

Chapter III–15: *How Girls Grow Up in the Villages*

Today we will talk about how girls grow up in the villages and the work they do. As I have told you that the sense of the villagers is different from that of the townspeople, it is because the villagers are following the old ways of living. It is in the towns that people have got bad sense, the sense to do bad to somebody. The town sense is: “What am I going to do to get money and spend it?” But the village sense is different. Everywhere in the villages, they have sense, and this sense is all coming because the villagers respect their parents and elders. And it is in the work that the village children do that they get their sense. And I think in my heart that even in your country it is like that, too. And so I will start this talk with the girls and the work they do in the villages in Dagbon here, and this talk is a bit long, and if we finish it, tomorrow I will talk on the part of the boys.

In the olden days, training was there, and inside its way, if a small girl is growing up, the first thing for the girl to do is that they will put pepper in the mortar and give this girl a pestle to pound it or grind it. After pounding the pepper, she will sweep the compound. Sometimes the girl will be finding it difficult to hold the broom, and they will be teaching her how to hold it. After sweeping the compound, she will be going to the riverside to fetch water, carry it on her head and bring it back home. When this girl is young, they will get a calabash which we call *ɲmankpabli* and which will not be too heavy for her, and she will be using it to carry the water to the house. From this *ɲmankpabli*, she goes to *chuyu*. This *chuyu* is also a calabash; it’s a whole one, and they make a hole in the middle of it and bring out all the inside and leave it hollow. And when this girl is from seven to eight or eight-and-a-half years, she can be carrying it.

And doing work, for a young girl, it has got times, and part of it is at the bush. The work at the bush is picking shea nuts, and I have told you something about it. When the time for picking shea nuts comes, the person this child is living with, if it is her mother who gave birth to her, or if the child is living with her aunt or her junior mother or her grandmother, the one looking after this child will wake her early in the morning, around four or five o’clock in the morning. When the village girls are at the age of seven or eight, these people looking after them will be waking them and grouping about fifteen or twenty of these young girls to find their way to the bush to pick the shea nuts. Everyone will be carrying her calabashes, a big one and a small one. A child with wide palms can get a basket and be carrying it. If their mothers or their aunts are following them, when they get to some points in the bush, they will stand and divide themselves by houses.

Each house will be going with its mothers and children. And when they get to the bush like that, they will disperse. As for picking the shea nuts, no one is going to show the other how to do it. Everybody will be going round the shea nut trees. And the children will be picking the shea nuts from the ground into their small calabashes and going to put them into their baskets or big calabashes.

Sometimes they will be picking these shea nuts, and the rain will fall and beat them at the bush. And some of these little girls will be shivering and shaking. Sometimes they will be tired and a heavy rain will beat them at the bush, and they will pour down the shea nuts and use the calabashes or the baskets to cover their heads from the rain. Unless this rain stops before they will come again and collect all the shea nuts into the baskets and calabashes. And they will carry the shea nuts to their various houses. When they get to the house, the next morning it is the same thing they will do. And inside it there is trouble for them, because when these young girls are going for the shea nuts, sometimes it is very dangerous to them. There are many snakes among the shea nuts, and these snakes can get them easily and bite them. Sometimes the biting of the snakes kills them. And so, that is why I told you that the village children are used to suffering. The child from the town cannot attempt to do even a single kind of their suffering.

When these girls go to the bush at four o'clock in the morning, sometimes they don't take any food. They just go like that. And so, when they come back home in the night, their mothers will put corn in a mortar and give them pestles so they will pound the corn and mix it with food in a pot. And when the girls go to the bush, whether their mothers or grandmothers are strong or not, they will make porridge and put it down before these children come back. Sometimes when these children get up at five o'clock in the morning and go to the bush, some will come home at seven, eight, nine, or even ten o'clock in the night. And when the children come, they will drink the porridge. After drinking, their hearts will be cool. Then their mothers will bring out guinea corn. We have something we call *neli*; it is a grinding stone. Their mothers will give them the guinea corn and ask them to grind it. By twelve o'clock or one o'clock, these girls have finished grinding all the guinea corn, and they will help their mothers make food and eat. And so, as they were tired when they came back from the bush, when they eat this food, their hearts will be cool, and the next day they will be going with happiness.

Let me separate this talk. As I have given you the example of going for the shea nuts, it's not that it has time. Any work that is not white man's work, there is no time inside it. It is only white man's work that they show that if you are working like this, then at this time you must close. But you go to the bush to find for yourself. And the distance you go is different. And so these girls don't have

wrist watches. Somebody may get up by five o'clock in the morning and go, and up to the evening time, she is still there because she will be getting plenty. And that is what she wanted. She won't say that she has fixed a time to be home. Somebody will go late and she won't get plenty, and she won't remain in the bush. If she is coming home early, maybe she has some other work to do in the house. And so it is not fixed down that they have a time that they should return home. That is how it is.

After these girls finish gathering the shea nuts, they have another work, and they still will be going far. These young girls will go deep inside the bush to get strong sticks for firewood, and they will carry them home to put in the kitchen to boil these shea nuts. Their mothers they are staying with, or their grandmothers or their aunts, they will be teaching these young girls how to boil the shea nuts so that when they also grow up and get married, they will also teach their children how to do it. Because everything needs showing. And so we Dagbamba say that if you don't ask your dog to catch something, it won't go and catch it; you must show it by saying "Go and do this," and it will do it. And I'm showing you the work of these young girls at the age of seven or eight, how their sense is and how they train them, and how it's different from us the people in the town. So when they get to know the boiling of the shea nuts, they will pour them from the cooking pot. And they will come and sweep outside, and sweep it very clean. And they will come out with the shea nuts and spread them. The shea nuts will be lying outside for about four or five days or more. Any time these children are free, they will come out and take their hands and be turning the nuts so that the sun will get all the nuts and dry them. They will be doing this until they come out and pick one nut and shake it so that the nut inside the shell will be shaking.

