

A Feminist Appraisal of Oromo Proverbs with Reference to Selected Districts in Bale Zone

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Abstract: The rationale behind this study was the fact that there was no former attempt to collect and analyze the Oromo proverbs of Bale area from feminist perspective. So, the main objective of this study was to collect and analyze the overall representations of females' images in selected proverbs of Bale Oromos. Three woredas were selected for this study from the zone purposively. The proverbs were collected primarily from the elders of the woredas through unstructured interview and observation. Ten elders were selected from each woreda through snowball sampling, and availability sampling technique was used to identify informants for the observation. Proverbs were collected and written in Afan Oromo, translated into English, and analyzed qualitatively using feminist perspectives. The study has largely indicated that significant number of proverbs in Bale area depict women negatively whereby they appeared to reinforce the deep rooted patriarchal ideology. Women are depicted as compliant, less knowledgeable than men, weaker and less important than men, more troublesome, materials of their husbands, unwise, etc.

Keywords: Feminist, Proverbs, Oromo

1. Introduction

Traditionally, women have been a marginalized part of society. Much of the history of humanity has been shaped by male dominance over females. Patriarchal systems have long denied women to play appropriate roles in nation building and to enter the public spheres. But since 1960s those traditional standards have been questioned actively by the women's rights advocates movement called feminism. Feminists have come to realize that literatures as part of traditional human production propagate the values of patriarchy and should therefore be re-read in light of exposing the operations of patriarchy and thereby contribute to the betterment of women's position in the society.

When one raises the issue of feminist criticism, it is always vital to question the issue of patriarchy. Patriarchy, according to Tyson (2006), is by definition sexist, which means it promotes the belief that women are inherently inferior to men. And it is this belief feminists try to challenge in human productions like literature, film and so forth. Feminist theories developed in an attempt to explain the reasons

behind a pervasive gender inequality. The explanation that this inequality is divine or essential and that women give birth and men do not is not a satisfactory explanation now. Millet (1977) coined the phrase 'Sexual Politics'. She details on what she calls 'Theory of Patriarchy'. For her, the relationship between the sexes is a relationship of dominance and subordination. It has long been assumed that it is the birth right of men to be the dominant sex and have the higher status in the social hierarchy. So, it is basically a power relationship. This relationship is reinforced by the existing institutions.

The present generation as well has witnessed an apparent superiority of the male over the female in the social, political and economic statuses. According to Tyson (2006), traditional gender roles assume men as rational, strong, protective, and decisive and they presuppose women as emotional (irrational), weak, nurturing, and submissive. These gender roles have been used very successfully to justify inequities, which still occur today, such as excluding women from equal access to leadership and decision making positions in family as well as in the politics, academia, and the corporate world (Tyson, 2006). Though the operations of

patriarchy may vary from one culture to another, the pervasiveness of assuming the female sex as inferior to the male one is worldwide phenomenon.

Similarly, Millet (1977) observes that the standards of patriarchy are deeply entrenched in our religion, in our values and ethics, in our political, social and economic institutions. Its ideological basis rests in the categorizations of sex into 'masculine and feminine'. This categorization serves the needs and values of the dominant group and relishes in what it considers desirable such as aggression, intelligence, force in the male and passivity, docility, virtue in female. The roles assigned to women, domestic service, tending infants are limited as compared to the vast area left for men in human achievement, interest and ambition.

Such patriarchal ideologies have been propagated through various human productions among which proverbs can be worth mentioning. According to Mieder (1993) a Proverb is a short, generally known sentence of the folk which contains wisdom, truth, morals, and traditional views in a metaphorical, fixed and memorizable form and which is handed down from generation to generation. According to Encarta dictionary (2009), a proverb is a short well known saying that expresses an obvious truth and often advice. Even if the roles of proverbs in telling truth and presenting advice have been known for years globally, their correspondences to ideologies like patriarchy have not yet been clearly known till recently. For example, the following sexist proverbs, which have been considered as educative and truth telling for years are popular amongst Afan Oromo speaking communities in Ethiopia and their equivalences are common in many other parts of the country. Such proverbs are "Dubartiin dheertuudha malee beeytuu miti." (A woman can be tall but not knowledgeable), "Qalbiin dubartii takka; lama hinbeeytu." (A woman's talent is once, not twice).

Until recently such realities were considered to be natural and women had been the sufferers from such system for centuries. Many practitioners of feminist theory and criticism credit the 1960's women's political movement as the initial meaningful challenge against the inferiority of female. Yet others maintain that there had been older traditions of thought and action already possessing its classic books which have attempted to diagnose the problem of women's inequality in society, and in some cases proposed solutions. The current inquired the proverbs selected from Afan Oromo speaking communities from the perspective of the feminist theories proposed more popularly since 1960s.

The movement of the 1960s was literary from the start, in the sense that it realized the significance of the images of women disseminated in literature, and saw it as vital to combat them and question their authority and their coherence (Barry, 2002). The main task of feminist literary critics who are new to the field today is expected to be examining the ways in which the literary texts reinforce patriarchy because the ability to see when and how patriarchal ideology operates is crucial to our ability to resist it in our own lives. (Tyson, 2006).

The current study considered that it is relevant to examine the ways in which patriarchy is both reinforced and resisted

in a literary works so that issues turn out to be clear summarily to the audience what to support and pass up from the results to be obtained.

