

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY**

**SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

**IMAGE OF WOMEN IN SELECTED OROMO FOLKTALES, FOLKSONGS  
AND PROVERBS WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO EAST ARSI ZONE**

**BY**

**AHMED DEDO**

**JUNE 2010  
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**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO  
THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
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EXAMINER

## **DECLARATION**

I, hereby, declare that this thesis is my original work, and has not been presented for a degree in another university and that all sources of materials used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

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## ABSTRACT

*Dundes (1965) and Adams (1973) suggest that folklore validates and maintains conformity or control in or over the society and educates certain aspects of culture and justifies its rituals and institutions, and shows the manner of thinking, mode of life, and attitudes of the society. Hence, the major goal of this study was examining the images of women in Arsi Oromo folktales, folksongs and proverbs. To achieve this goal an attempt was made to collect and analyze folktales, folksongs and proverbs from two districts in east Arsi zone. The data were collected through interviewing people from the study area, using focused group discussions, making observations of the discussions and also using already documented folktales, folksongs and proverbs. The study revealed that images of women in Arsi Oromo folktales, folksongs and proverbs have been portrayed both positively and negatively and that images of women in all the three genres were highly distorted though some positive images also existed. Regarding the positive images of women, some of the Arsi Oromo folktales, folksongs and proverbs have represented some groups of women, for example, wives as faithful, honest and loving; mothers as fair and thoughtful; and female beings in general as wise and problem-solving. There are also some positive representations of women that are manifested only in the proverbs. These are the portrayal of women in general as cautious and suspicious beings; wives and girls as indispensable persons; and mothers as generous. However, the largest parts of the collected folktales, folksongs and proverbs have represented women in a negative and distorted manner. These include the representations of women in general as shameless, selfish and greedy, trouble makers and evil-minded, stupid, and as inferior to men in every aspect; and in particular, wives as unfaithful and adulterous, and step-mothers and co-wives as cruel and jealous. Moreover, some negative representations of women were observed only in the sample proverbs. They include the depiction of women generally as liars, pretenders, deceivers, submissive, quiet and weak, unintelligent, and careless and unreliable, on the one hand, and wives as disagreeable and disobedient, on the other. The other point found out was that images of women in the three genres vary. That is, some positive and negative representations of women exist only in the proverbs but not in the folktales and folksongs. In general, the over all result revealed that the deep-rooted attitude of the patriarchal society that attempted to establish the superiority of men and subordination of women in its oral literature. Regarding the organization of this study, it is made up of four chapters. The first chapter deals with the introductory part of the study which includes the background, statement of the problem, the objectives, the significance, the scope, the methodology and the definition of some important terms of the study. In the second chapter relevant literature is reviewed and also the socio-cultural background of the Arsi Oromo is presented. The third chapter includes the analysis of the folktales, folksongs and proverbs collected from the study area. In the fourth chapter an effort was made to provide a conclusion based on the discussions of the foregoing chapters.*

## A Key to *Afaan Oromo* Pronunciation

Oromo Script	Phonetic Presentation	Sample Words in Afaan Oromo
<b>A. Vowels</b>		
A	a	Amma (now)
E	E	Egeree (later on)
I	I	Imala (journey)
O	O	Oggummaa (skill)
U	U	ummata (people)
<b>B. Consonants:</b>		
B	Ba	Balaa (accident)
C	Ča	Cabaa (broken)
D	Da	Dalagaa (task)
F	Fa	Farda (horse)
G	Ga	Ganama (morning)
H	Ha	Hamaa (bad)
J	Ja	Jala (beneath)
K	Ka	Karaa (road)
L	La	Lama (two)
M	Ma	Mana (house)
N	Na	Nama (human being)
P	Pa	Paartii (party)
Q	Qa	Qabiyyee (content)
R	Ra	Ragaa (evidence)
S	Sa	Sagalee (voice)
T	Ta	Tabba (hill)
W	Wa	Waggaa (year)
X	Ťa	Xaxamaa (complex)
Y	Ya	Yayyaba (announcement)
Z	Za	Zangaada (sorghum)
CH	č a	Chartarii (charter)
DH	Ḑa	Dhadhaa (butter)
NY	Ña	Nyaata (food)
PH	P'a	Itoophiyaa (Ethiopia)
SH	š a	Shame (rotten)

NB: - Double vowels results in long sound as in *eegee-a tail*

-Double consonants results in stressed sound as in *tabba- a hill*

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## APPENDICES

### **Appendix A: Arsi Oromo Folktales Portraying Women both Positively and Negatively**

#### **Tale number 1. Wow! Your stew**

Once there was a happily married couple living in a small village. One day a guest came to their house to spend the night with them. They live in a small countryside house. This house is everything for them because everything takes place there: cooking, relaxing, and bedroom are all there in the single room. The husband and the guest were chatting while the wife prepares porridge (፡marqaa፬) for dinner. In the middle of her work, the husband started nagging her for unknown reason in the presence of the guest. The wife got angry and suddenly, using a hot cooking stick, hit her husband on the cheek. This time the husband is ashamed, confused what to do in front of the guest and said, ፬Wow! Due to the deliciousness of your porridge, I was to swallow even your cooking stick፬.

#### **Tale number 2.Let them roast it!**

While a wife was enjoying with her lover in her house, her husband came home carrying raw meat. This time both were shocked and decided that the secret lover should hide in the empty standing barrel. Hence, he immediately jumped into the barrel and hid there. Even though the actions of his wife were unusual and put him in to suspicion, he kept silent and sat for some time.

After a while he called his wife and told her to bring red raw meat for both of them from the meat he brought home. She did as she was told and brought the red meat together with spices. Before they started eating, she planned a way to make her lover share from the food they are eating. She said to her husband, ፬Darling it is a customary to throw a piece of meat to the spirits around us before we eat for ourselves፬. He said that is right and she can throw the pieces. She, then, cut a big loaf of meat and threw it into the barrel. Seeing this, the already suspicious husband grew more suspicious and said, ፬Darling why do you make the spirits eat raw meat, let them use this fire to roast the meat፬. Saying this, the husband threw fire into the barrel in which

the secret lover was hiding. The fire then burnt the man into death and the husband told his wife that she can never go away with cheating him.

### **Tale number 3. What does she do outside?**

There were a husband and a wife living together. The wife had another lover. One day, her lover, missing her a lot, decided to see her. This time her husband was sick and sleeping in the house. The wife was cleaning the garden. The lover came unexpectedly and greeted her. In the middle of their chatting, suddenly he took her by the hand and carried her and rushed to the house and placed her on the bed in which the sick husband was sleeping. The lover did not know that the husband was sick and sleeping. The sick husband was overtaken by surprise and asked the man, "hey, what do you think you are doing?" Equally surprised, the man answered: "Sir, you are sick and sleeping in the house, but she is outside. I got angry and decided bring her inside to you- After all, what does she do outside?"

### **Tale number 4. A step-mother and a step son**

There was a woman having her own son and a step son. She loves her own son and hates the other. She always mistreats him. He is the one to fetch water, collect firewood, and look after the cattle. He never says no to any kind of work he was ordered. Despite all this, the boy looks better and healthier than her own son. These things, apart from her hatred, make her very angry and envious. So, she decided to kill the boy. She planned the killing as follows: she dug a big hole on the ground on which the boy usually rests after coming home from work. Erecting a lot of pointed arrows in the hole, she covered it by cow's hide.

The boy has a very loveable and intimate dog that looks after him always. This dog has seen all the woman has done. The dog, when the woman leaves for kitchen, replaced the hide with grass and placed the cow's hide on a different position. The boy came home and after washing was going towards the cow's hide. The woman came back from the kitchen and rushed to towards the attractive grass to sit down and see the death of the boy she hated very much. Unfortunately before seeing the death of the boy, she became the one to go first because she directly went and slept on the pointed arrows covered by the grass which she thought was safe. The boy was saved by his friend-the dog.

## **Tale number 5. Disagreement**

There was a journey undertaken by a group of six. The group consists of a man, a problem, a dog, hunger, a devil and a girl. They started on the journey and went a long way. Problem said, "I am tired" and asked the man to carry him. He agreed and carried him. After another hour of journey hunger got tired and asked the dog to carry him. The dog, too, agreed. Going a long way since the start of their journey, devil was finally exhausted and proposed that the girl should carry him to their destination. In the same way as her partners, she too agreed to the proposal and did so.

Towards the sun set, the six travelers arrived at their destination three of them being carried by the other partners. At their destination, the man, the dog and the girl asked those they carried to get off them since they completed their journey. But the three being carried refused to get off their partners. The man asked the problem, "why don't you get off my shoulder?". The problem answered: "because there is no one who can withstand problems than you do". The man agreed after hearing the reason. Next the dog wanted to know why hunger refused to get off him. Hunger also reasoned out as follows: "You are very strong and can stay hungry for longer periods of time". The dog finally agreed since what hunger said is true. Finally the girl asked devil why he does not want to get off her. The devil expressed his reasons as follows: "I could live, agree and be entertained with you than anybody around me. Therefore, you should agree to carry me forever." In this way the six travelers became three since problem resided in the man, hunger in the dog and devil dwelled in the girl.

## **Tale number 6. The Adulterous woman**

There was a husband and a wife living together. The wife cheats her husband. She got three different lovers. One day the husband decided to go for hunting. Knowing this, the wife invites all her three lovers one after the other.

The one invited first arrived at his lover's house. They enjoyed some time together. In the middle of this, the second lover knocked at the door. The woman quickly told her lover that her husband has come home. Immediately, the man climbed up to the place reserved for the hens. She answered the door and invited the second lover in. They had fun for some time together before the third lover knocked at the door. In the same way she informed the second lover that her

husband has come home and let him hide in the inner room. She spent a considerable time chatting, and doing stuffs with the third lover. Again for the forth time there was a knock at the door. This time the real husband has come. She finally informed her third lover that her husband has come back home. Trembling, she told him to go and hid under the bed. She answered the door and let her husband in. She invited him to sit and asked him whether he was successful at hunting. He was not successful. He answered her question by indicating his finger upward to the roof, referring to God, "he who is above us only knows". The lover who hid on the place of the hens, thinking the man is referring to him, said, "It is not only me, there is another in the other room. The one in the other room also said, "You can also find the third under your bed". In this way, the husband caught all the three lovers and his wife and sent all of them away.

### **Tale number 7. The Faithful wife**

Long ago there lived a loving husband and wife. During this time there was a guy from the neighborhood who loves this woman. Even though she always tells him that she has a loving husband whom she also loves very much, this guy gives her a hard time. On her way to the market, river, and firewood collection, he follows her and tells her he loves her very much. She tried a lot to convince him she is married and loves her husband much. However, he said no and went on annoying her.

When she knew this guy is not going to leave her alone, she decided to tell her husband. After she informed her husband, she got relieved because he told her that this is simplest thing. The husband and the wife planned a way out together. They agreed that she will invite him to their house while the husband hides in the house. As per their plan, she went and invited the guy to her house telling him that her husband was away on some journey. The lover thought that is true and came on the day he was invited. As he got in the husband came out of his hiding place and caught the trouble maker. The husband prepared one hundred kilograms of wheat and ordered him to grind it to make flour. This took the guy a day and a night. After he is done with the grinding, he sent him away warning him not to look at his wife anymore. Finally, the faithful wife got her problem solved because she discussed it with her husband.

### **Tale number 8. A husband and a wife**

There were a husband and a wife living together. The husband was a priest who goes to church on Sundays to carry out his job. While they were living together, the wife loved another man from the neighborhood. On one Sunday she wanted to invite her new lover to her home while her husband left for church. After her husband went away for church, the lover, watching him hiding somewhere nearby, came immediately. They have had some time together. But before they eat the porridge she prepared, the husband came back from church early. The two were troubled and jumped and went under bed to hide. Trembling, she said 'I prepared a delicious porridge, thinking that you will be back early'. The husband took her for real and appreciated her deed. They started eating the porridge. She gave shorter wooden spoon to her husband and used the longer one herself. While eating she has the idea of sharing the porridge with her lover who is hiding under the bed on which the husband was sitting. She took the porridge in the longer wooden spoon and sends it under the bed to let her lover eat some. However, she was unsuccessful that the hot porridge touched the man's body giving him a strong burn which led him to jump up carrying the bed and dropping the husband on the floor. The lover runs away without being seen. Once more planning a way out, the wife told her husband that it was devil that came home with you, please get up and start praying. The husband accepted her advice and started praying. With this she finally escaped from being caught.

### **Tale number 9. The Unskilled wife**

In ancient times, a man married to an unskilled woman. They stayed together for a while. Seeing that she has no skill, he decided to marry a co-wife and he did it. This time she was confused did not know what to do. While she was in this trouble, a friend of hers came. This friend asked her what is wrong with her because she looks not alright. She told her friend that her husband married another wife and lives next door. He does not visit her, does not come to her home anymore, and no longer eats from her. After thinking for a while, he advised her to clean the house very well, prepare delicious food, hot milk and use good fragrances all over the house and invite him in the evening when he comes back from work. She did all she was told. In the evening when the husband came back from his farm, she invited him.

The husband was surprised to see her changed like that and improved her house, too. He ate the delicious food, drunk the hot milk, and enjoyed the good fragrance that filled the room. He spent the night there with her. He was also surprised to see her get up early in the morning. He was watching her being in bed. She sung the following song while grinding to make flour:

Oh! The tree on the edge of a cliff

Has it been our protector from falling

Or not

Oh! The advice of my good friend

Has brought my life back.

Finally, she got her husband back to her home because she was a very good listener and has put the advice she was given into practice.

### **Tale number 10. The stupid husband and the stupid wife**

Long ago there were a couple married living together. One day they slaughtered oxen and cooked it. Then the wife asked, "After we ate the meat, what toothpick are we going to use in order to clean the meat remnants from our teeth?" The husband answered, "This is the simplest issue. Let us go and bring it from the forest." She agreed and they went to the forest. On their way to the forest, they came across two people. They greeted each other and told these men that they are going to bring toothpick from the forest to clean their teeth with. They begged these two men till they come back to look after their cooked meat in the house. The two men agreed and went to the house they were told.

The two men arrived at the house and became very happy to see all these cooked meat. They ate all that is cooked and took the raw meat also with them. When the husband and the wife came home, they were left only with flies roaming all around the empty dishes. The husband was very angry and started chasing the flies and breaking the pots and other utensils that the flies rested on. Finally, the wife said, "My husband there are flies left sitting on my nose." Using the big stick he was holding, the husband hit the flies on the nose of his wife and killed his wife rather than the flies on her nose.

## **Tale number 11. Queen Ako Manoye**

There lived a queen the Oromo named *Ako Manoye*. She was the queen of the Oromo land. During her time every thing was excessive. The farmers produce was excess and life extravagant. The queen was also known for extravagant behaviors and was also called the cruelest, unsympathetic and impatient ruler all over the Oromo land. This is because she used to rule over the people and the land severely.

One day she called on to her ten loyal and strong worriers. They all immediately came and asked, "Your majesty, of what service shall we be for you?" She gave them very strong order to go and kill every elder whose height was shorter found all over the country. That time it was believed that shorter elders were considered as wise people who knew a way out for everything. Her loyal worriers went all over the country and killed the people they were ordered to kill. However, one wise shorter elder begged them not to kill him telling them that this queen ordered them to kill people like him because she might have a plan to let you do something that might be difficult or impossible to do. So he might be of great importance for them one day. They discussed among themselves and planned to hide this man where nobody can see him until they need him. Finishing their job, the worriers went home after months to the queen to inform her news.

The queen was waiting anxiously for her worriers to come home. They came home and the queen was very happy see them. She asked them, "Have you killed all the shorter elders?" They answered unanimously that they have done everything as they were ordered. She was very happy and it was time for her other order to come out. The queen ordered again her loyal worriers to build her a palace on the space, that is, without touching the ground and the space, in between the sky and the earth. They were very confused what to do about the new order of the queen. Suddenly, one of them remembered about the elder they hide. He informed his friends about the old man and they should go and discuss this issue with him. They went and found him where they kept him and told him the new order of the queen. The old man exclaimed, "You see! That is why I begged you not to kill me." "My sons," he said, "it is a custom that when a new home is built, the corner stone will be first laid down by the owner of the house. Therefore, go and ask her to first put the corner stone for you." They went back to the queen.

The queen was waiting for them. They asked her to put the corner stone herself as per the custom. She came to learn that they did not kill every elder they were told to kill. She became mad and said, "You bastards, you have not killed everybody I told you to kill." "Now go and bring a wild-ass for me", thinking that they will not do it. But they brought the wild-ass. Again she was very angry and said, "Bring it to me and place me on and tie me strongly to the wild-ass and leave me alone." They did as they were told and left her alone. When they release her, the wild-ass took flew away to the forest and the gorges. Finally, her own wit killed her by a wild-ass throwing her into a cliff.

### **Tale number 12. The Loving Wife**

There were once a husband and a wife living together. They live together for many years. They never disagreed or fought. However, one day a disagreement occurred between them on some issue. Since they have never fought before, they have had hard time agreeing on the issue. The husband, therefore, said, "If we do not agree and talk anymore, it is not worth living together. You can go to your parents." Then, she left for her parents.

When she comes to her parents' home, they understood that she had fought with her husband. Therefore, they planned a meeting of the husband and the wife in the presence of community elders and parents from both side to settle their problem.

The day of the meeting came and everybody was at the meeting, including the husband and wife. Among the community elders, one stands up and asked both the husband and wife, "tell us your entire problem and the points you disagreed on." Both told their problems turn by turn. After hearing their narration, one elder said, "As I can understand from your narration, your main problem is that you disagreed on sharing your entire properties. Therefore, for us to be fair in sharing equally between the two of you, please, we need you to take off all the cloths you are wearing now." Hearing this, the wife immediately looked at her husband in the form of asking his permission to take off her cloths. The other elder immediately said, "You see you two still love each other, you do not need to separate." Right there and that time they agreed not to divorce and hugged each other. The elders became very happy because their plan to reunite them was successful.

### **Tale number 13. The wise girl**

A husband a wife had to children and both were girls. One of the two girls is wise and the other foolish. While these children were still small, their mother died and the father planned to marry another. The woman he wants to marry told him that if he had children, she will not marry him. Therefore, he lied that he had none.

When the new wife came home he was forced to hide them in a big grain-storage (silo). He told his new wife that since he has some kind spirit, she should share any kind of food she makes and throw it in to the storage without looking inside. But, one day while throwing food as usual, she heard a noise and looked inside and faced with two beautiful small girls. She was very angry at her husband and again told him he must send them away or she would live.

He took the two girls to a place they never been before and waited till they sleep and left them there. They were confused and went to an unknown direction when they come across an *‘Oda tree’* or a sycamore and talked to him as follows: *‘if we are sinners in our work, fall up on us and kill us, but if not open yourself and be our home. Since they are only small children and free of sins, the Oda tree became their new home. They have nothing to eat. However, their neighbor was an ogre who has excessive property. One day, when the ogre went out to the field, the wise girl brought food for her sister and herself. When the food is finished, the fool girl insisted that she should go this time to the ogre’s house to get them food. She was not as cautious as her sister. She was surprised to see all that property of the ogre. While she was wondering here and there in the house the ogre came back from field and got her. He placed her in a skin basket and suspended her from the roof and lit fire under the bag she was in. He went out till she will be cooked and become s ready to eat.*

The wise sister was suspicious that the ogre might have got her sister. She decided to save her and went there very cautiously. Fortunately, the ogre was not in the house. She saw a bag hanging from the roof in which her sister was kept. She brought the bag down and took her sister out and replaced the bag with stones that gets hot faster and they left and suspended the bag.

She took her sister and rushed out to their home. When the ogre comes back, he was very happy to see the red burning bag. He went closer and tried take it down. Unfortunately the already burnt bag burst and spilled very reddish hot stones on his body and burned him to death. Next morning

his house, the cattle and sheep all stayed closed inside the house. Knowing this, the wise girl went to his home and saw him dead. From that day onwards, the sisters inherited the entire properties and the house of the ogre and lived in there happily forever.

#### **Tale number 14. The two wives**

There was a man having two wives. After some time this man died. Each woman has a son. The two wives love each other. They promised each other if one of them died before the other, one of them will bring up the wives the son of the one who died. The inevitable came and one of wives died. As per their promise the other wife took the son of her partner and brought him up.

The boy whose mother has died is not willing to work. When he says no to works his step mother orders him, she beat him. The beating reminded him that he should be submissive to any order by his step mother since she is not like his own mother who died. Hence, he becomes very nice boy who says ok to any thing.

The boy has fully grown now together with son of his step mother. The mother sends both boys for hunting giving a gun to her son and a spear to her step son. After a while both boys came home her son unsuccessful carrying a gun and her step son successful only with a spear. This makes her very angry. She says to her step-son, "I saw that you killed all the animals, but can you capture an elephant and cut his longue and bring to me?" He agreed and went to the river and waited for a thirsty elephant and cut his tongue and brought it to her .It was told that starting from that day the step mother regretted and promised to herself to keep the promise of partner who has died .and accepted the boy as her own son and loved him equally.

#### **Tale number 15. The stupid wife**

One day a husband slaughtered a sheep and tells his wife, "keep this meat for us, we will eat when the spirits come". She agreed and kept it. In the absence of her husband, a man came to her home speaking the following: "The spirits killed us, the spirits killed us!" The woman asked the man "Is your name the spirits?" He positively nodded his head to say "Yes" "Well then" she said, "My husband has told me to keep meat that should be eaten only when the spirits come." She brought all the meat in a big basket to the man who agreed his name is "the spirits" He took all the meat and told her to go out and watch whether her husband has come home. When she

went out, the man took every cloth in the house including the basket full meat and left. When she came back from outside, there was nothing left in the house.

### **Tale number 16. The stupid old lady**

On a rainy day, there was a man going on a journey. When he comes across a house on his way, he went to the house to escape from the rain. The house belongs to an old lady who came right then from a trip and very hungry, she opened the door for him and he went in. The woman was baking the only bread for herself. The man was also very hungry since he has been walking all the way in the rain. The man saw where the old lady kept the only bread.

The man asked the woman "Madam has the rain stopped? Let me go out and see it", she said. She went out and saw that it has stopped. She told him it has. While she was outside, he took her only bread and hid it in his bag and went out to go on his trip thanking her for allowing him escape the rain. She, too, said that is ok.

As the man left the house, she immediately went inside her house to eat the bread. But she found nothing and became mad because she was very hungry herself. As such the old lady lost her only bread for an unknown wise man.

### **Tale number 17. The greedy wife**

There were a man and his wife living together. The woman usually makes porridge for both of them. The husband always recognizes that his wife uses much flour but the final porridge becomes always smaller and it is not enough for two people. This makes him angry and suspicious.

One day getting upset, the husband decided to discuss this with his intimate friend. He told his friend "My wife used much flour while making porridge, but the final outcome is very small. What do you think is the problem?" His friend got angrier because he knew that when she makes the porridge and bringing it out on to the dish, half remains inside the pot used for cooking. She used to eat the porridge left inside alone. So, his friend advised him, when she puts on the pot with water, to add a leaf, telling him the type of the leaf, into the pot without being seen and

when the porridge is ready to be put on the dish, nothing will stick inside and all the porridge will come out.

Another day his wife is going to make porridge. He remembered the advice he received and did as he was told. When the porridge is ready, wife put it on to the dish, she was surprised that all the porridge came out on to the dish. She, then, said, "My husband, today our pot has given birth to more porridge. So go out side and celebrate saying "ililö. She planned to hide some porridge if he gets out. Since he knew her tricks, he said "ililö staying where he was.

### **Tale number 18. The cruelty of women**

Long ago, a king and his lords were arguing on who is crueler: men or women? Some of them say it is a man and some others say it is a woman. The king and his lords could not agree. Therefore, they planned to bring a husband and a wife for nearby village and told them the following proposal independently for each. First, they told the husband, "If you go home and cut the head of your wife while she sleeps and bring it to us. We promise you become a kingö. The man agreed and went home. During the night he waited till his wife sleeps. Holding a knife, he saw her in her sleep and could not kill her. Next morning he went to the king and reported to them that he cannot kill a wife whom he loves very much. They told him to go home. Then they called the wife and told her the same thing and if she did it, she will become the queen of the country. She agreed and next morning, she brought her husband's head rapping it with a piece of cloth and keeping it in a basket.

The king and the lords regretted that they let the innocent man killed. They agreed that women are crueler. They decided the women should be beheaded. From that day onwards, it was publicly agreed that women are crueler than men.

### **Tale number 19. The she-Monkey**

There lived an ape that has a small child of her own. One day the ape was walking a road carrying her child on her back as she does always. A she-monkey came without being seen and took the child of the ape and disappeared in to a forest nearby threw away the child. In the same way the monkey came back and sat on the back of the ape as if she was the child of the ape. They arrived home. Still the ape did not recognize that the monkey is not her child. However, as

time goes on the ape starts to ask herself why her child does not grow like other apes. She does not know that the one she took as her child was an ape that stays smaller. Then mother ape asked herself and her child: "why has God given me a child that never grows?" Hearing mother ape's complaint, the she-monkey said, "Let us go ask the witch why I do not grow like others." Mother ape agreed and prepared a big jar of honey for the witch. On their way the she-monkey ate the entire honey. Some droplets were dropping on the ape's hands and she asked "what is dropping on me?" The she-monkey answered, "It was my tears." "Why are you crying?" asked mother ape. "Why do you take me to the witch? If the witch says throw her away, I know you are going to throw me away." "Why do I throw you away? My only intention was to know why you do not grow up," said mother ape. This time since the she-monkey has eaten the entire honey; she jumped on to a tree and laughed at mother ape from the top of the tree. "Why do you laugh at me?" asked mother ape. The she-monkey answered: "Your foolishness made me laugh. First you lost your child, then your honey and now you lost me."

