

GENDER IDEOLOGY IN PROVERBS AND SAYINGS

Գենդերային գաղափարախոսությունը
ասույթներում և ասացվածքներում

The subject matter of the attached work is the study of gender ideology in different proverbs and sayings.

A proverb is a short familiar epigrammatic saying expressing popular wisdom, a truth or a moral lesson in a concise and imaginative way. Proverbs and sayings haven't lost their colors and educational value, their direct appeal and cognitive nature. Proverbs are like a link with the ancestors of our past and with generation yet to come. It is an assurance that we shall forever exist as a people, for as long as the land shall last.

Proverbs are used all over the world. However the way to express them is different for each country and culture. Most proverbs were created from the thirteenth to the seventeenth century. Poets, clergymen, wise men made proverbs, and then they spread through people gradually.

The wisdom inherent in proverbs has demonstrated its value over an extended period of time. A proverb is a saying popularly known and repeated. It usually expresses a truth based on common sense or practiced human experience. The interesting thing is that these short sayings have a great influence on people and without losing your time you can just mention a proverb instead of explaining him for hours what you want to say because "a word is enough to wise".

Proverbs have been predominantly used by males to denigrate women's physical, mental and social weaknesses. Such proverbs in this section interiorize the personality of women and reinforce their subordinate position in the society.

Proverbs and sayings tell much about people's traditional ways of experiencing reality, about values and warnings, rules and wisdoms the elders want to impress on the mind of their young.

A saying is a short expression that expresses a general truth and contains advice or wisdom (for example, "once bitten, twice shy", meaning that unpleasant experience makes us more careful the next time). If you know the words (once, bite, twice, shy) you can probably understand what this saying means. "Once bitten, twice shy" is not an idiom because it is understandable from the individual words.

Proverbs are short expressions and they give various knowledge. Proverbs and sayings can teach us much knowledge about experiences and lessons of life, and about philosophy. They are old experiences in our life.

Proverbs and sayings attach weight to our life. These characteristics of proverbs and sayings are effective to the technique of expression.

Although most people would have little difficulty in quoting a proverb, the matter of precisely defining a proverb is much more problematic. The Oxford dictionary's offering of "a short pithy saying in general use" is neither sufficiently comprehensive nor accurate. Proverbs need not to be "in general use", and the "short pithy saying" is ill-defined to the point of being meaningless. Archie Taylor's 1931 definition of a proverb extended to over 200 pages, and concluded that it was impossible to give a meaningful definition. Proverbs have been collected from a very wide variety of cultures and, with a few possible but still disputed exceptions, no past or present culture is reported to have gone without them. It is quite possible, therefore, that proverbial advice has been with us (that is, with the human species) for much of the last two thousand or more generations of roughly thirty years each. Indeed, the capacity to coin, remember, and share proverbs, and thus efficiently transmit accumulated experience, may well have been one of the adaptive advantages that fully developed human language bestowed on its early users.

A proverb is a short, standard, spoken, written or stored statement, having an evident or implicit general meaning to the field of general human condition, attitude or actions, with implicit proper scope and limitation of validity. The reference to the general meaning idea may be direct or implicit. It has a currency. It is well-known often quoted in a period of time in certain small or large community, sometimes in a short form.

The learning of proverbs can be a key element in the language acquisition process. Reframes, phrases, idioms and proverbs can provide a snapshot of other cultures that allows for a more thorough understanding of both language and culture. Without grasping the meaning of these types of saying we are limited to a unilateral understanding, providing fertile ground toward the development of cultural and linguistic ethnocentrism. We can become enriched as individuals and societies when we understand the viewpoints of others. Both individuals and groups are able to benefit when each is vitally concerned with equanimity not only for themselves but also others. This forces us to broaden our frame of references, deepen our understanding and improve our individual effectiveness.

Everyone is able to achieve authenticity, obtain historical place and engage as a human subject and agent, cultural essence, world view and assumptions combine to form how each person evaluates his reality. The legacy connections have endured across time, space and place through the culture, language and values. Symbols, words, proverbs, poems, songs and stories that are told, heard, written and read conceptualize language.

The main feature distinguishing proverbs and sayings from ordinary utterances remains the semantic aspect. Then literary meaning is suppressed by what may be termed their transferred meaning. In other words, one meaning is

the form for another meaning which contains the idea. Proverbs and sayings, if used appropriately, will never lose their freshness and vigor.

