



# **Female Disempowerment: Some Expressions in Amharic**

**By**

**Aschalew Bililigne**

**Advisor**

**Baye Yimam (Prof.)**

**A Thesis Submitted to the Department of Linguistics in Partial  
Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts in Linguistics**

**November 2012**

**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

# **Female Disempowerment: Some Expressions in Amharic**

**Aschalew Biligne**

**A Thesis Submitted to the Department of Linguistics in Partial**

**Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of**

**Master of Arts in Linguistics**

**Addis Ababa University**

**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

**November 2012**

**Addis Ababa University**

**School of Graduate studies**

This is to certify that the thesis prepared by Aschalew Bililigne, entitled: *Female Disempowerment: Some Expressions in Amharic* and submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts (in Linguistics) complies with the regulation of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

Signed by the Examining Committee:

Examiner \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Examiner \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Advisor \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

---

Chair of Department of Graduate Program Coordinator

# **Female Disempowerment: Some Expressions in Amharic**

## **Abstract**

*By examining various language expressions about women one can see to some extent how women are perceived in a certain culture. This thesis is conducted in order to examine Amharic proverbs and literal expressions that refer to females. Although there are expressions that empower women, they are not the concern of this study. The data are collected through participant observation and introspection since the researcher is a native speaker of the language. Besides, different books have also been consulted as secondary sources of data. Since the Amhara society is patriarchal the expressions are analyzed based on the “dominance” theory which assumes that social norms are established dominantly by men and because of this the social and political systems see and treat women as not equal to men. The expressions which are analyzed under various themes illustrate that women are inferior, talkative, ill-natured, dependent, etc. In some contexts, women themselves accept the superiority of men. They are marginalized and systematically forced to be powerless. As a result, they have little political, social, economic, etc. participation in the society.*

**Key words:** gender, sex, dominance, gender-ideology, patriarchy, disempowerment, socialization, gender-segregation

## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to my only and beloved brother **Solomon Bililigne**. Eleven years have passed since I have lost you. I know that you are living in heaven, where everyone wishes to live.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to appreciatively acknowledge my thesis advisor, Prof. Baye Yimam for his valuable and helpful comments and suggestions in spite of his too many commitments. I have learnt a lot from him. I take full responsibility for any shortcomings.

I also want to acknowledge to Addis Ababa University for its financial support towards the completion of the research.

Here is my greatest love to my friends Ato Yirga Tegegn, Ato Dawit Hagos, Ato Abebe Masresha, Ato Workneh Tarekegn, and Ato Tesfaye Yimer who have lent me their hands from the beginning to the end. My classmates, especially Awoke Tsegaye, Alemayehu Atinafu, Mesfin Tamene, Samrawit Bekele, and Zinawork Assefa have also been very helpful. I love you all.

# Table of Contents

	<b>Page</b>
<b>Chapter one</b>	
Introduction .....	1
1.1. Background of the study .....	1
1.1.1 The language .....	1
1.1.2. The people .....	2
1.2. Statement of the problem .....	3
1.3. Objectives of the study .....	5
1.3.1. General objective .....	5
1.3.2. Specific objectives .....	5
1.4. Scope of the study .....	6
1.5. Significance of the study .....	6
1.6. Methods of data collection and data analysis .....	6
1.6.1. Methods of data collection .....	6
1.6.2. Methods of data analysis .....	7
<b>Chapter two</b>	
Conceptual framework and review of related literatures .....	8
2.1. Conceptual framework .....	8
2.1.1. Gender and sex .....	8

2.1.2. What is patriarchy? .....	10
2.1.3. Gender and language .....	11
2.1.4. Gender ideology .....	13
2.1.5. Socialization .....	15
2.1.6. Segregation of sexes.....	17
2.2. Theoretical framework .....	18
2.3. Review of related literature .....	20

### **Chapter three**

Data description and interpretation .....	26
3.1. Gender in Amharic .....	26
3.2. Female disempowerment in proverbs and literal expressions .....	28
3.2.1. Low status .....	29
3.2.2. Lack of intelligence.....	33
3.2.3. Preference to sons .....	36
3.2.4. Reliance of women on men.....	38
3.2.5. Segregation of sexes .....	41
3.2.6. Unfaithfulness and changeability .....	45
3.2.7. Being role model .....	47
3.2.8. Objectification of women .....	50
3.2.9. Hegemonic masculinity .....	54
3.2.10. Ill-Nature of women .....	58
3.2.11. Talkativeness and silence .....	60

## **Chapter four**

Conclusions and recommendations .....	63
4.1. Conclusions .....	63
4.2. Recommendations .....	66

References

Appendices

# Chapter One

## Introduction

### 1.1. Background of the study

#### 1.1.1. The language

Amharic (Amharic: አማርኛ *ʾamariñña*) is a Semitic language spoken in Ethiopia. It is one of the two main (in terms of number of speakers) languages of Ethiopia along with Afan Oromo. It is spoken principally in the central highlands of the country. It is the second most-spoken Semitic language in the world, after Arabic, and it is the working language of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. According to Appleyard (2003:231) it is the main lingua franca of Ethiopia. Thus, it has official status and is used nationwide. Amharic is also the official or working language of many of the regional states. As such, it serves as the language of primary and secondary levels of the education system. It has been the working language of the government, the military, and the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church throughout medieval and modern times.

The original home of Amharic is obviously to be found in the lands referred to by the name ‘Amhara’, a somewhat flexible term in its application at different periods, but the earliest occurrences of the name refers to the area of Abay between the ‘Bashilo’ and ‘Walaka’ rivers. Today, Amharic is the sole language in much of ‘Bagemider’ or ‘Gondar’, Western ‘Wollo’ and northern ‘Shewa’ and is the majority language in ‘Gojam’, (ibid, 233). It is the working language of the federal government of Ethiopia today. Amharic is spoken almost in every corner, outside the Amhara region.

Amharic is a language that uses a script which originated from the Ge'ez alphabet. It is one of the rare languages in Africa with its own writing system, a semi-syllabic system called 'fidel' "alphabet". It has 33 basic characters with each having seven forms where each represents a consonant-vowel combination and the alphabets are organized in groups on the basis of their formal similarities. Unlike Arabic, Hebrew or Syriac, the language is written from left to right.

Appleyard (2003:234) states that, modern Amharic shows some dialectal variations, though, perhaps, less than might be expected for a language with such a wide distribution. The dialect areas that are generally recognized geographically defined within the regions where Amharic either originated or has been spoken the longest: 'Shewa', 'Bagemider', Western 'Wollo' with 'Manz' and 'Gojam'. The dialect of Addis Ababa has become the prestige dialect forming a de facto standard. This is the form that is used in the media as well as in the areas of administration and education. Some dialect features do, however, appear in written literature. Besides According to Encyclopaedia Britannica (online version, 2012), the dialects of Amharic are not strongly differentiated from one another.

### **1.1.2. The people**

In the first three centuries A.D., Semitic-speaking people built a "South Arabian" (or "North Ethiopian") type of civilization in Eritrea, later centring about Aksum in Tigrai Province. As early as the middle of the fourth century, military expeditions may have reached the area later known as Amhara. By the mid-ninth century, a distinctive Amhara

region was recognized. Regional variations aside, the Amhara are mostly Ethiopian Orthodox Christians and they generally live in the highlands as plough agriculturalists.

The Amhara people live in households that function as a unit of political economy rather than a kinship unit. Its members, each carries out specific tasks assigned according to gender and other status markers, under the authority of a single male, (Levine 2003:231).

According to the census result of 2007 the Amhara people are 17, 214, 056. They constitute 22.3% of the total population of the country. Among this 8,636,875 or 50.2% of them are male and the rest 8,577, 181 or 49.8% of them are female, (FDREPC<sup>1</sup>, 2008:13).

## **1.2. Statement of the problem**

There are two types of gender in Amharic. These are feminine and masculine. There is no specific gender for inanimate objects. Inanimate objects can be described in either of the two genders. These gender-based descriptions of inanimate objects can confirm the socio-cultural belief of the speakers towards the two genders. For example, objects or concepts which are powerful or strong are masculine and those which are weak are feminine.

Examples:

1. In the concept of marriage

- (a) *ṛagəbbat* = ‘He married her.’; is acceptable and normal, but;

---

<sup>1</sup> FDREPC<sup>1</sup> = Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Population Census Commission

(b) *ʔagəbbaččiw* = ‘She married him.’; has pragmatically negative connotation in the eyes of men. It shows economic dependency of the man on the woman.

2. In naming the sun three expressions are commonly used

(a) When the sun rises in the morning;

*s’əhay - wa wət’t’əč*

sun - 3FS rise

‘The sun (she) rises.’

(b) At mid day, when the sun is hot

*s’əhay - u yak’k’at’t’ilal*

sun - 3MS burn

‘The sun (he) burns.’

(c) When the sun sets at dusk

*s’əhay - wa t’əllək’əč*

sun - 3FS set

‘The sun (she) sets.’

In the second example, when the sun rises and sets it is weak in power, so it is referred to in the feminine gender. But at mid day when it gets hotter and hotter and becomes very hot, it is mostly represented as masculine. These examples show that there is a problem of gender inequality that needs to be investigated through language expressions.

There are also lexical items that clarify the community’s perception of gender. In this case, the semantic system of the language plays a role. For example, according to Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003:60), the adjectives *pretty* and *handsome* are used to refer to a good looking female and male person respectively. The adjectives are gender specific. But the expression of “a pretty boy” is usually taken as a sarcastic disrespect. Besides, the restricted practice of some items with women and men also shows the society’s thinking about gender. For instance, women are almost responsible for only domestic

activities like cooking, looking after children, taking care of the house, etc whereas men engage in public activities and interactions.

The present research looks into speakers' gender-biased ideology as manifested in their proverbial and literal expressions. Literal expressions, here, refer to gender-biased expressions which lack poetic diction unlike proverbs. They are used in the form of prose in interactions of people than are proverbs. To achieve the objective of exploring expressions that disempower females as reflected in proverbs and literal expressions of Amharic, the researcher raises this question;

- How is gender-biased ideology of Amharic speakers reflected in proverbs and literal expressions?

### **1.3. Objectives of the study**

#### **1.3.1. General objective**

In general, the objective of the study is to examine how socio-cultural expressions of Amharic disempower female.

#### **1.3.2. Specific objectives**

The specific objectives of the study are:

- to examine how proverbs are used as expressions of female disempowerment.
- to describe how literal expressions of Amharic are used for showing gender-biased ideology of the society.

## **1.4. Scope of the study**

As mentioned in section 1.1.1, eventhough there are different dialects of Amharic, they do not show a big difference. As a result, the research focuses on most common proverbs and literal expressions which are used to disempower females in all dialects. Some of the data are collected in Dessie and Mersa; in which ‘Wolo’ dialect is used. However, the expressions can also be used in other places of the Amhara. The study will not cover expressions that empower women; such as using feminine forms to refer to a country such as Ethiopia as in:

- *ʔinnat*    *hagər*  
Mother country  
‘Mother land.’

## **1.5. Significance of the study**

This study is important in that it shows how females are underestimated and disempowered despite their role as mother and as a major component of the production force in society in general. Scholars and language planners should pay attention to change this. It also helps other researchers to conduct further research on the subject. As it is known, the issue of gender is culture-based; therefore this study may contribute to gender research in other societies of the country.

## **1.6. Methods of data collection and data analysis**

### **1.6.1. Methods of data collection**

The study is based on qualitative data. These data have been collected through document analysis from different Amharic literatures; such as, textbooks, dictionaries, poems, fictions and non fiction materials. From these sources various kinds of proverbs and

literal expressions have been extracted. Most proverbs are collected from Birhanu G/Tsadik's (1992), Kebede G/Medhin's (1994) and Emawayish Melese's and others (1982) books by using purposive sampling of data.

In addition, since the researcher is a native speaker of the language introspection and participant observations methods of data gathering have been used to collect a variety of expressions that disempower females.

### **1.6.2. Methods of data analysis**

According to Dawson (2009:115) for a research which is designed qualitatively, there are various methods of data analysis such as discourse analysis, content analysis, thematic analysis, and comparative analysis. In this research the collected data are analysed by their themes, and the researcher has tried to find out general ideas from specific facts therefore; thematic analysis is used. About thematic analysis, *ibid* (119-120) states that, "this [thematic] type of analysis is highly inductive, that is, the themes emerge from the data and are not imposed upon by the researcher. In this type of analysis, the data collection and analysis take place simultaneously. Even background reading can form part of the analysis process, especially if it can help to explain an emerging theme". Phonemic transcription is used to transcribe the data.

# Chapter Two

## Conceptual Framework and Review of Related Literatures

### 2.1. Conceptual framework

#### 2.1.1. Gender and sex

Scholars take gender and sex as two different terms. For instance, West and Zimmerman (1987), and Butler (1990), cited in Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003:10) state that “Gender is not something we are born with, and not something we *have*, but something we *do* – something we *perform*. In other words, gendered performances are available to everyone, but with them come constraints on who can perform which personae with impunity.” In relation to this, DeFrancisco (1997:38) also says; “gender is constructed in a complex array of social practices within communities, practices that in many cases connect to personal attributes and to power relations but that do so in varied, subtle, and changing ways.”

On the other hand, sex is something related to biology or anatomy that shows the distinction between female and male. It can be taken as socially constructed status, when the chromosomal, gonadal and hormonal sex work and build up under the influence of environments. However, sex is generally seen as a biological term that is primarily based on reproductive potential, Lorber and Farrell (1991a) in Wodak (1997:3).

Gender is a representation of characters at which male and female place themselves when they react to socio-cultural activities. In most communities’ social practice, there is a

difference between male and female. This distinction brings gender inequality. There are three primary levels at which gender operates:

- First, gender is produced at the individual level. This view includes sociological and psychological perspectives. In this perspective, gender is characteristic of people.
- Second, gender distinctions and inequalities are produced through social relations and interactions. In this view, gender is observed in relation to different social contexts. Because in a communities' social system there are activities which separately belong to males and females. For instance, cooking, and cleaning the house are left to women and ploughing to men among the Amhara people.
- Third, gender is produced through organizational arrangements and institutions. To understand gender from this perspective requires attention to social structure and the policies and practices that support it.

