

## Social Impact of the Gender Related Pashto Proverbs on the Life of Pashtun Woman

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### ABSTRACT

Proverbs are a genre of the folk literature of any language and these are also a social discourse. As a social discourse, this genre has, through the use of language sustained the stereotypical image of woman. Through the stereotypical image of woman, the status quo about the inferiority of woman and the superiority of man has been maintained. Pashto sexist proverbs portray woman as weaker in faculties and potentials. For instance, woman has been projected by these proverbs as lacking in decision-making, intellect, leadership qualities, management skills and so on. On the basis of these weaker faculties, she has been excluded from the public and social sphere, which restricts her to the limited domain of the household. Woman through the discourse of proverbs, which is the cultural and traditional truth, has accepted the negative traits about herself as the only truth. In fact, she has also become the promoter of negative discourses about her own gender, depictive of her compliance to the traditional truth about her own gender. In short, it can be assumed that discrimination, exploitation, inequality and injustice towards woman has continued and she has submitted to it as her only fate. This article has critically analyzed the impact of all those proverbs, which have affected the social life of woman. The social impact of this discourse on her life is also reflective of the fact that language has been utilized as a tool for the exploitation of woman and so, in a similar way it can be utilized for the deconstruction of the negative discourses, which will open a way for her progress and advancement.

**Key Words:** Pashto proverbs, gender and language, women in Pashto proverbs, Pashto folklore.

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## INTRODUCTION

The main objective behind the formation of discourses in cultures and societies is to convince the weaker groups about the norms, which are imposed on them. Gordon (1980, 131) says that “truth belongs to this world and is produced in the process of putting restrictions on the oppressed and the marginalized.” Truth is a system of statements and beliefs, which does not exist outside the power-relations within societies and the discourses created within it. Power, according to Foucault, is pervasive and ever-present in the discourse (1978, 93). It is through an organized strategy that humans are trapped in the social structure into the mesh of power and then they cannot escape themselves from the trap, which is set for them by power, through knowledge and truth in the form of discourses. Discourses are pervasive to all relationships as power is pervasive. Power is not only implanted through government institutions but is present in the whole structure. Now the question arises as to how does power work in the social structure. Power for Foucault, works in the form of knowledge. Power is related to Knowledge and both of them deeply impact the existence of one another and there can be no power relation without the constitution of different fields of knowledge and vice versa (Hewett, 2004: 21).

Pashto proverbs as a social discourse have inextricable relation as to how power is inherent to the formation of knowledge in cultures and societies. Power works, according to Foucault, in an organized way in societies for the oppression of different groups and the evolution of traditional knowledge and truth in the form of traditional truth, which is indispensable to it. Power, in this context cannot be restricted only to the institutions of state (Hewett, 2004: 8). Pashto proverbs as a social discourse enjoy authenticity of traditional truth and wisdom as a genre of folk literature. This wisdom and truth portrayed through the proverbs is embedded in the collective experiences, observations, attitudes and psyche of the whole nation. The role and status of individuals and groups in societies is determined through discourses and does the role of the two genders. The study of the proverbs of Pashto language about the portrayal of woman convey the message that she has been assigned a secondary and inferior role, position and status in the social structure. This negative portrayal of woman in the social discourse of proverbs, which holds significance as a social discourse and is a very popular genre of the folk literature, has deeply impacted the various aspects of woman’s life, one of which is the social aspect.

## LITERATURE TREVIEW

It has been mentioned in the introduction that the representation of woman in the discourse of Pashto proverbs has left an impact on the social life of woman. Any influence of a discourse on any aspect of a group's life cannot be extricated from others' aspects of the same group. Different aspects of the lives of groups are deeply connected with one another. Humans in the social world think through discourses, the most dominant of which is the proverbs. According to Farid et al (2023a) proverbs as a discourse have impacted the educational sphere of woman as a consequence. There are Pashto proverbs which project woman as lacking in intellect, vision and wisdom, which restrict her to the domain of the household and on that basis she has been deprived of the right to education. Farid et al (2023b) in a research study on the "economic impact of gender related proverbs on the life of Pashtun woman" are of the view that discourses play an important role in daily life. Humans interpret the reality around themselves and the world around them. Pashto proverbs have evolved from Pashtunwali, the code which has provided guideline to Pashtuns. The stereotypical image and misogynistic views about woman have evolved from proverbs as a discourse, with superior masculinity and inferior femininity, thus depriving woman of economic participation and rights. Woman in the Pashtun society is economically dependent on man. According to Farid et al (2023c), in a study on the "psychological impact of the gender related proverbs on the life of Pashtun woman" the maintenance of the status quo through discourses has promoted injustice, inequality and discrimination in the social structure of Pashtuns. This social imbalance has impacted various aspects of the life of gender including the psychological. Linguistic sexism is a tool which has been utilized in the proverbs as a social discourse and has denigrated and belittled her, which has developed a sense of inferiority in her about her own worth and potentials. The sense of inferiority has impacted her psyche and has developed a negative self-image in her about her own self, which she has further transmitted to own gender of the coming generation.

