

Poverty, Shame and Social Exclusion

Working Paper 1 Uganda

Portrayals of poverty and shame in literary and oral traditions in Uganda; how poverty shaming evolved.

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Introduction

This report presents the findings of an analysis of Ugandan novels/plays and traditional proverbs, to elicit the conception and social expression of poverty and shaming, and the probable link between them.

In the textual analysis, selection of the novels was purposive, based on their content and capacity to reflect the social and cultural understanding, or construction of shaming that is associated with being poor in the contemporary Ugandan context. The key question that the analysis sought to raise, discuss and answer is whether or not, or to what extent poverty and shaming are linked.

In this analysis poverty was understood in terms of deprivation of material, social and emotional resources required for a basic/decent level of living in a Ugandan setting. Shame was conceptualized in terms of acts of negative self evaluation that evoke a sense of low self worth, despair, inferiority and hopelessness vis-à-vis individual aspirations, and perceived aspirations of others in society.

In order to maintain perspective and coherence in the textual analysis, the books/plays were reviewed separately; the broad themes of poverty and shame subdivided into smaller topical sub themes. The latter included among others, specific manifestations of poverty shaming; experiences of poverty shaming; and response/coping strategies to poverty shaming. In the analysis focus was not on the protagonists of the novels/plays per se, but on other characters as well. This had the effect of broadening our insight and enriching our understanding as to how poverty and shame are experienced by a cross section of characters in the selected literature.

The oral tradition analysis drew from diverse poverty related proverbs selected from two of the most widely spoken languages (Luganda and Runyakitara) in Uganda. The underlying presumption of this approach is that poverty and/or shame are not recent phenomena, but part and parcel of the culture of indigenous/traditional ethnic communities from which present society has evolved.

The argument here is that poverty, given its persistence in both ancient traditional and current society, and its ignominious consequences including shame, has taken the form of a sub-culture. And in order to understand a culture, it is essential to learn its language, in the latter case the language of poverty. The focus on traditional proverbs (engeru, enfumu) from Buganda and Ankole respectively is not only because they are fairly well documented, but also because they are integral to the two institutions and reflect the ethos and cultural values of the indigenous people.

In order to place this section into coherent perspective attempt has been made to present the proverbs to capture the themes of poverty and/or shame that they best explain or contextualize.

Such themes include how poverty is experienced, attitudes towards the poor, how the rich and poor are expected to interact, attitudes towards the wealthy, coping strategies to poverty and the extent if any, shame is seen as a consequence of poverty.

The reader is cautioned however that unlike material from novels and plays, most of what is presented in proverbs is not contemporary and reflects the views or lived experiences of past generations of indigenous people who lived at a time when poverty was more or less universal and not necessarily shaming or stigmatizing, at least as it is to date. Nonetheless the proverbs provide a broad and informed material for analysis and understanding of the poverty-shame nexus.

Overall both textual and oral tradition provides synergistic material for analysis of the evolution and nature of poverty and its insidious effects in Ugandan society.

Presentation of the proverbs

Luganda Proverbs (engero)

1. Akajja obunaku keemanya, ejjanzi terigenda na nzige; eriiso lijja n'obukwino bwalyo.

L¹ A poor individual should know his limitations (or status); a grasshopper (ejjanzi) does not fly with locusts.

M² A poor individual should know his limitations: an eye is contented with its lashes.

2. Atawone bwaavu, agula bikadde.

L. One who will remain in perpetual poverty, shops from second hand dealers.

M. The poor foolishly perpetuate their poverty.

3. Bimanywa nda, omunaku tayogera ky'alidde.

L. It is the inside which knows what goes in. A poor person does not say what he has eaten.

M. When an individual chooses not to reveal his thoughts, this does not dispute the fact that he will be the only one to know what he is contemplating at a particular moment.

4. Bwaavu mpologoma, bw'otobulwanisa ofa.

L. Poverty is like a lion. If you do not fight it, you will be killed instead.

M. Poverty is a formidable force that has to be stoically resisted

5. Ekuba omunaku tekya, esigala ku mutwe.

L. The rain which falls on a poor person (or orphan) never stops: his head remains permanently wet.

M. The woes of a poor person – bad accommodation, indebtedness, poor clothing, lack of school fees, and so on – never end; he lives with them constantly.

¹ L- literal translation of proverb from vernacular to English

² M- meaning/message of proverb to society

6. Ennaku musana, tegwokya omu.

L. Suffering is like sunshine: it does not burn only one individual.

M. Misery misfortune, sickness, and so on, can affect anybody, just like scorching sunshine, which does not discriminate.

7. Ennaku z'abassaja, tezigga matenda.

L. The suffering of men: it is a never – ending story.

M. Men's poverty is indefinite

8. Ennaku z'abakyala, buli omu azitenda bubwe.

L. The suffering of wives (or women): each one has her own big story.

M. Women's poverty is unique to each individual.

9. Ennaku ziri mu kufiirwa eyali mwannyoko afuuka kitaawo.

L. Suffering is evident during bereavement'-when one that was your brother becomes your father.

M. This is said when a brother succeeds a deceased father as heir.

10. Ennyanja y'omukopi, ebeera ku lusebenju.

L. The lake of a commoner (or poor person) is by his house.

M. A poor person's lake is the vegetable patch in his backyard. The poor cannot afford fish

11. Ezinunula omunaku, Katonda azitunga kiro

L. The money (ransom, or bail) which pay for the release of a poor person: God puts it on a string during the night.

M. When a ransom is demanded to free a poor person, he will not expect it to get paid because all his associates are poor. But through God's mercy, money can be raised from nowhere by people of good will.

12. Kyewalyanga, bw'olaba ennaku olekayo.

L. When you experience poverty, you stop eating former delicacies.

M. When poverty strikes you must adjust you lifestyle accordingly.

13. Lwabaaga, lwafuna munywanyi we.

L. When a poor despised person kills an animal, is when he acquires friends.

M. A poor person has no genuine friends, because he has nothing to offer, it is only when he accomplishes something significant that individuals claiming to be his friend turn up just to enjoy benefits.

14. Nnaku musana, tigwokya omu

L. Misery is like sunshine: it does not burn one individual.

M. Several people experience misery of one kind or another at any given time, under different circumstances. Like sunshine, which never spares anyone.

15. Obwavu, tebukumanyisa akwagala.

- L. Poverty makes it impossible to know who loves you.
- M. Poverty inhibits a person's mobility and access to benevolent people.

16. Omuko omwavu, akanya magulu.

- L. A poor son-in-law must persist with his legs.
- M. Since a poor man he cannot afford to buy presents for his parents-in-law, the only way of maintaining a good relationship is to visit them frequently.

17. Omuwaavu ky'afuna kyeyetuuma.

- L. What a poor man gets (or achieves), is what he names himself.
- M. When a poor man receives a great thing, or has a great achievement, he will be so elated that he will try to be identified with it. For example, one who suddenly becomes rich may call himself Ssente (meaning 'money'). The poor are feeble minded.

18. Omunaku yegulira, y'alya akawera.

- L. A poor person who buys food for himself eats a reasonable amount.
- M. When the purchaser is the beneficiary, he devises ways of getting the best value for his money.

19. Ssebanaku bekina, nti embuga ndiddeo omukono gw'embuzi.

- L. A poor person mocks himself by saying, "I ate a goat's arm/front leg at the chief's house".
- M. It is impossible for a poor person to get such a treat. Wishful thinking is a trait of the poor.

20. Tezikuba misinde (ennaku), ssinga omuntu aziwulira n'adduka.

- L. Misery (poverty) has no footsteps, otherwise one would hear it coming and run away.
- M. It is not possible to predict poverty/hardship. Otherwise people would do everything to avoid it. The practical thing is for one to learn how to cope with poverty when it hits.

21. Waggumbulizi kaaba nako k'awa munywanyi we; akatono kazira mu liiso.

- L. What a poor man can afford is what he gives to a friend; a small thing is only rejected by the eye.
- M. When a poor man donates something – no matter how small it is – it should be appreciated, because parting with even the smallest item is a huge sacrifice for him. After all, it is the eye that rejects whatever tiny particle is on its surface, because of the discomfort, irritation, or soreness it causes if it is not removed promptly.

22. Z'abaana, ng'ekuliyo owuwo (ennaku).

- L. The suffering of children – if your own child is one of them.

M. One will be concerned about the bad treatment given to a group of children, only if his own child is among them.

23. Zansanze yafiira mu ddya, nga ssibisobole yekunidde.

L. I have suffered already' (a woman who says so), dies in her marriage, while one who says, "I cannot bear this" has already left.

M. Some women are prepared to bear all types of difficulties to stay in their marriage, while others just give up and leave the minute they experience the slightest problem.

24. Zaatusanga babiri, bw'agaggawala takuwa.

L. 'We suffered together' (one says to a friend), when he becomes rich he does not give you a thing.

M. do not expect someone with whom you have grown up together and shared hard times to assist you when he gets rich. He will give you nothing and even distance himself from you. Do not expect to get out of poverty by relying on others' good will.

25. Zikusooka, nezitakuva nnyuma.

L. It is better to suffer at the beginning, than at the end.

M. Suffering poverty at the beginning can be a blessing in disguise. It prepares one for harder times ahead, and makes it easier to adjust to difficult circumstances. Conversely, one who has an easy life in the beginning can find it extremely difficult to cope with poverty later in life.

26. Zinkunyira wano, kasubi ka mu ddiro.

L. 'I am being squeezed by the misery of this place' says a piece of straw on the floor of the living room.

M. A person can find himself inescapably bound by a position of responsibility, when he is relied upon solely to oversee multiple functions, despite having peers who are equally capable of doing the same functions. Multiple roles/responsibilities cause poverty.

27. Nnabyewanga, ng'akaliga akaliira mu nte (oba mu nyana)

L. A person who forces himself onto a different group, like a lamb which grazes among cattle (or calves).

M. A person becomes a total misfit when he does something contrary to his group, for example a poor person settling among the wealthy, or a tailor setting up his business among book sellers, and vice versa. The poor should keep within their social realm

28. Bwebambulira satuula, nga lwamugagga(olumbe)

L. 'When I was informed about the last funeral rights, I left immediately' – if it concerns a wealthy person.

M. The prompt response of the poor when calamity befalls the wealthy is not genuine. The poor are attracted by vested interests like food and drink which are in abundance.

29. Bw'ofuna todulanga.

L. When you become wealthy, do not become snobbish.

M. Wealth and poverty are not permanent situations someday you may be in the same situation as the people you had once despised because of their poor economic situation.

30. Bw'ogwa awabi, ng'eyali munno akwerabira.

L. When you get poor, an old friend will forget you.

M. Most people do not want to get involved in poor people's problems.

31. Ddya ddungi, likwerabiza gye wava.

L. A good marriage makes a woman forget where she came from (her parents' home).

M. An exquisite environment, endowed with ideal conditions – comfortable living, good food, attention, luxury, easily makes a woman forget her poor past which may have entailed a lot of suffering and misery.

32. Guweddeko entontogolo, amayiba kuutwe.

L. There are no more wild fruits on the tree; the pigeons are just flying past.

M. When the riches get exhausted, a rich man's friends abandon him. The rich have no genuine friends.

33. Gw-omenyera mu nkejje, ewuwe alya luti.

L. A person that you give a half-piece of nkejje³ eats a whole stick, bearing several pieces, at his house.

M. It is unwise to underestimate a person because of his appearance; he may appear shabby, unkempt and poor and yet be a lot wealthier than you.