Gender difference is the cause of gender inequality. Because, different gender-based activities are associated with various levels of status. For instance, at the individual level, masculine characteristics are more valuable than feminine; as a result, public activities as in the second case above are considered more important than domestic activities. Because of this, there is status difference and hierarchy between women and men. Even resources cannot be provided equally; consequently, there is economic difference. This difference creates opportunities for more power by men than by women, (Wharton 2005:217-219).

Based on the above discussion, one can generalize that there is male domination in most social organizations. Because the more valuable and important characteristics and activities which belong to men, enable them to have a higher status in their community. And it is clear that the one who has a higher status has also a greater political influence or power over the other. This brings disempowerment of females, because the system grants power to male. This restriction can also be the cause to construct patriarchal social organizations where male exercise more power than women.

### **2.1.2. What is patriarchy?**

Patriarchy is a system in which male dominance is existed. According to Lee (2006:216) patriarchy is defined as follows:

It is a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress, and exploit women . . . [it] means the manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over women in society in general. It implies that men hold power in all the important institutions of society . . . [it] is a set of social relations between men, which have a material base, and which, through hierarchal, establish or create interdependence and solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women. The material base upon which patriarchy rests lies most fundamentally in men's control over women's labour power.

In line with Walby (1990:2) analysing patriarchy is very essential to understand the interconnectedness of various features of women's subordination. It is also useful to know different forms of gender inequalities over time, class and ethnic group.

Patriarchal social structural system has its own impact on members of a community. The following concepts are raised as prominent results of having a patriarchal social system, Werlhof (2007:2):

1. It creates dominance of men over women, because women were at the centre of pre-patriarchal society and were responsible for the maintenance of its unrestricted principles.
2. Patriarchy invents a society split into social classes, “races,” generations, and “sexes.”
3. It invents a psychology that defines the ways men could develop their “masculation”, and their competitive, ego-logical patriarchal individuality, opposing community, women, and nature.
4. It provides opportunities to men to have strong economic power.

In general, patriarchy is a system in which men dominate, subjugate and exploit women. Therefore, a patriarchal social structural system should also be studied in order to understand how gender inequality, female disempowerment, male dominance and other social relations are viewed.

### **2.1.3. Gender and language**

The study of language in terms of gender differences relates to the interdisciplinary field of language and society. Various disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, education, psychology, linguistics, literature, etc. are involved in one way or another.

Language is the main tool for constructing, socializing and manifesting human culture. It allows speakers to show who they are. It is also very important to shape the belief, thought, and attitude of a society towards gender. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003:55) state that:

At any historical moment, both the gender order and linguistic conventions exercise a profound constraint on our thoughts and actions, predisposing us to follow patterns set down over generations and throughout our own development. Change comes with the interruption of such patterns, and while sometimes that interruption may be sudden, it comes more commonly through infinitesimally small events that may or may not be intentional.

Therefore, language plays a great role in any activity in society. It is prominent in controlling human general thoughts. Human behavior can be shaped through language. Minimizing or avoiding gender asymmetries, which are shown in language, can be very important to bring gender equality.

As many scholars agree, sex and speech have relationships. This is to mean that there is speech difference between sexes. In different social systems, there are languages which are restricted to men and women. For instance, among the Amhara, using terms of the reproductive organs in public is impolite for women, but not for men. These kinds of differences develop because of the ideology and attitude of the society towards gender. Throne and Henley (1975:14) say that three major points should be considered for sexual differentiation of language. These are:

- a) Social elaboration of gender,
- b) The structure of male dominance, and
- c) Division of labor by sex.

In general, speech differences can be taken as results of male domination. Besides, the society plays its own role in accepting and practicing these kinds of speech differences.

#### **2.1.4. Gender ideology**

People's attitude towards some kind of social activity or member of their community is governed by the ideology they have. Ideology is also a key to guide and assess the behaviour of others. Even people set norms that govern participations according to gender and justify their participation. "Ideology is the system of beliefs by which people explain, account for, and justify their behavior, and interpret and assess that of others. Gender ideology is the set of beliefs that govern people's participation in the gender order, and by which they explain and justify that participation", (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2003:35).

Language is a key instrument for the construction of gender ideologies. It is through language that the culture, attitude, and ideology of a community are reflected. In relation to this, Foley (1997) cited in Roza (2009:16) states, "The ideology of gender categories is typically enacted in linguistic practices; indeed, it is through language that the individual cultural understandings of gender categories are learned and the coordination of gender roles achieved." For example, in most societies having a baby boy is more preferable than having a baby girl. In the culture of Amhara, people use the following expressions to wish the best for a newly married couple:

- wənd liḡ kənnə k'ač'ilu yist'aččihu  
Male child with bell give you  
'May (God) give you a baby boy with a bell.'

There are expressions which restrict women activities at home and create role differences in a community. The following proverb is an example of this:

- set      bəmağətu   wənd   bəçilətu  
Female in kitchen   male   in court  
'A woman is to the kitchen as a man is to a court.'

Such kinds of expressions provide opportunities to people to develop gender-biased ideology. In most societies, masculinity is developed through language socialization. It is imposed on the members of a community via different social activities in various contexts by parents, teachers, peers, and cultural transmitters, etc. In general, a community decides what kind of role and responsibility women and men should have. Regarding this, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003:35) state that "Members of any western industrial society are likely to be able to produce the following set of oppositions: men are strong, women are weak; men are brave, women are timid; men are aggressive, women are passive; men are sex-driven, women are relationship-driven; men are impassive, women are emotional; men are rational, women are irrational; men are direct, women are indirect; men are competitive, women are cooperative; men are practical, women are nurturing; men are rough, women are gentle." In addition, Levant (2002:722) identifies traditional masculinity ideology in terms of the following four dimensions: men should not be feminine; men should never show weakness; men should strive to be respected for successful achievement; and men should seek adventure and risk, even accepting violence if necessary.

Generally, all these kinds of activities bring differentiation between women and men. This creates gender ideology which determines gender role. Such activities, that bring

gender dichotomy, are not only practiced but also linguistically manifested in various forms of expressions among which are proverbs.

### **2.1.5. Socialization**

Socialization is a process at which members of a society learn the culture of their community. In this process, individuals can learn the society's languages, formal and informal rules of behavior, and sets of knowledge through interactions. Socialization plays a great role in developing gender ideology. In relation to this, Pilcher and Whelehan (2004:160) say:

The concept of socialization features in explanations of gender difference, where emphasis is given to the process of how individuals learn to become masculine or feminine in their identities, appearance, values and behavior. The primary stage of socialization occurs during infancy and childhood, via interaction between adults (especially parents) and children. Socialization is, though, a life-long process. As individuals grow up and older, they continually encounter new situations and experiences and so learn new aspects of femininity or masculinity throughout their lives.

In a given society, children learn how to be a man and a woman through the means of interactions with members of the community. Interaction plays a role in socializing children. Most of the time, our cultural elements, such as norms, values, and the material elements such as clothes and playing materials, are strongly gender typed and gender-segregated. For instance, in the Amhara society, parents may appreciate their son to play football, climb tree, look after cattle, plough, etc. and their daughter to learn how to cook food, clean house, wash clothes, look after little sisters or brothers, etc.. In this case, the parents are socializing the son to the public and restricted the daughter to domestic activities. As a result; children themselves begin to acquire their gender identity and

internalize appropriate behavioral norms and characteristics and thereby unconsciously regulate their own behavior, in line with the masculine or feminine roles into which they are socialized.

Sheldon (1993:99), states that “Language is a part of culture and an instrument for transmitting and perpetuating implicit, historically situated, and culture-bound principles of social order and systems of belief that define and assign unequal social value to femininity and masculinity.” In line with Schieffelin and Ochs (1986) cited in Sheldon (1993:99), the process through which children and other community members learn to use language in ways that fit a culture's norms of appropriate feminine and masculine behavior is called *language socialization*. Cazden (2001:87) relates language to socialization to the following three ways:

- a) First, language is the primary medium for socialization into culture; that is, there is socialization by or through language, where language is the means.
- b) Second, there is socialization for language, where situation-specific and culture-specific language use is the outcome.
- c) Third, there is socialization about language in the form of knowledge about, and attitudes towards, language forms and functions.

Interaction with adults of a community is the major means at which children are “socialized through language and socialized to use language” according to the gender ideology of a community. For instance, in Amharic there are “male focused” expressions which are used to appreciate both sexes discussed in chapter three.

### **2.1.6. Segregation of sexes**

Wharton (2005:167) defines sex segregation as “the concentration of women and men into different jobs, occupations, and firms”. In other words, gender segregation takes place when women and men are placed separately from one another, as if not participating in a broadly similar set of activities. In most society’s cultures, the work of husband and wife is different: for instance, women perform most of the domestic tasks, including child care, cleaning, and cooking, and men specialize in work requiring strength, such as handling heavy and hard materials.

Various causes can be raised in relation to gender segregation of labor. Jencks (1992) cited in Wharton (2005:174) raised five types of sex discrimination by employers. These are myopic, principled, statistical, consumer-driven, and worker-driven. According to Jencks’s discussion, the first two usually do not have economic importance; however, the latter three may have economic benefits for employers. Myopic and principled type of discrimination show either employers’ short-sightedness (i.e., myopia) or their belief in the superiority of either sex. The last three are not as easy as the first two to eliminate, because they provide economic benefits for employers. The following idea is also by Hartmann (1982) cited in Pilcher and Whelehan (2004:65):

Job segregation invariably means that it is men who hold the jobs with greater material rewards, not least relatively high wages, compared to women. The lower wages earned by women in their jobs keep women dependent on men because they encourage women to marry. Married women must perform domestic chores for their husbands . . . This domestic division of labor, in turn, acts to weaken women’s position in the labor market. Thus, the hierarchical domestic division of labor is perpetuated by the labor market and vice versa.

On the other hand, Hakim (1979), cited in Pilcher and Whelehan (2004:65), identifies two dimensions of occupational segregation: horizontal and vertical. In horizontal segregation, women and men are found in different types of occupations. Concentration or “crowding” of women and men in different occupations is seen in this type of job segregation. For instance, there may be lots of women secretary than men. In vertical segregation, women and men hold different positions in occupational hierarchies, with men tending to be at the higher and women at the lower levels. Here, higher positions are taken by men. For example, more men can be found in political leadership than women.

In general, gender segregation can be a means of gender inequality. According to World Bank (2007) cited in Deegan (2009:106) gender inequality can surface in three domains: in the household, in the economy and markets, and in society. The connection between these three is seen as follows:

- Gender inequalities influence the distribution of household tasks, limiting women’s ability to work outside the home, as well as women’s control over fertility decisions.
- In the market, gender inequality is reflected in unequal access to land, credit, and labour markets, and in less access to new production technologies.
- In society, gender inequality is expressed as restrictions to women’s participation in civic and political life.

## **2.2. Theoretical framework**

Researchers on language and gender often use two types of theoretical frameworks; namely the theory of difference and the theory of dominance. The *dominance theory* of

language and gender, presented first by Barrie Thorne and Nancy Henley (1975), focused on issues of patriarchy - that is, male power and dominance. In the perspective of this theory, the social and political systems see and treat women as not equal to men; because the social norms are established dominantly by men. As a result, there is division of labour. Together with this division of labour, there is also division of language practices, because language is created via day to day interactions within a society. As a result, powerful languages belong to men and others to women, Freed (2003:701). According to DeFrancisco (1997:40) this theory allows to study gender-based communication problems relying on the positions of women and men in society. Generally, the dominance theory argues that women's language is different from that of men because women do not have access to exploit themselves in powerful norms at which powerful language is created and developed.

The other theory, which is the *difference theory*, argues that communication style differences of women and men are the result of differences in sociolinguistics and cultures. Scholars who are in favour of this theory believed that the negative comparison of women and men language can be avoided, if there is a focus on language differences rather than power difference. However, other scholars argue against this; language difference cannot be created in a vacuum. They believed there to be power arrangements of women and men in the social system that leads to language differences, Freed (2003:701). Generally, this theory states that the language difference of women and men is a result of sociolinguistic and cultural difference in which female and male are exploited.

The difference between these theories is mainly on whether women are overcome and controlled by men or not. The dominance theory focuses on power, male dominance and patriarchy social structural system. On the other hand, the difference theory implies that women and men belong to different sub-cultures. In general, Coates (1993:11-13) states the following about the difference between the two theories:

The dominance approach—sees women as an oppressed group and interprets linguistic differences in women’s and men’s speech in terms of men’s dominance and women’s subordination . . . the difference approach— emphasises the idea that women and men belong to different subcultures. Ultimately, in linguistic terms, the differences in women’s and men’s speech are interpreted as reflecting and maintaining gender-specific subcultures.

By taking the theoretical framework above into account, the researcher uses the dominance theory to investigate the society’s attitudes; which are manifested in their use of proverbs and literal expressions of day-to-day interactions. As it is mentioned above, in the dominance theory the concept of power is very important. The Amhara people have a social system that provides more power to men than to women. The sociological practices are linked to power differentials which create status difference between female and male. Besides, since the Amhara people are patriarchal or live in a male dominated social system, the researcher believes that the dominance theory is more applicable than the difference theory.

