

THE CONCEPT OF A WOMAN IN GEORGIAN, ENGLISH, FRENCH, AND GERMAN PROVERBS

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Abstract. Proverbs provide intriguing insights from both cultural and linguistic perspectives. By comparing proverbs in Georgian, English, French, and German, we can gain valuable insight into how women are represented across these four societies.

This research aims to examine how proverbs in these languages reflect centuries of accumulated wisdom and experience, with a focus on categorizing them thematically by the depiction of women across different cultures.

The comparative and contrastive analysis of Georgian proverbs along with their English, French, and German counterparts reveals both universal themes—such as motherhood, virtue, and the centrality of family—and cultural differences, particularly regarding independence, marriage, and women's rights.

Our thematic analysis reveals that women are often portrayed as mothers, wives, and homemakers in all four languages, with a strong emphasis on the positive image of motherhood. However, we also identified stereotypical views of women, portraying them as either evil or seductive; indeed, sexist or outdated proverbs can be found in each language. Additionally, humor is prevalent in English proverbs, which often emphasize intuition, while French proverbs tend to be more poetic and elegant. In contrast, German proverbs are generally direct and strict. Georgian proverbs, on the other hand, highlight women's strength, intuition, and the importance of respecting mothers and other women.

The proverbs have been organized thematically into the following categories: Family and household roles; Marriage, widowhood, and independence; Virtue, beauty, and modesty; Women's tongue and temper; Old age; and Poverty, suffering, and patriotism.

Keywords: Georgian, English, French, and German proverbs; concept of women; contrastive analysis; semantic and thematic analysis.

Introduction. No other genre of folklore conveys the wisdom of the people as vividly and concisely as proverbs. They showcase a remarkable ability to observe the richness and adaptability of language. „Proverbs don't always have to be didactic and prescriptive; they can also be full of satire, irony, and humor. As such, the thousands of proverbs that make up the stock of proverbial wisdom of all cultures represent not a universally valid but certainly a pragmatically useful treasure” (Meider, 1997:416). Proverbs encapsulate individuals' life experiences, capturing everything that has affected them—joy or sorrow, bitterness or sweetness, despair or elation, hope or hopelessness—into short, skillfully crafted phrases. „In the use of proverbs, it is not only the words that matter. The feelings and emotions are combined with the proverb” (Granbom-Herranen, 2011: 285). Covering all areas of life, proverbs have been shared across the centuries, offering insights and generalizations based on long-term observations about important topics such as love for one's homeland, courage, friendship, work, bravery, cowardice, intolerance, and deception, among others.

The importance of the semantic study of proverbs is stressed by the famous paremiologist Wolfgang Mieder. He notes that „The vexing problem of proverb meaning continues to occupy semantic studies. Linguists and folklorists have repeatedly attempted to explain the semantic ambiguity of proverbs, which results, to a large degree, from their use across different contexts and functions. But proverbs also act as analogies, which adds to the complexity of understanding their precise meaning in a particular speech act” (Mieder, 1997:410).

When examining the worldview expressed in proverbs and sayings, anthropocentrism emerges as an essential characteristic. These expressions, which reflect a culture's collective experiences, predominantly focus on human beings. They describe various aspects of human life, including character traits, behaviors, and relationships within families, communities, and society. Additionally, proverbs and sayings reflect a nation's spiritual values. Surguladze and Matchutadze (2014), discussing the reflection of ethnocultural peculiarities in French and Georgian proverbs mention that “Decoding of a 'hidden' essential meaning in a proverb is a difficult thinking process on the level of conceptual thinking. This process is based on the principle of synthetic thinking (the combined operation of constituent elements). It involves complex subconscious operations of thought, such as reflection on the logical relations between objects and phenomena in the universe, perception of essentials, generalization, and abstraction. Unlike surface-level (subjective) perception (though, in practice, based on it), it exceeds the boundaries of visual, sensual reflection and strives towards a deeper cognition of reality. It is a higher, abstracted form of perception of reality” (Surguladze & Matchutadze 2014:156).

Zakirova (2012: 3), investigating the linguistic and cultural features of the gender aspect in the linguistic world image of paremias, notes the importance of describing the cultural concepts of "femininity" and "masculinity" and of identifying their components through the analysis of linguistic structures, particularly paremias (proverbs and sayings). She underlines that paremiological units are anthropocentric: a person in them appears in two guises - male and female, and are inextricably linked with the concept of "gender," the national specificity of which is represented precisely by the distinctive and unique features of how the "male" and "female" are understood, how they are displayed, how they relate and how they interact with each other.

