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RESEARCH ARTICLE

A THEMATIC ANALYSES ON THE OROMARA DISCOURSE AS REFLECTED IN GENDER RELATED PROVERBS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to analyze the representations of women in Oromara proverbs of Ethiopia. The term Oromara is a currently coined concept that shows the sociocultural, political and economic relationship between the Amhara and Oromo society. The proverbs used for the study were 25 theme-relevant proverbs collected by interviewing systematically selected 10 elders, Focus group discussions and by analyzing Documents. Qualitative research design was used to conduct the study. Women were both negatively and positively represented in the Oromara proverbs. Most of the proverbs have similar ideas that show the two people's cultural similarity in their ideologies in relation to gender representations. Based on these findings, awareness creation trainings should be given to de-motivate the use of proverbs having negative depictions towards women. The Oromara families have to encourage their children to use proverbs that reflect gender equality, and the society, at large, should totally avoid the use of proverbs that reflect outdated negative perception of femininity in their society.

INTRODUCTION

The Amhara National Regional State is one of the nine regional states of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE). In geographic terms, the state is located between 9^o 21' to 14^o 0' North latitude and 36^o 20' and 40^o 20' East longitude. The total area of the Amhara region is estimated to be 170, 752 square kilometers. The region shares borders with Tigray region in the North, Afar and Oromia regions in the East and the South, and also Benishangul region and The Sudan Republic in the West. (BoFED, 2004). The Oromo are one of the Cushitic speaking groups of people who are said to be indigenous to east Africa. As stated by Prouty and Rosenfeld (1981), the Oromo were a very ancient race in the horn of Africa. According to the 2007 census estimate, the Oromo, who live in almost every part of Ethiopia, constitute about 40 percent of the population (Keller, 2008). Nowadays, the Oromo live in Oromia and almost every part of Ethiopia, Northern Kenya and Somalia. Oromia is a national regional state in Ethiopia, which extends "from 2 degree and 12 degree N and between 34 degree and 44 degree E" and is bordered by "Somalia, Afar lands and Djibouti in the East, Sudan in the West, Kenya, Somalia and others in the South, and Amhara and Tigray Regional states in the North" (Gada, 1988: 27). In Ethiopia, after the era of political change in 1991, efforts are being made to improve the legal and social status of women as

evidenced by the articles in the new constitution. The government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia has announced a new women's policy which aims at giving equal opportunity to Women to participate in all spheres of life. It has also opened Women's Affairs Office (WAO) with branch offices in the regions. The office is given the responsibility of promoting women's issues and it is working to this end. But, due to the scarcity of well-planned research projects and publications, valuable data on the socio-economic situation of women are not adequate. This causes the problem to be more serious than other things. As a result it has become very problematic to change the lives of many women in our country as it is supposed to be. This research could be useful to fill the gap that the ministry of women's affairs is facing in Ethiopia. As one of the developing countries, Ethiopia is a poor country where majority of the people live in the countryside. The case of gender discrimination is very high here and even in most parts of the country it is considered as normal part of the tradition. For example, circumcision of girls, abduction and early marriage are being practiced even nowadays. As a result of these, women suffer at delivery, and also they are exposed to fistula due to early marriage and other related problems. Though the society knows that such practices are not good for women, it is considered as culture and hence they have continued practicing them as "normal and deserving" to women. What makes the problem more serious is that the society has inculcated the idea of oppressing women in

the mind of every generation using oral literature like proverbs to oppress women. In the case of Oromara women are assumed to be under the control of men. Hence it seems that they have the right to punish them and also treat them like their own property. This causes great suffering for their whole life, physically and psychologically. This study, therefore has tried to analyze the extent of the negative and positive images of women among the Oromara of Ethiopia.