## **ANALYSIS OF PROVERBS RELATED TO WOMAN**

Before coming to the discussion about how Pashto proverbs it is pertinent to develop an understanding of how Pashtuns treat their women. In the Pashtun society, culture binds and constrains woman to stay at home, take care of children and do the household chores. It is an undeniable reality that differentiation on the basis of gender exists in human societies, and both

the genders have been assigned different roles and responsibilities. There is another fact as well, which cannot be denied that bias on the basis of gender also exist in societies. Men and women are also socialized in different ways with different expectations from them in the social life. In addition to that, according to Din et al (2008, 486), cultures view different forms of work as “Women’s work” and “Men’s work,” by drawing the distinction between men and women as two different gender groups, which leads to the creation of gender stereotypes. A person thus gets distinct social significance on the basis of his or her gender and is assigned particular social role accordingly. Different studies conducted in social sciences display the fact that gender roles are not innate but are cultural constructs (Din et al, 2008:486). As Pashtuns follow many codes of conduct in their life, which have evolved from Pashtunwali, at different periods in their social history. Pashtunwali is an unwritten code of conduct, which all Pashtuns follow in their social life. In so many situations, they are guided by the same code of conduct, which they value and honor. According to Pashtunwali, woman is inferior and weaker to man and he is her protector (Khattak,2008: 65). If viewed from this perspective, in Pashtun culture, the social sphere does not exist for woman, according to this code and it from the same code that these proverbs as a discourse have evolved.

All the sexist proverbs of Pashto as a social discourse, which implicitly or explicitly cover the social aspect of Pashtun woman’s life have been analyzed in this article, in order to investigate how these have impacted the social sphere for woman in the Pashtun culture. The impact of these proverbs on the social aspect of woman is about her restriction and exclusion from social life. Women in different cultures across the globe have been deeply impacted by the demeaning language of discourses. This derogation of her through language, in the form of discourses is a part of a strategy of the patriarchal structures. According to Foucault, power is not simply saying no to what an individual or a group is asked to do or to behave in a certain way. It is also not just oppressing individuals, groups or oppressing their desires, aspirations or their natural instincts. Power has a productive role, which is performed in the form of shaping human behavior and making them obey certain norms and thus restricting their freedom (Gordon,1980, pp. 139-40). By shaping the behavior of individuals in in a certain way they are actually prepared to behave in that way. In *The History of Sexuality, Volume One*, he says that “If power was repressive, no one would have obeyed it” (1978, 36). If looked at from this Foucauldian perspective, Power for him

does not operate in the traditional way of the word power. Power, according to him sets norms of behavior rather than restraining individuals and curtailing their freedom in the traditional manner. Foucault lays stress on the productive nature of Power. Power, according to him, produces truth and knowledge in the form of discourses (Foucault, 1978, 97). Those sexist proverbs as a discourse, which are about the social life of woman, focus more on her social restriction and exclusion on the pretext that she lacks in faculties like wisdom, vision, decisiveness or procrastinates, intellect, that her nature is evil and malicious, management capabilities, capability for the completion of a task in an organized way, talkativeness and her inconsistency, moreover, subservience, silence and dependence; all the negative traits associated with her, highlight the one major point that as she is lacking in all these faculties and traits, therefore, she is not fit for the social sphere. The message conveyed by the proverbs, whether implicit or explicit, is that wisdom, broader vision, decisiveness, leadership qualities, keeping regard for one's words and so many other positive traits are masculine. The negative traits associated with woman have evolved in the patriarchal structures, in which man has played a dominant role. The negativity of woman has been highlighted and authenticated through the discourse of proverbs. The gender-related proverbs of Pashto establish the traditional truth that if woman as a weaker gender is lacking in all those faculties, which are necessary for the accomplishment of bigger tasks, then she should be restricted to the domain of the household, where she will focus her energies on the duties of a limited world, which suits her faculties and capabilities. It can be said that in the social structures superior traits of humans have been monopolized by man for himself through discourses and for centuries their authenticity and truth has not been questioned as these discourses have been considered as universal truth.

Pashto proverbs, which have impacted woman's social life associate those traits with her, which portray her as inferior and weaker in different traits. The traits which depict her weak are not the natural traits but are those which culture has associated with her. In short, it is a social and cultural strategy, to keep and maintain her in the secondary position. One aspect of woman's life which has been highlighted by three proverbs is about woman's restriction to home and the observance of strict purdah by her (covering herself so that she may not be seen by strangers). The proverbs about these aspects of her life say that “Woman is either for the grave or home,” (ښځه يا د کور ده يا “Woman has to cover herself even from the ceiling at home (ستر خو د کور د برگو نه هم کيږي) د گور)