At that time these children will get a flat stone and start knocking the nut, *kpo! kpo! kpo!* Or they will get a flat stick of wood. And sometimes they use a flat stick we Dagbamba call *sampani*; that is what our women use to make the floor of a room. These young girls can use it to shell the nuts. After shelling the nuts, they will put them into baskets. And we Dagbamba weave a kind of big basket we call *kunkɔŋ* that can hold about twelve or fifteen medium baskets. It's not as big as *kunchuŋ*, the silo, and its mouth is wide. The one whose shea nuts are many can fill it up. Sometimes someone with about four children, their shea nuts can fill it. And someone's children can get more shea nuts so that they can fill about three big baskets. And as the children are more than one another, it is just from how that person trained these young girls how to pick them. Somebody who is able to fill a whole big basket will get a lot of money. So when the time of picking these shea nuts finishes, and they have boiled and stored the nuts in the

big baskets, everybody will know the amount of shea nuts she has got. And they will take the shea nuts and store them.

After that time, you will see that the time of picking groundnuts will come. When you have these young girls, and somebody is going to harvest groundnuts, you tell your children that so-and-so is going to harvest groundnuts and they should go. And the one who has the groundnuts will gather these young girls on his farm, sometimes about forty of them, or sometimes fifty or twenty. Sometimes he will be lucky: these girls will spend that one day to pick all the groundnuts. If not that, they can pick somebody's groundnuts for two days or three days. The farmer will share some of the groundnuts to them, and when these girls get their groundnuts, they will take them to their parents. Before the time of these groundnuts will finish, sometimes a girl will get a full bag of unshelled groundnuts. Sometimes a girl will get three bags. And these girls are only going to give all these bags to those who are looking after them.

When they go to pick the groundnuts, everybody has her big and small calabashes, and they will be going round and picking the groundnuts and putting them in the big calabashes and dumping them under a shady tree. When one has been able to pick and fill a big calabash, she will pour it down and then start again. How these calabashes are, it is the small calabash that shows the work, and the small calabash is half of the big calabash. And there are different ways, and it comes from the owner of the groundnuts. If the owner of the groundnuts shows you that you should harvest with the small calabash, you will come and pour it into the big calabash. And you will fill the big calabash and go and fill the small calabash again. At that time you have got the big calabash and the small calabash, that is one and a half times the big calabash. Then you will take the big calabash to the owner of the groundnuts and take the small calabash for yourself. Sometimes the owner of the groundnuts will show that you should fill the big calabash two times before he will come and measure your part with the small calabash. And again, sometimes you will fill two big calabashes and one small one, and take one big and one small calabash — that is, one and a half — and give it to the owner of the groundnuts. And someone will say that you should pick groundnuts and fill one big calabash before you go and pick a small calabash for yourself. And so as you have harvested, you have taken some. Some people harvest like that. And the girl who is not able to pick the groundnuts up to a full calabash, the owner of the groundnuts will come and use the small calabash to measure and divide her groundnuts into two parts, and he will take one part and tell her to take the rest. And so the owner of the groundnuts will be doing this, going around all the girls and dividing their groundnuts.

And truly, I can say that all of this measuring is useless, because it is inside farming that the villagers cheat one another. On the part of their living together, they don't have cheating, and they don't cheat one another apart from the way of their farming. Their way of farming is different from their way of living. How do they cheat? You yourself can look and see that they have different ways of giving to the girls who come to pick the groundnuts. As these girls go to pick the groundnuts, they don't go together. Someone will go early, and someone will go late. Sometimes a girl will go to the farm, and somebody has already filled a big calabash and poured it down and has taken the calabash to go again. If she is able to fill it again, they will divide it. But if you are only able to fill a full calabash, and the time is late, that big calabash is for the owner of the groundnuts, and sometimes he will tell you that you should take the small calabash and pick your groundnuts. And by that time, the sun is going down. If you are not able to fill the small calabash, have you not fallen? And it is cheating. Or if the owner of the groundnut shows that you should pick a big calabash and a small calabash before you will go and pick a small calabash for yourself, if you didn't come early and you only pick one big calabash and are not able to pick a small calabash, sometimes the owner of the groundnuts will take the big calabash and only tell you, "Tomorrow you should come early and pick, and if you finish you should take one big calabash." The next day, if you go early, you will pick the small calabash for him before you pick your calabash. And if you are not able to fill it, you have fallen. And so has he not cheated her?

And so on the part of farming, villagers don't fear cheating. If one doesn't cheat the other, then the other will be cheating, because all of them cheat one another. These girls, too, as for them, they have come for the cheating. They will steal some of the groundnuts and hide. How do they steal? These girls don't sit at one place. If they are forty, they will not be together. And if it is that someone has farmed groundnuts plenty, maybe the girls will be more than a hundred. They will separate, and some will be here, and some will be there, and some will be over there. As the owner of the groundnuts is going around to watch them, before he reaches one place, they will pour some of the groundnuts somewhere and hide them. This is what they do. They will be picking the groundnuts and hiding some. After the owner of the groundnuts gives them their share, they will go back and collect the ones they have hidden to add to what they have got. And as they are all cheating one another, they don't quarrel. The farmer will only say to himself, "These people want to cheat." But if he wants to say it to them, they will also count the ways he is cheating them. And so nobody farms and fears cheating.