34. Kagulumule, ng'omukazi alya n'abaddu.

L. A puzzling individual, like a (married) woman who eats with the servants.

M. A woman who lived in a household with indentured servants was expected to uphold her superior status and not mix freely with the servants – to the extent of eating with them. Whenever this happened, people got puzzled. It is equally puzzling when a person of high status regularly interacts with people of a much lower rank-the poor.

35. Mazzi masabe, tegaloga nnyonta.

L. Begged water does not quench thirst.

³ Silver fish. The smallest edible species of fish

M. Begging does not satisfy one's needs: it is advisable to find a permanent solution which makes one self-reliant. Begging as a coping strategy to poverty is futile.

36. Mu baana abangi, temubula azza ngoma.

L. Among many children, there is always one who returns the drum.

M. If one has many children, at least one of them will redeem the family name when he becomes rich and powerful. High fertility is a strategy of the poor to get out of poverty in future.

37. Baboola mwavu. Omugaga tatera kuboolebwa mu kika olwebintu bye by'awa abekika.

L The rich are never discriminated within the clan members because they distribute their wealth among clan members.

M. Poverty goes with discrimination in the clan

38. Ddiba likaze, enyomo zikolonge

L The hide/skin had dried. Let the brown – sugar ants roll it.

M: When a person dies or when poverty strikes, a person in most cases is abandoned by friends who used to depend on him.

39. Enkoko y'omwavu teggwa meebaza

L: Thanking once is not enough for gifts received from the poor.

M: The poor will always remind you of what you were given as a gift. Did you see how fat the cock was? Did you appreciate? Then you will be forced to thank them again.

40. "Ensimbi abula", asiiba waka.

L: The poor can't find the money because they stay at home.

M: Why can't the poor seek for the money where it's hiding? Money is earned for doing work not just sitting at home. Laziness/lack of initiative causes poverty.

41. Nsimbi ze nfuna zimpita mungalo

L The money just passes through my hands (Money just sifts through my hands).

M Those whose hands are porous to let money sift through them should wrap and sew their hands in a skin/hide to reduce the rate at which the money sifts through. Spendthriftness causes poverty.

42. Ensimbi zenfuna simanyi gye zida, awase banobye.

L The money I get, its way about is not known. The poor marry divorced women.

M The money spent in paying fines for committing adultery is hard to account for. Adultery and promiscuity cause poverty.

43. Kasobeza ng'ennebaza y'omwavu, ajja akaaba ate bw'omuwa ng'era akaaba nti, "Onnanze ki, sebo!"

L: It's puzzling the way the poor show gratitude. The poor cry when they need attention and when they receive attention they also cry. "Who am I to deserve such attention?"

M: For the poor both sadness and joy are situations for crying. They have a unique puzzling mindset.

44. Kateyamba ng'abaavu abayita ababiri

L: As vulnerable and helpless as two poor persons staying under the same roof.

M: Two poor persons are helpless because no one can bail each other out when one of them is in problems. Poverty is similar to hopelessness.

45. Muka omwavu talondwa. Obwavu tebuggisa mukazi ku bba anti omulalala amwagala amutwale.

L A poor man's wife is not a prostitute.

M Poverty does not entitle a poor women's wife to be married by another wealthy man (women living in poverty don't abandon their husbands). Adultery/prostitution as a strategy to getting out of poverty is a cultural taboo. It can't work.

46. Nantabwaza akuba mu ly'enkejje obusomyo.

L The poor extract bone marrow from the bones of silver fish (enkejje)

M. The desperation of the poor is equated to extraction of marrow from the bone of silver fish. Silver fish have tiny bones that contain no marrow. Poverty leads to desperate coping strategies.

47. "Na wano bulyabirawo" nga lwa mwavu.

L: The funeral rites of the poor are held immediately after burial"

M: The last funeral rites of the poor are held promptly after burial because they neither have property to distribute or food for mourners. When you are poor, you are compelled to adopt cheap/affordable options.

48. N'wemu akoomera

L Even a poor person with a single cow should prepare for it a fire place (enkoomi) to keep it warm at night.

M The poor should take care of/respect/value their meager property as it is their only wealth.

49. "Nze nakula sizanya" nga ayambadde lukadde.

L "Am an adult, I don't play" that is when a poor child is dressed in old clothes.

M The children of the poor protect their old clothes by avoiding playing, pretending that they are adults. Pretence, even among children, is a coping strategy to poverty.

50. Obwavu si bbanja. Omwavu talina gwa jiriza ng'omuli wamabanja.

L: Poverty is better than indebtness as it hurts only the poor.

M: A debtor hurts the person he borrowed from when he fails to payback, but poverty is personal and does not hurt anyone else. Poverty its bitterness notwithstanding, remains a personal issue.

51. Omuko omwavu y'amera amayembe.

L: It's the poor son in law who gores the mother in law.

M: When a mother in law meets a poor son in law she claims that she was going to be gored by the poor son in law's horns. Yet if the mother in law meets a son in law who has means, she claims that their meeting was just coincidental.

52. Omwavu aliyisa bulago.

L: It's the poor who are hanged.

M: The poor have limited options when it comes to accessing justice. When guilty they are physically punished/imprisoned/hanged whereas the rich get bail.

53. Omwavu aluma kikonde.

L: The poor bites their fists.

M: Since the poor can't afford meat, they demonstrate eating it with their fists. "The day I will buy meat I consume it like this" the poor demonstrate how they will enjoy their wishes. Wishful thinking is a coping strategy of the poor.

54. Omwavu ayisa bukalu.

L: "As bold as the poor"

M: When the poor don't have appropriate clothes to suit an occasion, they put on what they have and pretend they are smartly dressed. Feigned self contentment is a common coping strategy to poverty.

55. Omwavu bwakyala y'abunya ekika.

L: It's the poor who seek for relatives or clan members.

M: When the poor are seeking for a relative they are actually looking for economic opportunities and benefits they can reap from rich relatives. The rich do no search for relatives.

Runyakitara proverbs (enfumu)

56. Akaigi kakingira enaku kaba omukago.

Meaning: What keeps away poverty is true friendship. One who shields you from poverty is a friend indeed.

57. Enaku kuri ikubanza, itakuhererukye.

Meaning: It is better to experience poverty earlier in life than later.

58. Enaku okuzikwarira nikwo obyama.

Meaning: Poverty is best endured as it comes.

59. Enaku zishanga abashaija.

Meaning. Poverty is endured by strong, resilient men.

60. Enaku ziteera ogumire.

Meaning. Poverty should be endured stoically.

61. Omunaku ayemanya, enkoko eyetaasya.

Meaning a poor person should know his level, like a hen that takes itself to roost.

62. Omunyaruganda akunda otungire.

Meaning. A relative likes you when you are wealthy. The rich are not genuinely liked, even by relatives.

63. Orwita omunaku rumuntambira.

Meaning. What kills a poor person is a blessing in disguise. It saves him/her from chronic suffering. Extreme poverty/existential hopelessness is worse than death.

64. Ow'enaku taganiirira ha kihuro.

Meaning. A poor person does not talk at a meal. This is to make sure he/she gets satisfied as it may be the only meal in a day. The poor should take advantage of any situation to derive maximum benefit.

Proverbs about wealth (obugagga)

65. Abasajja mivule; giwaatula ne giggumiza.

(Men are mivule trees; they shed off and later regenerate their leaves).

Emivule gisuula amakoola ate ne gifuna amalala. N'omuntu ayinza okuggwebwako ensimbi oba ebintu naye bw'anyikira okulola ayinza okufuna ebirala.

Mivule trees shed off their leaves and later regenerate. In the same way, one may exhaust his money (become poor) but regain wealth if he works hard. Poverty and wealth respectively are not permanent situations.

66. Abagagga n'abagagga baagalana, ekirevu kiyita ku bisige ne kigenda kyegata n'enviri eziri ewala.

Rich people like each other, the beard bypasses the eyebrows and links with the hair which happens to be far away on the head.

Abagagga okwagala bagagga bannaabwe kye kya bulijjo kubanga na bingi eby'okunyumyako ebikwata ku bugagga.

It is common practice for the rich people to associate with fellow rich people because they both have plenty in common to discuss/talk about concerning wealth.

67. Afuna aduula.

The one who gets rich/wealth brags/an achiever is arrogant.

Abalina ebintu bingi batera nno okuduulira abatabirina. **Those with a lot of property have a habit of bragging to those who do not have. The achievers are arrogant.**

68. Amala okufuna nti, “Oluggya lukala mbuzi”. **The one who gets says, “goats make the courtyard dry” “goats make the courtyard habitable”.**

Okwo kuba nga kuduulia abatalina mbuzi. Si kirungi omuntu amazeokufuna ebingi okuduulira abatabirina. **That is like abusing those who do not have goats. It is not good for the rich to show contempt towards those who do not have or to abuse those who are not rich.**

69. Asooka okufuna yeerabira munne by'alifuna.

The person who gets rich first forgets what his or her colleague will get.

Abantu abamu bwebagaggawala tebalowooza nga walibaawo n'abalala abaligaggawala nga bo oba n'okubasinga. **When some people get rich or achieve, they do not think that there will ever be others who will achieve or get rich like them or even better/richer.**

70. Baagala mugagga. **They like the rich/the achiever.**

Omuntu amala kutuuka kubugagga ne bamukunganirako. **When a person gets rich or achieves, that's when people start recognizing him/going to him or her.**

71. Bazaala mugagga. **They produce a rich one.**

Omugagga g' wa ekintu oba ebintu amwebaza nti, 'Ompadde mwana wange" **When a rich person gives someone something, that person thanks like, “you have given me my child”.**

72. Biva nju bida nju. **From one household to another.**

Abantu abamu baba beeyongera okufuna ebintu ng'ate abalala bibaggwaako buggwi. **While some people continue amassing wealth, others become impoverished.**

73. “Eby'omugagga”: (a) bivunda', bwalwala ebbwa ng'anyiga (the riches of a wealthy person: get rotten, but when s/he gets a wound s/he gets it dressed and treated.

Kale singa alireka ne livunda nga bw'agamba. **One wonders why the wealthy person does not leave the wound to rot, since s/he says that his riches rot.**

(b) Bijja byokya” omusota bwegugenda w'ali ng'adduka. **The riches of a wealthy person: come hot' but when a snake goes to him/her s/he runs away.**

Omusota adduka gwaki are nga bintu bye bye bigenda gyali? **Why does s/he run away from the snake when all those are his/her things going to him/her.**

74. Ensimbi: Money

(a) Ky'eremwa ow'enkata tazinga. **There is no English equivalent of enkata but this proverb refers to the fact that money is a solution to everything.**

(b) W'ekuba egonzaawo. **Literally saying that where there is money things become easy/hard things become soft.**

Omuntu alina ensimbi ennyingi asobola okukola ekinu ekizibu atazirina ky'atasobola kukola. **One with a lot of money can do difficult things/solve difficult issues, while one without money would not manage to.**

75. Kamukamu gwe muganda. One by one makes a bundle.

Katonda gw'anaawa okufuna ava ku bintu biitono n'agenda ng'afuna, n'atuuka ku bingi. Kykiva kitaba kirungi omuntu okululunkanira okugaggawala amangu. **The person God chooses to bless with wealth starts from small things and then amasses wealth with time. That's why it is not good for a person to be greedy for riches.**

76. Nsimbi: Money:

(a) Mbi ewoomera mu kyasa. **This could be equivalent to 'take care of the pence, the pound will take of itself' (when it is hundreds, a small coin of less value becomes valuable.**

Ensimbi embi bw'ogigatta mu nnungi terabika mangu nga mbi. **When you combine an ugly coin in the good ones its ugliness reduces.**

(b) Tekubalirwa munno. **You should not trust others with money issues.**

Omuntu bw'akukwasa ensimbi naawe osaana okuzibalamu okakase ntuufu. **When money is given to you, you should count it again to verify correctness.**

(c) Emu tennombya, nga waaluganda y'agitutte. (literally: **if a small amount of money is taken by a relative I would not quarrel**)

(d) Ziwoome. **Money is sweet.**

Ensimbi zaagalibwa nnyo. **Money is liked a lot.**

(e) Tekuba nnyonyi. (**money should not be used to throw at birds**)

Ensimbi temala gasuulibwa etyo, ne bw'eba emu. **Money is not thrown around, even if it is one coin, it should not be misused.**

77. Onireka n'otobyegomba.

Omuntu tasaana kulekayo kukola olw'okulwooza nti agenda kufa mangu kubanga bw'atafa mangu yeegomba ebintu bya banne abaakolanga nga ye

alinda okufa. N'omuntu agenda okusenguka tasana kulekayo kukola mirimu mu kifo ky'agenda okuvaamu.

