

THE PECULIARITIES OF GENDER IN PAREMIAS

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Abstract: This article studies specific peculiarities of gender and its communicative impact to the meaning of paremias in English and uzbek languages.

Key words: proverb, emotion, particular meaning, attitude, gender. Folk literature, orally

Proverbs have numerous definitions varying from philosopher to philosopher and dictionary to dictionary. There are many definitions available which tried to explain proverbs precisely and accurately. According to the Cambridge Dictionary of English, a proverb is a short statement known by many people for a long time that expresses some common truth or gives advice. Merriam-Webster defines it in much similar fashion as a precise popular maxim or epigram. More comprehensive definitions are available in literature as different scholars attempted to define proverbs covering the aspects of culture, their distribution, and causes and so on.

According to English writer William Penn “The wisdom of nation lies in their proverbs”. In his book named “Proverbs are never out of season: Popular Wisdom in the Modern Age”, Meider quoted American paremiologist Bartlett Jere Whiting’s (1993) defined proverbs as: “A proverb is an expression which, owing its birth to the people, testifies to its origin in form and phrase. It expresses what is apparently a fundamental truth – that is, a truism, – in homely language, often adorned, however, with alliteration and rhyme. It is usually short, but need not be; it is usually true, but need not be. Some proverbs have both literal and figurative meaning, either of which makes perfect sense; but more often they have but one of the two. A proverb must be venerable; it must bear the sign of antiquity, and since such signs may be counterfeited by a clever literary man, it should be attested in different places at different times. This last requirement we must often waive in dealing with every literature, where the material at our disposal is complete”.

Looking at the origin of proverbs, they were used orally in the beginning without any evidence in written literature. They have roots in the oral traditions of a nation. Proverbs are folk literature Representation of Men and Women in English Proverbs 37 representing the nation’s wisdom in few lines. Mieder (2008) in his book ‘Proverbs speak louder than words: Wisdom in art, culture, folklore, history, literature and mass media’ discussed the formation of proverbs. According to him proverbs just like other folk literature genres such as jokes, riddles etc. do not come down from the sky or are

simple products of mythical folks rather they are always intentionally or unintentionally coined by individuals

He and Zhang (2018) described proverbs as a kind of folk literature that is composed of ordinary people, not scholars or officials. Workers such as peasants, cooks, hunter, sailors etc. formulate proverbs in a nonstandard form to express their experiences. They are literary gateways to language, thinking, culture, and mode of life and other social aspects of a particular nation.

The roots of proverbs are in cultural concepts and social encyclopedia of a nation. Proverbs are cultural carrier and transmitters. They usually tend to change precisely over centuries by sticking to the central idea.

Proverbs are transferred from generation to generation. Meider (2008) mentioned four major sources that played a fundamental role particularly in the distribution of European proverbs and it could be generalized to other cultures as well. The first source is Roman and Greek antiquity wisdom which spread through proverbs mostly in the Latin language.

Bible as the second most important source of proverbs followed by Medieval Latin as lingua franca the third and fourth source is the modern text. In short, there are multiples ways through which proverbs spread in different cultures. Few most popular ones including the four sources of Meider are classical languages, antiquity, religious texts, modern text sources, culture etc. He and Zhang (2018) discussed some essential features of proverbs.

According to them, proverbs are both synthesized and used in nonstandard form situations. They express the truth to teach people important lessons. The language of proverbs is simple and easy to understand. Besides this they are straightforward. Proverbs tend to have harmonious rhyme which makes them easy to remember and read.

Categories of Women Proverbs Most of the proverbs involving women have depicted negative features of them with a few describing positive aspects of women. The researchers have tried to explain them through the following categories.

1. *Women as negatively fragile, beautiful and sexual objects.*
2. *Women as unintelligent, unproductive and gullible.*
3. *Women as willful and evil.*
4. *Women as burdensome.*
5. *Women as loquacious.*
6. *Women as a negative and positive homemaker.*
7. *A woman and a glass are ever in danger.*
8. *Woman and a cherry are painted for their harm.*
9. *A woman is the weaker vessel.*
10. *A woman's work is never at an end (never done)*

11. *A woman's advice is best at a deadlift.*
12. *A woman's answer is never to seek.*
13. *Women in state affairs are like monkeys in glass-shops.*
14. *Women will say anything.*
15. *Women's counsel is cold.*
16. *Women are the devil's nets*
17. *Women are like wasps in their anger.*
18. *Women (wives and wind) are necessary evils.*
19. *A bad woman is worse than a bad man.*
20. *There was never a conflict without a woman.*
21. *The female of the species is more deadly than the male.*

The words used here for showing the fragility of women are vessel and glass. These both things are easy to break and because of this resemblance are being used for women. The adjective weaker is used in a comparative degree which shows a woman is here compared to a man and with regard to him is explained weaker. Women physically are designed in a delicate way to justify the notion of beauty attached to them.

