

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Vol.6.Issue.1.2019 (Jan-March)

ISSN

INTERNATIONAL  
STANDARD  
SERIAL  
NUMBER  
INDIA

2395-2628(Print):2349-9451(online)

**WOMEN IN AWNGI PROVERBS: *POSITIVE IMAGE IN FOCUS***

**TSEGAYE ABIE**

Lecturer in Wachemo University, Hossana Ethiopia

Department of English Language and Literature, College of Social Science and Humanities, Wachemo  
University

Email: [tsegayeabie@gmail.com](mailto:tsegayeabie@gmail.com)

doi: <https://doi.org/10.33329/ijelr.6119.72>



TSEGAYE ABIE

**ABSTRACT**

Language is the vehicle through which ideologies are transmitted in society. Proverbs which form an integral part of the society reflect and shape social life in their concise form and authoritative style. This research identifies and describes the positive images of women in Awugni proverbs in the socio-cultural realities of the Awi society. Proverbs were collected by using focus group discussion, semi structured interview and documented materials on proverbs. Purposive and snow ball sampling techniques were applied. The result of this study shows that women as mothers are extremely reflected positively as innocent and generous creatures that teach, treat and control their children by providing their life experiences in relation to the values, customs and beliefs of the people. The social status of women as mothers is very high in which everybody respects them. Women as wives are also portrayed positively focusing on their roles of taking care of children and husbands by keeping their needs and desires; eyes and motors of household works and home management. The positive images of girls as reflected in the proverbs rely on their contributions to the economic development of their family in particular and the society in general.

Key Terms: **Awugni, proverb, language, image, women**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

**1.1 Background of the study**

Oral literature is a dynamics of communication and transmission of the socio-cultural, political, economic, and historical aspects of any society. Bascom, (1968) as cited in Sena (2008:2) states that “verbal arts serve to keep cultural continuity from generation to generation”. People have rich folkloric traditions in Africa in general and in Ethiopia in particular. These folkloric traditions can help people to describe their socio-cultural realities, economic, ritual practices, political and historical aspects.

Among these folkloric traditions, proverbs have been very important parts of any culture of a society by serving as a medium through which the important cultural images and perceptions of people towards women are transferred.

Finnegan (1970) states that "In Africa, proverbs are repositories of social and cultural wisdom and in many African cultures a feeling for language, imagery and for the expression of abstract ideas through compressed and allusive phraseology comes out particularly from proverbs (390)". This shows that proverbs are special in expressing the images of a society. Fasiku in Hussein (2009) states that proverbs in Africa are used as spices to add taste and pungency to speech. They constitute a powerful rhetorical device for the shaping of moral consciousness, opinions and belief. Speech without proverb is like stew without salt. The Zulu of South Africa say about proverbs "without them, the language would be, but skeleton without flesh, a body without soul" (Finnegan, 1970:475). Proverbs show the identity of its people and equally reflect the strong and weak sides of any society (Buchanan (1965) as cited in Sena, 2008). For example, an Ethiopian proverb "better a bad wife than an empty house" implies the positive image of wife who is very important to make a house as house. Similarly, "A woman without man is like a field without seed" shows the complimentary advantages of sexes to each other.

The Awi society like other ethnic groups of Ethiopia has different traditions, values, socio-cultural realities which are described by the use of proverbs. Women in Awi society like other women in the world have both positive and negative outlooks in the eyes of the society as a whole. Therefore, the researcher investigates and analyzes the positive images of women as reflected in Awngi proverbs.

## 1.2 Statement of the problem

This study was intended to analyze Awngi proverbs to understand the positive images of women in the Awi society. Studying the positive images of women in a society's literature can help us to know the cultural and social codes of the society. It also forms a reflection of underlying social relations and world views, specific to gender, social class and so on. In Ethiopia, there exist both written and oral forms of literature. The oral literature which includes proverbs, folktales, legends, riddles, myths is less appreciated and studied. Therefore, the researcher attempted to analyze Awngi proverbs to understand the positive images of women as reflected in it.

Proverbs which reflect the positions, roles, status and other images of women in a society are vast. For instance, Schipper (2004) demonstrates that proverbs about women substantially help explain how and why sexual differences have resulted in a growing gap all over the world a gap that has estranged men and women from sharing both public roles in life and responsibilities at home. He also states that in the mirror of proverbs, we can meet the prescribed and accepted, rejected and acclaimed, past and remaining gender roles (ibid). In relation to this, Lei (2006) puts that proverbs among genres of oral literature perfectly reveal sexism and the underlying social relations in relation to gender issues.