### **Tale number 20. The cruelty of step-mothers**

A man married two wives. One of his wives gave birth to twin daughters. The other wife could not give birth. Since the husband loves the one having children, her partner was very envious towards her. She wanted to steal the twins and make them disappear. One day while their mother went to the river to fetch water, she put them in a bag and threw them away on a highway. She came back and told her husband that his wife whom he loves so much ate his children. Taking this for truth, when the wife comes from the river, to make her life miserable he took her to the donkey's room. He made her home there. Her cloths are made of donkey's skin, and her regular work became looking after the donkeys.

A man came across a bag on a road and opened it. He was surprised to small twin daughters in the bag on a highway. He took them to his home and brought them up well. He got older and decided to tell them that he is not their real father. One day he summons on to them and said, "My children, I am not your real father. Your real father is found in such place. Your step mother threw you away while you were too small. She told your father that your mother has eaten you both. Now you go to such and such places where you will find your mother whose work is looking after donkeys wearing a cloth made of donkey's skin." He died instantly after telling them the truth.

The two daughters went on searching for their mother. They found her with a bunch of donkeys. They told her that she is their mother. She cried and cried out of happiness. The mother, then, took her children and went to her husband's home. She told him they are his children whom he believed she has eaten them. He was also excited to see his beautiful twin daughters alive and grown up. When the whole house was happier than ever, the step mother was in huge trouble because she has never thought this would happen. Finally, after a happy family reunion, their mother got back all she lost but the step mother was casted away into a donkey house, cloth and her regular job became looking after donkeys.

### **Tale number 21. A man and a She-Monkey**

Once there was a man walking on a road. He came across a she-monkey crying in the middle of the road. He asked her why she is crying. She answered, "I go my leg broken. I could not walk." The man said, "I could carry you buy what shall I do with my food that I am carrying?" The she-monkey immediately proposed, "If you carry me, I will carry the food in turn." They agreed and did as they proposed. While they were walking the she-monkey ate all the food she was carrying that belonged to the man.

The man knew from the droplet of the food that the monkey has eaten his food which she promised to carry. Before she knew that he knew she ate his food, he suddenly took her by the hand and went to his house. He dug a hole in the ground, added dry grass to cover the hole. In order to burn her he went inside to bring fire. As he left her for the house, the she-monkey immediately got out and added wild fruits in to the hole that blow when caught fire.

The man came back from the house carrying burning fire and threw it to the ground. The fruits began blowing like a gun which he took it for the organs of the she-monkey. He became so happy to hear the monkey's organ blowing like that. Right then, the monkey laughed at him from the top of a tree. He asked her, "How have you got out?" She answered, "Very easy, I came out holding on to the smoke that comes out of the ground." He was surprised and said, "Let me try getting out holding on to the smoke as you did." He went inside the hole. The she-monkey came down immediately and added more fire and dry grass in to the hole. He was finally burnt down to death by the same fire he brought to kill the wise she-monkey.

## **Tale number 22. The Beautiful and Unfaithful wife**

There lived a husband whose wife was very beautiful. This wife does not eat together with her husband. She always brings food and drink for him and sees him eating. She has never eaten with him. The husband always asks her, "My wife why don't you eat?" She always answers, "My husband, my beauty is enough for me. I do not need any food at all."

One day the husband wanted to test her. He planned to take her to the farm, which is very close to their house, for the whole day. Early in the morning, he woke up and let her for farming. Before leaving the house, he ate his breakfast and she prepared dough for injera. Both went to the farm. They stayed on the farm to late afternoon. She is very hungry even though the work is still unfinished. She is forced to plan a way out to go home and eat something. Without being called, she answered, "I will come soon, I will come soon, wait for me." The husband asked her who is calling her. She pretends that a woman from her neighborhood was in need of borrowing something. He was suspicious and said to her, "I will release the oxen and take them to the river for drink. You go home and give the woman what she wants and come back here and finish the work." Then he released the oxen and went towards the river which is on the opposite side of their house.

The man did not go to the river rather went to the house to hide and check what the hungry wife will do coming back home. As he expected, coming home she drunk the entire dough prepared for injera. The unbaked dough worked quickly and made her busy with strong diarrhea. This time her husband also went outside to their compound. He called her by her name and told her he is home.

She came back and told him that she has a diarrhea. He asked what happened to her. She told him that she knew nothing of the cause. He, on the other hand, wanted to teach her not to lie again and informed her that he has seen all she has done. She was highly ashamed. Starting from that day onwards she quit saying, "I do not eat! My beauty is enough for me." Finally the husband and the beautiful wife have started eating together.

## **Appendix B: Arsi Oromo Folksongs representing Women positively and negatively**

### **1. Bayee bayee(A Wedding song sung by a bride-to-be and her girl fiends)**

Bayee bayee hin beekuu daalee abbaa eegee luquxumaa,

Abbaa kiyya ganni lufee bonni dhufee eennutu looniin sii godaanaa;

Godaantuun harree rartee abbaa kiyya godaananii galuun haftee.

Bayee bayee hin beekuu na mararaa udda naæee lafa taaæee

Yoom deebiæee nama taæee.

Itittuu guchumaan firri waa dhugaa itti taraa,

Garaan ayyaa boonaafu natti hin dhufu,

Ulaagaa ulee hidda goggogaa naaf hiddaa,

Bahee galus nyaarumaan nama hiddaa;

Sharxumme jala dhibbaa nyaarri kee haa caccabuu,

Bahee galuu haa dadhabuu.

Goge jettee adaamii hin bobeessinii,

toltee jettee masaanuu hin oddessinii

Adaamiin godde baala,

masaanuun tolte hadhaa;

Adaamiin godduu hin qabduu,

Masaanuun toltuu hin qabduu.

Bilillee afaan qoolaa duutulee si argaan nu darbaa,

Farda adii ati badii sittu karaa kana baasee,

Hiree durbaa ati badii situ biyyaa ana baase;

Biyya bayuun laga shanii,

Biyya bayee ha sanii.

This song is about a girl who is going to be married. Towards the beginning, the girl talks about who will help her father in looking after the cattle and talking them for a long journey during summer time when there is no enough pasture land around because she is going to be married soon and she belongs to those who marries her. She says my brother will never come to see me because of his boisterous character. She curses those who are going to take her away from her parents. Her friends also advised her that she should be careful with her life. However, good she might be she should not discuss secrets with co-wife [in the case of her husband having more than one wife]. She also curses her chance of being woman. She understands that being a woman is a bad a fortune and once she is married she has lost her parents.

## **2. Bayee bayee kan intalli heerumtu ofii isiif sirbitu(A Wedding song sung by a bride-to-be about herself)**

Bayee bayee haræalee hin baafatanii,

Mala haræaa hayyolee gaafatanii;

Hayyolee ulee balaa,

Waan hayyuun murtu laala.

Bayee bayee akka waan cidha dhaquu ganamaan na dibanii,

Akka waan dayee baduu sabataan na hidhanii.

Sabbannilee diina kiyaa ,

Hanfaalaan miila kiyaa.

Bayee bayee daaleen aabbaa olgodaanee gad-godaanee,

Takka takuun hin dhidhatinii (hirɔatinii),

Qamaacaan jilba gayee ka takku hin dhiqatinii,

Ani hin dhiquu foonii keeti dhiqattu harkaa keeti.

Bayee bayee loowwan aabbaa hoomaanuu garaa taʼee,

Lamiin aabbaa mulunuu(hundinuu) daanyooleeʼee.

Bayee bayee garaan aayyaa irkiyyooʼoo na jaalataa,

Lubbuu tiyya jedha;

Bayee bayee garaan aayaa usiyooʼoo ana jibaa,

Loontu lubbuu tiyya jedha.

Bayee bayee garaan bahe bayyee hin beekuu attam taʼa,

Bayee bayee dubaree dubarillee waa kadhoo handaarilee,

Haruu jabboo waan nyaadhu hindhabnee,

Afaan tu wal na hidhee.

Bayee bayee baya geennaan macureen na raafamee,

Macuree gad-deebisii daalee abbaa na eebbisii;

Bayee bayee daleen aabbaa olgodaanee gad-godaanee,

Ganni gayee abbiyoo eenutu looniin si godaanaa,

Godaantuun harree rartee godaananii galuun haftee;

Bayee bayee duulli duulee itayyaa bobbeeffatee,

Abbaa ormaa kan ofii seetee odeeffatte.

Bayee bayee haati tiyya addaatte adda nuu dibaa jette,

Haati ormaa maraattu hidhaa jette,

Maraaree hidhaa fardaa

Maraattuu haadha gandaa.

Bayee bayee daakuu daakee aayyiyo,

fudhu harcee situ galchee situ halche,

Dubbataa fudhu barsee.

Barseen durbaa si hubduu,

Tiyya keessan si haa gubduu.

Bayee bayee osoo mukaa habuuleen dhaddachumaa

Osoo dhiiraa anillee kallachumaa.

Bayee bayee osoo mukaa habuuleen dhaaba golaa,

Osoo dhiiraa anillee dhaabee lolaa,

Dhiira lolaaf kayatanii ana tolaan qabatanii.

Bayee bayee abbaa kiyyaa mul'ataa

Haga waaqoo mul'adhuuu waaqoo mooyii

Mul'ata ana fooyii.

The song [2] is a song by the bride-to-be. She sings about herself, her parents and the new family she is going to join after marriage. Moreover, the goodness of once mother and the evilness of step-mother, about the effect or the value of being a man and a woman in her society. More specifically, she says getting married is like a prison. She says this because her new families will tie her using ፊፊፊፊፊፊ or a male belt suspecting that she will go away even after she gave birth to their child and that they do not believe her.

In this song it is seen that even though she is going away to other families, she wishes prosperity for her father [parents], for his cattle to double in number. She also worries who will help her father in feeding the cattle when she goes away.

She also says, even though she is forced to go to another family, she does not want to obey to disgraceful deeds like washing the legs of her husband.

Her mother likes her very much while her step-mother regrets the money they spend on wedding ceremony. Besides, when her mother worries much about her well-being, the step-mother is happier to see her off from her family.

In her understanding being a woman has less value in her society. She says, "If I were a man, I will be important to my family. If I were a man I would fight like him and show my importance. I know that my families keep my brothers for battles where as they gave me away for free to make relatives.

### **3. Tartarii [A wedding song that is sung by women and girls who are going to give away their daughter]**

Tar tarii birraa tar tarii,

Nyaapha haa qabduu jagalli;

Tar tarii ta dheeressanii hin dheeressinaa

Shaiyoo ta geeggeesanii

Geggeessee eessaan si gaha

Deebisaa garaan na na'aa anis atta ta'aa

Tar tarii shuulee tiyyoo

Cuffattee xurreen tiyyoo ta shaiyyoo

Alalaa bulee halluu si bitaa xilaa faanoo ta jaalaloo

Taliyoo maal kee tar tarii birraa tar tarii

Abbiyyoon alaa maal jedhaa?

Isiituu nyaaphaa dhalatee gabaasaa jedhaa.

Aayyiyyoon alaa maal jettii?

Anatuu ergaa baratee na nyaatte jettii.

Shayiyyon duruu teennumaa ,Buøii waraabii daalacha abbaa

Bitaa jechuun waraani.

Tar tarii abbaa Gammachuu Daalacha qorii gangalchu.

Tar tarii birraa tar tarii haadha shayiyyoo deeteyoo

Sabbataan garaa hidhadhuu baasaan geeteyoo.

Makiinaa bulee assaamasamuun

Durbaa naasaa jalaa baasaa

Gondoree garbuun gondooree

Haadha shayiyyoo deeteyoo garaan shondaree.

Maal sii goonaree.

Ganamaan na dhooftuu gufuun

Mana shoyiyyoon hin jirre hin dhufuu,

Dhufullee karrara hin lufuu.

In the above song [3], the girls start the song by insulting the outsiders who si going to take their friend away forever. They say it is because of their existence that their friend is leaving them. They also ask themselves how they could say goodbye, which is a difficult task to do, to their friend and decides to give her a memorable gift that lasts long.

The bride, on the other hand, asks what her father and her mother are saying from where they are. Her friends respond singing: her father says give her away because it is she who is born a woman who is meant for outsiders, and her mother, on the other hand, says, it is the mother who lost a lot because she gives much support in the house chores and she regrets a lot about her going away. And the girls advice the bride's mother that she needs to be stronger once she has decided to give her away.

The singers judge that the cause of all these mess is because of being born a female. Finally they complete the song by saying that in a house where -shaiyooø(a nick name of the bride) is gone is not worth coming and even though they come they will not pass the gate.

#### **4. Fayfaayii Aayaa [A song sung by the family and relatives when a man brings his bride home]**

Fayfaayii ayyaa faayaan galee

Kadhoo qeeransaa muree goodee

Qeerrantiin aayaa ee galee oodee

Inni hin kadhatee ima gaafatee

Worratu ofiirraa hobbaafatee

Jabilee rakkoo hobbaafachuu

Waaæe worra keetii hobbaafachuu

Arraddaa gamaa haa jabbiin yaatu

Iilii tolchaa haa lamiin naatuu

Tee lamiin hin naatuu tujjara hoo

Dimiyyoon lugaamaan uttalayoo

Dimiyyon lugaama kutee lufee

Xiqxiqii zinaarii muldhiin cufee

Fayfaayiin aayyaa faayaan galee

Shayiyyoo bishaan timootiyyoo

Maammiyyoo funyaan timootiyyoo

Funyaan limmoo hidhiin xuuxxoo

Galee kaasawoo worra ushoo.

The above song [4] can be summarized as follows: The singers welcome those who come back from wedding including the bridegroom saying that: our son has come back taking a wife [faaya] who he does not beg for but asked the family of the girl. However, it is her families who gave her away and got relief in that a woman is trouble maker like calf. Moreover they go on appreciating the bridegroom and his bloodlines

### **Weedduu Jaalalaa(weelluu)[Love songs]**

5. Fixeensa ganamaa yoo hinciniinin buutu,

Fayya hin qabu jetti yoo sinssinniin fuutu.[She complains about her health when she wants to quit her relationship with her lover]

6. Jaldeessa minaayee ceekataa obaasi,

Si jaaladhe jettu jaarsa kee kolaasi,

Isallee kolaaftu ka dhaalutu hafaa,

Wal faanaa dabarsi si ammadhee rafaa.[ If you love me castrate your husband,even if you castrate him,there is someone who inherits you. castrate them both, and then will sleep with you embracing you]

7. Asallaatti tamboo qircanii hoo

Ta waan jette irraa hin deebinehoo.[you are very difficult to convince]

8. Qotilee qottuu qotuun ta si baatu,

Ta didde maal qabdi baddu ta himatu.[ She who refuses is better than she who tells what she has done with her lover]

### **Geerarsa [Heroic songs]**

Heroic songs of the Oromo are usually lengthy. As the purpose of the paper is examining image of women, in some cases parts of the songs that deals with women are partially taken and translated.

9. í ijjooleen qona hin beektuu Ogolchoo buutee dhadhaabbatii malee,

Nadheen sanyoo hin himattu kakkatee duuti maleeí [children doesn't know farming, they rather go to ÆOgolchoÆ a name of a town/and wonder without work; Women do not tell about their lovers rather they die swearing.]

10. í Araddaa hiddi hin qabnee reæen hin jaallatuu,

Lammii qondaala hin qabne dubartiin hin jaallatuu. [Goats do not like a field without leaves; Women do not like a citizen[a man] who do not have relative/a bodyguard/]

11. í gamanaan dubbatee gamasiin dubbatee,

Kan kee maaf giddutti hafe akka waan ilma hin qabnee

Akka waan durba qofaaí [ the sense of this partial song is that the man's work is not completed as if he has no a son who supports him; as if he has a daughter only. Here having a son is preferred than a daughter ]

12. í ilaamee yaa aayyoo koo yaa dibriqqee dungee,

Yaa fooytuu calli lamaa yaa boontuu sanyii namaa

Mee kaæe si waama kaa hanga kan keen ilaala kaaí [ A mother, in this partial song, is treated as a skillful and loveable person]

13. Lolli gadheen nadheeniin dhufaa ,

Roobni gadheen subii dhufaa yoo seexani hin jire,

Lolli gadheen nadheeniin dhufaa , yoo dhirrsi achi hin jire. [Bad quarelling comes from women; bad rain comes early in the morning if the sorcerer is absent; Bad quarelling comes from women if the husband isn't there]

14. Luyni bifa lama

Tokko duula hin dhaqu,

Kuun dhaqee hin ajjeesu;

Nadheen gadheen bifa lama

Takka dhiqattee hin beektu

Takka dhiqatteetu hin quuftu. [Cowards are of two kinds: one doesn't go to battlefield; the other goes but doesn't fight. Bad women are of two kinds: one doesn't wash at all; the other washes the whole night].

## **Appendix C: Arsi Oromo Proverbs Portraying Women Positively and Negatively**

### **Proverbs portraying women positively**

#### **1.1 Women, girls, mothers as wise**

1. ãAkkamitti na dhungattaaö, jennaan õhanga na jaallattuö jette intali.

(õHow are you kissing me?öhe asked, õto the extent you love me, õanswered the girl.

2. Hanga beekan mana eegan jette jaartiin.

(One looks after the house up to one's knowledge)

3. Hubataniif qayya hin qayyatani

.(One does not do some thing for understanding the matter only)

4. Intala daakuu beektu daakuu hin hatani.

(You do not steal a flour from a woman who knows how to make it)

5. ãIntala si fuudhuuö ,jennaniin, õmala keetiö jette, õsi fuudhuu na jala teettaaö jennaaniin, õmala kootiö jette.

(õShall I marry you,öasked the man, õit is up to youö,answered the girl. õShall I marry you,would you last with me,öhe asked again,she answred, õit is up to meö.

6. Intalli fuulaan warra dhale fakkaatti,garaan warra heerumte fakkaatti.

(A women from outside resembles her biological parents, from inside the parents she is married to).

7. Nadheen faana qarsaarratti wal beekti.

(Women knew each others footprint on a stone in a water)

8. Jaartiin harkaan buna akoofti afaaniin waan baraa qaaxxi.

(A woman roasts a coffee with her hands at the same time talks about issues of the time)

9. Haati qaruuteen ilmoo ofii bishaan biratti guddifti.

(A wise mother brings her children up where there is water)

### **1.2 Mothers as loving**

10. Haadhatu laga jira ijoolleen qarreerra fiigdi.

(It is because of their mothers presence in the river that children runs on the edge of the river)

11. Haati naafaan shininniqaa koo jetti.

(A mother calls her disabled son/daughter -my graceful)

12. Haati ilmoo hin obsitu. (A mother never says I have had enough of her child)

### **1.3 Mothers as important person**

13. Manni gaariidha kan jedhamu yoo haadha qabaate qofaa dha.

(A house is said to be good if it has a mother)

14. Abbaan muka alaati haati utubaa manaati.

(A father is an outside tree where as a mother a pole of the house)

15. Haati hamtuu hin qabdu.

(A mother is never bad)

16. Haadhaa fi bishaan badduu hin qabdu.

(A mother and water is never bad)

17. Namni haati tiyya bushooftuu dha jedhu hin jiru.

(There is nobody who says my mother is unattractive whatever she might look)

#### **1.4 Women [mothers, girls] as suspicious and cautious person**

18. Haati hattuun intala ofii hin amantu.

( A thief mother does not trust her daughter)

19. Namni waan arge kadhataa okkotee koo naa dhoksa jette jarriin.

(öPeople ask/beg for anything they come across, please hide my pot,ö said the old lady.

20. Osoo qalma hin argin jaartiin tirruu anaaf jette.

(Before ckecking the slaughtering, the old lady ordered for the liver)

21. Kooraa irratti bayu malee heerumuu kiyya hin amanu jette haftuun.

(Bofere I sit on the horse, I do not believe that am married)

22. Daddaftee na dhunggate ,dhiirsa naa taøuu kee mooji jette intali.

(You hurried to kissing me, I am afraid whether you can be my future husband)

#### **1.5 Women [wives, girls] as important**

23. Bultiin nadhoo malee hin miøoftu.

(Life with out a woman is not sweet)

24. Intala dura jajan maayi ulfa jajan.

(First you appreciate the girl and later the her pregnancy)

25. Nadheen sabbata nyaati.

(Women eats their belt)

26. Niitiin dhiirsaaf kafana.

( A wife is a cloth for her husnad)

27. Qawween rasaasa malee dhiirri dubartii malee faaydaa hin qaban.

(A gun without a bullet and a man with out a woman have no use)

28. Niitii waan torbaaf fudhani waan takkaaf wajjiin jiraatani.

( You marry a woman for seven things but you keep living with her for one thing)

29. Ona taa'uu mannaa ontuu takka wajjiin ta'uu wayya.

(Rather than staying alone ,it is good to have one lazy/ugly woman in the house)

30. Namni niitii gaarii qabu mana keessatti dullooma.

(One who has a good wife grows old in his house)

31. Oorruu qe'ee fi niitii ganamaa booddee itti galan.

(A farm around the house and a first wife can be kept for later )

32. Mana galgalaaf ijaaratu niitii bultiif fuudhu.

(You build a house for staying the nights in, but a wife for life)

33. Namni dugdaa fi niitiin ol ka'a.

(A backbone and a wife help a man stands up)

34. Warra jechuun nadhoodha.

(A household/a family means a woman)

35. Bakka dubartiin hin jirre ciini hin tolu.

(Where there are no women,a wedding ceremony do not be good)

36. Kan du'e hin sodaatu jette niitiin Leenca morma huute.

(A dead has fear, said a woman chocking a lion by her hands)

## **1.6 Women [Wives and Mothers] as thoughtful**

37. Niitii yaadu yaada dabalaaf.

(A thoughtful wife will gate more to think of).

38.Haati yoo quufte ilmoo tiyyaaf jetti,ilmoon yoo quufte boruuf kaayatti.

(A mother keeps the food for her children after having enough for her self, but children say òI will use it tomorrowö)

### **1.7 Women [mothers] as generous**

39.Raafuu affeltee ollaa waamte.

(A woman invited her neighbor to a cooked cabbage only)

40.Dubartiin nama dhigseef dhiigdi.

(A woman says ok to whomever asked her)

41.Haati harma quufti malee harka hin guuftu.

( A mother only quits breast feeding , but never stops giving all she has)

42.Haati yoo quufte ilmoo tiyyaaf jetti,ilmoon yoo quufte boruuf kaayatti.

( A mother keeps food for her children after having enough for her self, but children say òI will use it tomorrowö)

43.Dachee fi haadha waan itti kennan irraa fudhatan.

(You take whatever you gave to the earth and your mather)

44.Jaartiin cufantaa ergiftee balbalarra bulte.

(Atfer lending the door of her house, the old lady stayed the whole night up watching her door)

## **2. Proverbs portraying women negatively**

### **2.1 Women [Wife] as greedy and selfish**

45.Akka hin nyaanne zangaadaan marqittee akka hin dhiifne itti carreessite.

(To prevent me from eating the porridge she made it from sourghum, for me not to leave it she has added more butter)

46. Akka hin komanne na yaamtee akka hin nyaanne na dhorgatte.

(To prevent me from blaming her she invited me, but to eat she has not given me any)

47. Haganumaaf na dabarti jette intalti takka ragaddee.

(Is it only for this that I should have missed,ö said a girl after dancing once.

48. Hanga hin qonne yaa qunnaa isii.

(She is not a good farmer, but she uses a lot of the product)

49. Tanumaaf na beelessee jette niitiin biddeena shan fixe.

(öIs it only for this that I felt hungry,ö said a wife, öafter eating five öinjeraöö)

50. Kennuu hin beektuu fudhachuuf harka isii hafarsiti.

(She does not know giving but stretch her hands to take)

51. Kunuu nyaata jette niitiin damma arraabde.

(öThey call also this foodö said a wife after eating honey.)

52. Raafuu affeltee ollaa waamte.

(A woman invited her neighbor to a cooked cabbage only)

53. Keenna a dabarte jette jaartiin daraboo ishiitiin.

( öYou have passed the age of receiving gift,ö said an old lady to her friend.