Conceptual Review of Proverbs

Proverbs are considered the most common genre of folklore, found among all cultures of the world. They are simple and often short statements with deep meaning, guidelines for individual, family and village behaviors. Proverbs are not built from a vacuum, rather on repeated real life experiences and observations. Like any form of language, “proverbs are mirrors through which people look at themselves – a stage for experiencing themselves to others” (Malunga and Banda, 2004: 2). Similarly, Jackie Lee (2015) notes that proverbs are the mirror of culture in that they: “can reflect the customs, traditions, values, opinions and beliefs of a particular society” (2015: 561). Indeed, by looking at peoples proverbs, we can understand how they think and look at the world, their culture, values, behaviors, aspirations, and preoccupation. A proverb is an adage, a saying in more or less fixed form marked by shortness, sense, and salt and distinguished by the popular acceptance of the truth expressed in it (Finnegan, 1970). Similarly, Okpewho (1992) suggests that, proverb is a piece of folk wisdom expressed with terseness and charm. Proverbs can further be defined as “short wise sayings which are often based on observable facts and heavily linked with the culture of the people” (Zakariyah, 2013: 22).

Based on the above definitions, proverbs could be conceptualized as any wise saying that converts the central idea in a given context, objectively and truthfully. While much has been written on what a proverb is, it is more important to understand what a proverb does. According to the Yoruba of Nigeria, “Proverbs are the horses of speech” meaning that in the event where communication gets lost, proverbs are used to recover it (Schipper, 1991: 1). For the Amhara people proverbs are very important to substantiate ideas. They say: “Tejbeberile NegerBemesale” literally it means a discourse needs a proverb, as an alcohol needs its cup which makes it attractive”. The Oromo’s also have a special place for proverbs. They say “Dubinmamakessa male nyatanisogida male hintauu” a speech without proverb is a stew without salt.” This shows that both the Amhara and the Oromo people has the same value for proverbs. Schipper’s idea is succinctly apparent in the following Igbo proverb which says, “Proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten” (Oha, 1999: 87), meaning that proverb help to accelerate the smooth glide of words through the throat.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on a combination of theoretical approaches including patriarchy, hegemonic masculinity, and feminism. Through the lens of these theories, the study tries to find out to what extent proverbs have been used among the Oromara to maintain the traditional depiction of women. The study therefore attempts to identify and analyze women’s representations as portrayed in Oromara proverbs. In a society where patriarchal practices and beliefs are prevalent, the

relationship between men and women is based on gender inequality. Patriarchy, as defined by social scientists such as Weber (1947), is “a system of government in which men rule society through their position as head of households” (quoted in Walby, 1990: 19). However, the meaning of the term has advanced since Weber, especially in the writing by radical feminists, who developed the elements of the domination of women by men. For example, Walby (1990) defines patriarchy as “a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress, and exploit women” (1990: 20). This particular culture privileges the exercise of men’s power over women. Commenting on the meaning of patriarchy and its effects on women, Mutunda (2015) observes: Patriarchy is a gender system in which men dominate women. The endorsed superior status of men is encouraged and sustained by social institutions that are considered unquestionable. In addition, this system of social stratification based on sex provides men with power and material advantages while depriving women of both those benefits.

Deeply entrenched in the concept of patriarchy is the notion of hegemonic masculinity. According to Connell (2005), hegemonic masculinity is “the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of legitimacy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (2005:77). Hegemonic masculinity, when embodied by at least some men overtime and space, legitimates men’s domination over women as a group. In essence, hegemonic masculinity, as Mutunda (2015) suggests, refers to that view of masculinity which has established dominance in society. In addition, this form of masculinity is mostly supported by social institutions namely schools, religion, and law, just to cite a few. Furthermore, Mimi Schippers (2007:94) has defined hegemonic masculinity as “the qualities defined as manly that establish and legitimate a hierarchical and complementary relationship to femininity and that by doing so, guarantee the dominant position of men and the subordination of women in their society”