Proverbs are difficult to define. Any definition should include the following recognized and necessary characteristics of proverbs. Proverbs appear in the form of short sentences, having a standard text, allowing sometimes some variants too, where the order of words maybe changed or some of words maybe replaced by others. Sometimes additions and omissions also appear. Being short, it excludes the possibility of including the scope and limitation of validity found in statements.

The most noticeable thing about the functioning of sayings, proverbs and catch-phrases is that they may be handled not in their fixed form but with modifications. These modifications, however, will never break away from the invariants to such a degree that the correlation between the invariant model of a word-combination and its variants ceases to be perceived by the reader. The predictability of a variant of a word-combination is lower in comparison with its invariant. Therefore the use of such a unit in a modified form will always arrest an attention in order to get at the idea.

Proverbs in common knowledge have no known author or literary source. Proper research can and does discover that a considerable part of the well known proverbs may be traced back. E.g. in Europe to Greco-roman classics...e.g. "one swallow does make a summer" to Aristotle. "Time is money" was coined by Benjamin Franklin in 1748.

While much has been written on what a proverb is, it is more important what a proverb does. A proverb is a short homely statement that teaches a lesson or gives practical advice. There is generally a matter of rhyme and a matter to consider and a binary structure that presents a problem in the first half and solves it in the second half. Usually proverbs contain humor, but that humor, particularly when the subject is women, can be bitter, satirical and even macabre.

Proverbs have a currency: they are known and often quoted in a small or large region in one or several linguistic communities or in a part of such community. They may be known in several languages and contexts. According to the size of the area where a proverb is known, we may distinguish universal, regional and local proverbs. Proverbs have a history, they come and go. Their existence is related to a certain period of time, starting with the first known use or recording.

In works of literature the use of proverbs varies in manner and degree from age to age. Erasmus speaks as a scholar and conscious literary artist when he calls proverbs "condimental" which must be used intelligently when one writes or speaks. Proverbs are used freely in writings which make an appeal to the folk and in those in which the folk is characterized: in those classes of literature which are far removed from the folk, proverbs rarely occur. We see these distinctions already in classical writers: Aristophanes, Theophrastus.

Lucian and Plautus use proverbs easily and naturally. Throughout in Middle Ages proverbs were frequently used in literature, and individual preferences manifested themselves then as now. A proverb is often a ready-made epigram, sums up the situation effectively, drives home the point, and appeals to the reader's or hearer's sense of humor.

Beliefs in fundamental differences in character and natural abilities between sexes occurred throughout time in many cultures. The subordination of women was felt to be a natural state. When challenged, the position was often strongly defended. Most of the proverbs illuminate the harshest attitudes about women, which might not have applied to women in every class, and which might simply have been ignored. They, nonetheless help to explain the limited contributions of women in some areas, and the types of attitudes women have had to overcome.

There are many proverbs that we use in daily life. We can divide proverbs into several groups.

1. Knowledge that we have from life:-

These proverbs have technique of expression to impress in peoples minds. It has comforting sounds and interesting figures of speech.

2. The description and figure of speech.

These proverbs have expressions to gather attention of people and novelty of contrast.

3. Lessons and admonition.

These proverbs are the most common ones which are often used as a motto, a slogan and so on, showing a nature of familiarity and compulsiveness.

4. Subjects on human nature and reason on life.

These proverbs have truth to convince people because it has made by wisdom of life custom from old people.

5. Proverbs from west.

The use of proverbs in some societies become the tool through which men control positions of social and economic influence by objectifying women and limiting their participations to domestic sphere. (Collins, 1996).

While we romanticize the colorful imagery of proverbs and their value-carrying rules, we usually ignore the prejudiced they are used to produce and reproduce.

All societies across the world are generally male dominated. Patriarchy is viewed as legitimate by men, because it keeps women in subordinate positions to the advantage of men who do not want to lose the privileged roles, and therefore, the power their gender as men gives them, including access to power and the scarce resources available to all.

Gender is defined as 'the relations between men and women, both perceptual and material. Gender is not determined biologically, as a result of

sexual characteristics of either women or men, but is constructed socially. It is a central organizing principle of societies, and often governs the processes of production and reproduction, consumption and distribution' (FAO, 1997).

Gender ideology is a systematic set of cultural beliefs through which society constructs and wields its gender relations and practices. Gender ideology contains legends, narratives and myths about what it means to be a man or a woman and suggests how each should behave in the society. Gender ideology is grounded largely in religious and social principles, which are then used as grounds to justify different rights, responsibilities and rewards to each gender.