Proverbs are genres of oral literature which clearly show the positive or negative, strong or weak sides of its nation; they are a medium through which the important cultural images and perceptions of women are transmitted. Moreover, proverbs have been and remain most powerful and effective instrument for the transmission of culture, social morality, manners and ideas of a people from one generation to another (Dabaghi, 2010). He also puts a saying *if you want to know a people, know their proverbs* to convey the importance of proverbs to know the culture of a society.

In the same manner, Berhanu (1995) puts that oral literature in the Awi community serves to keep their values, beliefs and cultural continuity, to describe their environment and world views and to know their historical background, etc. The researcher, therefore, analyzed the positive portrayal of women in Awngi proverbs. The Awi ethnic group is one amongst the ethnic groups of Ethiopia. Studies have been done in different areas of the country on oral literature in general and proverbs in particular which focused on gender related issues. For instance, Meshesha Make (2015), studied on *The Prejudiced Negative Images of Femininity in Wolaita Proverbs*; Hussein Jeylan (2005) on *Masculinity and Femininity in African Proverbs*; and Endalew Assefa (n.d) on *Linguistic Violence against Women as Manifested in Sexist Amharic Proverbs*. However, there is no any study conducted on the images of women in Awngi proverbs. Additionally, Teferi (2000) has studied on *the analysis of Awngi proverbs especially the structure, content and function*, and Melakneh (1991) studied

Awgni folk tales of this area. However, these two researchers did not address the issues of women in the proverbs.

As a result, the researcher believed that it is very important to look at the positive images of women as portrayed in the proverbs of the Awi people as it has not yet been thoroughly documented and studied. Therefore, this study focused on showing the positive images of women in the target proverbs.

### 1.3 Objectives of the study

#### 1.3.1. General objective of the study

The main objective of this study is to collect, analyze and interpret the positive images of women in Awgni proverbs.

#### 1.3.2 Specific objectives

- To collect and document Awgni proverbs related to the positive image of women
- To identify and analyze the positive portrayal of women in Awgni proverbs

### 1.4. Significance of the study

This study is considered to have multidimensional significances. It:

- May help to understand the positive qualities of women in proverbs of the Awi society.
- May enhance the diffusion of the positive qualities of women for the coming generations.
- Will help others to appreciate the creativity and wisdom of the society.
- May contribute to the development of Ethiopian oral literature in general and Awugni oral literature/proverbs in particular.
- May serve for other researchers, and students of folklore and literature as a reference material.

### 1.6 Scope of the study

Studying all genres of oral literature (proverbs, folktales, riddles, legends, myths, funeral dirges, etc) is very. As a result, this study focused on Awugni proverbs dealing with positive images of women.

### 1.7 Limitation of the study

The researcher faced some constraints in conducting this study. Firstly, the researcher encountered a problem in translating the proverbs in to English since proverbs are very metaphorical in nature. The other constraint was the unwillingness of some informants in doing FGD. Although these limitations occurred, the researcher successfully completed his work.

## 2. Review of Related Literature

### The concept of folklore

The term folklore can be defined differently by different scholars. *Brunvand (1978) as cited in Kerschen (2012)* states that folklore reveals the common life of the human mind apart from what is contained in the formal records of culture that compose the heritage of people so that it is an indicator of a people's way of life and attitudes. *Dundes (1965)* defines folklore as people's manners, customs tales, jokes, riddles, chants, blessings, deaths, insults, teases, folk dances, folk arts, folk medicine, folk music, and the like. In short, folklore is a verbal art which is performed by the people.

Folklore has certain functions in the society. It helps to instruct or teach the previous life status of the people along with their cultures, values, norms, beliefs and so on. *Dorson,(1972)*, states that folklore serves to validate some aspects of culture, to transmit the accumulated knowledge and wisdom to the future generations. It can also help us to know how people react to social pressures in their environment, and it enables us to perceive and behold the people's patterns of beliefs, customs, values and the like. *Kerschen (2012)*also pinpoints that folklore helps either to maintain or challenge the status quo prevailing within a community; it serve to express and reinforce the acceptance of the dominant norms, concepts, beliefs,

customs and power structures and to attempt to dispute the authority of the predominant concepts and power holders.

