

popular and smashing.

In other words, descriptions of the ideal man show him as strong and oppressive; he suppresses all ideas and actions that challenge his authority. The ideal woman on the other hand is oppressed and exploited as she is submissive and non-political. She does not stand up for her rights and believes she is born to suffer.

Sayings and proverbs are a popular form of expressing the values and morality of a culture. Sayings on the subject of women make us wonder if women are really human and how they even manage to raise a family and contribute to the economy. A few examples are: "Fickle as a woman", "Don't be a sissy, be a man", "Woman, the temptress", "It's a lady's privilege to change her mind". In Kiswahili we commonly hear: "Usiwe mjinga kama mwanamke", "Mwanamke ana akili kama za kuku", "Usiamini mwanamke" and "Maneno haya ni kama ya mwanamke". This last refers to gossiping and cheating.

This derogatory terminology has no basis in reality, but it reflects the low worth and status of women in society. Both men and women are conditioned into believing that there are inherent sexually determined roles and behaviours, for example that men are born aggressive and women passive. Some even think that male foetuses kick harder than female ones and are more difficult to deliver. They make strenuous efforts to conform to these norms and those who don't are viewed as eccentric or abnormal. These patterns are perpetuated from generation to generation as children are reared in the same mould.

WOMAN AS COMMODITY

This negative kind of terminology does not just stop at purely descriptive words. It is deeply rooted in the unequal social relationships between the sexes and ensures that women are put into a passive role that emphasises their value as property and a source of labour.

There must be few words more ridiculous than housewife—we use it so often that