And truly, it's not groundnuts alone. Every farmer is like there like that, the rice farmer, the millet farmer, the corn farmer. Some people will pick corn and leave some inside the bush. You will go home, and they will say that they are going to remove the corn that has not grown well, and they will add good ones they have hidden and take home. If not that, they will pick the corn and put it under a tree, and they will remove the skins, and they will be hiding some of the corn in the corn skins, and the next day they will come and remove the skins and take the corn. And so that is how all farmers are, and this is why people say that of all the people who are doing work, it is the farmer who has the most blessings. Others profit from him; animals profit from him; even birds come and profit from him. And so a farmer has got more blessings than anyone. That is how it is, and it is not any talk. As I have told you that our Dagbamba farmers don't do group farming because they don't like cheating, the group farming way is different from this way. As the farmer and these girls are cheating one another, they are all getting their profit. That is why I told you that the day you show that someone is cheating you is the day you will no longer benefit from that person. As you are sitting here with us, if you know that we are cheating you, and you don't agree, you won't get what you want from us. And if we know that you are cheating us, and we say that we won't agree, we also won't get. And so the farmers and these girls and women who are picking the crops, they know that there is cheating, and they will all be working and doing. That is how it is.

And as these girls are going to pick shea nuts and groundnuts, what they are getting, their mothers will be selling it and getting money to buy cloth to sew a dress for them. In the villages, when these girls are young and not up to the age of marrying, they don't wear dresses; they only wear *mukuru*, the woven cloth skirt. Sometimes a girl will stay with her aunt and work hard for her aunt, say about four years or five years of hard working. And all that this girl will get, the aunt will be getting money and putting it down. If the girl needs anything, the aunt will use that money to buy it for her. And so during that time, the aunt will be eating some and this girl will be eating some. And if the money is not much, the aunt will add her own money to buy all the things that this child needs.

And these young girls who are not up to the age of marrying, what they like best is going to what we call *chuyu daa*, the festival market. I have told you something about it. This festival market, how it comes, if they finish the Praying Festival or the Chimsi Festival, they will be having the festival market until the month dies. When the month dies, they won't have the festival market until the next month in which they will be celebrating a festival. And the only thing these young village girls think about is the time their parents will sew a cloth for them

so they will go and enjoy the sweetness of the festival market day. And the cloths and the scarves which their mothers or their aunts are buying or sewing for them, that is what these young girls are going to wear to the festival market.

If the festival market day comes, their white heart is just like the white moon. On that day, they don't carry anything on their heads to the market except the dress they will put on. You will see small children, maybe twelve of them, and they will put their dresses into a scarf, tie the scarf and let a small child among them carry it. On that day, they will bathe more than ten times. And they will get cream and put it on their bodies. And they will get *chilo* and put it to line their eyes. And they will get powder, put it on their necks and spread it on their faces. The *mukuru* skirts they have, they will wash them neatly and put them on; that is what they will put on to walk from their villages and come to the market.

When they are coming near the market, just a short distance from the market, they will put their dresses down and let the small children sit down and be looking at their things. No one will take anything. They will come and go around the market and have a look at how their friends from different villages have come to spend the festival market day. They will be going around for some few minutes, and then by that time, you will see the market full of people. Everybody has come from his town to the market, and no one is on the way coming to the market again. And by that time all these young girls who have come from their villages will go back to their village roads to the place where they kept their dresses and start to put their new dresses on. Sometimes when they are coming, some of them will carry gourds of water, because sometimes when they come on the road and go around the market, their legs will be very dirty from the dust, and their faces and bodies will be sweating. And so, after going around the market, these girls will come and sit down and wash their legs and faces. And they will get a little cream and smear it on their faces again. And they will get their powder again and put it on. Sometimes if one of these girls' mothers has the means, she will buy a necklace for the girl. The girl who has suffered a lot for her mother, she is the one who will get a necklace, and get earrings too. And she will put this on for the festival market day.

By that time they will all get ready. And there is one who is their leader. Their leader is not anybody apart from the one whose eyes are open. Sometimes the older ones' eyes will not be open, and they will give it to a little one. And the eye-opening is not from anywhere apart from the one who is able to speak well. She will be the one they will give the respect and the leadership, and she will lead them to enter the market. When they get inside, their way is just to be going around the market. No one leaves the other; they will all walk together. And if

this town's girls pass, that town's girls are going to follow them, and they will ask, "Which town's girls are these?" If they see that some girls' dresses are very new and very nice, they will ask the village they come from. And all this, it is that they are showing themselves, and inside it, that is where they meet and befriend the young village boys.

On the market day, these village boys will follow the village girls to the market and start to befriend them there. I want to show you and you will know, because when somebody talks a talk, it is good if he separates it. Let's say that it is Tolon market, because the Tolon-Naa has a lot of people, and there are many people who go to the Tolon market. When the village boys get to the market, if they see different villages' girls who look nice or beautiful, they will get their own village's girls and ask. When they are going around the market, it is there that they see them and ask. And you know, every village girl knows the village girls of another town. And the boys will ask their village's girls, "Which town's girls are these?" And they will say, "Oh, those are Kasuliyili girls." And they will ask, "Which town's girls are these?" And they will say, "They are Voggo girls." And they will ask, "Which town's girls are these?" And they will say, "They are the young girls of Yogu." They will say "Which town's girls are these?" "They are Chirifuyili girls." And they will ask, "Ah! Which town's girls are nice like that?" And they will say, "Oh, don't you know Tali? Those are Tali girls." And they will ask, "Oi! Which town's girls are dressed nicely like that?" And they will say, "Those are Jerigu girls." And they will ask, "Eh! As for those girls, their eyes are opened. Which town's girls are those?" And they will say "Wariboggo girls." And a young boy will see a young girl there and say, "I will try to befriend her." That is how the boys will be asking about the girls before they come to befriend one another at the festival market.