54. Of jettuun dhiirsa koo hin jettu.

( A selfish do not think of her husband)

55. Niitiin dhirsa irraanfatee dinnicha funnaanatte.

(A wife forgot her husband and collected the potato for her self)

56. Osoo qalma hin argin jaartiin tirruu anaaf jette.

(Before checking the slaughtering, the old lady ordered for the liver)

## **2. 2. Women as Disagreeable and Disobedient**

57. Amala hin qabduuf kophaa bulti.

(Because of her bad behavior, she lives alone)

58. Amma tole jettee niitiin dhiirsa manaa ariite.

(“Now everything is good,” said a woman after chasing her husband away from his home)

59. Hoodhu jennaan diddee ol keennaan hatte.

(When she was given she refused, but she took from where it is kept)

60. Kadhannaan diddee dhisnaan bootte.

(When asked she refused, but when left she cried)

61. Ofiin bultuun nama hin jaalattu.

(A woman who lives by herself does not like others)

62. Namni niitiin bulu ollaan hin bulu.

(A man who is ruled by his wife does not agree with his neighbors)

## **2.3. Women as liars, pretenders, deceivers**

63. Ofii ni bootti gammade jetti.

(She is crying, but pretends that she is happy)

64. Duruma dhiirsi naa hin bane jetti gursummeettiin jaarsatti heerumtee.

(“It is my luck that I do not find a husband,” said a widow after getting married to an old man)

65. Sobdee bootee amba kolfisiifte.

(She let others laugh by pretending that she is crying)

66. Kakuun dubartii amala beekaan kana beeka gurra keessa kabala.

(A woman's swearing is her behavior, that is why a clever man hits her in her ears)

67. Intalli fuulaan warra dhale fakkaatti, garaan warra heerumte fakkaatti.

(A woman from outside resembles her biological parents, from inside the parents she is married to).

68. Niitiin dhiirsa wajjiin nyaachuu didde, nyaatee garaa qabdi yookiin kayatee lafaa qabdi.

(A wife who refused to eat together with her husband, must have eaten already or have kept some for herself)

#### **2.4 Women as Cruel**

69. Dhaala abdatteet odoo hin duʼan awwalte.

(Believing that she will inherit his brother, a wife buried her husband alive)

70. Dhiirsa tamboon huute niitiin kolfaan duute.

(A husband was choked with a cigar, however, his wife laughs badly at him)

71. Mootummaan dubartii bishaan ol yaafti.

(A woman's government will turn the river up the hill)

72. *Heexoo* fi niitiin namatti hin dabin.

(A medicine (traditional herb) and a wife is not good if they do not fit)

73. Namni niitiin bulu ollaan hin bulu.

(A husband ruled by his wife do not agree with his neighbor)

74. Garbaan hin qoosin daaraa dhaan si qabdi durbaan hin qoosin mutaadhaan si waraanti.

(Do not crack a joke with a slave he/she will spoil you with dust/dirt, do not do the same with a girl ,she will stab you with a knife)

## **2.5 Women as who are easily deceived**

75. Geete geette jennaan intalti jala bultii dhaqxe.

( When everybody tells her that she is old enough for marriage,she left for the groom's house on the eve)

76. Haadha gabaabdu intalti hirriyyaa seeti.

(A short mother is taken for a friend by her own daughter)

77. Hamartii bitaniifi sossobatu.

(You date a girl by buying her a bracelet)

78. Hin bari'u seeteet manatti udaante.

(Thinking that the morning will not come ,she shit in the house)

79. Kadhatee galteet weedisaa daakti.

(She got it by begging, but she grind the grain singing)

80. Oddoo isii irraa hin hafin liqeessitee odoo hin fudhatin duute.

(She lent it even though she hasn't enough, but died before getting it back)

81. Raafuu affeltee ollaa waamte.

(A woman invited her neighbor to a cooked cabbage only)

82. Ulfaachuun kan ulfaati jennaan gowwittiin garaa dhiibde.

(When she was told that respect comes from pregnancy,a fool pretended to be one by pushing her belly outward)

83. Dhiirsa tamboon huute niitiin kolfaan duute.

(A husband was chocked with a cigar, however, his wife laughs badly at him)

84. Deettee hin beektu dahaaf jarjarti.

(She knew nothing about bearing a child, but she rush to do one)

85. Biyya aannaniitti gala jennaan,jaartiin aannan dhangalaafte.

(When she heard that they are going to a milk plenty country,the old lady poured down all she has)

86. Bishaan lagaa dhume jennaan,boosettiin ilil jette.

(The lazy/stupid woman celebrated when she was told that the water in the river is totally used)

87. Jaartiin cufantaa ergiftee balbalarra bulte.

(After lending the door of her house, the old lady stayed the whole night watching)

## **2.6 Women [wives] as shameless**

88. Hin qaanoftu nama qaanessiti.

(When she is supposed to be shameful,she let others to be ashamed)

89. Kadhatee galteet weedisaa daakti.

(She got it by begging, but she grind the grain singing)

90. Kunuu nyaata jette niitiin damma arraabde. (ØThey call also this foodØsaid a wife after eating honey.)

91. Salphoo mana isii hin dhaqan mana namatti dhufi.

(No one goes to the house of a shameless woman, she comes to your house)

92. Dhiirsa tamboon huute niitiin kolfaan duute.

(A husband was chocked with a cigar, however, his wife laughed badly at him)

93. Kan qaanofne deettee buna liqqi dhaxxi.

(A shameless goes to borrow coffee right after her delivery)

94. Intala koo koottu gabaa dhaqnaaö jennaan, öyaa soddaa koo koottu sirba dhaqnaaö jette.

(öMy girl letø go shopping,ö asked the father-in-law, ömy father-in-law, letø go dancing,ö answered the girl.

95. Of jettuun dhiirsa koo hin jettu.

(A selfish do not think of her husband)

96. Jabduu jajjabduun dhiirsa hin dadhabdu.

( A shameless do not back down from her husband)

## **2.7 Women [wives] as submissive, powerless, silent**

97. Intalti garaa laaftu garaa qullaa hin heerumtu.

(A generous girl never gets married in her empty belly)

98. Garaa/Ija laaftuun oboleessaaf ulfoofti.

(A submissive girl gets pregnant from her brother)

99. Intalti tole tolee gudda tu obboleessaraa fafaan galti.

(A girl who says ok to everything, will get shame to her home from her own brother)

100. Dhiirsa kijibuu niitiin lafa laalti.

(Because of a lying husband, a wife gets ashamed)

101. Nadhoon hamtuun siin loluun dura meeshaan lolti.

(A bad wife fights with tools in the house before she fights with her husband)

102. Amiiniin dubartii fi dhagaan lukku garaa keessa.

(A girlø acceptance and henø grinding- stone is inside)

103. Kadhatanii niitii fuudhanii kadhattee warra isii dhaxxi.

(You marry a wife by begging ,she later on go to her parents for a visit by begging her husband)

## **2.8 Women as lacking Intelligence**

104. Nadheen/dubartiin lama hin beektu takka hin walaaltu.

(Women do not now two but never misses one)

105. Beekumsi dubartii boroorra hin darbu.

(Women's knowledge do not go beyond the fence)

106. Dubartiin dubbi hin tolchitu nyaata tolchiti.

(Women do not make sweet speech but sweet food)

107. Dubartiin cinaacharraa waan uumamteef dubiin isii hir'uu dha.

(Since women are made from a rib bone their speech is not full)

108. Dubbiin dubartii fi udaan handdaaqoo buburree hin dhabu.

(A woman's speech and a hen's waste is multi-coloured)

109. Mootummaan dubartii karra cufaa oolcha.

(A woman's government keeps the door closed the day)

110. Dubartiin beekaa deetti malee beekumsa hin qabdu.

(A woman gives birth to an intelligent person but has no intelligence her self)

111. Boosettiin kajeelaaf mana namaa dhaxxi.

( A stupid/lazy woman goes to her neighbor to get something to eat and drink)

## **2.9. Bad wife**

112. Niitiin dhiirsa mootu ganda bulti.

(A woman that wins her husband freely stays the night in others house)

113. Niitiin badduun dhiirsa hamatti.

(A bad wife gossips her own husband)

114. Namni niitii lama awwaalli isaa banaa dha.

(A man having two wives has his grave open always)

115. Namni niitii hamtuu qabu yeroo malee dullooma.

(A person who married a bad wife grows old fast)

116. Namni niitii hamtuu qabu mana keessatti hiyyooma.

(A person who married a bad wife gets poorer and poorer in the house)

117. Niitiin hamtuun kufa.

(A bad wife is a failure)

118. Dhiirsa tamboon huute niitiin kolfaan duute.

(A husband was choked with a cigar; however, his wife laughs badly at him)

## **2.10 Women as trouble makers or evil**

119. Salphoo mana isii hin dhaqan mana namatti dhufti.

(No one goes to her ,a shameless comes to your house)

120. Ibiddi nadheen qabsiifte hin dhaamu.

(A fire lit by women could not be turned off)

121. Reæe fi nadheen lafa rakkoon jiru jaalatti.

(Goats and women like where there is trouble)

122. Namni dubartiin ergitte duæ hin sodaatu.

(One who is sent by a woman never fears for his life)

123. Sareen lafee fiddi nadheen dubbi fiddi.

(Dogs bring bones, women troubles)

124. Ijoollee fi nadheenitu dhiira waliin gaya.

(It is kids and women who let mwn fight/disagree)

125. Haati budeenaa aduu ganamaati.

(A step-mother is like a morning sun)

126. Aduun ganamaa fi haati budeenaa odoo hin beekin nama miiti.

(A morning sun and a step-mother hurts you without one's knowledge)

127. Tiifuu fi haati budeenaa malaan nama miiti.

(A shower (rain) and a step-mother hurt one very systematically)

## **2.11 Women [wives] as adulterous**

128. Yoom deebita jennaan yoom na eegda jedhe namichi niitiidhaan.

(õWhen will you be back,õ asked the wife, õwhen will you wait for me,õ answered the husband)

129. Niitiin dhiirsi irraa duæ niiti nama hafeeti.

(A widowed is a wife of the rest)

130. Dubartiin nama dhigseef dhiigdi.

(A woman says ok to whoever asked her)

131. Harkifattuun niitii dhiirsaan nama eegdi.

(A reluctant wife with a boyfriend in her house waits till her husband comes back)

## **2.12 Women as jealous**

132. Garaa qabaachuu baatanillee masaanuu biratti garaa dhiiban.

(Even though not pregnant, in the presence of a co-wife, one should pretend to be pregnant)

133. Dhiirri niitiin itti hinaaftuu fi manni itti dhimmisu tokko.

(A man whose wife is envious and whose roof leaks are the same)

134. Namni niitiin bulu ollaan hin bulu.

(A man that is ruled by his wife do not agree with his neighbor)

## **2.13 Women [wives] as inferior to men**

135. Niitiin dhiirsa hin qabne mana utubaa hin qabne.

(A woman without a husband is like a house without a pole)

136. Niitii fi irfiin kan ofii gadiiti.

(A wife and a plough are to be found downward)

137. Namni ilma dhabe intala taphsiisa.

(One who has no a son will be forced to play with his daughter)

138. Dubartii gurri tokko.

(A woman's ear is single)

139. Beekumsi dubartii boroorra hin darbu.

(Women have little knowledge)

140. Dubartiin dubbii hin tolchitu nyaata tolchiti.

(Women do not make sweet speech but sweet food)

141. Dubartiin cinaacharraa waan uumamteef dubiin isii hirøuu dha.

(Since women are made from a rib bone their speech is not full)

142. Dubartiin nama hin bulchitu dhiiratu nama bulcha.

(A woman do not rule, it is a man that rules)

143. Dubartiin lama hi beektu takka hin wallaaltu.

(Women do not now two but never misses one)

144. Dubartiin keessumaa hin qabdu.

(A woman is never a guest)

145. Taaøuu manna durba dhalchuu wayya.

(øRather than sitting idle,øsaid aman, øit is good to bear a girlø)

146. Harreen mana hin qabduu mana loonii galti, nadheen mana hin qabdu mana dhiiraa galti.

(A donkey has no house but lives with the other cattles,and women do not have house but lives in a manø house)

147. Aduree, saree fi dubartii adabaan gudisani.

(You bring up cats, dogs and girls by proper punishment)

148. Dubartii fi jibicha garaa goggogaa leenjisan.

(You train an oxen and a woman with their stomach empty)

149. Anuu bade kan intala taøe badii lammataa kan itala daye jette niitiin.

(I am mistaken by being a woman, the second mistake I gave birth to a girl)

## **2.14 Women [wives] as careless**

150. Kan jiruun duute dhiirsa jiruun ajjeesti.

(A woman who is careless, does not care for her husband)

151. Boru hin beekneen qodaan bukoo isii sagal.

(A woman that does not think of tomorrow, prepares her dough in nine materials)

152. Kan ulfaan daakuu nyaate, gaafa deette daaraa nyaatti.

(A woman that ate flour during her pregnancy will eat dust after delivery)

153. Kan boru hin beekne iftaan quba hin qabdu.

(A woman who does not know tomorrow, have no idea about the day after tomorrow)

154. òIntala koo koottu gabaa dhaqnaaö jennaan, òyaa soddaa koo koottu sirba dhaqnaaö jette.

(The father-in law asked his daughter-in law, òletø go to market?ö She answered, òMy father-in law òletø go to the dance.ö

155. Ollaa abdattee dhiirsa heexoo obbafte.

(Hoping that she will get proper food for medicine, a wife let her husband drink the medicine)

## **2.15 Women as unreliable**

156. Dubartiin siree qaraati, waan ni qabna jedhanii abdatan hin qabdu.

(A woman is like a sharp knife by the side of the bed, one cannot hope and say we have a daughter)

157. Handhuura intalaa alatti awwaalan, kan gurbaa mana keessatti awwaalan.

(You bury a girlø placenta outside, a boyø inside the house)

158. Namni niitii takka fi ija takka qabu, takkuma duøa.

(A man with a single eye and a single wife dies once)

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### 1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to critically examine the images of women in Arsi Oromo folklore, particularly folktales, folksongs and proverbs. According to Okephwo (1992) and Cuddon (1998) the concept of folklore refers to the tradition, customs, superstitions, etc of a society that have been handed down from generation to generation by words of mouth not in written form. It consists of folksongs, ballads, fairytales, drama, proverbs, riddles, charms, legends and myths.

Various scholars indicate that folklore shows the manner of thinking, mode of life, attitudes, and cultural features of a society it belongs to. Georges and Jones (1995) attempted to explain this function of folklore by defining the concept folklore as follows:

The word folklore denotes expressive form, processes, and behaviors (1) that we customarily learn, teach, and utilize or display during face-to-face interactions, and (2) that we judge to be traditional (a) because they serve as evidence of continuities and consistencies through time and space in human knowledge, thought, beliefs, and feelings.(p.1)

Hence, if folklore reflects the manner of thinking, mode of life, attitudes, beliefs, feelings, and cultural aspects of a society it belongs to, it would, in one way or another, play a basic role in the ways in which women are viewed in the society.

Ethiopia is a country where a large number of ethnic groups are found with their diverse languages and cultural aspects. The Oromo being among the many ethnic groups forming the nation, the images of women are depicted in its folklore in a variety of ways which this study tried to examine. For instance, as can be seen from the following proverbs, women are portrayed both positively and negatively:

Bultiin nadhoo malee hin miðoofu. [Life without a woman is not sweet]<sup>23</sup>.This proverb shows the positive side of women by portraying them as important for ones life.

Of jettuun dhiirsa koo hin jettu. [ A selfish woman does not think of her husband]<sup>54</sup>..This proverb unlike the above one shows the negative side of women and portrays them as selfish beings in that they do not care about their husbands and only worry about their

own matters. There is a saying that is used on a daily basis among the Arsi Oromo: ስMaal akka nama dubartiin itti dhalattee cacalāstanö [ Why has silence prevailed in the house as if you have begotten a daughter ]. Thus, such are the features of most proverbs, folktales and folksongs which need much scrutiny and examination in order to see what the images of woman look like in these genres of folklore. To do so, even though folklore consists of many genres, the study focused particularly on the collection of folktales, folksongs, and proverbs from two woredas or [districts] in east Arsi zone and their analysis in order to achieve its goal.

This study is made up of four chapters. In these chapters relevant methods and theories in the study of folklore and its sub-genres and some issues in feminism are discussed and the image of women in Arsi Oromo folklore is presented. More specifically, the first chapter is the introductory one. In the second chapter, a review of related literature has been incorporated. The third chapter is the analysis of the three folkloric genres selected for the study. The final part of the study is conclusion.

This particular chapter focuses on the statement of the problem, the objectives of the study, the significance of the study, the scope of the study, limitations of the study, and the methodology of the study. Moreover, how the collected folktales, folksongs and proverbs are translated and how the classifications of these data are accomplished has been included.

## **1.1 Statement of the problem**

Folklore is common to all people. According to Bascom (1965) ስno group of people, however remote or however simple their technology, has ever been discovered which does not employ some form of folklore. (Bascom: ስFolklore and Anthropology,ስ in *The Study of Folklore, 1965*, p. 26.).

The image of women is portrayed in many ways both in written and oral- literature. In folk-literature such as proverbs, folktales, myths, long legends, etc, women are depicted in various ways and this study is interested in finding them out.

There are some studies carried out so far around this subject both in Oromia region and Arsi zone. Sena Gonfa (2008) has carried out a study entitled ስImage of women in Arsi Oromo proverbs and sayings: The case of West Arsiስ. In her operational definition section, Sena has explained that proverbs and sayings are used interchangeably. However, the researcher feels that

in the presence of various folkloric genres it is difficult to find out and conclude about the image of women in Arsi Oromo based only on a single genre: proverb. Moreover, there are different researchers who carried out studies related to the collection and analysis of proverbs, folktales and folksongs, the contextual studies of proverbs in the Oromia region in general that did not focus on such issues as images of women. For instance, the three volume works done by Cluade Sumner in the collection and analysis of Oromo proverbs (1995), folktales(1996) and folksongs(1997) are typical works of recent movement in research of Oromo folklore.

The fact that the image of women in Arsi Oromo folklore is not investigated widely and thoroughly and the wide availability and the use of folklore such as folktales, folksongs and proverbs at different levels of the society beginning at the household level made these folkloric sub-genres the target for this study.

Therefore, this study explored the image of women in Arsi Oromo folklore particularly focusing on folktales, folksongs and proverbs. To do this, in the course of its development, this study has been attempted to answer the following important research questions:

What do the images of women look like in Arsi Oromo folklore, particularly folktales, folksongs and proverbs?

Do the image of women in Arsi Oromo folktales, folksongs, and proverbs vary?

## **1.2 Objectives of the study**

### **1.2.1 General Objective of the Study**

The general objective of this study is to examine and identify the images of women in Arsi Oromo folklore particularly in folktales, folksongs, and proverbs. In other words, this study aimed at discovering the images of Arsi Oromo women in the three genres of folklore.

### **1.2.2 Specific objectives**

The specific objectives of this study are:

to collect folktales, folksongs and proverbs of the Arsi Oromo and analyze the image of women reflected in them.

to examine the attitude of the society towards women in relation to the use of the specified types of folkloric-genres.

### **1.3 Significance of the Study**

This study might be useful in providing an important understanding of the image of women in Oromo folklore in general and Arsi Oromo proverbs in particular. This study may give the opportunity for readers to see deep into the folktales, folksongs and proverbs identified in order to understand how people perceive women. Women may be interested in the messages these folkloric sub-genres in their society carry about them and start to critically examine them. Moreover, the researcher feels that this study may pave the way for further research in the area.

### **1.4 Scope and Limitations of the Study**

This study has a limited scope both in the geographical area it covered and the content included in it. As explained in the thesis topic, this study, area wise, focused only on two districts or woredas in east Arsi zone. This study, content wise, is limited to the images of women in folktales, folksongs, and proverbs collected from the target sample only. It does not deal with other genres in folklore apart from the three mentioned. Moreover, it does not go beyond the investigation of the images of women.

Due to the nature of the study itself, the researcher encountered different problems in the course of the study. The first limitation was on translating the collected folkloric entities in Oromo language into English with out losing the original sense and meaning. The other difficulty is that these days when different teachings of awareness raising are done about the role of women and their rights in almost all parts of the society, it makes it a little difficult to find people using folklore about women openly in the public. In other words, this limits the use of folktales, folksongs and proverbs with negative connotations at household level only making it difficult for the researcher to access them easily. Moreover, time and budget constraints were also a major problem the researcher faced.

## **1.5 Methodology of the Study**

This study has passed through various procedures including collection of the three folkloric sub-genres (folktales, folksongs, and proverbs) from the target informants and documents, asking for people's opinions about the meaning of the folktales, folksongs and proverbs, translating them into English, classifying them under different categories, analyzing and interpreting them .

### **1.5.1. Sample of the study**

The sample selected for this study is Oromo folktales, folksongs and proverbs from east Arsi. The purposive sampling technique has been used in order to decide the location of the study. The researcher was born in that area and has many experiences with the people and culture of that region. This, the researcher felt, contributed much to the study at hand in a number of ways. The study has focused on two woredas/districts/: Ziway Dugda and Hetosa. Specifically, data collection took place in four Kebeles two from each: Abargada and Uboweni-baricha from the former district and Boru Jawi and Itaya from the latter district.

The sample of this study covered informants from all age groups in order to be able to compare the results and also students are used for focused group discussion. The first group of informants interviewed was of male elderly people, and young boys , fifteen in total, in the region to collect folklore about women and to identify the attitude of these men towards women due to the meaning the folklore transmits.

Secondly, elderly women and young girls, again fifteen in total, were selected and interviewed to collect the target folkloric sub-genres and also to see what women know and think about the positive or negative messages the folktales, folksongs, and proverbs carry.

Thirdly, students in two high schools from each district were involved in focused group discussion. The target students were selected based on the information received from their teachers regarding their outspoken behavior, involvement in different activities in the two schools and knowledge of their culture. From each school, twenty students were involved in the focused group discussion wherein half of them were girls.

Finally, already documented folktales, folksongs and proverbs either in English or in Oromo language were used as secondary source of data.

### **1.5.2 Method of Data Collection**

The methods used in this study are interview, focused group discussion, and observation of the focused group discussion. As stated under the sample of the study, this research project employed interviews with the sample subjects. Focused group discussion has been undertaken using selected students from two high schools in the two districts. However, before the discussion was carried out, the students were asked to come up with any of the three folkloric sub-genres that talks about women with an explanation for their contextual usage. In the course of the students' discussion, the researcher made observations that particularly focused on identifying the students' attitude towards women in relation to the messages in the selected genres.

Moreover, document inspection has been done in which case the printed materials either in Oromo language or English were consulted as sources of data. As the purpose of this study is to examine the image of women by looking into the attitudes of the society through their folklore, the researcher felt that interviewing his informants was found to be appropriate. Regarding the relevance of interview method of data collection, Goldstein (1974:104) states that the information which may be obtained through observation by the collector is limited to situations and performances which are external to the inner man and therefore interviews are an important tool in order to elicit such kinds of inner information and attitudes from the informants. The interviews were carried out in different places, as explained under the sample population. The document inspection part helped the researcher to compare the results of the fieldwork with different anthologies of Oromo folklore collected, analyzed by different authors so far.

### **1.5.3 Analysis of Data**

The folktales, folksongs and proverbs collected were brought together, and sorted out based on their similarity and relevance of their themes and grouped under different topics. Then they were translated into English. After doing the grouping of the folktales, folksongs and proverbs under relevant categories and translating them into English, analysis was taken up. However, in the

data analysis only the translated versions of the folktales are used. Because of the lengthy nature of folktales, it makes it difficult to use folktales both in the language they occur and in English at the same time and , therefore, only the translated version of the folktales are appended. Regarding the folksongs and proverbs, some of the folksongs and all of the proverbs appeared both in the data analysis section and under the appendices in both the language they occur and the English language.

## **1.6 Definition of Some key terms in the study**

The important concepts in this study are the following: folktales, folksongs, proverbs, image, and feminism. For this study, these concepts are understood as follows:

*'Folktales'*- for the purpose of this study, it should be understood as defined by Abrams (1999:101) as "a short narrative in prose of unknown authorship which has been transmitted orally; many of these tales eventually achieve written form".

*'Folksongs'*- seemingly spontaneous songs of various races and cultures are considered to be "folksong". It is a folk music that is part of a folk culture .Moreover, present-day collectors use the term "folk music" or "folksongs" as all-inclusive, covering many varieties of music of the common people. These songs should be traditional in the sense that they are not composed like the modern ones and should be those passed down to generation orally (Mills, 1974; Park, 1967; Lawless, 1960). In this study folksong and folk music are used interchangeably.

*'Proverbs'* ó Proverbs are defined in different ways by different people. For this study a proverb is defined as "a brief, popular sentence or complex sentence, grammatically complete and independent with respect to its thought, which teaches a lesson ,which on its own authority lays claim to absolute validity" (Pfeffer,1997:3). Moreover, proverbs are consistently described as self-contained, pithy, traditional expressions with didactic content and fixed form (Norrik, 1985:31).

*'Image'* óin this research, it will be understood as the representation or portrayal of women in the folklore or as the impression created by the folkloric genres in the minds of the people and the attitude of people towards women following the meaning of those folktales, folksongs and proverbs.

*'Feminism'*-In this study, feminism is understood as explained by Culler (1997:126), "feminist theorists champion the identity of women, demand rights for women, and promote women's writings as representations of the experience of women. Besides, in the description of Tyson (1999:83), "feminist criticism examines the ways in which literature (and other cultural productions) reinforce or undermine the economic, political, social, and psychological oppression of women."

*'Patriarchal ideology'*- Patriarchy literally means rule by the father. However, the word patriarchy is often used loosely as the rule or dominance of males, regardless of whether they are fathers; and any social, political, economic, or educational system or ideology that grants privileged status to males, and permits or encourages their domination of women, is a patriarchal system ((Schussler-Fiorenza, 2003; Kemerling, 2001).