### Concepts of Oral Literature

Oral literature is transmitted from generation to generation through word of mouth. *Dorson, (1972)*, states that oral literature is a traditional utterance in the form of spoken, voiced or sung manner that show repetitive patterns. Oral literature, as *Melakneh (2005) cited in Yaregal (2009)*, is the verbal heritage of mankind transmitted from generation to generation by word of mouth. Oral literature encompasses voiced or spoken forms of traditional literature like proverbs, legends, folktales, riddles, jokes, myths, war chants, poetry, folk speech, folk narratives and so on which all are artistic expressions and performances that are the results of the conscious efforts of people in the society (*Fennigan, 1970; Melakneh, 2005 as cited in Yaregal, 2009 and Ndungo, 1993*).

### Functions of oral literature

Oral literature serves various functions in a society. As it is stated in *Ndungo (1993)*, oral literature can enhance our understanding of the past and the present social situations of the society under scrutiny; it also enhances the awareness of the cultural values and literary structures that persist as part and parcel of the understanding of the community.

*Hussein (2005)* states that oral literature helps to lighten society's myth of creation, religious cultures and the ethno-philosophy of people; it is also significant to construct the socio-cultural history of a society and to express denial of domination and opposition in a society. It also plays a crucial role in shaping and perpetuating the images of a society. It also possesses massively more aesthetic, social and personal significances, and it serves as an escapist vehicle in which people encounter different problems and realities in their society so that they can escape from such problems by using genres of oral literature. Oral literature can also serve to express and promote the value system and the normative systems of any society. Although the value system varies from culture to culture, it is unquestionable for the variability of the function of oral literature (*Finnegan, 1970; Jason, 1968 and Ndungo, 1993*).

### Proverbs

Proverbs are pieces of advice concerning a recommended direction of action; propositions loaded with hidden feelings, wishes and intentions of the speaker and tools to cover individual opinions in public interactive situations. Proverbs may give us persuasiveness by appealing to an authority (*Lauhakangas, 2007 as cited in Saima Mir, 2018*).

As *Balogan (2010) cited in Beatrice T. (2014)*, points out though the use of proverbs may differ from society to society, what is common to proverbs everywhere is that, they touch a wide array of human concerns and activities. Proverbs are highly regarded in the thinking and communication process of Africans as whole. In different cultures across the world; proverbs play an important role in people's lives. These proverbs are used to emphasize a point during discussions and also to define different roles between men and women which imply that there is gender connotation within the meaning and interpretations of proverbs.

In Africa, proverbs help us make interpretations of our everyday existence through dialogue and individuals' collective wisdom providing insight into how people live and behave (*Hussein, 2009*). Proverbs are considered to provide advice and life lessons on how men and women behave in a society and may have an impact on individuals' health. They bring forth cultural and societal expectations because they are ancient and are still valued in current times. *Mieder (2007)* believes that proverbs pass judgment and prescribe what people should do in the future. Proverbs are cultural and therefore prescribe values and norms for both men and women.

Proverbs are related to the concrete social situation in which they are uttered; as a result, they function to fit the social recurring situations and values and to capture people's cultural heritage. They also provide us with rich linguistic data for the analysis of cultural beliefs and social values of a society. As proverbs

are an oral form of popular culture at the level of local society, they provide a means by which gender based power relations are renegotiated in everyday life. Moreover, proverbs show people's way of life and reflect not only cultural uniqueness but also the commonalities shared across the globe and throughout history (Boke, 2012; Dundes, 1965; Hussein, 2009 and Schipper, 2004).

Proverbs provide a general view on life and serve as indicators of general perception or folk wisdom. Since proverbs reflect the wisdom of masses, they mirror the cultural norms, beliefs and values of life of the culture or society they come from. It is interesting to note that the ideas or notions presented in proverbs across the globe are the same. It is only the choice of language, use of rhetoric devices and application of imagery that varies from language to language and culture to culture. These choices of language have a significant impact. Language plays vital role in shaping the material reality; and the relation of language with power can also not be denied. (Roya, 2011 as cited in Sarwet R, 2015)

Finnegan (1970) also states that proverbs are rich sources of imagery and succinct expression on which more elaborate forms can draw. She particularly notes that proverbs represent a people's philosophy. In proverbs, the whole range of human experience can be commented on and analyzed, generalizations and principles expressed in graphic and concise form and the wider implications of specific situations brought to mind

### Functions of proverbs

Finnegan, (1970) states as proverbs serve almost similar functions all over the world; however, the socio-cultural context creates the difference. She puts two major functions: didactic and aesthetic functions.