The metaphors used are also representing how easy it is to break a woman and play with her feelings more precisely deceiving her emotionally. Cherry is a fruit which has been used in poetry so many times for representing a woman and beauty. Interestingly, cherry as a metaphor has been used for representing women in a sexual context in the early 1600s.

1. *If you would be HAPPY for a week take a wife; if you would be happy for a month kill a pig; but if you would be happy all your life plant a garden.*
2. *Marry your son when you will, your daughter when you can.*
3. *Marry your daughters betimes, lest they marry themselves.*

In this set of proverbs, women are presented with a connotation of being burdens for the family. Women are portrayed as those who are dependent on men for their worth and decisions of life even if it is the most important thing i.e., marriage. The word 'daughter' is used to present women as burdens because they are considered to be dependent on family and the word 'marry' is making a connection to former one creating the context of marriage.

The phrase *take a wife* is used in a negative connotation representing woman as someone who can be purchased or bought for some time. The reasons for this dependence are the status of women in the English society especially during the reign of Queen Elizabeth where it was a patriarchal society and women were under complete control of men. Marriages back then were contracts where women were used to bringing wealth to families especially rich families had very strict rules in this regard.

Poor women still had some margin of choosing a spouse because they could not be used for bringing wealth to the family (Atkinson, 2019).

The problem of finding out a suitable husband for daughters was a big issue back then and is often depicted in the literature of that time. The all-time famous female writer “Jane Austen” had presented a mirror reflection of the issue of marriages in English society even during the Victorian era. The reason why younger daughters of the Bennet family were trying to get involved with military officers was just to secure a good future by marrying a man with stable financial status. Moreover, parents were also shown involved in the struggle of finding suitable suitors for their daughters. Their stress and concerns about marriage-related stuff were presenting daughters as a burden.

Women back then were not allowed to work for themselves and help families financially which made parents treat daughters as burdens. This even at present is observable in many areas across the world where women are considered a burden because of their no contribution to the family income. What worsens the situation are they being carriers of dowry ultimately putting pressure on a family financially.

1. *Women will have the last word.*
2. *One tongue is enough for the woman.*
3. *Many women, many words, many geese, many turds.*
4. *Woman’s tongue wags like a lamb’s tail.*

Here in this category of proverbs, the gossiping habit of women has been targeted. ‘Geese’ have been used to metaphor the group of women since both like making talks but in the case of geese, it is a noise. This is nothing new about women. Women are probably designed in such a way that they like gossiping to kill their time and gossiping also serves the purpose of catharsis.

Women might have appeared as chatterboxes in the era of patriarchy in England. They had nothing more productive to do apart from taking care of the house, kids and husbands and this used to be their leisure time activity to gossip about things they like or dislike.

Men in recent studies have been found more talkative than women but their topics differ from those of ladies. Moreover, it is a general practice that new-born babies are under the supervision of mothers and for their language development they must receive inputs. The general talks of mothers even with toddlers appear meaningless. Mothers have to be talkative in this regard. This is unfair to put a tag of ‘talkative’ on any of the genders because all become loquacious when the topic is of their interest such as men in public speaking, business deals etc. leaving women to hold the second position in such contexts.

According to Susan Herring who studied the pattern of men linguists’ messages Uzma Rani & Mazhar Iqbal Ranjha 48 over professional topics in online discussions, the length of men’s messages was twice those of women. (Tannen, 2017). Moreover,

according to studies at University of Maryland School of Medicine, women have an abundance of a protein that helps in language development in mammals as compared to men and that is why they tend to appear talkative (National Geographic, 2013).

1. *A house full furnished makes a woman wise*
2. *Men make houses, women make homes*
3. *The more women look in their glass the less they look to their house.*

Woman in this set of proverbs has been shown as an entity that shall be confined to the walls of a house along with someone only who is capable of making a house a home. The furnishing of the house has always been associated with married women. The phrase 'full furnished' is presenting both positive and negative portrayal of a woman. A woman had this duty of making a house nicely furnished and beautiful and her wisdom was judged by this in the times of patriarchy or more precisely in Shakespearean age.

Women were involved in learning knitting and other stuff that can help them remarkably decorate their houses. This was cruel on the part of men to judge women based on their aesthetic sense. It is positive in the sense that this shows the creativity of women.

Men have been assigned by nature the duty of acting as an earning hand that is capable of building a Representation of Men and Women in English Proverbs 49 shelter for his family but he lacks the warmth and loving nature of women which is imparted in them again by divine forces so that they could help their children feel secure at times when they are dependent mothers. Women have naturally been given this element of spreading love and this is why they are labelled as homemakers in a positive sense. The other side of the picture where women simply lose the balance between making a house beautiful and making themselves pretty, they are portrayed as the ones who lack wisdom and are not good wife material. This could be a matter of fact since keeping house fully furnished and nice is a full-time job and usually, it has been observed that those women who are good at keeping houses clean are not much great at taking cares of themselves as both tasks are time consuming and exhausting.