The proverbs were collected from amongst the rural settlers of the Oromo people in Bale zone. The people are mostly farmers and pastorals. In most case the land and the cattle are considered as the property of the father, and possession inheritance is mainly from father to the son. Girls are married to those boys who bring properties to the girls' families in exchange. And the girls will start new life with the men and their family. Girls are forced culturally to marry the men who bring the bride price to their families. A girl will not have any significant influence on the marriage process if the man who marries her and families of both sides agree. So it is hoped that the proverbs that will be collected and analyzed from the view point of feminism from such area will have a huge role in uncovering the patriarchal ideologies embedded in the proverbs and the possible ways of getting rid of the harness of patriarchy.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

As a matter of fact women have generally been assumed to be inferior to men in almost all cultures of the world. Except in some myths, it is hardly possible in the realistic accounts to women to challenge the deeds as well as the misdeeds of men. It is hardly possible to find a history or literature of a matriarchal society as it had long been assumed that male dominancy over women is natural and women had been the victims of such conjecture for centuries. But these deep rooted assumptions are now under challenge by feminists. Feminists realized that there is no a natural and/or a scientifically tested evidence that justifies the superiority of male over female. Instead, feminist practitioners uncovered that it is simply the work of patriarchal ideology that unnecessarily kept women and men in the traditional gender roles and in so doing maintains male dominance. For instance, Simone de Beauvoir (1999) as cited in Wolfreys and Baker (1996) suggests that 'woman' is a cultural construction, rather than a biological one. And the importance of this remark is that it seeks to demonstrate that the ideas about sex roles which any given society may have come to regard as natural, are not really so; and, given that they are not natural, they may even be subject to change and feminist literary criticism has a big role to play in combating the deep-rooted propagations of patriarchal ideology through literature.

To change the existing circumstances, in feminist literary criticism the promise is re-reading the literatures that have been produced in such a patriarchal world and exposing the ways in which patriarchy operates in the literatures to naturalize the traditional gender roles and thereby sustain male superiority over female. While re-reading, the task of the researcher as Tyson (2006) puts it, should not only be uncovering the ways in which patriarchal ideology is reinforced but also the researcher needs to show the ways in which patriarchal ideology is undermined.

So far a lot of western academicians have presented works

on exposing the different ways by which women are the victims of patriarchal ideology. Even if the condition of women have improved since the second half of 20th century, still the ideological gap is far-reaching which is an indication for the claim that more works should be done in order to totally do away with patriarchal principles. Especially in developing nations like Ethiopia, the culture of looking back into human productions from the perspective of feminism is so scarce and presumably as a result of that the reality of women's inferiority in our society is enormous. So, to help the attempt of filling that gap the researchers have chosen to study Oromo proverbs of Bale area from the view point of feminism.

Sizable number of proverbs that have been gathered from the selected woredas, translated to English and analyzed from feminist perspective.

1.2. Objective of the Study

1.2.1. General Objective

The general objective of this study was to analyze the overall representations of women in selected proverbs of Bale Oromos.

1.2.2. Specific Objectives

The followings were the specific objectives of this study.

1. To reveal about the economic, political and social operations of patriarchy
2. To identify if the work resists or reinforces patriarchal ideology

2. Methodology of the Study

2.1. The Study Design and Procedures

This is a qualitative study which means a great deal of work was done descriptively. The proverbs were collected from oral sources from the woredas identified, and all the data that are relevant for the analysis have been transcribed on paper. The proverbs are considered as the primary data of this study. In addition, secondary data like different theories on feminist literary theory and criticism, and reviews of related works by other researchers have been congregated from libraries and the internet. The secondary sources are mainly needed to put the current study in the context of the existing body of knowledge.

The data collected by the above means have been analyzed qualitatively from the perspectives of feminist literary theories. The researchers identified important texts from the data gathered and tested them in light of the feminist perspective. As the study is purely qualitative, the researchers haven't applied numerically set amounts for the inferences made. Instead, the analyses will be in words alone and will be taken as long as they are to be sufficiently backing the different notions to be raised. Identification of the proverbs for scrutiny will take into account feminist notions like

1. Othering- the ways in which the work implicitly or explicitly prioritizes the male than the female in social,

political economical

2. Mothering –the ways in which women's place is consciously or not assumed to be at home to bear and nurse children than at various public spheres
3. Gender roles-the ways in which the work tries to place women in the traditionally assumed roles of rational vs. emotional, strong vs. weak, protective vs. nurturing, decisive vs. submissive and so forth.
4. Objectification-the ways in which women might have been materialized to fulfill the needs of men

2.2. Subject of the Study

The subjects of this study were the folktales collected from the three woredas. Proverbs have been collected and identified for the analysis based on their potential suitability for the feminist thematic concerns. Five kebeles from each woreda were selected based on random sampling. And from these woredas the informants were selected by snowballing for the interview and availability sampling for observation.

2.3. Data Collection Tools

For this research, data collection tools were interview and observation. Such tools have been briefly explained like the following.

2.4. Using Unstructured Interviews

With this technique the researchers went to the target audiences on the ground, asked the target respondents and recorded or wrote down proverbs. For the interview, ten elders from each woreda were selected through snowball sampling technique.