and that “I remained covered all my life and shall leave it so (پټه ووم پټه به ځم).” There is an emphasis in the discourse upon this aspect that the social world does not exist for her. This exclusion of woman from the social life restricts her to a limited world, through the creation of a stereotypical social image of her, so as to sustain and perpetuate the same image of her, which declares her as unfit for holding any responsibility in the social world and the public sphere. The same idea associates woman’s insecurity with man, which conveys the idea of woman’s security through man that she needs a male guardian in any relationship. There is a proverb which refers to this aspect that “A woman without husband is like a garden without fence (بې خاوندنه بنځه بې انگنه باغ) (دے).” Woman herself has also psychologically accepted the idea of her social security through man, which is socially true and also paradoxical if looked at realistically. The idea of woman’s insecurity without man is paradoxical as it is due to man that she is not safe and it is against man that she needs another man. She, due to the fear, which has been inculcated in her by culture and society, cannot question that she needs the security of one man because of the fear of another man. A proverb which refers to the limited world where woman lives and which is her only specified world, says that “Woman vision cannot go beyond the village (د بنځې نظر د کلي نه بهر نه لکي)” In the next proverb mother is addressed and she is being told that you are tied to your sink by conveying the message to her as a mother she has a minor role and that she should be tied to the kitchen and the sink there which is her only world. It says “O mother, you are tied to your sink (ابې ابې ځائے دې) (دینگولے دے).” The significance of the role of mother within family and also for society cannot be denied but this Pashto proverb refers to the same role of woman in a mocking way. This approach towards the role of woman as mother strengthens the view that gender bias exists in patriarchal societies in a very organized manner so as to strengthen patriarchy and to maintain and normalize the status quo. According to Kun (2022, pp. 81-82), “Language is an indispensable tool for the humans as they communicate through language, so, the relationship between language and society is inseparable. The causes and analysis of linguistic sexism in discourses cannot be separated from the social factors. If looked at in terms of the division of labor and also the social status of both the genders, there exist substantial gap, which has resulted in the limited and restricted social status and social life for woman.” There are many sexist proverbs in Pashto which speak of a restricted social sphere for woman like “Either for home or for the grave” (یا د کور او یا د گور) and that “Women’s vision cannot go beyond the village (د بنځو نظر د کلي نه بهر نه لکي).”

As the discourse of proverbs has remained in the hands of man and being a significant genre of the folk literature it has played an extremely important role in perpetuating injustice and discrimination towards gender by depreciating and also underestimating her role, position and identity as well. The social restriction on woman as a weaker gender and the exclusion of her from social life is to bring man to a superior level in the social hierarchy and in this way to prove him fit for higher responsibilities. A proverb stresses the indispensability of man for woman as socially woman without husband is not safe and protected as the proverb says that “a woman without man is like a garden without fence (بی خاوندہ بنخہ بی انگنہ باغ دے)”. According to Van Dijk (2003, p.471), and as has been cited by Lomotey et al (2020, p.71), power relations between the two sexes, as has been expressed in the gender related proverbs, is only one instance out of the countless number of instances in the ordinary day to day life. It establishes the fact that all the day-to-day discourses serve as powerful tools for the creation of gender ideologies and gender stereotypes, as discourses stand as a mirror to societies. Discourses are also the carriers of traditional truth in Foucauldian term. It is due to the same factor that proverbs as the transmitters of traditional truth have gained an authentic, authoritative, unquestionable and unchallengeable position and that truth is accepted by people as the only truth. In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the researchers who developed different theories under the influence of critical theory, challenged the established norms, discourses and systems. Gender has also become an important issue and according to Alia (2019, 17), as she cites Greaves et al (1995), “feminist research is different from traditional research for different reasons, out of which one is that it is motivated by an objective and that is the removal of power imbalance and social inequality.” The aim behind gender research, according to this point of view, is not just highlighting the gender issue but the improvement of the condition of women as respectable humans with their separate social identity. The rooting out of traditional discourses and ideologies is an uphill task but the struggle for improvement and betterment has also persisted in cultures. The persistence of efforts sometimes become the bringer of positive changes for the marginalized groups.

If the negative proverbs about woman are viewed from the perspective of traditional and historical truth and that it is unchallengeable or unquestionable, it will build a barrier in the way of the cause of gender and also social improvement. As has been argued by Foucault (1978, 94), “relations of power are the immediate effect of strict division, inequality and imbalance which come into