## CHAPTER TWO

### A REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter consists of the review of related literature concerning folklore and its constituents such as folktales, folksongs, and proverbs. More specifically, the definition of the concept folklore and its functions as well as the broad explanation of the three sub-genres (folktales, folksongs, and proverbs), which are the major concern of this study, have been presented. Moreover, some issues related to feminism are briefly presented. Last but not least, the socio-cultural background of the Arsi Oromo is treated in this chapter.

#### 2.1. Understanding Folklore

##### 2.1.1 Definition and characteristics of folklore

Definition of the concept folklore has been an issue of a debate for many scholars for so long. Peek and Yankah (2004) state that the discipline of folklore has been shadowed for too many years by debates over terminology and the scope of the field. Initially, in Europe, the term *folklore* referred literally to the *folklore* of the *folk*, that is, the illiterate members of a literate society; for some, that definition still holds. Leach (1949) and Boswell (1962) seem to have a similar understanding of folklore. For them, folklore is a general term referring to an unsophisticated and unscientific society's popular and traditional knowledge that is accumulated over many years by what people have experienced, learned, and practiced including their handicrafts, customs, beliefs, traditions, tales, magical practices, proverbs, songs, etc. Dundes (1965), however, states that folklore refers to myth, legends, tales, jokes, proverbs, riddles, chants, charms, blessings, curses, deaths, insults, teases, greetings, customs, folk dances, folk drama, folk art, folk belief, folk medicine, folk music, etc. Similarly, Dorson (1972) attempts a definition of folklore by categorizing it into four: *verbal art* (oral literature) that includes riddles, proverbs, myths, folktales, fairy tales, etc; *material culture* which are traditional materials used by a given society; *performing folk arts* such as traditional drama and song and dance; and *social folk customs* which include the society's traditional belief, dressing style, and other ways of life. Definitions that came later on such as by Cuddon (1998) and Abrams (1999) in one way or the other have similarity with the above definitions especially with the last two ones. For them, folklore has been the collective name applied to sayings, verbal compositions, and social rituals

that have been handed down solely, or at least primarily, by word of mouth rather than in written form.

From these definitions, one can come up with a definition that could be agreed up on. Folklore can be understood as a general concept referring to oral expressions of a people's knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and feelings including items like mythic-legends, tales, jokes, proverbs, riddles, chants, charms, blessings, curses, deaths, insults, teases, greetings, customs, folk dances, folk drama, folk art, folk belief, folk medicine, folk music, etc, that have been transmitted from generation to generation by word of mouth.

Regarding features of folklore, many scholars assert that folklore has a number of characteristics. One major feature is its universality. According to Bascom (1992: vii) "folklore, no matter what the genre, is rarely confined to a single culture. Rather the "same" folktale or proverb is to be found in some variant form in adjacent cultures and perhaps even in cultures far distant in time and space." Communal or communal authorship (i.e. items in folklore do not have a specific author or creator rather they are owned by the whole community in which the proverb or tale is being told or used) and vulnerability to modification are some of the other characteristics of folklore. Concerning the authorship of folklore, Sokolov (1971) explained that various works of folklore are anonymous and nameless for the reason that the names of the authors in many cases have not been revealed and discovered as the majority of them are not written down but handed down to the next generations preserving them in the memory of the people. Regarding vulnerability of folklore to modification, many scholars in the area attribute the issue with the story tellers or performers in that these individuals put their experience and interest into the folkloric genres. For example, Sokolov (ibid.p.21) citing Sakulin(1919) explains that "the old poetic heritage is subject to modification: every more or less talented narrator, singer, storyteller, and so forth, leaves the imprint of his creative spirit on those works changing their forms, their composition, and in part their subject."

One of the commonly used expressions about folklore is that there is no one "right version". Hand (1971) asserts that all variations of a folktale (or even a folksong) have equal validity - as long as you trust the storyteller to be competent. For instance, a folktale can exist in more than one form: as a story told by someone, as a poem, as a play or as a song. In many

folklore versions, the older ones are often replaced with more popular ones if the current presenter is popular. This is particularly true of folksongs.

### **2.1.2. Functions of Folklore**

Folklore provides a number of functions in the society in which it is being used. Bascom (1965a) states that the most important functions of folklore are aiding in the education of the young, promoting a group feeling of solidarity, providing socially sanctioned ways for individuals, serving as a vehicle for social protest, offering an enjoyable escape from reality and converting dull work into play.

The other function of folklore is that people validate norms, substantiate the legal decision, sharpen children's mind, and express their hostilities through the folkloric elements of proverbs, riddles, and satirical songs (Bascom cited in Dorson; 1972:21). From this statement, it can be understood that folklore serves in shaping the norms of the society, in legal areas of its people, in education of children, and also as a means of uttering one's hostilities towards different bodies or ideas. Fekade (1998:10), on the other hand, tried to explain the function of folklore in terms of its contents which are aspects of a given society. He states that folklore functions in a society by recording the people's history, culture, beliefs, and their practices which are reflected in their folktales, oral poetry, and in general the various forms of oral literature.

Fekade (1991), Coyle (1991), Miruka (1994) and Chesaina (1997) classify the function that folklore is traditionally supposed to serve four main categories of functions. These are entertaining, educating, validating culture and maintaining conformity to accepted patterns of behavior with each category having its own further functions in turn.

Animals are frequent protagonists and subjects of African folklore and using them in stories has a far reaching significance. There are several main reasons why people are so likely to think about animals via narrative. As Fernandez (1995) suggests, it is difficult to know how we would understand our own identity as human beings, were it not for the other animals that serve so conveniently and appropriately as a frame for our own activity and reflectivity. In other words, what it means to be human is often understood by recognizing contrasts to, and similarities with,

animals. When people tell stories about animals, they are usually talking about themselves, or at least about animal/human relations. An important effect of this parallel thinking is that through animal proverbs, tales, songs, epithets, and other narrative forms, we humans can discuss ourselves and each other indirectly.

## **2.2. Folktales**

### **2.2.1. Definition and Function of folktales**

As defining folklore has been difficult, the same is true about folktales. Coffin and Cohen (1966) explain that the concept folktale is not clearly defined in English usage but generally refers to the various types of traditional narratives. However, many attempts have been made to define, classify, and describe folktales. Finnegan (1976), Harry (1972), and Abrams (1999) commonly used expressions such as "traditional", "prose", and "oral narratives" in their definitions of folktale. For instance, Finnegan (ibid.) attempted to define folktale as a prose narrative genre of oral literature; and Harry (ibid.) referred to the term as a legend or narrative originating in, and traditional among a people, especially one forming part of an oral tradition. Abrams (Ibid.) defined folktale as "a short narrative in prose, of unknown authorship which has been transmitted orally". He also included myth, fables, tales of heroes and fairy tales. Hence, for the purpose of this study, folktales can be referred to as traditional prose narratives as animal tales, humorous tales, trickster tales, fairy tales, and so on.

Folktales have much significance for people who use them and for others who access them. Folktales are said to assert social, economical, and political attitude. Besides, they help in children's intellectual development in a number of ways. That is, folktales have an important role in knowledge transfer and personality development. They also influence a person's perception, attitude, behavior, and many other factors important to human's life as well as to society. Some of the other functions can be listed as follows (Songsin, 1999: p.6):

Folktales help people to better understand general conditions of human beings since they are sources of constructed perceptions, beliefs, paradigm, fear, fun, formality, and so on.

Folktales are implicitly regarded as a medium through which people in the society perceive whether things are right or wrong.

Folktales enable human beings to learn local lifestyles since they reflect social and cultural values.

Folktales are national cultural heritage. They are stories about human's ways of lives in each nation or language and have been transmitted through generations.

Folktales are the source of people's pride of their locality in that they would perceive that they have something in common. Such attitudes greatly lead to people's unity and harmony.

Folk tales are also sources of entertainment for human beings.

Jablow (1961) also writes about the importance of tales for the society, discussing it with special reference to African tales, as follows:

Aside from the pleasure of a good story which African tales provide, they reveal much of the life of the people, their basic ideas and values, their ideas of morality, their humor and concepts about personal relationship. We can tell from the folklore that the small and clever person (or animal) can and often does master the large and slow-witted one. We learn that greed, stubbornness and laziness are just a reprehensive issue in Africa as they are in elsewhere; that cleverness and devotion to family are as prized. And indeed, many of the tales and proverbs are used to teach children what is expected of them, and how to behave. (P.29)

Awonoor (1975:76) also states that thematically, the narratives provide a close study of spiritual conflict; the heroes of these tales, be they men, animals, or gods, emphasize the survival factor for man in an undeterminable world. Awonoor (ibid.) further states that prose narratives, in a broad sense, however, are calculated to provide moral instruction about proper behavior and they also educate the youth in the tenets of group solidarity such as respect for elders and awareness of duties and responsibilities.

Tales, as can be understood from the above and the previous quotations, serve a number of functions that range from entertainment and education to shaping behavior of the people. In general, folktales have normative, economic, societal and political and many other values for the society which is using them.

### 2.2.2. Characteristics of folktales

There are many features that identify folktales from other folkloric genres such as proverbs. The typical characteristic might be their form. As stated earlier under the definition of folktales, various scholars have stated that folktales are narratives.

The obvious characteristic of folktale is the simple way of telling a story without a complicated structure and plot. Story-telling is direct and starts with important characters in the story and such characters may be the generation of main characters' parents. Then, the story goes on telling about the lives of main characters that may face obstacles but finally manage to get over the troubles. Usually, folktales lead to a happy ending. If folktales are fables, the ending would be "this tale teaches you a lesson." Likewise, some tales normally indicate who the main characters would become after their reincarnation in the next episode. On the contrary, riddle tales always end with questions. Mallikamas (1975:pp.99-100) and Satawetin (1974:p.16) point out the main characteristics of folk tales as follows:

Folktale is told with ordinary words. It is in prose, not a verse.

Folktales have been orally passed down from generations. With the emergence of writing, folktales may be written down based on the stories previously told by mouth.

There is no indication of the original story teller. It is usually indicated that the story has been told by important persons in the past. This differs from contemporary literature which clearly indicates the authors' names. Even the folktales with names of the authors, such as Grimm's Fairy Tales, still show that the stories are based on the original tales, that they are not newly composed.

The story must be old and should be in prose.

The story must have been previously told orally.

The story must present perceptions and beliefs of local folks.

Implicitly, it can be seen from the above discussion that the most important characteristic of a folktale is the way it has been passed down to newer generations without knowing who the composer of that story was. This leads to the definition provided by Abrams (ibid.) that folktales are prose narratives of unknown authorship.

The other characteristic of folktales is that it is not uncommon to come across folktales in which humans, animals, and inanimate objects co-exist and communicate. Explaining this point Owomoyela (1979) writes:

The tales are set in a world in which the existential barriers between human and animals (and even non-animate things) dispensed so that all interact on the same plane. Even when the characters are not humans, they are endowed with human qualities and are for all practical purposes to be taken as surrogates (p.4).

Finnegan (1976) and Owomoyela (1979) add that the characters in tales have the negative and positive qualities which are usually understood as human attributes. They explain that the outcome of the conflicts between these qualities shows the values and attitudes approved by the community that positively influence members of society.

In an attempt to explain the nature of the characters in African tales, Jablow (1961:32) states that animal characterizations, though figuring in many diverse plots, are usually uniform. The trickster figures: spider, rabbit, or tortoises are always guileful and mischievous; the hyena and the leopard are always greedy and unscrupulous; the elephant is always stupid and gullible. Human beings are less predictable, for quite often they metamorphose quite suddenly into animals or even into ghosts, and they may be good, bad, clever, or stupid. Similarly, Finnegan (1976:342) explains that characters of African stories recur throughout the continent. Most familiar of all are the animals, particularly the wily hare, tortoise, spider, and their larger dupes. But there are also many stories about people, ordinary and extraordinary, some about legendary heroes and ancestors, and a few which recount the actions of various supernatural beings. Awonoor (1975:77) also explains that the most significant characteristic of the folk narrative is the trickster character. With regard to the characters, the themes in most of the tales are typical in that they recur repeatedly in many stories. One of the most frequently recurring themes in the prose narratives is conflict, and the victory of cunning over force dramatizes this conflict. Even the high god himself is outwitted by the trickster-hero (Awonoor 1975:76).

Last but not least is the time of narration or storytelling as characteristic of folktales. That is, in many cultures tales usually are narrated in the evenings. Regarding this, Finnegan (1966) and Lendfors (1977) state that story telling occurs in the evening in a central place. However, Finnegan (Ibid.) insists that there is no explicit rule that stories must not be told during the day

time but in practice people are occupied during this time by various activities. Similarly, Jablow (1961), regarding the time of the story telling in African context, explains that the usual time for story telling is night time but there are also special times when stories are told during day time. To use the author's exact words:

At night, the usual time for storytelling, the people gather around the fire to listen and watch, to perform and enjoy the tales. Children, even babes in arms, are permitted to stay up for the occasion. Anyone may tell the story, but there is usually one, noted for his skill as recounter and for his wide repertory of tales, who carries much of the performance. There are also special times when stories are told during the day in the market places (p.30).

Generally, folktales have various characteristics that can be attributed to the way the stories are told, who tells the story, when the stories are told, the types of the characters in these stories. Moreover, tales are also known for their simple way of telling a story and their simple plots, etc.

### **2.2.3. Classification of folktales**

Folktales are narrative stories that are classified in a number of ways based on different points. Some categorize them based on their themes and others on their functions. Kipury (1983) states that narratives are often classified based upon their function. She notes:

Narratives are often classified according to their functions. While this kind of classification is convenient, it does not prevent an inevitable overlapping of categories. For this reason no classification of narratives, and other forms of oral literature, should be adhered to rigidly (p.16).

Yet, there are attempts made to classify folktales by many scholars. Many of them attempted to classify folktales based on their forms, characters, contents, functions, and purposes of the tales. *Encyclopedia Americana* (1985) describes, on the basis of the folktales' form, function, and purpose, various genres may be distinguished such as myths, legends, and fairy tales or marchens. However, for Boswell and Reaver (1962) a folktale consists of all traditional prose narratives including myths, legends, animal tales, fables, anecdotes, tall tales, etc.

Okpewho (1992:181-182) classifies the majority of tales that have so far been classified into four categories based on the protagonists in the tales, the purpose of the tales, the characteristic qualities, and the context in which they occur. Based on the protagonists in the tales, he identifies

animal tales, human tales, and fairy tales. Based on the purpose of the tales, he classified them into tales with moralistic and didactic purposes; and based on the characteristic qualities, he lists trickster, dilemma, historical, and origin tales. Last but not least, based on the context of the tales, he lists moonlight tales, divination tales, and hunter's tales.

Similarly, for Finnegan (1966), and like Okpewho (1992) classification of tales is based on the protagonist's in them. Taking Limba Stories in to account, they classified tales based on their characters into three types. These are stories about people, animals and tales about origin.

Therefore, the researcher believes that it would be appropriate to consider all prose narratives as part of folktales for the purpose of this study.

## **2.3. Folksongs**

### **2.3.1 Definitions**

Folksongs are one of the oldest and most prevalent forms of folklore. Many scholars use the term folk music and folksong interchangeably to refer to songs of traditional origin. Similarly, in this study the two expressions, "folksongs" and "folk music" are used to refer to the same thing. The term, "folksong" covers a vast array of musical styles, but is most commonly used to refer to a narrative song that uses traditional melodies to speak on a particular topic. Often, topical folksongs address social and political issues such as work, war, popular opinion such as love and philosophical ideas. According to Forcucci (1984), "folk music has been with us since the dawn of history" (p. 16). However, it was not until the early 1900s that scholars began to consider folk music as a legitimate facet to be studied as part of a culture. The definition of folk music has led to a debate for many years.

A broad general definition of "folk" music is that it is music of the "folk" or of the people (Nettle & Myers, 1976; Forcucci, 1984). The folk are sometimes identified as the rural or peasant people of a country (Nettle & Myers, 1976), although Rhodes (1966) believed that folk music exists in all classes of society. Sometimes, the folk are considered a particular ethnic group or nationality (Nettle & Myers, 1976).

Lloyd (1967:15) citing the International Folk Music Council defined folk music as "the product of a musical tradition that has evolved through the process of oral transmission. The factors that shape the tradition are: (1) continuity which links the present with the past; (2) variation which springs from the creative impulse of the individual or the group; and (3) selection by the community which determines the form or forms in which the music survives. The International Council also stressed the fact that the term folk music, which includes folk songs, can be applied to music which has originated with an individual composer and subsequently has been absorbed into the unwritten living tradition of a community. Lawless(1960:4) adds that present-day collectors use the term "folk music" or "folksong" as all-inclusive, covering many varieties of music of the common people. Mills (1974) states that it is a seemingly spontaneous song of various races and cultures that is considered to be "folksong".

For Park (1967), folk music is part of a folk culture. Besides, the culture's lore, including its ballads and stories, is passed down by word-of-mouth from generation to generation. Different folk cultures, sometimes referred to as folk communities (literally geographic communities) developed in isolated areas where there was limited outside contact (Malone, 1968). The people within these communities worked to preserve their traditional cultural values. Some other definitions and descriptions of folk music are:

The music must be very old; that it is a particular style of music; that the author is not known. An art song is one that is written by a trained composer and is passed on in written form, whereas a folksong is one which is passed on in the oral tradition rather than in written form (Nettl & Myers, 1976).

The International Folk Music Council adopted this definition at its Annual Conference in London in 1952. It is "music that has been submitted to the process of oral transmission. It is the product of oral transmission. It is the product of evolution and is dependent on the circumstances of continuity, variation and selection." The music may change and evolve as it passes from person to person (Karpeles, 1955, p. 6-7).

The music also has a simple melody (Brand, 1962:10).

Rhodes (1966) said that folk music could be defined by its sociological function because it is a kind of social behavior. "Interpreted in this light, it can reveal a great deal regarding the interests, thinking and feeling of the people" (Rhodes, 1966, p. 18).

Bohlman (1988) talked about folk music's ability to "express the most profound of human values" (p. xii).

There are two kinds of popular music, the folk and mass forms. The folk form is performed live, and the mass form is recorded (Cutler, 1985).

Folksong is not a popular song in the sense in which the word is most frequently used, but the song of the folk; not only the song cherished by the people but, in a strict sense, the song created by the people. It is a body of poetry and music which has come into existence without the influence of conscious art, as a spontaneous utterance, filled with characteristic expressions reflecting the feelings of a people. Such songs are marked by certain peculiarities of rhythm, form and melody which are traceable, more or less clearly, to racial (or national) temperament, modes of life, climatic and political conditions, geographical, environment and language. Some of these elements, the spiritual, are elusive, but others can be determined and classified. (Krehbiel, 2010:2-3).

### **2.3.2. Characteristics of folksongs**

Scholars maintain that many folksongs have been around so long that nobody is entirely sure who their composers were. Often these songs are passed down within a community, and they have evolved over time to address the issues of the day. That is, folksongs are typically about a community of people, and the issues they feel are important to them. Folk songs were sung by common people during work or social activities. One of their most important characteristics is that they are part of oral culture. The melodies and the texts are learned by imitation and participation rather than from books. In *Encyclopedia Britannica Online (2010)* it is stated:

Where a folksong originated is rarely known to its community, and thus the anonymity of the creative process was once considered a major criterion of folk music identification. The repertory of a folk community probably always included songs of

very diverse origins. Folksong, music of anonymous composition, is transmitted orally. The theory that folk songs were originally group compositions has been modified in recent studies. These assume that the germ of a folk melody is produced by an individual and altered in transmission into a group-fashioned expression. National and ethnic individuality can be seen in folk music, even in the case of songs transplanted from one country to another. There is scarcely any person whose folk song is wholly indigenous.

Similarly, Pedersen (1997) writes that little or nothing is known about the origins of many of our best-loved traditional songs. Many authentic folksongs will never have a reliable genealogy. Then, its spontaneous group authorship, that is, unknown origin, becomes a defining characteristic of a folksong.

From the above quotations, it can be noted that folksongs are characterized by its diverse origins and mode of transmission, which is oral, and being of anonymous composition. Folksongs are usually produced by an individual and transmitted into a group fashioned expression and in the course of this oral transmission, changes occur to the melodies. Moreover, they depict an element of nationality and ethnicity which becomes a typical feature of folksongs in various societies.

Krehbiel (2010:3) states that in the folksongs of the world there lies a body of evidence of great value in the study of many things which enter into the science of ethnology, such as racial relations, primitive modes of thought, ancient customs and ancient religions. Moreover, folksongs are echoes of the heart-beats of the vast folk, and in them are preserved feelings, beliefs and habits of vast antiquity. Not only in the words, which have almost monopolized folksong study thus far, but also in music, and perhaps more truthfully in the music than in the words. Krehbiel (2010) further explains that music cannot lie, for the reason that the things which are at its base, the things without which it could not be, are unconscious, unvolitional human products.

Another characteristic of African traditional songs might be the fact that some themes of songs occur more than others. According to Finnegan (1976:248-52), songs sung about birds are very common and the ones about nature in general are less common. Among the pastoral people, songs are often composed and sung in praise of individual beasts. Cattle come to mean far more

to their owners than mere economic sustenance, and are accepted as emotional and evocative topics for deeply felt expression. She generalizes that songs describing main interest in human life is more common, love and marriage songs probably being the commonest themes in African traditional songs.

Generally, a folksong is referred to as a song that is sung by the common people of a region or culture reflecting people's attitudes and life. Such songs were typically performed during work and social activities. Originally, folk songs were spread only by oral tradition without any fixed symbolic notation. Therefore, in the process of oral transmission, folksongs have been reshaped in many different ways by their performers. That is, at the same time, because they are less commonly written down, folk songs lend themselves to adaptation and change as the needs of the song's singers and audiences change.

### **2.3.3 Classification of Folksongs**

The problem of folksong classification has been extensively dealt with in the ethnomusicological literature since the beginnings of the discipline in the late nineteenth century. Looking back at the history of folksong scholarship, one can see that the criteria used for classification throughout the whole nineteenth century were solely based on the literary content of the text. This is the case with Child's famous collection in which the same principles are used (form of the text and its narrative content) that had been used by the Danish folklorist Svend Grundtvig, who preceded Child in publishing a collection of folk ballads. It was customary for folklorists of the time to study folksong as poetry, overlooking its musical component. Such an approach, today generally dismissed as inadequate, gave way to others in which music entered the picture and dictated the taxonomies and tabulations based on its sound-durational components. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, however, with the gradual emergence of musicology as a discipline and musicians taking over from folklorists, the task of studying folksongs, the necessity of thematic indexing became clearly apparent (Keller, 1984).

Even though there were difficulties classifying folksongs, some have attempted to do so. Hence, according to Abrams and Foss (1968), folksongs may be classified under several headings but three specific ones are most commonly found: the ballad, lyric, and dialogue songs.

Ballads are narratives or story-telling songs in which action predominates. The traditional ballad is one that has come down from the past. It has lost its individual originator, shows evidence of variation in content by the existence of more than one version, is compact and concise in narrative, and usually has repetition and refrain (Lawless, 1960:5). A ballad is a folksong, but a folksong is not a ballad unless it tells a story. It might be about some aspect of love, work, religion, recreation, or any one of the various types of topics. It may be, and often is, of rather substantial length. Ballads are organized around an event which can be discussed in terms of action. The action can be related by a third person, from a dispassionate observer's vantage. It tells a story chronologically, and in terms of beginning, climax and ending. (Abrams and Foss, 1968:83-85). The term lyric, on the other hand, may be considered to apply to a song which emphasizes the emotions of an individual rather than the actions of a group of people. It is organized around a situation and its attendant mood. The emotions are expressed through the first person. Again, it might be any one of the types of songs such as work songs, love songs, or recreational songs (Lloyd, 1967). A third classification is the dialogue song. According to Barbeau (1962: VI), it is a type of song in which dramatic confrontation of characters is important. The dialogue, usually between two people, shifts the first person point of view to correspond to the change in speaker. As with the other classifications, this may encompass any of the various types of folk songs.

However, in a general sense, Abrams (1999:100) classified folksongs based on their theme into love songs, Christmas carols, work songs, sea chanties, religious songs, drinking songs, children's game-songs, and many other types of lyric, as well as the narrative song, or traditional *ballad*.

Finnegan (1976:247) explains the abundance of song types in Africa by stating that there are songs for every topic that can be imagined. To use her exact words: "there are songs about wives, husbands, marriage, animals, chiefs, this year's tax, the latest football match, a recent intrigue, the plight of a cripple dependent on his family, an amusing incident, a friend's treachery, or an enemy's vices, the relationship between variety in the human and the natural world and so on."

More specifically, Finnegan (ibid.pp.79 and 104) groups most songs under lyric poetry, that includes songs about insult, heroic songs, sung interludes in stories, maiden songs, love songs,

songs of prayer, exhilaration and excitement, cradle songs, warrior songs, work songs, children's verse, lullabies, and chorus parts of antiphonal songs.

