

Woman Depicted in Oral Literature: A Study Based on the Proverbs in Kerala.**Dr. Julie****Assistant Professor****School of Folklore Studies****University of Calicut****Kerala****Abstract**

This Paper is concentrating on three topics. Oral literature, proverbs and woman depicted in proverbs. Basically, this defines about the woman depicted in proverbs in Kerala. Many proverbs related with the woman are analyzing in this. Many folklore genres are there in Kerala representing the woman. All are based on the social condition of that time.

Key Words

Proverb, Oral Literature, Genre, Folklore, Oral Tradition

Industrial Revolution Civilization Subsequent to the Renaissance and nationality gave rise to the conscious about tradition among the western people and there came context of old is to be studied. It leads to the formation of the new branch of study folklore. At the beginning it was a study about the past and the investigation about the old manners. It basically focused on study of folk song folk dance and another art forms and worships. But nowadays it is a stress on the companionship in the modern age. Folklore accepts new definition and it grows while trying to define the present problems and doubts. Folklore is such a subject which defines the pulse beat of the civilization and its lowest level. The folklore courses those cultural factors which may be formed in the society might give and back poses. It is an age where society is attempted from some western parties to unify these differences of the different society. Folklore has a great responsibility in identifying each and every feature of the societies and in rearranging the society as it is keeping all its essence intact. Folklore is common to all people understanding appreciating and sharing another culture folklore transcends race, color, class and creed more effectively than any other single aspect of our lives and as an element of our past and present society it is something we can call relate to. Its value is no less than any other part of our history and heritage and as such must be documented and preserved as a legacy for

our future for a proper understanding and definition of folklore and folk life is essential to look at it separate parts.

For an illiterate society the extent of folklore comes to culture while for a literate society folklore only comes as part of tradition. A large part of folklore is transmitted orally. Myth, legend proverbs, tales riddles all these are transmitted by word of mouth. The most important in the study of folklore are such oral traditions. For folklore, classification is essential. This is done on the basis of gender. The genus was first introduced by Laurie Honko. Many scholars like Richard M Dorson, R.S Boggs, Anti Arne, Stith Thompson Classified folklore in their own ways. In folklore the four classification of Richard M Dorson is more accepted one. Dorson classified folklore in to oral tradition, social folk custom, material culture and Folk arts.

Oral literature is part and partial of the oral tradition. Proverbs are one among the folk literature. Proverbs are the best way to enter into a civilization proverbs are popular sayings which contain advice or state are generally accepted truth because most proverbs have their origin in oral tradition they are generally worded in such a way as to be remembered easily and attempt to change little from generation to generation so much so that sometimes their specific meaning is no longer relevant proverbs are passed down through time with little change in form proverbs are often used metaphorically and it is understanding their metaphorical nature that we can unravel their meaning proverbs often make use of grammatical and rhetorical devices that help make the memorable including alliteration rhyme and parallel structure reputation of keywords or phrases and strong imagery.

Woman have a specific role I the oral literature in Kerala. It is mainly depended up on the social structure of the period it created. It is visible in proverbs too.

ORAL LITERATURE

Oral literature can be defined as the spontaneous outburst of the innermost feelings which emerged from the deep feeling of a community. It has its roots deep in tradition and preserved in memory. It is ever fresh and ever on the move from one person to another. All literature oral or written spring from life but oral literature is better projection of the innermost recesses of the social and culture of the society, its tradition, customs, habits, behavior, rites, their history etc. In a village there will be some people who store all the songs or stories in some occasions.

Oral literature is concerned only with speaking singing and with listening thus depending upon the existence of a living culture to carry their tradition. The speaker or singer is carrying or in an oral tradition a tradition learned from other speakers and delivered to a living audience. The listeners those who are new and old to here get the information about the life their community and their tradition with the listener's interest, the story or song or proverbs or riddles will be repeated over and over.