existence in the social structure. There are no superstructures where relations of power exist.” The fact about discourses is that social history is the story of power play. The powerless groups in societies and cultures have been subordinated by the powerful because it is shaped in the form of discourses and discourses are further authenticated in the form of truth and knowledge. Through this occurrence and recurrence in the social structures, throughout the historical periods, the discourses have served the purpose of the powerful, strategically and in an organized way. It can be said that the idea of weakness has been imposed on woman, and she has been portrayed as the weaker and dependent out of the two genders, so man has declared himself as her sole protector and financial supporter. Due to the same weakness and inferiority, which has been created by man in the negative discourses against woman, and specifically, in the gender biased proverbs which are under analysis in the current study, woman has been excluded from the social sphere, and it has been declared as his domain. According to Pyle (1976), and as has been cited by Lema (2021, 20), “sexism brings woman down to subordination and inferior position in societies, while misogyny refers to sexist ideology, which also consciously or unconsciously lowers the social status of woman to a greater depth, and rather it would be appropriate to put it in these words, to the point of contempt and prejudice (Smith, 1991; cited by Lema, 2021;20). Smith has further argued that misogyny demonstrates itself in so many different ways like hostility towards women, androcentrism, patriarchy, more privileges for men, violence against women and their objectification. Proverbs like “woman’s wisdom lies under her heels,” (د بنځو عقل په پوندو کښي وي) or “woman’s thoughts and winter’s wind are not to be relied upon (د بنځي سوچ او د ژمي باد زر بدليري) ” and “woman’s vision does not go beyond village,” convey an inferior image of her. There also exists a biased approach in cultures about her faculties, by restricting her life and declaring certain domains as masculine and not feminine, through the same negative traits. On the basis of belittling language which is expressed about her through discourses, she has been assigned a subsidiary position in cultures. Expressions like these in discourses impact the social image of woman extremely and it on the basis of such sexist and misogynist perceptions that she is not considered fit for the social sphere, which restricts her to home and an ideal role is expected of her in that limited and smaller world. Alia (2019,23), in her study about the misrepresentation of woman in Algerian proverbs, argues that among Algerians there is no separation between the terms like “the privacy of woman” and “house,” the walls of which are impassable for her. These terms are synonymous for them restricting woman to the privacy of home. Algerians call mothers, sisters



and specifically wives as “eddar,” which means “the house.” Actually, the Algerian woman is assigned the tasks, which do not go beyond the doors of the house. Such women, who fulfill only domestic duties are considered chaste, pure and the best women. Those, who go outside home are looked at with suspicion, are not considered good women and not worthy of any relationship. The chastity of those women, who go outside home, is also doubted as they, according to the social view, go outside and so, can also be guilty of immorality. There is an idea in the Pashtun culture about the “house” as synonymous with the “privacy of woman,” which is found in Algerian culture and also their discourses. While referring to wife, Pashtun men say “kor wala,” by mixing the terms “home” and “wife.” “Kor wala” in Pashto language literally means the one who remains or stays at home. There is similarity of ideas about gender across cultures, which is portrayed through discourses. These simple instances speak about the social exclusion and restriction of woman.

Woman considers the negative image about herself in the discourse of proverbs as sayings of the wise and so, sacred and the only truth about her, which have to be obeyed by her and she has also accepted these views about herself in this discourse as the only truth and wisdom. Pashtuns also call the wisdom and truth of the proverbs as “writings on the stone” (د کاني کرښي). One other aspect of the discourses need to be mentioned here. Woman has been so much influenced by the negative language of discourses that in the whole process, she herself has become the transmitter of negative ideologies about herself through the social discourses. To cite an instance there is a Pashto proverb, which expresses scornful views about woman by saying that “If women had not a nose, filth would have been their food.” (که د بنځو پوزي نه وي غول به يې خورل) The proverb is the carrier of negative ideology and is also full of contempt against woman. In the countryside of the Pashtuns, old women often quote the proverb against their own gender, and thus consciously and unconsciously, promote negative ideologies and gender bias against their own kind through discourses. The older women also taunt the younger women through biased proverbs about their own kind, when they commit some mistake. According to Lazar (2007,142), and as has been cited by Lomotey et al (2020,71), in their study about Spanish and French proverbs about gender ideologies and power relations, is of the opinion that “hegemonic power relations are produced discursively, then further sustained and negotiated in different communities.” Lazar (2007) is of the view that through the Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA), the taken for granted assumptions about gender are challenged in different communities. Woman has accepted her weakness through this discourse

and does not question it. A Pashto proverb elaborates the same idea. It says that “A broken wall can be entered into by anyone (د وړان دېوال نه هر څوک لوتنه نړوي),” meaning that there is a threat to the honor of a woman who has no male protector. As has been expressed by Van Dijk (2001, p.355) and cited by Lomotey et al (2020, 70), gender-related proverbs combine power and ideology, in which power is legitimized, even if it is through imposition. Actually man’s power, even if it is through coercion, becomes legitimate when woman accepts the traditional role, assigned to her, by accepting her inferiority and dependence on man and takes his authority and power as normal, even if it is illegitimate. The discourse of Pashto proverbs about woman depict her as socially weak and in need of man’s security and protection. The irony is that a discourse, which projects woman as weak and insecure without man, is actually insecure because of the social and cultural constructs. She needs the protection of man for herself as a social security from another man and for that matter, discourses project her weak and the stress is on the perpetuation of the idea of her weakness. Without the perpetuation of the idea of her weakness man would not be able to maintain his superiority over her. The idea of the weakness and dependence of woman has been the social strategy which has a close resemblance across cultures.

