

Culturally, in Africa and as it may be in elsewhere, women are the custodians of home, which invariably means, they are in charge of the housework, while men work outside the house. The select proverbs in the analysis portend obvious discrimination, which foreground abusive expressions and meanings. Below are some proverbs, metaphors and idioms analysed for both emphasis and clarity.

Idoma Language	(trans.) English Language
Ach'ènya we'mbli mla elo'kpotuchè'n:	Evil and capricious (= women are devilish and quick to change their minds or emotions.)
Ach'ènya we'gbla ko'do- bobi:	The root of all disasters (= they are the causes of all evils.)
Al'onyan, al'otunobi'n:	Wife not have, grief not have (= this considers women as the sources of grief and sorrow in men's lives.)

<p>Ene ko anya le bo ena ochòche no yokwu ki'poto</p>	<p>The mother-in-law is called or referred to as a scorpion under the carpet (= this means rascality and sedition.)</p>
<p>Odoje ka'chenya ofu we'ta jonjile mla ku'gwu nobi'ye:</p>	<p>The foresight of sixty women is as low as that of a black hen's intelligence. (= this shows the low level of women's reasoning in general.)</p>
<p>Ogbenene ka'chenya le ben ko'n ogbe ko'nyak- lumi:</p>	<p>Women's kindness is like the donkey's tail (= it literally means women are unkind or they show only little act of kindness. It is a male-oriented language of prejudice not to acknowledge women in all they do.)</p>
<p>Ach'anya lo'kpotuch'e'n: Women don't have dog's loyalty:</p>	<p>Women don't have dog's loyalty (= this portrays women as unaffectionate, unkind and unfaithful human beings.)</p>

Because the Idoma language is a gender-based language, the women, too, have what we may call discriminatory terms in female communication. A language used by a group of people as laid down in their culture is a proof of their values, norms, and beliefs. Derogation and discrimination against men are reflected effectively in the use of proverbs, idioms and metaphors much as we could see in the male communication system. This derogatory language portrays women as people who possess qualities such as: evil, capricious, the foundation of all disasters, inferior, as well as beings of low self-esteem, while men are described as greedy, absolute dictators and cruel fellows. Men use language in this regard to simply devalue women in society. Language, no doubt, is sexually prejudiced against women and this prejudice is the interconnection of language itself and social reality in life. Arguably, we may wish to say that no human language is sex-blind enough to avoid gender inequality, prejudice, stereotype, and discrimination.

Idoma Language	(trans.) English Language
Ai'nu wa'bo no l'igbo:	It is teeth that possess the bread (= man is the bread-winner of his household. And because he is the bread-winner, who provides for his family, it, therefore, means that he owns his family.)
E'ko n'ikake ko'chenyilo gbo piepa, ogbo do'ka ony a ome'pa:	When a man's pair of trousers doubles, then he begins to think of a second wife to marry (= this proverb grants absolute authority to men to do as they wish and impose easily their decisions on women. This metaphorical expression means that when a man becomes rich, he thinks of re-marrying a new wife and, women, in turn, shows aversion, disgust and critique of this imbalance and unfairness.)

<p>Och'enyilo no le'l'abo- hinu ma le bo'chenya:</p>	<p>A man who lacks self-opinion is inefficient (= this expression means that most men function as dictators. They often neglect their wives' views and never consult with them in anything they do. They take unilateral decision in order to avoid being called effeminate, in other words, someone who is under his wife's control.)</p>
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Based on the analysis of the select proverbs, we see how men are projected through the use of language as absolutists. These proverbs demonstrate how power structure is constructed through language to dismiss other people, namely women, as a minority, and render them as an appendage to humanity. Also, the male supremacy is reflected in the use of proverbs and cultural metaphors. Such proverbs and metaphors demonstrate the power of masculinity as an embodiment of a patriarchal society. By way of interpretation, they imply that women are dregs of humanity, even though it is statistically obvious that women constitute more than half of the world's population. That is notwithstanding, as M. Karl puts it:

The primary responsibility for their families' health and for provision of food, water and fuel and their work is not only unpaid, but largely unrecognized as well. Their major responsibil-

ities for the households' well-being do not always mean decision-making power within the family (Karl: 1995, 3).

Culturally, the proverbs somewhat present women as a subset of humanity through gender masculine terms, which portray them as objects of male verbal abuse. This form of cultural discrimination against women has been defined by the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), as in:

[Any] distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of the marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the Political, Economic, Social, Cultural, Civil or any other field (United Nations: 1979, 2).

The stress of the 1979 convention was on elimination of all forms of discrimination against Women because they are mostly at the receiving end. 168 countries had ratified the Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Among these 168 countries, 46 of them were African nations, and Nigeria was one of them. This document

has helped to a large extent by reducing the gender gap that exists in most society and bringing into existence a new phase of civilization that recognizes women as equal partners in progress.

CONCLUSION

To close, this paper asserts that any language that poses a threat to the respect of others should not be encouraged. If we, as human beings, sincerely want to show some dignity, fairness, understanding, then, we must dismantle the structures of oppressive and exclusionary politics of gender inequality. We need to ensure that the language we use is consistent with these intentions as established in liberal conventions of “civilised” societies. Therefore, we need not only avoid the abusive use of language that offends, but also to use a language that is all-inclusive of other human beings. We need to respect the points of views, emotions, and feelings of others, and use the language that neither denigrates, offends nor discriminates. We have to be sensitive to the issues of equality, and the possible offence that language can generate is unthinkable.

Equal opportunities can be strengthened if we carefully examine the language we use and the way we use it as a daily tool of communication. The paper tries to demystify the male supremacy, and blur the extant boundaries of oppression. Sexism in the Idoma lan-

guage is clear and its semantic interpretation is found in the use of proverbs. To get things right, we may need to send a strong and powerful message to re-awaken the awareness of equality of women in our society. Our respect for gender differences and preferences could strengthen our sincere commitments to the all-inclusive space of human beings, as this paper envisages. In pushing beyond the social and cultural boundaries that restrict the gender balance of power, no one, in my own thought, captures it better than Meer Shamim does. Shamim frames it this way:

There is more talk and more contestation around gender identity, in urban and rural areas alike, to the point that we are now compelled to deal with the question of masculinities in crisis, as men wrestle with new realities where femininity is no longer synonymous with dependency and subordination (Shamim: 2011, 14).

This is exactly the summary of this paper, as it tries to argue in favour of women's liberation from cultural subjectivity. Even where the women's struggle for equality is jested by some men, or imagined as a threat to the patriarchal world, especially within the family unit, the fact remains that there is a massive conceivable possibility in the heightened awareness of women's struggle that challenges the male power, and desta-

bilizes the dominant narrative of hegemonic discourse. With the empowerment of women through education, the male suppression of women seems to be a myth of the past, and it is no longer what it used to be.

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