As shown in the definitions above, hegemonic masculinity legitimates the domination of men over women. Feminists have also focused on this gender inequality which stresses women’s inferiority to men. Three feminist approaches namely the liberal, radical, and socialist, try to provide different explanations for the roots of gender inequality. Liberal feminism holds that “women and men are identical by their essential nature but women are deprived of the opportunities to realize their potentials on account of their gender” (Ndungo, 1998:47). Another liberal feminist, Betty Friedman (cited in Belfatmi, 2013: 16) explains gender inequality in terms of culture and social subordination. She maintains that “lack of equal rights in different fields including education is the root of women’s oppression.” In fact, the liberal feminists believe there is no such thing as male/female nature but human nature. They imagine a society inhabited by human beings who will be the same in their essential nature. When some feminists began to perceive the inequality between women and men, they used the term “radical” to signify their commitment to seek the origin of the root cause of this inequality. One such theorist is Shulamith Firestone (1970) who is believed to be the first radical feminist. Throughout her work titled the dialectic of sex (1970), Firestone stresses that the root cause of women’s subordination is their biology. She argues that women’s biology, which includes menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth,

and breastfeeding, makes them to be dependent on men. This dependence inevitably produces unequal power relationships (Firestone, quoted in Belfatmi, 2013: 16). Other radical feminists argue that patriarchy is the origin of inequality existing between males and females. They focus on patriarchal oppression in every sphere of women's lives from the most private to the most public. They stress the need to revalue the creative and nurturing aspects of femininity which have been devalued and distorted in patriarchal society. For instance, in her *Sexual Politics*, Kate Millett (1970) maintains that patriarchy is perpetuated by the family, being the primary source of socialization which provides men with dominant disposition. She believes that patriarchy is the source of many social problems faced by women. She also argues that gender inequality is not related to social class but to male domination over women. In the same breath, Hartman (1997) argues that patriarchy creates the conditions for women to be systematically dominated, exploited and oppressed. The very difference between men and women, which allow men to exploit the situation to dominate women and rule the world, is the very difference that concern radical feminists on a political level. Radical feminism sees that men have benefited of inequality; women, on the other hand, carry out unpaid work in higher jobs positions. Consequently, "unlike liberal feminism which claims that gender inequality should be reformed, radical feminism believes that it should be totally eradicated" (Belfatmi, 2013:17). Radical feminism promotes womanhood rather than aspiring to integrate and assimilate into male-dominated social arena. It is focused upon sexual oppression as a manifestation of women's oppression and social order. Marxist and socialist feminism, nevertheless considers the entire system of capitalism as the root of women oppression. This theory highlights the provision of cheap labor to enhance capitalism. The theory finds significance in class relation in that one class is more advantaged than the other. Social feminists believe that the exploitative economic relations, where the worker is exploited by the dominant capitalist class, could serve as an understanding of gender relations. They further argue that women are second class citizen in patriarchal capitalism which demands for its survival on exploitation of working people and on the social exploitation of women (Humm, 1992). Social feminists hold that one way to get rid of gender inequality is the establishment of a communist society in which the production of wealth is commonly owned. They, therefore, relate gender inequality to economic differences.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Design of the Study

Qualitative research design was used for this study. This is because it was believed to be suitable to interpret and explicate the existing gender related problems as revealed in the selected proverbs of the Oromomara.

Subjects of the Study

The major population of this study is the Oromara people at ArsiNegeleWoreda: Qereru and Qersa areas where both the Oromo and the Amhara people live together. The researcher collected more than 50 proverbs reflecting women's representations. However, a sample of 25 proverbs was drawn from the 50 to the manageability and relevance of the study. Regarding the collection of the proverbs, three tools of data collection were used: Document analysis, Focus group

discussion and semi-structured interview for 10 selected elders. Then, the collected proverbs were filtered based on their thematic relevance for the study and the selected 25 proverbs were analyzed using qualitative method of data analysis.

Sampling Technique

For this study, the researcher used purposive sampling procedure to come up with 25 proverbs having thematic reflection of women's representations and the society's ideology towards gender related issues. The proverbs were collected through interviewing 10 elders who were systematically selected (using snowball sampling) from various communities of West Arsi areas (at Qereru and Qersa) at ArsiNegeleWoreda based on their deep knowledge of Oromomara people's culture and by document analysis.