There are many proverbs which relegate woman to lower position in the social hierarchy by assigning her an ideal role and she is expected to come up to the social expectations, which have been set for her. There is a Pashto proverb, which can be cited as an instance in this regard. The proverb says that “The earth and Pashtun woman remains silent (د زمکې او د پښتنې ښځې غږ نه راخيژي).” The proverb declares silence, subservience and obedience as feminine traits and the social requirement of woman is the fulfillment of these expectations. If she does not come up to the level of these social expectation from her, she is not considered a good woman. A woman who proves herself worthy of the social expectations from her is considered an ideal woman. Discourses circulate in the social world in an organized way and win the compliance of the oppressed groups, without conscious imposition. Proverbs as a social discourse have served as an effective medium for the propagation of ideologies, which are centered on men. A proverb is about the decision-making and action taking power of man, and compared to men, women only procrastinate and hesitate from taking action. This is an intentional effort through discourses to make woman socially inferior to man in many faculties, one of which is the strong decision-making. Decision-making, in Pashto proverbs, like in the proverbs of other languages is a masculine trait. Strong decision-

making is mostly followed by action, so accordingly, both become masculine qualities. A comparison of this Pashto proverb can be made with a Ghanaian proverb which says that “Words for women, action for men (توکل نر او اندېښنه ښځه),” signifying the fact that biased ideas against gender are common in discourses across cultures. According to Gyan et al (2020, pp. 1-7), drawing on the work of Foucault (1980, 132), power is not something which men possess and women as the “other” do not possess. “Power is everywhere,” meaning that it is spread everywhere in tangible form in discourse, knowledge and “regimes of truth.” In the Pashtun society men as the stronger and superior of the two genders, enjoy more power and they also use this power for decision making. In the social structure, the socialization of woman takes place in such a manner that they accept men to be wiser and also good at decision making and do not trust their own faculties, as according to Foucault:

“We are subjected to the production of truth through power, which we cannot exercise except through the production of truth. In the last analysis, we must produce truth as we must produce wealth” (Gordon,1980: 93).

In the light of Foucault’s statement, power is about the production of truth and furthermore, is an inevitable part of the social process and can be genuinely applied to the evolution of proverbs as a social discourse. Now, it can once again be reinforced that in societies the powerful groups perpetuate their power and privileges through the exercise of power, which is perpetuated through the “production of truth” (Gordon, 1980: 93). The superiority of man is created through a discursive process in the patriarchal structure. However, it cannot be said that the formation of negative ideologies or discourses which evolve in cultures through discursive processes, are not the effort or plan of a particular individual or group at a particular period of time in history, who have sat together and have framed such discourses. Proverbs in different cultures of the world have evolved over a long period of time and it is not known that from whom have these evolved. Claim can also be not made that a specific proverb has come from woman or a biased man. One thing about proverbs, which portray women negatively, is that these are patriarchal tools, which intend to bring women down to a subsidiary level in the social hierarchy and have evolved throughout the centuries from those minds collectively, which wanted man’s superiority over woman. There are proverbs in Pashto, which lay stress on sustaining and perpetuating the inferiority of woman

in the social structure: “Keep a woman-well fed and in control even if it is through a slap په بنځه) (بنځه په ساته) “خبته ډکه ساته او په څپره يې لاندې ساته) and “Sword, horse and woman have to remain in man’s control (توره، اس او بنځه د متو لاندې ساته).” These two proverbs are an explicit instance of how biased minds through language, in the form of this discourse has brought woman down to a secondary position and has maintained and sustained her inferiority through the same discourse. An important aspect of discourses is that people rarely think of going against them, as these are assumed to be absolute truth. Discourses are traditional truth, which emerge during the historical periods, in order to maintain the superiority of the stronger groups over the weaker, which they also accept as universal truth about themselves. In this manner, cultures are tools for the exploitation of the weaker groups. Women accept their traditional inferiority through the discourse of proverbs. Pashto proverbs portray woman as lacking in wisdom, as bad decision-maker and having limited foresight. These ideas which are expressed through discourses, take firm roots in the social structure by adopting the form of traditional truth and knowledge. A Pashto proverb here portrays a similar idea about the short-sightedness of woman, which says that “woman’s vision cannot go beyond the village.” These negative ideas have been embedded in the social systems and adopt the form of people’s perceptions, views and psyche on such a larger scale that ultimately become the collective approach of cultures. This idea exists not only in Pashtun culture but across the globe. Those groups, who have become the victims of biased discourses also accept them as general truth about themselves. Women under the influence of these sexist ideas trust the wisdom and vision of man in different relationships, and give their compliance to be led by him, because of his superiority over her in these traits. This idea of man’s superiority culturally, has been strategically framed through power-relationships, as according to Foucault, and as has been cited in a book about him by Mills, “the production of knowledge and information which for its own sake is just a delusion, a false belief, which is also clearly shown by Foucault’s analysis of power and knowledge” (Mills, 2005;42).