### **2.3. Review of related literature**

Different scholars have done various researches and have published books in relation to gender and language. For example, Lakoff’s (1975) *Language and Woman’s Place*

identifies and explores a phenomenon called “women’s language”; language which is restricted to women and language which describes women alone. She explains that women are linguistically discriminated by the way they are taught to use language and the way general language use of a society treats them. When women are systematically taught to speak with specific language features, and those language features are associated with lack of power. So there is a relationship between women and the language describes. She said that both ways force women to have lower status in a society, submerge their personal identity, and treat them as objects. As a result, there is a systematic denial of access to power. She identifies several language features unique to the speech of women as opposed to that of men. Expanding on this, it becomes possible to imagine these features as useable by any speaker to signify an “out of power” identity position. The women language she identifies, then, is a set of linguistic features that have in common not gender, but rather a specific relationship to an ideological, gendered power structure. According to her, gender inequality is explained in terms of the following manifestations:

- a) Ordering the masculine form before the feminine; for example ‘husband and wife’ rather than ‘wife and husband.’
- b) Euphemism such as using the term ‘lady’ instead of ‘women.’
- c) Semantic derogation for instance, ‘mistress’ which is no longer the exact equivalent of ‘master.’
- d) Lexical and paradigmatic asymmetries for example, the title of address ‘Miss’ which reflects differentiation on the basis of marital status has no masculine counterpart in English.

Roza Tadesse (2009) and Amanuel Raga (2007) have done their theses on *Gender Biased Ideology of Tigrinya Speakers as Reflected in the Grammar of Tigrinya* and *Gender Biased Ideology as Manifested in the Grammar of Afan Oromo* respectively. Amanuel Raga's research is conducted from the dominance theory point of view. The study explains how the grammar of the western dialect of Afan Oromo reflects the gender-biased ideology of speakers. He has found out that gender biased ideology is manifested in the grammar of Afan Oromo. Roza also uses the dominance theory to conduct her research on Tigrinya. Her research examines how the socio-cultural gender-biased ideology of the speakers is reflected in the grammar of Tigrinya. She focuses on the Adwa dialect. She has identified the following features of the language in relation to gender:

- Things which are big, strong, and powerful have positive social values and categorized as masculine. On the contrary, things which are small and weak have negative social values and categorized as feminine.
- Feminine morphemes are added for the purpose of demeaning while masculine morphemes are used for augmenting.
- Masculine forms of terms are used as the standard or general forms.
- Nouns referring to administrative and professional titles reflect the dominance of men in the society.
- Figurative uses of masculine nouns are used to refer to concepts which have higher and positive values; such as, bravery, boldness, etc. On the contrary,

feminine nouns figurative use refers to concepts that have lower and negative values.

- Some lexical items which refer to marriage and husband-wife relationship can only collocate with only one of the grammatical genders.
- Personal names demonstrate that the society place men on higher social status whereas women on relatively lower social status.

In general, she concluded that the grammar of Tigrinya reflects the socio-cultural gender-biased ideology of speakers. Especially Roza suggested that, other aspects of the language (Tigrinya) such as discourse, proverbs and other expressions are important reflection of gender biased ideology of a society.

Bowker (2001) has also done a research entitled *Terminology and Gender Sensitivity: A corpus Based Study of the LSP of Infertility*. The aim of the study is to investigate the construction of gender in particular LSP (Language for Special Purpose), specifically in relation to infertility. Because LGP (Language for General Purpose) is not the only means through which gender identity is constructed. As Bowker explains, language is a means of reflecting thoughts, attitudes and culture of its users. So, people explain their bias or view of reality through the use of language. A corpus-based approach is used to analyse data from two main texts which are semi specialised (aimed at interested and educated laypersons) and highly specialised texts (aimed at medical experts). The research focuses on analysing terminologies under four main headings in which gender is

constructed. These are; term choice, use of scientific vs. lay terminology, LGP influence and semantic prosody, and perspective and focus.

For Bowker term choice is very important to reflect the attitude of language users. Speakers may prefer one term to another to describe similar phenomenon. For example, the term '*autoimmunity*' is used to describe men's infertility which is caused by antibodies produced by men's immune system. The same condition for women is described by using the term '*hostility*'. When the two terms are compared, the word hostility, which is used for women, has negative connotation. In relation to the use of scientific vs. lay terminology, for instance, the idea of not being able to produce sperm and unable to menstruate are raised. Both have the scientific name of '*azoospermia*' and '*amenorrhoea*' respectively. The men condition is addressed by its scientific name in both types of texts, however, the women condition is described using terms such as '*failure of ovulation*' or '*abnormal menstrual cycle*' in the semi-specialized texts.

Generally, the terms which are used for men address the condition in a more correct and 'acceptable' way than those of women. It is too difficult to say that there are linguistic reasons for choosing terms; rather it seems that it is bias against women. So, gender constructions in these types of contexts represent men in a positive light and women in a negative one.

In addition to these works, Zelalem (2010) has also conducted a research on *Asymmetrical Representation of Gender in Amharic*; he has shown gender asymmetry in

corpus linguistics, in common nouns, in different semantic fields, in personal names, and in titles and others; but not in proverbs.

Besides, Birhanu G/Tsadik (1992), Kebede G/Medhin (1994) and Emawayish Melese and others (1982) have also published books. These books contain collection of proverbial expressions of various themes; other than gender issue, without any analysis. They only provide the raw data. Therefore, the books are used as sources of data for this research. Tadesse Eshete (1972) has also conducted a research on gender issue, but it is not accessible in the university libraries. My research is different because it adds literal expressions in addition to the proverbs and gives detailed theory based analysis.

# Chapter Three

## Data Description and Interpretation

The data which are collected to show the gender-biased ideology of the Amhara society are presented and discussed in this chapter. The chapter starts with a discussion of grammatical gender in Amharic. This is followed by a presentation of proverbial and literal expressions that disempower females. The data are then analysed under different themes such as; status, intelligence, preference to sons, dependency, segregation of the sexes, hegemonic masculinity, etc. Both proverbial and literal expressions are considered under each category of themes.

### 3.1. Gender in Amharic

Amharic is a language which has grammatical gender of feminine and masculine and natural gender of male and female of animate beings. Inanimate objects can take either of the genders based on the speaker's attitude and size of an object. The attitude is based on gender-biased ideology which emulates males. Objects are feminine if small and masculine if they are big or large in size. Consider the following examples:

- (a) *ʔine yičč'in sini ʔalwəddatimm tinniš nat bətillik'u sini sit'əññ*  
I this cup not like small be-it with big one cup give me  
'I don't like this (she) cup. It is small. Give me with the larger (he) cup.'
- (b) *ʔiss<sup>w</sup>an k'urrač' ʔinč'ət sit'əññ*  
This one piece stick give me  
'Give me that piece of (she) stick.'
- (c) *ʔisun wəfram ʔinč'ət sit'əññ*  
This one thick stick give me  
'Give me that (he) thick stick.'

In the above examples, the smaller cup in (a) and the piece of wood in (b) are represented as feminine, and the larger cup (a) and the thick wood in (c) as masculine gender. In this case, the speaker’s gender-biased attitude is reflected according to the size of an object. In relation to this, Roza (2009:39) said, “categorization of nouns under feminine and masculine grammatical genders depending on the size of the referents is a direct reflection of the social status of female and male in the speech community. This in turn creates the psychological association of smallness to femininity and bigness to masculinity.”

According to Baye (2000:132), Amharic has the following grammatical gender classification. In the classification, unlike other languages, there are pronouns that enable us to address elderly people with respect.

Person		Singular	Plural	Respect
1 <sup>st</sup> Person		ʔine	ʔiñña	-
2 <sup>nd</sup> person	Masculine	ʔant-ə	ʔinnə-antə	ʔant-u
	Feminine	ʔant-i [ʔanči]		
3 <sup>rd</sup> person	Masculine	ʔiss-u	ʔinnə-iss-u	ʔirso/ʔiss-u-ə [ʔissiwo]
	Feminine	ʔiss-u-a		

Table 1. Grammatical gender in Amharic

As can be seen in the above table, Amharic has distinct forms for both genders in 2SG and 3SG. The base form of the 2SG is *ʔant-* and the gender markers are *-ə* for 2MS and *-i* (Imperative form) for 2FS. “*ʔant-i*” is pronounced as “*ʔanč-i*” after going through the palatalization process of: *t > č / -i*. Similarly, the 3FS “*ʔiss-u-a*” is read as “*ʔiss-wa*” in possessive construction as in “*t’at-wa*” ‘her finger’ and *-u* is also used as a possessive marker for 3MS as in “*t’at-u*” ‘his finger’. When we see the pronouns, the masculine pronouns are used as base to form feminine gender. For instance, the base for 2FS is 2MS. Besides, as Zelalem (2010:75-76) says “the 2nd and 3rd person plural forms are derivatives of the 2MS and 3MS, respectively. In other words, in the plural pronouns, the masculine forms appear to be the bases. There are neither neuter plural forms nor plural forms which show the 2FS and 3FS as bases ..... Even if a speaker refers to a group of female persons in the 2PL or 3PL, the pronouns are always *ʔinnə-antə* or *ʔinnə-iss-u*, derivative of the 2MS and [3MS] together with the plural marker *ʔinnə*. In this regard, it is axiomatic that plural pronouns are masculine marked as clearly seen in the structure and hence should refer to male references. However, these pronouns are pragmatically perceived as gender neuter and are used for both genders”.

### **3.2. Female disempowerment in proverbs and literal expressions**

Disempowerment is a means of creating gender inequality between the sexes. It is a means of dominance and oppression over women. In the linguistic community, inequality and dominance is expressed through preference to certain terms in the language. These include proverbs, idioms, and literal expressions that reflect the dominant attitude of the society towards females. It is common to see females as subjects

of Amharic proverbial and literal expressions, used by both men and women in their interactions.

For the sake of avoiding unnecessary repetitions, proverbial and literal expressions are treated together. Expressions which have related meanings are treated together. In addition, only some of the data are selected for analysis and interpretation, the rest are found in appendix. The data are analysed under various themes as stated before.

### **3.2.1. Low status**

The data analysed under this theme are expressions that show women's biological, social, physical, economic status and psychological state of being low or inferior. The women are undermined and become subject to discrimination and dominance. A discriminated member of a society is assumed to be low in status and also worthless. Women constitute a major part of the Amhara society but they are made subordinate to men. The society is structured in patriarchal terms where the father's line is given high status. As a result, women are found in a lower status. The word "*set*" 'female or woman' by itself has a negative connotation when used in reference to a 'boy'. People use the compound form "*set-a-set*" to insult boys who behave cowardly, who are talkative, and weak.

The word 'status' has to be made clear at the outset. According to Margolis (2003:137) social scientists or anthropologists do not agree on what 'status' means in relation to the two sexes (Female and male). They do not also agree on the absolute or relative means of measuring 'equal status' between females and males. Some scholars relate status to power and authority. They argue that the relative power and authority of men and

women is the key to determining status. The decision making role of both sexes is also considered as an important factor. Others say status refers to how a particular society values the qualities that are defined as masculine and feminine. Others create a link between works; which are performed by women and men, and the society's feedback towards those works. Status can also be directly related to the idea of segregation by sex. Others try to see the concept of status in relation to having equal rights in the lives of women and men. Still others believe that the regulation of sexual access to females is the key to their status. In this regard, equal status is seen in relation to the equal practice of divorce and sexual freedom by both sexes.

Expressions grouped under the theme of low status articulate women's incapacity to assume important roles in society and, by implication, their social/emotional dependence on male supremacy. The word female is seen as having a less valuable. For instance, in expressions "sete k<sup>w</sup>ank<sup>w</sup>a" 'Feminine language' and "sete məret" 'Feminine land' are used to refer to language which is easy to learn and land which is easy to plough. These kinds of expressions which refer to simplicity are associated with females. There are also proverbs that refer to their low position:

1. (a) *set ʔinna fərəs ʔində kure wiha ʔiyyadər manəs*  
 Woman and horse like stagnant water time goes low  
 'Woman and horse become lower and lower like pond as time goes on.'
- (b) *set ʔinna fərəs yəsət't'utn yik'əms*  
 Woman and horse given to eat  
 'Woman and horse eat what they are given to eat.'
- (c) *ləset liğ ʔiskə ʔarba k'an mot<sup>w</sup>an kəzziya wədiya hab<sup>w</sup>an*  
 For female child until forty day her death from that onwards her wealth  
 'For a woman for forty days wish her death, after that wish her wealth.'
- (d) *kəset məmkər dəggiso məsikər*  
 With woman advice party drunk  
 'Seeking advice from a woman is like being drunk with one's own party.'

(e) *set bəzza gommən t'anəzza*

Woman many cabbage raw

'Too many women spoil the broth.'

(f) *yəkahin ʔaynaffar yəʔahiyya ʔiwwur yaset daffar ʔayirəbam*

Of priest shy of donkey blind of woman fearless useless

'A priest who is shy, a donkey which is blind, a woman who is fearless are the same: all are useless.'

There are proverbs that show the societies' view towards women in relation to their position of inferiority. This position is compared with that of animals for instance, with horse in (1a) and (1b), with donkey in (1f), or with things like stagnant water and plants.

Besides, eventhough it is generally believed that peoples' mind change or develop through time, the above expressions go against this when it comes to women. The data show that women get lower and lower as time goes on. This means that women should get men support to be effective or successful in any activity of society. Even they are not welcomed to ask what they want, they are forced to accept whatever is provided for them by men.

Some proverbs show that, even things or ideas which are considered positive for men are performed by women, they become taboo, not acceptable by the society. For instance, in the data (1f) 'being fearless' is interpreted as becoming useless for women who, for this reason, are compared to a blind donkey. They are also compared with men if they do something unexpected of them. For instance, if a woman is bold or courageous, the society finds it hard to accept her boldness since they say "*bəzzih ǧəgininnət<sup>w</sup>a lay wənd bittihon*" 'If she were a man with all this courage'. Nowadays, they appreciated this with the word "*wənd-ata*" 'courageous' or "*wənd nəš*" 'you are male'.

The proverb in (1c) shows that a woman is assumed to be valueless and, therefore, it is good to wish her death before she becomes forty days old, because since the family spends little time with a baby girl, it is not that much saddening if she dies as early as this. However, this idea/expression doesn't work if the newly born baby is a boy. In case the girl passes this age, her relatives wish her to have wealth, to have a husband. In this expression getting married is taken as the only option a woman has in her life. Pragmatically, it expresses the society's belief that a woman does not live independent of a man which appreciates the patriarchy system where there is male supremacy.