### **2.3.4 Functions of folksongs**

Mills (1974) states that anthropologists have found that songs and singing have been very important in the life style of early cultures. Primitive societies existing today allow researchers to view the importance of music in the rituals, religious ceremonies, and recreation of these cultures. Truzzi (1969:38) explains that folksongs, like the people they represent, have very diverse social values.

Folksongs are important sources of oral traditions in part because their language is encoded through repetition and the rhythmic structures of songs; because the verses are supposed to have a common meter and retain a rhyming structure. The exact terminology used in folksongs survives better than in other forms of oral traditions (Pedersen, 1997).

Generally, African traditional songs serve a number of functions. Regarding this Finnegan (1976:82-85) lists the following as functions gained from songs in Africa:

- the most specialized genres of poetry occur in association with royal courts to help in decision making;
- they help on religious occasions;
- function in the preservation of the historical record and of genealogies, for example, was often a part of the African art;
- have a profound political significance as a means of political propaganda, pressure or communication;
- help in praising the victorious ,the chiefs , and his predecessors, and the glorious victories of the past in general, etc; and
- are used to enliven national festivals, state funerals, and political functions like the election of new chiefs or the swearing of oaths of allegiance by sub-chiefs.

## 2.4. Proverbs

### 2.4.1 Definitions

The proverb is a complex, intriguing, and important verbal entity. As a result, it has been the subject of a vast number of opinions, studies, and analyses for so long. Mieder (1993), who has published numerous distinguished books on proverbs, describes the reason for a lack of an all-encompassing definition of proverbs as follows:

The reason for not being able to formulate a universal proverb definition lies primarily in the central ingredient that must be part of any proverb definition – traditionality. The term ‘traditionality’ includes both aspects of age and currency that a statement must have to be considered a proverb. But while we can describe the structure, style, form, and so on, of proverbs in great detail, we cannot determine whether a statement has a certain age or currency among the population by the text itself. It will always take external research work to establish the traditionality of a text, and this means that even the most precise definition attempt will always be incomplete (p. 6).

Mieder (ibid.) further explains that the problem of defining a proverb appears to be as old as man’s interest in them. People who consciously used them or began to collect them in antiquity obviously needed to differentiate proverbs from other gnomic devices such as apothegms, maxims, aphorisms, quotations, etc. Not only did such great minds as Aristotle and Plato occupy themselves with the question of what constitutes a proverb, but early Greek paremiographers in particular wrestled with this seemingly insurmountable task as well. Similarly, Pfeiffer (1997:1) states that ‘the definition of a proverb is a notoriously difficult task’ in part this is because proverbs are such an integral part of our daily lives and language that we rarely give them any considered attention’.

Considering the above mentioned difficulties in formulating an all-embracing broad definition a selection of some widespread and concise definitions of proverbs will be presented below. In this context key characteristic features of proverbs that help distinguish them from other phraseological units are also be given.

On the basis of studies, in which selected groups of ‘nonspecialists’, but also the general public who have been asked to state their view on how a proverb may be defined, Mieder (1993) presents the following, commonly quoted definitions:

“A proverb is a short, generally known sentence of the folk which contains wisdom, truth, morals, and traditional views in a metaphorical, fixed and memorable form and which is handed down from generation to generation” (p.24).

“A proverb is a short sentence of wisdom” ( Mieder ,1993, p. 5 ).

In the two definitions provided above by Meider (ibid), there is a point that asserts proverbs are usually shorter sentences expressing the wisdom of the society. Similarly, the issue of being traditionality is stated in the following definition by Norrik (1985:78): “The proverb is a traditional, conversational, didactic genre with general meaning, a potential free conversational turn, preferably with figurative meaning”. The *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Proverbs* (1998), on the other hand, suggests in its introductory remarks the following definition asserting traditionality of proverbial expressions as in the definitions by Meider (ibid) and Norrik (ibid) above: “A proverb is a traditional saying which offers advice or presents a moral in a short and pithy manner” (Simpson and Speake, 1998).

In general, the researcher believes that a definition provided by Finnegan (1976:393) fits for the purpose of the present study. It is as follows: “proverbs are sayings in more or less fixed form marked by shortness, sense and salt and distinguished by the popular acceptance of the truth tersely expressed in it”.

## **2.4.2 Function and Usage of Proverbs**

Proverbs offer a concise record of folk wisdom and have appeared in oral tradition, literature, art, and popular culture for centuries. The significance of proverbs has been illustrated by various scholars in the area. Mieder (2004:1) puts forward the following functions proverbs serve:

Proverbs fulfill human need to summarize experience and observations into nuggets of wisdom that provide ready-made comments on personal relationships and social affairs. They serve people well in oral speech and the written word, coming to mind almost automatically as prefabricated verbal units. While the frequency of their employment might well vary among people and contexts, proverbs are significant rhetorical force in various modes of communication, from friendly chats to formal speeches.

Similarly, Meider and Dundes (1994:142) suggested the following on the function of proverbs:

The essential function of proverbs is a rhetorical one, for they are used primarily in deliberation about questions of practical conduct. Whether people are deliberating

internally or sharing counsel with another, proverbs establish norms for actions. They endure not only because of their rhetorically effective form, but also because of their substantive capacity to shape attitudes and action.

Finnegan (1976:390) points out that in many African cultures a feeling for language, for imagery, and for the expression of abstract ideas through compressed and allusive phraseology comes out particularly clearly in proverbs.

More specifically, the function of proverb is that it enters all forms of communication and helps in commenting on many aspects of the society. Regarding this point, Kipury (1983:148-149) lists the following ideas:

Proverbs comment on behavior, whether in condemnation or criticism, in the household, in a public place, or in determining cases in traditional law courts. It is indeed a mark of admirable elegance in speech to be able to use the apt aphorism skillfully.

From proverbs we gain insight into behavioral patterns of people.

They give commentaries on happenings that reveal the system of values under which the culture functions.

Proverbs could be generally summed up as the core of a people's culture, since they phrase their philosophy as well as poetry. This is of special significance in the cultures whose literature is oral.

From the images contained in these proverbs, we learn a great deal about the values and attitudes of people within a given setting.

Finnegan (1976:414 and 424) also explains the functions of proverbs in African contexts as follows: proverbs are used to add color to everyday conversation and used to warn, to bring another to a sense of proportion, and to comment on or ridicule another's action, and resolve disputes. It is part of an accomplished art of the orator to adorn his rhetoric with apt and appealing proverbs. She also stated that proverbs are essential part of life and language and are often said to represent a people's philosophy.

The usage of a proverb, on the other hand, can allow multiple communicative-pragmatic, social and other functions, which is true in interactional situations as well different genres of written

and oral texts. Moreover, it seems important to underline that proverbs not only serve as a disseminator of traditional wisdom, knowledge and apparent truths handed down from generation to generation, but, apart from aspects already mentioned, bear to some extent a rather serious dimension, too. This is particularly true when they are deliberately misused in order to express or propagate certain views and beliefs. Thus proverbs may contribute to spread and reinforce prejudices and stereotypes of any kind. As such, proverbs have often been applied for instance in political speech and propaganda (Brunvand, 1986).

To the complex aspects set out above, it is equally vital to note that proverbs do not exist in a cultural vacuum, but, depend on the language of its usage, can be highly culture-bound and contain components which may be restricted to a specific culture or region. However, a detailed discussion of all these aspects would go beyond the scope of this project and encumber the search for an adequate definition for proverbs. With this in mind, the remarks mentioned below should suffice to meet the requirements of the project in question. As such, the following remarks are attempted towards depicting significant functions and usages of proverbs in the modern age without taking its culture-bound aspects and so on into account.

Looking at the usage of proverbs from the perspective of its users, it can be postulated that proverbs are mostly intentionally used to describe, classify, or judge a given situation. In addition proverbs are often used to claim for certain norms and principles, and to emphasize moral and ethical recommendations. Studies dealing with proverbs and their usage prove that even though proverbs in their original form are barely used in everyday conversations nowadays, they nevertheless remarkably often occur in written texts, oral speeches as well as in headlines of newspapers and magazines. It seems, however, interesting to note that in recent times the traditional patterns of usage and wording are increasingly disappearing in favor of playful and innovative forms (Mieder 1993, p. 90). In other words, well known proverbs are often only partially cited, modified or simply implied rather than stated explicitly. They may, moreover, be parodied and combined with different phraseological elements. It seems worth mentioning that such modifications, playing and punning with proverbs are mainly possible, because of the underlying assumption that native speakers of a given language are not only intrinsically familiar with the original proverb, but are also well aware of the hidden associations and allusions.

In general, Africans use proverbs for many purposes such as the support of debates and arguments. They are sprinkled through normal conversation, debate and storytelling. They are the backbone of African law and education. They embody the values, the cultural generalizations and their philosophical percepts by which they live. Because they concentrate on a maximum of meaning in a minimum of words, proverbs are also powerful rhetorical devices used in solving difficult family problems and judicial cases. There are hundreds of proverbs to point up each aspect of behavior and feeling.

### **2.4.3 Characteristics and Classification of Proverbs**

For a statement to gain proverbial status and be perceived as a recognized proverb it needs to exhibit certain characteristic features and fulfill a set of formal criteria, some of which are explained below.

A proverb is always articulated as a complete and comprehensive grammatically accurate statement.

Proverbs are not ad hoc pieces of language, but are pre-formulated and pre-fabricated generalized statements. They are, therefore, unalterable in their style and structure. As such, they neither need to be adapted to a given textual context nor do they require a specific textual surrounding to be fully comprehensible.

Proverbs feature through a high name recognition, whereas the origin or the founder of a proverb is rarely ever known.

Due to their simple sentence structure and metaphorical language, in which rhetorical figures such as alliterations, rhythm, rhyme, etc. frequently occur, proverbs are fairly easy to memorize and easily retrievable from memory.

Against the background that many traditional proverbs draw upon a collective human experience or traditional wisdom they are often considered to be prescriptive as well as didactic reflecting some sort of moral teaching.

Proverbs can, apart from containing diverse levels of idiomacity, exhibit a kind of semantic indefiniteness because of their hetero situationality, poly-functionality, and poly-semanticity (Mieder 1993, p. xi).

Some of the above-mentioned attributes can be admittedly applied to other phrasal or metaphorical units, such as *truisms* (irrefutable, always true sentences), too. However, those phrasal units differ from proverbs in so far that they do not communicate any recognizable deeper insight, but are mostly trivial and insignificant set phrases (Burger, 2007: 40). Moreover, in comparison to proverbs, such set phrases are less moralizable and didactic and feature common human experiences in a colloquially expressed language. Against this background, they are too trivial and banal to qualify as a proverb in the traditional sense.

When dealing with stating the characteristics of proverbs, the other important point that should be raised is who uses proverbs, when are proverbs used, where and why are they used? To answer the question –who uses proverbs? there is a tendency to attribute it to elders. One usually hears people saying that proverbs are used by elders. In an attempt to explain this claim, Bukonya, et al (1994:38) explain that it is generally believed that it is elders who use proverbs, usually among themselves, but also when addressing non-elders. They assert that if this is generally true, it should not be taken as the gospel truth. Second to age, sex must be considered when talking about who uses proverbs. Again Bukonya, et al (ibid.) state that this is determined by the type of society whether it is patriarchal or matriarchal. If, for example, we are dealing with a matriarchal community where women have leadership roles both socially and domestically, they will be the ones who are found to be using proverbs more often than men. They further added that the use of proverbs is not a uni-directional affair but more of an exchange in the sense that during using proverbs, it is not like story telling in which case one tells and others listen.

With regard to the classification of proverbs, Bukonya et al (1994) state that it is one area where much attention has not been given. Nevertheless, attempts at classifying proverbs go hand in hand with the function of proverbs. Kipury (1983) uses such classification of the –Maasai proverbs? based on the function the proverbs offer like –proverbs on fate, –cautionary proverbs, etc but such classification has its own drawbacks. They mention the fact that such classification ignores that a classification system should be consistent (i.e. all proverbs should be classified using the same parameter), comprehensive (i.e. classification should consider the aspects of function, style, and context), translingual (i.e. a classification should be usable whether one has proverbs in the original language or in translation), and transcendental. Transcendental

classification, according to Bukenya, et al (ibid) , refers to the idea that classification should be able to entertain all proverbs that one is likely to encounter. Such classification includes alphabetical classification, subject, content or thematic classification, functional classification, and literary classification.

Therefore, Bukenya, et al (ibid.) suggest an eclectic approach for the classification of proverbs. They suggest a combining of alphabetical classification, subject, content or thematic classification, functional classification, and literary classification based on the purpose of our study. Thus, in this study, among the common classifications stated by Bukenya, et al (ibid), functional and subject, content or thematic classifications are used.

## **2.5 Some issues in Oromo folktales, folksongs, and proverbs**

Many scholars assert that folklores found around the world share a number of features except the difference in language, culture and its geographical location. Thus, Oromo folklore shares many features with folklores found elsewhere. In an attempt to explain this Finnegan (1976:29), affirms that "many myths, characters, and incidents known elsewhere also occur in African narratives and that African folklore is thus a branch of one universal tree". Similarly, Oromo folklore in general and folktales, folksongs, and proverbs discussed in this study share any universal feature attributed to folklore.

Below, some issues of Oromo folktales (፡dur durii፡ in *Afaan Oromo* or Oromo language), folksongs (፡weeduu sabaa፡/ ፡weeduu aadaa፡ in *Afaan Oromo*), and proverbs( ፡Mammaaksa፡/ ፡Makmaaksa፡ in *Afaan Oromo*) are briefly discussed.

To start with, Oromo folktales (፡Dur-durii፡) share the features of folktales in general. That is what influenced Sumner (1996) to indicate that Oromo folktales can be classified according to Aarne-Thompson's classical work. Sumner(ibid.) categorized Oromo folktales into animal tales, which in turn include tales about wild animals, wild and domestic animals, man and wild animals, domestic animals, birds, and tales about other animals and objects. Sumner (ibid.) further classified Oromo folktales into tales of magic, religious tales and romantic tales, jokes and anecdotes.

Concerning the identity of Oromo folktales, it is explained that it enters into a qualitative identification such as historic legend, mythic legend, etiological legend and fable (Sumner, *ibid.*). Oromo folktales have their own system of values, prevalence of moral concerns, facts and reversal of situations. Moreover, regarding their social background, these folktales deal with the humanization of warfare, promotion of *õinterneçineõ* fighting and promotion of internal solidarity in Oromo society, causes of war and ways of dealing with powerful enemies, and the power of blessing and prayer are predominant issues raised in Oromo folktales (Sumner, *ibid.*).

When coming to Oromo folksongs( *÷weeduu sabaaø ÷weeduu aadaaø* in *Afaan Oromo*), Sumner (1997) suggests for its classification, criteria supplied by the songs themselves, distinction of significant literary units, and the link between form, content, and concrete situation in life. More specifically, Oromo songs have been classified into love songs, heroic songs, historical songs, pastoral songs, festive and religious songs, satirical songs, gnomic songs (Sumner, *ibid.*). As Sumner (*ibid.*) explains, Oromo songs predominantly represent the totality of the physical world that includes man, animals, plants, and trees; and material in organic things in addition to the world of artificial objects such as artifacts, food, beverage, clothing. Moreover, Sumner (*ibid.*p.318) points out that Oromo traditional songs have their own rhythm of local origin which includes *õidentical endings of verses that have been produced by the effect of the richness of the language in vowelsí õ*

The final genre that should be discussed here is proverb. Oromo proverbs have similar contents, functions and themes as proverbs of other societies. This is due to, as many scholars affirm the features that folklore share universally. Sumner (1995:53) asserts that:

Proverbial wisdom is exactly the same all over the world, differing only in the rendering. *÷Men are all made from the same pasteø* Fundamentally, psychologically, they are the same, Oriental or Occidental, pigmented or white. Love, hunger and fear are the basic factors that rule mankind, primitive or cultured; factors uninfluenced by environment or civilization. All the civilizations of the ages will not eradicate the primary instincts of mankind. A study of proverbial racial folklore provides overwhelming evidence of this similarity. The same proverb conveying the same piece of advice recurs again and again in the indigenous aphorisms of all tribes and races.

However, Finnegan (1976), trying to explain some features of African proverbs, explains that it is difficult to provide a clear account of the contents of African proverbs unless they are found in their contexts. Having that point in mind, however, when it comes to Oromo proverbs, the

criteria for classification, their function and features are highly supplied by the themes of the proverbs at hand. Sumner (1995) suggests additional criteria for categorizing Oromo proverbs. These are the alphabet, the theme and the alphabet, the formal elements, the theme only, and the structural patterns of the proverbs.

## **2.6. Gender Representation in African Oral literature**

The suppression of women in patriarchy has a tremendous effect on the representation of women in literature (both in written and oral literature). In real life, women are considered to be passive, submissive, and cruel and so on while men are taken for granted in a number of areas and considered the standard for the norms of the society which in turn are shaped by the traditional gender roles assigned by the society itself. These traditional gender roles, as explained by Tyson (1999:83), cast men as rational, strong, protective, and decisive; they cast women as emotional (irrational), weak, nurturing, and submissive. Hence, feminists consider examining the ways in which literature (and other cultural productions) reinforce or undermine the economic, political, social, and psychological oppression of women shift (Tyson, *ibid*: 83) as their job in the study of literature.

Concerning the representation of women in literature in general, Ferguson(1977:viii) indicates that women are treated both positively and negatively as wives, mothers, sex objects, show women on a pedestal, ostensibly viewed with favor, and women alone, usually pitied or ridiculed. How can such images prevail both in real life and in literature? Before answering this, it seems appropriate to explain what an image is in this context. In this setting an image is a concept that shows women's portrayal in real life as well as in literature, or the society's perception about women and their roles in comparison with men. Ferguson (*ibid*.p.9) presents one aspect of society's views on women as stereotypes. As long as some aspects of stereotypes are present, the observer supplies the others from previous experience which might constitute prejudging or prejudice.

According to some psychologists certain stereotypes are particularly strong because they are formed not by a single society but by the entire experience of humanity (Ferguson, *ibid*: 9). These strong stereotypes are: images of myths, stories told in every society to impose upon and explain the inexplicable and chaotic aspects of experience (*ibid*.).

In African oral literature also the representations of women have both positive and negative attributes. Concerning this, Bukenya et al (ibid.79-80), taking Gikiyu oral narratives into account, explains below:

Wives are generally portrayed among other things as: unreliable, disobedient, irresponsible, disloyal, disagreeable, adulterous, cunning, senseless, easily cheated, forgetful, not dependable, evil, trickster, lazy, etc. There is hardly any story among the Gikiyu that describes wives positively. As co-wives, they are ogres, cruel, and malicious. On the other hand, mothers are the respected category of the community. But we note that mothers are women and wife too, and are seen in the same way discussed above.

Moreover, taking Xhosa women in Africa into consideration, Guzana (2000) explains that they are considered to be silent or voiceless and inferior which can be seen both in oral and written literature that are usually dominated by male writers or narrators. There are a number of factors which may contribute to perceptions of women as silent including male dominance, male control of language, in formal training at home, institutions such as the church and the school which teach women to be silent, traditional values of community and the fear of being characterized as insane, evil or fear of being scold.

Regarding gender representation in Oromo oral literature, a number of researchers indicate that it is highly influenced by patriarchal power. It can be argued that cultural values and cultural productions, including oral literature, exert substantial influence on the lower status of women. Taking the example of Arsi Oromo folk-proverbs and folk-religion, Jeylan W.H (2004) indicates that language and culture has been able to create and reflect gendered cultural society where women are considered inferior in line with the patriarchal ideology reflected in their cultural productions that includes their oral literature. Moreover, Abreham Alemu (2007), taking into account the Jimma Oromo Oral narratives, showed that women are considered subordinate to men, inferior and less important. Therefore, from the two instances it can be understood that women's representation in Oromo oral literature show that they are subordinate.

## **2.7 Review of Local Studies related to the present study**

The study of folklore in Ethiopia is very recent. The pioneer in the study of Ethiopian folklore is Fekade Azeze, who put in an effort to introduce research in oral literature in Ethiopia when he came up with a foundation work of reviewing and providing exhaustive bibliography of the

produced works in Ethiopian folklore up until 1976 ( Fekade, 1984). This evidently shows his effort in promoting scientific studies in Ethiopian folklore. Starting from there, many researchers have put in remarkable efforts into the study of folklore of Ethiopia in general and Oromo people in particular. The research in Oromo folklore is relatively limited in Ethiopia. However, in this short span of time a number of studies on Oromo folklore have been conducted. They include general topics like the collection, translation, and analysis of folktales, folksongs and proverbs by many authors. Few of them focused on specific topics like the image of women in Oromo proverbs, and the portrayal of women in Oromo folktales and popular sayings.

To start with, Rikitu (1992) has included a collection and translation of Oromo proverbs and sayings in his book *Oromo Oral Treasure for a New Generation, Proverbs and Sayings with English Translation*. Similarly, Sumner produced Oromo wisdom literature in three volumes. Sumner collected, translated and analyzed proverbs (1995), folktales (1996), and songs (1997), respectively. Kidane Sahilu (2002) provided a contextual study of Borana folktales and also dealt with proverbs in one of the chapters, exploring the contextual functions of these genres. However none of them has dealt with issues like the image of women in one of or all of these folkloric genres either in Oromo folklore in general or Arsi-Oromo in particular.

Other attempts made in the study of Oromo folklore are senior essays at Bachelor of Arts (BA) level. One of them is Alemu (1984) on "The contents of Oromo proverbs in Jibat and Mecha Awerajaä, and Ararsa (1995) on the "Analysis of Some selected Oromo proverbs with specific reference to Woliso Area"; and Samuel (2000) giving attention at revealing the socio-cultural relevance of Oromo proverbs and used the following title for his senior essay : "Some selected Oromo proverbs around Dembi Dolloö. While dealing with the exploration of Oromo proverbs, none of the above senior essays have attempted to study of images of women in the proverbs selected or like the current study, dealt with the image of women in Arsi-Oromo folklore focusing on folktales, folksongs, and proverbs. Furthermore, Tufero (2004) focusing only on proverbs, dealt with the "image of Women in Arsi-Oromo proverbs" revealed outcomes like positive and negative portrayal of women. It portrays women positively as mothers and housemakers and negatively as house wives.



The language, *Afaan Oromo*, is a popular one and has several dialects. Regarding this Gadaa Melbaa (1999) asserts that the Oromo nation has a single common mother tongue and basic common culture; *Afaan Oromo* or the Oromo language belongs to the eastern Cushitic group of languages and it is the most extensive of the forty or so Cushitic languages. *Afan Oromo* is considered as one of the five most widely spoken languages from among the approximately 1000 languages of Africa and it is the third largest widely spoken language next to Arabic and Hausa (Gragg, 1982 cited in Gadaa Melba, 1999). The Oromo have two main branches: the *Borana* and the *Banrentu* with each having number of sub-branches. Supporting this point, Gadaa Melbaa (1999) writes the following:

Oromo have several clans (*gosa, qomoo*). The Oromo are said to be of two major groups or moieties from the two -housesø (wives) of the person Oromo represented by Borana and Barentu (Barenttuma). Borana was senior (*angafa*) and Barentu junior (*qutisu*)í The descendants from Borana and Barentu form the major Oromo clans and sub-clans. They include: Borana, Macha, Tuullama, Wallo, Garrii, Arsi, Karrayyu, Itu, Ala, Qallo, Anniyya, Tummugga or Marawa, Orma, Akkichu, Liban, Jile, Gofa, Sidamo, Sooddoo, Galaan, Guji and many others.

More specifically, according to Gemetchu Megersa (1991), there were five sets of sub-moieties that extended from the Borana and Barentu moieties: the Sabbo and the Gona, the Macha and Tulama, and the Raya and Assabo, the Siko and the Mando, and the Itu and Humbana. The first three sets belong to Borana, and the second two sets are branches of Barentu. The descendants of these moieties occupy specific areas in Oromia today: The Raya and Assabo branches occupy northern Oromia (i.e., include some part of Tigray, the whole of Wallo and some part of northern Shawa). The regions of Macha and Tulama include most of the present regions of Shawa, Wallaga, Ilubabor, and some part of present Kaffa. The branches of Sabbo and Gona occupy some part of the present Sidamo, part of Gammu-Gofa, and Borana, Gabra, and Guji lands, and some part of Kenya. The descendants of Siko and Mando occupy the present day Arssi and Bale lands, and some part of the Rift Valley. Finally, the branches of Itu and Humbana live in most of Haraghe and some part of Wallo in the north. Nevertheless, there have not been demarcated boundaries among these parts of Oromia.

Bartels (1983) further explains that wherever Oromo were divided into sub-moieties and clans, there is clear distinction between clans and lineages. The clan (*qomo*) is first of all a social group, consisting of several descent groups who not all need be Oromo. The heart of every clan is compounded of a cluster of lineages tracing their descent to the ancestor who gave his name to the clan.

Thus, oral tradition unanimously agrees that the Arsi belong to Barentu group of the Oromo division. According to the Arsi oral tradition, a man called Arse had begotten two sons; Sikko and Mendo. And they in turn had 12 sons of which Mendo had 7. These twelve sons are fathers of all Arsi living in Arsi and Bale. When Sikko lineage group occupy present Arsi territory, sons of Mendo inhabit the present day Bale. So, it is believed traditionally that all Arsi are descendents of the two brothers. The fact that these people in Bale and Arsi manifest similar cultural setup, religion and socio political organization ascertains the common descent of the lineage. Therefore, the people the present study deals with are those people of Arsi Oromo in the present day Arsi.