A person should not stop working believing that s/he is going to die soon; because in case s/he does not die soon, s/he regrets and envies the things his colleagues did while the other was thinking of dying. The same proverb also relates to that person who intends to vacate a place/or relocate; this person should not stop working in the place from which s/h is to vacate/leave.

78. Obulungi bukira obugagga. Beauty is better than riches/wealthy.

Omulungi ne bw'akaddiwa era bamulaba nga yali mulungi naye omugagga bw'ayavuwala abamulaba tebamanya nga yali mugagga. **When a beautiful/handsome person gets old, one can tell that the person was beautiful/handsome, however, when a rich person gets impoverished no one can tell that s/he used to be rich.**

79. Omugagga: The rich

(a) Tabaamu mwoyo, ennanja tezza mpiso. Has no heart, a lake does not return a needle.

Ennyanja ejjude ebintu ebya buli ngeri naye era bw'etwala empiso. N'abantu bangi abalina ebingi ate be basing okwagala okwongera okwegaggawaza nga banyaga eby'abalala. **A lake is full of all sorts of things but when it takes a needle it does not return it. Likewise, people with a lot of property always wish to continue amassing wealth even when it means stealing from the poor.**

(b) Taggwa ntabaalo. **The rich is ever at war.**

Gw'awa ekinu amwebaza nti, "Yogayoga Ssalongo".

Because when he gives something to someone, he is thanked like "welcome back Ssalongo" (this has a hidden meaning implying welcome back from war, or hard task).

80. Ssebingi bwe bikwalira ogamba nti tebirimbula. Those who have in plenty think they will never lack anything.

Abantu abamu bwe bafuna ebintu ebingi oba ensimbi ennyingi tebalowooza nga ziyinza okubagwaako. **When some people get rich they cannot imagine that riches can vanish.**

81. "Twalabagana obwedda" empale akuwa nkadde. You have been my colleague for a long time; he gives you an old pair of trousers.

Abagagga abamu bwe bawa bannabwe ebintu babawa bikadde. **When some rich people give to their friends, they give them old stuff.**

Analysis

The 81 proverbs portray poverty as a formidable social force, out to smother all those who lack capability either to confront it directly or stoically endure its adverse effects. Poverty is likened to an indomitable lion; fierce scorching sunshine; or endless torrential rain that drenches those without the means to take shelter – the poor. Some extreme forms of poverty are portrayed as worse than death.

Poverty is presented as widespread in traditional society with a multiplicity of causes including but not limited to individual factors like foolishness, lack of initiative, laziness, inability to accumulate/save money and lack of patience. Other causal factors include attempts to fulfill multiple responsibilities, over reliance on divine providence, ‘investing’ in adultery/promiscuity and exploitation by the relatively wealthy.

The poverty that is mainly portrayed in proverbs is one of material privation/consumption poverty that inevitably leads to misery/suffering (ennaku) among both adults and children. Women and men respectively are shown as experiencing poverty differently and uniquely as a result of gender differences. Children are portrayed as hopelessly vulnerable to poverty, with only their biological parents to extricate them out of misery and suffering. Orphanhood is also portrayed as a form of poverty or extreme vulnerability among children.

Many proverbs delineate a sort of informal code of conduct for the poor; the basis being that poverty is an individual burden. The poor are constantly reminded about their social standing in society and advised against the futility of attempting to operate out of their social realm.

The proverbs remind the poor of their limited options in life; that they do not have and should not ever expect to get genuine friends; that since they operate in a vicious cycle of poverty, their only option of survival is resilience and self reliance. They are reminded that even a hitherto shared background of acute poverty with a rich person is not a guarantee that he/she will support them to get out of poverty. When poverty/misfortune strikes, it is emphasized such a friend will be the first to desert you.

Though some proverbs apparently portray poverty as a dynamic situation capable of reversal, they ironically only advise the poor on how to cope. The poor for instance are reminded that they can not access justice, whether guilty or not; and can only cope by adhering to the right side of the law or criminal justice system. The proverbs portray coping strategies like wishful thinking, begging, false pretence, self pity, coveting others and giving up entirely or existential hopelessness as futile, self defeating and counter productive. Poverty it is reiterated, should best be endured as it comes.

The few proverbs that empathize with the poor, intimating that hardship in some instances can be reversed, point out hard work, resilience and divine intervention/good luck as positive solutions. The latter is likened to air (empewo) which enters a house even with closed shutters; or a flea that remains alive even when it is sat on.

Many proverbs caution the poor to know their limitations when interacting with the rich. In most cases the wealthy are portrayed as miserly heartless individuals only obsessed with accumulating and sustaining their wealth even at the expense of the poor. The poor it is stressed cannot afford to be generous. Any form of generosity is at their peril. On the contrary they are advised to take advantage of any situation to satisfy their needs.

Poverty and shame-the contradictions

What is most striking about the traditional proverbs nonetheless is that despite poverty being portrayed as a desperate situation associated with suffering and all sorts of coping strategies; it is not particularly associated with negative phenomena like shame or social exclusion. Indeed there are only two proverbs that portray poverty as embarrassing or undignifying; and this only in certain situations like when a poor man who has nothing to offer his in-laws is compelled to visit them frequently to do manual work for them in compensation for the gifts that he can not afford to offer them.

Yet on the contrary, the proverbs apart from associating wealth with a few negative social values like greed and arrogance, strongly link it to power and social respect. Wealth accumulation is portrayed as no mean task, implying that the rich deserve to be accorded their due respect and social worth despite their short comings. The key question thus is that if wealth evoked feelings of pride and heightened social status, why didn't poverty reciprocally evoke feelings of shame or stigma, leading to social exclusion in traditional, indigenous communities?

It would be rational to argue here that among ancient traditional societies in Uganda, poverty was more or less universal with only a handful of wealthy individuals especially those closely linked to the ruling hegemonies. In Buganda, Bunyoro and Nkore for instance, the commoners (bakopi) predominated, and were not expected by any means to be wealthy. In such a context thus shame, especially that linked to consumption poverty bore no relevance except perhaps only at extreme levels.

It can be strongly argued that whereas it is true that shame is externally imposed by society and felt at individual personal level, this has evolved over time in Ugandan traditional society.

It can be stated with certainty that in Ugandan ethnic communities, the genesis of poverty shame is closely linked to the introduction of the cash crop economy in the early colonial period (1890s) where enterprising individuals became rich and others remained poor. In other words the period of 122 years (1890 – 2012) has not only witnessed massive economic and political transformation, but marked social stratification as well. In context of the economic and other opportunities presented in this period, poverty has been increasingly attributed to personal/individual failings, though structural factors beyond the individual still play a crucial role. It is the failure to materially achieve and be socially like others who have achieved that has created a strong link between experiencing poverty and shaming or social exclusion.

In the pre-colonial period, where communication and transmission of indigenous knowledge was largely through oral tradition (folklore and proverbs) poverty was a generalized and internalized as a normal situation and rarely evoked feelings of shame. It was part of the respective cultures or institutions; and thus the language of poverty, oral tradition, had nothing to portray in the perspective of what is currently seen and defined as shame of poverty and associated negative attributes like social exclusion.

Insights from plays and novels

The Burdens, by John Ruganda

Manifestations of Poverty

In the introduction of this play that tries to 'diagnose' the symptoms and damage of a 'modern cancer'-empty headed ambition and its attendant spirit, self pity, it is stated that poverty is not strange to the protagonist, Wamala. Way back he had played on this stage-'thumbing pieces of chalk'.⁴

But on the eve of independence, he had made his harangue effectively and had subsequently found himself a cabinet minister with all the licensed and unlicensed accessories befitting his office. From a humble background to a ministerial position, Wamala ascended to a higher hierarchy in terms of money, assets, relations and social status. However this changes when Wamala is arrested and imprisoned for conspiring to overthrow the government. He falls from glory back to insignificance, to a life unbelievably bleak. In this state, he is stripped of everything except his wife and two children. No more ministerial laughter, comfort, and giving orders. Wamala is portrayed in his current situation as extremely poor, his life characterized with hunger, material privation, and failure to meet family obligations; a humiliating affair. His downfall is inevitably adversely experienced in the entire family. Wamala's wife Tinka is also in the same situation. She too, has descended the ladder of success and settled to brewing *enguli*⁵ and weaving mats to provide for the family.

The overall effects of failed politics on Wamala and Tinka are abject poverty, shame and total isolation. Their success during Wamala's ministerial stint had made them regard themselves as set apart from the common herd. Failure has become an impregnable wall between them and their fellow community men and women.

⁴ 'Thumbing chalk' or 'eating chalk' is a form of derogatory reference to the teaching profession-the profession of the poor in Uganda. This is different from other especially developed countries where teaching is seen as a noble, rewarding profession.

⁵ Enguli; also known as waragi is a local potent gin often illicitly distilled and sold by the poor both in slum settings in urban areas and in rural villages.

Specific portrayals of poverty

Act 1

The play opens in a setting that typically portrays material poverty.

The curtain rises on a little semi-permanent house made of mud and wattle. The walls of the sitting room (part of which is used as a kitchen) are smeared with cow dung. Home made furniture. There is kitchen ware too. Everything has gone dark with continual smoke. From the ceiling hang long strands of soot, dangling precariously. The protagonists' wife, Tinka is sitting alone, weaving a mat. She wears an 'I have been through hell' kind of face. Her son Kaija enters quietly. He is wearing badly patched shorts, nylon shirt and carrying a hurricane lamp. Tinka is quick to remind him about the extravagance of lighting two lamps, in their impoverished situation.

Tinka: We don't need two lamps, do we now son? You don't seem to realize that paraffin in this house is so hard to come by, as everything else.

Kaija: (blows out the lamp) I'm sorry mother; I forgot to blow it out.

Kaija also complains about having to share a bed with his younger, bed wetting sister. He wishes he had a bed of his own, like all the boys at school.

Kaija: What a pool! What awful smells! What discomfort! I wish I had a bed of my own, like all the boys at school.

Tinka: (resuming her weaving...then sympathetically) I know son, I know. You are the only one who doesn't have a lot of things as well. A lot of other things.

Kaija: But a reed bed isn't very expensive, or is it mother?

Kaija also complains about being hungry and asks Tinka for some food, late at night. Her mother offers him Wamala's share of the beans and potatoes. In fact hunger and starvation are chronic in Wamala's household, with cold sweet potatoes and beans (the diet of the poor) predominant on the daily menu. In a nutshell, Wamala's household life of poverty and hardship is summed up thus on pages 24-25.