The expression (1d) warns people against listening to women's advice. A woman's advice is presented as damaging or injurious; it is a means of confusion and disaster. In other words, it declares that, effectiveness can never be achieved by consulting a woman. Therefore, listening to a woman's advice is like being drunk with one's own party or being foolish or thoughtless.

Women are also viewed biologically inferior because they sit they urinate and this is cited as an expression of cowardice by men. One can say "*ʔantə kəməttahaññ ʔində set k'uč'č' biye šəniččalləhu malət nəw*" 'I urinate sitting like woman, should you dare hit me'. Here the biological thing (the nature of women) is used to express weakness.

Similarly, one can say "*ʔində set k'əmis ləbiššalləhu*" 'I put on a dress, like woman' to mean I am weak like a woman. Surprisingly, such expressions can also be used by women themselves. It is familiar to hear women saying "*ʔine ʔissun kalisərrahullət set nəññ*" 'If I didn't win or take a revenge on him, I am woman'. In such context, they use

their gender as a symbol of weakness. It is just like saying that, being a woman is similar to being unable to protect or defend oneself.

### 3.2.2. Lack of intelligence

In a number of cultures, women are thought of having little intellectual and artistic qualities. All the proverbs grouped under this theme view women as lacking objectivity in how they think and what they do. The expressions here reflect the society's attitude towards females as having little or no intelligence. Here are some expressions:

2. (a) *set ġib tifəralləčč ʔat'ir tafərsalləčč*

Woman hyena she fear fence pull down

'A woman fears hyena but pull down fence.'

(b) *ləset mikir ʔaygəbatim*

For woman advice not understand

'For a woman, advice is not necessary.'

(c) *minm set bittawik' bəwənd yalk'*

Whatever woman know by man conclude

'Whatever is known by a woman, a man concludes.'

(d) *bilih setinna k'ənd yallat ʔahiyya ʔayiggəññimm*

Wise woman and horn has donkey not found

'There is no wise woman and hyena with horns.'

(e) *set wifrət ʔiŋġi tillik'innət yəllatimm*

Woman fatness except bigness not have

'Woman may be fat but not big.'

(f) *bal<sup>w</sup>an goddahu bila billit<sup>w</sup>an bəgaret'a*

Her husband hurt think her vagina with splinter

'Thinking that it would hurt her husband, a woman pierces her vagina with a splinter.'

(g) *ʔawək'š ʔawək'š bil<sup>w</sup>at məs'ihaf ʔat't'əbəčč*

You know you know said book wash

'A woman told that she is wise, washes her husband's book.'

(h) *set min tawk'alləčč ʔawək'i tiwəliddalləčč ʔinği*

Woman know nothing intelligent give birth only

'A woman is not intelligent, but she gives birth to intelligent ones.'

(i) *ʔinnat yələtun ʔabbat yamətun*

Mother of day father of year

'A mother plans for the day; a father plans for the year.'

Proverb (2d) denies the existence of wise women which is compared to finding a hyena having horns. Proverb (2e) is also similar in that the society views women in general as inherently weak, lacking wisdom, confidence, self assurance, and good character. In addition to denying their intelligence, proverb (2h) restricts women to only giving birth to babies that could grow wise.

Eventhough women could create or bring spectacular ideas, the people around them do not accept their thoughts because they are from females. Not only in the case of bringing ideas but also in making decisions; if women decide on something without consulting men, their decision is taken as wrong and even evil. Whatever idea a woman raises, it cannot be practical without the support of men. For instance, the expression in (2c) states this. A woman might be knowledgeable enough but she cannot put it into practice; it gets into effect by or with the help of a man. This hinders women from getting the opportunity of practicing decision making in society. As a result, they cannot get to higher positions in their life.

In relation to this idea, Rosener (1990) cited in Kauppinen and Aaltio (2003:98) says, female and male leaders differ in accordance with gender stereotypes. In societies with gender-biased ideology, language is a means of suppression of women. In such societies there is a small number of women in power position. As it is discussed in the preceding chapters, patriarchy is a system where men dominate women. The Amhara society is patriarchal and is a perfect example of male supremacy.

According to some proverbs women are not intelligent enough even to identify what is good and bad for them. For example, in proverb (2f) a woman hurts herself thinking that would hurt her husband. Some expressions suggest that women cannot learn. Through such expressions, the community reflects its belief that it is all futile to try to teach women. Proverb (2b) is just about this, that a woman considered knowledgeable ends up washing books. Such expressions lead parents to teach their sons and not their daughters.

Some expressions illustrate that women are unreasonable and lack the ability to look at or plan for a long period of time. For example, the proverb (2i) states that, mothers cannot even think about tomorrow. On the contrary, fathers dream about longer periods of time. Here, mothers are believed to be short-sighted of the future. The data in (2a) also strengthens the view that women are illogical in their thinking, one does not pull down the hedge to avoid a hyena, for the hedge is a means of protection.

In general, as stated by Schipper (2006:41) “Men’s heads are associated with brains, intelligence, wisdom and talents, while women in general, and wives in particular, are mainly associated with feelings, emotions, lack of logic and irrationality.” This means that women’s contribution to development is null or at best minimal. They are taken as

the supporter of men. Women participation in a society is very important not only because there should be equality between the sexes, but also because women can contribute to life in a way that men cannot, Alvesson and Billing (1997) cited in Kauppinen and Aaltio (2003:98). They also raised the following four reasons to argue for women equality in society. These are:

- a) There should be equal opportunities for both sexes;
- b) Women's competencies should be fully utilized;
- c) Women's contribution as leaders should be taken into account, especially their values, experiences, and behaviour;
- d) Women's alternative values enrich an organization and work life in general.

Therefore, gender equality should be guaranteed in society. Development that stigmatizes women or their contribution is temporary. And society should recognize that there is a lot women can contribute to the development of society.

### **3.2.3. Preference to sons**

In Amharic, numerous proverbs express that giving birth to girls is less appreciated than giving birth to boys. In other words, there is strong preference to boys than to girls in the Amhara society. This is reflected in the type of practices at the time of birth. For instance, the number of ululation when a baby boy is born is more than when a baby girl is born. The preference for boys is almost common across communities. This puts girls at an inferior position right from the very beginning by asserting that males are preferred to females.

Parents prefer to have a baby boy for different reasons. The major reason is economic – in the Amhara society taking care of parents during old age is the responsibility of men more than women. Men are the major sources of income and parents tend to leave their property to their sons. The second reason is that lineage is recorded through males as the society is patriarchal. Concerning this Schipper (2006:90) explains that, “In a majority of cultures a daughter who marries is destined to leave the family. Her commitment and her children are then considered to be economically ‘lost’ to her own family, as she will belong to her husband’s family. In contrast, a son keeps the family name alive.” In the Amhara society, it is believed that a society’s security is maintained by males. There are expressions asserting to this state of preference.

3. (a) *kəhullum yaw wəndim bikəfam biləmam*

From all it is brother worse better

‘For better and worse to have a brother is good.’

(b) *ʔabbat yələlləw liḡ məzgiya yələlləw dəḡḡ*

Father not-have child door not-have public

‘A child without a father is like a compound without a gate.’

(c) *set ʔagbitəw set biwəldu yət ʔallə nigdu*

Woman marry woman give-birth where is trade

‘If one marries a woman and gets a baby-girl, where is the profit?’

(d) *wənd yəwəllədə kəbbədə set yəwəllədə ʔabbədə*

Male give-birth honor female give-birth insane

‘One who gets a baby boy is honoured; one who gets a baby girl becomes insane.’

(e) *set kəməwləd yiššalall maswərrəd*

Female give-birth better abort

‘It is better to abort than to give birth to a baby-girl.’

Sometimes the preference goes beyond sons and daughters to include their family members. Thus a brother is preferred to a sister, an uncle to an aunt. The general belief is that males are sources of security more so than females. This is stated as: “*wənd liğ məkəta/kurat nəw*” ‘A son is a protection and pride of a family’. In this, daughters, sisters, aunts etc. have no place. A woman cannot avenge the murder of a family member. This is done by a brother or husband if she has one. This is clear from statements like: “*ʔantə wəndu ʔiyyalləh ʔine set<sup>w</sup>a dəm ʔalməllisimm*” ‘I, a woman, cannot take revenge while you, a man, are alive’. This statement suggests that a woman takes it that vengeance is not her responsibility. Because of this, the society develops the attitude of preferring boys to girls.

In addition, in the proverb (3b) it is assumed that a child without a father is nothing which suggests that a mother is not as important as a father. A child raised by only a mother is considered as ill-bred.

### **3.2.4. Reliance of women on men**

There are proverbs and literal expressions that show that women have no existence without men, usually their husbands. Husbands are assumed to take the role of supporting and guiding their wives. Suppression, dominance, and violence can be the outcome of dependency of women on men. Men and women may be restricted to specific tasks and this leads to dependency of one on the other. Role divisions create power and status differences between male and female. Consequently, women become dependent on men because men are the economic sources more than women. When the society assumes women as dependent, there is the attitude of describing them as requiring

help, attention, permission, information, emotional support, or material resources. As can be seen, the proverbial expressions below state the society's attitude towards women.

4. (a) *set kəwənd ʔihil kəhod*

Woman from-man food from-stomach

'Women should be in men, like food in stomach.'

(b) *ʔaləbal set wəyzəro ʔaləməngəča kəbəro*

Without-husband woman Mrs. without-strap drum

'A woman without a husband and a drum without a supporting strap are the same.'

(c) *nəfs bəfət'ariwa set basaddariwa*

Soul by-creator woman by-governor

'The soul is to its creator as a woman is to her governor (husband),'

(d) *wənd liğ bətəšoməbbət set liğ bağəbbaččibbət*

Male child where appoint female child where marry

'A man (lives) where he is appointed and a woman where she is married.'

(e) *yəset ʔagər<sup>w</sup>a bal<sup>w</sup>a madəriyawa ʔaməl<sup>w</sup>a*

Of woman her country her husband her livelihood her conduct

'A woman's homeland is her husband, and her means of livelihood is her conduct.'

(f) *yəməngəd dar ʔišət bal yələllat set ləmannim nat*

Of road side ear(plant) husband not have woman for everyone be-she

'An ear (plant part) on the road side, and a woman without a husband, belong to everyone.'

(g) *yəset biččawan hiyağ yək'es ʔarfağ huləttum nəgər wədağ*

Of woman alone travel of priest late both trouble like

'A woman who travels alone and a priest who is late are for mass both troublemakers.'

The social existence of women without men is totally denied in some proverbial expressions. For example, the expression in proverb (4a) states that it is an obligation for a woman to be with a man. Amazingly, the data in (4c) declares that the governor of a

woman is a man (her husband). Primarily, when a girl gets a fiancé (husband) it is said “*habt<sup>w</sup>a k’anna*” ‘She has got wealth’. A husband is assumed to be a source of income. The woman is assumed to be lucky when engaged and eventually married.

There are also expressions that suggest that women are homeless (4d) and (4e), and less respected (4b) if they have no husband. These kinds of proverbs influence the woman to lose her identity and develop a different identity which is that of her husband. As Schipper (2006:89) clarifies “In so many cultures, a girl had (or still has) to move and live under the supervision of her husband and his family must have (had) an impact on her identity. The contradictory loyalties she has to develop in such a situation towards her own family and her husband’s family make her uncertain and vulnerable. Such a permanent feeling of alienation in girls only becomes manageable by unconditionally adopting the ruling principles and internalizing the resulting messages.”

In most contexts, a woman takes herself as less respected and helpless if she doesn’t have a brother or husband. For example, if she is attacked by a man, she says “*wəndim yəllatim bilo nəw yəmmič’č’awətibbiññ*” ‘He attacks me because he knew that I don’t have a brother’. From this expression, one can understand that a woman is already defeated in her mind. This kind of attitude is developed through the different activities that society assigns to the sexes.

When a woman gets a husband who is wealthy, strong, bold, hard working, and so on, it is said “*yəbirət məzgiya yəhonə ʔamač ʔamət’t’ačč*” ‘She has brought a brother-in-law who can be a steel door to the family’. This expression appreciates a woman’s role in

attracting a strong man who can be a source of security and pride of her family. A woman is expected to strive for getting a good husband by being a nice “*yābet Ṕimmābet*” ‘Lady of the house’.

Whatever wealth or capital is found with a woman, her family and her husband will have no pride in that because the source is a woman. This is consistent with the saying “*yāset habt Ṕayakoramm*” ‘A woman’s wealth leads to no pride’. This shows that although a woman has all the qualities, which are considered good by the community, she cannot do much independently. A man might be insulted with the expression “*Ṕindā set bāre (Ṕindā yāgalāmota bāre) mannim yāmmiṣ’āmdāw*”; ‘Like a divorcee’s ox, which is used by everyone’. This is a demeaning statement to a man who has no sense of purpose.

Some expressions give men unlimited right to assume that they are correct in whatever they do to women, including beating. Violence is a means of social control of the hierarchy of inequality. The proverb in (4f) states that a woman is object that belongs to everybody if she doesn’t have a husband. Similarly, the data in (4g) warns a woman not to go out alone in public. If she does, she is taken as a troublemaker. In a family, parents may tell or advice their daughter to go with her younger brother if she wants to go out, even if the boy is much younger than her. If a woman is abused as a result of going out alone in public that is her fault.

### **3.2.5. Segregation of sexes**

The mechanism through which men control positions of social and economic influence in their society is segregation of sexes. People generally consider women less

knowledgeable than men even in gender-neutral things, which hurt women and limit them to domestic spheres.

In most societies, women are associated with home. The Amharic expression “*yābet Ṗimmābet*” ‘Lady of the house’ is a representation of this. On the contrary, the expression “*abba wārra*” refers to the man as head of the family, who is responsible for securing the basic essentials.