2.5. Observation

Observation in philosophical terms is understood as the process of filtering sensory information through the thought process. Input is received by hearing, sight, smell, taste or touch and then analyzed through rational thought. In this research we relied on hearing proverbs used by the community members were recorded informally by the researchers during their study in the woredas for the field work.

This was done in order to get more proverbs and look for possible contextual meaning of proverbs to the occasions or situations in which they are used, the purposes they serve and their implications about the women in the communities. Circumstances like coffee gatherings, streets, farmyards, local markets, were observed and the proverbs were written down by the researchers.

2.6. Data Analysis

The method of data analysis were predominantly qualitative; descriptions were made using words than figures and conclusions and possible judgments have been made based on the qualitative descriptions which were supported by different related theories. The proverbs collected were

translated into English, thoroughly read by the researchers and sorted out based on their thematic predispositions. Then Feminist theoretical frameworks from different scholars were set and based upon that the feminist appraisals of the proverbs have been made.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. Oromo Proverbs Which Appear to Portray Women Profoundly Very Negatively and Reinforce the Patriarchal Ideology

a. *Dubartiin lama hinbeeytu, Takka hinwallaaltu.*

This proverb can literally translated as “*a woman knows only one thing, and not another.*” In other words this proverb means the women folk knows not a lot of things or do not look at things from various angles. And, the women are considered to be one-sided and not open-minded. Because of this they are yet taken to be ignorant. (othering i.e the one that knows everything is the man while woman doesn't)

b. *Beekkumsi dubartii jilbaa gadi.*

This can be literally translated as “*the knowledge of the women is below the knee*”. This again shows how the women are considered to be inferior to the male folks. Their knowledge, experiences and skills are always put down by their male counterparts.

c. *Dubartii beekaa deetti malee beeytuu miti.*

This proverb is very much similar to the one under No 2 and means that “*a woman gives birth to the one who knows (the male) but she knows not*”. From this one can easily understand that in the Oromo culture especially in the countryside the women folks are supposed to have no knowledge and that their only role is to produce ones who know-the male counter parts. (mothering i.e. this proverb tries to uphold the patriarchal notion that woman is meant for bearing children; her only rightful job looking after the children)

d. *Kan dandeettu dhaani jennaan, Dhiirsi galee niitii dhaane.*

This literally means ‘*when the man is allowed to beat anyone that he can, he beats his own wife.*’ Even when it comes to abusing, the women are considered to be the appropriate ones for the purpose-beating. Physical abuse is mainly one the frequent forms of torture perpetrated against women in most Ethiopian culture, the Oromo women are no exception to this. And, this is what this proverb shows.(objectification i.e. even if this proverb seems to criticize male, it implies that woman is to be beaten naturally by man which is seriously patriarchal. Women are considered to be the materials of the men.

e. *Ibiddi dubartiif ijoolleenqabsiifte hindhaamu.*

This literally means “*the conflict/war/disagreement kindless by women and children disappears not*”. This shows that the women are in the leading position when it comes to negative things. As we can see in this proverb conflict and war are images of negative things, and the women folks are associated with these things.

f. *Qalbiin dubartii akkuma harma isii gadi rarraá.*

This nearly means a woman's brain points downwards, just like her breasts. This is mainly said to indicate to downgrade even the intelligence level of the women. The expression *points downward* is used to show how the male folks are neglectful of the intellect of the women. The proverb is also associated with the mistaken male opinion of the women that the women folks are not dependable when it comes to determination and perseverance.

g. *Kan kufe dubartiin kufe.*

This literally means one who has failed is because of his women. What we can understand from this proverb is that the women are considered to be the source of bad luck, failure, misfortune and problem. Because of this they are hated, degraded and abused. It is a common practice to see husbands feeling sorry upon the birth of a female child.

h. *Dubartiif reéen rakkoo jaalatti.*

This is to mean the women and the goats are fond of narrow things. As has been shown in this proverb the women and the goat are similar in that both are associated with something that is ugly, filthy and unwelcome. This is thus indicative of how much the women are considered worthless in the society.

i. *Dubartiin nyaapha.*

This proverb roughly means *a woman is an outsider*. This is mainly said in relation to the girl leaving her family's place on being married to a man who is strange. It is because of this that the woman in Oromo culture is supposed to be always out there for marriage. In some cases the female child in the family is considered like an object for sale and the father can cash in on her. The husband then starts to beat her if she fails to satisfy him. So, this shows the ill-treatment that the women are under both in the family and at her husband's place after being married.

j. *Biyyi dubartii warra dhiirsa isiiti.*

This literally means the woman's place is the home of her husband. This is to mean that woman owns nothing in the home of her family, unlike the male child. All she has to do is leave her family's home in marriage and be at her husband's place. This is a clear violation of the right of the woman to inherit the property of her family and a denial of her right to own a property before getting married.

k. *Taaiurra dubartii dhalchuu wayya.*

This proverb can be translated literally as: *it is better to bear a female child than to sit idle*. The embedded meaning of this proverb is that it is just worthless to have a female child, and in most of the Oromo culture anyone who has female children only, and no male child is not esteemed by the local people. To make matters worse, the parents consider themselves as not so important among the people with whom they are living.

l. *Dubartiif harreen tumaa jaalatti.*

The literal translation of this proverb is that *both females and donkeys like to be beaten up*. As this proverb indicates people generally assume that the women folks like to be beaten. As a result the male took the law into their hands and do whatever they like to their ladies. The men wrongly

believe that it is when they are capable of heating their ladies that they are said to have lived up to their husband hood. The tragic part of this is that the ladies themselves do not object to be beaten, nor do they want to take the case to the court. They consider being beaten to be part of their female identity.

m. Dubartiin jabaa deetti malee jabduu miti.