Wamala: (talking about the drudgery of his family life). I suddenly realized we couldn't take the situation much longer. You, me and the children. We get up at the crack of dawn. Tea without milk. Cold potatoes and beans. The searing sting of smoke and the smell of urine from Kakes' bedding. We wash our faces with dew because water costs a fortune and there isn't any in the house. Kaija goes to school. The cold morning making his teeth chatter and biting his bare buttocks. Kake chases butterflies or walks around the house in silence because you and I have nothing much to talk about.

Tinka: We should take that girl to a proper doctor, Wamala. (Nyakake is sickly, emaciated, with a chronic cough).

Wamala: Ten o'clock comes. You start your weaving or setting out tins and tubes for distilling enguli. I borrow the previous day's newspaper and begin the endless search for jobs in the vacancies column. When I see one I think I can do there is still the problem of three referees. And yet the only people who know me, who dare associate with me, are fellow drunks at the Republic bar. Then lunch comes; potatoes and beans sometimes kawunga and dodo⁶, and our indefatigable silence-except for the occasional mediocre jokes to reassure the children. In the evening I go to the Republic to meet the outside world, to meet the new breed who are susceptible to praise and can afford to stand us drinks. I drink and drug myself against depression and frustration. Another dawn. Tea without milk. Cold potatoes and beans. The searing sting of smoke. Day in day out...we can't stand it any longer.

Overall diverse manifestations of extreme poverty and hardship are vividly captured in various scenes in Act 1 of this play. Wamala's family is resident in a slum neighborhood, in a substandard house; the children are malnourished, sickly and cannot access healthcare; all family members including Wamala are attired in tattered clothes; the children share a bed and beddings; and as a result of chronic cash shortfalls, the protagonist and *de facto* household head/breadwinner, cannot afford to pay school fees for the children, his poll tax and even buy a bed for his son. His wife Tinka sees this as the epitome of humiliation-classical shame. Tinka doesn't spare her son what she feels about her husband's poverty and shame.

Tinka: to her son Kaija (with dirty, damaging laughter) Oh! Our adorable father! Next time ask him, innocently of course, Father do all mothers buy beds for their sons? Pay school fees for their children and...poll tax for their husbands?

The experience of hardship is not limited to the home. For the children (Kaija), the hardship is clearly manifest even at school. The school environment in this play becomes a scene of comparison in terms of what children have or don't have in their homes. Kaija for instance tells his mother that unlike him, all the boys at school have their own beds. He tells his mother that he is small and skinny because he has small snakes inside him.

⁶ Kawunga and dodo, maize/cassava meal and a green leafy vegetable. This is also a diet especially for the extremely urban poor.

'Teacher calls them tapeworms. Brooklax clears the stomach...a boy of fourteen should have a bed of his own. To prevent the little snakes wriggling from body to body. You know mother, I am the only one without a bed of his own.'

Portrayals of poverty shaming

The protagonist, Wamala

In the introduction, it is mentioned that the feel of power is now an irritating memory for Wamala and his family. This is in reference to the shame of insignificance that is experienced as a bitter, painful memory. Men who have been at the top (like Wamala) it is stressed, find hunger, poverty and failure to meet family obligations a particularly humiliating affair.

Act 1

When Kaija asks his father to buy him a bed, he simply keeps quiet and stares ahead of him for a long time-a gesture his wife says is meant to keep others silent. However it could also be a form of body language expressing poverty shame, resulting from his failure to meet a basic necessity like a bed for his teenage son.

Another shaming incident is when Wamala goes to see the Managing Director of Associated Matches Company to sell him his 'great invention' the two headed match stick that even the cynical Tinka acknowledges as a product of a creative mind-a genius. However Wamala is shamefully thrown out of the office and the premises by the Managing Director's Secretary and Security guards respectively, courtesy of his shabby dressing.

Wamala: Do you know what happened when I went to the Managing Director?

Tinka: He invited you in for a business lunch?

Wamala: Don't be pedantic. His secretary, a non national of course, threw me out of the office.

Tinka: What?

Wamala: She looked at my tattered jacket with scorn, pulled out of the drawer a 'Hakuna Kazi'⁷ poster and sweetly said the Managing Director was busy; and all the

⁷ Hakuna Kazi-no vacancy (Swahili language)

time the burgher was there scratching his balls. I told her I wasn't looking for a job. She said I was becoming a nuisance. The Securico Guards threw me out.

Tinka: What a shame.

Wamala: And that my dear, was the end of a great idea patiently borne of a man in tatters. A rejection of a poor man's contribution.

Wamala's next 'great idea', the International Slogans Syndicate (ISS), though it initially fetched a little money is also shamefully rejected when he tries to sell it to the cynical Tinka.

Wamala is also seen, towards the end of Act 1 (pg 34 and 35) complaining about being treated shamefully by his wife, craving for respect (after a scuffle with Tinka over a hidden bottle of waragi⁸)

Wamala: You provoked me; you shouldn't have treated me like that. A man always wants a little bit of respect. Just a little bit you know. To make him feel he is the boss in his own house, not a doormat for every bastard to wipe his shoes on. You shouldn't treat a man like that, poverty or no poverty.

Tinka, Wamala's wife

As the curtain rises in Act 1, Tinka is sitting alone, weaving a mat and wearing an 'I have been through hell' kind of face. Given the acute impoverishment that she and her family is experiencing, Tinka's facial expression depicts the inner emotional pain and shame she is consequently experiencing.

Tinka openly resents poverty and the associated shame. She is totally uncompromising when it comes to exposing her poverty and subjecting herself to ridicule!

For instance her son Kaija's humble request to borrow from her two shillings to start selling roasted groundnuts at school; and use the proceeds to buy himself a bed, is assertively turned down. The latter is not because she doesn't have two shillings to lend him, but because of the shame her son's business at school would expose her to.

Kaija: Good. Can you lend me two shillings? Just two.

Tinka: (puzzled) Whatever for, son?

⁸ Waragi-local potent gin, illicitly distilled and consumed by the poor.

Kaija: I will tell you. I want to start selling roasted groundnuts at school. It pays a lot mother. No, no, no please listen to me. In a month or two I will have accumulated enough money to buy myself a bed.

Tinka: Impossible, absolutely impossible...

Kaija: You promised mother...

Tinka: How can a son of mine sell groundnuts at school?

Kaija: A promise is a promise, you always say.

Tinka: How can it be said...oh no. Not as long as I have these two hands...

Kaija: But if father has never been really up...

Tinka: I know, I know. It's the mother's pride, son. Staking a mothers pride...

Kaija: Nobody will care whether I sell groundnuts or carry pailfulls of excrement from Junior Staff quarters and besides, other boys do it.

Tinka: Let them, you won't do a thing like that. No. how can I bear the derisive laughter of the slum women? Their shocked whispers. Their malicious gossip. Their mock pity. A maimed tigress dies clawing the soil, son. Don't put your mother's pride at stake.

The above dialogue shows that Tinka sees her son's engagement in activities like petty trade, however noble the reason, as the epitome of shame for the parents. She'd rather engage in decent activities like weaving mats or even illegal ones like distilling and selling enguli/waragi to support her family, other than let her son engage in demeaning casual labour or petty trade. Despite experiencing acute hardship, Tinka sees poverty per se as shameful, and is not willing to internalize a 'poverty' identity. However this is not easy for Tinka. As a result of her inner emotional debates as to how to cope with poverty, her mind appears to be in permanent turmoil. She is bad tempered and incapable of even smiling. All she can do is wear an 'I have been through hell' kind of face-a face that mirrors her emotional pain, shame and true social identity.

Kaija: (regards her (Tinka) for a moment)...and besides you have become bad-tempered of late. Your smiles used to embrace me, fill me with comfort. As long as they were there I felt everything was fine. Where have they gone, those smiles? Where mother?

(Tinka is seen after this dialogue trying to smile without much success).

Alcoholism and domestic violence induced by hardship and poverty shame.

A clear manifestation of the above is towards the end of Act 1 (pages 33-36). A drunken quarrel over a hidden bottle of 'enguli' sparks off an ugly scuffle where Tinka gets injured and household items are broken. Wamala blames it all on Tinka who he says treats him disrespectfully because of his poverty-a provocation. Tinka is seen threatening to leave, to abandon the family.

Tinka: Blows, battles, hunger, hatred, poverty and a cold bed. I can't stand it any longer.

In fact Act II is filled with scenes of intensifying tension and violence when both Wamala and Tinka bring their past to the fore and have their greatest and final confrontation where Tinka apparently in a drunken stupor quarrels and physically fights with Wamala, eventually murdering him and getting arrested by the police in the end.

Impact of poverty and shame on Kaija and Nyakake (Tinka and Wamala's children)

In the play, Nyakake the youngest child is portrayed as too young to know the predicament (poverty and shame) that the family is experiencing. On page 25 where Wamala graphically describes his family's poverty, he only mentions in passing...Nyakake chasing butterflies or walking around the house in silence because the parents (as a result of shared poverty shame) have nothing much to talk about. The impact of this (failure to bond with the child) is definitely adverse for the cognitive and psycho-social development of the young girl.

On the other hand, the teenage son Kaija is much aware of his family poverty and the associated shame. He is desperate to do anything, including selling groundnuts at school or even cleaning filthy public toilets, to earn some income and assist his family. He is ready to endure the shame that this kind of work evokes.

Tinka notices that of late Kaija carries on as if he is an orphan, as if the mother does not care. He no longer laughs, relaxes like he used to; that he only sulks like some abandoned luggage waiting for its owner. Kaija however also notices the same misery in his mother, sensing her bad temper and absence of smiles in the home anymore.

In the end when the situation gets out of hand with no money to take the sickly Kake to a proper doctor, Kaija has no option but to collude with his mother to secretly sell off the family's most treasured asset, Wamala's royal regalia-a drum and crown to tourists to raise two hundred shillings (page 69).

Overall Kaija is portrayed as a confused boy, rather too wise for his age, desperately trying to cope with the shame of the transition from opulence and wealth to extreme

poverty that his family has undergone. Unlike his younger sister, Nyakake, Kaija is able to recall the better times.

The anticlimax is towards the end of the play (Act III pages 70-72), where Kaija personally experiences the final and most shameful verbal and physical fight between his parents. He totally loses control-his shame degenerating into unrestrained anger and violence. He cannot stand the sight of anybody else who has witnessed and dares to talk about the ugly incident; and thus ends up 'shooting stones' with his catapult at Kamoga, an elderly widow, and goes on to uproot her cotton plants. In similar vein, he picks a fight with a neighbor Tibasaga, at the communal well, ***"...so I pounced on her and gave her a thorough beating and broke her water pot. I felt relieved."***

At the fall of the final curtain, Kaija is in total confusion, a heap of cowering hopelessness, fear, shame and despair. He doesn't until the very last moment realize that it is not him but his mother Tinka that the police have come to arrest as a suspect for 'murdering' his father Wamala.

First Daughter by Goretti Kyomuhendo

Manifestations of poverty and poverty shaming

The trials and tribulations that the protagonist, of this novel, Kasemiire, experiences are to a large extent attributable to her humble family background characterized by material and social deprivation. Chapter 1 of the novel opens with the protagonist a pubescent young girl sharing a bed and threadbare blanket with her younger sister. Though sharing beds and/or beddings is not uncommon among children in large polygamous families in Bunyoro, a threadbare blanket is an indicator of acute poverty-a type of hardship that may evoke feelings of shame. In fact the sharing of threadbare blankets among the children in the family resurfaces on page 6, and is this time round directly attributed to hard times the family is going through. The 'hard times' are specifically described as 'a very difficult situation' where money was becoming more and more scarce.