Data Analysis

For the analysis of the proverbs, the researcher used qualitative method of data analysis. Then, he presented the results and discussion in a systematic approach of transcribing the proverbs, translating them into English, and then analyzing and interpreting them within their relevant thematic category based on the theoretical framework of patriarchy, hegemonic masculinity, and feminism.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF THE SELECTED PROVERBS

Before moving into the analysis section let me present a brief summery about the two people. The Oromara term has been a recent concept that deals with the historical, socio cultural and economic relationship between the Oromo and the Amhara people. The two people has been living together for a long time. According to FikreTolossa (2018) the two people were assumed to be the result of one family. (newscenter.vansd.org/fikre_tolossa.pdf). The two people has lots of things in common. For example the Oromo considers the Raya people as Oromo. The word Raya means Army in the Oromo language. The Amhara also claim that the Rayas as Amhara. I think their claim could be because of their similar origin as FikreTolossa said. The other thing that could be raised here is the word Gojam also has an Oromo meaning which means "desire". There are also places in Oromia and Amhara region that have the same names. For example: Bati in Wolo and Bate in Harar. Borena in Oromia and Borena in Wolo. The two people also have ruled Ethiopia for a long time together. The Woreillu dynasty could be the best example for this, "wera" means house in Oromo language. According to Marcus, Harold (1995) King Minilik is an Oromara (his mother was Oromo and his father an Amhara), that is why the showans plotted Menelik's escape from Magdala; with the help of Mohammed Ali and Queen Worqitu of Wollo, he escaped from Magdala on the night of 1 July 1865, abandoning his wife, and returned to Shewa. Enraged, Emperor Tewodros slaughtered 29 Oromo hostages then had 12 Amhara (showa) notables beaten to death with bamboo rods. Here we can see that the unity of the Oromo's and the Amhara's to Minilik's scape has made them to pay in their life. Emperor Menelik had Oromo ancestry himself on his mother's side (IjgayehuAdeyamo), and his late father King Haile Melekot's alliance with the Wollo Oromo helped him in his success. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Menelik_II). HaileSelassie was also an Oromara, (The emperor's mother was called

Yeshimebet Ali Gamcho.) <https://www.pambazuka.org/pan-africanism/who-was-emperor-haile-selassie%E2%80%99s-mother>). Even the Current Prime Minister DrAbiyAhimed is an Oromra. Even though the primary focus of this study is on gender related issues among the two people, further study is needed to discover their relationship to the benefit of the two people and for Ethiopians as a whole; since they are the majority on which democracy could be established. According to the 2007 CSA report the Amhara and the Oromo people consists of 60% of Ethiopian population. It should not be forgotten that democracy is based on majority vote and minority right. After all they are 50 plus one in terms of their vote in the country. This means anything that ignores these people means ignoring Ethiopia's existence. The unification of Ethiopian states came into being because of the two people's cooperation with king Minilik. Even the present change in the country was the result of the two people's resistance towards ethnic federalism that could disintegrate the country like the "ZemeneMesafinet". The discussions in this paper are based on the data collected from documented sources, focus group discussion and interviews made with 10 Oromara native informants. The proverbs were then put into categories according to various themes that were found relevant to shed light on the ways women's representations is perceived among the Oromara people. They were depicted as follows:

Dubartiinxiqqoohinqabdu

A woman is never little
Yesetnayemaseroteneshyelewem
There is no little girl and pot

The above proverbs have almost the same idea. When I collected proverbs among the Oromara, I asked why they use this proverb, one of my interviewee who is very aged, told me the context why people started using this proverb. The man told me that an oral narrative how this proverb came into being. Once upon a time a woman went to her would be husband's family, where she was taken being betrothed before her actual marriage time reached, due to her immaturity she was forced to wait till she gets matured and be given for her husband officially. But the girl wanting to marry her future husband did something challenging her husband's family. In the middle of the night, she rose up and excreted a little amount and slept as nothing happen deliberately. When the family rose early in the morning the house was full of bad smell, then they started asking what happened in the family. Then the little girl started responding for them that it is very little that she excreted. But the family of her future husband responded to her that even though it is very small but it is still feces.