In some cultures, the people who those who have a good memory can carry these traditions. Some men and women are much skillful to orality of a narration. It is true that the continued existence of an item of oral literature depends upon the memory of the teller. As it is passed from one person to another it suffers changes from forgetting or from conscious additions or substitutions that the item changes continually.

The people those who have a skilling good narration develop special techniques for singing or telling epic or heroic tales to the accompaniment of the harp or other musical instruments which can be more effect on the hearers. In the course of time in various places special poetic forms have been perfected and passed on generation to generation. By such a techniques has been the way in which remarkably skillful.

A different kind of oral tradition is preserved by the ritual specialist: priest Shamans and others who perform religious ceremonies and healing rites frequently these rituals must be remembered word for word and are not believed to be effective unless they correctly unless. They correctly performed the ideal of such priestly transmitters of oral tradition will have complete faithfulness to that which has been passed down to them. The items which they have passed will remain unchanged and modified.

There are some items in oral tradition which the person is totally unfamiliar in writing .It is called primary orality. This depends upon the spoken form. Oral exist and mostly has existed without any writing at all. They learn a great deal and possesses and practice great wisdom, the items in oral literature are passed to another by apprenticeship. It is like hunting with experienced hunters, for example by disciple, which is a kind of apprenticeship, by listening by repeating what they hear, by mastering proverbs, songs, stories etc.

Walter J Ong in his orality and literacy talks about primary orality and secondary. The orality which is untouched by writing is called primary orality and which sustained by telephone radio television and other electronic devices that depend for their existence and

functioning on writing and printing are called secondary orality. It is to preserve the culture through the use of high technology. This can prove much mindset of primary orality. The primary orality the word has no visual presence; even the objects by represent are visual. In primary oral culture though thought and expressions are like additive rather than subordinate, aggregative rather than analytic, redundant or copious, conservative or traditionalist, close to the human life world, agonistically toned, empathetic and participatory rather than objectively distanced, homeostatic and the situational rather than abstract.

It is difficult to study oral literature. When a speaker is addressing an audience the members of the audience normally become a unity with themselves and the speaker. Then the speaker asked the audience to repeat or to say when they have got from the narrator or the teller each of the reader will enter into his or her own private world including their own words in it. So the unity of the audience is shattered when they do not perform the actual thing which has come from the narrator's mouth, the originality or the real feelings of it will perish. And its beauty is lost but it may have a new form of style which is different from the original one.

The more skillful tradition bears take pride in the exactness with which they transmit a tale or so gust as they have heard it many years before but they only deceive themselves for every performance differs from every other one. The whole material is flow it and refuses to be stabilized in a definite romp. The teller is likely to find rules for improvement and may well begin a new tradition that will live as long as it appeals to other tellers. It thus depends that in nearly all cultures certain people specialized in remembering and repeating what they have heard.

The essence of all folk literature is oral and subject to its survival in the human mind is the memory it is by the repetition which it helps to exist in the memory the folk literatures of all kinds are filled with formulaic expression. Fork literature is of many types such as folktale myth legends folk songs riddles proverb folk speech etc.

PROVERBS IN KERALA

Generally, the proverb is said to be a short pithy saying in common use which are some statements earned by experience or observation. Each proverb is a full statement of an approach to recurrent problem. It presents a point of view and strategy that is self- sufficient, needing nothing more than an event of communication to bring it into play. Proverbs are the shortest form of traditional expression that calls themselves as formal artistic entities

There are different varieties of proverbs in the world. All are representing its own culture. Kerala has its own culture and many proverbs are there based on the culture of Kerala. Women are depicted in proverbs in different ways. This is analysing in this paper.