The persistence of the difficult situation described above is evident when Kasemiire, who is the eldest/first daughter, passes her Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE) very well. Her academic excellence notwithstanding, the reality is that her father cannot comfortably afford to raise money for her tuition and school requirements. Abwooli the protagonists' mother is seen nursing mixed feelings of hope and despair, wondering if in face of the prevailing family financial shortfalls, her daughter will make it to secondary school. Though she happily visualizes her dressed in the smart uniform of the neighboring secondary school, looking beautiful, at her heart is the nagging problem of school fees. *"Would her husband agree to cooperate and pay? It would mean sacrificing their meager income for their daughter's school fees. She dreaded facing her husband*

about the issue because she knew for sure that he would bark at her” (2nd paragraph page 11)

The protagonist, Kasemiire, in spite of her tender age, similarly has her own doubts vis-à-vis her father’s financial ability to send her to secondary school. *“Kasemiire knew very well that she came from a very poor family. Her father had no formal education and so he could not work in the government like some men did. He had to depend entirely on his sweat. Secondly there were many children...”* (last paragraph page 17).

Kyamanywa the protagonist’s father, is portrayed as a typical traditional Munyoro man; illiterate but well aware of his expectations in society, and as a family head and breadwinner. In spite of the worsening economic times, he is seen trying his best to work hard and sustain his family. On top of subsistence crop production, he also rears livestock (a few cows and goats); and there is always a surplus to generate some income. With the latter he was among the few individuals in the village who sent all his children, irrespective of sex, to school. Though he did not consume alcohol Kyamanywa was well respected in his community and interacted freely with his often drunken peers including those opposed to enrolling girl children in school.

Nonetheless sending the protagonist, Kasemiire to secondary school was not easy. It drained all the household resources. As Kyamanywa sternly reminded his wife *“...it has cost me my savings and I even had to sell my heifer at a giveaway price! Moreover that covered school fees for only one year! Now what about the requirements? It means that I’ll have to get some of the younger ones out of school”* (last paragraph page 26). In a nutshell, the high opportunity cost of sending the protagonist to school is an indicator of the hardship in the family -a clear manifestation of poverty and probable source of shame.

The preparation (shopping) and moving to school also turns into an emotionally painful affair due to the limited money available. The one thousand shillings (equivalent of USD 20 to date) could barely cover all the items required for a freshly enrolled student. At least UGX 3000 (USD 60) was needed. After purchasing only the priorities (lowest quality mattress and blanket, a plate, cup and spoon) all the money was used up! The scenario turns emotional when out of the blue; Abwooli pulls out one thousand shillings, her entire lifetime savings.

“Let’s go look at those two dresses,” said her mother. “But mother the money is finished!” Kasemiire said sadly.

“I know” she replied, “but look at this!” she was holding one thousand shillings in her hand.

“Where did you get it?” Kasemiire asked, surprised.

“I have saved it all my life,” her mother replied. Tears of joy filled Kasemiire’s eyes. So her mother had been saving the meager income she got from weaving baskets and mats! “I will repay her one day.” She promised herself. With that money they bought two dresses, underwear, a basin and sandals which also could serve as bathroom slippers and shoes.

A typical definition of poverty is found in an expression on page 28, where an envious uncle’s wife whose husband had declined to send her daughter to enroll in secondary school remarked thus to Abwooli in reference to Kasemiire’s good luck;

“You are very lucky, Abwooli; now you can be sure that you will never lack salt.”

Salt is regarded in the study setting as the most basic household necessity that even the poorest are expected to afford. Inability to afford salt is not only a portrayal of extreme poverty, but classical shame as well hence the expression on page 28. In the entire village, and more specifically in Kasemiire’s family, the protagonists’ admission and actual enrollment in secondary school was visualized as a form of insurance against abject poverty and shame in future.

In spite of the intense preparation, family and other support by well-wishers, Kasemiire’s luggage to secondary school manifests her impoverished situation. *‘Lastly Kasemiire washed and ironed her few clothes and put them together with her eatables in an old wooden box which her grandmother had given her’.* Later at school, the wooden box/suitcase was shamefully referred to as a coffin in the bullying sessions targeted at freshly enrolled students, by the seniors. In other words the ‘coffin’ is visualized as an object of shame and used to ridicule the owner.

Another shaming scenario was when the protagonists’ requirements were being checked to ensure that she had all that she required before moving to the dormitory. Most of the embarrassment was caused by her father’s ignorance and the demeanor of the other girls, when the matron found out that Kasemiire lacked toilet paper.

“Toilet paper? She can use leaves!” all the girls burst out laughing but the matron was not one inch amused!

“What do you expect her to use when she is having her monthly periods?” she asked in stern rebuke. Kasemiire was embarrassed. True she knew about monthly periods, but could it be discussed in public? “Do you bleed?” her father asked her bluntly. Fortunately the matron saved her from answering the question.

“Oh come on sir it is a normal thing for every girl to do so!” her father thrust his hand in his pockets and came out with some money. “Make sure you buy them,” he said handing her the money.

The protagonist would not have had to endure this public shaming if she had been well provided for by way of school requirements. At secondary school, Kasemiire is always aware of her poor background and is reluctant to associate freely with the other relatively rich students. When approached by Anita, a rich student to be her roommate at the end of her third year, Kasemiire was reluctant to accept despite Anita being a former roommate, friendly and considerate girl.

“In the dormitory Kasemiire had been elected as the House Captain. She was now free to choose any room she wanted. The rich girl she shared a room with while in S1 had now approached her and asked her to be her roommate. Kasemiire had been reluctant to accept. True Anita was a very kind and considerate girl, and very friendly too, but she was also very rich. She had very expensive things such as a leather suitcase, countless pairs of shoes and dresses. From senior one Kasemiire has learnt never to associate with rich girls, for she always felt an inferiority complex when with them. She had learnt to find her own level, and stayed away from them. But she agreed to share her room with Anita.”

Though Kasemiire enjoyed all the perks of being close to Anita, including the latter’s extreme kindness and generosity, deep inside she was always haunted by her poverty at home and the stark differences between the two. For instance when Anita insisted on visiting Kasemiire’s home, she at first refused outright fearing that she would see how poor they were. When she reluctantly accepted, she was surprised at how Anita freely associated with her parents and siblings. *“Surprisingly, Anita had been very free with her parents and sisters and even entered the smoke-filled kitchen to prepare lunch with her mother.”*

All the misfortunes that the protagonist experiences, to a large extent triggered off by the unwanted pregnancy in her final year in secondary school, are not only attributable to her background of extreme poverty, but also to the strategies she adopts to cope with poverty at school. Initially Kasemiire’s strategy was to avoid the rich students, and find her own level among the poor underprivileged students of her ilk-a strategy that served her well for the first three years at school.

All this changes however when she abandons her latter coping strategy and is catapulted into a life of illusion, materialism and pretence where she forgets her background, and embarks on a path of self destruction. It is clear that if Kasemiire had maintained her coping strategy of keeping within her social realm at school, all the misfortunes that she experienced including the pregnancy and premature dropping out of school, the murderous wrath of her father, the inconsolable grief of her mother; and above all the personal and family shame and social isolation, would not have befallen her. Though the protagonist, through stoic resilience and good luck manages to extricate herself out of the emotional rubble, gets university education and marries

Steven, the man who 'ruined' her life; the poverty and emotional pain do not cease to haunt her and her broken natal family. For instance when she wants to formalize her relationship by introducing Steven to her parents, she was always stopped by the persistent poverty at her home.

'She kept on remembering the poverty in which her mother, sisters and brothers were living. Another thing was about her father (who had deserted the family). Would he agree to come back for the introduction ceremony? What of their house? It was all in shambles! What would Steven's relatives think?' (page 126).

Kasemiire's father, as a result of extreme poverty and the consequences of abandoning his family is portrayed as a totally broken man, a hopeless emotional wreck. *"Her father continued to stare at the ground. There were unshed tears in his eyes as he looked up at his daughter. Who am I to forgive you? He whispered. Life has changed; I'm a poor man now, no longer the harsh, uncompromising and proud father I used to be. He was sobbing quietly now. Kasemiire was moved. She had not expected her father to bend so low! The man was actually crying openly now".* (Page 128)

On the other hand, Steven's relatives were also perturbed by his relationship with Kasemiire. They had not come to terms with her poor background, and Kasemiire was aware of everything. *"They argued that Steven was still young and needed to build his future first. Why had he chosen a girl with such a background anyway? Kasemiire got very worried about the comments. She understood that she would never be accepted in Steven's family; she would never belong to their world."* (Page 131)

Wrinkled Faces-A play by Ssebunga Masembe

Manifestations of poverty and poverty shaming

The entire play is awash with scenarios of material deprivation, shame, hopelessness and despair. The title 'Wrinkled Faces' per se speaks volumes in reference to poverty. Though facial wrinkles are often associated with aging, and old people derogatorily referred to as wrinkles (abenkanyanya)⁹, in context of the play, the title has nothing to do with aging since most characters including Isabirye-the protagonist, are not advanced aged people. 'Wrinkled faces' as a title is definitely used by the author to elicit a

⁹ Runyoro/Rutooro/Runyakitara-the language widely spoken in the study area. Facial wrinkles (enkanyanya) at an early age are associated with poverty, hardship, and ill-being.

perspective of hardship, pain and despair. Grim wrinkled facial expressions are often associated with poverty and suffering irrespective of the age of the person.

The opening of the play, (Act 1, Scene 1) is against a backdrop of abject poverty and gloom. The protagonist, Isabirye's household is shown consisting of a bare courtyard and a house of walls with fading paint, broken and dirty wooden shutters. Nabirye, Isabirye's wife is sad and gloomy; dressed in a tattered discolored blouse and patched skirt. Her soliloquy vividly depicts her family's needy and hopeless situation characterized by material deprivation, shame and despair.

"...eeh, I am so tired! I have to work in order to fend for my daughters. How can I get money to cater for all their needs? Look at me. I need a new skirt and blouse. We are the laughing stock of the village. Look at my house that was once the envy of every one. Now it is a mere raft with water dripping through as if it were a sieve. Damn you Isabirye for leaving us like this! You sold all the furniture, all the utensils, and all bedding to buy a visa and ticket to Japan. But it is now ten years and no sign of money saved for us. How do you expect me to look after the children, when all I have is a hoe? Last season it shone heavily and the crops dried up. Now when my crops are doing well, the neighbour's goats are making a feast on them. I am sick and tired of this life."

Nabirye and her family's desperate situation is a result of her husband's desperate gamble to extricate himself and his family out of poverty. Once prosperous by village standards, a disgruntled Isabirye sold off all the family property including furniture and personal effects to raise money for an air ticket and visa to Japan, in quest of greener pastures. Unfortunately after a long ten years Isabirye's venture is yet to bear fruit and his family back home is in a state of extreme poverty, shame and despair. Nabirye is sick and tired of that life.

Children's Poverty, Despair and Shame

The twin teenage girls, Kaudha and Babirye daughters of Nabirye and Isabirye are not spared the adverse effects of poverty and hardship in their family. As teenage girls they face unique challenges, both at home and at school-most of the challenges related to the material privations characteristic of their home. They are compelled to borrow petty household essentials like a mortar (ensekuro) and salt from their better off neighbor, Mama Mudondo. Mudondo is not only the twins neighbour, but their peer. The twins openly envy Mudondo because unlike them her family does not lack essential items like a mortar for pounding groundnuts, has healthy livestock-goats and chicken; and above all her school fees are paid on time.