Religion wise, the present day Oromo have three religions: the traditional religion known as *Waaqeffannaa*, Christianity and Islam. Supporting this, Gadaa (1999) states that

There are three main religions in Oromia: traditional Oromo religion, Islam and Christianity. Before that introduction of Christianity and Islam, the Oromo have practiced their own religion. They believed in one *Waaqayyoo* which approximates to the English word God. They never worshipped false gods or carved statues as substitutes. M.de Almeida (1628-46) had the following to say: "the Oromo are neither Christians, moors nor heathens, for they have no idols to worship".

Therefore, these days it is common to come across the three religions practiced in Oromia.

Regarding the economics of the Oromo, it can be generalized that in the highlands, it is based on a mixture of agriculture (grain crops and coffee) and cattle breeding; in the lowland areas they live as pastoralists; where there is highland and lowland topography mixed economy can be observed where in a single family both pure farmers and pure herdsmen are to be found (Sumner, 1995). According to Baxter (1986), the Oromo are one of the most ancient and of the first 23 widespread and culturally homogeneous people in Africa and with economic activities of such as agriculture, cattle breeding, and hunting are as their main economic activities. Further more

Gadaa Melbaa (1999) explains that ecologically and agriculturally Oromia is the richest region in the Horn of Africa with its diverse and abundant livestock products, coffee, oil seeds, spices, mineral resources, and wild life.

In general, everything that has been mentioned about the Oromo people above is applicable to all the clans in the Oromo people. Therefore, as the Arsi people are part and parcel of the Oromo, and everything said about the Oromo people also applies for the Arsi (the focus of the resent study) people that are mainly found in the present day Arsi.

### **2.8.2 The Position of women**

Oromo have various rich cultures that are fostered by the large population, large land areas and diverse climatic conditions. Gadaa Melbaa (1999/88) asserts that "one highly developed self-sufficient system which has influenced every aspect of Oromo life is the Gada system. It is a system that organizes the Oromo society into groups or sets (7-11) that assumes different responsibilities in the society every eight years." He further added that the Gada system has guided religious, social, political and economic life of Oromo for many years and also their philosophy, art, history, and method of time keeping. Asmerom Legese (1973) supports the previous idea that "the traditional *gada* government developed by the Oromos organizes and orders society around political, economic, social, cultural, and religious institutions."

Regarding women's position, Qabbanee Waqayyo (1991) writes:

Despite *gada* being an egalitarian social system, women were excluded from passing through age-sets and generation-sets. *Gada* effectively enforced a gender-based division of labor in Oromo society, although it allowed two equally important separate and interdependent economic domains. Explaining how the *gada* system brought these two domains together by establishing mechanisms of balancing, regulating, and safeguarding these domains, Qabbanee Waqayyo argues that: "men have controlled the mobile resources -- those that required going out from the homestead --- herding, defense of livestock and land, tilling new fields, plowing, etc. Women have controlled the stationary resources -- the house, the grain and other products of the fields once they are brought into *gotara* for storage, etc. Even the cattle around the house are under their control; women milk them, decide how much milk goes to the calves, how much to the people in the household for drinking, how much for butter or cheese to eat or sell, how much to guests who bring valuable information, become friends in time of need, etc. (Qabbanee Waqayyo, 1991 as cited in Asafa Jalata, 2010 in Sociology Publications and Other Works).

Qabbanee Waqayyo (1991) goes on explaining “By exercising a real day-to-day control over the disposition of the resources at every point of the decision-making process in ways that are protected by the value system of society, the woman wields determinative influence in the society as a whole.”

Kuwee Kumsa (1991) explains the value system of Oromo society has been influenced by the *gada* and *siinqee* institutions. That is women were using the *siinqee institution* which was a parallel institution to the *gada* system: functioned hand in hand with *Gadaa* system as one of its built-in mechanisms of checks and balances. These two institutions helped to maintain *saffu* (moral and ethical order) in Oromo society by enabling Oromo women to have control over resources and private spaces, social status and respect, and sisterhood and solidarity by deterring men from infringing upon their individual and collective rights.

According to Kuwee Kumsa (ibid), “Married women have the right to organize and form the *siinqee* sisterhood and solidarity. Because women as a group are considered *halaga* [nonrelative] and excluded from the *Gadaa* grades, they stick together and count on one another through the *siinqee* which they all have in common . . . in the strange *gosa* [lineage] where women live as strangers, *siinqee* represents the mother and they even address each other as “daughters of a mother.” They get together regularly for prayers as well as for other important individual and community matters. If men try to stop women from attending these *walargee* (meetings), it is considered against *saffu*.”

Oromo women used different *siinqee* mechanisms to maintain their rights; such mechanisms included the law of *muka laaftu* (softened wood), the *abaarsa* (curse), *iyya siinqee* (scream), and *godaana siinqee* (trek). Kuwee Kumsa comments that “because of their liminality, women wield a special religious power where they draw an enormous moral and ritual authority. Men, therefore, try to avoid their curse and seek their blessings . . .” Women in general are symbolically and politically liminal and correspondingly enjoy special sacred power as a class. . . . people respect and revere a woman because *Waaq* made her to be respected and revered (ibid.).

Regardless of these institutions functions in the past, owing to the patriarchal nature of the society, women are generally considered inferior to men (Trimingham 1965, Huntingford 1969).

In general, like the other Oromo women, Arsi Oromo women share what has been explained under this topic. That is, regardless of the various institutions, due to the nature of the society's patriarchal ideology, women are considered subordinate to men.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE IMAGES OF WOMEN IN SELECTED ARSI OROMO FOLKTALES, FOLKSONGS AND PROVERBS

This chapter of the study focuses on the analysis of the images of women in some Arsi Oromo folktales, folksongs and proverbs collected for this purpose. As can be seen from the title of the study, the main purpose of this study is to analyze images of women in the selected folkloric genres. In Arsi Oromo folklore particularly folktales, folksongs and proverbs, women have been portrayed positively and negatively. However, what should be noted here is that a single folktale, folksong, and proverb may represent a woman positively and negatively. It may portray them as, for example, wise and generous or shameless and adulterous or wise and shameless, etc. In this study, a single folktale, folksong and a proverb might be analyzed more than once under different topics. Therefore, in the following sub-sections images of women in selected Arsi Oromo folktales, folksongs, and proverbs have been critically analyzed.

#### 3.1 Positive Images of Women in some Arsi Oromo Folktales, Folksongs and Proverbs

##### 3.1.1 Women [wives, girls] as faithful, honest and loving and loveable

There are folktales, folksongs, and proverbs that represent women as faithful, honest and loving. Faithful in this case is defined as remaining loyal to people such as ones family, husband, and friends. Honesty can also be understood as not lying, cheating or stealing something. In Arsi Oromo culture, faithfulness and honesty as well as being a loving person are rewarded whereas the opposite is punished in many ways. One who tells lies or is disloyal to the society or individual is always insulted, discouraged, and hated in the eyes of everyone. Thus, there are tales that portray women as faithful, honest and loving even though many of the tales feature them as unfaithful, dishonest, cheaters, adulterous, and the like.

To start with, there are tales that portray women as faithful and honest, for example, in tale number 7, [*The Faithful Wife*], the wife was portrayed as loyal to her husband. This is due to her telling the truth to her husband about a man who was bothering her many times saying that he

loves her. The husband and the faithful wife planned to punish the trouble-maker by inviting him to their house. Then, the wife invited this man telling him that her husband was away from home. He came home happy for he was invited to the house of the woman he loves. When he arrived home, he found the husband waiting for him. They punished him by letting him grind wheat-grain for a day and night which made him not to trouble her anymore. Thus, because of her honesty and faithfulness, the woman could overcome her internal conflict.

The other is tale number 9 entitled, [*The Unskilled Wife*] that portrays women positively as open to change, having a positive attitude and accepting advice and putting it into practice. When she was married, this woman had no skill, a weakness that led her lose her husband to the second wife. However, after accepting advice from her friend, she learnt how to become a skilled wife which finally brought her husband back to her deserted home.

In tale number 12, [*The Loving Wife*], also a woman is portrayed as a loving person. This specific tale deals with a married couple who has never been in a fight. One day they fought and could not agree again. This led to family settlement through elders. However, before the settlement had properly begun, the wife desired to come back to her husband because she could not agree to separation with a husband she loved. Hence, from such tales it can be seen that women are portrayed positively although as in a number of tales women may be negatively portrayed.

Regarding the folksongs, in some of them women, especially, girls have been depicted as loyal to their parents even if as they give them away in marriage against their will. In the following wedding songs the voices of women are heard from their own perspectives. For example, in wedding songs number [1,2, and 3], women [girls] are portrayed as loving and caring for their families and worrying about their wellbeing. In song number 1 and 2, for instance, the girl worries about her father when she goes away in marriage against her will and asks herself, "When I go away to another family, who will help my dad in looking after the cattle?"

í Abbaa kiyya ganni lufee bonni dhufee eennutu looniin sii godaanaaí

[í My father winter has gone and summer has come, who will take the cattle and go for pasture for you...]<sup>1</sup>.

This shows that the girl loves and cares for her family and is worried about who will support her father. In some heroic songs, women [mothers] have been depicted as loveable ones. For example, in partial song number 12 a mother was depicted as a skillful and loveable person. The following line from song number 12 shows this:

í Yaa fooytuu calli lamaa yaa boontuu sanyii namaa..

[Mother a maker of a beautiful thing and a proud human being]

Moreover in some proverbs of the Arsi Oromo women [wives, mothers] have been portrayed positively as loving and thoughtful. Regarding this the Arsi Oromo say:

Haati naafaan shininniqaa koo jetti.

[A mother calls her disabled son/daughter -my graceful] <sup>11</sup>.

Haati ilmoo hin obsitu.

[A mother never says ðI have had enough of her child] <sup>12</sup>.

Haati yoo quufte ilmoo tiyyaaf jetti, ilmoo yoo quufte boruuf kaayatti.

[A mother keeps the food for her children after having enough for her self, but children say ðWe will use it tomorrow] <sup>38</sup>.

The above three proverbs [11, 12, and 38] reveal that women, especially, mothers are indiscriminating regardless of the physical appearance of their children, loving their children without limit and thoughtful about them.

Generally, in the preceding paragraphs, attempts have been made to explore the images of women in folktales, folksongs and proverbs that have been portrayed as faithful, honest, loving, caring and thoughtful for people around them particularly their parents, husbands, and children.

### **3.1.2 Women [wives, girls] as wise**

Few of the folktales, folksongs and proverbs collected for this study have depicted women as wiser. Wise in this study and in the context of Arsi Oromo is understood as having the

knowledge or experience to make good or sensible decisions or being able to provide a way out from unforeseen incidents. In Oromo culture as in many other cultures, being wise is acceptable behavior. For instance, elders are expected to be wise in their speech during the time of settling disputes. For this, tale number 12 can be the best example in which case the elders brought the fight between a husband and a wife to an end tactfully that should have led them to separation. Besides, wives are rewarded by their husbands if they are wiser in a number of household decisions, chores and receiving guest in their house. In the same way, in tales number 8 and 13, women [females in general] are portrayed as having problem-solving ability.

To begin with tale number 8[ *A husband and a wife*], the woman whose husband was a priest has been able to deceive her husband when he comes back from church while she was still having an affair with her lover. When suddenly the husband knocks at the door, the lover hides under the bed and after a while he jumps up and throws the husband to the ground and runs away. The wise woman immediately reacts telling her husband that it was the devil that came home with him and he should start praying right away. The husband, believing his wife, started praying which shows that the woman was wiser than him. This tale, actually, gives two images of women: one is positive and the other negative. The woman's ability to deceive her husband is positive where as the action of deceiving him is negative because deceiving is considered as a bad behavior among the Arsi Oromo.

As in tale number 8, tale number 13[*The wise girl*] is about a wise person who made an appropriate decision and took actions that saved her little sister from being eaten by an Ogre. She killed the ogre and was finally able to save her sister. She also appropriated all the properties that belonged to the Ogre.

In some of the folksongs, women have been portrayed in the same way as in the tales, as wiser beings. This can be supported by song number 1:

í Goge jettee adaamii hin bobeesinii,

toltee jettee masaanuu hin oddessinii

Adaamiin godde baala,

masaanuun tolte hadhaa;

Adaamiin godduu hin qabduu,

Masaanuun toltuu hin qabduu

[I do not use a cactus leaf thinking that it is dry; do not discuss your secrets with the other wife of your husband whatever good she might be; a cactus leaf has never been dry; onesø partner ( second wife) has never been goodí ]<sup>1</sup>.

In all the six lines of this song we see that the girls advise their friend before hand, who is the bride-to-be, telling her if her husband has another wife she should be reserved and refrain from revealing secrets however good might the second wife might be. That is, she should not tell any of her secrets to co-wife. For instance, in the second line in the above song: *õ...tolte jettee masanuu hin odeessinii...õ* the girls explicitly tell their friend not to tell any of her secretes thinking that the woman is good. To achieve their goal the girls used a technique of comparing the second wife with a cactus leaf that looks dry but is not but the comparison is metaphorical in the original language not a simile where the comparison is made explicitly.

In the addition, in some of the sample proverbs of the Arsi Oromo women have been represented as wise. Proverbs that portrays women in this way includes:

Hangaa beekan mana eegan jette jaartiin.

[One looks after the house up to onesø knowledge]<sup>2</sup>.

Jaartiin harkaan buna akoofti afaaniin waan baraa qaaxxi.

[A women roasts a coffee with her hands at the same time talks about issues of the time]<sup>8</sup>.

Haati qaruuheen ilmoo ofii bishaan biratti guddifti.

[A wise mother brings her children up where there is water]<sup>9</sup>.

Besides, proverbs number 1, 3,4,5,6, and 7 that are appended in this study represent women in the same way as numbers 2, 8, and 9 as wiser beings. From this, it can be deduced that images of women in few of the proverbs of the Arsi Oromo are portrayed as wiser than men even though usually women are undermined in the traditional Ethiopian society.

Therefore, in few of the Arsi Oromo folktales, folksongs and proverbs, it is possible to come across women portrayed as wise beings when compared to their male partners. What should be noted is that the number of folktales, folksongs and proverbs among the Arsi Oromo that portray women as unwise or frivolous and stupid.

### **3.1.3 Women as good wives**

In one of the folktales collected, a woman has been portrayed as a good wife and good-step mother. It is common to come across a good wife who loves her children and her husband. However, as in the case of tale number 14, [The *Two Wives*], where a step-mother has been portrayed as good to her stepson and brought him up when the biological mother of the son died. A good step-mother is a rarely found among the Arsi Oromo people. This can be backed up with a number of proverbs that shows step-mothers are not good. For instance, they usually say regarding step-mothers: Aduun ganamaa fi haati budeenaa odoo hin beekin nama miiti. [A morning sun and a step-mother hurts one without one's knowledge] <sup>157</sup>. This proverb vividly reflects the traditionally held view that step-mothers are cruel.

The images of women explored so far are those portrayed commonly in all the three genres of folklore focused on in this study. However, there are few other images of women that are not common to folktales and folksongs but found only in one of the three genres, which is proverb, as explained in the following sub-sections.

## **3.2 Positive Images of women in some of the Arsi Oromo Proverbs**

The following images are those depicted in the sample proverbs only not in the other two genres, folktales and folksongs.

### **3.2.1 Women [mothers, wives and girls] as important persons**

In most of the proverbs collected women have been treated as less important and inferior. This has been analyzed under the section entitled "Negative Images of Women". However, women, especially mothers are usually considered as important person for the family and the house. Therefore, the positive side here is recognizing their importance. For example, in the following proverbs, mothers are portrayed positively as follows:

Manni gaariidha kan jedhamu yoo haadha qabaate qofaa dha.

[A house is said to be good if it has a mother]<sup>13</sup>.

Abbaan muka alaati haati utubaa manaati.

[A father is an outside tree whereas a mother a pole of the house]<sup>14</sup>.

Haati hamtuu hin qabdu.

[A mother is never bad]<sup>15</sup>.

Haadhaa fi bishaan badduu hin qabdu.

[A mother and water is never bad]<sup>16</sup>.

Namni haati tiyya bushooftuu dha jedhu hin jiru.

[There is nobody who says my mother is unattractive whatever she might look]<sup>17</sup>.

All the proverbs above (13-17) show how important mothers are for their house and children regardless of their behavior and physical appearance.

Moreover, there are few proverbs that portray women [wives, girls] as important persons. Wives are helpmeet for their husbands in a number of ways whereas girls are important because they give birth to a child later on. These premises are supported by the following proverbs:

Bultiin nadhoo malee hin miðoofu.

[Life with out a woman is not sweet]<sup>23</sup>.

Intala dura jajan maayi ulfa jajan.

[First you appreciate the girl and later her pregnancy]<sup>24</sup>.

Niitiin dhiirsaaf kafana.

[A wife is a cloth for her husband]<sup>26</sup>.

Qawween rasaasa malee dhiirri dubartii malee faaydaa hin qaban.

[A gun without a bullet and a man with out a woman have no use]<sup>27</sup>.

Namni niitii gaarii qabu mana keessatti dullooma.

[One who has a good wife grows old in his house]<sup>30</sup>.

In addition proverbs number 32, 33, and 34 assert the same idea which is found in the appendix of this study.

Moreover, apart from their importance that is explained above, wives are procreators for life in general. As explained in proverb number [23] above men claim that life without a wife is not sweet.

### **3.2.2 Women [mothers, girls] as Suspicious and Cautious**

Suspicious in this context is one who feels that he/she do not trust or like someone or something. Similarly, cautious is a person who is careful and tries to avoid danger or risk. In Arsi Oromo culture being suspicious or cautious is an acceptable behavior. That is why they usually use the saying that goes: *Suuta deeman/ijjatan suuta qoreen nama waraana. [Walking slowly or putting one's foot slowly will save one from hurting one's foot]*. In the same way, there are few proverbs that represent women as cautious or suspicious when compared to their male partners. The following proverbs highlight this idea:

Haati hattuun intala ofii hin amantu.

[A mother who is a thief does not trust her daughter]<sup>18</sup>.

Namni waan arge kadhataa okkotee koo naa dhoksa jette jarriin.

[öPeople ask/beg for anything they come across, please hide my pot,ö said the old lady]<sup>19</sup>.

Osoo qalma hin argin jaartiin tirruu anaaf jette.

[Before ckecking the slaughtering, the old lady ordered for the liver]<sup>20</sup>.

Kooraa irratti bayu malee heerumuu kiyya hin amanu jette haftuun.

[öBofore I sit on the horse, I do not believe that I am married,ö said a girl]<sup>21</sup>.

Daddaftee na dhunggate ,dhiirsa naa taøuu kee mooji jette intali.

[øYou rushed to kiss me, I am afraid whether you can be my future husband,ø said a girl] <sup>22</sup>.

For instance, in the first proverb [18], suspicion in women is highlighted by attributing one unfavorable behavioral trait to a mother, øthiefø. In proverb number 19 womenø suspiciousness or cautiousness is emphasized by showing what an old woman ordered her pot to be kept away without even seeing anybody coming; and so on.

As can be observed in these proverbs the suspiciousness or cautiousness of women have been explained from different angles but still shows their careful behavior in deciding to do or say something when compared to their male partner.

### **3.2.3 Women [mothers] as generous**

The other attribute to women that has been depicted in proverbs only but not in the other two genres is generosity. Generous in this context is giving whatever you have to those who are around you. What you give might be money, food or time in order to make them happy. Hence, in the following proverbs, women have been portrayed as generous:

Raafuu affeltee ollaa waamte.

[A woman invited her neighbor to a cooked cabbage only]<sup>39</sup>.

Dubartiin nama dhigseef dhiigdi.

[A woman says ok to whomever asked her] <sup>40</sup>.

Haati harma guufti malee harka hin guuftu.

[A mother only quits breast feeding, but never stops giving all she has]<sup>41</sup>.

Haati yoo quufte ilmoo tiyyaaf jetti,ilmoon yoo quufte boruuf kaayatti.

[ A mother keeps food for her children after having enough for her self, but children say øI will use it tomorrowø]<sup>42</sup>.

Dachee fi haadha waan itti kennan irraa fudhatan. [You take whatever you gave to the earth and your mother]<sup>43</sup>.

From the above proverbs (39-43) generosity was the image of women specially that of mothers because out of the six proverbs in three of them the noun mother [haadha] is used that carries the large part of the messages of the proverbs.

So far, the positive images of women in the selected three genres have been explored. The next section deals with negative images of women in the tales, songs and proverbs that have been collected from the sample subjects.

### **3.3. Negative Images of Women in some Arsi Oromo Folktales, Folksongs and Proverbs**

#### **3.3.1 Women as Shameless**

In Arsi Oromo culture, as in many patriarchal societies, women should not be bold and outspoken. If they are bold and out spoken they are considered to be shameless. The concept shameless is understood as not seeming to be ashamed of onesø bad behavior although other people think one should be ashamed. Regarding this, there are common expressions among the Arsi Oromo used to show that women should be ashamed: ðMaal tun hin qaanoftuu?ö [Is she not ashamed?]; and ðTun tama ija reæe nyaate dha.ö [This woman must have eaten goatsø eyes]: eating goatsø eyes is believed to make people bolder and shameless. That is, there are behavioral traits or actions that are considered as embarrassing among the Arsi Oromo. These are portrayed in the folktales, folksongs and proverbs they usually use that are explained below.

To begin with, tale number 1, [*Wow! Your stew*], is a situation where a wife embarrasses her husband in front of a guest in their house. She hit her husband on the cheek because he was saying things that made her angry. Such behavior is considered to be embarrassing and the person who did such actions is taken as shameless. The society expects her to keep silent at least as long as the guest is there. In the same way, in tale number 2 [*Let him roast it*], a woman was enjoying with her lover when her husband came back from where he was. The lover immediately hid in an empty barrel in the house. The wife and the husband were ready to eat raw meat he brought home with him. Before they started eating, the wife threw a slice of meat in the direction

of the barrel in the name of spirits and the meat went in where the man was hiding. However, her husband was aware that there was someone in there and he threw burning fire in to it saying, õlet the spirits roast and eat the meatö and the man was burnt to death. The woman's acts were shameful in that she should have thrown the piece of meat in any other direction as she used to. However, since she is shameless, she directly threw in to the barrel where her lover was hiding to allow him to have share of the meat they were eating.

In some of the folksongs also, women are represented as shameless, i.e., in songs number 2, 8, and 14. To start with, in song number 2, there are two lines showing that the woman broke the norm of the society and she was taken as shameless. The two lines taken from the song are the following:

í qamaacaa jilba gayee ka takkuu hin dhiqatinii,

Ani hin dhiquu foonii keeti dhiqattu harkaa keetif

[The dirt of your (refers to the bridegroom) leg has reached your knee; if you want to wash it, that is your body and it is your hand that should wash it, don't expect me (bride) to wash it, I will never do it]<sup>2</sup>.

As some of the informants explained, it is common that wives wash their husbands' legs whenever he comes back from work. Some of the female informants also explained that washing one's husband's legs is not bad because they said, õAfter all he comes back tired and exhaustedö. These female informants further explained the two verses in which the bride-to-be complains that she will not wash her would be husband's legs which is just one way of expressing her resentment as she is going to leave her family and join another that is new to her.

The other song is song number 8, which reads:

Qotilee qottuu qotuun ta si baatu,

Ta didde maal qabdi baddu ta himatu.

[She who refuses is better than she who tells what she has done with her lover]<sup>8</sup>.

In the above song [8], what is considered shameful is the woman's boldness in committing two mistakes: the first mistake is cheating on her husband; the second mistake is telling about her affair to another person. Hence, it is a grave mistake which shows the woman as shameful act. According to the norm of the Arsi Oromo, the above two instances show unacceptable behavior, which is liable to punishment.

As in song number 2 and 8, song number 14 does the same thing in depicting images of women. The song portrays women as shameless from men's perspectives because women fail to understand or deliberately ignore men's needs. The song is as follows:

Luyni bifa lama

Tokko duula hin dhaqu,

Kuun dhaqee hin ajjeesu;

Nadheen gadheen bifa lama

Takka dhiqattee hin beektu

Takka dhiqatteetu hin quuftu.

[Cowards are of two kinds: one doesn't go to battlefield; the other goes but doesn't fight. Bad women are of two kinds: one does not wash at all; the other washes the whole night] <sup>14</sup>.

According to the Arsi Oromo culture, women are very much liked by men and respected by everybody if they wash and take care of their hygiene, especially if they use traditional perfume called -Qayyaa a kind of steam bath using butter and smoke from selected wood. However, in the above song [14] what led men to call such woman shameless is the fact that it took her the whole night to wash her body leaving her husband sleep alone. If she keeps doing this the whole night, she will be considered shameless. In this song to represent a woman as shameless, a comparison is made between a man that does go to war but never fights which is also parallel to a woman who washes to keep herself clean but do not stop from washing which makes it a negative attribute.

Some of the Arsi Oromo proverbs also portray women as shameless. There are frequently used proverbs which reflect this attribute to women. Some of these proverbs are:

Hin qaanoftu nama qaanessiti.