We view gender representation in proverbs as both a sociocultural and an embodied phenomenon within the field of linguoculturology, as it reflects diverse worldviews in the linguistic image of the world. Geldiashvili underscores the importance of linguacultural studies while analyzing the ethnic and moral aspects that reflect the national image in Georgian. She remarks that day by day, the description and analysis of the relationship between language and national culture, and between language and the mentality of the people, is becoming increasingly relevant, made possible by linguoculturology, that is, the study of culture through language (Geldiashvili, 2023). Gender is understood as a socially and culturally determined category, making it a culturally specific phenomenon that varies across different languages and cultures. According to Lomotey (2019), "proverbs are both overt and covert linguistic expressions of dominant and subordinate ideologies about gender and the social order" (Lomotey, 2019: 326).

By examining the portrayal of women in proverbs through the lens of contrastive linguoculturology, we can uncover both universal and unique features of various nations, as well as their linguistic and cultural characteristics. Our analysis compares Georgian proverbs with those in English, French, and German, highlighting culturally significant values that reflect new perspectives and focus on emerging societal norms. Among these values, gender serves as a key marker of social status.

The aim of our research is to identify how women are represented within the linguistic and cultural contexts of Georgian, English, French, and German societies. We seek to examine how proverbs in these four languages encapsulate centuries of wisdom and experience, categorizing them thematically based on the depiction of women across different cultures. According to Lomotey, "through proverbs, prevailing dominant gender ideologies can be reproduced, sustained, and (potentially) contested. They possess significant rhetorical and pragmatic functions, which can make them manipulative" (Lomotey, 2019: 327).

Wolfgang Mieder (1994, 1997, 2004), a prominent expert in proverbs, has conducted research on the impact of gender in proverbial discourse that is scattered throughout the discussions. His works highlight that proverbs are not neutral; instead, they serve as traditional cultural reflections that often reinforce gender stereotypes and biases. In the *Wise Words: Essays on the Proverb* (1994), Mieder argues: "The proverbial tradition has contributed much to the negative image of women by perpetuating stereotypes that portray them as talkative, deceitful, lazy, or inferior to men" (Mieder, 1994:118). In contrast, men are typically portrayed as the standard of humanity. He emphasizes: "While proverbs about men stress wisdom, strength, and authority, proverbs about women tend to ridicule them and question their moral character." (Mieder, 1994: 124). He also points out that the realm of proverbs is predominantly male-centric (androcentric). In many proverbs, the term "man" is used to represent "humanity" or "people," implicitly positioning the male experience as the universal norm. Bożena Kochman-Haładaj (2017), discussing the problem of gender stereotyping in world proverbs, stresses that "Beyond any conceivable doubt, the female image emerges more precisely, since women's roles and status constitute the core subject of many proverbs, regrettably of negatively-coloured perception, both at a European and a universal level" (Kochman-Haładaj, 2017:78)

One of the many social phenomena reflected in proverbs relates to sex and gender issues, specifically focusing on male and female stereotypes. This topic enhances our understanding of the languages of Georgian, English, French, and German proverbs, which convey historically, socially, and culturally determined gender-specific information about individuals. Proverbs serve as a unique, aesthetically rich subsystem within the broader context of these languages.

Research Methodology. Linguoculturology is an interdisciplinary field that studies the relationship between language and culture. It focuses on how cultural values, worldviews, and traditions are reflected in language. Therefore, the scientific methods used in linguistic culturology research are diverse. These include: semantic analysis, contextual analysis, component analysis, comparative and contrastive analysis, metalinguistic description, discourse analysis, statistical data analysis, interview analysis, corpus analysis, and other methods (Sobirjonovna, 2025:42).

Our research focuses on the linguocultural analysis of proverbs, utilizing comparative and contrastive methods, as well as semantic analysis, particularly of proverbs that convey female connotations, both explicitly and implicitly. The comparative method allows us to examine linguistic and cultural elements across different languages and cultures, enabling us to identify their similarities and differences. This approach helps us understand how various linguistic communities perceive the world.

Linguocultural analysis is concerned with identifying and examining the cultural concepts embedded in proverbs that hold significant cultural meaning. This involves studying the dictionary definitions of proverbs and their usage in literature, folklore, and everyday communication. Lexicographic analysis explores how meanings are represented in proverb dictionaries, allowing us to track cultural changes and the transformations of proverbs over time.