Babirye and Kaudha are frustrated and ashamed of their poverty and vent their anger by being rude and insulting to the innocent and unsuspecting Mudondo, when she drops in at their home to collect the mortar they had borrowed the previous day. Nabirye, their mother, her age and status as a wife and mother of twins notwithstanding, also surprisingly exhibits similar behavior as her daughters. With bitter undisguised sarcasm, she retorts;

Nabirye: (disgusted) - you girls bring the mortar. The owners want it. Do not forget what the catechist tells us; that even before their birth, some people were supposedly chosen by God with the intention of sharing his glory in the heavens. *“Babirye brings the mortar and drops it on the floor. Mudondo removes her feet just in time to save them from getting crushed. She sighs, picks it up and walks away”*.

As Mudondo walks away, instead of expressions of gratitude, she is accompanied by orchestrated insults from both Babirye and Kaudha, allegedly in relation to her family's straying hens and goats; this in spite of the inconvenience of having to collect a borrowed item instead of the borrowers' returning it, as would be expected.

The ingratitude and unbecoming behavior exhibited by the trio, speaks volumes about the psyche or mindset of the poor. It is a reflection of their innermost feelings about their relatively better off neighbours. It is a type of behavior definitely shaped by the shame of being hopelessly poor!

For a person who is not poor, a neighbour's straying hen or goat is not necessarily a thorny issue. But for a poor person who is always on tenterhooks, on the lookout for apportioning blame for his or her poverty and the associated shame; a straying hen is a big issue, a cause or perpetuator of poverty and therefore a legitimate target of harm, or reason to abuse/insult the owner.

As the play unwinds (page 6) other grudges definitely driven by poverty shame and envy, the trio (Nabirye, Babirye and Kaudha) harbor against Mudondo and her family, become manifest. Needless to say, to an ordinary (non impoverished) person, these grudges are subtle, more or less molehills. But to the poverty stricken trio, they are mountains, unnecessarily blown out of proportion.

Nabirye: But our neighbor thinks highly of herself. Is it because they own goats and hens? I must warn them. (Kaudha enters)

Kaudha: I overheard while returning from the well that they ate meat last night and they will have either chicken or fish for lunch.

Babirye: In fact of late Mudondo has grown fat

Nabirye: She is pregnant, isn't she? How I pray that it is true.

Babirye: I'm not so sure mother. But I suspect she might be

Nabirye: If she is pregnant, I could rejoice over ten cups of water (sighs)

This dialogue between daughters and mother shows the extent of poor peoples' desperation and their warped attitudes towards their better off neighbours. A small dispute of a straying goat that could have been settled mutually and amicably is taken to the village court; and as if that is not bad enough the neighbours' goat is fatally poisoned by the impoverished trio, by maliciously feeding it on an excess of sweet potato vines. Yet at the same time Nabirye is seen sending her daughter Khauda to beg for salt from another neighbor, an errand that turns out futile.

The scene at the village court about the straying/dead goat speaks volumes about the language of the poor, their disposition and the way they interface with their better off neighbours. The court degenerates into a shouting match between Nabirye and Mama Mudondo. At one point Nabirye openly insults her neighbour calling her a pig (page 11).

Neighbour: "Tell them that, woman"

Nabirye: "You have no authority to speak, you pig."

As the curtain falls on Act 1 scene 2, where the case is adjourned to the following day, the village clown whose interest all along has been in the meat of the carcass (dead goat), makes direct reference to poverty.

Clown: How about the meat? It won't be good by tomorrow! But who is to blame? Is it the goat? Is it the women? Is it the daughters? Or is it poverty?

Children's experiences of poverty and shame

In Act Two, scene I which is two years later, the children in the play-the twins (Babirye and Khauda) and Mudondo, their better off neighbors' daughter are now grown up, attending secondary school, but still haunted by the ghosts of their past bitter poverty related conflicts between their families.

However out of teenage camaraderie and open talk about their past poverty related family conflicts, the three girls sort of forget their differences, and get somehow friendly. This reconciliation nonetheless is not easy, and would not have happened if it wasn't for Mudondo who is cheerful by nature, and is more outwardly perhaps because unlike her 'friends' she attends a good boarding school. The girls meet on the way to the well.

Kaudha: (looking hesitant) Ah...ee...we are going to the well and we actually hadn't recognized you. You have changed a lot. Looks like you eat chicken even at school.

Mudondo: No not exactly.

Babirye: Yes, you have changed.

Mudondo: Is that all you are going to say? I hope you are no longer angry with my family-hope you've put away the bad days we had back then. At least I have.

Babirye: But our parents are still going on. We are a poor family. Don't you remember that we sold everything we had for school fees? We now do small jobs here and there to survive.

Mudondo: I can see you are still angry. You haven't changed a bit, have you?

Kaudha: Well, you didn't expect us to change overnight, did you? There is nothing much to change after all. We are still poor and you have everything. I guess you are laughing at us.

Babirye: And I don't think we should be found speaking to each other-especially by your mother.

The dialogue above shows how experiences of poverty and shame impact negatively and shape the mindset of children in poor families. The twins, Nabirye and Kaudha are very conscious of their poverty and keep on referring to it to discourage Mudondo from interacting with them. They obviously feel inferior and ashamed, but the cheerful and outward Mudondo downplays their fears and calms them down. Their differences forgotten, the three girls cheerfully break into song and dance; their irritant past buried beneath them, at least temporarily. (page 13)

The incident where Babirye, with Mudondo's prompting engages in an illicit sexual affair with teacher Zakariya resulting in an unwanted pregnancy may also be directly attributed to poverty and deprivation. The naïve Babirye, after a bit of Dutch courage, pours out her heart to teacher Zakariya, telling him about her family poverty, and showing open admiration for Zakariya's life style especially listening to an old radio and watching a small 12 inch TV set. Zakariya instinctively takes advantage of her poverty and naivety to seduce her.

Zakariya: Please don't call me sir, Zack is enough. So what do you enjoy during your free time? Watching TV listening to music? (Babirye starts drinking).

Babirye: (getting tipsy) Hmm, life has not been easy for me and my family. We cannot afford such pleasures.

Zakariya: Why?

Babirye: We do not have money to go visiting places or buy a new radio and TV. The ones we had were... (she suddenly keeps quiet)

Zakariya: Do you mind telling me more? Maybe I can be of help.

Babirye: Father sold off most of our things so that he could buy a ticket and a visa to go for greener pastures. (She drinks more)

Zakariya: Oh, I'm sorry to hear that. Have you heard from him since he left for Japan?

Babirye: It is now 10 years since he left. We've not heard from him, he has not even sent a single coin. He deserted us! Mother is very sad.

Zakariya: (moves even closer) don't be sad my dear, all is going to be fine. Don't worry about the hardship that you have endured. Cheer up!

Babirye: What do you mean, Sir?

Zakariya: I can support you some way. I have made some savings from my job. I can help buy you a small radio at least.

Babirye: You mean you can do all that for me? But mother will kill me if she sees me with it.

For the poor and naïve Babirye, a promise of a small radio is all it takes to be lured into a risky sexual affair that results in pregnancy and puts her future at stake. All along Zakariya was aware of her vulnerabilities did not hesitate to exploit them to meet his selfish ends.

Other Portrayals of poverty and poverty shaming

The subsequent Acts and scenes of the play-Babirye's pregnancy; Mudondo and Babirye's nocturnal escapades and accident; teacher Zak's arrest by the police; and Isabirye's return and arrest are all riddled with incidences of poverty, shame, self pity and inability to access justice by the poor.

For instance when Babirye starts falling sick as a result of pregnancy, she is seen telling her friend Mudondo that she can't go for treatment because her mother doesn't have any money to pay for it (page 20.)

When Mudondo's mother angrily confronted her hostile neighbour, Nabirye, when their respective daughters got involved in a motor accident, Nabirye sarcastically reminds her that her seriously injured daughter Mudondo will be fine since she has enough money.

Neighbor: What do you mean Babirye is dead? It is my daughter Mudondo who is in danger. Your ugly girl is fine.

Nabirye: We have no time for that now. Besides you have enough money. Your daughter will be out of hospital soon (page 23).

The village soloist's song at the end of Act Two Scene VII (page 29) highlights the rigors of poverty; it's painful circumstances that persist like life scars. Part of the song (page 30) that's about Nabirye, the deserted wife's plight, which goes like this;

Deserted by her husband;

Trouble grew wide

The man in Japan

Left poverty at home;

Poverty for wife

Feeding clothing and nursing the kids,

Ten years of agony,

Ten years of misery,

Ten years of nothing.

Nine months after,

Babirye full of grief,

Babirye gave birth

But lost the birth

Through and through

Be it who or who,

Throes often become life scars;

has overtones that highlight poverty, despair, misery, shame and hopelessness that are characteristic of Isabirye's abandoned family.

In Act Three, Scene 1 where preparations/festivities are in full gear, to welcome back Isabirye-their long lost father; the children Kaudha and Babirye are not amused when their better off relatives' who had since deserted them shamelessly come to join in the festivities. Kaudha and Babirye are angry and openly express their feelings by giving the relatives, especially Aunt Molly, a lukewarm reception. They even discourage them, though unsuccessfully, from traveling to the airport. The general feeling is that Aunt Molly is greedy and shameless; and in spite of being well off, her motive for coming is selfish, to see how she can benefit from the occasion.

Isabirye is expected to return with a lot of goodies/wealth from Japan, as is usually the case with such returnees, and the shameless relatives are eager for their share. The daughters are determined to block them by any means.

When Isabirye is arrested at the airport, and the family robbed on their way back, the unfortunate incidents that mean perpetuation of family poverty and shame are blamed on family curses and fate.

Aunt Molly: For sure, our family is cursed; first it was Isabirye, now it is the robbery. We must consult our ancestors about these tragedies. Nabirye, Isabirye's wife also thinks likewise.

Nabirye: (speaking between sobs) Dear God, what did I do to deserve this? When shall I ever have a moment of peace? Just when I thought my problems (poverty and hardship) were over, my husband gets arrested before I even have a chance to greet him. Now it is thugs stripping me naked in front of my children! I can't stand this humiliation! (She collapses).

When Isabirye is released from jail, his presence does not make the family any better off. They are still impoverished, begging around for salt-the cheapest of basic commodities. Isabirye is penniless, and desperate. His home becomes a locus of intolerable shaming. He avoids home, tries to get involved again in the risky drug trafficking business; and to crown it all shamelessly engages in an illicit sexual affair with his wife's nemesis, their better off neighbour, Mama Mudondo. The anticlimax (Scene VI) is when the shameless duo, Isabirye and Mama Mudondo are caught red handed by none other than Babirye, Isabirye's daughter who had come to Mama Mudondo's house on a salt begging errand. Nabirye, Isabirye's wife sees this as the epitome of shame and humiliation and attributes it to fate and curses.

On the other hand, when Isabirye escapes, and Mama Mudondo in connivance with the elders, changes the story from one of being caught in an illicit sexual affair to being a victim of a house robbery-the robber being Babirye the hapless poverty stricken salt beggar, Isabirye's family is appalled at this treachery and blatant injustice. In the end they resignedly attribute the injustice to their abject poverty.

Khauda: Is this what it has come to? So the rich are never guilty? It is only the poor who are capable of committing crimes. And they call themselves village elders. (the elder returns)

Elder: Respect your elders, young girl. The dark spot on the elder's eye sees the furthest (exits).

Babirye: I can't believe this! I can't believe Mama Mudondo has gone away unpunished. The world is very unfair! Is justice only for the rich? (page 62)

This anticlimax brings to the fore the insidious evils of poverty, including shame, hopelessness, despair and vulnerability to all social inequalities, including inability to access justice even in the lowest village arbitration system. Indeed for Isabirye's family, poverty appears to be a curse-a poverty shame trap where extricating/redeeming themselves remains a pipedream.