Peek and Yankah, (2004) stress the cultural function of proverbs. As witnesses and caretakers of the body of accumulated wisdom of the group, proverbs express the norm, the points of view and philosophy of the group taking into account its tension as well, since different proverbs can express contradictory ideas. The proverb in Africa is a highly valued mood of discourse that functions as an indication of cultural status. In African society where an oral tradition of discourse exists and where memory is the sole guarantee of conversation of this verbal culture, proverbs are held in esteem.(Ibid)

Miruka (1994) as cited in Messifn, (2012) also states that proverbs serve as reflecting devices and provide us with a codified wisdom of a society that has been accumulated over many years of pleasing and annoying experience. They are essential aspects of verbal discourse within the socio-cultural contexts in which knowledge, ideas and emotions are communicated. Proverbs also serve as "a vehicle of society perception through warning, cautioning, satire, advice, counsel, invective encouragement or any of those roles for which proverbs are claimed" (Miruka, 1994 as cited in Yaregal, 2009, 14). According to Samovr, et al, cited in Dabaghi et al. (2010), proverbs can help people to learn about cultures. It also offers an important set of values and beliefs for members of the culture. It reflects wisdom, biases and superstitions of a culture. Gaulntely (2005,23) also puts as "not only do the proverbs pass down wisdom and instruction from generation to generation, a primary purpose of even the most static of proverbs is to influence behavior, attitudes or conclusions." Kerschien, (2012) stresses proverbs as the simplest of the metaphorical genres of folklore and the genre which clearly and directly is used to serve a social purpose.

Mieder (2004) puts that proverbs reflect the attitudes and world views of various social classes at different periods. It also shows the traditional wisdom about gender issues and misogyny in particular over the centuries. Hussein(2009), states that proverbs cannot be fully signs of wisdom. They have been used to maintain gendered life through conveying the African people's understanding of masculinity and femininity. Olatunji (1984) as cited in Adegoju (2009), also states as proverbs shape a rule of conduct in which they state what should or should not be done and lay conditions for certain actions and attitudes. He also puts as they serve as social charters condemning some practices while recommending others. They may be negative, positive or conditional statements (ibid).

Proverbs reveal people's frustrations and attempts to escape in fantasy from repressions imposed on them by society (Bascom, 1965). They provide a way of expressing what people cannot express in their actual

lives. The use of pithy proverbs enables people to hide their own thoughts and say something they would not dare to say in a direct manner. This is a paradox: while proverbs play a vital role in transmitting and maintaining the social norms and in forcing the individual to conform to them, at the same time it provides socially approved outlets for the repressions which these same institutions impose upon individuals. (Ibid)

### **3. Research Methodology**

#### **3.1. Research Design**

This research was designed to be qualitative study which is an ethnographic research in nature since it concentrates on cultures, customs, beliefs and attitudes of the society towards women. It aimed at investigating and analyzing the positive images of women in Awngi proverbs.

#### **3.2 Participants of the study**

The subjects of this study were elders (both sexes) of one town administration and one woreda: namely Injibara Town Administration and Dangila woreda. Although oral literature is accessible for everyone, elders are more frequent in using oral literature especially proverbs in their day to day communications.

#### **3.3 Sampling technique**

Purposive sampling technique was carried out to select the informants of the study in Dangila woreda since the researcher is familiar with the area and the people living there. Snowball sampling technique was also applied to select sample informants from Injibara Town Administration of Awi zone since it is best method when the population is difficult to manage and when the researcher is new to the area and the people living there.

#### **3.4 Data gathering tools**

Both primary and secondary data collection tools were employed.

#### ***Focus Group Discussion***

Focus group discussion was held within two groups. The researcher conducted the discussion in both research sites namely Injibara Town Administration of Awi zone and Dangila woreda. The discussion with men and women of both sites was held independently considering that women can freely express their emotions. The total informants in both sites were 20: 10 men and 10 women.

#### ***Semi-structured Interview***

Seven informants were interviewed to collect proverbs used about positive images of women.

#### ***Document Analysis***

The researcher used documents to collect proverbs which are written in Awngi language. The researcher found a collection of proverbs in the Amhara Regional Cultural and Tourism Bureau and in the Awi Zone Cultural and Tourism Office. Hence, the proverbs were documented without having a specific topic. Therefore, the researcher selected proverbs dealing with positive images of women and then asked the elder informants in both research sites to give meanings to the proverbs.