As these boys and girls are going around, they will ask for the names of one another, and they will see one another before they get to know one another. It is the eyes they take and look at one another. You know, in some places, it is only the eyes that will talk talks. They will be looking at one another and talking with the eyes. That is what they will do on the first festival market day. If a boy sees a girl he likes, he will go to his own town's girl. When the village girls come and they meet their village's boys, a boy can ask, "Miriamama, which town's girls are these?" And the girl will say, "Oh-h, they are Tali girls." And the boy will ask again, "Do you know them?" And she will say, "Yes, I know them. They are my friends." And at that time he can ask to know the name of the girl he likes. And you will hear the village girl ask him, "Are you looking for her?" And he will say, "Yes. I like her." If she is walking, she will tell the other girl, "When we were

with our village boys, they were asking about you.” And the girl will say, “Is that so?” And she will tell the girl everything the boy told her. This is how it comes. The first festival market day they enter, that is the day they will start. And it is on the next festival market day coming that the boy will befriend the girl.

What is the befriending like in our Dagbon? The boy will buy porridge water, and he will get red cola and white cola and will put it in the water. If a boy wants to befriend a girl, even if the girl also likes him, he won't go to her himself to give her these things. As they have been asking about one another, they know of each other, but the boy cannot go by himself to befriend her. He will get his own town's girl to send the water to the one he likes and say, “Such-and-such a person says I should bring this water and give to you.” That is how it is. It's not the boy who will go himself. His village girl will get somebody to accompany her, and they will go to where that town's girls are sitting and give the water to them, and the leader or the elder of those girls will ask, “Because of whom are you giving us this water?” And if the one they are looking for is called Sanaatu, they will say, “It is because of Sanaatu we are giving you water.” Or if it is Miriama or Fati, they will say, “It is because of her we are giving you the water.” And these girls will ask, “Who is giving the water?” And the one who gives the water will say, “It is Adam from this town. He is giving the water.” And these girls will say, “As for that, it is good.” And at that place, that is where they will start their friendship. And the girls from the boy's village will go back and get the boy, and he will also get his friend to accompany him, and they will go and greet. And they can be meeting each other at the market.

This girl, the one the boy loves, when she gets home, within a month she will get her girlfriend and ask her to accompany her to greet her boyfriend. The day they go and greet her friend, that is the day he will take her to show to his senior brother or senior father. When they go, he will tell his brother, “This is the one who is at Voggo, and she is my friend. She has come to visit me, and I am bringing her to you.” And by that time, you will see the hard work this man will do to give out something to greet the girl. Sometimes he will call about two of his fellow friends, and they will add to him and greet her. If these girls will be sitting with them up to evening, maybe the boys won't be able to kill a chicken for them, but they will go out and get meat from the butchers, and let their people cook food. And they will give their friends and they will eat. When the girls are going home, the boy will get some small money and give it to the sister of his friend. And she will collect it and they will say good-bye to each other. And so, these young girls in the villages, this is how they are when they are, say, from nine years or nine-and-a-half years old and going, and this is how the young boys look for them. That is how it is.

And there are girls, if they reach about ten years and they have their boyfriends, when the mouth-tying moon comes and stands, when they want they can fast for their boyfriends. And every village girl knows that. How do they fast? A village girl can get small money from her aunt or her mother and be cooking rice and be giving it to a friend to send to the boy's house until the moon dies. Another girl will be sending porridge until the moon dies. Another one will be sending *sayim* until the moon dies. And another one will peel yams and make *ampashe* and send it until the moon dies. As they give this food, when the moon dies, their boyfriends will also sit and talk. And when they meet, one will say, "This girl has done a lot of cooking for me. And she has spent a lot of money. What are we going to do for her?" In the olden days, the money was not like today; if these boys are farming they can sell some of their things and they could get about three pounds and give it to the girl who has sent the bowls that she should give it to the girlfriend's mother or grandmother or aunt. And they will say she should collect the money and buy a cloth for the girl. Someone can do this for his girlfriend and the girlfriend has already got a husband; but before she goes to the husband's house, her having a husband does not prevent somebody from befriending her. And if the mother or the aunt collects this money, she will take it and buy a cloth for this child. And so the village children, when they are growing up and they are still young, this is what they do.

And all this is learning. How they cook for each other and buy cloth, as they have done that, if the boy come to have a wife, will he be tired? If the girl has a husband, will it worry her on the part of cooking? It is just like that. In the whole of Dagbon, it was there, but now it is not there as much. It is not anything that made them stop it: it is money. Money hasn't got strength again. In the olden days, someone could have three pounds, and he will search for a woman and they will bring her to his house, and he will not spend up to three pounds. Money had strength then, but now it hasn't got strength. The food is too expensive. Formerly, a girl was going to be cooking for you until the Ramadan moon would die. There was meat, and one day she would cook *sakoro* and bring it, and the next day she would make yam slices, and the next day she would bring rice. In the olden days, the rice was not plenty, but it was cheap. Now it is there, but it is not cheap. And today as we are sitting, if a girl cooks like this and comes every day, and you think about how you are going to pay her back, the money will make you afraid. And so nowadays they don't fast with one another again in the mouth-tying month. What they have taken now if the fasting comes, if a girl wants to tie her boyfriend's mouth, she will get about two bowls of rice, and one bottle of groundnut oil, and about four onions, and get two guinea fowls and add, and she

will send her friend and say that she should go and give to so-and-so to get and tie his mouth. And when the month dies, that boy will also know what he will be able to do for her. This is how it has come now. In every talk, they have removed some of it.