Black Mamba by John Ruganda

Introduction

This play that made its debut at Makerere University Kampala on October 3rd 1972 has been described as an amusing satire about an intimate, yet intriguing relationship involving a white expatriate University Professor and his mistress in a plot schemed by the Professor's houseboy and husband to the professor's mistress; portrays much about poverty and the level to which individuals can stoop, in desperate attempt to overcome it. Though the play exposes the private life of the professor, and in a dramatic finale the curtain falls on the shocked professor learning the true identity of his mistress; at the core of the drama is a tale of biting poverty, desperation and shamelessness. The amorous Professor is not aware that he is part of, or victim of a poverty related, treacherous exploitation scheme.

Portrayals of poverty, shame and shamelessness

Poverty without shame

Berewa the Professor's houseboy is poor, materially deprived. Like many individuals of his ilk, he is illiterate or only semi literate, without much opportunity for better employment. He is chronically short of cash and openly covets his friends who are materially better off, irrespective of the means they use to get their money. Apart from his devious mind, his most prized 'asset' is his beautiful, voluptuous young wife, Namuddu, over whom he has absolute power.

Berewa's scheme to get out of poverty is simple and straightforward; to persuade/coerce his naïve wife Namuddu into an illicit but well paying sexual relationship with the amorous, wealthy Professor whose wife is away for three months. All the financial proceeds are to be handed over unconditionally to Berewa.

The play opens with shame stricken Namuddu handing over UGX 100, a lot of money then, to her shameless husband Berewa after her first sexual encounter with the Professor. The money is equivalent to Berewa's monthly stipend.

However the problems start when Namuddu gets the courage to demand what she feels is her share of the money. The dialogue that follows between her and Berewa reveals the extent of their background, causes of privations and how Berewa intends to execute his shameless strategy.

Namuddu: There we are dear husband, a hundred shillings for us. I couldn't believe my eyes when he gave it to me.

Berewa: Good good! That wasn't as bad as you thought, was it? Going to bed with a Professor and earning your first treat. I knew you'd make it. Why the devil didn't I think of this before? Why? A hundred shillings! I must bank it straight away.

Namuddu: But I need a new dress, Berewa. For once I will have a beautiful dress for Christmas.

Berewa: (shaking head in protest) Ah! ah! That's not the way we are going to use this money. I can't bloody well understand why women have such a craze for clothes. Last month I sent you three dresses which the Professor's wife gave me. Have you torn them to bits and pieces as usual?

Namuddu: They were old ones. I also want something new. Day in day out I see women here dressed smartly. I get ashamed of my rags. I want to look like Namata, for instance, high heeled shoes, a necklace, earrings and a handbag. That's what your wife should look like.

In response, Berewa sternly declines Namuddu's request and shamelessly asks her to continue sleeping with the Professor if she expects her material needs to be met. Berewa even threatens her with physical violence if she keeps on pestering him for a share of 'his' money.

Namuddu: What? Do you believe I would go on sleeping with your master?

Berewa: I believe in prosperity and a good life, Namuddu

Namuddu: I shan't go back to that man, let me tell you that!

Berewa: Then don't talk of earrings and necklaces anymore, lest I knock your block off.

Berewa insists that Namuddu should continue sleeping with the Professor, reminding her that that's the reason he temporarily recalled her from their rural village-to work and get out of poverty. Incidentally he blames her for their impoverished situation and she

doesn't deny it. Apparently Berewa was once relatively wealthy, the wealth inherited from his father. He blames his wife Namuddu for the loss of his wealth, though the circumstances were apparently beyond her control. Berewa is definitely othering his poverty shame, probably in a vain attempt to justify his shameless behavior-lending away his wife for financial gain.

Berewa: There you are. You want fine things, but you don't want to work for them. I called you from home to come and help me rise up very quickly, and there are plenty of chances here. We have three whole months before Professor's wife comes back. We can do a lot in these three months. But there you sit like a little rat waiting to be fed all the time. I'm getting fed up with you.

Namuddu: How you talk! Berewa, do you really love me? How can you lend me away to another man?

Berewa: These two years I have been slaving and struggling to make ends meet. Yet you can't say that my father didn't start us off very well. He left us in real paradise and what have we done with it? Turned it to hell; It was all your doing. I suppose he appreciated your stubbornness, eh?

Namuddu: Berewa please don't say that again. You needn't have brought in the sad past. What matters is that I belong to you and you only. My parents gave me to you and not anybody else. Why then would you share me with any other man at all?

Berewa: A good wife you are Namuddu; simple unspoilt, loving and all that. You are too virtuous for these hungry times, I must confess. But if you are going to replace that house which you burnt down carelessly, and if we are ever going to refill that kraal which we emptied when your father was sick, we can't afford to be ourselves

Namuddu: Berewa you promised me never to repeat that story.

Berewa: And there is that colossal amount of money we lavished at your brother's education. If only he could remember what I did for him, he would regard me with more favour than a dog does a shilling. But your honorable brother chooses to forget everything.

Namuddu: I know all this, Berewa. It pains me the way my brother treats you, and the way he treats me. He ought to have done better.

Berewa probably as an attempt to cover up his shame asserts that what he is doing is just an emergency temporary step, just to recover their lost wealth drained away by Namuddu's ungrateful family. When Namuddu suggests alternative ways, like offering her labour in the house, Berewa's adamant refusal exposes his shamelessness and greed.

Namuddu: I can help with some of the work Berewa

Berewa: Fine. But then the Professor won't like it at all. Nor would his wife when she comes back. She doesn't like women to work for her husband.

Namuddu: But how can I go on sleeping...How can I do it? Oh God!

Berewa: Think of something else while you are doing it

Namuddu: Supposing he made me pregnant?

Berewa: No, Namuddu, the Professor is not an idiot. Perhaps you don't like the way he smells, but think of me, think of our poverty, think of our future riches when you are at it.

Namuddu: Did you expect me to do this when you called me into the city?

Berewa: Simple I knew by swinging your shimmering behind in the professor's eye, you would dig deep in his heart and pocket too. If less beautiful women have been able to do it, why not you Namuddu? Sweet, polished and graceful figure. He can't resist it. Poverty hooked us, we must hook riches. That's the fashion these days. Many families have become prosperous that way. No reason why we shouldn't.

Berewa continues to cajole, intimidate, and harass his wife Namuddu until she reluctantly agrees to go along with his dirty but shrewd scheme. He draws her attention to other families who have made it from abject poverty to riches through spouse supported prostitution. He advises Namuddu to cast off the façade of morality that is often associated with the poor and don the one of immorality that will inevitably reward them with immense riches. For the shameless Berewa, the message is that the end justifies the means. He even goes ahead to coach his hapless wife on the dos and don'ts of the game; and how to blend in with the strange home environment and how to acquaint herself with the personality traits of the Professor.

Namuddu: Like that prostitute Namatta?

Berewa: Precisely

Namuddu: But she is unfaithful to her husband

Berewa: There you are. That's what everybody says but it is part of the game, Namuddu. That's the mark of good tactics. See where it has landed them. I remember them two years ago, lean as leaches, dirty as pigs and poor as beggar's dogs. But look at them now-the husband eternally in suits. The way he walks makes everyone believe he is above the tribulations of this wretched world. You have met the wife yourself, the money they have only the devil can count. They are planning to put up a duka (small shop) at the end of Karachi Street. Wouldn't you like us to be like them?

Namuddu: (unable to contain herself any longer) If we do it the right way, yes.

Berewa's and indeed society's resentment of poverty is reflected in how the poor are perceived and/or described-lean as leaches, dirty as pigs and poor as beggar's dogs. The message here is that poverty and privation per se, whatever the cause portray shame and indignity likened to emaciation, dirt and being unsightly. This is contrasted with the self confidence, smartness and swagger of being rich; an aspiration of everyone.

No wonder the dignity inclined Namuddu is co-opted, albeit reluctantly into her husband, Berewa's undignifying scheme. Berewa goes on to remind Namuddu of the limited options at their disposal if they are to rid themselves of poverty and the associated shame.

Berewa: And what's right about being poor? What's moral about sweating oneself to death for only one hundred shillings a month? I don't see why you are weeping Namuddu, we have got to use what we have; and what we have is your body, and mine. They are our major sources of income as things stand now. If God didn't expect us to use our blessed bodies he wouldn't have given us the bloody brains to think how to use them; nor would he have had us poor like this.

Namuddu: It's immoral, a hundred times immoral. Don't make it sound simple and virtuous!

Berewa: We can't be blamed for giving what the rich want, when we have the chance. The Professor is infatuated with your looks. We must praise the God on high for showing us the way to get our daily potato.

The above dialogue does not only portray the indignities of poverty, and individuals' innermost debates-moral or immoral on how to overcome it, but also provides an insight on people's perceptions and/or knowledge as to what causes poverty. Berewa for instance believes that his family poverty is rooted in the divine; a factor beyond his control. However he conveniently uses this to rationalize his immoral copying strategy-his shamelessness. On a more realistic note though, Berewa turns around and blames his wife Namuddu, as the cause of their poverty.

Poverty with shame

The behavior of Berewa's wife, Namuddu reflects the shame and indignity of being poor. Throughout part one of the play, the arguments between Berewa and Namuddu mirror the latter's state of mind-the inner debates going on in her subconscious about the morality of Berewa's shameful scheme, her family poverty and privation

notwithstanding. Worse still Namuddu is aware that she is the cause of her family poverty—a situation that puts her in an awkward situation as this renders it her moral obligation to get her family out of poverty. Yet what she is required to do is immoral.

Eventually the immoral perspective of her inner emotional debates prevails over the moral and she becomes a willing player in her husband's scheme. 'The end justifies the means' also becomes her coping strategy, the shaming aspects of her illicit sexual relations with the Professor/husband's master notwithstanding.

Attitudes of the rich towards the poor

Despite the racial and socio-economic divide between them, the short-lived relationship between Namuddu and the Professor shows how the rich feel about the poor. The Professor internally despises Namuddu. Her naivety and disorderliness in the house disgusts him. He regards her as a mere prostitute; and at most his attitude towards her is just patronizing. He is ashamed of her presence in his residence and orders her to hide so that she is not seen by visitors. The Professor advises her not to develop expensive tastes, and just remain a simple poor girl, satisfied with the handouts he dishes out to her. He assertively rules out socializing with her in public, as this would shame him. Namuddu despite being poor is not happy with this.

Namuddu: (disgruntled) You may do whatever you wish. But you must also remember that I have likes and dislikes. Why should you tread on me as if I were dirt under your boots? Why would you spit at me as if I was a useless piece of nothing? I shall not be disregarded simply because I have not read as many books as you Mwalimu¹⁰.

After the black mamba (snake incident), where the professor was shamed in front of his guests, his demeanor towards Namuddu worsens. In fact he wants her to leave immediately, but Namuddu is reluctant having acquired expensive tastes. She is also aware that her mission of extorting money from the Professor is yet to be accomplished.

Namuddu: (page 54) Our stay together has created dreams and expectations in me. It has induced me to despise my past because it appears so empty and so meaningless. My heart longs for so many things now. What am I to do?

Professor: If you have taken such a little time to have a different set of values, it will take you even less to get used to your old ones.

¹⁰ Mwalimu. Swahili, Teacher. Respectful way of addressing someone in the teaching profession. Berewa advised his wife to address the Professor as Mwalimu so as to inflate his personal and professional ego; and as a tactic of enticing him.

Namuuddu: I was happy before I met you. I didn't have many needs as I do now. I thought living in a hovel was natural, wearing rags a necessity, toiling away in my garden a duty. Nor did I care about my hard bed, my poor meals and the carelessness of our men. How can I go back to those things?