[When she is supposed to be shameful, she let others to be ashamed]<sup>88</sup>.

Kadhatee galteet weedisaa daakti.

[She got it by begging, but she grinds the grain singing]<sup>89</sup>.

Salphoo mana isii hin dhaqan mana namatti dhufiti.

[No one goes to the house of a shameless woman, she comes to your house]<sup>91</sup>.

Dhiirsa tamboon huute niitiin kolfaan duute.

[A husband was chocked with a cigar, however, his wife laughed badly at him]<sup>92</sup>.

The above proverbs [88-92] have portrayed women as shameless in various ways. For instance, in proverb number 88, it is indicated that when women are supposed to be ashamed, they rather make others to be ashamed. AS explained earlier, among the Arsi Oromo women should not be bold and outspoken but if they are the attribute ñshamelessö is usually attached to their behavior. This is a mechanism of silencing them. In proverb number 89, a woman brought some grain home by begging but grinds it singing out loudly because she is a shameless woman. According to the norm of that society, begging is an embarrassing act and those who could not work are actually supported by those who can. However, in this proverb the woman begged a grain which is the first point that made her shameless and the second shameful act she did was that she grinds it singing out loudly. In the rest of the proverbs (90 and 91), similar image of women is perceived.

Thus, in the tales, songs and proverbs seen in the examples above, attempt was made to show in all the three genres depict women as shameless who act boldly and embarrass others when they themselves should be embarrassed.

### 3.3.2 Women as Unfaithful or Adulterous

Among the Arsi Oromo faithfulness is a rewarded positive behavior of human beings expected not only of women [wives] but also of any person in the society. A faithful woman is liked by her husband, family and people around her whereas the unfaithful one is hated and gossiped by everyone. She is not respected in her society. Unfaithful women are one those who have a sexual relationship with somebody who is not their husband. In light of this, there are a number of folktales, folksongs, and proverbs among the Arsi Oromo that depict women as unfaithful or adulterous. In the forthcoming paragraphs such folktales, folksongs and proverbs are analyzed.

Tales number 2[*Let them roast it*], 3[*What does she do outside?*], 6[*The Adulterous woman*] and 8[*A husband and a wife*] are some examples which represent women who are unfaithful or adulterous. In tale number 2, the wife is seen while cheating on her husband, in their own house, and the husband comes back home to find that she has been having an affair with another man. In tale number 3 also a woman has a lover who came to her house and finds her in her garden. He suddenly carries her into the house while the husband was sick and sleeps inside. The woman did not protest or try to tell her lover that her husband is at home. Similarly, in tale number 6, the woman has three different lovers whom she invites at the house one after the other on a single day when her husband leaves for hunting. However, he comes back early from where he was and catches all three men. Tale number 8 also portrays a woman, who was found being unfaithful to her husband who is a priest. In all the four tales, a woman is represented as adulterous and unfaithful to her husband. It seems that some women have accepted adultery as an established norm.

Some Arsi Oromo songs also represent women who are unfaithful. This applies to songs number 6, 8, and 9. Song number 6 is about a woman who is married but had a love affair with some other younger boy. This song reads as follows:

Jaldeessa minaayee ceekataa obaasi,

Si jaaladhe jettu jaarsa kee kolaasi,

Isallee kolaafu ka dhaalutu hafaa,

Wal faanaa dabarsi si ammadhee rafa.

[If you love me castrate your husband, even if you castrate him, there is someone who will have you. Castrate them both, and then I will sleep with you embracing you] <sup>6</sup>.

In this song [6], the woman and her new lover could not be at ease and enjoy their love due to the presence of her husband. So her lover tells her to castrate her husband. He added that though she castrates him, another man is by her side to take her (*-Dhaala* -is a tradition where a brother inherits the wife of the deceased person and becomes a husband) as his wife. Therefore, he advises her to kill both of them so that they will have good time together. In this song, it can be seen that she is not hesitating to kill her husband or the would be husband.

Similarly, song number 8 represents a woman who is unfaithful to her husband and considers it as an admirable thing deed and as something not to be ashamed of. The same song represents women as shameless because after committing adultery she keeps on telling this to anyone she found what she does with her secret lover (see section 3.3.1).

Moreover song number 9, like number 6 and 8, depicts a woman as unfaithful because she cheats on her husband but never tell about it whatever punishment is taken on her.

. í ijjooleen qona hin beektuu Ogochoo buutee dhadhaabbatii malee,

Nadheen sanyoo hin himattu kakkatee duuti maleeí

[Children doesn't know farming, they rather go to *-Ogocho*/a name of a town/and wander without work; Women do not tell about their lovers rather they die swearing] <sup>9</sup>.

In this song, contrary to the woman in song number 8, the woman though commits adultery she is portrayed as a secret keeper.

Having said this, there are also some proverbs among the Arsi Oromo that focuses on the issues discussed in the folktales and folksongs. Some of the commonly and frequently used proverbs revealing such negative images of women are the following:

Yoom deebita jennaan yoom na eegda jedhe namichi niitiidhaan.

[õWhen will you be back,õ asked the wife, õwhen will you wait for me,õ answered the husband] <sup>128</sup>.

Dubartiin nama dhigseef dhiigdi.

[A woman is the prey of any man who wishes to be her lover]<sup>130</sup>.

Harkifattuun niitii dhiirsaan nama eegdi.

[A reluctant wife with a boyfriend in her house waits till her husband comes back]<sup>131</sup>.

The claim that is made by the tales and songs can be supported by the above proverbs. For example, number 128, is where the woman asks her husband boldly when he has planned to come back from his trip. This shows her intention and desire for adultery has reached a high level which prevented her from understanding that he might be suspicious of her plans. In this proverb from the answer of the husband one can see that he has understood her intention and answered her saying: "When do you expect me to come back?" In proverb number 131, the adulterous behavior of women is stated. Here, the woman is very reluctant to send her boyfriend home before her husband comes back. This reveals that she seems to understand adultery as an accepted behavior in her society.

In general, from the sample Arsi Oromo folktales, folksongs and proverbs analyzed, it can be seen that women have been portrayed as unfaithful or adulterous. In almost all the three genres, women are portrayed as adulterous because they all have had a lover apart from their husband and some of them seem to understand this behavior as a natural and normal act in the society.

### **3.3.3 Women as easily deceived human beings**

Under the positive images of women, it has been shown that women are wiser than their male partners. Women, especially, mothers, girls, and animal characters such as a she-monkey were depicted as wiser in tales number 8, 13 and 21, song number 1 and in few of the proverbs. Nevertheless, many of the folktales and proverbs and some of the folksongs portray women as stupid and easily cheated beings. Foolishness is understood to be a trait of a person who is not sensible or wise as a result of which they might face a negative situation.

According to some of the researcher's informants, the Arsi Oromo expect anybody to be wise in many aspects such as in his/her speeches, in interpersonal relationships and in life in general. Hence, foolishness is not acceptable and may lead to hurting oneself or others around them. In a

number of the data collected for this study women are represented as fools. Tales number 2, 10, 11, 15, and 16; folksongs number 2 and 14; and proverbs numbers 75-87 portray women as foolish beings. Each of these are analyzed below.

To begin with, the first tale in which women are represented as foolish is in tale number 2 [*Let them Roast it!*]. In this tale, a woman is viewed as foolish because she threw a piece of meat in the name of a spirit into a barrel in which her lover was hiding leading her husband to be more suspicious than he already was due to her unusual reactions. Still she was not aware that he might suspect her. This example shows a stupid woman. If she was wise, she would not throw the meat directly into the barrel, but fools never think twice.

A similar portrayal of women can be seen in tale number 10 [*The Stupid husband and the stupid wife*]. In this case, towards the beginning of the story, both a husband and wife were fooled in telling strangers to look after their boiled meat in the house till they come back from the forest with a toothpick to have their teeth cleaned. However, when they came back, the entire meat had gone. The strangers had eaten it and took the rest with them. The husband and the wife found all the pots empty and only flies were roaming over the empty pots and dishes. The man chased the flies and in doing so broke pots and most of the dishes. In the middle of this, some flies sat on the woman's face, and she informed her husband that some of the flies are still sitting on her face. Right then, using a big stick he hit her on the nose and killed her rather than the flies. Therefore, here, she is portrayed as fool because she was fooled for the second time in telling her angry husband that flies were still on her face.

In tale number 11 [*Queen Ako Manoye*] also the cruel queen of the Oromo land in ancient times, that is told to date in Oromo oral tradition, was fooled when she ordered her warriors to bring a wild-ass for her so that she could ride it. She should have known that a wild-ass is dangerous. But because of her bad wit, she was tied on the back of the wild-ass and killed herself.

In tales number 15 [*The Stupid Wife*] and 16 [*The stupid old lady*], women are portrayed as foolish or easily cheated beings. In tale number 15, a husband orders his wife to keep some meat so that they will eat when the spirits come (By this he meant the desire to eat). However, the woman gave the meat to a man who came to her house on a rainy day, exclaiming, "the spirits killed, the spirits killed us!". Thus, she gave him the entire meat. She told the man, "Please eat! My

husband told me to keep it till the spirits comeö. The man ate and went away. Again in tale number 16, an old woman who happened to have small bread, invites some one so that he could protect himself from the rain. The man, planning to steal her only bread, asked her whether the rain had stopped. She went outside to see the rain. The man stole her bread and when she came back and told him that the rain had stopped, he went away thanking her for allowing him to shelter from the rain. In both [15, 16], women have been represented as foolish beings when compared to other male beings because in both cases they are fooled by men.

Some of the songs also depict women as fools. Songs number 2 and 14 reveal women who are fools. In this case women are fooled for failing to understand an inevitable situation and menö [husbandö] needs. To start with, part of song number 2, the bride-to-be fails to understand an inevitable situation which is shown in song number two that has also been cited under the title öWomen as shamelessö(see section 3.3.1 for the song). The inevitable situation is refusal to wash her husbandö legs. This is regarded as failing to understand her would be responsibility as some of the female informants explained. They further said, öRefusal to fulfill oneö responsibility is foolishness by itselfö. Some of these women even advised such girls to avoid doing this because it will be a hindrance to the future relationship of the couple. Song number 14 as well shows that the woman [wife] fall short of wit to recognize that she should have a limited time for washing though washing oneö body is good. Besides, she fails to understand that her husband might be waiting for her for sleep. This song portrays a woman as shameless for refusing to wash her husbandö legs. The song and the analysis could be seen under section 3.3.1. Then it can be seen that in songs number 2 and 14, women in both cases are represented as foolish.

Similarly, in many of the proverbs used among the Arsi Oromo, foolishness is a common attribute of women. That is, there are a number of proverbs that take women as fools which by implication makes their male partners wiser. Some proverbs are:

Hamartii bitaniifi sossobatu.

[You date and try to convince a girl by buying her a bracelet]<sup>77</sup>.

Oddoo isii irraa hin hafin liqeessitee odoo hin fudhatin duute.

[She lent it even though she hasnö enough, but died before getting it back]<sup>80</sup>.

Ulfaachuun kan ulfaati jennaan gowwittiin garaa dhiibde.

[When she was told that respect comes from pregnancy, a fool pretended to be one by pushing her belly outward]<sup>82</sup>.

Biyya aannaniitti gala jennaan,jaartiin aannan dhangalaafte.

[When she heard that they are going to country where milk is plenty, the old lady poured down all she has]<sup>85</sup>.

The above proverbs portray women as fools in a number of ways. For instance number 77, to fool a girl all one needs is buying her a bracelet and do whatever one wants. In this proverb the man's perspective is clearly seen because it is a man who is speaking of fooling a woman only by buying her a bracelet. In proverb 80, on the other hand, the foolishness of women is indicated when she lent something that she does not have even enough for herself. There are a number of proverbs that are not analyzed here but appended at the end of this study and have an attribute of women as fools (See Appendix c).

Therefore, it has been observed from the folktales, songs and proverbs that the images of women in Arsi Oromo have been undermined by being represented as foolish beings. The number of proverbs that represent women as fools exceeds the number of the songs and tales collected from the sample area of the study.

### **3.3.4 Women [step-mothers] as cruel**

Cruelty is a behavioral trait that is condemned. It is practiced deliberately to cause physical or mental pain or suffering to somebody or something. Like the other types of negative behaviors, cruelty is also a unpopular behavioral trait among the Arsi Oromo. They reveal cruelty of individuals or groups or people through their oral traditions that includes among other things folktales, folksongs and proverbs.

Among the attributes of women recurring in the folktales, folksongs and proverbs is cruelty. Some of the sample folktales depicting women as cruel beings are folktales number 4[*A step-mother and a step son*], 11[*Queen Ako Manoye*], 13[*The wise girl*],18[*The cruelty of women*] and 20[*The cruelty of step-mothers*]. To begin with, tale number 4 shows a woman who has both

biological and step-son. This woman hates the step-son because she is jealous about the difference between him and her biological son. That is, the step-son is faster and better in many aspects and healthier than the biological son of the woman. Because of this, she became jealous and cruel to her step-son and decided to kill him. However, it finally ended in her own death in the net she prepared to kill the step-son. In tale number 11, there was a queen of the Oromo land in ancient times that out of her selfish wits ordered her workers to do all impossible types of works and ordered them to kill all elders. Again, like in tale number 4, she too ended up killing herself due to her selfish wits and cruel behavior. As in tale number 4, the cruelty of step-mothers is witnessed in tale number 13. In this story, a woman got married to a man whose wife died leaving him with his two daughters. However, the new wife [step-mother] did not want to see the daughters, therefore, told her husband to get rid of them and he did it as wished. Regardless of her cruelty to send the daughters off their father's house, they survived. The cruelty of women is also revealed in tale number 18 and 20.

It has been observed that there are a number of tales that portray women as cruel whereas only few folksongs present such a negative image of women. For instance, in song number 2, a step mother is considered as cruel whereas in song number 6, a wife is depicted as cruel. In song number 2, the step-mother's cruelty is compared with a mother's generosity and thoughtfulness.

í . Bayee bayee haati tiyya addaatte adda nuu dibaa jettee,

Haati ormaa maraattuu hidhaa jette;

Maraaree hidhaa fardaa,

Maraattuu haadha gandaái

[the girl's mother says, 'my daughter is going to be in trouble and I want someone to take care of her hygiene; the step-mother says, 'take that girl away and tie her up because she is mad']<sup>2</sup>.

In the above lines from song [2], a step mother is represented as being unkind to her step daughter who is getting married and even considers her as a mad woman who should be tied up and sent away.

Song number 6 again shows a woman [wife] who has a husband and lover. The following two lines from song number 6 indicates how cruel a woman is.(see section 3.3.2 for the whole song)

Line 2 of song 6í Si jaaladhe jettu jaarsa kee kolaasí

[If you love me castrate your husband]

Line 4 of song 6í Wal faanaa dabarsi si ammadhee rafa..

[Castrate them both, and then I will sleep with you embracing you]<sup>6</sup>.

From both lines above song, it can be seen that the man who sings the song expects the woman to take the actions he suggested. Besides, this describes that the woman does not care less to kill her husband and a man who might have her as his wife after the death of her husband as explained earlier under the section entitled *Women as Unfaithful and Adulterous*. This shows the extent of her cruelty from what she does to pave the way for her and her lover.

In addition, in some proverbs of the Arsi Oromo also an attribute of cruelty to women has been witnessed. Some of these proverbs are

Dhaala abdatteet odoo hin duʼn awwalte.

[Believing that she will inherit his brother, a wife buried her husband alive]<sup>69</sup>.

Dhiirsa tamboon huute niitiin kolfaan duute.

[A husband was choked with a cigar, however, his wife laughed badly at him]<sup>70</sup>.

Mootummaan dubartii bishaan ol yaafti.

[A women's government will turn the river up the hill]<sup>71</sup>.

Heexoo fi niitiin namatti hin dabin.

[A medicine (traditional herb) and a wife are not good if they are inappropriate]<sup>72</sup>.

In each of the above proverbs [wives, females] have been depicted as cruel beings who kill a husband for fulfilling their own needs. They are represented as they are cruel to the extent that someone's pain becomes a source of happiness and the like.

From the three folkloric sub-genres explored above, it has been observed that the images of women have been negatively portrayed as cruel beings. It has been shown that cruelty is a dominant negative trait of women.

### **3.3.5 Women as Selfish and Greedy**

The concept selfish is understood among the Arsi Oromo as running after one's advantage ignoring the interest and welfare of others. Greedy is understood as trying to own more money, power, food and the like than one really needs. According to Oromo tradition, they believe in sharing whatever they have with those who do not have. Selfishness and greed are not appreciated rather punished. Some of the researcher's informants explained that is why the Oromo people make up many tales, songs and proverbs in order to teach their society by portraying selfish or greedy characters using various animal and human characters. Among human characters that recur in Arsi Oromo folktales, proverbs and songs are women characters portrayed as selfish and greedy.

Folktales number 11, [*Queen Ako Manoye*] and tale number 17, [*The greedy wife*] have greedy and selfish characters one represented by a queen and the other by a wife. To explain each of them, in tale number 11, the legendary queen of the Oromo land called "Queen Akko Manoye" wanted to have everything at any cost. She wanted to have unlimited power and she had it; she wanted to rule over the whole Oromo land and she was able to rule; she ordered all elders who are shorter in height to be murdered and all were killed as she asked for; she wanted to have a palace to be built for her between the earth and the sky, but she could not have this because she was asked to put the foundation stone to begin the building. Finally, she ordered for a wild-ass so that she can ride it and the wild ass was made ready and this finally killed her. In tale number 17, the selfish or greedy behavior of a woman was manifested in that she wanted to eat more food by hiding it from her husband. She had always been eating extra half pot of porridge alone after eating the other half together with her husband. However, whenever he found out about her tricks, he tried a trick himself and made the entire porridge to come out on the dish. This time



The next two proverbs [48, 50], on the other hand, portrays women by attributing a condemned trait of desiring to snatch away others' property. They are also too greedy to share what they have with others.

Hanga hin qonne yaa qunnaa isii.

[She is not a good farmer, but she uses a lot of the product]<sup>48</sup>.

Kennuu hin beektuu fudhachuuf harka isii hafarsiti.

[She does not know giving but stretch her hands to take]<sup>50</sup>.

Proverb number [54] below also portrays a woman [wife] as a person who does not care about her husband because of her selfishness and only thinks for herself.

Of jettuun dhiirsa koo hin jettu.

[A selfish wife do not think of her husband]<sup>54</sup>.

In proverb [56] below, a lady is portrayed as being too selfish even before seeing the slaughtering warns a liver to be kept for her.

Osoo qalma hin argin jaartiin tirruu anaaf jette.

[Before checking the slaughtering, the old lady ordered for the liver]<sup>56</sup>.

There are more proverbs that have been appended at the end of this study that portrays women as selfish and greedy (See Appendix C).

Therefore, based on the tales, songs and proverbs analyzed in this section, it can be generalized that women's negative behavioral and psychological traits are attributed to Arsi Oromo women as selfish and greedy.

### **3.3.6 Women as Sources of trouble and Evil**

In some folktales, folksongs and many proverbs, women of the Arsi Oromo have been represented as trouble makers and sources of evil. Evil, in this case, can be understood as an action taken to cause trouble or harm people, that is, an action by women to harm people around

them including their husband, step-sons and so on. Like many other negative acts, evil actions and trouble making are disliked among the Arsi Oromo people. As some of the informants clarified, people with evil intentions and trouble making habits are highly discouraged and cursed.

There is a folktale that carries such images of women. This is tale number 5, entitled as [*Disagreement*] where the woman [the girl] is taken as the only being that can agree and live with devil as stated in the story. This tale is about a journey that should have been completed by a group of six: *a man, a problem, a dog, hunger, a devil and a girl*. They started the journey and went a long way. In the middle of this, out of the six journeyers *problem* got tired and carried on the shoulder of the man; next *hunger* got tired and carried in the stomach of the dog; and finally *devil* got tired and carried by the girl. When they finished the journey each that was carried by the other refused to get off the others shoulders. This is because each of those carried have got their best choices. That is, the girl carried the devil and by implication, it is only a woman who can agree and live with the devil. This shows that women are thought to be evil-minded.

There are also some songs that represent women as trouble makers. These songs are number 4 and 13. In the case of the song number 4, the bad nature of the woman was manifested through trouble making and causing men to fight. There is a verse in song number 4 that shows women are troublemakers, therefore, their families want to give them away in marriage and get relief in doing so. The following line is taken from song number 4:

í Jabilee rakkoo hobbafachuuí

[Women are trouble makers like calves; therefore, it is worth getting rid of them]<sup>4</sup>.

This song is sung by the family of the bridegroom who are welcoming their son by praising him and insulting the bride as she is considered a trouble maker. Her family gave her away to get relief.

Moreover, song number 13 does portray a woman who is bad-natured. Women are viewed as catalysts who initiate strong fights among men.

Lolli gadheen nadheeniin dhufaa ,

Roobni gadheen subii dhufaa yoo seexani hin jire,

Lolli gadheen nadheeniin dhufaa , yoo dhirrsi achi hin jire.

[Bad quarelling comes from women; bad rain comes early in the morning if the sorcerer is absent; Bad quarrelling comes from women if the husband isn't there]<sup>13</sup> .

Here, a woman is compared with a bad rain that may cause disaster. Furthermore, it is indicated that it is a woman who can induce men to fight among themselves. It is believed that such fights induced by women have no end also.

Regarding proverbs that describe women as trouble-makers are plenty among the Arsi opposed to the tales and songs. Some of the examples are as follows:

Ibiddi nadheen qabsiifte hin dhaamu. [A fire lit by women cannot be turned off]<sup>120</sup> .

Reøe fi nadheen lafa rakkoon jiru jaalatti. [Goats and women like where there is trouble]<sup>121</sup> .

Namni dubartiin ergitte duøa hin sodaatu. [One who is sent by a woman never fears for his life]<sup>122</sup> .

Sareen lafee fiddi nadheen dubbi fiddi. [A dog brings bones, women troubles]<sup>123</sup> .

Ijoollee fi nadheenitu dhiira waliin gaya. [It is kids and women who let men fight/disagree]

<sup>124</sup> .

All of the above proverbs [120-121] represent women as the cause of any kind of troubles among men or their husbands. Besides, the proverbs describe women as being bad-natured. It is women who go to where there is trouble, who brings men together and it is women who acts as evils do in catalyses as evils do. The proverbs go to the extent of comparing women with kids who knows nothing and with dogs that have no thinking ability at all.

In general, women as has been observed in the tales, songs and proverbs above, are portrayed as people who are dispose to do evil, as creatures who are not relational and capable of positive thinking.

### 3.3.7 Women as inferior to men

The word inferior refers to lower position given to somebody or something. In the case of inferiority of women, it denotes the lower status given to them in society. Lower status of women, therefore, is lower in importance, quality, success or achievement, intelligence, conscience, and so on compared to men. Thus, folktales, folksongs, and proverbs of the Arsi Oromo represent women who are deprived of equal rights with men.

Almost all the sample tales, even those that have superficially positive image of women, portray women as inferior to men directly or indirectly. This is due to the implications that men (fathers, husbands, brothers) will continue to be the superior, controller, leaders and winners in most cases. Only in very few cases, men have been, for instance, depicted as fools. That is, women are generally portrayed negatively unlike men. See appendix A to get overall impression of how women are negatively portrayed even in those tales that seem to represent them positively.

Besides, there are some folksongs that present women as inferior to men. These images are specifically referring to women as less important, less knowledgeable, not good at decision making and so on. Some of these songs, i.e., number 2, 3, 4 and 11 are analyzed as follows:

Song number 2 explains a situation that exists in the family of the daughter that is going to be married. For this analysis, the first four lines of the song are taken. These lines represent a woman [a girl] as inferior. The selected lines from the song are given below

Bayee bayee harøalee hin baafatanii,

Mala harøaa hayyolee gaafatanii;

Hayyolee ulee balaa,

Waan hayyuun murtu laala.

[Do not sing öBayee bayeeö ask elders about your fate; elders who are dangerous people; let us see what they will decide]<sup>2</sup>.

In this song it can be seen that it is not up to the girl who is going to be married to decide about her fate, it is elders who decide. Therefore, women are not fit for making decisions even about

their own future showing how inferior they are thought to be by the society. Again towards the end of the same song [number 2], there are five lines that show women as inferior and less important to their family when compared to their brothers. The girl who is going to be married sings the following verses for herself:

í Bayee bayee osoo mukaa habuuleen dhaddachumaa,

Osoo dhiiraa anillee kallachumaa.

Bayee bayee osoo mukaa habuuleen dhaaba golaa,

Osoo dhiiraa anillee dhaabee lolaa,

Dhiira lolaaf kayatanii ana tolaan qabataniíí

[í The girl is saying in her own words that if she had been a boy she would have been given the right position; if she had been a boy, she would have been on the battlefield and served like a man does; her family kept her brother for war time whereas gave her away in marriage for free to the advantage of her family]<sup>2</sup>.

In order to show the difference in status with her brother, the girl used a comparison between different types of plants having various importance but the importance of one three is more than the other. In the song the word *-habuuø* meaning *-weedø*, which is not important at all, is compared with a tree called *-dhaddachaaø* a tree with wide and flat leaves that is usually used as a shelter during sunny days. In the same way, she tells her audience that she regrets to be a female because it made her less important than her brother.