As these boys and girls befriend one another like that, that is how we start, and if God likes somebody, it can come to stand that they will marry. It doesn't show that. But you know, all people are not one. If a girl has already been given to a husband when she was young and was staying in her father's house, sometimes they will take her to the husband's house, and because of her boyfriend, she will refuse the husband. If God likes the boyfriend, the girl will come to be his wife. And as some men are jealous, if they have given her to such a man, if you have befriended her and she refuses the husband, you cannot marry her. If you marry her, then you are not there again, because the man knows that it is because of you that the girl has refused him. He will not leave you. And so it sometimes happens like that, and it sometimes happens that the boys come to marry the girls. But the friendship doesn't show that the boys are trying to take the girls from their husbands. If they befriend one another, it doesn't matter. The husband will not quarrel over it. If they haven't sent the girl to her husband's house, and the boyfriend tries to take her, in the olden days, they would catch him and sell him at the chief's house. All the expenses the husband made, the boy would pay them, and when he finished paying, the chief would add his own charge, and so it was a double charge. If the boy didn't have, they would sell him. That was how it was. And so if you didn't have, would you take the girl? And so this friendship, it doesn't show that the boy is looking to marry the girl. It is all learning. And so this is how the young village girls, at the age of eight or nine and up, they have their boyfriends and they go to visit their boyfriends, because as you know, when a girl is about seven or eight years, she wants to become a woman. By the time they are nine or ten, you will see their breasts coming out small-small, and whatever happens, whenever you see a young girl's breasts coming out, young boys will be looking at her.

Even when they were still very small, they had their small boyfriends and they were playing together. When they were four or five years old, these small children will share each other; one will say, "This is my wife," and another will say, "This is my husband." And where these small children play, they play at places that are away from other places. Where the village children play is inside corn fields or at the dust heaps where we throw away rubbish. And as they play, they have sex with one another, and it is there they learn. The boys learn about the girls and the girls learn about the boys. And every child does that, and I think that

even your white children do that at your place. We call it *tankpɔ' luɣsa*, that is, they sit in the sand, moving dust.

And so children, when they are small, that is their work, because a girl will not be anywhere and a boy will not also be there. And as they are still small, the boy's penis is still small, and the girl's vagina is just a small hole. And the boys don't have water. And so they are just brushing against each other. As the boy's penis is small and there is no water in it, if it enters the girl's vagina, it won't reach, and it can't do anything. And when they are about seven or eight years, they don't do that again. If they reach about eight years and a boy does that to a girl, it means he has spoiled the girl. There is some skin like rubber there, and as she is not yet a woman and someone forces to enter her, the thing will break or be cut, and it will make her have a sore. And when the girl is spoiled and they are going to treat her, if they don't take her to the hospital, then the elders have to stand up. In the olden days, before we came to have hospitals, we had such elders. When a child is spoiled, they close the child in a room, and they get a rag and put fire. When the rag is burning, they will let the smoke enter the girl. When the smoke is entering the girl, it kills the sore, and the blood will not come out again. So when somebody is not up to a woman and someone spoils her, they burn a rag and let smoke enter the sore, because if someone spoils a child and they don't treat her, it can happen that the girl will not give birth to a child. And so in Dagbon here, when they spoil a child, it's a big talk. And it will go to the chief's house, and in the olden days they would charge a lot of money, because they would say that this boy wants to remove life.

This *tankpɔ' luɣsa*, it's not that it's a custom. Nobody shows them: it's a bad boy who follows the footsteps of another bad boy. Truly, I don't know about your place, but I think that every person knows it. If a small boy and a small girl meet anywhere, they do it. Even if they are from the same house, they do it. It's there today and tomorrow, because an old talk does not finish, and if it finishes, someone will come to do it again. As we are sitting now, sometimes you will see these small boys and small girls hide behind doors. And you will call the small boy, and his penis is erect, and he won't want to come. When you see that, you will know what they were doing. And you will know that you were also doing it. And when they reach about seven years, they stop.

And so, these young girls, that is how they play when they are children. And as they will be growing up from six, seven, eight and nine years and up, they will be working with their aunts and mothers, and they will be sitting with their mothers and aunts and grandmothers in the compounds. As I told you, these mothers will be showing the young girls how a woman works in a house, how they

will marry a man and how they should live nicely with the man. And their elders will be teaching them how to live with their husbands if they should grow up and marry. How do they show them? If a young girl is staying with her aunt, the aunt will be teaching this girl, “If you get a husband and you go to meet the husband’s wife, you have to be giving respect to the wife just as you give respect to me your aunt. And if you go to meet the mother of your husband, you have to be respecting her the same way you respect me. And the father of your husband, you have to fear him. And you will be giving respect to the brothers of your husband.” This is how the aunt or the mother will be talking to the girl.

