One can imagine that each proverb has a story behind it. Or can think of a proverb as a gem, a crystallized piece of human wisdom, purified and polished over generations. In Eritrean society there is a saying “mesilelu kimselelu” which translates as tell him a proverb so he can get good ideas to lead a virtuous life. Starting from this saying we can see the picture or glimpse of the society. A proverb has a reputation as influential in shaping the society in a hearty way. It is filled with words of wisdom.

What is a proverb? The Oxford English Dictionary defines it as "a short pithy saying in common and recognized use; a concise sentence, often metaphorical or alliterative in form, which is held to express some truth ascertained by experience or observation and familiar to all; an adage, a wise saw."

In the Tigrinya language, the timely citation of a proverb in conversation lends authority to the speaker. For example, a person trying to talk his or her friend out of a break up with a partner might say: Don't give and then take; don't love and then hate “hibka aytklæ? fetika aytxilæ.” Or someone trying to convince someone not to lie might say: A liar sweats twice as much as an honest person “hasawi klt gze yrhix”. Many proverbs originated as a moral of a folktale or song. For example, the famous proverb Don’t go into business without thinking “zeyhasb aynegd” is the moral of a folktale about a foolish man who sells his farm to go into business and ends up losing everything.

Some proverbs may not translate very well into our modern experience; they seem to be written for an older, feudal, sexist society. But some proverbs seem just as relevant as ever. Another issue with proverbs comes up in translation. The appeal of Tigrinya proverbs often comes from
the way they rhyme two contrasting images. The rhyme and rhythm of a Tigrinya proverb, however, can easily be lost in translation. But still it carries a powerful message behind it.

For this reason we will see some beautiful sayings in Tigrinya language which are mostly used by the community. These proverbs possess wise thoughts, and have excellent wisdom to put on the readers mind. And there are even many proverbs with similar meanings or which transfer the same message.

Like "Mistr hade tihti midri, mstr klite lieli mdri, mstr seleste zerie mdri" which translates as A mystery of one person remains a mystery, between two becomes shaky but a mystery between three people becomes a seed spread in a farm (public secret). Similarly, the proverb “ms kolia aytmkër; ms kelbi aytithabae”. This proverb advises you to keep your secret to yourself until you accomplish what you have planned to do above all your secret is your power. It also reveals the bad result of not choosing the right person to deal with and the negative effects of involving so many people in your life. It opines you should have fewer to confide it. It encourages you to have someone very special in your life that you should share your secret with so as not to be exposed.

Only with aim you reach your goal “megedi tiena amet kido”. This proverb has been used by our forefathers to show the young generation how to do the right thing. Overall it suggests to each and every person to have good decisions in every aspect of their life.

There are proverbs which have powerful messages to the society like “haki zereba mot kereba” Death is inevitable so regardless the consequences you should speak the truth. It has a strong message that speaking the truth is not easy but it is set you free, whether sooner or later everybody will die. This shows clearly the society has a strong belief in speaking the truth.

“Kab felat si zteame yihayish/ kab mhros aemro” translates as it is better to have wisdom better than a mind full of scholastic knowledge. It values good experience more than the sheer accumulation of academic knowledge you don’t know how to apply. It puts like whatever knowledge the person has mostly it is different on how you handle the issues practically that’s why the experienced or the naturally wise person is more successful.

If a lion shows you its teeth it doesn’t mean it likes you “anbesa endihir snu ar’eyuka si
zfeteweka keymesleka”. When a person smiles at you whenever and wherever don’t think he is good or he loves you. This proverb tells us to be careful and not trust everyone who seems goody goody with us. The enemy can hurt you while he seems a person who cares about you.

“Haki tezaribka ab megedi babur dekis” which translates as If you can tell the truth you should not be afraid to sleep on a rail-way. Our forefathers made this statement to show how speaking the truth makes you proud more than anything. Overall, speaking the truth is the most valuable thing to do even at times that are uncomfortable, which it literally metaphors as sleeping on the railway comfortably.

The shine is not so fine “melkena aberena”. This saying is used when a person wants to express that all things which seem to be good are not always good. On the other hand you cannot judge a book by its cover. Even if things seem so shiny and attractive on the outside they can be the opposite inside. Put another way it means things can look perfect when they have so many faults. So this reminds us to look at a thing carefully in all its dimensions.

A lot of proverbs do have vivid and strong meanings. They inspire and build a good society. They are the backbone of morality and have kept the Eritrean society intact for a long period of time.