Professor: The thing is you have to go Namuuddu. I just can't help it now. Everybody will come to see the white Professor's indiscriminate consorting with black prostitutes-and a married professor too. I can't be a show piece, its intolerable Namuuddu. It has done me a lot of damage already. My students, my staff, the whole world will lose confidence in me-merely because of your untimely popping into my sitting room. Think, think, what it will mean to me! Newspapers could easily pick it up and inflate it to God knows what degree. It will be in the headlines. No no! 'Professor's Prostitute!' incredible!

In a nutshell the behavior of the professor towards Namuuddu, though he mistakes her for a prostitute, speaks volumes about the attitudes of the rich towards the poor. They despise the poor whom they see as irritating, irrational, with nothing but only their poverty to whimper about. The Professor sums it up thus: "You and I are not the same. The lion and the goat are two different things, Namuuddu."

Analysis

In the literature reviewed poverty is portrayed mainly in terms of material privations, evidenced by inability to comfortably afford basic consumer commodities; lack of decent shelter; inadequate personal effects including bedding; and inability to access social services especially education, health and justice. The consequence of these privations on the individual, is ill-being and misery.

The privations in question are much evident among the characters in the reviewed literature. For instance Wamala and Isabirye's families are all experiencing severe hardships resulting from cash shortfalls. Though the two families are in different settings-urban and rural respectively, they share a commonality in the privations experienced that include poor housing, inadequate nutrition, lack of personal effects and inadequate social protection. Whereas the cases of Isabirye and Kasemiire's families portray typical rural poverty, Wamala's household typifies urban misery. Overall however, the effects of the duo-rural poverty and urban misery, are the same and are adverse to individual welfare. They constitute illbeing.

Evidence from the literature shows that poverty is not only entrenched in society, but has to some extent been internalized by some individuals as an omnipresent cancer in society-a cancer that has to be endured. Because this cancer is resented, this endurance often takes the form of attributing poverty to factors beyond individual control

such as the divine or the supernatural. Characters like Nabirye, Berewa and Abwooli (Kasemiire's mother) at one point attribute their extreme poverty and ill being either to God's providence or family curses.

Evidence from the reviewed literature further provides compelling evidence that whereas material privations per se create untold hardship and/or ill-being to the individual, it is the insidious aspects of this poverty such as feelings of shame, inadequacy, despair, inferiority, stigma, worthlessness and hopelessness that are more damaging to the poor. It can be argued that the latter are severely damaging because they directly impact on the psyche/mindset of the individual, reflecting his/her inability to attain the benchmark material and social/emotional aspirations. The analogy here is that it is easier for a poor person lacking a blanket to endure the physical effects of not having a blanket (the cold and discomfort of exposure at night) than the shame-internal or external, evoked by his/her incapability to afford (buy) a blanket which is a basic commodity. In this case the emotional pain evoked by poverty shame supersedes the physical suffering. The overall effect nonetheless is heightening the ill-being of the poor individual who has to endure both physical and psycho social pain.

What emerged prominently though is that the insidious effects of poverty especially shame are both difficult to endure and avoid. The latter is due to the diverse loci/arenas of shaming that the poor by virtue of being society members per se, cannot avoid. For our characters in the plays and novel the arenas of shaming include the home and the general public such as the school, bar, office, village well, LC courts, and a neighbours' premise among others.

Informed by evidence from the reviewed literature, it can be argued that the incidence and severity of shaming for a particular individual is determined to a large extent by the locus/arena where the shaming occurs. For instance in the case of Wamala, the protagonist of *The Burdens*, it is at his home that the feelings of shame, inadequacy and worthlessness are most sorely felt. This is because the home is the locus where inadequacies like inability to provide basics like decent accommodation, food and personal effects for his wife (Tinka) and the children (Kaija and Nyakake), especially for a household head, become vividly manifest. This coupled with the cynical, nagging disposition of Tinka render the home a no go, detested shaming arena for the poverty stricken Wamala.

In other public loci like the Republic bar, where Wamala takes refuge the effects of the shaming are subtle and less damaging, when he is with his fellow drunks. Here nobody cares whether he has a decent house or not or if his family is starving or well fed. His tattered attire is inconsequential at the Republic Bar. It is only when he ventures out to the offices of the Associated Matches Company that his tattered clothing and unsightly appearance become shaming; and the indignity of being thrown out of the premises by

securicor guards, is sorely felt. To avoid shaming and its damaging consequences, Wamala is left with no option but to avoid his home as much as possible-a strategy that has insulated him against home based poverty shaming for years.

For the protagonist of the novel-The First Daughter, poverty shame is most sorely felt when she relocates from her impoverished home to secondary school. For Kasemiire, the hardship at home is something she has internalized over the years; and the home its material privations notwithstanding is not a significant arena of shaming. It is at school that the stark material and social differences between her and the other 'richer' students become vividly manifest; and the school becomes a locus of shaming and emotional pain that she has to endure.

For the characters in the play-Wrinkled Faces (Nabirye, Babirye and Kaudha) who are compelled by abject poverty to rely on the mercy of neighbours for basics like salt or mortar for pounding groundnuts, the wider community (neighbours' premises) is the main arena of shaming. Their home irrespective of its privations is not a locus of shaming. At most the shaming that occurs there is of the internalized self shaming category; a type of shaming that can be felt anywhere.

When Isabirye is released from jail and returns home penniless, his home despite his prolonged absence becomes a virulent arena of shaming as he is unable to provide even a basic commodity like salt to the family. Like Wamala he adopts a coping strategy of avoiding home and seeking refuge and emotional solace at their neighbour's house. Isabirye's shaming infidelity is definitely linked to his abject poverty.

The characters in the Black Mamba (Berewa and his wife Namuddu) are portrayed as beyond shame' and the single setting of the play i.e. the Professor's residence cannot thus be described as an arena of shaming. The damaging shame that Namuddu initially felt is mostly internal and not evoked by her sojourn at the Professor's house.

Evidence from the literature shows that the sore feelings of poverty shame evoke different behavioral responses among the affected individuals. Whereas some accept/internalize it as their inevitable fate and strive to endure it stoically with feigned dignity (The Kyamanywe family-The First Daughter); others especially those who have prior been exposed to better life (Wamala, Berewa, Isabirye) deliberately refuse to internalize it and adopt diverse strategies to mitigate its adverse impacts. The strategies highlighted in the literature include among others shame denial, or hiding behind a façade of self respectability (Tinka); shamelessness/beyond shame (Berewa, Namuddu); and alcoholism (Wamala).

Whatever the coping strategy, what is much evident is that poverty shaming has disastrous psycho-social and emotional consequences for the poor. The negative self evaluation corrupts the psyche/mindset and cognitive abilities of the poor. The

characters in the play appear to think and act irrationally, yet their behavior is shaped and confined by the narrow context of their material privations and limited choices. This narrow scope for action appears to have the adverse effect of further entrenching the poor in the poverty and shame trap; a factor that does not augur well for both their material and psycho-social well being.

Evidence from the literature reviewed shows that children in poor families are highly prone to poverty shaming; and those feelings of negative self evaluation and low social worth start early in life (Kaija, Kasemiire, Babirye and Kaudha). This inevitably impacts negatively on the way they interface with their relatively better off peers.

The literature finally and on a positive note portrays poverty, and presumably its insidious evils, as transitions. For instance three of the families (Wamala, Isabirye and Berewa) were once wealthy, but due to different circumstances descended into poverty. The implication here is that the situation of poverty though painful and shaming is not permanent and can be reversed- though there is no evidence of this in the textual portrayals.

Conclusion

Evidence from both oral tradition and textual portrayals of poverty, suggests that poverty mostly in terms of material privations is not a recent phenomenon. It is a situation that characterized the life of early ethnic communities, and has persisted to date. Data from oral tradition however provides evidence that in the early, pre-colonial period, poverty was more or less universal in society. Individuals privileged with material wealth were few and negligible, and in such a context being poor was socially internalized, and did not necessarily evoke feelings of shame and/or stigma. Insights from the traditional proverbs attest to the above, suggesting that poverty shaming as it is experienced today, has evolved over time.

In apparent contradiction textual insights portray poverty and shaming as strongly linked. Shame is portrayed as an insidious evil of poverty; evil in the sense that it evokes feelings of inadequacy, despair, inferiority, indignity, stigma, worthlessness and hopelessness due to the inability of the impoverished individual to attain his/her material and social aspirations both at household and community level. This is in stark contrast to the early and pre-colonial society where, as shown by the traditional proverbs, poverty was an accepted way of life-a form of sub culture characterized by its unique language; the language of poverty.

Though evidence from literary texts shows that some of the individuals living in poverty are often compelled by limited choices and hopelessness to accept/internalize poverty,

it is clear that poverty shaming is widely resented as shown by the desperate coping strategies that the poor adopt to avoid it.

In a nutshell it is strongly argued here that poverty shaming and its insidious evils are a product of the social, economic and political transitions that have characterized the past twelve decades in the country. The introduction of the cash crop economy, formal education, commerce/trade and public service employment in the pre and post colonial periods has led to the creation of niches of both extremely poor and relatively rich individuals, as should be expected in a developing country.

Nonetheless the consequence of this is that a divide between the poor and rich has slowly but surely developed and widened, a phenomenon that has led to social stratification based on economic benchmarks. The enduring product of the above has been the creation and entrenchment of poverty shaming, as poor individuals realize that getting out of the poverty trap is an uphill struggle, and that they will never attain their material and social aspirations.

Though oral tradition makes casual reference to child poverty, often linking it to general suffering, hardship and orphanhood (ennaku), textual evidence has shown that children in poor families are highly prone to shaming; and that feelings of inadequacy; worthlessness, and inferiority develop early in life. Contrary to the home, the school is a prominent arena where poverty shaming and its sore feelings are sorely felt/experienced by children. There is evidence to suggest that poverty shaming has a negative impact on the mindset and psycho-social well being of children.

Finally and on a positive note however, both data sets suggest that poverty, its dire consequences notwithstanding, is a situation that is dynamic and transitional; given an enabling environment, resources, and opportunity and individual resilience. This unanimity between textual and oral tradition evidence should not be ignored by antipoverty stakeholders as it provides a starting point and window of opportunity to explore or identify the enabling environment, resources and opportunities that can be integrated in design of empowering and effective anti-poverty interventions in rural settings.

List of Plays and Novels Reviewed

1. The Burdens, a play by John Ruganda. Published in 1972 in Kenya by Oxford University Press, East Africa Ltd. ISBN 978019 5720280
2. The First Daughter by Goretti Kyomuhendo. Fountain Publishers Kampala, 1996. ISBN 99 7002119X
3. Wrinkled Faces, A Play by Connie Ssebunga Masembe. Fountain Publishers, Kampala, 2010. ISBN 978-9970-02-748-4
4. Black Mamba a Play by John Rugenda. East African Educational Publishers Ltd Nairobi, Kenya, 1973. ISBN 978-9966-46-378-X

List of Sources/Texts of Traditional Proverbs

5. Joseph Lule. The Hidden Wisdom of the Baganda. Amagezi g'Omuganda Amakusike. Humbolt and Hartman, Arlington, Virginia ISBN 0-9761306-0-2.
6. Nsimbi Bazzebulala Micheal (2004). Siwa Muto Lugero. Crown Books Ltd, Kampala.
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8. Tumusiime James R (2007): Entanda, y'Omugambi w'Orunyakore Rukiga. Fountain Publishers, Kampala. ISBN 978-9970-02-552-7