A similarity of themes is found in the discourse about the role and also the portrayal of gender in different cultures. For instance, a Ghanian sexist proverb says that “A woman’s thinking capacity does not go beyond the bed she sleeps on” (Gayan et al, 2020: 4). The authors of this study are of the view that oral traditions have the capacity to enhance man’s role in important matters like decision-making, vision, intelligence, management skills, wisdom and other capabilities and

potentials. The authors cite from Oboler (1985), who furthermore, displays the view that the common assumption about woman, which has been traditionally established is that she in the broader role of leadership will not be able to take “visionary decisions,” as she possesses limited thinking and foresight. Gyan et al (2020, 5) further cite Collins (1986), according to whom, such type of discourses, which belittle the faculties of woman, serve as an instrument for strengthening man’s socio-economic role for the development of communities and presenting woman as weak, so, placing an obstacle in her way to play any such role or to compete with man. That is how discourses in the patriarchal structures eliminate the role of woman from the social world and restrict her to the domestic world. According to the Pashtun code of conduct, Pashtunwali, man is the sole protector of woman, as he is the superior and physically stronger of the two genders (Khattak, 2008: 65). Pashto proverbs project woman to be weak as these have evolved from Pashtunwali, spread over different periods of time. Pashtunwali has evolved slowly and gradually as a code and it also woman as weak and inferior. The proverb, which will now be discussed about the weakness and subsidiary role of woman is about her social insecurity without a male protector or guardian. Proverbs, which portray woman as insecure without husband or in another relationship like that of brother, son and father, have evolved under the very strong influence of Pashtunwali. The proverb which says that “woman without husband is like garden without fence,” conveys the meaning that woman without a male protector in the Pashtun social structure is not secure and safe. It reinforces the idea that woman has no social security if she has no male protector and the strongest of all support for woman is her husband. Another proverb has a relevant idea with the previous that “It easy to break pieces from an already broken wall(دوران دیوال نه هر څوک لوتنه نړوي).” Saidi (2010, 18) has cited Kiyimba (2005), who has offered Baganda proverbs which clearly reflect the social inferiority of woman. There are Bagandian proverbs which express that a woman, who only delivers girl babies is not valuable. On the contrary, a woman who has more sons enjoys the status of being the favorite wife of her husband in a polygamous marriage in the clan. The same approach can be seen in Pashto proverbs, where a woman aspires to have son, and also becomes the favorite of her husband if she has more sons. A Pashto proverb says that “The more sons a woman has, the more valuable she becomes.(چې څومره یې ډېر ځامن وي نو هغه هومره قدرمنه وي).”

According to Foucault, in any society there are numerous relations of power which are spread all over, characterize and constitute the social body as the relations of power can only be established

through the establishment, production and circulation of a discourse (Gordon, 1980: 93). Foucault's Concept of Power and Knowledge, which functions in the form of truth as a discourse, can be applied to the proverbs about the representation of woman in Pashto proverbs as social discourse. As a social discourse, it has imposed restrictions on woman through the imposition of weakness and inferiority as her distinct traits. This inferiority has been promoted against her by proving her weaker in many faculties, which make her socially insecure and dependent on man for a secure place in society. There are Pashto proverbs about woman which reveal the same truth that this discourse has supported the maintenance, promotion and perpetuation of gendered life in the Pashtun social structure. The proverbs of this discourse which portray woman have transmitted the idea of masculinity and femininity in the Pashtun culture. There are proverbs, which can be cited here as an instance: "Winter's wind and woman's thoughts are not be trusted (د بنځي سوچ او د ژمي (د بنځو عقل په پوندو کښي وي) "Woman's wisdom lies under her feet (باد زر بدليري) and that "Woman's vision does not go beyond the village (د بنځو نظر د کلي نه بهر نه لگي)." The above three cited proverbs here convey three different dimensions about woman's inferiority, which are her inconsistency in the capacity of thinking, her poor wisdom and limited vision. In short, it can be deduced from these instances that through this discourse the injustice, inequality and inequity towards woman has been justified and legitimized, which has led to the formation of a social structure based on asymmetry. Her limited thinking capacity, poor wisdom and narrow vision make her a misfit for the social world, as the broader social world require superior thinking faculty, wisdom and vision, which are masculine traits. From that perspective, the broader social world also belongs to man. According to Foucault:

"In reality power means relations, a more- or- less organized, hierarchical, coordinated cluster of relations" (Gordon, 1980:198).