On the whole, it is shown here that it depends on women what she prefers to do and ultimately that decides her worth as wife. Women are presented with positive attributes here but in a depending way. They are appreciated for being capable of making a house into a home but this quality is applauded by putting house as a reference point along with marriage. Woman as an individual is not presented with many qualities that make her a great gender.

There are not many proverbs as compared to that of women which are simply involving men, rather they are mostly shown in comparison with women. The researchers have found some proverbs about men which are categorized as below:

1. *Men as demanding but not burdensome.*
2. *Men as the ruling gender.*
3. *Men as loyal and lively.*
4. *Men as bad/cruel at a young age.*
5. *The son full and tattered, the daughter empty and fine.*
6. *Marry your son when you will, your daughter when you can.*

The analysis of these proverbs has shown the comparison between man and woman in the form of son and daughter. Son, on one hand, is shown as demanding but in the very next proverb has appeared to be someone capable of sharing family burdens. Phrase ‘son full and tattered’ are used for former representation and ‘marry your son when you will’ for latter one. The first proverb has depicted a son as someone who has high demands from the family. This is a general belief that daughters are more compromising and are gifted with the tendency of making sacrifices. Even if they are hungry, bankrupt or emotionally empty, they will not express it usually in order not to distress their parents.

This tendency is lacking in sons who in general are believed to be satisfied before daughters. There could be many social reasons to this discrimination. Probably sons are the earning hands of the family and daughters are not on the same level, former’s needs have to be met as a reward for their financial assistance to the family or more particularly to father. Sons are the ones who inherit family status and position moreover they are expected to take care of parents in their old age. May be parents have this insecurity that their sons would not give them proper attention and may not fulfil their demands in old age if they are not pampering them when parents are capable of it. Probably this pampering and importance make sons act tattered even when they have everything to gain more of them. There is a general perception about boys in almost all societies that they are not bound to any specific age for getting married and they shall not be either. Son is considered as someone whose marriage is not a big responsibility for the family as he is the earning hand of the family and can contribute to his marriage monetarily.

In middle ages, even in the English society women were not allowed to contribute to the financial status of the family. They were limited to house and this is depicted in the second proverb. Women even after getting political and economic rights are still not generally given equal financial status in the family and are considered as a burden and responsibility on the shoulders of parents. Boys have a choice to get married when they want but in the case of girls, they are believed to be married as soon as possible. Getting girls married is generally linked to social relief of parents and the same thing is depicted in the second proverb.

1. *Feed a DOG for three days and he will remember your kindness for three years; feed a cat for three years and she will forget your kindness in three days.*

2. *A man is as old as he feels, and a woman as old as she looks.*

This is a common practice to use animals for the representation of human traits and this is what we can trace back to a type of storytelling called ‘Fabula’. It is a general fact about dogs that they are loyal and faithful to their masters or the ones who are taking care of them. The dog could be taken for man because of many reasons and one prominent is their protective nature. Cat is often used connotatively for a woman because of its sassy nature, tantrums and a famous catfight which the animal is often found engaged in. Close analysis of the first proverb represents man as someone who will stay loyal forever or at least is going to remember one’s goodness as compared to a cat which upon trivial issues or disappointment is going to forget all goods you did for her.

1. *Better be an old man’s darling, than a young man’s slave.*

2. *A good man is hard to find.*

This pair of proverbs is portraying a negative picture of men as cruel, dishonest, and carefree and the list males. The interesting thing in the second proverb is the adjective used good. This is referring to the overall qualities of man. No other adjective like honest man, decent man etc. has been used instead good is used expressed an overall flaw of a man. If we look at the style of the first proverb, it appears more like a warning than a piece of advice. The two nouns on different extremes i.e., slave and darling have been used to make it sound more like a warning. If it were to act as an advisor, the word wife could have been used instead of ‘darling; and ‘slave’.

It has been generally observed that old men because of their age gap biologically become soft-spoken and Uzma Rani & Mazhar Iqbal Ranjha 56 dependent on their wives for most of the things. An interesting thing to be discussed here is the reason women give for choosing older men for keeps going. From the hardships of finding a decent and nice man which is addressed as a good man in the proverb to the advice given about preferring old man in a relationship, man is shown as someone who with power in hands is no one to rely on completely. In both proverbs again the word ‘man’ is used other than any other synonym which could present dating/ marriage.

According to Patrick et al. in 2019, women are assumed to choose older men to secure some financial support, the environment in which they want to raise their children and so on. All these economic, social and biological reasons make a young woman a darling of an older man. But if we look at men when they are in the early thirties and late twenties, they are generally under the sheer pressure of developing their career and secure future. If they get married in that age, there are fewer chances for a wife to enjoy a luxurious life until and unless the guy is some millionaire. This first proverb is simply referring to the reality of the economical struggle of men in early age and the usual need of women for being with someone financially stable in a balanced way

There are few proverbs which are representing both males and females and are categorized into two categories as below:

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