Proverbs are the product of companionship. It is a discretion filter from the experience of many generations of a community. Proverb includes some of the important features like regionalism, tradition etc. They appear so simple and obvious when heard, read or used yet they amount to very effective modes of communication in interpersonal relationship, political discourse, mass media, literary works and advertisements in cartoons. Obviously, people need such traditional sound bites to add metaphorical expressiveness to their utterances and writings. This has been true since antiquity, and there is absolutely no need to fear the demise of proverbs as our lives become ever more complex. In many ways, proverbs are not so different from short quotations that have gained a considerable currency of age. The biggest difference is, of course, that the originator of a famous quotation is always almost known, while the coiner of most proverbs is lost in anonymity. But one thing both verbal genres definitely have in common is that they both start with an individual who formulates a memorable statement that catches one among the people. In fact, the proverbs are still being created today as readymade formulas to express new human and social insights. As such, proverbs are based on a multitude of experience and observations that are part of everyday life in the family, the workplace, business and any form of human exchange.

Definition

The proverb defines as the knowledge of many as the wisdom of one. It is meant as the knowledge passed down from generation to generation. Proverbs are called in Malayalam as Pazhamchollukal. Literally that means ancient sayings. It is well known that proverbs reflect the culture of the people and their language. These have been coined based on centuries of human experience and are used very effectively. Most of the old people use to illustrate their conversation by using stories or proverbs in an effective manner.

Characteristics

Proverbs offer a concise record of folk wisdom and appeared in oral tradition, literature, art, and popular culture for centuries. Proverb illustrates the customs and behavioural pattern of the people. As a universal subject of the human way, it reflects the light of reason, experience and completion. It reveals the perceivable world in general and the pragmatics of social behaviour

in particular. Horizontally it concerns the phenomenal world, vertically it moves toward the metaphysical order. Hence, on the one hand it is practical, on the other hand it is essential and absolute. Proverbs are recurring and traditional by virtue of being the items of folklore. The didactic content present in proverbs suggests a statement of fact that can be identified as a tendency with relevance for knowledge and behaviour of human life. Thus, proverbs and folklore serve as revelatory wisdom of a community. For a statement to gain proverbial status and be perceived as a recognized proverb it needs to exhibit certain characteristic features and fulfil a set of formal criteria some of which are elucidated below.

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 prefabricated generalized statements. They are therefore unaltered 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 retrieval from memory. Against the background that many traditional proverbs draw up on 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 contextuality, poly functionality and Poly Semanticity. Certain linguistic, structural and poetic devices often add to the expressive and memorability of proverbs. It also should be noted that the reason the exist thousands of proverbs in various language is due to the fact that they are based on similar structures that become formulas on which the on which the based new insights with different concepts and ideas.

Common features

Proverbs are passed down through time with little change in form. It often used metaphorically and it is in understanding their metaphorical nature that we can unravel their meaning. Proverbs are often make use of grammatical and rhetorical devices that help make them memorable including alliteration, rhyme, parallel structure, repetition of keywords or phrases and strong imagery. A proverb forms when we apply the traditional knowledge at the right context aptly.

The definition wisdom of many wits of one point out the same. It is actually an effort of an individual to explain a peculiar circumstances with the help of deep rooted past societal experience. It can only be applied by an individual who has a deep awareness of society and life.

Proverb is a wit too. The proverbs like “ *Eenampachikk Marapatti Kootu, Ettande aniyam Konda Krupu* are example for it. These proverbs are used by a 3rd person when he compares characters, acts or state of other two. It is human as it settled with regard to an apt circumstance meant about character of some individual when we are close to a person his nature can be better known. *Koyikkenda Kooviyalu, Njan alle Muttamadikkende*. This proverb indicates an anger of a person to another who keep on advising or suggesting others to do something. *Kurukan Chennaidathellam Koovilum Viliyum*, it pictures those person who make problem wherever he goes. Humour in proverbs has a major role in keeping these remains for centuries.