In the Pashtun culture, the wider social world, monopolized by man through discourses, does not exist for woman, as has been displayed by proverbs about her: "Woman is either for home, or for the grave (د بنځي يا کور او يو گور) and "A woman who looks outside the door of her home does not deserve to be kept at home (بنځه چي د کوڅي او د کرکي څنگ ته ودرېده د کور بنځه نه ده)." The first proverb is about constraining and delimiting the sphere of woman only to home. It says that as home is for a woman, who is alive, in the similar way grave is for the dead woman, meaning there is no other

world outside home for her, except these two abodes. This restriction of Pashtun woman to the four walls of home has evolved under the influence of Pashtunwali, which has continued for centuries and woman has accepted it as her lot and the only ultimate truth about herself. The next proverb says that woman, who goes to the door of home, stands in the door, looks outside the door or window, becomes guilty of serious violation according to the code of the Pashtuns. This violation is punishable as in this manner she brings public defamation to the fair name of different men to whom she is bound in different relationships. Such a woman, according to the Pashtun code and also to the discourse of proverbs has committed herself of an immoral ignominious act and so, as a consequence has no right to be kept at home by a man with honor and dignity. Such a woman may bring dishonor to the fair name of man. The proverb mentioned above is about keeping strict vigil on even the minor mistakes of woman. Any violation of the code even when she stays in the domestic sphere is considered as the degeneration of her character or her inclination to bigger violations. Woman's minor violations, in the form of looking outside the door, according to Pashtuns may lead to the bigger immoralities, therefore, they should be kept under a check all the time. According to Fairclough (2007) and Wodak (1996), and as has been cited by Hussein (2009, 99), a society in which divisions are not based on equality, discourses act as a primary source for maintaining inequality and side by side act to persuade the oppressed groups to accept their inferiority. So, discourse and its critical analysis enhances and strengthens the idea that, the norms and behaviors, which have established through it in societies, are not natural but socially constructed. So, the critical analysis of discourses reveals the fact these can be explored and critical approach can be adopted towards them. The critical and analytical approach towards discourses further creates an awareness about the injustice, inequality, exploitation and oppression, which is promoted in the social structure through them. Moreover, according to Wodak (1996,126), the construction of discourse about others is how one sees one's own identity. It also signifies that when one is constructing discourse, it means how is one looking at one's own self and group and that the way it is different and separate from others. The application of Wodak's idea about discourse and identity through discourse as different from others can be applied to the gender-related proverbs of Pashto. There is a Pashto proverb which says that "As is loyalty expected from dog, so is coyness of woman (د سپي وفا او د بنځي حيا)" and "Keep yourself away from a mad dog and a woman of ill-breed (د پليتي بنځي او د لېوني سپي نه و ډار شه)". Both the proverbs shape woman's identity through comparison with dog. The first proverb stresses woman's modesty in comparison

to the loyalty of dog and the second compares a negative trait of woman in comparison with a mad dog. Mad dog symbolizes danger to one's life and a woman of lower breed, who is devoid of noble traits, puts man's honor in danger. If identity is constructed through this process of the image of one's own superiority and inferiority of the other, it can be rightly applied to the sexist proverbs of Pashto as a social discourse. The derogatory and demeaning language of the proverbs about woman are expressive of the fact that these have evolved from man, where he has established his superiority in comparison with woman through her comparison with different animals.

Man, according to Wodak (1996), has created his own identity through the Pashto proverbs, which is the superiority of his own character and also his sense of honor. Compared to his own good traits, traditional truth is established through the discourse that woman is lacking in them. If woman is lacking in so many faculties, she is then suitable for a narrow and limited world and that she can create bigger social problems, if she is made a part of the bigger social world. Ghilzai et al (2020, pp.1-7), in their study "Proverbial Rhetoric in Sustenance of Gender Stereotypes," display the view that when it comes to the study of the characteristics of different people and also the differences and relationships between them, which is termed as ethnological account, and which also applies to proverbial phraseology; from it can be deduced the fact that Pashto proverbs are not only the remains of the past social history of Pashtuns but have practical usefulness in their daily lives as well, as has been cited from Badshah (2017). The author of the study (Badshah, 2017) cites Sanauddin (2015), according to whom most of the Pashto proverbs are used in an organized manner for the purpose of social control. The main objective behind the social control mechanism of the proverbs about woman is the development of ideal behavior among the Pashtuns. For that matter, the socially acceptable moral values of the Pashtun moral code are inculcated through the promotion of inferiority of one gender and superiority of the other. The promotion of the inequality and injustice towards the weaker gender, for the purpose of developing an ideal social behavior, clarifies the fact that proverbial messages in the Pashtun culture are context-bound and are part of the conscious strategy, that is for the maintenance of male superiority. Woman through such proverbs has become the victim of social strategies, which has brought her down in the social hierarchy. The fact of the matter remains that once the victim of the social strategies submits to its own inferiority and secondary role in the social hierarchy, then it is smoothly utilized against them.