In this study, it is essential to compare proverbs from foreign languages—specifically English, French, and German—with those from Georgian. By employing comparative and contrastive methods, we can uncover not only the structural and functional features of the languages being compared but also the national characteristics and cultures of the respective nations. While comparative linguistics has

long examined languages with different structures, the complex study of language and culture through the contrastive method has only recently gained attraction. This research focuses on identifying similarities and differences among the proverbs of four languages and cultures through contrastive linguocultural analysis.

The thematic field analysis method aims to identify cultural connotations and themes. This method can be implemented by consulting multilingual dictionaries for proverbs. In our case, we relied primarily on the corpus of proverbs in the www.idioms.tsu.ge database.

This study also adopts a comparative semantic approach, analyzing Georgian proverbs about women alongside selected counterparts from English, French, and German. 71 proverbs were chosen from various dictionaries, particularly from the corpus at www.idioms.tsu.ge. The selection criteria included: 1. A semantic connection to the female component; 2. Proverbs that align with thematic classifications; 3. Georgian proverbs that have semantic equivalents in English, French, and German; and 4. Proverbs that carry cultural connotations.

The analysis emphasizes both semantic parallels and contrasts, highlighting the cultural values embedded in metaphor, tone, and imagery. Georgian wisdom tends to be stricter and more metaphorically vivid, while Western traditions often provide greater space for independence and personal choice. The findings contribute to both ethnolinguistic and gender studies by illustrating how shared human values are interpreted through distinct cultural perspectives.

Discussion and results.

The Concept of Gender in Georgian, English, French, and German Proverbs. The national characteristics of proverbs become apparent when they are organized into thematic groups that reflect various aspects of society. These aspects include social values, class hierarchy, historical events, labor activities, geographical features, economic conditions, and cultural elements such as customs, traditions, beliefs, and legends. By analyzing and categorizing the extralinguistic information in proverbs and sayings by theme, we can significantly enhance our understanding of people's lives. “Most of the Georgian proverbs are focused on positive and didactic cultural functions and how the competence in the use of proverbs reflects the possession of cultural wisdom, relations between man and the God, parents and their off-spring, people’s view on status and achievement in life, survival, friendship, love and humanity, bravery and so on” (Goshkheteliani, 2011:277). Each nation has its own specific attitudes toward different social phenomena. A culturological analysis of proverbs and sayings can provide valuable insights into the people who speak the language. The Georgian people, for instance, have created proverbs that reflect their values concerning family, the relationships between women and men, and love for the motherland. Human behavior, morality, actions, and education are all influenced by proper upbringing, which begins in the family under the guidance of parents. In traditional Georgian families, the role of parents—especially the mother's—has always been highly significant. The Georgian proverbs emphasize this point:

დედა ნახე, მამა ნახე, შვილი მერე გამონახე (Look at the mother; look at the father, and you will find a child like that); / Eng. *As the tree, so the fruit; As the old cock crows, so does the young* / Fr. *Tel grain, tel pain; Tel père tel fils; Tel arbre tel fruit.* / Ger. *Die Zweige arten nach dem Stamme; der Apfel fällt nicht weit vom Baum.*

ქალს დედა გაუსინჯე, სამოსელსა- ნაწიბური (examine the child's mother, just as you would examine a seam in a garment) / Eng. *Choose a good mother's daughter, though her father was the devil.* / Fr. *Choisissez la fille d'une bonne mère quoique son père soit le diable.* / Ger. *Prüfe das Neue und das Alte, und das Beste behalte; Wie der Vogel, so das Ei.*

The English tend to incorporate proverbs and sayings into their speech. This suggests that the characteristics of these expressions—such as metaphor, expressiveness, and didacticism—resonate with the nation's unique traditional mentality and worldview. Alkhasova (2020) underlines linguistic features of the English proverbs and notes, that English proverbs have universal characteristics, including content-related ones (didactic orientation, generalized nature), formal ones (imagery, structural design, metaphor, variability in speech, stable structure, traditionality, oral form), and functional ones (the function of translating the nation's cultural code, entertainment) (Alkhasova, 2020:11).

Due to their didactic nature, proverbs serve as a collection of moral principles and values cherished by the English. For example:

- Patriotism: *There's no place like home, and East or West, home is best.*
- Optimism: *Never say never; Never say die; It is a poor heart that never rejoices.*
- Honesty: *A good conscience is a good pillow; Honesty is the best policy; Better speak truth rudely than lie covertly.*

These proverbs reflect the core beliefs and values that are significant to the English people. The imagery and symbols used in proverbs and sayings to represent similar phenomena and situations vary across cultures, reflecting distinct national characteristics. This exemplifies the ethnic identity inherent in proverbs, in which the same concept is expressed through different linguistic images across cultures, shaped by their unique lifestyles and traditions.