The mothers will teach this girl that if she gets a husband and she goes to the husband’s house, if any of her husband’s clothes gets dirty, she should wash it. And even she should wash the clothes of the husband’s mother. And she will teach the girl that she shouldn’t do any bad to the husband’s parents. Whatever food the husband is going to eat, that is the same thing the husband’s father and mother will eat. If the husband gives her money for food and the money is not enough, she shouldn’t talk aloud so that people will hear it, because it is the woman who covers the secrets of the man. Sometimes a man will bring a wife and he will not have money, and no one will know that he does not have. And again, the mother or aunt will teach this girl that if a stranger should come to visit the husband and the husband is not there, this is how she will receive the stranger until the husband returns home. It is because of strangers that somebody has a wife, and that is why the girl will go to the husband’s house. And again, she should sit at the husband’s house and shouldn’t be talking too much. A woman who has a lot of mouth, who can talk much, when she gives birth to children, the children will be useless to the father and the mother. And if she respects the husband, she will give birth to good, good children. And if the husband should speak to her once, she shouldn’t speak twice to the husband. And again, if she’s at the husband’s house, she shouldn’t be going around borrowing things from others, because that will disgrace a young girl to the husband. And she shouldn’t be walking too much from the husband’s house. And those wives in front of her whom she will be meeting at the husband’s house, she shouldn’t say that they are her enemies. And she shouldn’t be annoyed if her husband goes outside to get another wife to add to her.

As for women, they don’t sit with these girls to show them all this. They show these girls when they are going on the way to fetch water, or when they are going to the bush to fetch firewood, or when they are going to the farm. And it is not the mother or grandmother who will show a girl. A woman doesn’t show her daughter or granddaughter many talks; it is a different woman who will show the

child. Another woman will be going to fetch water, and a girl's mother will say, "Get up and follow this woman and go for water." As this child is following the woman, all the talks that woman is talking to her, the child will be catching them. If that woman is talking to another child, this girl will be hearing it. And if the women are grouped and they are going to someplace together, and they are talking their talks, the children who follow them will hear. This is how the women teach their daughters.

Truly, a woman hasn't got time to sit the way a man will sit. If you see that a woman has sat down and it has reached three hours, if it is not that they have tied her and put her down, then it is that she has got some sickness. A woman will not sit down like that because she will find some work for herself. And if a person doesn't sit at one place, can that person talk talks to somebody and it will hold? And so on the way to the farm, on the way to the river, and on the way to fetch firewood, it is inside it that the young girls catch the talks of the women.

Even in the compound, a woman will not sit down. If a woman is cooking, her daughter is pounding the vegetables for the soup. If not that, the daughter is grinding the food. Women do not gather in the compound. Even if a woman has cowives, you won't see all of them grouping and sitting at the cooking place. It is not that it is forbidden. Whatever happens, the other woman will have some work. If you come to see women group together and sit down, it is that they have come together to eat. If not that, when they are cooking, they can't sit and talk to one another. One of them is going to make the *sayim*, and another will come to fetch the flour and put it inside the pot for the other to be stirring. If she finishes, another one will be collecting the bowls and bringing them. When that woman brings the bowls, she will be giving them to the woman who has prepared the *sayim*, and she will fill it and put it down. Another woman will take the bowl and put soup on top of the *sayim*. And they will put the bowls aside. As they are coming together like that, can they talk to one another?

But as for their coming together to eat, if they finish eating, they will sit for about thirty minutes, and the children will also sit beside them. They will talk, and the children will hear a little. And when the children have heard a few talks, they will get up and go outside because they also have their games, and they will go and play. And so a boy will hear more talks than a girl, because a man will sit and talk old talks. But a girl will only hear talks one by one, on the way to the river, to the farm, or to the bush. This is how it is. A woman's teaching is on the part of work, not on the part of old talks. And it's not because of anything. Women don't sit down to talk about all these things. How a woman is, she doesn't sit down. If she sits down for a minute, she will get up and find some work for herself. Even if

you are lying with a woman in the room, and it is night, if rain is falling, the woman will get up and go out inside the rain to collect the rainwater.

Our old Dagbamba say that a small goat looks at its mother's mouth and eats. How the mother goat eats, that is how the small goat is also going to eat. If the mother is not eating, will the small goat eat? That is how these girls are. If the mother sits down at one place, the child will also do that. But the mother does not sit down. And you can look at this and know that the village child is different from the town child. If it is the town, whether a child is a boy or a girl, before day breaks, the mother or the father is in the market selling. Will the child hear any talk about what is proper? As for a village girl, if the mother is going for firewood, she will go, and if the mother is going for water, she will go. And a village boy, when he just gets up, he knows that his father is farming, and he will follow his father to the farm. But in the town, we are sitting down. I am taking care of my water: I buy. I am for my firewood-going: it is my money they take to buy firewood at the market. As it is, if my wife gives birth to a daughter and the girl goes to her husband's house, she is going to stand that her husband should give her money and she will buy. That is why I say that a small goat looks at its mother's mouth and also eats. This is how it is.

All this is the work of these young girls in the villages. And how their mothers and their aunts will be teaching every young girl up to the time she will be married, when she gets to her husband's house, these is nothing she won't know. She will know everything about the household. If it is sweeping the compound, she knows it; pounding the soup, she knows it; cooking of porridge, she knows it; and the cooking of the food, *sayim*, she knows it. And if there are shea nuts growing near the town where they marry her, when the shea nut season comes, she knows it, and she can go and be picking. And if it is groundnuts, she can also go, because picking groundnuts is not only for young girls; any woman who is able to get to the farm can pick the groundnuts. And you know, already she knows everything about housework. If she goes to meet the mother of the husband, then her aunt or her mother has already told her how to respect her. If it is the father of the household, the aunt has also told her. If she goes and meets the other women in the husband's house, the aunt has already told her, and she knows how to move or stay with them.