Pashto sexist proverbs are not gender neutral and have been used for the perpetuation of male domination in any society. In the social hierarchy, if one gender has to be kept dominant, it is part of a natural phenomenon that the other gender has to be made subordinate and dominated, so as to legitimize the domination of the superior. There are proverbs related to woman that “Good women are without ears (بني بښي غورونه نه لري)” and “Better to be with shaven head than to be thrown out of home by husband (سر خرښلي بڼه ده، مېړه شړلي نه).” Both proverbs justify the exploitation and public humiliation of woman through this Pashtun social discourse. A woman who does not possess ears will not complain even against the mistreatment done to her and will remain silent and will thus be considered a good woman, according to the social norms. Such a woman will also fulfill the criteria or the touchstone of idealism and goodness, which is the social expectation from any woman in the Pashtun culture. The social perception about good woman, and as she has been portrayed through the proverbs of Pashto language, is the one who tolerates humiliation and insult done to her by man in different relationships. A good woman will always remain silent, otherwise, she will lose the right to be called good woman on the basis of those parameters, which have been set for her. The idea about the goodness or badness of woman is a social construct as has been depicted in Pashto proverbs. Proverb which treat woman with demeaning and belittling language justify her humiliation. The discourse justifies the humiliation of woman in the manner that woman if humiliated in front of people is not a bad thing. A bad thing will be if she is thrown out of home by man. The simple message conveyed by the proverb is that woman has to bear any humiliation and indignity at the hands of man to any extent so as to remain secure in his protection. In all circumstances she should not leave her husband’s home as outside husband’s home she is not accepted by anyone. There is no honor for woman except for husband’s home. The married daughter does not enjoy the status at parents’ home, compared to an unmarried daughter. Such discourses are the strategies of patriarchy, the objective behind which is to delimit and restrict the role of woman, exclude her from social life and also to maintain the status quo against her as according to Lazar (2008,92), and as has been cited by Lomotey et al (2020,73), “every act of meaning making whether through written or spoken language in different forms bring about the making and remaking and then preserving of the social state.” According to Ghilzai et al (2020, 4), study of the proverbs of four different languages of Pakistan like, Urdu, Saraiki, Pashto and Sindhi reveal that men are the breadwinners for the family, due to which they are considered the more powerful, authoritative and valued members of the family and society. It is due to the same

dominant social influence of men that compared to women, they enjoy superior social influence. Pashto proverb, which express a social idea that woman's social status is determined by the way she is treated by her husband. A proverb says that "A wife who is valued by husband is valued by the village (چې په خاوند گرانه وي نو په کلي هم گرانه وي)." In the limited sphere of the household, woman is more respected who is valued more by her husband. Such type of social discourses lay stress on the subordinate position of women consciously by bestowing glory and splendor to the position of those wives who are endeared by husbands. A wife who strives to attain the appreciation and favor of her husband is socially considered as an ideal wife. According to Baxtar (2003), Sunderland (2004), Cameroon (2005), Lazar (2005) and Mills (2008), all of whom argue that studies which cover the domain of gender and language indicate a fact and the fact is that language is a vehicle for addressing the issues of gender through construction and deconstruction. The statement by all these scholars and researchers can be taken a step forward for the betterment of the lot of gender. If language has been used as a vehicle throughout history for the construction of gender to sustain the inferiority of woman, through the same tool, the stereotypical image of gender can be deconstructed for the creation of social balance, equality, equilibrium and harmony in societies. As has been already mentioned by Cornwall and Lindisfarne (1995), the term gender is a conscious transformation of females and males into women and men, signifying the fact that it is a social construct. The same social construction has throughout centuries led to the making of the idea of masculinity and femininity. The idea of masculinity and femininity is known as 'gendered-culture,' according to Holmes (1995). The 'gendered-culture,' according to James and Saville-Smith (1989), is essential to the formation of societies. The study of the characteristics of different people and their relationships is profoundly linked with discourses of societies. In this connection the phraseology of Pashto proverbs not only portray them as the remains of the past customs but have also practical use in the present time (Badshah, 2017). Studies by Tair and Edwards (2006) and by Tair (1981) also reveal this fact.

## CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

The study of proverbs across cultures and also Pashto proverbs reveal the fact that approach towards gender, through this discourse has been similar. One other fact revealed by the study is that discourses in patriarchies have been utilized for the suppression and exploitation of gender in

cultures. Another fact is also disclosed through the study that societies and cultures have supported and promoted male chauvinistic approaches through discourses, in order to sustain and maintain man's superiority over woman. Pashto proverbs restrict and exclude the social and public sphere for woman by depicting her as inferior in different faculties and potentials, due to which she is not fit for the wider social world. The larger number of Pashto proverbs about woman project and highlight her negative traits compared to the positive ones. She has been portrayed as lacking in so many traits and potentials and, therefore, has been declared incapable for the public and social world. According to Pashto proverbs, which have evolved under the influence of Pashtunwali, woman has been excluded and restricted from the social and the only domain for her is the household. As has been mentioned at the end of this study that language as a tool has been utilized for the construction of negative ideologies and discourses for the suppression and exploitation of woman and to perpetuate her inferiority. The same tool in the modern age can be used for the deconstruction of the inferior and stereotypical image of her, which is the high need of time and is intensely needed for the progress and advancement of those cultures and societies, which are lagging behind in the pace of freedom, progress and advancement. Progress and development of backward societies is possible if the marginalized group are provided the opportunity to participate in activities.

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