A study of French proverbs reveals that the wisdom embedded in the sayings reflects the historical experiences of the French people, offering a unique perspective. Furthermore, the events that mirror reality are categorized differently within the collective mindset of different groups. Various ethnic groups use their own materials while sharing common themes to convey similar ideas. This highlights that people, regardless of their distinct languages, ethnic identities, and cultures, can express comparable human concepts, often against the backdrop of both similar and different logical relationships between objects and events in their environments. In many cases, they use a shared system of conceptual thinking, creating stereotypical models based on accumulated experience of understanding the world.

The choice of language is significant, as language plays a crucial role in shaping our understanding of material reality. A nation's values and beliefs are expressed and codified through various aspects of linguistic communication, including popular expressions, common vocabulary, oral traditions, rules of speech, and even linguistic creativity. Mieder remarks that „With the growing interest in popular culture, the mass media, and cultural literacy, paremiologists ought to look at which traditional proverbs survive today and which have actually been coined in the twentieth century”(Mieder, 1997:416).

Proverbs reflect social beliefs about gender. By analyzing proverbs within a specific language or culture, one can gain insight into how the relationship between women and men is perceived. There are many stereotypes and assumptions about men and women, some of which are deeply ingrained in our culture, while others are more recent. These oversimplified notions are often reflected in proverbs, which capture common experiences and widespread beliefs. Some proverbs may be specific to a particular culture, while others are recognized across different cultures or borrowed from various linguistic communities. Analyzing proverbs related to women allows us to explore how gender is perceived and represented in these succinct expressions of common knowledge and wisdom. Unfortunately, many of these proverbs portray women in a highly unfair, demeaning, and offensive manner, reflecting the biases of male-dominated cultures.

Wolfgang Mieder has written about how women are portrayed in proverbial tradition. He emphasizes that proverbs often reflect patriarchal stereotypes, presenting women as vain, dangerous, or confined to domestic roles, while at the same time acknowledging their wisdom and influence. He notes that the image of women in proverbs is frequently ambivalent—on the one hand, they are praised for their wisdom, industriousness, and beauty, but on the other hand, they are stereotyped as vain, talkative, and deceitful. “Little wonder that feminists created a slogan turned proverb, *A woman without a man is like a fish without a bicycle*, during the 1970s to combat such gender stereotyping” (Mieder 2004: 28).

Proverbs about female characteristics are very common in English. They can be both positive and negative, and unfortunately, critical proverbs about women are cited much more often. Ciesielkiewicz (2019:46) analyzes how gender is reflected in English proverbs, noting that women are culturally perceived as the weaker sex (e.g., "*A woman is the weaker vessel*"), and examines proverbs that portray women negatively. For example, in the proverb *Frailty, thy name is woman*, the abstract noun *Frailty* is personified, and the attribute of a woman is given more importance than the woman herself. Ciesielkiewicz (2019) notes that „English proverbs describe women as gentle, delicate, shy, and not very smart (e.g., "*Handle with care, women and glass*"; "*Women are wacky, women are vain: they'd rather be pretty than have a good brain*"). Women pretend to know less to avoid conflicts with men (*A man thinks he knows, but the woman knows better*). They change very quickly and constantly (*A woman is a weathercock, Women are always in extremes*); they cry easily (*Men must work and women*

must weep). They talk and gossip too much. (*A woman's tongue is the last thing about her that dies; Tell a woman and you tell the world*)“ (Ciesielkiewicz, 2019:46)

Litovkina (2011) analyzes some aspects of a woman's nature revealed through Anglo-American anti-proverbs and organizes them into seven sections. In the third section, she portrays women as housewives; in the fifth, she focuses on women's talkativeness; and in the sixth, she discusses women's stubbornness, dominance, and strong will: “Several proverbs argue that women are stubborn, manipulative, and bossy (one of the most deep-rooted stereotypes of women in the role of wife). Having a strong will, they persistently try to get their way and, therefore, whenever they can, they exercise their power and dominance over men. For example, *Women will have both her word and her way; Two things govern the world—women and gold; While there's a world, it's a woman that will govern it*” (Litovkina, 2011:357). In the seventh section, Litovkina (2011) portrays women's intellectual abilities: “Women's stupidity, silliness, foolishness, craziness, mindlessness, and ignorance are portrayed in some Anglo-American proverb transformations. A woman in the role of wife is frequently depicted as possessing such negative qualities: *“Tit for tat,” quoth the wife when she farted at the thunder {Tit for tat}; A little knowledge is a dangerous thing, especially when your wife has it {A little knowledge is a dangerous thing}. A woman, especially when cast in the role of a nagging wife, might be viewed as lacking in wisdom, that is, “wise” is antonymous with “wife”, reflected in numerous transformations of the proverb A word to the wise is sufficient: A word to the wife is never sufficient; A word to the wise is sufficient, a word to the wife never is; One word to the wife is sufficient: say “Yes”* (Litovkina 2011:359)