#### **3.5 Data collection procedure**

Proverbs dealing with the positive images of women were collected by using tape recorder and notebooks. Taping the proverbs may help the researcher to save time and to get the direct versions of the informants without any change. Writing down the proverbs on notebook was also used to take proverbs from informants of Dangila woreda and from documents.



### 3.6 Data analysis and Interpretation

The data collected were analyzed qualitatively. Firstly, transcription of proverbs from tape recorder was made. Secondly, translation of the transcribed data and others from Awngi language in to English language was also conducted. To do this, communicative translation approach was carried out because it gives the chance to modify, to reproduce, to re-correct and to smooth the meanings of proverbs (Newmark, 1982). After translating the proverbs, the researcher coded them according to themes. Then, the researcher analyzed the themes and the positive images of women as portrayed in Awngi proverbs. Finally, conclusions and recommendations were given based on the results of the study.

## 4.0 Data Analysis and Interpretation

### Introduction

This chapter deals with the analysis and interpretation of Awngi proverbs which reflect the positive images of women in the Awi community. The proverbs are grouped based on the themes they reflect.

#### 4.1. Proverbs portraying women as mothers

Women as mothers play a key role in the family and in the society at large. Motherhood is their primary role. Women as mothers in the social life of Awi community are viewed positively through their proverbs. The following proverbs depict the positive images of women as mothers in the eyes of their societies.

- a. **ፌዋጋወቡክ ኸዌ**  
*A person who lost his mother eats dough.*
- b. **ፌዋእ ላ ቲወጀር ስታላ ካኸታሰ ኸአ ዝምር እ ምጥሊያ ኸ**  
*A child whose mother died and a crop hit by an icy rain are alike*
- c. **ፌዋወክር ኒስታላ ጅትፍን ዚእ ምጥሊያ ኸ**  
*The death of a mother and a wound on a finger are alike*
- d. **ፌዋወክር ኒስታካር ኒእ ንጃኩጂ ቻጫ ኮረኮራ**  
*The death of mother and sitting on stone feel you bad when you stay a long period of time.*
- e. **ፌዋዝኩኸወጀር ደሬጃእ ላ ቲወኪሽል ኮስወሊጅ**  
*A child who has a mother grows safely, but a child who has not a mother grows carelessly.*
- f. **ፌዋዝኩኸወጀር ስን ክስታወላ ስስኸቆስቲ**  
*A child who has mother is normally happy without getting any treatment from his mother.*

All the above proverbs reflect the positive images of women in the Awi society. Those all proverbs deal with the importance of women as mothers. Proverbs reflect how much the death of a mother is worse enough for all members of the family especially for children and husband. It is also too bad for the community members. In all proverbs stated above, a child who lost his or her mother never gets her affection, treatment, protection and so on which mothers give for their children.

For example, proverb (a) reflects that a child who lost his or her mother never gets a proper feeding. As a result, he or she suffers a problematic situation or illness. In the Awi community, children whose mother died are considered as they grow lacking the appropriate treatment, affection and protection. Similarly, proverb (b) reflects the importance of mothers for the well-being of children. In this proverb, a child whose mother died is considered as a crop crashed by an icy rain in which both issues concentrate on the problematic situation. A crop which an icy rain crashed is valueless; it does not be productive. Likewise, a child who lost his or her mother does not grow properly. Moreover, proverb (c) and (d) portray as the death of mothers is worse enough which is a memorable issue in the mind of family and the community. In both proverbs, the death of a mother is compared with a *wound finger and sitting on stone* for a long period of time. A finger with a wound creates a miserable condition. It is also true that sitting on stone for a long period of time is not comfortable though it is not known at the very beginning of sitting. In the same manner, though the death of one's mother at the very beginning seems easy, it becomes the worst issue in the life of the

family members when it stays a long period of time. This happens when the family members miss/recall the affection, protection, treatment and so on of mothers.

Proverb (e) and (f) in general reflect that a child who gets his or her mother's treatment, affection and protection grows in a good manner. He or she learns a good life lesson from his or her mother's life experience. For example, proverb (f) depicts that a child who has a mother is normally happy without getting any treatment of his or her mother, but not a child whose mother died.

From the elders' point of view, all these proverbs are used to show how much women as mothers are very significant members of the society. No one hates living with his/her mother and losing his/her mother. Since mothers play a key role for the well-being of the family and the community members, everyone in the Awi community dislikes the death of mother. Moreover, all members of the family need the affection, treatment and protection of mothers so that everybody wants to live with mothers. In addition, the following proverbs reflect the positive qualities of mothers in the target society.