This means literally as the woman gives birth to the strong one (the male) is not herself strong. One can easily understand from this translation of the proverb that the women are still looked down upon by their male counterparts as being weak fragile and powerless. According to the prevailing male mentality all the female are good at is giving birth to the male children-nothing less and nothing more! The sad part of the story is that they are not thanked even for the male children that they give birth to.

n. Boriif hinyaanneen qodaan bukoo isii sagal

The literal translation of this proverb is a woman who does not care about tomorrow prepares her food in nine utensils. What this implicitly shows is that women do not care about saving their resources for home consumption. They are taken to be spend-thrifty and extravagant. Because of this their males do not trust them with money and foodstuffs. The male are of the opinion that unless they are supervised closely the women will finish whatever is in the house.

o. Niitiin manatti dhiirsa moote gabaadhaan calisaa jette.

This can be translated as a woman whose husband is in control of her at home will at a later time tell the people at the market place to keep quiet. The message of this proverb is a woman shouldn't be allowed to make her (husband) under her control, for she controls her husband she will start to shout at other people outside of her home. Hence, the male makes sure that the woman is always under his control.

p. Beeraafi harreen ba'aa hindadhabdu

This proverb can literally be translated as *the women and the donkey will not be tired of carrying a pack*. This indoctrinates the mistaken notion of expecting a woman to do very hard jobs. And the society expects them to have lived up to a womanhood when they do very unbearable and sometimes backbreaking jobs. As the proverb compares the women with the donkey, it is easy to recognize the place the society gives to the woman. The proverb may also be used to state how the burden of social and economic tragedy often falls unevenly on the culturally, politically and psychologically victimized part of the society. But, if one who sympathizes the workload of women or admires the physical strength of women uses the proverb, there is again nothing disparaging. In the latter sense, the proverb may be employed to paradoxically suggest that in a traditional male-dominated society, women contribute a great deal towards protecting the social and economic systems of their families.

q. Beerri daakkaa malee daangaa hinbeytuu

This means literally, *'the women know grinding but do not know when to stop'*. This proverb is primarily used to comment on women's dimension of self disclosure during inter-personal communication. It encodes the society's belief that women talk (usually to each other) broadly and deeply, and therefore take longer time before they wind up. It is used

with a piercing connotative tone that during self-disclosure women cannot strike a balance between what expressiveness and protectiveness is. This proverb contrasts two immutable attributes of women: physical engagement and mental involvement. It mainly relegates women to the physical engagement over their mental involvement. It is employed to stress the view that women do not know how to use the self to limit one's own vulnerability or protect others at the time of expressing thoughts and feelings. Because of this, the proverb is unquestionably a misnomer as it portrays women as simpletons.

r. Beerri da'oo hinqabdu da'oo dhiiraa galti.

This proverb means, *"the woman does not have a home or house of her but lives in the house of the man."* It is clear from the proverb that in the society the women folks have been denied of property ownership. This goes against their basic human rights. When it comes to material ownership the women are at the mercy of their male counterparts. They are no less active in the production and securing of the wealth and property of the family but when ownership issue raises they have no say at all. This means that nothing belongs to them in the form of property. Even their own soul belongs to the male.

s. Intalti garaa laaftu gara qullaa hinheerumtu.

This means, *"a too kindhearted girl will marry with a fetus in her womb."* As we can understand from the wording of this proverb when a girl is extraordinarily kind or accepting the end result of this will be a very devastating end. According to the proverb, the girls are always victims of their own making. That is whenever they do something they do not guess the final result of it but it is later on that they discover the consequence of what they did. Here the proverb is meant to show how shallow the decisions of a woman are. And, the Oromo society considers it very naïve when a girl easily opens up herself to anybody.

t. Beerri nyaata tolchiti malee dubbii hintolchitu.

This proverb means, *"a woman is good at cooking not at talking."* As one can understand from this proverb the society limits woman to cooking and other routine home -related issues and not more than that. According to his proverb the women are even considered poor when it comes to interpersonal communication. Even in this natural and everyday practice their male counterparts ignore the ideas, opinions and viewpoints put forward by the female, for only because they have already formed a negative preconception about them. What is worse, the women themselves, far from challenging the men, are in the habit of taking for granted the messages of this and other similar proverbs. And, this is the state of affairs which the Oromo women are under in the past and even today with the exception of some very few women who have received modern education.

u. Niitiifi farda abbaatu eeggata.