The semantic contrasts reflect broader cultural orientations. Georgian proverbs, rooted in patriarchal traditions, emphasize dependence, duty, and caution. Women are portrayed as both the household's strength and its potential downfall. English, French, and German proverbs, while not free of stereotypes, more frequently highlight autonomy, resilience, and empowerment. English sayings often draw on biblical moralism, French ones on wit and irony, and German ones on practicality. This divergence illustrates how universal themes—family, virtue, motherhood—are refracted through distinct cultural lenses. Georgian wisdom binds women tightly to marriage and family, while Western traditions increasingly allow for independence and personal choice.

Thematic arrangement of Georgian, English, French, and German proverbs. In Georgian proverbs, women are often depicted in a positive light. They are viewed as embodiments of family purity, motherhood, strength, intelligence, beauty, hard work, and loyalty as devoted wives. We present images of women in proverbs, organized into thematic groups: 1. Family and Household Roles. 2. Marriage, Widowhood, and Independence 3. Virtue, Beauty, and Modesty. 4. Women's Tongue and Temper. 5. Old Age. 6. Poverty, Suffering, Patriotism.

Georgian proverbs emerged in a society where family honor, lineage, and household stability were paramount. Women were often portrayed as the moral and practical center of the home, but also as potential sources of disorder if not virtuous. A unique Georgian trait is the homeland as a mother figure (*“სამშობლო დედა კაცისა”*), which is less common in Western Europe. European traditions often use “fatherland” (German *Vaterland*) rather than maternal imagery. **English** proverbs often moralize in practical terms (*“A stitch in time saves nine”*), with women's roles tied to motherhood and domesticity. **French** proverbs emphasize elegance, wit, and irony, reflecting a culture that valued sophistication and social commentary. **German** proverbs are blunt and disciplinary, reflecting a culture of order and responsibility (*“Ordnung muss sein” – “There must be order”*).

We organized Georgian proverbs by theme, providing semantic equivalents in English, French, and German traditions that depict women. From the collected 71 proverbs, we provided a quantitative analysis for each thematic group.

1. Family and Household Roles (15 proverbs)-22%

- Georgian: *“სახლს ქალი აქვებს სახლად”* (verbatim: *“A woman makes a house a home”*).
- **English:** *“The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world.”* → Emphasizes maternal influence on society.
- **French:** *“La femme fait le foyer/la maison”/« Ce n'est pas la maison qui fait la femme, mais la femme qui fait la maison.”* → Stresses domestic centrality, but with elegance and order.

- **German:** “*Die Frau macht das Haus zum Heim.*” → Practical, highlighting stability and structure.

Georgian and French stress emotional warmth, German stresses order, and English stresses power through motherhood

2. Marriage, Widowhood, and Independence (12 proverbs)—18%

- Georgian: “*ქორწინება ზეცაში წყდებაო*” (verbatim: “*Marriage is decided in heaven*”).
- **English:** “*Marriages are made in heaven.*” → Romantic ideal.
- **French:** “*„Les mariages sont faits au ciel.”* → Same idea, but often used ironically in French.
- **German:** “*Ehen werden im Himmel geschlossen.*” → More solemn, tied to destiny.

Georgian and German lean toward fate, English toward romance, and French often toward irony.

3. Virtue, Beauty, and Modesty (10 proverbs)—15%

- Georgian: “*ქალის ყველაზე დიდი მზითველი სიწმინდე და ნამუსიაო*” (verbatim: “*A woman’s greatest dowry is virtue and honor*”).

- **English:** “*Beauty is only skin deep, but virtue is eternal.*” → Moral over appearance.
- **French:** “*La beauté plaît, mais la vertu honore.*” → Beauty attracts; virtue dignifies.
- **German:** “*Schönheit vergeht, Tugend besteht.*” → Very pragmatic: beauty fades, virtue lasts.