- a. **ፍጥወድኪስታክ ኸወፃ ማእ ላ**  
*There is no evil mother and water.*
- b. **ፍጥላ ኪቸረክ ዋላ ኪጊ ኛ**  
*Be proud while your mother is living and perform your task before the sun sets.*
- c. **ፍጥወስታብሩወወሌጅኦ ላ**  
*There is no useless mother and money though they become old.*

From the above proverbs, one can easily understand the positive representation of mothers in the Awi community. Proverb (a), for instance, reflects that there are no harmful mothers. In other words, mothers are compared with water as they are very important. Though water becomes dirty enough, it serves for different functions. The same is true for mothers; *mothers are mothers*. In the same way, it is reflected in proverb (b) and (c) as mothers are very important and needed creatures. As it is reflected in proverb (c), mothers are seen as they are very significant for the family members and the community though they become old enough like that of an old money which can serve certain functions. From the elders' point of view, it can be concluded as mothers as members of a community play a crucial role in the life of children. No one considers mothers as useless though they become old enough, poor, unhealthier and so on. This reality is also presented in Sena (2008) as images of women as mothers.

Mothers in the Awi community are also portrayed as innocent or merciful creatures in their proverbs. Below are proverbs that depict this fact.

- a. **ኸፍ ወጂወስታማን ዳወስ ኒ እ ምጥሊያ ኸ**  
*The heart of a mother and butter in a container of plastic are similar.*
- b. **ፍጥኸዋ ታጅረስ ጅረ ኸዋማን ን ኪረስ**  
*A mother thinks for her children while she is eating, but a child thinks to be reserved for another day.*
- c. **ይፍስ ኸክሳ ኸኔ ታኸላ ኒ ኸ**  
*A daughter who thinks to go to her mother's home does not want to eat at her home.*

The proverbs stated above reflect that women as mothers are innocent or merciful creatures for their family and community members. For example, proverb (a) depicts the fact that mothers are simple who worry much for the well-being of her family. Though a mother is in conflict with her children and her husband, she does not be disheartened rather she forgets everything and treats them in a good manner. That is why the heart of a mother is compared with a butter which is put in a warm place. A butter which is kept in a warm place easily melts, or changes its shape. The same is true for the heart of mothers though they are in a bad mood with her family members. Similarly, proverb (b) reflects the simplicity of mothers for which they think for their children while they are eating something. In the Awi community, according to the elders explanation, fathers do not give due attention to their children whether they eat or not, but mothers play a key role for such activity. This proverb, on the other hand, reflects that every activity which is done at home is performed by mothers. Moreover, in proverb (c), the generosity of mothers is reflected. It reflects that a girl who lives in her own



home does not want to eat when she propose to come to her mother's home. This directly or indirectly shows the fact that woman for her children are innocent enough.

In general, mothers in the Awi community are extremely portrayed positively through their proverbs as innocent or merciful creatures, full of affection, treatment, protection for their children and for the home. Since mothers treat and control their children to know the values, customs and beliefs of the people, they are very needed by children. In other words, children learn and grasp different life lessons so that everybody wants to live with his mother. This does not mean somebody hates to live with his father or the family members. In short, no one is like ones mother.

#### 4.2 Awngi Proverbs portraying women as wives

Women's image as wives can be depicted positively and negatively in any proverbs. Likewise, Awngi proverbs reflect the images of women as wives both positively and negatively. However, below are proverbs which reflect the positive depiction of women as wives in the social context of Awi society.

**a. ከሥላሳ ተወላጅ ገጽገጽ ምግብ ታችኛት**

*A home without a woman is like a zoom without cattle.*

**b. ልሻ ማሻኛ ከላ ችፍረት ትጽፋል ከላ ትሸታ**

*A prudent woman always creates happiness at home, but the silly woman creates boring.*

**c. ደስ ትፍን ፍትፍት ደስ ከሺ**

*It is better a good facial expression of a woman than her an excellent feast.*

**d. ጉዳ ከሥ ዝህኑሽ ረጅን ስራ ያለ ጃ ሺዳ ዝህ ከሺ**

*A man who has a good wife does not go to a wedding ceremony because his home is full of ceremony.*