Finally she surprisingly responded for them that even though she is very little but she is a woman and capable of doing anything expected from her. Most of the proverbs in the Oromara are connected with oral narratives for their origin whether it is truly related or not to make it more reliable and truthful. This gives the proverb more power and will have the influence to shape the societies attitude positively or negatively. For example this proverb is used to strengthen the early marriage practices in the Oromo and also in the Amhara society. But we know what bad consequences early marriage holds in any society. Some of the problems that are caused by early marriage are : early pregnancy which causes mostly death at birth, fistula due to early sexual experiences before the body of little girls get matured enough, dropping out of school

because of the responsibility that women take at home like feeding her family and rearing children, etc. The similarity of the ideologies reflected in the two proverbs among the Amhara and Oromo people also shows that the people has ideological or philosophical similarity's that shows their gender related culture.

Dubartiindhertu male, bektunhinqabdu.

A woman could be tall, but she could not be knowledgeable.
Men set betawqebewendyaleq
Whatever a woman knows, it is a man that concludes.

The above two proverbs have the same idea. They are a direct insult against women's knowledge. It is undeniable that there is no direct relationship between height and knowledge, because there are lots of people who are tall and are both intellectual as well as ignorant; at the same time there are short people who are intellectuals and also those who are ignorant. This shows that knowledge is not dependent on height in any case and it is illogical to think in this way. The other proverb is also the same in its insulting women like the first one. Generally the above two proverbs has nothing in them except a hatred for women and simply an insult originated from ignorance about women's value in the society. The next proverb also strengthens the idea reflected in the above Oromara proverbs.

Dubartiindhiraadeessimalheedhiirahingettuu

A female may bear a male, but she will not be equal with him

In this proverb the value of woman is measured because of her potential to bear a son, but not because of her being a female. Moreover this proverb puts woman in an inferior position when she is compared with men. This proverb is very dangerous because it demoralizes women mentally and tries to persuade them that they are not equal with men, hence, no need of competing with men. But nowadays we know that women do not only bear males, but led them as well when they get the opportunity to do so. Here we also should have to consider that it is not woman that bears a male or female individually, because both men and women are important for bearing a child. But in a traditional society women's role is usually associated with giving birth not with leadership as could be seen in the next proverb.

Dubartiindeessuumaleebeeektuuhinqabdu

A woman may bear a child, but she is not knowledgeable

The above proverb is related with this one in that both of them gives value for women's bearing ability. Here it is good to see the context of how a traditional society thinks about gender differences and preferences. A babe boy is preferred in a traditional community, because they think that a female is not the member of her family. The male is thought to strengthen the family's line by inheriting what the family possesses. While the woman is considered as a go away child, because of marriage she is supposed to join another family. Due to this a woman is not considered as important as a man and will not be allowed to get inheritance in her own family and also in the place where she goes after marriage. This causes woman to lose economic advantages even though they are very important in household activities and in child rearing which is a very tiresome work in a traditional society. Moreover the proverb denies women's ability of acquiring knowledge, and gives recognition for their ability of bearing a child. There is nothing

wrong with bearing a child; it is the gift of nature and great responsibility to sustain any society in this world. But because of the responsibility of women's child bearing, denying their ability to acquire knowledge is unfair and injustice which shows that women need more treatment than men because of the burden they carry as a mother. But women are usually denied opportunities of leading their society and economic advantages of inheriting land from their families. They are expected to be passive whenever they faced challenges from their husbands starting from their early marriage. The next proverb shows how a woman is expected to behave when she faced a challenge from her husband. "... Enjitedartru new ezawlemeji" "...Despite that, marriage is good, so be tolerant with it." The next proverbs also show how a woman is considered to be a cause of conflict in the society among the Oromara's.

Ibiddidubertiinqabsiiftehindhhaamu

A fire lit by a woman shall not be extinguished

Set yelokesewesataytefam

Set yelakew mot ayferam

As it is known a fire is a very powerful thing, even if it is small it can destroy a forest once it is burnt. Here a woman is represented as an agent of conflict that never ends. The fire is the symbol of destruction in the proverb listed above. Relating woman with fire is due to the assumption that women are a catalyst for conflicts in the society. If a society accepts this assumption as a reality the result is woman's value will be degraded and they are considered as the source of evil in the society. Assumptions that are like this, is the cause of the negative attitudes that any society develops against women. In any case it will not be fair to relate women with the causes of conflict; while both men and women could be a cause of conflict in any society. Moreover the ideas reflected in the proverbs about women in the Oromara society could show the societies ideological similarity about gender related issues.