Georgian and German stress lasting values, French balances pleasure and honor, and English moralizes.

4. Women’s Tongue and Temper (14 proverbs)—21%

- Georgian: “*ქალის ენა ეკლის გამოფხეჭილზე მწარეაო*” (verbatim: “*A woman’s tongue is sharper than a thorn*”).

- **English:** “*A sharp tongue cuts deeper than a sword.*” → Universal warning.
- **French:** “*La langue de femme est plus tranchante qu’un rasoir.*” → Adds elegance but is still biting.

- **German:** “*Die Zunge der Frau ist schärfer als ein Messer.*” → Direct, blunt.

Georgian and German are harsh and blunt; French adds wit, and English generalizes to all sharp tongues.

5. Old Age (12 proverbs)—18%

- Georgian: “*დედაბერმა იანვარში მარწყვი ინატრაო*” (verbatim: “*The old woman wished for strawberries in January*”).

- **English:** “*You can’t teach an old dog new tricks.*” → Limits of old age.
- **French:** “*La vieille femme rêve de printemps en hiver.*” → Poetic longing.
- **German:** “*Alte Frauen wünschen im Winter Sommerfrüchte.*” → Practical impossibility.

Georgian and French are poetic; German and English are practical warnings.

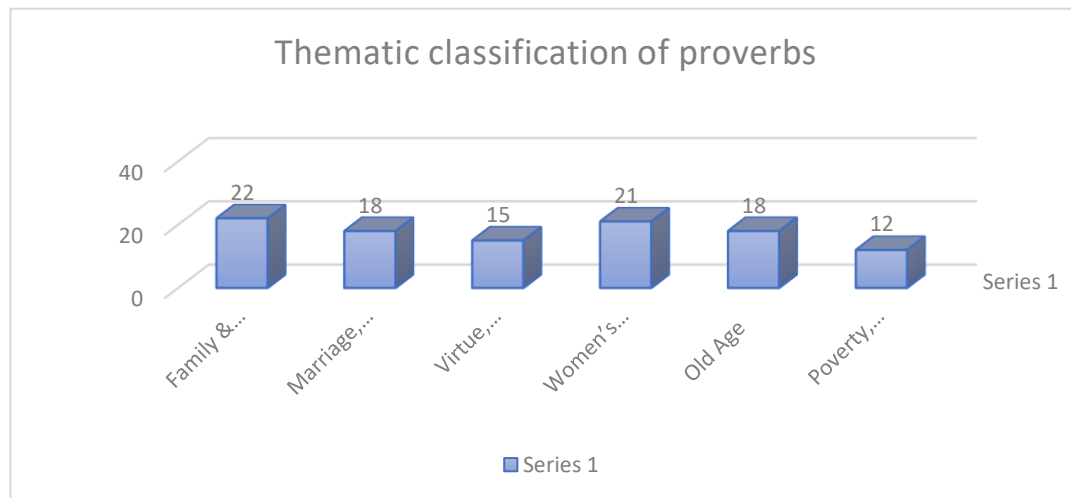
6. Poverty, Suffering, Patriotism (8 proverbs)—12%

- Georgian: “*სამშობლო დედაა კაცისა, უცხო მხარე-დედინაცვალიო*” (verbatim: “*The homeland is a mother, a foreign land a stepmother*”).

- **English:** “*Home is where the heart is.*” → Emotional belonging.
- **French:** “*La patrie est la mère, l’étranger la marâtre.*” → Strong maternal metaphor.
- **German:** “*Das Vaterland ist die Mutter, die Fremde die Stiefmutter.*” → Nationalistic, rooted in Heimat.

Georgian and French stress maternal homeland, German underlines national identity, and English softens to personal feeling.

Diagram 1. Ratio of thematic classification of Georgian, English, French, and German proverbs with the concept “Woman.”



Georgian tradition, like many cultures, oscillates between reverence for women as mothers and homemakers and suspicion of their temper or independence. The **positive side (28 proverbs, 39%)** emphasizes women as the foundation of the family and morality. The **negative side (32 proverbs-45%)** often highlights stereotypes about talkativeness, destructiveness, or vanity. **Neutral proverbs (11 proverbs—16%)** tend to describe social realities (widowhood, aging, fate).