And so in the villages, how they train their young girls is different from how we the people in the town train our young girls. And it's not our fault. Today, if you are in the town and you give birth to a child and your child is a girl, there are no shea nuts in the town for your girl to go and pick them. As for the compound, it is a must for her to be sweeping, but maybe when it's daybreak, the mother will

go to market and not sweep the compound, so how is she going to teach this young girl to sweep the compound? If you want ground pepper, you can just go to the market and buy it instead of pounding it. If it is porridge, in the village they don't sell porridge, but everywhere in town they cook porridge and sell it on the roadside. And so here is the case: the town is spoiled. There are no examples of work for this young girl. And if somebody doesn't do work, how will she know it? How will you tell a young girl to pound pepper? They have finished its work already, so how will she get to know it? Here in town, there are grinding machines. If a woman wants to grind guinea corn, she will take it to the people with the grinding machine, and they will grind it for her. The child will not go. And so this child doesn't know how to kneel down and grind on the *neli*, the grinding stone. She doesn't even know what a grinding stone is. We the old people know of the grinding stone, but if you get a girl in town and ask her if she knows how to grind on a grinding stone, she will not be able to answer your question. She has not even seen it, and as she has not seen it, how can she know it? And how can you force your young girl to do all this work when others have already done it? But all these works are the work of the young girls in the villages, and that alone makes the life of the young village girls different from the life of the young girls in the towns.

All this is the training these young girls get from their mothers or aunts. And this training is from the beginning of their childhood, because if a fish is dried and you want to bend it, it will break. And so the time these girls are children is when they will train them how to live with their husbands. In Dagbon here, the woman who trains girls well will always be getting children from her brothers. She will get girls now and start looking after them. By the time these girls grow up and people marry them, she will get other children again, simply because people will make good witness about her taking care of children. If a girl goes to the husband's house and does well, it is from the one who trained her. If you are a woman and you have trained her to be good, they will say good about you the mother or the aunt. And that is why women like to show their children the good way.

And so if a girl should come to a house and we know they have taught her like that, if she is not respecting or she is not doing what her aunt or her mother was teaching her, we say, "They taught her, but it is that she refused." And it's not from anywhere. Sometimes you can talk some talk to somebody, and he will refuse and not follow it. As for that, you have told the fellow, and he has refused. Where it is "they taught her but she refused," that one is different. If God has not made somebody, and you say you are going to make the person, it won't stand.

And it's not all of them, but sometimes too these women are bad. Sometimes a girl will be staying with the aunt, and every day the aunt will make her carry heavy, heavy loads. The aunt will only want this girl to go round and sell things and bring money so that she the aunt will eat. And some of the women hold their girls like that, and whether the girls eat or not, these women don't mind. Whether or not the child has got dresses to wear, the woman doesn't mind. And these women who don't let the children do small work in the house but rather make them do heavy work to get money, these same women don't want to spend money on the girls if it is time for them to get married. They only beat them or refuse them and drive them away from the house, and most of these girls run from other towns to this town, and such girls are many in Tamale here. And these women who hate the children and make them do hard work and don't give them food to eat, people will start complaining about them outside. And if such a woman trains a child, and if someone marries the girl and she is not behaving well at the husband's house, they won't abuse the girl. They will rather abuse the mother or the aunt, because she is the one who trained the child in that way. And that one too is different from "they taught her but she refused."

And so if you know that you will take your child and give to your relative and that person won't hold the child well, you won't give. I have already told you that the sharing of children comes from the giving birth of children, and the sharing of children is what your heart wants. It is not a debt. If you know that you can give your child even to your friend and your friend will hold the child well, you can give your child to your friend. This is how we give our children. It's not that we say, "I have got a relative here, and so I am going to give my child to him." If someone sees that his sister is very bad and trains children in that way, he will never allow his daughter to be given to his sister. But as some people take it that God makes a child, it can even happen in Dagbon here that your sister has not given birth, and you look and see that your sister's character is not good, but you will sit down and get a child and give to her. If God has made the child stronger than your sister, then that is all.

Truly, our old Dagbamba say that it is because of suffering that a child will not grow fast. And so most of the women don't want their girls to be suffering too much. If such good women are doing some very hard work, they will protect these children from doing it. And so the women who don't let their girls do heavy work, they are good. If you are a woman, you will train your daughter in a good way, because you don't want her to marry and they will come to abuse the child.

When I say that suffering makes a child not to grow fast, it all comes from the body of the child. As I have told you that the villagers train their children with

suffering, they are two talks, and if I don't separate them, it will look as if I told a lie. There will be somebody who is eating suffering and growing fast, and somebody will eat suffering and not grow fast. This is how it is. Suffering does not kill a person, unless somebody whose life is already short. And so suffering doesn't kill a person. As the old people say that you should train a child with suffering, it's not a lie; and again, there is someone who will suffer and will not grow fast. If you take it like that and talk to anybody, he won't see any fault.

And I can say the girls suffer more than the boys, because a village girl has no rest. In some villages, where they go to fetch water is very far. Whatever happens, maybe the aunt or the mother will only go and fetch water once and let the girl go and fetch three times. Is the child not suffering? And can she refuse to go and fetch water? Will this girl be tired or not? Maybe the bush where she is going to cut firewood is very far. Can this girl refuse to go because the place is far? Whatever happens, the aunt will not go to fetch firewood unless this girl has not yet got sense, and if the girl grows up to the age of seven or eight years, the woman will not go for firewood again. Whether this girl is her child, or her sister's child, her senior brother's child, her junior brother's child, the woman will not go again. This girl will go and fetch water and carry it home and then go again and get firewood. If going for groundnuts is there, she will also go. If going for shea nuts is there, she will go. All this, the village girls do its work, and if you look at it, you will know that the village girls suffer more than the boys. As for a boy, his work is just one work: he is going to the farm. Even if he goes to the farm to do many works, he is just in the farm. That is how it is.