**e. ጉዳ ከሥ ጅራስ ዘወዳኽ**

*A worthy woman is the crown of her husband*

**f. ከሥ አሰብት ከሻን ከላ ችሁእ ንኩዋኒ**

*A home with a wife is always interesting.*

**g. ከሥ ሻን ስወፍቺ እ ቲኒ ስ**

*A woman is for home as miller is for pounder.*

**h. ሻን ከሥ ጋቲታወይ ማእላ**

*A home without a woman is valueless.*

**i. እላታኸት ደስ ዝህል ምቲ ከሺ**

*It is better a home with a woman doing nothing than an empty home.*

**j. ከሥ አርቲኒ ከእ ከዋጅኛስታላ**

*A person who is ordered by women never fears a hyena.*

**k. እ ምጥል ሻር ጀወእ ሻግር ዳእ ምጥላ ከሥ ዝኪ**

*In every side of a man, there is a woman.*

All the proverbs stated above reflect the positive portrayals of women as wives in the Awi community. Proverb (a) portrays the importance of wives for a home to be a home. If there is no a woman at home, it is not interesting to live in it. In other words, it reflects that women are very important to arrange everything in home such as arranging household works, taking care of her husband and her children and so on. In proverbs (b), (c), (d), and (e), it is reflected that a prudent, worthy, intelligent and responsible wife is proud of her

husband and the family members. In other words, a woman who keeps the societal values, beliefs and customs in which she belongs is respected and her family members too respected. Proverb (b) depicts that an intelligent or prudent woman who knows how to manage and hold her home in a good manner creates an interesting mood in her home. In proverb (c), it is reflected that a woman's good facial expression is more important than her good feast. Though a woman prepares and gives an excellent meal with her bad facial expression, it is better her good facial expression than her excellent meal. This proverb is, most of the time, applied for giving advice to a woman whose behavior is not comfortable for the family and the community members. Both proverbs (d) and (e) depict that a man who has a worthy and an intelligent wife lives with an interesting mood. A home with a good woman is always full of ceremonies or harmonies which give happiness to the family members. In the Awi community, a man who has a good wife does not want to go somewhere to get refreshment or pleasure. This is because his wife prepares his needs and desires and then satisfies him.

Proverbs (f), (g), (h) and (i) reflect wives as the eyes and engines of a home. They are badly necessary for making an interesting home. A woman plays a key role to beautify the atmosphere of her home. Proverb (f), for example, reflects that a home which is controlled and treated by a woman creates a good atmosphere. In proverb (g), it is reflected that a woman is compared with that of a miller. Miller is a milling machine which mills whatever a crop is without selecting good or bad crop. The same is true for a woman who activates everything at home. Since women play a crucial role in caring off children, controlling and treating her husband by keeping his likes and dislikes, collecting the cattle properly, they are reflected in proverbs as an important member of the society. Similarly, proverb (h) reflects as a home is valueless without a woman. It depicts the absolute importance of women at home. Proverb (i), on the other way, portrays that a useless woman is important than an empty home. Though a woman works nothing, she shares her idea to her children to arrange everything at home. The family members too need their mother though she does nothing. In proverb (j), the supportive/cooperative role of a woman is portrayed. Women in the Awi community play a key role in supporting and motivating their husbands being in their sides while they are working farming works such as harvesting, weeding, and plowing and so on. The last proverb (k) reflects extremely the positive image of women. As the proverb depicts directly or indirectly wives play a great role for the success of their husbands in every aspect. Therefore, in every side of a man either he is strong or weak, there is a woman.

From the elders' point of view, women as wives are an important members of the community. They play a great role in shaping the life of their husbands and children in a good manner. Wives in the Awi community are considered as the eyes and motors of the home. Women as wives depicted in the proverbs treat and control their children to know the values, customs and beliefs of their society and to grow keeping and respecting these social expectations. Similarly, they treat husbands keeping their needs and desires. Moreover, wives are cornerstones for household activities and for the good atmosphere of the home.