Similarly, in song number 3 women [girls] are presented as less important to their family. In the following line from song number 3, the girl asks what her father was saying about her going away in marriage.

í Abbiyyoon alaa maal jedhaa?

Isiituu nyaaphaa dhalatee gabaasaa jedhaaí

[The girl asks, “What was my father saying?” The other girls singing with her answer: Your father says, “It is she who was born female that belongs to the outsiders; get her out to those waiting to take her away.”]<sup>3</sup>.

The father indicates that she is less important because she is female and belongs to outsiders. That is, since she is born female she belongs with others not her family. Therefore, women in this case are portrayed as inferior as far as status is concerned.

Song number 4 again, focuses on women’s inferiority. Here, the bridegroom’s family explains that their boy who married her is superior in that he did not beg to get her but only asked her family. The two lines that show this idea are the following:

í Inni hin kadhatee ima gaafatee

Worratu ofiirraa hobbafateeí

[He does not beg for her but only asked her family; it is her family who easily gave her away and got relief]<sup>4</sup>.

This song [4], first shows the inferiority of women in that she is given away so easily because of her bad-nature; secondly, she is less important to the family so they got relief by sending her off. So from, her families and her bridegroom’s, perspectives the woman [the bride] is less important.

In the same way, in song number 11, a woman is considered inferior because she is not as important as a boy.

í ganamaan dubbatee gamasiin dubbatee

Kan kee maaliif gidduutti hafe

Akka waan ilma hin qabnee

Akka waan durba qofaaí

[ You were saying a lot about completing your work early but you failed to do so as if you do not have a son who will support you ; as if you only have a daughter.] <sup>11</sup>

As can be seen in the song above [11] having a son is preferred to a daughter because if the man has a boy he would have completed his work like people around him but he did not finish his work as if he had no sons to support him. Thus, in all the four songs analyzed above women are considered less important and inferior in many respects.

With regard to the proverbs used among the Arsi Oromo, women are portrayed in a number of proverbs as inferior to men. Some of the proverbs are

Niitiin dhiirsa hin qabne mana utubaa hin qabne.

[A woman without a husband is like a house without a pole] <sup>135</sup>.

Niitii fiirfiin kan ofii gadiiti.

[A wife and a plough are to be found downward] <sup>136</sup>.

Dubartiin keessumaa hin qabdu.

[A woman is never a guest] <sup>144</sup>.

Dubartiin nama hin bulchitu dhiiratu nama bulcha.

[A woman do not rule, it is a man that rules] <sup>142</sup>.

In the previous four proverbs [135,136, 144 and 142] women are considered as inferior in different ways. For instance, in proverb number to 135, women without a husband are compared to a house that has no pole to support it. A house with out a pole is no more a house because it will collapse or in the first place it may not even be built. In the same way, the woman in this proverb is considered someone who cannot on her two feet. Besides, the following proverbs number 138,139, 140, 142, and 143 have shown women's inferiority in different ways:

Dubartii gurri tokko.

[A woman's ear is single] <sup>138</sup>.

Beekumsi dubartii boroorra hin darbu.

[Women have little knowledge] <sup>139</sup>.

Dubartiin dubbii hin tolchitu nyaata tolchiti.

[Women do not make sweet speech but sweet food] <sup>140</sup>.

Dubartiin cinaacharraa waan uumamteef dubiin isii hirøuu dha.

[Since women are made from a rib bone their speech is not full] <sup>141</sup>.

Dubartiin lama hin beektu takka hin wallaaltu.

[Women do not know two but never misses one] <sup>143</sup>.

From proverbs 138,139, 140, 142, and 143 above one can see that women are considered as beings lacking intelligence, unable to properly comprehend of what is being said, as women lacking something because they are made from rib-bone. Moreover, they are described incapable of making good speech except making good food.

The following three proverbs 137, 145, and 149, on the other hand, shows inferiority of women with regard to their importance compared to men.

Namni ilma dhabe intala taphsiisa.

[One who has no son will be forced to play with his daughter] <sup>137</sup>.

Taaøuu mannaa durba dhalchuu wayya.

[øRather than sitting idle, øsaid a man, øit is good to begotten a girlø] <sup>145</sup>.

Anuu bade kan intala taøe badii lammataa kan itala daye jette niitiin.

[I am mistaken by being a woman, the second mistake I begotten a girl] <sup>149</sup>.

The aforementioned proverbs 137, 145, and 147, portray women as insignificant. They are not considered as beings who are indispensable. That is explained, for example, in proverb 137 that he who has no a son will play with a daughter; and in number 145, it is fair to beget a girl than just sitting idle. In addition, in proverb number 149, the woman in her own words explains that it is a mistake to be female and a more serious mistake is giving birth to a girl. This, on the other hand shows that womenø outlook is shaped by the expectations of men who are the main agents

in construction of images of women in the patriarchal culture. As some female informants explained regarding this proverb, they usually like giving birth to a boy than a girl and when asked why they said that, the society prefers male to female.

Finally, the next two proverbs number 146 and 148 show that women are dependent on men and need more follow up in order for them to be productive.

Harreen mana hin qabduu mana loonii galti, nadheen mana hin qabduu mana dhiiraa galti.

[A donkey has no house but lives with the other cattle, and women do not have house but lives in a man's house] <sup>146</sup>.

Dubartii fi jibicha garaa goggogaa leenjisan.

[You train an oxen and a woman with their stomach empty] <sup>148</sup>.

For instance, in proverb 146, women are described as dependent on men because they do not have their own house but live in men's houses. The comparison made between a donkey and a woman shows the extent of men undermining women. Besides, in proverb 148, it refers to women as creatures who totally depend on men and need a careful follow up in order to raise them. Proper follow up is positive but when the comparison is between a woman and an ox used for plough, the status of the woman is brought down to the level of beasts.

Generally, from what have been seen so far in this section women are described as inferior to men in various ways. They are indispensable and not intelligent. Moreover, they are dependent on men because they are incapable of doing tasks assigned to men.

### **3.3.8 Women [step-mothers, co-wives] as jealous**

The concept of jealousy is understood as feeling angry because people want to be like somebody else or they desire to have what somebody else has. In the society under study, jealousy is thought to be a destructive behavior as reflected in oral literature. Some of their tales, songs and proverbs carry this kind of image, especially, about women.

Some sample tales portray women, especially, step-mothers, co-wives, as jealous. These are tales number 4, 13, and 20. Tale 4 [*A step-mother and a step son*] presents a jealous step-mother who

wanted her son to be healthier and more active and successful like her step-son and becomes jealous of her step-son. Her jealousy led her to plan his murder (see section 3.3.4). Tale number 13[*The wise girl*], on the other hand, is about a jealous woman who is going to marry a widower having two daughters. However, due to her jealousy, she told the man that she will not marry him unless he gets rid of the two girls (see section 3.3.4). Similarly, in tale number 20[*The cruelty of step-mothers*], a second wife who could not give birth becomes jealous on co-wife who has twin babies and stole the girls and got rid of them (see section 3.3.4). Thus, due to jealousy in all the above tales [4, 13, and 20], women, especially step-mothers involved in all sorts of criminal acts.

Similarly, few songs depicted women as jealous. For instance in song number 1(see section 3.3.2) women are depicted as jealous. In these lines quoted from the song even if co-wife is good, the friends of the bride advise her to be careful in discussing her matters with her. This is because, according to the song and the tradition of the society, wives of the same man are thought to be jealous towards one another.

In the proverbs used among the Arsi Oromo, some of them are about women who are jealous. Examples of such proverbs as follows:

Garaa qabaachuu baatanillee masaanuu biratti garaa dhiiban.

[Even though not pregnant, in the presence of a second wife, one should pretend to be pregnant]<sup>132</sup>.

Dhiirri niitiin itti hinaaftuu fi manni itti dhimmisu tokko.

[A man whose wife is envious and whose roof leaks are the same]<sup>133</sup>.

Namni niitiin bulu ollaan hin bulu.

[A man that is ruled by his wife do not agree with his neighbor]<sup>134</sup>.

Proverb number 132 shows that jealousy leads women to pretend to be what they really are not. Besides, as in proverb number 133, a jealous wife tends to destroy the marriage of a couple by the disagreement that prevails in their house every day. The other instance shows that a man who

is controlled by his wife could not live with his neighbors because she will become jealous in every move he makes while interacting with his neighbors.

In all the three genres, it has been observed that women, particularly step-mothers and wives are represented as jealous which finally results in cruelty, evil actions, pretensions, and fighting with husbands and neighbors.

The negative images of women that have been observed so far are common to all the three genres: folktales, folksongs and proverbs. Yet, there are some images of women that applies only to one of the three sub-genres: proverbs. Hence, in the forthcoming sub-section these images are explored.

### **3.4 Some negative Images of women in some of the Arsi Oromo Proverbs**

#### **3.4.1 Women as Disagreeable and Disobedient**

This is a feature that exists so far only in the sample proverbs. A disagreeable person refers is a person who exhibits an unpleasant behavior and whose company does not please others. Disobeying persons also represent people who refuse what someone who has the mandate tells them to do or just the rules and regulations or break the norms of the society. Among the Arsi Oromo, therefore, there are proverbs that represent women as disagreeable and disobedient.

Some of the examples of such proverbs are the following:

Amala hin qabduuf kophaa bulti.

[Because of her bad behavior, she lives alone]<sup>57</sup>.

Amma tole jettee niitiin dhiirsa manaa ariite.

[Now everything is good,ö said a woman after chasing her husband away from his home]<sup>58</sup>.

Ofiin bultuun nama hin jaalattu.

[A woman who lives by herself does not like others]<sup>61</sup>.

Namni niitiin bulu ollaan hin bulu.

[A man who is ruled by his wife does not agree with his neighbors]<sup>62</sup>.

The above proverbs number 57, 58, 61, and 62 represented women, particularly, wives as disagreeable. Their disagreeable character compels them to separate from their husband. Furthermore, it is shown in these proverbs that disagreeable wives cannot agree and live with their neighbors as other people do.

The next two proverbs also depict women as disobeying persons:

Hoodhu jennaan diddee ol keennaan hatte.

[When she was given she refused, but she took from where it is kept]<sup>59</sup>.

Kadhannaan diddee dhisnaan bootte.

[When asked she refused, but when left she cried]<sup>60</sup>.

Proverb number 59 and 60 above describe women as disobedient in that when they are given something they refuse to take it, but they steal the same thing when it is kept away. In the same way when they are begged they like saying no, but when they are left they start crying. These are all resulted from having a disagreeable and disobedient behavior that lead them to do the opposite of the right thing to do. Hence, these examples reflect unacceptable behavior among the Arsi Oromo people.

### **3.4.2. Women as liars, pretenders, deceivers**

Lying, pretending and deceiving are all have nearly similar meaning or sense. In some Arsi Oromo proverbs such images as lying, pretending or deceiving are among the awful behavioral traits hated by the society and the same is given to women in the proverbs. The following four proverbs [63-66] portray women as liars and pretenders at the same time.

Ofii ni bootti gammade jetti.

[She is crying, but pretends that she is happy]<sup>63</sup>.

Duruma dhiirsi naa hin baane jetti gursummeettiin jaarsatti heerumtee.

[öIt is my luck that I do not find a good husband,ö said a widow after getting married to an old manö] <sup>64</sup>.

Sobdee boottee amba kolfisiifte.

[She let others laugh by pretending that she is crying]65

Kakuun dubartii amala beekaan kana beeka gurra keessa kabala.

[A woman's swearing is her behavior, that is why a wise man hits her in her ears] 66.

In the above four proverbs [63-66] we can see conflicting ideas raised by the women. For example, in the first proverb, the woman was found crying but she told others that she is happy. In the second proverb, a woman married an old man by her will and said that it is her luck or fortune that deluded her in giving her an old husband; and so on. These actions of women show that they are represented as liars and pretenders.

The next two proverbs [67 and 68], depict women as deceivers:

Intalli fuulaan warra dhale fakkaatti,garaan warra heerumte fakkaatti. [A woman from outside resembles her biological parents, from inside the parents she is married to] <sup>67</sup>.

Niitiin dhiirsa wajjiin nyaachuu didde, nyaatee garaa qabdi yookiin kayatee lafaa qabdi. [A wife who refused to eat together with her husband, must have eaten already or have kept some for herself] <sup>68</sup>.

In proverb 67, a woman deceives her natural family by resembling them facially but once she is married she resembles her marriage family in reality. In the second proverb also a woman is represented as deceiver in that she refuses to eat together with her husband because she might have eaten already or has kept some for herself.

Therefore, women in general and wives in particular are portrayed in the above proverbs as liars, pretenders and deceivers.

### 3.4.3 Women [wives] as submissive, powerless, silent

In a number of cases apart from oral literature, in Arsi Oromo women's voices are silenced due to their powerless status in their society. In the past, still in some area in the present, women have an institution that helps them to protect their rights and make their voice heard which is known as *siinqee institution*, which has been discussed under the topic 'socio-cultural background' (see section 2.8.2). However, in the area this study has been carried out this institution is almost not functioning because of the strengthened influence of Islam and Christianity. Due to this the status of women is not determined, that is, both religions claim that they are giving women full rights which in fact is the opposite. Thus, the next proverbs reveal women who are powerless, submissive and quiet.

Proverbs number 97 and 99 shows that women are submissive. Due to their submissive nature, they finally get pregnant from their own brother. That is, as some of my informants observed, women do not have the courage to say no to what men order them to do.

Intalti garaa laaftu garaa qullaa hin heerumtu.

[A generous girl never get married in her empty belly]<sup>97</sup>.

Intalti tole tolee gudda tu obboleessaraa fafaan galti.

[A girl who says ok to everything, will get shame to her home from her own brother]<sup>99</sup>.

The forthcoming proverbs [100, 101, and 103], on the other hand, depicts women as powerless. Since they are powerless, they could not self-control, could not oppose what men do whether they are right or wrong. Besides, since they cannot fight with their husbands, they prefer fighting with tools in the house which is an indirect way of protesting.

Dhiirsa kijibuu niitiin lafa laalti.

[Because of a lying husband, a wife gets ashamed]<sup>100</sup>.

Nadhoon hamtuun siin loluun dura meeshaan lolti.

[A bad wife fights with tools in the house before she fights with her husband]<sup>101</sup>.

Kadhatanii niitii fuudhanii kadhattee warra isii dhaxxi.

[You marry a wife by begging, she later on goes to her parents for a visit by begging her husband]<sup>103</sup>.

In proverb number 102 below, it is seen that women are compared with a hen's grinding-stone which is invisible and always stays inside the body of the hen. That is, women are thought to be silent and invisible like that of the hen's grinding-stone. Their silence sometimes is understood as acceptance or willingness to some proposal.

Amiiniin dubartii fi dhagaan lukku garaa keessa. [A girl's acceptance and hen's grinding-stone is inside]<sup>102</sup>.

So, from the above proverbs one can see that women have been presented as submissive, powerless and quiet beings. Society believes that women should always display such behavioral traits indicating their stereotypical attitude towards women.

### **3.4.4 Women as Lacking Intelligence**

An intelligent person is understood as a person having a high level ability to understand, learn and think about things. Women are thought, according to some of the following proverbs, to lack the ability to understand, learn and think about things. For instance, whenever a man comes across a woman making any error whether minor or major, as some of my informants expressed, he immediately relates that to women's lack of knowledge, but there is no scientific evidence to prove it. Some of these proverbs are:

Dubartiin lama hin beektu takka hin walaaltu.

[Women do not now two but never misses one]<sup>104</sup>.

Beekumsi dubartii boroorra hin darbu.

[Women's knowledge do not go beyond the fence]<sup>105</sup>.

Dubartiin dubbi hin tolchitu nyaata tolchiti.

[Women do not make sweet speech but sweet food]<sup>106</sup>.

Dubartiin cinaacharraa waan uumamteef dubiin isii hirøuu dha.

[Since women are made from a rib bone their speech is not full] <sup>107</sup>.

Dubbiin dubartii fi udaan handdaaqoo buburree hin dhabu.

[A woman's speech and a hen's waste are multi-colored] <sup>108</sup>.

Mootummaan dubartii karra cufaa oolcha.

[A woman's government keeps the door closed the whole day] <sup>109</sup>.

Dubartiin beekaa deetti malee beekumsa hin qabdu.

[A woman gives birth to an intelligent person but has no intelligence her self] <sup>110</sup>.

Proverbs number [104-110], portray women who are not smart and unintelligent. Even though they have potential for a number of things in reality. The above proverbs have been analyzed under the section entitled as *Women as inferior to men* because they portray women both as inferior and lacking intelligence when compared to men (see section 3.3.7).

### **3.3.5 Women as careless and unreliable**

The word carelessness is understood as not paying enough attention to what one is doing, so that one makes irreparable mistakes. But unreliability refers to being unable to be trusted or to be depended on. It is these kinds of images of women that prevail as representing women among Arsi Oromo proverbs. In this case carelessness results in unreliability, that is, if one thinks that a woman is careless, one will not be willing to rely on her. Some of the proverbs that portray women as careless and unreliable are the following:

Kan jiruun duute dhiirsa jiruun ajjeesti.

[A woman who is careless, does not care for her husband] <sup>150</sup>.

Boru hin beekneen qodaan bukoo isii sagal.

[A woman that does not think of tomorrow, prepares her dough in nine materials] <sup>151</sup>.

Kan ulfaan daakuu nyaate, gaafa deette daaraa nyaatti.

[A woman that ate flour during her pregnancy will eat dust after delivery] <sup>152</sup>.

Kan boru hin beekne iftaan quba hin qabdu.

[A woman who does not know tomorrow, have no idea about the day after tomorrow] <sup>153</sup>.

ōIntala koo koottu gabaa dhaqnaaö jennaan, õyaa soddaa koo koottu sirba dhaqnaaö jette.

[The father-in law asked his daughter-in law, õLetø go to market?ö She answered, õMy father-in law õletø go to the dance.ö] <sup>154</sup>.

Ollaa abdattee dhiirsa heexoo obbafte.

[Hoping that she will get proper food for medicine, a wife let her husband drink the medicine] <sup>155</sup>.

Therefore, proverbs number 150,152, and 154 shows that women are considered careless in that in each case a woman is seen to be careless. For instance, in proverb number 150, a woman is portrayed as she does not care about her husband due to her carelessness. In proverbs number 151,153, and 156, on the other hand, indicate that they are unreliable. The unreliability of women is expressed, for example, in proverb number 151, in that they do not keep their flour for tomorrow because they never worry about the next day. Hence, the images of women in these proverbs have been depicted as careless and unreliable.

## CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION

### 4.1 Findings

From the analysis of the preceding chapter, it has been observed that the folktales, folksongs and proverbs of the Arsi Oromo represent women both positively and negatively. In positive representation, they usually focus on some types of women among others. That is, for example, mothers are described as thoughtful and loving. However, in most cases all the three genres bring out the negative traits of women in general.

Thus, women in some tales have been depicted positively as faithful, honest and loving even though many of the tales regard them as unfaithful, dishonest, liars, adulterous, etc. Regarding the folksongs, they show some positive images of women, especially, girls that have been portrayed as they are loyal to and as loving their parents in whatever condition they might be. But in some wedding songs, the voice of women is heard from their own perspective and it makes it easy to see what they think of themselves. Similarly, in the proverbs among the Arsi Oromo, it has been observed from the preceding chapters that some of these proverbs have depicted women, especially, mothers as indiscriminating, loving, and thoughtful about their children regardless of who they are and what they are like.

The other positive trait of women observed in all three genres is that they have been portrayed as wise beings. That is, women (female beings in general), are considered good at problem-solving for sudden incidents. It is possible to say that in few of the Arsi Oromo folktales, folksongs and proverbs women have been portrayed as wise beings when compared to their male partners even though the opposite image outnumber it.

There are also a few positive representations of women that are not common to the three genres under study. This is the case in the proverbs of the Arsi Oromo where women, especially mothers are usually considered as important persons for the family. Hence, there are few proverbs that portray women [wives, girls] as indispensable persons. Wives are considered important for they help their husbands in a number of ways whereas girls are important from the perspective of their family of marriage because they give birth to a child later on. There are also few proverbs that represent women as cautious and suspicious when compared to their male

partners. Moreover, women, especially mothers have been depicted in some of the Arsi Oromo proverbs as generous.

Apart from the few positive images of women analyzed so far, a large number of the tales, songs and proverbs collected and analyzed indicate that women are negatively represented in a number of ways. To start with, it has been shown that in many of the tales, songs and proverbs, women have been depicted as shameless because they violate the norms of the society which expects women to be quiet, submissive and weak. What is amazing in this regard is that men are not supposed to be ashamed of behaving in an unacceptable way but women are.

The other image that has been widely observed in the three target genres of this study is that women have been portrayed as unfaithful or adulterous. In all the three genres, women are viewed as a people who extra-marital affair with other men.

Thirdly, foolishness is also another negative attribute of women. This has been observed in all the three genres: folktales, songs and proverbs. This image of women is not equally observed in all the genres, that is, the number of proverbs that represent women as fools exceeds the number of the songs and tales collected from the sample area of the study.

Next, cruelty is another trait that is attributed to women, especially, step-mothers and co-wives. The custom of the area allows a man to have more than one wife, particularly among the Muslim communities. Hence, the folktales, folksongs and proverbs show that the wives in polygamous marriages usually fight and are assumed that they do not like each other or each others' children. That is, in the absence of one of the mothers, the other wife may hurt the children of the co-wife to suffer. In general, cruelty is also one of the prevalent features of women reflected in the genres under study.

Fifthly, women are also represented as selfish and greedy. They are portrayed as they strive for personal gains only. Even a mother can be selfish on rare occasions. She might compel her daughters to help with house chores and when her daughter gets ready for marriage the mother worries only for who will give her a hand in the house.

Moreover, women have been depicted as trouble makers and evil-minded. They are thought of as the cause of any kind of trouble and cause of quarrels that begins among men such as their

husbands, fathers and brothers or lovers. In general, women as shown in the tales, songs and proverbs, are portrayed as the cause of any trouble. They are considered as they take the roles of evils that catalyze incidents to get worse.

The analyses of the selected works also reveal that women are considered inferior in the patriarchal society. This is due to imbedded implications that men (fathers, husbands, brothers) are the head of the family, providers and protectors of their family. The analysis has revealed that women are not clever and intelligent, that they are poor decision-makers. However, practically women carry unlimited number of responsibilities in their family: bearing children, looking after the children and the house in general, taking care of a number of domestic chores; and even in some cases women are seen taking part in field work that is typically meant for men.

Women have also been portrayed as jealous even though jealousy can be manifested in both women and men. However, in the sample tales, songs and proverbs analyzed in this study, it has been found that it is a typical attribute of women. Hence, some sample tales and few sample songs portray women, especially, step-mothers, co-wives, as jealous; and in the proverbs used among the Arsi Oromo, also there are few of them that portray women as jealous.

Still there are some features of women found in only one of the three sub-genres: proverbs. That is, the other two sub-genres (folktales and folksongs) collected and analyzed did not reveal the following traits of women. Some of these images are the following. First, some of the proverbs represent women, particularly, wives as disagreeable and disobedient. This kind of disagreeable character is thought to have forced women to live alone sending their husbands away. Furthermore, this disagreeable behavior has caused women to be trouble-makers in their community.

Secondly, it has been observed that there are some proverbs that portray women as liars, pretenders, and deceivers. It can be seen that the foregoing discussions shows that women have been portrayed as liars that deceive people. Therefore, negative images have been attributed to women in the proverbs from the Arsi Oromo.

The analysis of the selected proverbs has also revealed another feature of women. That is, they have been depicted as submissive, quiet and obedient beings. The society expects them to be

ruled over by their husbands and they should agree to the norm of the patriarchal society's ideology where men are the masters and women the slaves.

Women are also described as lacking intelligence in some proverbs of the Arsi Oromo. Some of these proverbs claim, for instance, that women are not clever but give birth to an intelligent man. They cannot convince others and they cannot rule and, therefore, confined to stereotyped roles.

Last but not least, some proverbs have also represented women as careless and unreliable. With regard to carelessness they are thought to give not much attention to important tasks they are expected to do so and due to that lack of attention they are said to make mistakes. Women are therefore viewed as unreliable according to some proverbs. They cannot be trusted.

Generally, in all the three genres: folktales, folksongs and proverbs of the Arsi Oromo women play stereotype roles and are portrayed both negatively and positively. Although they are indispensable as wives and mothers, they are also considered inferior to men. The selected tales, songs, and proverbs reflect the influence of the patriarchal culture on women.

## **4.2 Recommendations**

This study has revealed that women had been represented positively and also negatively in the three folkloric sub-genres. The large number of negative representations is a phenomenon of the past where women are considered inferior than men in every aspect. However, this does not mean that women are not treated negatively in the Arsi Oromo society at present. There are still some who have negative attitude on women and try to reflect what had been established in the folklore on women. Therefore, those who are working in the area of women's affairs and their empowerment should do a great deal to change this type of distorted attitude on women to a better one. This could be done by working on awareness rising issues such as teaching the role of women in the society either in social, economical or political spheres; going down to the level of a household and motivating parents to send their daughters to schools equally with their sons. These could gradually bring changes in the minds of those who think women are inferior and less important in the society.