This one can be translated as, *"the wife and the horse are taken care of by the owner."* This is the other proverb in the series which shows the level at which the women are subjugated. They are considered just like material possession and that it is up to the husband to decide everything that his

woman does. According to this proverb she is not even supposed to think on her own to decide for herself what to do, where to go or when to go where. Her husband makes sure that her every step is made according to his will for he is in a position to decide everything that he wants. In the proverb, the analogy drawn between the ownership of both the wife and the horse by itself shows the inhumane treatment that the women have to undergo because of the traditional husband-wife relations. This kind of male dominance in the society is still manifested at various degrees in most parts of Ethiopia in general and in Bale in particular.

v. *Niitiifi farda abbatu leenjifata*

This proverb can be translated literally as, *it is the husband (the owner) that trains both the wife and the horse*. This proverb is similar to the one under No 21 but this one has to do with the way of training or customizing the wife and the horse. As has been indicated in the proverb it is the responsibility of the husband to shape both (his wife and his horse) the way he wants them to be. Here the interest of the wife is not taken care of but only the husband's. He mainly does this to ensure his husband ship i.e to frighten her in every aspect and make her obedient to him in all spheres of life. And, it is only when he finds that she has given in wholly to himself that he is considered to be one with a good wife. From this it is clear to understand the harsh home and family conditions that the women are under in our society.

w. *Dhiirsi niitii sodaatu ilma hindhalfatu.*

The proverb can be literally translated as, *'the husband who is afraid of his wife will not have a child.'* In this saying the implied meaning is the notion that the husband has to be very strong and one who surpasses his wife in every aspect. Even when it comes to beating the woman the husband has to be good at the art to be considered to have lived up to his position. In most of the oromo society a woman who is stronger than her husband and refuses to obey him will be told either to give in to her husband or get divorced. And, because the unfortunate wives know this bitter fate and they choose to accept whatever the husband says or does to them even if they in some cases are physically fit enough to defend themselves.

x. *Niitiin dhiirsi boonse itilleerraa mucucaatti.*

This can be translated literally as, *"a wife who has been very well taken care of by her husband will slide from a bed."* The hidden meaning of this proverb is when a wife is given all the comfort and joys in life, she will not be a good one. It is believed that such protection can ruin her and make her to misbehave and in some cases to act like a small child. In the proverb, the phrase, *'she will slide from the bed'* shows that because of the luxuries of life a wife can tend to do very silly things that a little child does. Also, the other message of the proverb according to the users is that the wife shouldn't be given extra joys or comforts, for it is believed that, this will result in spoiling her personality. Hence, because the husband knows this from the old traditions that he received from his forefathers, he always withholds from his wife the pleasures of this life. Even when he loves her dearly, he behaves as if

he does not love her at all.

y. *Niitiin abbaan manaa bira hinjirre bira gayii du'a fardaa dhayqi.*

The proverb can be translated as, *"a woman whose husband is not with her will go to console the family whose horse has died."* This proverb is said in situations wherein the wife whose husband has gone away from home for a long time and the wife has become very loose and spends her day by going here and there. According to the traditional belief system the woman is always supposed to be at home and shouldn't be seen outside at all costs. And, when a wife is seen here and there outside of the home she is deemed to be either a divorcee or one whose husband is not at home or one who does not have any control at home. Such wives will lose the respect of the society and no one will marry them.

z. *Niitiin dhiirsa moote olla hintoltu.*

This can be translated literally as, *'a woman who has gone out of the control of her husband will not be a good one for her neighbors.'* The message one can understand from this proverb is that when a wife is not under the leadership of her husband and is disobedient to him she will even be a nuisance to the neighbors. According to this proverb, a woman who is not obedient to her husband and does not accept him causes a problem not only to him but also to the entire neighborhood. That is why her goodness begins at home, as the people ordinarily believe. Therefore, as the husband knows in advance from this oral tradition he does his at most best to make her easily manageable and obedient to him.

aa. *Dubartiif ijoollee uleetu qoricha.*

This can be literally rendered as, *for the women and the children the stick is the medicine*. In this proverb the word 'ulee' i.e. stick is the instrument with which both the women and the children are physically punished in case of breach of rules and regulations. In traditional societies there isn't such a thing as guidance and counseling but instead corporal punishment. Those who perpetrate these harsh measures against both the women and the children are of the opinion that it is the beating that can straighten the misbehaving ones. Sadly in the course of the beating a loss can be made to important body parts like the eye or the teeth or the others. But the man does not care very little about this, nor will his wife or the children take the case to the court as both are the sole property of the man, in traditional society.

bb. *Niitiin dhiirsa mootu ganda bulti.*

The proverb can be translated as, *a wife who rules over her husband will spend the night in others' house*. This proverb means if a wife is capable of getting control of her husband, she will abuse her power and cares less about her home and will be seen outside of her home even during the night where she isn't supposed to be. This implies that if the wife is one that is stronger than her husband she is always an object of ridicule, joke and considered no more one that fits to be a wife. That is why the husband always makes sure that his wife is one that accepts his rule over her and does everything that he obeys her to do. And, in most cases, the wives themselves know the men's mentality and hence do their

level best to satisfy them.

cc. *Gabrittiin gargaarsa argatte majjee dhoysite.*

This can roughly be translated as, '*the female servant who got support from others hides the grinding stone*'. This proverb is more common in the countryside where the women do grinding in the traditional way. And, the idea behind this proverb is this action of grinding is deemed the most difficult home routine and if a woman who has become tired of this is given a support she will hide the grinding stone away from people. This is again said, according to the traditional belief, to show that the womenfolk's are narrow-minded and even do not know what is good for them and what is bad for them.