Beeraa fi ijoolleecitiiitihinhiman.

A secret should not be told to women and children

DhiiraAmaaraafidubartiOromoogaraaisaaniiosohinargin

biraa bane.' JedheXaaliyaaniin

We could not get the heart of the Amhara men and the Oromo women.' said theItalians"

I deliberately presented the two proverbs above; because they contradict with each other and proves that thinking woman as talkative to the point of exposing secret is wrong. Children may expose secret due to lack of maturity, but well developed women knows what is good and bad and it will not be sound to assume that women are like children who do not know what is to be told and kept as a secret. Of course some women may expose secret like men also do, but there could not be any difference between the two sexes in the matter because of their gender. The second proverb even gives more value in keeping secrets for women than men. The historically based proverb's context disproves the assumption that women are not to be trusted like men because of their gender differences from men. This also shows that thinking a proverb as a general truth as a definition needs to be redefined because of the wrong assumptions some proverbs might hold like the one we discussed here. The second proverb also implies that the Oromara society were very strong in keeping secretes to protect their country from their enemies. This also shows that both the Amhara and the Oromo people were serious

challenges for the Italian invaders of Ethiopia. The next Amharic proverb also confirms the idea reflected in the above proverb.

Setenyamene gum yezegene

Trusting woman is holding a cloud

A cloud cannot be hold by hand; comparing a woman with this assumption degrades her worth by reducing her to be entrusted with anything. If a woman is not trusted life will be very challenging not only for women but for their life partners' men. For example a husband accepts his children by trusting his wife, since they do not come out from his body like they do from their mothers. A father should believe his wife that the babies that she delivers belong to him. If he does not trust everything will end there, especially in traditional society where people cannot check their children by genetic identification. Therefore lack of trust on women can cause societal problem not only by affecting women but also destroying men's life.

Dubartiinhamamuuyoobeektedhiiraanhaadhmatu

Whatever a woman knows, it is a man that concludes.

Men set betawqbewendyaleq

Before analyzing this proverb, let me present a proverb which is exactly similar with it in Amharic: "Men set betawqbewendyaleq". The similarities of the proverbs show the socio cultural relationships between the two people in the country. According to this proverb even though a woman has got knowledge about anything she is expected to be under men's control, due to the expectation that she is less reliable than men. This makes women to be passive and men to be active in decision making. The matter is not weather men or women decide finally, because if women decides finally men are looser and if men decides as they do women are looser, in both cases it is unfair; but the crucial point is women are expected to accept any kind of decision which may affect their life while men make a final remark on women's conditions. This assumption is to put women under the control of men who is assumed to be their owner. That is why the Oromo called the husband as "abba mana" the owner of the house and the Amhara as the "balebet" the owner of the house. In both cases the ownership includes the wife. Whenever people ask for the husband they say: "sewale" the response will be "yelum" if the husband is not in the house. This otherises a woman as absent even at her presence at home.

Biyyidubartiwarradhiirsaisiiti.

The woman's place is the home of her husband

Yesetageruabalua new

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. This is the result of the life style the two people shares. Both society are agrarian that depends on the production of crops. The male is assumed to be the one who will be responsible for the farming business. But the women is considered to be a go away child that joins another family. Due to this tradition the family do not give land related heritage for women. But nowadays this has been

changed and women has a legal right to inherit land and other properties from her families. The next proverb also confirms the same idea reflected in the above proverb.

Beerrida' oohinqabduda' oodhiiraagalti.

The woman does not have a house of her but lives in the house of the man

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. They also say: "issinuhorii' horihinqdhabetu" literally it means she does not need a cattle (property) as she herself is a "cattle" owned by the husband" this has caused the idea reflected in the next proverb.

Kandandeettudhaanijennaan, Dhiirsigaleeniitiidhaane.