When activities are restricted to sexes, women and men develop skills in their respective jobs and they assume different positions of status. In relation to this, Carli (2001:734) says:

The male advantage in influence should be even greater in contexts that are stereotypically masculine or that are explicitly described as favouring male expertise. On the other hand, women should be more influential than men in contexts that are considered stereotypically feminine, for under such conditions women would be presumed to be more expert and would also have more legitimate authority than men.

In a society that has patriarchy social structure in which male dominance is a core point, public activities are restricted to men. This system influences women to be active only in domestic activities like cooking. For instance, the literal expression “*yāwānd sira/wānd-a-wānd sira*” ‘Job of a man/boyish job’ refers to jobs like ploughing, hunting, and so on. On the contrary if a job is “*yāset sira*” ‘Job of a woman’ it is directly related to cooking, cleaning, washing clothes, taking care of children, etc. The following are some such expressions:

5. (a) *yaset*      *mot<sup>w</sup>a*      *bəmağət<sup>w</sup>a*  
 Of woman    her death    by her kitchen  
 ‘A woman’s death is in her kitchen.’
- (b) *set*      *ləbet*      *wəfč’o*      *ləduk’et*  
 Woman    to home      mill      to flour  
 ‘A woman is to home as a mill is to flour.’
- (c) *set*      *yiwədd<sup>w</sup>al*      *mağət*      *yangodagud<sup>w</sup>all*  
 Woman    love      kitchen      search  
 ‘One loves a woman and searches a kitchen.’
- (d) *setin*      *kəbet*      *birrin*      *kəmadbet*  
 Woman    from house    money    from kitchen  
 ‘(Keep) a woman in a house and money in a kitchen.’
- (e) *wəč’itinna*      *set*      *sikkənnəbu*      *yışšalall*  
 Bowl and    woman      cover      better  
 ‘A bowl and a woman are better when they are covered.’

During any social context, women are not allowed to be like men. There are lots of things that are restricted to men. For example, eating on the street or in public is socially restricted to men; if a woman is seen behaving like a man, she will be subject to ridicule as the following expressions demonstrate:

- *set*      *liğ*      *ʔigir<sup>w</sup>an*      *ʔattanəsam*  
 Woman    child      her leg      not raise  
 ‘A woman should not raise her leg to kick.’
- *set*      *liğ*      *məngəd*      *lay*      *ʔattibəlam*  
 Woman    child      street      on      not eat  
 ‘A woman should not eat on the street (public).’

There are so many expressions of “should not’s” in relation to females than males. This is developed through socialization of kids. They learn to distinguish between what the society considers acceptable or appreciated or tolerable, and unacceptable, intolerable

behaviour to be shown in a way that is appropriate for the needs of the society. The society has its own custom of distinguishing activities as good or bad for women and men. For example, cooking, cleaning, looking after children, washing clothes, etc. are only left to women. The proverbs in (5b), (5c) and (5d) show that women are totally bound to the homestead.

From some of the expressions, it is clear that women themselves believe their place is the home. It is common to hear women saying “*ʔisti ʔinda wandočču wət’a bəl*” ‘Let us see you leaving the house like men’. This is an expression addressed to husbands or brothers when something strange happens outside. Besides, if a man works in the kitchen or helps his wife with “a woman’s work”, he will be given low status by the public. The community members may say “*ʔindet set liğ tək’ammit’a wənd liğ madbet/mağət yigəbal*” ‘How can a man be in the kitchen while there is a woman’. Such a man is considered “*set-a-set*” ‘woman like’.

If a woman is found in public places, she will be called “*yəset ʔaləle*” which means ‘sex hungry’. According to proverb (5e) a woman who is found in public is advised to cover herself because the society believes that a covered girl is beautiful. It relates to the subjugation of women because a covered woman may not get the chance to be seen and appreciated by other men. Women are considered as properties of their husband.

In general, looking at all data, one can conclude that women are marginalized from various activities and this makes men to have political, economic, social, physical, etc. superiority over women, as a result they become dependent of their husbands or men in general.

### 3.2.6. Unfaithfulness and changeability

Proverbs which are included under this theme refer to unfaithfulness, infidelity, and unreliability. Women's behaviour is compared with mist, hen, moon, night, butter, home, and wind. All of these are used as expressions of mistrust.

According to proverb (6g) below for example, a woman is compared to a house in that both cannot be left alone. One has to constantly watch over them. There are also proverbs that advise men not to share their secrets, love, trust, or lives with a woman. For instance, (6a) and (6b) warn men that they should not trust women as they should not try to catch mist. Mist is used as figure of speech of unfaithfulness to describe a woman. Trying to get a woman's heartfelt love is like trying to get hold of a mist or cloud.

Consider in this regard the following proverbial expressions:

6. (a) *lasetinna ləgum ʔayizənəggum*

For woman and for mist not careless

'For woman and mist, never be careless.'

(b) *setin yammənə gum yəzəggənə*

Woman believe mist catch

'Believing a woman is trying to catch a mist.'

(c) *yəset libb yəmankiya k'ibe nat*

Of woman heart of spoon butter be-it

'A woman's heart is butter in a spoon.'

(d) *setinna doro dur kəhedu betaččəwin yikədu*

Woman and hen out if go their home they deny

'A woman and a hen, once they go out, they forget their home.'

(e) *mistinna dawit bəbibbit*

Wife and psalms by armpit

‘A wife and Psalms (Praying book) should be kept under one’s armpit.’

(f) *č’arək’anna set zare birhan nəgə s’ilmət*

Moon and woman today light tomorrow dark

‘Woman and moon, today they are light, tomorrow they are dark.’

(g) *setinna bet ʔayitammənim*

Woman and house not trust

‘A woman and a house cannot be trusted.’

(h) *yəmittinnək’annək’ gindinna yəmmittisk’ set libb ruk’k’ nəw*

Movable centre tree and smiling woman heart far be-it

‘The centre of a moving tree and, the heart of a smiling woman are unbelievable.’

In some proverbs the heart is used as representation of trust. If a heart is far from its possessor (as in 6h) it means it is almost impossible to get to the true nature of a person. Similarly, a woman’s heart is also compared to butter in a spoon as in (6c). Butter in a spoon needs a little heat to dissolve, and a woman’s heart is easy to open up. If one falls in love with a woman who looks difficult, it is too simple to get her easily.

In (6f), women are described as being inconsistent. They change their mind now and then. The moon is a metaphor that is used to illustrate this changing character. It is known that the light of the moon changes day by day based on its life cycle. The moon shines powerfully when it is full moon and its power becomes less and less as time goes on. Just like the moon’s light changes through time, a woman’s mood can also change from one state to the other. Because of this, women are taken as unstable and impulsive.

Because the society thinks that women are inconsistent, unfaithful or infidel; there are expressions that advise men to keep women or their wives at home. For instance, the proverb (6d) says a woman can never be trusted once she becomes familiar with the public. As a result, men are told to keep them at home. In addition, proverb (6e) recommends that a man should keep a woman at home as he keeps his prayer book (Psalm) in his armpit so that both are under control.

The cause of women's inconsistency and unfaithfulness can be related to different things. Mostly it is associated with getting some kind of gain such as money. Here is one literal expression that supports this assumption, "*yəzaf k'it'al bīrr bihon nuro set liğ t'ot'a tafək'k'ir nəbbər*" 'If leaves were Birr/money, a woman would fall in love with a monkey'. This saying shows that, whatever is the means, the primary concern of a woman is getting money and she can do anything to get it.

In general, by implication, such type of proverbs advice men not to trust women. Some of the expressions deny that women have human nature: like falling in love with monkey. As a result, men are responsible to control and correct them. This leads to men's dominance and women's subordination.

### **3.2.7. Being a role model**

Being a role model in the context of this study is being a person who serves as an example, for those whose behaviour or activity is followed by others. A role model can be chosen by looking at a person's confidence, ability, social status, and so on.

According to the socializing system of the Amhara society, men are believed to have qualities of a role model than women. There are proverbial expressions which relate to this.

First of all, pragmatically, the word “*wənd*” ‘male’ has the extra meaning of courage. For example, if someone is referred to as “*wənd honəčč/honə*” ‘She/he becomes male’, it means one has become courageous. On the other hand, if a man is represented as “*set*” “female” or “*set-a-set*” “womanish” it is an insult. So, the masculine gender is appreciated more than the feminine one. Therefore, it is clear that the male gender or men are chosen for role model.

In a society like the Amhara which is patriarchal, roles are assigned on the basis of confidence, bravery, courage, etc. which are qualities of men more than women. Consequently, in this society, men in general and fathers, brothers and husbands are appreciated and also respected more than mothers, sisters and wives. For example, the data in proverb (7a) below says “A boy should always be like his father and some day should act like his mother”. This suggests a son should be strong and brave like his father and when he fails to face challenges, he can act like his mother. In other words, weakness and fear are symbolized as feminine, motherhood and courage and bravery are represented as masculine, fatherhood. The same is stated in (7f) which states “Fearful is the son of his mother”; in which case, the society believes that a son who is not brave belongs to his mother, whereas one who is strong and courageous belongs to his father. It is not arguable (from the whole discussion of this paper) that the society prefers bravery,

courage, confidence, etc. which are manly; and weakness, fearfulness, etc. which are womanly. The following are some common proverbs that refer to role model:

7. (a) *wənd liğ hullk'ən ʔində ʔabbatu ʔand k'ən ʔində ʔinnatu*  
 Male child always like his father one day like his mother  
 'A boy should always be like his father and some day should act like his mother.'

(b) *liğ ʔabbatun ʔayib ʔagg<sup>w</sup>atun yiməslallu*  
 Child his father cheese its whey they resemble  
 'A child resembles his father as cheese looks like its whey.'

(c) *liğ ʔində ʔabbatu səw ʔində betu*  
 Child like his father human like his house  
 'A child like his father, man like his house (means).'

(d) *liğ kabbatu šotal kafotu*  
 Child with his father sword in its sheath  
 'A child is with his father, as a sword is in its sheath.'

(e) *ʔabbat yabəğğəw ləliğ yibəğğəw*  
 Father does for child good  
 'Whatever is done by a father is good for a child.'

(f) *fəri lənnatu yiggəbbal*  
 Fearful for his mother belong  
 'Fearful is the son of his mother.'

(g) *wənd liğ təwəldo kalhonə ʔində ʔabbatu ʔaməlimalo sit'ut yiftəl*  
 Male child born not be-he like his father spindle give him weft  
*ʔində ʔinnatu*  
 like his mother  
 'If a son cannot be like his father give him a spindle and so that he weft (work) like his mother.'

These expressions strengthen the idea that a child takes his father as a role model. The proverbs advise children to be like their father and imitate whatever is done by them. Proverbs (7b-7d) express the same idea. If a person cannot act like a “man” he is insulted as “*wəndinnət yəlləwm*” ‘He lacks manhood’. This simply means he is useless. The expression in (7g) which says “If a son cannot be like his father, give him a spindle so that he weft (work) like his mother” suggests that a boy should take his father as a model in his life, otherwise, he will be insulted as “*set*” and does what a woman does. Such a person will have a lower social position and status.

The proverb which states that “Whatever is done by a father is good for a child”, makes no mention of mothers’ contribution to child development. Emphasis is given to fathers.

In general, according to the data under the theme of role model, priority is given to men. As far as this study is concerned, women almost have no position as a role model because of the belief that they lack boldness, courage, and strength. They are taken as symbols of weakness, fear, low status, etc.

### **3.2.8. Objectification of women**

In some proverbial and literal expressions there are contexts where women are often represented as objects to be handled by men. These objects can be living or lifeless. Women are objectified by establishing parallels between human, object, and animal behaviours. For example, in some Amharic expressions women’s working capacity has been associated with that of hardworking animals like donkey or with lifeless objects like mills.

Amharic proverbs indirectly suggest violence as a means of showing one's manhood, in the Amharic speaking society, men are required to prove that they are "real men" by means of correcting (training or taming) or controlling women. Especially, this is practiced on wives in order to make them good, that is tame and quiet. A person may tell/advice his brother or friend by saying "*mist ʔagul ʔaməl sattawət't'a məttarəm ʔalləbat*" 'A wife should be corrected (by her husband) before she develops bad behaviour'. Here, the wife is considered as an object which needs somebody else to lead her to the correct behaviour. In case a woman is rude or bad-mannered, it is taken as the liability of her husband, because the society believes that the husband has the right and responsibility to correct her. The proverb (8b) below states that a woman acts the way she is trained, like a mule according to its trainer. Such proverbs indicate that violence is socially accepted or recommended. Here are some expressions that show this:

8. (a) *setinna məret yəmmayičʔlut yəlləm*  
 Woman and earth they withstand there is no  
 'There is nothing which a woman and earth cannot withstand.'
- (b) *setinna bək'ilo ʔində gəriwa nəw*  
 Woman and mule like her trainer be-it  
 'A woman and a mule behave the way they are trained.'
- (c) *setinna ʔahiyya bədulla*  
 Woman and donkey with stick  
 'A woman and a donkey need punishing.'
- (d) *wəfč'onna set məčemm ʔayimolallat*  
 Mill and woman always no be-it full  
 'A grinding mill and a woman cannot get to the full.'

(e) *ʔahiyyanna set sirəgt<sup>w</sup>at ʔayikəfat*

Donkey and woman when kicked not complain

‘A woman and a donkey do not complain when they get kicked.’

(f) *setinna masəro yəmayčilut yəlləm*

Woman and pot they can there is no

‘Nothing is impossible for a woman and a pot.’

In some Amharic proverbs, women are taken as lifeless objects, for instance in the proverbs (8a) and (8d) above, women are taken as being similar to the earth and mill. The character of these lifeless objects is compared with women so that man can do anything to them. The earth is taken as an object that carries every good and bad thing which are done by the human species. Like the earth, a woman is assumed to have an imaginary ability to accept and tolerate every evil thing a man does to her without complaining. Similarly, the proverb in (8d) states that nearly the same idea in the proverb (8a). The only difference is the objects that are compared which is a woman and earth in (a) and a woman and a mill in (d).