dd. *Haati hattuun ilmee hin amantu.*

This one can be literally translated as, "*a thief mother will not trust her own children*". The proverb is used in connection with a situation in which a mother has a bad habit of stealing and when she does this she will not trust her own children. The proverb also implies that if the mother is having the manners of taking unlawfully the properties of other people her children will also follow suit. One can also understand from the same proverb that whatever the mother does-good or bad-will be emulated by her siblings. That is why in the countryside when the people want to study the behaviors of children especially that of the female children they start by enquiring into how the mother behaves at home.

ee. *Dubartiin deettuu malee beeytuu miti.*

This can be translated as, '*the women are bearers of a child but are not knowledgeable*'. As one can understand from this proverb according to the prevailing philosophy of the society one of the major uses of the women are to bear children. The women are considered to have no or little share in areas where the intellect is much needed. That is why the last part of this proverb states that the women are not knowledgeable. Even when the women show marked signs of knowledge their views and opinions are not given important considerations and they are not considered to be serious for only they are women. In some cases even one who accepts the viewpoints and opinions of the women is considered not man enough in the society.

ff. *Dubartiin jilba hinguuttu.*

This can be translated as, '*the women are not fit enough to take part in elderly meetings*'. This basically means when the local male elders sit together for settling disputes or disagreements that arise between or among people, it is only the male members- mature male members at that- who can discuss the matter and pass decisions. In such meetings the women are not invited to have a say in the matter even if the issue may concern them in one way or the other. The main reason why the male counter parts do not invite them is because of the preconceived negative attitude to the women by the male. That is the notion that according to the male the women will not contribute anything useful to the meeting. All the women can do in such situations is to sit at home and eagerly wait for what the male have decided about the case, nothing less and nothing more!

gg. *Beeke beeke jettee jaartiin kitaaba dhiyxe.*

This can roughly be translated as, *believing that she knows much the old lady washed the book*. The proverb is used mainly in connection with situations in which a woman feels very much confident about her capabilities or knowledge and starts to destroy already useful things by considering them to be not important. The proverb also points to the weak judgment that women pass whenever they are given a certain position. Also, the proverb can be used to signal the idea that the women are not sound enough in their decisions and shouldn't be trusted in what they say or do.

hh. *Beekkumsi dubartii malkaa hinceesisu.*

The proverb can be translated as, '*the knowledge of the women will not help one to cross the river to the other side of it*'. This proverb once again shows the contempt the male have about the knowledge that the women can have. In the proverb, the expression ---*will not help one cross the river*--- means the knowledge of women won't get anyone anywhere in terms of guidance, usefulness or wisdom. It is probably because of such mistaken thoughts that many in the countryside do not send their female children to school. The worst side of the issue is that even the majority of the women folks themselves tend to believe that this is the case. Because they have been forced to believe that the message of the proverb is true, they themselves have no choice but to accept and use it.

ii. *Amma tole jetteniitiin dhiirsa manaa gadi ariite.*

The proverb can be translated as, '*it is alright now-said a wife- that chased out her own husband from home*'. The proverb is said in situation in which a not clever wife beats her own husband and drives him out of the house and feels that she is alright after having done this. The implied meaning of the proverb is that a foolish wife will do things that are detrimental to her life and feel as if she has done a heroic job-not knowing the severe consequence of her deeds.

jj. *Jaartiin deemsa guddiftu mana namaatti duuti.*

This can be literally translated as, '*an old lady who frequents going here and there will die at others' house*'. As the proverb shows, even the an old lady is like any women, i.e. she is no wiser despite her long years of life experience and that she too is considered one who will make poor decisions and suffer the consequence. The message that the proverb communicates is also whenever old ladies frequent going out of home they should be prevented from this in case danger may face them.

kk. *Mana dubartiin itti heddummaatte raafuun hinbilchaattu.*

The proverb literally means, '*cabbage will not boil in a house in which there are too many women*'. This saying shows that whenever there are too many women together they will not do any fruitful thing as they spend their precious time talking, backbiting and slandering others. It also embodies the idea that not one woman even in a group is good enough to correct the others when they make a mistake or when they fail to undertake a given assignment properly. Still, the proverb gives a signal that whenever there are many women together they have to be carefully supervised by the male folks before something bad comes about.

ll. *Intalli haati jajju hinheerumtu.*

The proverb can be translated as, 'a girl that is flattered by her mother will not get married.' The message that this proverb conveys is that if a mother makes unduly and too much comments about her own girl child, she will feel too good about herself and that she will start to be showy and arrogant. It is assumed that such behavior will make her lose her fame in the society and as result she will lose the chance of getting married-the event in one's life that has a much respected place in the culture of the society.

mm. *Shan taatus shantama taatus dubartiin mana hinijaartu.*

This proverb can be translated as, 'whether they are five or fifty in number women will not be able to make a house.' The proverb shows the negative image the male have about the women's abilities. According to the proverb-in fact according to the male's line of thinking- women are nothing even when they are great in number. When it comes to jobs requiring physical strength the idea is it is the male not the women who are fit to do them. The other thing that we can infer from this saying is that very serious jobs like house making are in the domain of the male folks, and not the women's, and hence job division.