Conceiving nature is the most peculiar feature of the proverbs. This will have an implied suggestion or idea along with the sense of word improver more often implied idea has more importance. This importance comes because of this conceiving nature of the proverb. *Marakkaruthe, kulichakadavu*, this proverb simply means we should not forget the past incident or experience. *Muttathemullakkumanamilla*, this means that we does not know about our near friends. Proverbs actually does the explanation of a peculiar fact with the help of a general fact. In every proverb there will be an implied meaning over its word meaning .they will not provide any real meaning.

There is an invisible relationship between a region and wording aroused from that region literally culturally and ideally. This remains true with the proverb too. *Kumbatil Mazha peithal Kuppelum Manikyam*, this proverb closely tied up with the Kerala geography and weather. Many proverbs of this type will not have any meaning, if it is separated from that particular culture. Some of the proverbs are universally accepted the following proverb exists in many cultures and is universal because the common fact day and night. Eg: *Oru Rathikku Pakalundu*.

Version is the important peculiarity which can be found in proverbs. There may be some dispute between two common people with the different proverb which spread the same message or idea and which proverb out of the current and so. This dispute has no remedy. It is the nature of folklore that one folk form has different lesson.

Kaattukozhikkenthu Changaranthy.

Kaattukozhikkenthu Samkranthi.

Like this there are different dialectical persons we can found all over Kerala.

So there is different version to the means of identifying folklore. Folklore has not a pure version or chapter but has many different versions. It considers the entire versions equally variations in proverbs is a clear cut proof for individual and societal dispositional cognition of Proverbs. Variation can occur at the level of dialects and societies, at the standards of language, standard colloquial slang and taboo at the level of social praxis and the level of ideology, attitudes and beliefs and so on. In addition, inter language variation in proverbs can also be studied from the language perspective. In such a perspective sociopragmatic variation will be useful study. What is more, there can be variation at the level of frequency of usage among individuals and language communities. In fact any variation is a matter of variation in disposition. That is why the component of disposition should be included in any language theory, including the theory of proverbs. Such studies have to be increased for for across cultural and cross linguistic information in view of the complex nature of variation. One more important area of investigation is the adaptation of proverbs. Already some pioneering work has been done in the case of anti Proverbs but not much in the case of adaptation in a linguistic model.

Context or circumstances is the life of a proverb. It is lifeless when we separate the proverb from a particular conversation or context. *Monthayamvalanjil arupathinalum valayum*. It means basic should be right so the whole will function rightly. This proverb, if it stands alone, it may not have any meaning and relevance but when it is bonded with a circumstances or context and much relevance. Some proverbs may usually use to hint many contexts like to imply the effectiveness of a good teacher or a good leader. It is not possible to apply a proverb, when we hardly have any idea about the circumstances.

Each proverb is like a lesson. Each generation produces some proverbs and learns from it. Common life is the core subject of proverb. We can see a number of proverbs in many fields of the peoples life such as custom, worship, employment, agriculture domestic life, art, medicine and astrology etc. The world view in proverb, according to Robert Redfield is the manner in which a public views its surrounding universe. In a more elaborative statement about worldview is it the manner in which common men confirming their view towards others,

environment daily life and themselves. Their view is given by Cluck Horn, if we examine proverb, we can understand how the animal, birds and surroundings environment reflected in this world.

Dog is an animal which loves men and lives in harmony with men with ease. But usually dog is represented as a valueless animal in proverbs.

Naya Kurachal Akasham Veezhumo

Kadalil Chennalum Naya Nakkiye Kudikkoo.

Kurakkum Patti Kadikilla.

Like this we can see a lot of proverbs about dogs. Some of the hints in this kind of proverbs are to be studied and thus we can understand a public view about its surroundings and more clearly about common sense of the public.

Meaning of the proverb bound to be different both with the place and time. *Melle Thinnal Panayum Thinnam* is slightly changed in some places and used *Melle ThinnalMullum Thinnam*. The change of the meaning in proverb is rightly explained in the book “*pazhamchollile Keraleeya Jeevitham*” by K M Anil. The proverb *Chakkiku Vechadu Kokkini Kondu* it is actually used to suggest little that is that we got which actually aimed at a bigger one. But the modern world uses this proverb in different perspectives. At the same time there are many modern proverbs which are just an imitation of the real ones. Even though it looks similar in structure, meaning and function may be entirely different. So a comprehensive study should be done towards this evolution or change in meanings.