The other aspect of the traditional socialization of males in the Amhara society is in relation to humiliation and violence. For instance, elders may advise a woman who quarrels with her husband by saying “*set liğ bətidar<sup>w</sup>a sidbunm dullawinm čila nəw mənor yalləbat ʔančim ʔagul tənəkkahu bay ʔattihuññ*” ‘A woman should live by tolerating insults and attacks in her marriage, you should not ask why you are touched’. With such languages a woman is persuaded or forced to accept domestic violence as a norm. Her voice against mistreatment is not heard. Similarly, according to the proverb in (8c) and (8e) violence against woman is normal. Even she is not advised to complain

about it, like a donkey which accepts any burden. This is because of the society's belief that men should have power over women.

There is a proverb which states "*yāset mirak<sup>w</sup>a wāfram nāw*" 'A woman's saliva is thick'. It is related with the feeling of hunger. This is just to say that, a woman cannot be hungry so, she doesn't need to eat much, whereas a man is encouraged to eat a lot.

There is also a proverb that takes women as sex objects (8f). Here a woman is compared with a pot. Literally it seems to have a constructive meaning, but when we see the context in which it is usually used, we can understand that its meaning is negative. In the society, early marriage is common. So, this proverb is used when a little girl (under aged girl) is married to a man. In early marriage, it is clear that, the girl is not biologically mature. However, for the sake of denying her tender age in relation to sexual intercourse the society uses the expression. It can be interpreted that although the girl is little like a pot, she can have sex with a man irrespective of the pain she suffers. Even when a woman cries, when she is married, the society says "*wāg nāw siddaru malk'ās*" 'Crying is normal when a girl is married'. The girl may cry to object to the marriage, but the society believes that she is crying because she is going to be separated from her family.

Generally, women are objectified in order to create a room for humiliation and violence. Objectification is one means of prohibiting women from taking high positions in the patriarchal society. It also restricts their participation in the activities of society. All these suggest that men are empowered over women.

### 3.2.9. Hegemonic masculinity

According to Pilcher and Whelehan (2004:84-85), hegemonic masculinity is about societal representation of men in higher places than women. At the top of gender hierarchy there are hegemonic masculinities and at the bottom are femininities. This representation enables men to have better psychological, social, economic, political and physical power than women. In relation to this, Holmes (2009:89), says “adhering to this form of masculinity [hegemonic masculinity] involves having a physically powerful and well-controlled body, a stoic and non-emotional approach to life and, related to that, pursuing power and success in an organized and even ruthless manner.”

In the Amhara society, proverbs and other expressions play an important role in supporting the cultural model of masculinity such as competitiveness, dominance, strength, endurance, confrontation, independence, boldness, and willingness to take risks. As discussed in the preceding themes, everything that is related to “*wənd*” ‘male’ has positive implication. Here are also some expressions that show hegemonic masculinity:

9. (a) *wənd balə bəlat set baləčč bamət*

Male he said within a day female she said within a year

‘If said by a man within a day, but it will take a year if (the same thing) said by a woman.’

(b) *liğ yalə ʔabbat ʔirgo bəʔagʷat*

Child without father yoghurt with whey

‘A child without a father is like yoghurt in a milk.’

(c) *s’əhay sallə rut’ ʔabbat sallə ʔagit’*

Sun there is run father there is dress up

‘Run while there is sun and dress up while your father is alive.’

(d) *lam bərətun yəsəw liǧ ʔabbatun ʔayrəsamm*  
Cow its stable of human child his father not forget

‘It is hardly possible for a cow to forget its stable, and for a son to forget his father.’

(e) *man yimut t’əlat man yinur ʔabbat*  
Who die enemy who live father

‘Who should die? an enemy, and who should live? father.’

When we see (9a), the supremacy of men is declared through the practice of decision making. As it is said, whatever idea is raised by a woman (whether it is good or bad) the decision will be made by a man. In other words, it is the man that decides everything. This expression affirms women’s dependency on man’s decision. Besides, it provides unlimited space to men to influence, subjugate, vilify, violate, etc. women. The proverb prohibits women from having higher position in the society because higher positions are “men’s”.

There are also proverbs which express hegemony of masculinity through superiority of fathers. For instance, the proverb in (9b) states the impossibility of living without a father. As a result it is the father who is preferred to live as in (9e). Fathers are taken as role models for children to follow. This can lead them to being assumed as sources of income. Thus, a child is advised to dress up and look good (in proverb 9c) when her/his father is alive. Proverb (9d) tells us that it is impossible to forget one’s own father. Both proverbs (9c) and (9d) ignore the contribution of mothers in raising children because they assign the role to fathers.

The other means of describing hegemonic masculinity in a society is related to marrying a widow or a divorcee. Amharic speaking parents advise their son not to marry a widow

or a divorcee by saying “*ʔagbita yəfəttacč ʔindattagəba ʔantə minimm bihon wənd nəh*” which is translated as ‘Never marry a divorcee, whatever the case because you are a male person’. Concerning the reasons why people condemn marrying a widow, Schipper (2006:126-128) raised four fundamental cultural causes. These are:

- A. She might have killed her husband or the society think that she is the reason of her husband’s death. In the Amhara linguistic community this kind of woman is called “*gəfi*<sup>2</sup>”, (The one who pushes her husband to death).
- B. She costs money: for example, if she has children looking for income to raise the children, that will be the man’s responsibility.
- C. Such a wife has already been trained and ‘modeled’ by her earlier husband; her deceased husband’s memory cannot be avoided simply. For instance, in the Amhara society there is a belief that “*set liğ yəməğəmməriyawan ʔattirəsam*” ‘A woman does not forget her first encounter’. It works if the dead husband was her first marriage.
- D. There is a problem in her presumed power and independence. She is known for taking initiatives, which goes against the usual rules of female decency and virtue. It is the man’s role to control, but a widow develops a will of her own. She resists being dependent and this is not acceptable in most societies.

According to the Amhara society’s linguistic expression, men are not expected to be scared, run away from quarrel, defeated, etc. Since these things are not acceptable to the

---

<sup>2</sup> *gəfi*= This term is not exclusively used for women; it is common to both sexes. For example, a newly born baby can be labeled as “*gəfi*” if his father or mother died after his birth.

society if someone is found performing cowardly things he will be advised and complained about or insulted using terms like the following:

- *yəwənd ʔallič'č'a*  
Of male fearful  
'A man of fear.'
- *wənd liğ bayməta ʔink'an šəšto yaməlt'all ʔinği ʔində set k'uč'č'*  
Male child not attack if run away escape even like female sit  
*bilo ʔayimmətamm*  
not be beaten  
'If a man cannot attack, he had better run away than being beaten like a woman.'
- *wənd ʔayidəlləhim*  
Male not you  
'You are not male!'
- *setoyye*  
Female  
'Female or lady-like.'

Socialization is one of the means of developing hegemony of masculinity. A child (both male and female) is socialized to be like a man and accept that man is a symbol of courage. Here when a girl is appreciated, masculine expression is used instead. A mother may appreciate her daughter by saying "*yəne liğ ʔikko wənd nat*" 'My daughter is male!' for her success. Or a mother may advise her daughter using an expression like "*liğe wənd huñi*" 'My daughter, be male'. This is to tell a daughter that she has to be strong and courageous like a man.

It is stated above that the society doesn't accept defeat. If a child (a son) is defeated, the family members or others may be angry with him and say "*ʔafər bila ʔattimattam wənd ʔayidəlləhim*" 'May you die, why don't you beat, aren't you a male?'. On the contrary, if the same thing happens to a daughter, the response will be "*dəgg honš! min ʔində wənd dəgg lədəgg tizoriyallaš ʔarfəš ʔattik'əmməč'im*" 'It is good to you, what are you doing out there like the boys, why don't you be here in the house?'. Both expressions declare

the superiority of men and this develops in the daughters' mind. For example, a daughter (in her early age) may believe that the public belongs to sons and not to daughters.

In some contexts, women themselves seem to accept hegemony of masculinity through their language use. For instance, if a woman faces hardship she may say “*yihinnin gud bəset ʔanǵəte ʔalčiləwimm*” ‘I cannot handle this problem with my feminine gut’. Here, she means that she is unable to do something hard as she is female. On the other hand, if the same hardship is faced by a man, he can be advised “*čaləw ʔinǵi wənd ʔayidəlləh ʔinde*” ‘You have to bear it, aren’t you a male?’. In general, based on all the data in this section, the masculine gender is what is taken as positive in the Amhara society.

### 3.2.10. Ill-nature of women

Proverbs under this category refer to women as sinful and horrible creatures. Because of this belief women should be under the control of men. It is one means of degrading women in patriarchal system. In such situations women are accused of being the causes of all kinds of bad things happening to them and to others close to them.

There are expressions that illustrate this. For example, if there is a problem caused by a woman, no one can find a solution for it or it is almost impossible to solve it. Proverb (10a) is about comparison between a woman and a child as sources of strife. The comparison is that a strife caused by them has no end.

10. (a) *setinna*            *liǵ*    *yamət’t’ut*    *t’əb*    *ʔaybərdimm*  
           Woman and    child    they bring    strife    no end  
           ‘A strife caused by a woman and a child has no end.’

(b) *set yəwəddədə wədə gəhannəm ʔisat wərrədə*  
Woman who love to hell fire go down

‘One who falls in love with a woman is like one thrown to hell.’

(c) *set yəfərrədəbbətinna ʔahiyya yəgat’əbbət məret wiha ʔayfəlk’ıbbətimm*  
Female verdict donkey grazed land water cannot yield

‘Land where a woman has given a verdict and where a donkey has grazed yield no water.’

(d) *set yəlakəw mot ʔayfəram*

Woman sent death not fear

‘One sent by a woman does not fear death.’

(e) *set yəlakəččiw*

Woman sent be-he

‘One sent by a woman.’

(f) *kaset nəgər kəbək’lo mədənbər ʔayittat’t’am*

From woman trouble from mule startling never lack

‘Trouble with a woman and startling with a mule are never lacking.’

In some expressions women are taken as creatures who lead man to trouble. To live or to fall in love with them is equated to committing suicide or creating an opportunity which is equivalent to putting oneself into hell. This idea is stated in (10b) which says “Falling in love with a woman is like thrown to hell.” Similarly, the meaning of the proverbs which say “One sent by a woman does not fear death” (proverb 10d) and “One sent by a woman” (proverb 10e) imply that women provoke men to get into things that they would not want to do otherwise.

When something, even if it is good, is done by a woman, it is taken as a curse. The proverb “A place where a woman gives verdict is like a land where a donkey grazes in that both yield no water”. This suggests that there is nothing useful in what a woman

does. According to the proverb, the society believes that women cannot give good judgment. The reason for this is that she is incapable of doing this (giving good judgment) and because of this she is compared to a donkey.

In line with the proverb (10c) women and strife are regarded as the two sides of a coin. The proverb states that strife is a normal and familiar behaviour of women. Likewise, in (10f) women are compared to an animal; this time a mule. In line with this proverb, it is not uncommon to have disagreement whenever there is a woman around. These kinds of expressions reduce women to the status of animals who should be controlled by their owners, in the case of women by their husbands.

### **3.2.11. Talkativeness and silence**

In most societies women are taken as being physically weaker than men. To compensate this physical weakness, women are assumed to have strong verbal talent. However, this talent is considered bad. There are proverbs and literal expressions that refer to women's being talkative, gossiping, twittering, cackling, and so on. In various contexts women's talk is presented as being hazardous, and even deadly. In most cases, their words are associated with swords, knives, poisons and other dangerous things. The data presented under this topic relate to the attitude of Amharic speakers towards women speech.

11. (a) *mawrat nəw setinnət məsrat nəw wəndinnət*

Talking be-it womanly working be-it manly

'To talk is womanly and to work is manly.'

(b) *yəset*      *gulbət<sup>w</sup>a*    *milas<sup>w</sup>a*

Of woman   her power   her tongue

‘A woman’s power is her tongue.’

(c) *yəbərə*    *dosəñña*    *yəset*    *wərəñña*    *?attamt’a*    *wədəñña*

Of ox        wild        of woman    talkative    not bring    to us

‘An ox which is wild and woman who is talkative, keep them away from us (men).’

(d) *wərəñña*    *mist*        *zərzarra*    *wəñfit*

Talkative   wife    full of holes    ceive

‘A talkative woman is like a ceive full of big holes.’

In line with some proverbs talk in general is taken as feminine. The society assumes that women and talk cannot be separated. For instance, in proverb (11a) talk and work are compared in relation to the two genders: female and male, who talk is taken as feminine and work as masculine. In the Amhara linguistic community, men are not appreciated for being talkative. If a man is found being “talkative” he can be labelled as “*set yiməsl wərə yiwəddal*” ‘Like a woman, he likes talking’. This has a negative connotation for a man and the society degrades him. Besides if a man gathers information/talk from others or if he is found being eager to listen to gossips, the society may reprimand him by saying “*?ində set wərə tīlək’ak’imalləh*” ‘Like a woman, you pick gossip’. In general, as the data show, the society believes that women and talk are inseparable. Even when men are talkative, they are compared with women and it has negative value.

According to the proverb (11b) women are assumed to be expert in talking. It states that a woman can win everything with her tongue, where lies her power. No man can defeat a woman in the power of “talk”, etc. Pragmatically, the proverb suggests that a woman knows nothing except talking.

In most societies silence is one of the most appreciated qualities, expected of women. The silence of a woman is taken as a means of showing kindness or respect to her husband. Therefore, men are appreciated if they marry women who keep their mouth shut. This is stated in (11d) which can mean that if a woman is talkative, she cannot keep secret and because of this she cannot make a good wife. Similarly, as illustrated in the proverb (11c) a talkative woman is never accepted. A woman who talks too much is degraded or not appreciated to participate in events and she is not preferred for marriage. The implication of all these proverbs is that women should be kept under the control of men because they are talkative and that can cause problem to men.