And so if they give birth to a girl and she grows up to be at the age of marriage, it is coming from how her body is. When this girl passes menstruation, then she is ready to be married. Sometimes a girl is fourteen years and she is matured. Another girl can be thirteen. And I've also seen girls who are sixteen or even older and they are not matured. And you see, these girls, as they are growing, their bodies are not equal. That is why some Dagbamba say it is because of suffering that a girl cannot grow fast, and they don't want their girls to suffer. And I think you people may also have it at your place. And here too, we have some families and their children just grow fast. But usually it is in the fourteenth year that the girls are mature and they marry. My son Yakubu is about twenty years now, and the one who follows him is a girl, and she was married at the age of fourteen years, and she has now given birth to a child. And we Muslims, we do that, because it is said in Islam that if you give birth to a girl and she reaches the fourteenth year, then she should be married. But it also comes up to sixteen and seventeen and even twenty. Because if a girl is not matured, how can she marry?

And apart from that, sometimes a girl can be twenty years old but there is no man looking for her. And if there is no man looking for her, can she marry? Before she can get the chance to be married, maybe she can even reach twenty years or twenty-one and so on. But as I said, usually they marry at fourteen years, and some of them don't even reach that and they are married. And so there is nothing apart from the talks I have shown, because everybody has what God has given to him or her. Even in our Dagbon, or this our world, I have seen them give birth to a girl and give birth to her sister, and the one who followed will go to her husband's house and give birth before they will marry her senior sister. My wife Fati, the one who cooks rice to sell, her junior sister did that, and they had one father and one mother. And so it's not any fault. It's from God's gift. The senior sister was matured, but nobody came to search for her. And the younger sister was not yet matured and they came to search for her. Have you seen how it has come? This is how it is. Everybody has his luck.

The young girls who get up and they are matured, and they don't have husbands yet, they don't have any fault. Such a girl, her not having a husband can come from her father who has not taken her to give to a man. She has no fault because she is following her father's mouth. If her father has not given her to a man, how will she have a fault? There can be a girl, when she reaches twelve years or thirteen years, she is matured, but there is no one chasing her, and her father has not been able to choose a husband for her. If this girl is a good girl, maybe she will be waiting for her father to choose a husband for her, but they have not given her to anyone. There will be another girl, and the father and mother will be looking at her to go and choose her own husband. And if it is that, it is also not a fault. If you are going to choose a man, and you don't cool yourself, you will choose a man and it won't be daybreak and you and the man will leave one another. A girl can grow up in her house and mature until she becomes cool, and as she is still sitting in the house, she also shows she has no fault. As her father has given birth to her and she is matured, as for that, they can give her to a man. And so it can happen that a girl is sitting, and no one has come to look for her, and no one wants her. There is no case in this one.

And again, if you hear that a young girl is sitting down and has not married, it can be that there are some *alizinis* or bad spirits in her head, and they fear men. A young girl can be there and her head will be strong for men, and she fears men. When she sees any man, she has no interest in that man. But if those who are holding her stand up on her with medicine, at that time you will see that her head will turn on men. Such a woman, we don't say that she doesn't want men. We say that it is God Who has given the bad spirits to her. And if God agrees, they will

take her to someone with medicine who will be able to treat her, and she will become all right again.

Sometimes it happens that they bring forth a girl and take her and give her to a man, and no one will search for her again because of the man's name they have called. If a young girl is given to a husband like that, she will still be staying in her father's house up to the time she is matured. The time she is matured is when they will send her to her husband's house. Maybe this girl will be about nine or ten years old, and the father will say, "I am going to take my daughter and give her to this man." No one will search for her again. Maybe this girl will grow up to be about twelve years old, and she will already choose her husband, and no one will search for her again. If it happens that the one she was given to dies, then her talk looks like the talk of a widow. The talk of widow is a big talk in Dagbon here because there are some things we do on the part of custom. And so I going to add salt to this talk, and I will take some part of it and mix it.

Inside our Dagbon, those who are typical Dagbamba, they will take such a girl to her grandfather's house. When they send her to her grandfather's house, you will see that there will be some people who will come to look for her, and they will go to her grandfather's house to find her. There can be about ten men, all going after her, and they will chase her the same way they chase a widow. Everyone will go and stay in his friend's house, and they will send for this girl. When they all chase the girl and they come around, they will all give stones to the grandfather to give to a soothsayer. When they give the soothsaying stones, the grandfather will also take them and go and see the soothsayer, and the soothsayer will look and catch the stone of the husband. And the grandfather will tell the girl and tell the man whose stone the soothsayer has caught. I'm talking about the typical Dagbamba, because it is with the typical Dagbamba that the finding of women started. When the man's people comes to collect the girl, those who were looking for her but did not get her, some of them will also use medicine to try to call her and steal her. If the girl's family wants to prevent this, they will just say, "As it is, the girl says she is going to choose the man she wants." Getting to evening, you will hear that the girl has said she likes these people from this town. And that is all. Everybody will go to his town. And they will finish giving her, and they will prepare and send her to her husband's house, and then they will give everybody's money back. This is what they do. It's widows they catch like that, but a girl who has been given to a husband and the man dies, or even a girl who is there without a husband, they can also take her like that. As it is, it is the same talk, but it has divided. And so I have only given you a small part of it today.

And so this is how these young girls are, and this is how they live up to the time they are married. And this is what I know about it.