When a fearful man is allowed to beat anyone that he can, he beats his own wife

Fereimanentashenefalehbiluetwedemistu rote

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 of beating. Physical abuse is mainly one the frequent forms of torture perpetrated against women in most Ethiopian culture, the Oromara 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. This is partly due to the marriage related cost the man is requested in the form of cattle to get the hand of a girl that gives him the right to be her especially among the Arsi Oromo's.

Niitiindhiirsiboonseitilleerraamucucaatti.

A wife who has been very well taken care of by her husband will slide from a bed

Sismuattetasisebuat

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. But the idea does not seem logical because, if one is able to stand in hardship with her husband

how could not manage living with comfort and honor. This representation could not bring positive result for the marriage of the society, rather it could be the reason of divorce for lots of people in Ethiopia.

Beekebeejetteejaartiinkitaabadihyxe.

Believing that she knows much the old lady washed a book
Awqeshaweqeshsiluatmetshafatebech

This can roughly be translated as, believing that she knows much the old lady washed a book. The proverbs are 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 women are not sound enough in their decisions and shouldn't be trusted in what they say or do. In short proverbs like this one makes women to be considered as ignorant among their society.

Beekkumsidubartiimalkaahinceesisu.

The knowledge of women will not help one to cross the river to the other side of it

Yesettemerteskeseminet

The proverb can be translated as, 'the knowledge of women will not help one to cross the river to the other side of it'. The proverbs show 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. Mostly girls are assumed to be prepared for marriage and their educational continuity shall be discouraged even by their own families. But nowadays the problem seems to have been challenged because the society has got awareness about the value of education for both girls and boys.

Mana dubartiinittiheddummaatteraafuunhinbilchaattu.

Cabbage will not boil in a house in which there are too many women

Set bezagomenteneza

The proverbs 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. This shows that in a traditional society it is not only women's education that was discouraged but their assemblage was also not liked by their community.

But without discussion and the culture of sharing ideas it will not be easy to transform our people.

Garbittiingargaarsaargattemooyee/majjeedhoksiti
A maidservant, who found some help, hid the millstone
Bariyansiagezuatmejuandebeqech

The proverbs subtly encourages men to control women because they were assumed as illogical. 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. Women as mothers are appreciated almost in all the proverbs of the Oromara. Hence teaching that all women are potential mothers that deserve respect and honor is very important. To protect women's discrimination by the society it will be wise using the culture itself by challenging the negative thinking and encouraging the positive and constructive once. There are also proverbs that represented women positively among the Oromara society. The proverbs that deal about women as mothers are usually positive. They were analyzed together because they have the same qualities or themes. While collecting the data among the Oromara's I could not find any proverb that negatively represent women as mothers; but step mothers were represented negatively with an exception. Here are the proverbs dealing with mothers:

Haadhailaaliintalafuudhi.
Evaluate the mother and marry her daughter.
Michuhaadhaormaarrabadduuhadhaaofiwayya
A bad mother is better than a good step mother
Haatiifbishanbadduhinqabani
There is no evil mother and water
Yenatenayewhametfoylewem

All of the above proverbs magnify the quality of a mother to a higher level, to the extent of perfection. Women as a mother are respected and honored as a special being in the Oromara proverbs. Let us see the proverbs about motherhood to understand how much value has been given for them for being a mother. The first Proverb is about marriage advice. According to this proverb, if one wants to marry a girl he has to know her mother's character very well, because a mother is considered to be a teacher for her daughter. If the mother is hard worker, the daughter is expected to be the same, if she is lazy, and then the same result is expected to happen. So, a mother is basic in her daughter's life, she can shape her daughter in the way she is. From this proverb it is possible to see that women are crucial in a society's development, because, if women are illiterate they will not be productive at any point, as a mother women can shape or teacher her children at home those things that are very important in life. This shows that giving more attention for teaching today's women tomorrow's mothers is very crucial to change their life and our country in general. The Oromara's usually teach women how to behave before men in the society and they also teach women how to make good dishes for the family and also for their future husband. The problem is both cultures primarily prepare women only for marriage. But nowadays this culture has been changing and women are being educated and are qualified to be leaders in the society as men. The other Proverb compares a bad mother with a good step mother, and gives more value to the bad mother to show how much a mother is very important to her children. When we come to the last proverb, it puts that there is no bad mother like water. Here motherhood is given the highest quality that disproves other

proverbs assumption of putting women as evil, because all mothers are women. Hence if we love mothers we are expected to give the respect all women deserves as potential mothers and as part of the community that needs our support because of what they have suffered in the past. Women are also represented as wise in some proverbs. For example the next proverb shows that women are wise and men are advised to be like them.