# Chapter Four

## Conclusions and Recommendations

### 4.1. Conclusions

The research in general has been planned under the objective of examining how socio-cultural expressions of Amharic disempower females, and specifically under two objectives which were, examining how proverbs are used as expressions of female disempowerment and describing how literal expressions of Amharic are used for showing gender biased ideology of the society. In general, the study has been aimed at answering the question “How the gender biased ideology of Amharic speakers is reflected in proverbs and literal expressions?”.

To answer the aforementioned question primary and secondary data were gathered. The primary data have been collected through participant observations and introspection (since the researcher is a native speaker of the language) methods. Besides, various kinds of proverbs and literal expressions have been collected from secondary sources. The collected data have been analysed by using thematic analysis method. Phonemic transcription is also used to transcribe the data.

Eventhough there can be some remaining issues that can be expressed under other aspects of the language such as jokes, discourses, etc., the research has tried to show how women disempowerment is expressed through proverbs and literal expressions under various

themes of social contexts to answer the research question. Based on the analysis of the data the following conclusions can be drawn:

- ❖ In the expressions, women are described in expressions that show their social, physical, and psychological inferiority compared to men. The feminine gender is used to express things which are negative. For instance, if the feminine gender is used in relation to males, the intention is almost an insult. However, the reverse is not true. The inferiority of women is expressed through comparison with animals like donkey, horse, hen, etc. which are in the service of men.
- ❖ There are expressions that view women, unlike men, as ignorant lacking knowledge by nature. This socio-cultural gender-biased ideology can be taken as a major problem that hinders women from taking part in decision making in the society.
- ❖ In the language, some expressions show that women themselves seem to have accepted the dominance of men. This undermines them to feel that they don't aspire for higher positions in the society. This kind of attitude may have developed from the patriarchal social structure of the linguistic community.
- ❖ The expressions show that there is discrimination against activities performed by women. Activities are classified in terms of gender. Women are assigned to tasks in the home area while men assume in public positions. There is no room for women's contribution in the society. This forbids them to have political and other participation in their social life.

- ❖ In the society, dominance of men starts from the preference of having boys to girls. Expressions show that parents (both mothers and fathers) are pleased if they have a baby boy. This preference makes them spend most of their capital on the success of their son. This can be seen in the process of sending children to school and transferring wealth like farmlands, cattle, etc. to sons. This is the cause for economic dominance by men.
- ❖ In Amharic, the superiority of men is socialized through proverbs and literal expressions. For example, children (both female and male) are praised by using the masculine gender. They are also advised to be like “a man” and to take their fathers, brothers, or other men as role models in their life.
- ❖ Some expressions deny the existence of women without men. Women are assumed to be requiring of men’s support. This attitude creates power and status difference between the two genders and makes women dependent.
- ❖ In most expressions the masculine gender is related with boldness, courage, strength, etc. On the contrary, the feminine gender refers to weakness, shyness, unfaithfulness, silence, instability, etc. Therefore, men are associated with things that are positive and women with things negative. This shows the gender biased ideology of the society.
- ❖ Objectification of women is one of the means of disempowering them in the society. Women are represented as objects and animals that should be handled and controlled by men. Because of this attitude there are contexts (for instance in

marriage) that take violence and humiliation against women as normal. This aggravates dependency and represents men as taking higher positions in the society.

- ❖ In the language, expressions show that talkativeness is directly associated with women. They are recognized as irrational, illogical, unreliable and gossiper. On the other hand, masculinity is expressed in terms of action. Furthermore, women are also considered as creatures that lead men to wrong doings and wrong directions. This is one of the ways in which women are disempowered and men are empowered.

## **4.2. Recommendations**

Based on the above concluding statements, the following recommendations are forwarded:

- ❖ Based on the expressions it is clearly seen that there is gender inequality in the Amhara linguistic community. As shown in some sayings, there are conditions in which women are treated not as human beings. To treat women fairly and to have gender equality, awareness raising programs should be carried out or strengthened by the concerned bodies and members of the society.
- ❖ Since there are contexts in which only women can contribute in any political, social, economic, and so on activities that lead the society (country) to development should involve them. It is through the participation of both women and men sustainable development can be made.

- ❖ In some contexts, it is clearly observed that women themselves have accepted the idea of men superiority. Effort should be exerted or the existing efforts should be strengthened to change this attitude. This can be done by using the media so that there are opportunities for women to participate in public activities.
- ❖ Curriculum developers, publishers, authors, language planners and others should consider these expressions in their work and they should try to address the problem of gender inequality.
- ❖ Further comprehensive study should be conducted on language concerning gender inequalities and in ways of changing the gender based ideology.

## References

- Amanuel Raga. 2007. *Gender-biased Ideology as Manifested in the Grammar of Afan Oromo*. Unpublished MA Thesis. Addis Ababa University.
- Appleyard, D. L. 2003. Amharic. In Siegbert Uhlig (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Aethiopia*, Vol. 1, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Baye Yimam. 2000. *Yəṗamariñña səwasəw*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), Addis Ababa: Eleni Printing Press.
- Birhanu G/Tsadik. 1992. *Yəṗamariñña missaleyawi ṗannəgəročč sibissib*. Addis Ababa: Birhanina Selam Printing Agency.
- Bowker, L. 2001. Terminology and Gender Sensitivity: A Corpus Based Study of the LSP of Infertility. *Journal of Language in Society*, Vol. 30, No. 4, pp.589-610.
- Carli, L. L. 2001. Gender and Social Influence. *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 57, No. 4, 2001, pp. 725-741.
- Cazden, C. B. 2001. Socialization. In Rajend Mesthrie (ed.), *Concise Encyclopaedia of Sociolinguistics*. Amsterdam: Elsevier Science Ltd.
- Coates, J. 1993. *Women, men and language*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), New York: Longman Group Limited.
- Dawson, C. 2009. *Introduction to Research Methods a Practical Guide for Anyone Undertaking a Research Project*. (4<sup>th</sup> ed.), United Kingdom: How to Books Ltd.
- Deegan, H. 2009. *Africa Today: Culture, Economics, Religion, Security*. New York: Routledge.

- DeFrancisco, V. 1997. Gender, Power and Practice: Or, Putting Your Money (And Your Research) Where Your Mouth is. In Ruth Wodak (ed.), *Gender and Discourse*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Eckert, P. and McConnell-Ginet, S. 2003. *Language and Gender*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Emawayish Melese, Solomon Woldu and Mesfin Mesele. 1982. *Yəḥamarīñña missaleyawi nigiggiročč*. Addis Ababa: Artistic Printing agency.
- Encyclopaedia Britannica. 2012. *Amharic - Language*. Retrieved February 21, 2012 from the World Wide Web: [www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/20500/Amharic-language](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/20500/Amharic-language).
- FDRE Population Census Commission. 2008. *Summary and Statistical Report of the 2007 Population and Housing Census: Population Size by Age and Sex*. Addis Ababa: United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).
- Freed, A. R. 2003. Epilogue: Reflections on Language and Gender Research. In Janet Holmes and Miriam Meyerhoff (eds.), *The Handbook of Language and Gender*. USA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Holmes, M. 2009. *Gender and Everyday Life*. London and New York: Routledge
- Kauppinen, K. and Iris Aaltio. 2003. Leadership, Power, and Gender. In Carol R. Ember and Melvin Ember (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of Sex and Gender: Men and Women in the World's Cultures*. Vol. 1 and 2. New York: Plenum Publishers.
- Kebede Gebremedhin. 1994. *ḥagar missaleyawi ḥannəgagəroččinna zəyibewočč*. Addis Ababa: Brana Printing Agency.
- Lakoff, R. 1975. *Language and Woman's Place*. New York: Harper & Row.

- Lee, B. L. 2006. *A Classroom of her own: Hegemonic Discursive Disempowerment of the Female Progressive Educator within Higher Education*. PHD Dissertation. University of North Carolina.
- Levant, R. F. 2002. Men and Masculinity. In Judith Worell (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Women and Gender: Sex Similarities and differences and the impact of society on gender*. Vol. 2. Lexington: University of Kentucky.
- Levine, D. N. 2003. 'Amhara' In Siegbert Uhlig (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Aethiopica*, Vol. 1, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Margolis, M. L. 2003. The Relative Status of Women and Men. In Carol R. Ember and Melvin Ember (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of Sex and Gender: Men and Women in the World's Cultures*. Vol. 1 and 2. New York: Plenum Publishers,
- Pilcher, J. and Whelehan, I. 2004. *Fifty Key Concepts in Gender Studies*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Roza Tadesse. 2009. *Gender Biased Ideology of Tigrinya Speakers as Reflected in the Grammar of Tigrinya*. Unpublished MA Thesis. Addis Ababa University.
- Schipper, M. 2006. *Never Marry a Woman with Big Feet: Women in Proverbs from Around the World*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Sheldon, A. 1993. Pickle Fights: Gendered Talk in Preschool Disputes. In Deborah Tannen (ed.), *Gender and Conversational Interaction*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Tadesse Eshete. 1972. *yäsetočč'in yäbätačč'innät yämiyans'äbark'u yä?amarinña ?abbabaločč'*. Addis Ababa University.

- Throne, B. and Henley, N. 1975. *Language and Sex: Difference and Dominance*.  
Massachusetts: Newbury House Publishers, Inc.
- Walby, S. 1990. *Theorizing Patriarchy*. Cambridge: Basil Blackwell Ltd.
- Werlhof, C. 2007. Capitalist Patriarchy and the Negation of Matriarchy. In Genevieve  
Vaughen (ed.), *Women and the Gift Economy. A radically Different world view is  
possible*. Toronto: Inanna.
- Wharton, A. S. 2005. *The Sociology of Gender: An Introduction to Theory and Research*.  
USA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Wodak, R. 1997. *Gender and Discourse*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Zealelem Leyew. 2010. Asymmetrical Representation of Gender in Amharic. *Ethiopian  
Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, Vol. VII, Nos. 1&2, 2010-2011, pp.  
71-112.

## Appendix A

### Proverbial Expressions

1. Low status	2. Lack of intelligence
<p>a) <i>set ʔinna fərəs ʔində kure wiha ʔiyyadər manəs</i> “Woman and horse become lower and lower like stagnant water as time goes on.”</p> <p>b) <i>set ʔinna fərəs yəsət’t’utn yik’əms</i> “Woman and horse eat what they are given to eat.”</p> <p>c) <i>ləset liğ ʔiskə ʔarba k’ən mo<sup>w</sup>an kəzziya wədiya hab<sup>w</sup>an</i> “For a woman for forty days wish her death, after that wish her wealth.”</p> <p>d) <i>kəset məmkər dəggiso məsikər</i> “Seeking advice from a woman is like being drunk with one’s own party.”</p> <p>e) <i>set bəzza gommən t’anəzza</i> “Too many women spoil the broth.”</p> <p>f) <i>yəkahin ʔaynaffar yəʔahyya ʔiwwur yəset dəffar ʔayirəbam</i> “A priest who is shy, a donkey which is blind, a woman who is bold are the same: all are useless.”</p>	<p>a) <i>set ǧib tifəralləčč ʔat’ir tafərsalləčč</i> “A woman fears hyena but pull down fence.”</p> <p>b) <i>ləset mikir ʔaygəbatim</i> “For a woman, advice is not necessary.”</p> <p>c) <i>minm set bittawik’ bəwənd yalik’</i> “Whatever is known by a woman, a man concludes.”</p> <p>d) <i>bilih setinna k’ənd yallat ʔahiyya ʔayiggənim</i> “There is no wise woman and hyena with horns.”</p> <p>e) <i>set wifrət ʔinǧi tillik’innə yəllatm</i> “Woman may be fat but not big.”</p> <p>f) <i>bal<sup>w</sup>an goddahu bila billit<sup>w</sup>an bəgaret’a</i> “Thinking that it would hurt her husband, a woman pierces her vagina with splinter.”</p> <p>g) <i>ʔawək’s ʔawək’s bil<sup>w</sup>at məs’ihaf ʔat’t’əbəčč</i> “A woman told that she is wise, washes her husband’s book.”</p> <p>h) <i>set min tawk’alləčč ʔwak’i tiwəliddalləčč ʔinǧi</i> “A woman is not intelligent, but she gives birth to intelligent ones.”</p> <p>i) <i>ʔinnat yələtun ʔabbat yamətun</i> “A mother plans for the day; a father plans for the year.”</p>

<p><b>3. Preference to sons</b></p> <p>a) <i>kəhullum yaw wəndim bikəfam biləmam</i>  “For better and worse to have a brother is good.”</p> <p>b) <i>ʔabbat yəlalləw liğ məzgiya yəlalləw dəğğ</i>  “A child without a father is like a compound without a gate.”</p> <p>c) <i>set ʔagbitəw set biwəldu yət ʔallə niğdu</i>  “If one marries a woman and gets a baby-girl, where is the profit?”</p> <p>d) <i>wənd yəwəllədə kəbbədə set yəwəllədə ʔabbədə</i>  “One who gets a baby boy is honored, one who get a baby girl becomes insane.”</p> <p>e) <i>set kəməwləd yiššalall maswərrəd</i>  “It is better to abort than to give birth to a baby-girl.”</p>	<p><b>4. Reliance of women on men</b></p> <p>a) <i>set kəwənd ʔihl kəhod</i>  “Women should be in men, like food in stomach.”</p> <p>b) <i>ʔaləbal set wəyizəro ʔaləməngəça kəbəro</i>  “A woman without a husband and a drum without a supporting strap are the same.”</p> <p>c) <i>nəfs bəfət’ariwa set basaddariwa</i>  “The soul is to its creator as a woman is to her governor (husband),”</p> <p>d) <i>wənd liğ bətəšoməbbət set liğ bagəbbaçibbat</i>  “A man [lives] where he is appointed and a woman where she is married.”</p> <p>e) <i>yəset ʔagər<sup>w</sup>a bal<sup>w</sup>a madəriyawa aməl<sup>w</sup>a</i>  “A woman’s homeland is her husband, and her means of livelihood is her conduct.”</p> <p>f) <i>yəməngəd dar ʔišt bal yələllat set ləmannim nat</i>  “An ear on the road side, and a woman without a husband, belong to everyone.”</p> <p>g) <i>yəset biččawan hiyağ yək’es ʔarifağ huləttum nəgər wədağ</i>  “A woman who travels alone and a priest who is late for mass are both troublemakers.”</p>
<p><b>5. Segregation of sexes</b></p> <p>a) <i>yəset mot<sup>w</sup>a bəmağət<sup>w</sup>a</i>  “A woman’s death is in her kitchen.”</p> <p>b) <i>set ləbet wəfç’o ləduk’et</i>  “A woman is to home as a mill is to flour.”</p>	<p><b>6. Unfaithfulness and changeability</b></p> <p>a) <i>ləsetinna ləgum ʔayizənəggum</i>  “For woman and mist, never be careless.”</p> <p>b) <i>setn yammənə gum yəzəggənə</i>  “Believing a woman is trying to catch a mist.”</p>