nn. *Akka feeteen dubartii akka feete dubbatti.*

The proverb can be translated literally as, 'a woman who behaves willy-nilly will speak any way she likes.' The idea of the proverb is that when a woman does not have any sense of shame she will do embarrassing things. In the Oromo society where this research has been conducted it is supposed that the women should behave themselves appropriately or else they will be condemned by the society. This includes the way they talk, the way they dress, the way they laugh and what have you should be conducted in such a way that the society considers it appropriate. If a woman fails in these very important social etiquettes, they will suffer the consequence.

oo. *Of hinbeeyneen dubartii du'a dhiirsaa gammaddi.*

The proverb can be literally defined as, 'an ignorant wife becomes happy with the death of her husband.' This is said to show that a wife that is fool even fails to understand how the death of her own husband who is near and dear to her can affect her life. When it comes to the issue of death the society highly regards it with serious attitude but if someone whose close relative has died becomes all the more happier with it that negatively reflects on the person. Here, what once again the users want to convey with this proverb is women are not farsighted and have a low thinking power.

pp. *Dubartiin yoo of beeyte soddaa lagatti.*

The proverb can be translated as, 'itis when they know themselves very well that women begin to show respect to their in-laws.' According to the Oromo culture the in-laws are highly respected and revered. This is a common custom and anyone who will not do this will be considered ignorant or arrogant and one that is antisocial. What we can understand from this proverb is that in even serious cases such as this one a woman who is ignorant or arrogant fails to show the proper respect to her in-laws, and only when she becomes knowledgeable enough that she will start to respect

them.

qq. *Badduun intalaa yoo gorsan mufatti.*

The proverb can be defined literally as, 'a bad girl will be offended when she is advised.' Normally, people offer advice to people so as to help them to become better. And this is a very unwelcome thing. When somebody offers advice to the other person the one advised should thank the advisor and respect him. But when the one advised feels offended and is bad about it, this negatively reflects on the person advised. This proverb is also used to show a situation in which a girl that has been advised doesn't like the good word and feels bad about it. It shows that a bad girl is one that fails to understand what is good and what is bad to her own life.

rr. *Aangoon dubartii bishaan ol Yaasaa jedhe.*

This can be translated as, 'the authority of women orders to flow water upwards'. The proverb is used by the men who oppose the idea of empowering women. According to the male, the reason why they resist female empowerment is because they think that if the women are given positions of power they will abuse it. Also, the male are opposed to the idea of the female getting power because according to the male the women are not logical in their reasoning and that the decisions to be passed by women will have a detrimental effect. As we can read from the last part of the proverb i.e. to make water flow upwards, is something that is impossibility. This is the natural law and no one can change this. And, in the proverb, it is feared that if the women are empowered they will order people to undertake things that are impossible to do. (gender role women as inappropriate for power)

ss. *Dubbiin dubartiifi udaan adurree burree hindhabu.*

This can be translated as, 'the words of a woman and the feces of a cat always have multi colors'. This shows that the female are not to be trusted in whatever they say as they are always in the habit of telling lies. As we can read from the proverb even when it comes to small everyday language use female mix truth with falsehood and this makes the quality of their talk poor and as a result unreliable. It is very common to see the male rejecting an idea if it is supposed to have originally said by women. The male will label it "this is the word of the female." The implication of this is that the idea has to be rejected in totality.

tt. *Garbittiin gargaarsa argatte mooyyee/majjee dhoksiti (A maidservant, who found some help, hid the millstone).*

This proverb subtly encourages men to control women. Put in different contexts, the same proverb may give different semantics. For example, it may connote a society's view that women indulge in irrational things.

uu. *Dubartiin dheertuu malee beektuu hin qabdu*

(Women are bulky, but not great) and

vv. *Mootummaan dubartii karaa cufaatii oolcha (The management of a woman leaves the corral door closed for the whole day).*

These proverb, 1 and 2, show the patriarchal view that women by nature are a weak group and no woman thus is better than the other.

ww. *Dubartiif harreen ulee jaalatti (Women are like donkeys, one should beat them from time to time).*

xx. *Women and donkey do not complain about burden (Dubartiif harreen hin dadhabdu).*

The above Proverbs 4 and 5 convey that women's tolerance of physical and mental humiliation subtly echoes the society's view that women lack subjectivity. These Proverbs shows that the objectification of women can sometimes be stated patronizingly.

yy. *A male person is dead from his birth (Dhiirti gaafa dhalatte duute).* This proverb inculcates fearlessness as a masculine self-fulfillment. The proverb states, a male person should not fear death whether it is for good or for trivial cause.

zz. *Niitiin dhiirsa hin qabne mana utubaa hin qabne. (A woman without a husband is like a house without a pole).* In this proverb women without a husband are compared to a house that has no pole to support it. A house without a pole is no more a house because it will collapse or in the first place it may not even be built. In the same way, the woman in this proverb is considered someone who cannot on her two feet.

aaa. *Haati hattuun intala ofii hin amantu (A mother who is a thief does not trust her daughter).* In this proverb suspicious in women is highlighted by attributing one unfavorable behavioral trait to a mother, 'thief'.

bbb. *Kadhatee galteet weedisaa daakti (She got it by begging, but she grinds the grain singing).* A woman brought some grain home by begging but grinds it singing out loudly because she is a shameless woman. According to the norm of Oromo society, begging is an embarrassing act and those who could not work are actually supported by those who can. However, in this proverb the woman begged a grain which is the first point that made her shameless and the second shameful act she did was that she grinds it singing out loudly.