#### 4.3 Proverbs that portray women as Girls

Women as girls are portrayed both positively and negatively in Africa in general and in Ethiopia in particular in the language of proverbs. Girls in Ethiopia particularly in the Awi ethnic group are portrayed both positively and negatively in their proverbs. However, below are proverbs which reflect the positive images of women as girls in the society and in the family they belong to.

a. አንጃጃራፅ ምዳቢራ

*A girl is a pair of oxen.*

b. ኸፍ ጅራክ ታታቻላ

*A girl can escape from a problematic or a hardship situation.*

c. ኸፍ አፈረ ታታቻረ ጃስይቲ

*A woman gives whatever she produced or gained to her husband.*

The above proverbs reflect the positive image of women as girls. The proverbs too reflect the economic contribution of women in the Awi society. All the proverbs stated above reflects as girls play a key role for the economy of the family. Proverb (a) in nature its metaphorical which represents girls as a pair of oxen. According to the elders' explanations, a person who has a pair of oxen can lead his family in a good way since he can plough and produce different crops better than a person who has one or no ox. Likewise, a person who bears a girl can enrich his economy. For one thing, when a girl marries, she receives a dowry from the person who marries her, and this money is given to her parents. Through marriage the couples become independent of their parents and lead their own life having their own land, cattle and other materials needed. Therefore, they plough and produce their own crops so that they play their part for the development of the society's economy. Not only the dowry but also her husband serves as a labor force to her families. On the other hand, girls exert their energy for serving their parents as a labor force both in the domestic and external works. For example, a girl serves to take care of a child, to look after cattle, to work in the farming area such as weeding, harvesting and so on. That is why a girl is seen as a pair of oxen. Proverb (b), in other way portrays the importance of girls in which they save their life and the life of their family by marriage and by being a prostitute if there is no any alternative. This proverb, on the other hand, reflects the power of women to survive hardship situations than men or they are seen as wise than boys. The last proverb reflects both the economic contribution of a girl and her subordination to her counterpart. This proverb in its nature holds both the positive and negative portrayal of girls. A girl may serve as a labor and then earn money but she gives whatever she produced to her husband.

Generally, women as girls in the Awi society are reflected in their proverbs as they play a key role in the economic development of their families. These are explained in the proverbs as serving as labor force, prostitute (*emphasis on 'if no any alternative'*), getting married, etc.

## 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

### 5.1. Conclusions

This study mainly focused on collecting, analyzing and interpreting Awugni proverbs dealing with the positive portrayal of women in the socio-cultural context of Awi society. In general speaking, as it was recognized from the elders in focus group discussion and from the interviewees, the societies in using Awngni proverbs and sayings have constructive or positive attitudes towards mothers in their community. The researcher found the following basic findings:

- Women as mothers are extremely reflected in Awngni proverbs positively in the social context of Awi community. They are reflected as innocent and generous creatures that teach, treat and control their children by providing their life experiences in relation to the values, customs and beliefs of the people. They are also full of affection, optimistic treatment, and protection for their children and for their home too. The society members have also positive attitudes towards mothers in using proverbs. The social status of women as mothers is very high in which everybody respects them.
- The Awi societies have positive implications for wives who are obedient to their husbands and perform their household chores properly and manage their home in a good manner. In other words, women as wives are portrayed positively in Awngni proverbs. Their positive images concentrate on their roles of taking care of children and husbands by keeping their needs and desires. They are also reflected as the eyes and engines of household works and home management. They are considered as the beauty of the home. If they are in home, the home simply attracts people.
- The positive images of girls as reflected in the proverbs rely on their contributions to the economic development of their family in particular and the society in general. These are explained in the proverbs as serving as labor force, getting married and generate income via dowry, etc. The economic contribution of women in the Awi community is also reflected in these proverbs. The burden or load of women with domestic and external works directly or indirectly shows as women play a key role for the economic development of the family and the community. It shows their hard working habit. Girls,

before and after marriage, as one member of the community play a major part in developing the economy of their family and society. In addition, if they grow with a good treatment and control, they are proud for their families in the eyes of the society.

## 5.2 Recommendation

Based on the results of the study, the following recommendations were given.

- People in Awi community should use proverbs towards the positive portrayal of women, and women themselves should keep the continuity of using proverbs that build their optimistic qualities. It also helps them to know how to live by keeping the cultures, values, beliefs, and customs and so on of their community as reflected in their proverbs.
- The Regional Government of Amhara and the Awi Administrative Zone should document proverbs related to women in general and proverbs that deal with the positive portrayal of women in the society in particular. It helps to preserve the images of women for the upcoming generations.
- Since folklore or oral literature reflects the values, beliefs, and customs and in general the socio-cultural realities of society, the researcher recommends other researchers to conduct further studies on other genres of folklore or oral literature such as riddles, funeral dirges, oral poetry and the like to know more about Awi community in general and women in particular.
- Furthermore, researchers should conduct researches on the other aspects of proverbs towards women such as negative portrayal of women in the society

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