<p>c) <i>set yiwədd<sup>w</sup>al mağət yangodagud<sup>w</sup>all</i>  “One loves a woman and searches a kitchen.”</p> <p>d) <i>setin kəbet birrin kəmadbet</i>  “(Keep) a woman in a house and money in a kitchen.”</p> <p>e) <i>wəċ’itinna set sikkənanəbu yiššalall</i>  “A bowl and a woman are better when they are covered.”</p>	<p>c) <i>yəset libb yəmankiya k’ibe nat</i>  “A woman’s heart is butter in a spoon.”</p> <p>d) <i>setinna doro dur kəhedu betaċċəwn yikədu</i>  “A woman and a hen, once they go out, they forget their home.”</p> <p>e) <i>mistinna dawit bəbibbit</i>  “A wife and Psalms (Praying book) should be kept under one’s armpit”</p> <p>f) <i>ċ’ərək’anna set zare birhan nəgə s’ilmət</i>  “Woman and moon, today they are light, tomorrow they are dark.”</p> <p>g) <i>setinna bet ʔayitammənm</i>  “A woman and a house cannot be trusted.”</p> <p>h) <i>yəmittinnək’annək’ gindinna yəmmittisk’ set libb ruk’k’ nəw</i>  “The center of a moving tree and the heart of a smiling woman are far.”</p>
<p><b>7. Being a role model</b></p> <p>a) <i>wənd liğ hullk’ən ʔində ʔabbatu ʔand k’ən ʔində ʔinnatu</i>  “A boy should always be like his father and some day should act like his mother.”</p> <p>b) <i>liğ ʔabbatun ʔayib ʔagg<sup>w</sup>atun yiməsilallu</i>  “A child resembles his father as cheese looks like its whey.”</p> <p>c) <i>liğ ʔində ʔabbatu səw ʔində betu</i>  “A child like his father, as man like his house (means).”</p>	<p><b>8. Objectification of women</b></p> <p>a) <i>setinna məret yəmmayičtłut yəlləm</i>  “There is nothing which a woman and earth cannot withstand.”</p> <p>b) <i>setinna bək’ilo ʔində gəriwa nəw</i>  “A woman and a mule behave the way they are trained.”</p> <p>c) <i>setinna ʔahiyya bədulla</i>  “A woman and a donkey need punishing.”</p> <p>d) <i>wəfiċ’onna set məċem ʔayimolallat</i>  “A grinding mill and a woman cannot get to the full.”</p>

<p>d) <i>liḡ kabbatu šotəl kafotu</i>  “A child is with his father, as a sword is in its sheath.”</p> <p>e) <i>ʔabbat yabəḡḡəw ləliḡ yibəḡḡəw</i>  “Whatever is done by a father is good for a child.”</p> <p>f) <i>fəri lənnatu yiggəbbal</i>  “Fearful is the son of his mother.”</p> <p>g) <i>wənd liḡ təwəldo kalhonə ʔində ʔabbatu ʔaməlimalo sit’ut yiftəl ʔində ʔinnatu</i>  “If a son cannot be like his father give him a spindle and so that he wefts (work) like his mother.”</p>	<p>e) <i>ʔahiyyanna set sirəḡit<sup>w</sup>t<sup>w</sup>at ʔayikəfat</i>  “A woman and a donkey do not complain when they get kicked.”</p> <p>f) <i>setinna masəro yəmmayičilut yəlləm</i>  “Nothing is impossible for a woman and a pot.”</p>
<p><b>9. Hegemonic masculinity</b></p> <p>a) <i>wənd balə bələt set baləčč bamət</i>  “If said by a man (something gets complete) within a day, but it will take a year if (the same thing) said by a woman.”</p> <p>b) <i>liḡ yalə ʔabbat ʔirgo bəʔag<sup>w</sup>at</i>  “A child without a father is like yoghurt in milk.”</p> <p>c) <i>s’əhay sallə rut’ ʔabbat sallə ʔagit’</i>  “Run while there is sun and dress up while your father is alive.”</p> <p>d) <i>lam bəratun yəsəw liḡ ʔabbatun ʔayrəsam</i>  “It is hardly possible for a cow to forget its stable, and for a son to forget his father.”</p> <p>e) <i>man yimut t’əlat man yinur ʔabbat</i>  “Who should die? an enemy, and who should live? father.”</p>	<p><b>10. Ill-nature of women</b></p> <p>a) <i>setinna liḡ yamət’t’ut t’əb ʔaybərđm</i>  “A strife caused by a woman and a child has no end.”</p> <p>b) <i>set yəwəddədə wədə ḡəhannəm ʔisat wərrədə</i>  “One who falls in love with a woman is like one thrown to hell.”</p> <p>c) <i>set yəfərrədəbbətinna ʔahiyya yəgat’əbbət məret wiha ʔayfəlk’ibbatim</i>  “Land where a woman has given a verdict and where a donkey has grazed yield no water.”</p> <p>d) <i>set yəlakəw mot ʔayfəram</i>  “One sent by a woman does not fear death.”</p> <p>e) <i>set yəlakəččiw</i>  “One sent by a woman.”</p>

<p>f) <i>wənd liǰ ləfərəs set liǰ ləbərinos</i></p> <p>“A boy is to a horse and a girl is to mantle (cloak).”</p>	<p>f) <i>kəset nəgər kəbək’lo mədənbər ʔayittat’t’am</i></p> <p>“Trouble with a woman and startling with a mule are never lacking.”</p> <p>g) <i>set yamət’t’aw t’əb ʔayibərdim</i></p> <p>“A strife caused by a woman has no end.”</p>
---	---

## 11. Talkativeness and silence

a) *mawrat nəw setinnə məsrat nəw wəndinnət*

“To talk is womanly and to work is manly.”

b) *yəset gulbət<sup>w</sup>a milas<sup>w</sup>a*

“A woman’s power is her tongue.”

c) *yəbərə dosəñña yəset wəreñña ʔattamt’a wədəñña*

“An ox which is wild and woman who is talkative, keep them away from us (men).”

d) *yəbal dəginnətu batinnagər mistu*

“The kindness of a husband is his wife’s silence.”

e) *wəreñña mist zərizarra wəñfit*

“A talkative woman is like a ceive full of holes.”

## Appendix B

### Literal expressions

<p><b>1. Low status</b></p> <p>a) <i>sete k<sup>w</sup> ank<sup>w</sup> a</i> “Feminine language.”</p> <p>b) <i>sete məret</i> “Feminine land.”</p> <p>c) <i>bəzzih ġəgininnət<sup>w</sup> a lay wənd bittihon</i> “If she were a man with all this courage.”</p> <p>d) <i>ʔantə kəməttahaññ k’uċ’ċ’ biye šəniċċalləhu malət nəw</i> “I urinate sitting should you dare hit me.”</p> <p>e) <i>k’əmis ləbiššalləhu</i> “I put on a skirt.”</p> <p>f) <i>ʔine ʔissun kalisərrahullət set nəññ</i> “If I didn’t win or take a revenge on him, I am woman.”</p>	<p><b>2. Preference to sons</b></p> <p>a) <i>wənd liğ məkata/kurat nəw</i> “A son is a protection and pride of a family.”</p> <p>b) <i>ʔantə wəndu ʔiyyallah ʔine set<sup>w</sup> a dəm</i> <i>ʔalməllism</i> “I, a woman, cannot take revenge while you, a man, are alive.”</p> <p>c) <i>wənd liğ kənnə k’aċ’ilu yisit’t’aċċihu</i> “May (God) give you a baby boy with a bell.”</p>
<p><b>3. Reliance of women on men</b></p> <p>a) <i>habt<sup>w</sup> a k’ənna</i> “She has got wealth.”</p> <p>b) <i>wəndim yəllatm bilo nəw</i> <i>yəmiċ’ċ’awətibbiñ</i> “He attacks me because he knew that I don’t have a brother.”</p> <p>c) <i>birət məzigiya yəhonə ʔamaċ ʔamət’t’aċċ</i> “She has brought a brother-in-law who can be a steel door to the family.”</p>	<p><b>4. Segregation of sexes</b></p> <p>a) <i>yəbet ʔimməbet</i> “Lady of the house.”</p> <p>b) <i>yəwənd sira/wənd-a-wənd sira</i> “Job of man/boyish job.”</p> <p>c) <i>yəset sira</i> “Job of woman.”</p> <p>d) <i>set liğ ʔiğir<sup>w</sup> an ʔattanəsam</i> “A woman should not raise her leg to kick.”</p> <p>e) <i>set liğ məngəd lay ʔattibəlam</i> “A woman should not eat on the street (public).”</p>

<p>d) <i>yaset habt ʔayakoram</i>  “A woman’s wealth leads to no pride.”</p> <p>e) <i>ʔində set bəre (ʔində yəgaləmotə bəre) mannim yəmmiṭ’əmdəw</i>  “Like a divorcee’s ox, which is used by everyone.”</p>	<p>f) <i>ʔisti ʔində wəndočču wət’a bəl</i>  “Let us see you leaving the house like men.”</p> <p>g) <i>ʔindet set liğ tək’əmmiṭ’a wənd liğ madbet/mağət yigəbal</i>  “‘How can a man be in the kitchen while there is a woman.’”</p>
<p><b>5. Unfaithfulness and changeability</b></p> <p>a) <i>yəzaf k’it’əl birr bihon nuro set liğ t’ot’a tafək’k’ir nəbbər</i>  “‘If leaves were Birr/money, a woman would fall in love with a monkey.’”</p>	<p><b>6. Being a role model</b></p> <p>a) <i>wənd</i>  “Male.”</p> <p>b) <i>wənd honəčč/honə</i>  “‘She/he becomes male.’”</p> <p>c) <i>wəndinnət yəlləwm</i>  “‘He has no manhood.’”</p>
<p><b>7. Objectification of women</b></p> <p>a) <i>mis ʔagul ʔaməl sattawət’t’a məttarəm ʔalləbat</i>  “‘A wife should be corrected (by her husband) before she develops bad behaviour.’”</p> <p>b) <i>set liğ bətidar<sup>w</sup>a sidibunm dullawinm čila nəw mənər yəlləbat ʔančim ʔagul tənəkkahu bay ʔattihuñ</i>  “‘A woman should live by tolerating insults and attacks in her marriage, you should not say why am I touched.’”</p> <p>c) <i>yaset mirak<sup>w</sup>a wəfram nəw</i>  “‘A woman’s saliva is fat.’”</p> <p>d) <i>wəg nəw siddaru malk’əs</i>  “‘Crying is normal when a girl is married.’”</p>	<p><b>8. Hegemonic masculinity</b></p> <p>a) <i>ʔagbita yəfəttəčč ʔindattagəba ʔantə minm bihon wənd nəh</i>  “‘Never marry a woman who is divorced whatever is the case you are a boy.’”</p> <p>b) <i>yəwənd ʔallič’č’a</i>  “‘The man of fear.’”</p> <p>c) <i>wənd liğ bayiməta ʔink<sup>w</sup>an šəšito yaməlt’al ʔinği ʔində set k’uč’č’ bilo ʔayimmətam</i>  “‘If a man cannot beat, he had better run away than accepting the thrash like woman.’”</p> <p>d) <i>wənd ʔayidəlləhim</i>  “‘You are not male!’”</p> <p>e) <i>setoyye</i>  “‘Female or lady-like.’”</p> <p>f) <i>yəne liğ ʔikko wənd nat</i>  “‘My daughter is male!’”</p>

<b>9. Talkativeness and silence</b>	
<p>a) <i>set yiməsl wəre yiwəddal</i></p> <p>‘Like a woman, he likes talk.’</p> <p>b) <i>ʔində set wəre tilək’ak’imalləh</i></p> <p>‘Like a woman, you look after talk.’</p>	<p>g) <i>liḡe wənd huñi</i></p> <p>‘‘My daughter, be male.’’</p> <p>h) <i>ʔafər bila ʔattimattam wənd ʔayidəlləhim</i></p> <p>‘‘May you die, why don’t you beat, aren’t you a male?’’</p> <p>i) <i>dəgg honš! min ʔində wənd dəḡḡ lədaḡḡ tizoriyalləš ʔarfəš ʔattik’əmməč’im</i></p> <p>‘‘It is good to you, what are you doing out there like the boys, why don’t you be here in the house?’’</p> <p>j) <i>yihinnin gud bəset ʔanḡəte ʔalčiləwm</i></p> <p>‘‘I cannot handle this problem with my female gut’’</p> <p>k) <i>čaləw ʔinḡi wənd ʔayidəlləh ʔinde</i></p> <p>‘‘You have to bear it, aren’t you a man?’’</p>

## **Declaration**

I, the undersigned declare that this thesis is my original work and has never been presented for a degree in any other university and that all sources of materials used for this thesis have duly acknowledged.

Name: Aschalew Bililigne

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 20/11/2012