ccc. *Yoom deebita jennaan yoom na eegda jedhe namichi niitiidhaan ("When will you be back," asked the wife, "when will you wait for me," answered the husband).* The woman asks her husband boldly when he has planned to come back from his trip. This shows her intention and desire for adultery has reached a high level which prevented her from understanding that he might be suspicious of her plans. In this proverb from the answer of the husband one can see that he has understood her intention and answered her saying: "When do you expect me to come back?" (gender role women as submissive)

ddd. *Oddoo isii irraa hin hafin liqeessitee odoo hin fudhatin duute. (She lent it even though she hasn't enough, but died before getting it back).* In this proverb foolishness of women is indicated when she lent something that she does not have even enough for herself. Therefore, it has been observed from the Proverb that the images of women in Oromo have been undermined by being represented as foolish beings.

eee. *Mootummaan dubartii bishaan ol yaafti (A women's*

government will turn the river up the hill). In this proverb women have been depicted as cruel beings that kill a husband for fulfilling their own needs. They are represented as they are cruel to the extent that someone's pain becomes a source of happiness and the like. From the above proverb, it has been observed that the images of women have been negatively portrayed as cruel beings or as cruelty is a dominant negative trait of women.

fff. *Raafuu affeltee ollaa waamte (A woman invited her neighbor to a cooked cabbage only).* This proverb represented a woman as she does not want to give away her good things but only something of lesser importance just to pretend that she is generous who invited her neighbors. According to the culture of the Oromo one do not invite a guest to a boiled cabbage if he/she has enough property. That is, there are different types of food meant for guests to show respect. Thus, this proverb portrays woman as greedy.

ggg. *Ibiddi nadheen qabsiifte hin dhaamu (A fire lit by women cannot be turned off).* This proverb represents women as the cause of difficult trouble among men or their husbands that cannot be controlled easily.

hhh. *Anuu bade kan intala ta'e badii lammataa kan itala daye jette niitiin (I am mistaken by being a woman, the second mistake I begotten a girl).* In this proverb the woman in her own words explains that it is a mistake to be female and a more serious mistake is giving birth to a girl. This, on the other hand shows that women's outlook is shaped by the expectations of men who are the main agents in construction of images of women in the patriarchal culture.

iii. *Harreen mana hin qabduu mana loonii galti, nadheen mana hin qabduu mana dhiiraa galti (A donkey has no house but lives with the other cattle, and women do not have house but lives in a man's house).* In this proverb women are described as dependent on men because they do not have their own house but live in men's houses. The comparison made between a donkey and a woman shows the extent of men undermining women.

jjj. *Amiiniin dubartii fi dhagaan lukku garaa keessa (A girl's acceptance and hen's grinding-stone is inside).* In this proverb, it is seen that women are compared with a hen's grinding-stone which is invisible and always stays inside the body of the hen. That is, women are thought to be silent and invisible like that of the hen's grinding-stone.

3.2. Some Selected Oromo Proverbs Which Appear to Depict Women Positively and Challenge Patriarchal Ideology

- Haati ilmoo hin obsitu (A mother never says "I have had enough" of her child).(mother as lover)
- Haati yoo quufte ilmoo tiyyaaf jetti, ilmoon yoo quufte boruuf kaayatti. (A mother keeps the food for her children after having enough for herself, but children

say we will use it tomorrow). (mother as care taker)

The above proverbs, (18 and 19) reveal that women, especially, mothers are caring, loving and thoughtful for their children without limit.

- c. Haati ofii Kafana ofiiti (A mother is like one's own dress). This proverb expresses that no one is like one's own mother, even a father, that a worthless mother is preferred to a friendly step-mother and, a father is depicted as an opaque material to show the firmness and cruelty of father as compared to mother.
- d. Dubartiin faaya dhiiraati (A woman is a jewel of a man)
- e. Dubartiin gaachana dhiiraati (A woman is a shield of a man)

In the above proverbs, 21 and 22, women are depicted to be very important members of the community, especially for their husbands. As far as the skill of housekeeping and feeding a family is solely the duty of women in many patriarchal societies, it is not surprising if women expertise in this area and are praised and appreciated for their good performances.

- f. Haadha dhabuu mannaa, haadha dhabduu wayya / having a destitute mother is better for a person than not having a mother at all/. In this proverb, we understand that there is no difference between poor and rich mothers, since their absence equally hurt their children.
- g. Haatifi bishaan hamaa hin qaban/a mother and water have no evil/. Here, a mother is compared with water – a universal solvent. That means, Water is very important for human beings, and we need it for our life, and the same is true for a mother as it is depicted in this proverb.
- h. Haadha duutee mannaa haadha maraatte wayya. (A mad mother is better to a dead one.)
- i. Michuu haadha ormaarra badduu haadha ofii wayya. (A worthless (bad) mother of one's own is better than a friendly (good) step-mother.)

Proverbs (25) and (26) show that let alone a healthy and

wealthy mother, and a mad mother is better than not having a mother at all.

- j. Haati harma guuti malee harka hin guutu. (It is a mother's breast which wins, not her hands). This proverb communicates the fact that a mother is a universal symbol of protection. That means, though, a mother may stop to feed her breast, she never stops to prepare her children other types of food.

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