As the analysis shows, Georgian proverbs are deeply tied to family, fate, and moral order. Women are central, but often judged. English proverbs: pragmatic, moralizing, often universal rather than gender-specific. French proverbs: elegant, witty, sometimes ironic, balancing beauty with virtue. German proverbs: blunt, practical, emphasizing discipline, order, and inevitability. Georgian and Western (English, French, and German) wisdom closely align in valuing virtue and modesty over physical beauty. Georgian proverbs underscore that purity and honor are the greatest dowries, and that modesty and silence enhance a woman's character. For Western cultures, “virtue is true nobility,” and silence also serves to adorn a woman. As seen in the analyses, Georgian proverbs often portray women as central yet burdened, with a strong emphasis on dependence (unmarried, widowed, poor). Western (English, French, German) proverbs more often highlight autonomy, wit, or resilience, though they also carry a critical tone (e.g., nagging wives, widows with debts). Georgian imagery is colorful and metaphorical, while Western sayings lean toward moral lessons or practical advice. Motherhood, marriage, widowhood, unmarried women, women’s tongues, and poverty are often mentioned in Georgian proverbs. Independence, autonomy, women's influence in the family, and resilience are more empowering in Western proverbs. What these cultures share is virtue, modesty, motherhood, and a strong sense of family.

These proverbs reflect universal values such as love, wisdom, responsibility, and respect, though each culture expresses them through its own imagery. In Georgian sayings, there is often an emphasis on the woman's central role in maintaining family harmony, a theme that is also strongly echoed in French and German traditions. The strength of a family lies in the harmony between spouses, and these proverbs convey that a woman's presence is fundamental to a family's strength, stability, happiness, and peace. Contrasting Georgian proverbs with Western ones highlights cultural differences in how family, women, and social roles are perceived.

In Georgian proverbs, the figure of a stepmother is often portrayed negatively, as in fairy tales. This suggests that a stepmother cannot genuinely replace a child’s biological mother. The affection a stepmother offers can sometimes feel as painful as a thorn in a stepchild's side. While having a stepmother may be preferable to being completely motherless, it is still recognized that a stepmother cannot fully fulfill the role of a true mother. In this context, a stepmother may be described as “ashes in the eyes,” a symbol of disappointment or dissatisfaction.

In Georgian culture, unmarried women are viewed as incomplete, likened to “*a bird with broken wings*” (“*ფრთხილებილი*”). Similarly, widows are compared to riderless horses, symbolizing their vulnerability and instability. In contrast, Western cultures, including English, French, and German traditions, value independence, as expressed in the saying, “*Better alone than in bad company.*” For them, widowhood is sometimes perceived as a form of freedom or opportunity. Georgian wisdom emphasizes marriage as a source of dignity, while Western sayings highlight autonomy and choice. When analyzing proverbs about family strength and the household, Georgian proverbs depict a woman as a central yet burdened figure. The strength of the family depends on a woman’s wisdom and a man’s wealth. Western proverbs, on the other hand, emphasize women’s influence in transforming a house into a home. “For centuries, nothing else has been considered to be more important for a woman than serving her husband and children. In fact, several proverbs even emphasize that women should not leave their homes: *A woman’s place is in the house; A woman, a cat, and a chimney should never leave the house*” (Litovkina 2011:354).

Regarding women’s behavior, Georgian proverbs often exaggerate the potential danger of a woman’s tongue, whereas Western proverbs frame it as mere irritation. Georgian expressions use sharp, dangerous imagery, such as “*a tongue sharper than a thorn,*” which portrays a nagging wife as destructive. In contrast, Western proverbs liken women to annoyances, as in the saying “*like a dripping roof.*” Regarding old age, Georgians tend to use humorous exaggeration, as in the image of an older woman wanting strawberries in January. Western proverbs, however, are more moralistic and direct, stating, “*Old age does not protect against folly.*” When discussing poverty and suffering, Georgian proverbs emphasize the daily, recurring nature of suffering, as illustrated by the saying that “*a poor man and woman die nine times a day.*” This contrasts with Western proverbs, which focus on gradual erosion.

Below, we sum up similarities, differences, and cultural semantics of the women’s concept in Georgian, English, French, and German proverbs.

Similarities

• Central Role in Family:

All traditions recognize women as pivotal in household life. Georgian proverbs consider women the central figure of the household, while English, French, and German sayings emphasize that women make the home or “*rock the cradle that rules the world.*”

• Virtue and Modesty:

Across cultures, virtue, purity, and modesty are valued more than beauty. Georgian sayings stress honor as the greatest dowry; a sentiment echoed in French (“*La vertu est la vraie beauté*”) and German (“*Tugend ist der schönste Schmuck*”).

• Motherhood:

Universally, mothers are portrayed as irreplaceable, with love and sacrifice beyond repayment. Georgian imagery of a child burning his hand for his mother parallels Western sayings about the endlessness of maternal love.