Woman Depicted in Proverbs

Kerala is very rich in its natural and cultural elements. Different cast, community, working folk are habituating here. Most of the communities are following patrilineal system. As women are seen to be principal bearers of tradition and culture of the society, we can understand their standing and status in the perspective of the folklore of that society. There are broadly two ways of evaluating the status and position of women in their respective societies by analysing all the activities and practices of a society relating to women and by examining the folk representations of women. Women representations are there in almost all oral tradition proverb is one among them.

Woman appears in many roles as mother ,daughter, wife, mother-in-law, daughter in law sister in etc in proverb

Adukkala Penninu Azhaku Nokkamo (Build there is any need to consider the beauty of the servant)

Mulayulla Penninu Thalayilla (Woman with breast have no brain)

Pennakunnathilum Bhedham Mannu(It is better to be mud rather than being a woman)

Angadiyil Thottal Ammayodo (Show the anger at disappointment in losing a fight towards one's mother)

Ammakku Prana Vedhana Makkalkku Veena Vayana

All these proverbs show the values given to men and women in our society. This is sort of proverbs arises from a society which is male oriented. When society considers men are superior to women, above proverbs are like the voice of a male autocrat. We can identify the role of women in a male cantered society and culture by analysing the proverbs. It ignores the efforts of women and thinks their efforts are valueless. Proverbs seem to follow with the flow of society rather than its opposite even it is wrong.

Mannum Pennu Kande Kollavoo.(The land and woman have to be reviewed before it obtain)

Vettum Kilayum Kollumthorum Mannum Pennum Nannavun. (Woman and Land will be purified while cutting and spoiling)

In the society, land and women has their own owners. There is a common view towards the land and women, that land should ripe mature according to the production and women should mature with the social wellbeing. It shows the wishes of male cantered society.

Some proverbs remember us that women are the carriers of heredity nature of women are transmitted to the generations it can be understood from the following proverbs.

Thallayillenkil Pilla (There is no mother than the child)

Paththu amma Cahamanjalum pettamaavilla (A step mother can't be a real mother.)

Amma mathiluchadilyal molu gaopuram chadum(If mother jumps over a wall daughter will jump over a tower.)

It shows the responsibility and role in the bringing the generation better.

Vadakkini Ponthiyal Thekkini Thazhum.(If the vadakkini is in heigh the thekkini will be down.)

In kerala culture vadakkani is the portion meant for woman and the thekkini meant for the men. This is an old saying indirectly means if women take decision in the family, it will be ruined soon.

Mother daughter relationships mother-in-law, daughter in law relationships is also a subject for proverbs. The fight between the two are also narrated in the proverbs.

Ammayiammayum marumolum onnichal kaikkunna kanjiravum madhuramayitheerum.(If a mother in law and daughter in law is united even the Strychnine tree will be sweeter)

These are explaining about the relationships between mother-in-law and daughter in law.

CONCLUSION

There are many proverbs related to women in Kerala context. They are highly connected with the social situation of the era it is originated. Still those are having relevant in the present time too. When it analyses it is seen that most of the proverbs are degrading the dignity of the women. Proverbs are considered as the most intelligent knowledge of the elder community. Still, it is not giving proper consideration to the woman and her dignity. She is always presenting as a quarrelsome and jealousy one. Her dignity is not presenting in most of the proverbs. Even though some proverbs are representing here as mother wife sister and daughter most of them are trying to supress her. It is highlighting the social status of Kerala and the clearcut example of the male oriented society. Most of them are acting as the justification of the existing social culture of Kerala. but most of them are not getting proper consideration in the present social scenario of Kerala.

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