to give them gifts. The food

that we eat in the town, they will be opening their mouths that you are bringing them that food. If not that, when you greet them and you get up, you will put your hand in your pocket and bring out money, and say, “Get this and buy salt. Give to women to buy salt and put inside soup.” If there are old people, you will say, “Here is something. You should buy cola. I was not able to buy cola and bring it on the way coming. And so take this and buy cola” That one will gather people, and it will be a debt for you the stranger. If you are living like that, if it were the olden days when Dagbon was good, even if you killed a hundred cedis in one day, you will sleep in that town and say that you have not thrown away the money. If you are doing that, even if you are not a Dagbana, we Dagbamba will become like your people. And in Dagbon we have that.

As you John have come, you are a stranger, and you are a white man and you’ve come because of a black man. And your giving of gifts has no end. As we have shortages in Ghana here, you have been going round to find things and give them to old people. And you have been bringing things from America. Such a stranger, if you take him to any of your relatives to greet them, they will all be opening their ears. And you the stranger, if a gift is there, you will give it. As you have done that, it will reach ten years, and whether you are in that town or not, your name will not be lost.

And you will try again, and you will be opening yourself to them. You will go out into the town, and if there are small children, you will buy *kooshe*¹ or any small food and give to the children. If you are getting ready to go back to your town, you will try and give something to those who are holding the children, just something. When you come out to go, some of these children will be crying for you. They are crying because when you were there you were giving them good things. This one too is good witness on the part of your way of living.

And after you’ve given your gifts, if it is that you are going to be staying with us six months or a year, all those people you’ve given gifts, what they will also turn and give to you will be very great. Some of what they will do to you is in the mouth. They will take a talk and talk it to you the stranger, and a towns person will not be able to hear it. As for a stranger, it’s not all things they show a stranger, but there are strangers and there are strangers. The things they show a stranger are there, and if you want them to show you and add, there are some things you will do. And that is why I’m telling you that in Dagbon here, on the part of giving of gifts, it is very good you give gifts. In that way, you the stranger can get a gift that is very, very big. It will be because of the work you’ve done for them. And you yourself, as you have come to learn and to know how the

1. kooshe: fried bean cakes

people in that town are living, whatever happens, they will take what they know and show you.

And so this is the talk I have for you today. And this is what I know about it.