Malli mala dubartii; humnihumnabishaaniisiihaata'u
Wisdom like a woman, power like water, let it be unto you

This proverb shows the blessing given to a man, if some proverbs that insults and consider women as ignorant were right, the Arsi Oromo's should not bless men with this blessing. But the matter is they know how much important woman is in the society, how much significant their knowledge is and the like. According to the Concise Oxford Dictionary (2001) wisdom means: the quality of being wise, the body of knowledge and experience that develops within a specified society or period. And power means: the ability to do something or act in a particular way. It is the capacity to influence the behavior of others; their emotions, or the course of events. It can be also a right or authority given or delegated to a person or body; Political authority or control. As well as it can be Physical strength or force. From both definitions it is easy to consider how much important wisdom and power is. Moreover the power of is known especially nowadays. Water has power both for construction and destruction. For example, Tsunami which is a long high sea wave caused by an earthquake or other disturbance, ibid (2001) was caused by water waves and has destroyed lots of people and their property recently. Also we use water for generating electricity to move big industries and for our daily purposes'. But we can do nothing without wisdom and knowledge. This shows it is very important to involve women in their countries and their own issues.

Dad daftenadhungatteefdHIRSANAafhintaatu.
Early kissing could not assure your being my husband
Yejebechekulqendyeneksal

This proverb is very important as HIV is destroying the productive force of most developing countries like Ethiopia. As we know the main reason for HIV is unsafe sex, and the main solution is abstinence from it. This proverb teaches couples not to rush in to sex because it doesn't guarantee the married life as some considers it. It teaches that women are wise in giving more attention to control their sexual feelings. It is very important to save the generation from the wide spread of HIV and unwanted pregnancy by teaching them that rushing to sex is like rushing to death. The proverb shows that how much a woman cares for her future married life and hence wise in keeping herself clean from sexual problems.

Summery and Recommendations: Under this section the main points on the findings of this research has been summarized. And also based on the findings some important recommendations have been given to all the concerned bodies in order to change the situation of women in our country in general and in the Oromara people in particular.

Summary: In this research different Gender issues related with the representations of women in the oral proverbs of Amara and Oromo people has been studied.

Women were represented both positively and negatively in the proverbs of the two people. The gender related discourses in the proverbs of the people studied shows that both people have similar ideologies or gender related philosophies which show their cultural similarities. As the Oromo and the Amhara people are the majorities of Ethiopian population, working on gender related issues among those people could be very helpful in order to solve our country's gender related problems.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this study it will be good if the following measures are taken and implemented by all the concerned bodies in our country in general and in the Oromara people in particular. Some of the recommendations are:

- Gender related education must be given starting from early childhood in every school in the country in order to build up the minds of the generation on the equality of men and women to solve the problem at the grass root level.
- Expanding training on Gender issues all over the country is also very important. But this one is very difficult and needs the involvement of the elders in the society, because matured people are not usually willing to change their thinking. As a result they need traditional means to convince them about the problem the traditional thinking brings on women.
- The Governments Medias like ETV's, regional FM's are not giving enough time for Gender issues. Rather they give more time for the governments' propaganda and other less relevant issues like Europeans football while women are dying because of gender related problems in the country. Therefore the Medias should be used properly to the advantage of women in the country to change the society's negative attitude towards women.
- At the level of higher education in our country giving common courses on Gender issues and conducting research extensively on the representations of women in the oral and written literature is very important to change and improve the situation of women radically. In order to achieve this, the government and the society should have to put great investment on issues related with women.
- The Oromara people's cultural similarities also must be studied in other oral and written literatures in order to discover the two people's sociocultural and economic ideologies so as to strengthen their relationships for the benefit of the two people in particular and Ethiopia in general.

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