Differences

• Marriage and Independence:

Georgian wisdom often views unmarried or widowed women as incomplete, vulnerable, or disadvantaged. In contrast, Western proverbs (especially English and French) highlight independence: “*Better alone than in bad company.*”

• Tone Toward Women’s Tongue and Temper:

Georgian sayings exaggerate sharpness and danger, while Western ones frame nagging as irritation. The Georgian tone is stricter, more cautionary.

• Old Age:

Georgian proverbs use vivid, humorous imagery (*old woman wanting strawberries in January*), while Western sayings are blunt and moralistic (“*Old age does not protect against folly*”).

• Poverty, Suffering and Patriotism:

Georgian wisdom emphasizes repeated daily suffering (“*die nine times a day*”), whereas Western proverbs describe poverty as slow erosion (“*death in installments*”). Georgian imagery is more immediate and dramatic.

Cultural Semantics

- **Georgian proverbs:** Rich in metaphor, often strict, emphasizing dependence on family and marriage, with humor and exaggeration to highlight social norms.
- **Western proverbs:** More varied—biblical moralism in English, wit and irony in French, blunt practicality in German. They often allow space for autonomy and resilience, especially regarding women's independence.
- **Shared cultural ground:** Respect for motherhood, virtue, and the woman's role in sustaining family life.
- **Divergence:** Georgian tradition is more conservative and duty-bound, while Western traditions increasingly highlight empowerment, independence, and personal choice.

As the analysis shows, proverbs reflect the life and culture of nations while serving as indicators of shared perceptions and folk wisdom. It is intriguing to observe that the ideas and concepts expressed in proverbs are often similar across the globe, as they embody the wisdom, cultural norms, beliefs, and values of the societies from which they originate. The differences lie primarily in the choice of language, the use of rhetorical devices, and the figurative imagery employed, which vary from culture to culture. Many proverbs reflect the social norms and power dynamics of the time and place in which they originated. They can perpetuate harmful stereotypes and limit women's roles in social life. Studying proverbs from different cultures can offer a broader perspective. Proverbs can spark discussion about gender roles and social expectations. They can also be used to highlight the diversity of women's experiences and perspectives. The key is to use them wisely and critically, avoiding harmful stereotypes.

Conclusion. Georgian wisdom elevates women as the backbone of the family but binds them tightly to marriage and duty. Western (English, French, and German) wisdom also honors women's roles but more often allows for independence, irony, and empowerment. Across all four traditions, women are portrayed as central to family life and moral order. Georgian proverbs emphasize the woman's central role in the family, a sentiment echoed in English ("*The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world*"), French ("*La femme fait le foyer/la maison/« Ce n'est pas la maison qui fait la femme, mais la femme qui fait la maison »*"), and German ("*Hausfrau macht das Haus zum Heim*"). Similarly, virtue and modesty are universally prized: Georgian sayings describe purity as a woman's greatest dowry, while French and German proverbs affirm that virtue is the finest adornment. Motherhood emerges as another universal theme, with Georgian imagery of a child unable to repay maternal sacrifice paralleling Western expressions of a mother's irreplaceable love. Despite these shared values, significant contrasts emerge. Georgian proverbs often adopt a stricter, more conservative stance toward women's marital status. Unmarried women are likened to "*birds with broken wings*," and widows to "*riderless horses*," reflecting a cultural emphasis on dependence and vulnerability. In contrast, Western traditions frequently valorize independence: English and French proverbs assert that it is "*better alone than in bad company*," suggesting autonomy as preferable to an unhappy marriage.

Attitudes toward women's speech and temper also diverge. Georgian sayings exaggerate danger, describing a woman's tongue as "*sharper than a thorn*," while Western proverbs frame nagging as irritation, likening it to a "*dripping roof*." Similarly, Georgian proverbs about old age employ humorous exaggeration (an old woman desiring strawberries in January). In contrast, German and English proverbs adopt a moralistic tone ("*Old age does not protect against folly*").

The semantic differences reflect broader cultural orientations. Georgian proverbs are rich in metaphor and hyperbole, often binding women tightly to marriage, duty, and family responsibility. They emphasize dependence and caution, portraying women as both the household's strength and its potential downfall. Western proverbs, by contrast, are more varied: English sayings often draw from biblical moralism, French ones from wit and irony, and German ones from blunt practicality. These traditions allow greater space for autonomy, resilience, and empowerment, particularly in matters of marriage and independence.

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