Indeed, every society has a set of systems to censure and control the normative concepts of masculine and feminine behaviors. The gender ideology is a system of shaping different lives for men and women by placing them in different social position and patterns of expectations.

The oral traditions cultivate men's prerogatives to the allegiance and subservience of women, and legitimize men to exercise their power over women to sustain the latter's subordination and marginalization.

According to Oboler, men are believed to be more intelligent than women. Women are thought particularly to be incapable of foresight and ability to make and carry through sensible and realistic plans.

For this reason, it is generally agreed that husbands should administer the family estate and wives for the most part concur with husbands' plans. It is commonly claimed that if a women tried to manage property, she would very likely make a mess of it. (Oboler, 1985: 60, cited in Bulow, 1993: 539).

"Women know grinding, but not when to stop." (Appendix #16)

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 Canary & Cody (1994) called expressiveness. This proverb contrasts two immutable attributes of women: physical engagement and 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.

In society, men are considered the norm for the human species: their characteristics, thoughts, beliefs and actions are viewed as fully representing those of all humans, male and female. This practice can make women invisible in language or altogether exclude them. It can also lead to their portrayal as deviations from this "male = human" norm. Women's linguistic status is often dependent on or derives from that of men, which is represented as autonomous.

By relegating women to a dependent, subordinate position, sexist language prevents the portrayal of women and men as different but equal human beings.

Not only in English, but in many languages, women are the victims of evil-intentioned jokes or proverbs, such as this proverb: **"If you see an old man, sit down and take a lesson; if you see an old woman, throw a stone."**

Most ethnic groups believe that such a gender hierarchy is normal and that boys and girls should be raised differently because of their essential differences. Inequality begins at birth. For example, most groups regard a daughter's birth as a less significant and less happy event than that of a son. Whereas it was considered that a boy would contribute economically to the family and carry on the family name, girls would marry out; this not only meant the loss of the family name but also required dowry expenditures. Therefore, female children were seen as a liability and a drain on family resources rather than as valued individuals.

Human beings are by nature violent and are tamed by social factors. Where sex determined division of labor beyond biological functions, and sex determined virtues, rights and obligations are not consistent with mutual respect, understanding and cooperation; there is possibility of gender violence. It may find resistance or silently suffered.

So it is obvious that the concept of patriarchal society goes with male domination in letter and spirit, and female subordination in overt and covert forms. This concept and its practice have not only outlived their relevance, but have become convenient cover for unspeakable violence against women in tradition bound families.

Males are iron pole of a house, while females are the outside gate that belongs to others.

This proverb primarily states that femininity is associated with liminality (Legesse, 1973).

It is also one aspect of dichotomous thinking in which differences are set in oppositional terms (Collins, 1998). Thus, it embodies a society's belief that sons are more permanent members of the family, and are the ones who would ultimately inherit the heritage of their family, while females are destined to go out of the lineage through marriage.

It suggests a cultural belief where a newly born baby is considered the bearer of the family name in general, and the extension of the father's masculinity (Ufomata, 1998). Because of this, the proverb is used to indoctrinate boys into masculinity and girls into femininity so that each would adapt personality traits, behaviors, and preferences that are culturally considered appropriate to each sex (Westen, 1996). It implants the attitude that a baby son is the embodiment of the family line.

The regard of proverbs as an important aspect of the literary genre of the society is significant. It is to the extent that, proverbs permeate every aspect of the society. Proverbs are the foundation of social and cultural wisdom and therefore, serve as the basis for formulating concepts that govern social relations. These social relations include gender relations. But largely due to the patriarchal nature of the society, the subordination of women has been prominently expressed in proverbs, which has further exacerbated the disadvantaged conditions of women. Women are supposed to be less intelligent, bulky and their role in the society is secondary.

However, the negative attitude towards women coming from the concept of impure blood should be eradicated through education.

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“Գեներային գաղափարախոսությունը ասացվածքներում և ասույթներում” թեմայով ուսումնասիրության մեջ արծարծված են ոճագիտության որոշ խնդիրներ այն է, ասացվածքների և ասույթների էությունը, ֆունկցիան և կիրառումը: Ուսումնասիրությունում ներկայացված են ասացվածքների և ասույթների նշանակության հիմնահարցերը, հավաքագրման մանրամասները, դրանց խմբավորումը: Հղվածում խոսվում է սեռային խտրականության հատկանիշների գնահատման մասին և ասացվածքների և ասույթների միջոցով վեր է հանվում նրանց դերն ու տեղը հասարակության մեջ: