

Resistance Themes in Pashto Tappa

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Abstract:

Pashto folk literature is very rich and vibrant comprising various genres in which Tappa is a significant one. This genre has been used in Pashto language since times immemorial highlighting various aspects and issues of Pakhtun society. Tappa has evolved through different phases of history and has been used by people on various occasions. Resistance to foreign aggression has always remained a key feature of Pakhtun society and this resistance to external invaders has persisted a major theme in Pashto Tappa. Pakhtun men as well as women have used it for invoking the sentiments of the people as well as instigating their countrymen and their beloved/ spouse against the foreign aggressors. It has been sung by Pakhtun women especially at the times of wars/ crisis to keep their men firm and steadfast. Nevertheless the resistance themes in this folk genre is not only limited to invaders (belonging to same or different belief system), it shows resistance in other domains of Pakhtun's social life like gender. Historical events like colonialism on Pakhtun land and different wars have contributed to the increasing treasure of this genre of folk literature.

Key Words: Resistance, Pakhtunwali, War, Invaders.

Introduction:

Folklore is the embodiment of various cultural practices, oral traditions and customs of a society which have been transmitted across generations. It includes numerous things like proverbs, tales, jokes, beliefs and rituals. Nonetheless there is also a tangible aspect of the folklore.

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The definition and interpretation of folklore has changed over the course of time. In past its definition was narrow and it was applied only to poor, rural, illiterate and peasant population in contrast with the Urban, literate and developed and industrialized population (Dundes, 1980). But this meaning of folklore has changed over time and now it comprises everything which is made by humans either in tangible form or intangible form (Wilson, 2006).

In modern times the importance of these cultural practices, customs and beliefs, and even material things cannot be denied for society. The presence and usage of these cultural entities show that they are still relevant to the people in present-day world.

Looking at the literature around the world a major portion of it is composed of folk literature. This folk literature contains themes on different aspects of the people like religious, moral, nationalistic and romantic themes. Though globalization has altered the social and moral values of the people around the world but still folk literature hasn't lost its significance. It is still a source of wisdom, entertainment and refreshment for the people around the world.

Every nation and ethnicity has folk poetry and most of the people comprehend it as its language is simple, ordinary and widespread. The themes of folk poetry are not limited to romance/ love and beauty but it contains every feature of social life. This genre of folklore shows the voices that have been raised by the folk against the brutality and injustices. Tales of deprivation, poverty and sorrows are also the themes of folk poetry. The hardships faced by workers, peasants and farmers have also been elucidated in folk poetry. It also contains the fables regarding the unkindness and viciousness of the feudal. Different human feelings, sentiments and emotions of delight, grief, companionship and antagonism have been depicted in a simple and attractive manner in folk poetry (Khalil, 2017).

Folk poetry is the depiction of a society's history, geography, norms, values and lifestyle. As most of the Pakhtuns are living in mountainous regions where they are having arid lands and a very minute area of their geography is cultivable. The basis of the livelihood is physical labor and hard work. The literature and folklore of these people has evolved in such unforgiving environment and due to this reason their folklore is a depiction of the same rough and tough conditions.

Pakhtuns in modern times have also been involved in various wars with the invaders in different phases of history. They have been encountered by Mughals, Marhatas, Sikhs and the British colonial powers. The Pakhtuns try to avoid invading someone and mostly they have been invaded by the outsiders. But once they have been invaded then they shows a great deal of resistance. Keeping in the view these different encounters one can easily understand the outlook and nature of their folklore.

Tappa is a major folk genre in Pashto like other folk genres. The characteristics and features which are necessary for folk poetry are present in Pashto Tappa. But unlike the other folk poetic genres of Pashto it is the creation of all Pakhtuns and they own it (Rahimi, 2017). Among the poetic genres of Pashto, Tappa is the oldest and pioneer one. Its history goes parallel with the history of Pakhtuns. This genre of Pashto folklore carries three names; Tappa, *Landai* and *Misra*. In Pashto Landai means short. As the first line of Tappa is short as compared to the second one that is why it is also known as Landai (Daud, 2021). This name has been used for it by the Pakhtuns living in Afghanistan (Enevoldsen, 1987).

There are two *misras* (lines) in each tappa and these two line together conveys the whole message. The first line is short and is composed of nine syllables while the second line is long and contains thirteen syllables (ibid).

It depicts the collective conscience of Pakhtuns, the main features of the daily lives, their blood soaked history, romance, pride, sorrows and many more. A person whether literate or illiterate will sung tappa according to his age and circumstances. Young boys sing it in Hujra in musical programs after relaxing from the daily routine work. Girls and women sing it on weddings and when they used to fetch water from springs. The farmers chant it in the fields for their own catharsis (Daud, 2021).

This genre of folklore is equally liked among the people of all age groups and classes. It is equally popular among Pakhtun men and women (Rahimi, 2017). Most of the tappas have been created by the women of Pakhtun society (Enevoldsen, 1987).

It has been diffused to present-day people from generation to generation through oral traditions. It elucidates every feature of human life and shows every direction of human feelings.

Topographical/ Environmental characteristics, historical happenings, national philosophies/ ideologies, cultural rituals, traditions and customs. Henceforth it illuminates each and every shade and aspect of Pakhtun culture/ society. Every Pakhtun is familiar with tappa as they are familiar with *Azan* (call for the five-time prayers) and tappa is next to *Azan* which they hear regularly (Raza, 1989)

Pashto Tappa from very early times has signified its own atmosphere/ environment and the feelings/ emotions of its people. This oldest genre of folk poetry is the peculiarity of Pashto language. Tappa is entirely a communal property. Due to this reason no writer or vocalist can claim its possession. Every person chants it at any time and place, which shows its peculiarity. It is the talk of every soul irrespective of the personal status. It gives comfort and soothes the hearts of the bereaved people. An ordinary Pakhtun dances on its melodies and his feelings and sentiments are associated with it. People enjoy this folk poetic genre because it exhibits their emotions in a natural way (Tair, 1986) .

In Pashto folklore another genre which is very similar to Tappa and which very much popular among the Pakhtuns of Balochistan province is ‘*Ghaari*’. But a major difference between the two is the meter of rhyme and rhythm. The cadence of both lines is compulsory in the structure of *Ghaari* while this rule is not applied to tappa.

Some Tappas are based on moral and religious themes while others are having romantic themes. Some of them are having amusement and humor and yet there are others which are having nationalistic and resistance themes.

Theoretical Framework:

The folkloristic resistance of Pakhtuns can be analyzed in the light of studies carried out by James C. Scott. He offers a very attractive viewpoint regarding the resistance of the oppressed people. In his prominent study “*Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Resistance*” which was published in 1985 the author presents the notion that coercion and resistance are in perpetual flux. The author argues that by concentrating on evident historic happenings like organized revolts we can simply miss indirect but influential methods of everyday resistance. The author focuses on peasant and oppressed societies/ cultures and their methods of reacting to hegemony/ oppressors. The focus in

this case is not on visible actions of revolt but on practices of cultural/ folk resistance and disobedience that are involved over ages through the development of unmoved oppression.

Scott's study reveals that explicit peasant uprisings are in fact unusual and most of the times do not have greater impact. Instead of focusing on organized resistance, Scott gazes at less observable and every-day forms/ practices of resistance like evasion, untruthful submission, pilfering, contrived ignorance and defamation. The author finds this type of resistance in rural areas and industrial sites. This form is predominantly found among the people of rural areas who are lesser politically organized and demographically dispersed as compared to urban areas. He says that the everyday form of resistance of the rural people/ subalterns reveals that they have not assented to power hegemony. Major portion of the lifetime of oppressed people/ cultures is neither a totality of explicit collective rebelliousness of oppressor nor it is a comprehensive hegemonic submission rather it lies between these two extremes (Scott J. C., 1985).

A very much related to the notion of resistance is another idea of James C. Scott which is known as "transcripts". These are conventional ways of speaking and behaving that fit specific actor in specific social situations, whether autocratic or oppressed. Resistance is an elusive method of challenging public transcripts by making use of approved language and to resist the misuse of power. It includes things such as metaphors, rumor, linguistic tricks, ritualistic gestures, gossip, folktales disguises, euphemisms, anonymity and disguises. These ways are mostly effective in circumstances where violence and coercion is used to sustain the status quo, permitting a covert discourse of self-respect and dignity within the public transcript. The ideological resistance in such cases is concealed, muted, disguised and oblique for the sake of security. These types of resistance need minute coordination and planning. They are used by people (both by individuals as well as groups) to resist the tyrants without directly threatening or provoking the norms of elite. (Scott J. C., 1992).

Now if we look at Pakhtun society they have used the same method of cultural resistance. The history of Pakhtuns is full of various encounters with foreign aggressors and the Pakhtuns with their direct resistance have also been involved through indirect and cultural resistance. Tappa as a folk genre has remained significant in this regards. Through this folkloric genre the Pakhtuns women and men have tried to resist and repel every oppressor. The idea that the cultural/ folkloric

resistance is mostly found in rural and lesser developed societies can be also be applied to Pakhtun society as most of the areas of Pakhtun land are rural and lesser developed.

Research Methodology:

The researcher has mainly relied on secondary sources for the collection of data for this study. Though there is a huge treasure of tappas containigg resistance themes but for this paper only twenty tappas have been select. Most of the tappas that have been collected and documented in this paper are borrowed from various secondary sources like books and articles. A few tappas which are written in the paper were personally memorized by the author. Furthermore qualitative textual analysis was used for the analysis of the selected tappas. The various resistance themes in tappas were qualitatively analyzed.

Classifying Resistance Themes in Tappa;

In South Asia Folk poetry has persisted a leading practice of public expression. This form of folklore has played a vital role against internal and external subjugation/ oppression. In traditional and non-Western societies, this genre has proved to be a common way/ method of communication. This can also act as a tool of nationalism especially in post-colonial states. (Ahmed, 2014).

The folkloric resistance in which Pashto tappa is the leading one has been used historically by Pakhtuns as an important cultural tool. This tool/ strategy of cultural resistance was used by Pakhtuns against oppressors in different time periods like Mughal era, Sikhs' era and Colonial era against and this tradition continues even today. However, this resistance in folk poetry has different dimensions and manifestations which are discussed in the following lines.

A) Nationalistic Resistance:

The history of Pakhtuns reveals that have always remained stubborn in protecting their motherland. This nationalistic resistance in recent history is evident from their tappas. For the sake of clarity this type of folk resistance has been divided chronologically into different time periods.

Mughal Era:

Though Mughals were religious wise Muslims but their encounter with Pakhtuns was not smooth. Historical accounts show that both the Pakhtuns and Mughals have remained tough rivals. It shows that the resistance of Pakhtuns is not only on the basis of religious belief rather it has also remained secular. The Pakhtuns have shown resistance to foreign aggressors irrespective of belief who invade them or try to occupy their lands without their will. Numerous Pashto tappas regarding Mughals shows the uneven relationship of both these groups. Bayazid Anasari, a Pakhtun religious leader of Mughal era who is commonly known as Pir Rokhan has remained a strong opponent of the Mughals. His name and efforts have been mentioned in various tappas of those times.

د مغل ظلم به نسکور کړي

چې پير روښان توره په لاس جنگ له ورځينه

(Daud, 2021).

Translation: The brutality of Mughals will come to an end; when Pir Rokhan will join the battlefield with his sword.

Pir Rokhan was highly admired among Pakhtuns and they had great expectations from him to liberate them from the clutches of Mughals.

پير روښان زبرگ دے هم عالم دے

ظلم زياتے به د مغلو خاوري کرينه

(Ibid).

Transation: Pir Rokhan is pious as well as a sage person; he will exterminate the brutalities and injustices done by the Mughals.

Another couplet illustrates the same theme regarding the rivalry of Pakhtuns headed by Pir Rokhan and Mughals.

که پیر رویشان سره یو ځای شو

مغل به واره په پانسې اوڅیزوینه

(ibid).

Translation: If confronted by Pir Rokhan; the Mughals will be hanged till death.

The above mentioned tappa reveals the rival nature of the relationship of Pakhtuns and Mughals. Although Pir Rokhan was a religious leader but his resistance to Mughals shows that Pakhtuns consider oppressor as an oppressor whether he/she be a Muslim or a non-Muslim. Thus one can easily deduct from these tappas that the nature of Pakhtun resistance is not solely on religious basis but it has also secular foundations.

Colonial era/ Anglo Afghan Wars:

The colonial period in Pakhtun areas and the Anglo-Afghan wars has contributed a lot to Pashto tappa. The historical events of those times are depicted in this poetic genre of Pashto folklore. The colonial powers faced extreme armed resistance in the highland of Pakhtun areas and for many years they were unable to capture these areas.

Chitral as a mountainous and remote area also remained unconquered. This district was strategically important for the British (Enevoldsen, 1987) as it was bordering the Afghanistan. The British colonists tried their best to conquer it and when they succeed in capturing it. This episode of history has been highlighted in the tappa given below.

چرتہ چترال چرتہ لندن دے

بی ننګی زور شوہ پپرنګیان چترال ته ځینه

Translation: Chitral and London are of the beaten track; the increasing dishonor on our part is making ways for British to enter Chitral.

A noteworthy tappa which became common during the colonial era originated in Malakand area. Haroon was a freedom fighter who sung this tappa in the battlefield of Malakand while fighting against the colonial army. He attacked the British artilleryman and was martyred by the British

troops nonetheless he killed the artilleryman with his sword. The grave of Haroon is located in Malakand Pass (Daud, 2021).

په ملاکنډ توره تياره شوه

هارونه توره خلوه چي رڼا شينه

(ibid).

Translation: Malakand has been hemmed in by nightfall; O' Haroon illuminate it with the glare of your sword.

The Anglo-Afghan Wars in 19th century has also been mentioned in various tappas. Like in one such instance the name of Akbar Khan has been mentioned who was the son of Ameer Dost Muhammad Khan of Afghanistan. His combat with the British has been highlighted in the following tappa in which has caused huge losses to the British.

د اکبر خان غازي په توره

وطن رڼا شو دېمنان په ماتي خينه

(Enevoldsen, 1987)

Translation: The Akbar Khan's sword is at ablaze; dazzling through land pushing the enemies discomfited.

The Second Anglo-Afghan war has also been highlighted in tappa. The name of the place (Maiwand) where a battle was fought between Afghans and British is clearly mentioned in the following tappa. Maiwand is a place near the famous city of Kandahar in Afghanistan.

که په مېوند کېښې شهيد نه شوي

گرانه لاليه بي ننګۍ له دي ساتينه

(ibid)

Translation: If you came back alive form the battlefield of Maiwand; I fear my darling! The enemy is sparing you to taste the humiliation.

Martyrdom has been highly glorified both in Islamic injunctions and Pakhtunwali. The Pakhtuns have a high esteem for their land and a person who sacrifices his life for the cause of his motherland is extremely admired. This glorification of martyrdom is clearly visible in this following lines.

خٔة عجب خونء ء شهادء ءے
ء زنءءن سلءے و هم خندا راخینه

Translation: Such a wonderful is the taste of martyrdom; I am smiling though I am breathing my last.

Another tappa regarding martyrdom shows the same glorification.

ءنءے مے سرے ے قبر کبیرءے
ے شهادء ء خپل وطن ءنت له ءمه

Translation: Put Red flags on my grave; I am going to heaven with the martyrdom in the name of my homeland.

This theme of elevation of holy war and martyrdom has been shown again in the below mentioned tappa.

ءه ے ءزا کبے ءان شهید کره
زه به خپل شال سءا ے زيارء و ءورؤمه

Translation: Let you become a martyr in the holy war; I will put my shawl on your tomb.

The Pakhtunwali (Pakhtun code of conduct) which is the unwritten constitution of Pakhtuns has remained a basic component of Pakhtun social structure. It has been highly valued and followed by every Pakhtun. This code of conduct trains every Pakhtun to remain steadfast in times of crisis and never accept humiliation. It teaches them to fight against the invaders and oppressors till the last breath. The Pakhtun prefer death in the name of this code of conduct instead of life of humiliation and disgrace.

ءوک به برے رابانءے وکھ
مونر ےبءءانه یو ء ےبءءو ے مینه مرو نه

Translation: No one can defeat us; we Pakhtun sacrifice our lives for the sake of Pakhtun traditions (Pakhto).

Abiding by the rules and principles of Pakhtunwali is a hard-hitting job and people face many hardships while following its rules. But the Pakhtuns try to remain persistent in the times of crisis and dangers.

پښتو کوه که ته پښتون بي
ما په پښتو باندې تېر کړي دي غمونه

Translation: If you are a Pakhtun you must follow Pakhtun code of conduct (Pakhto); as I have suffered many hardships by abiding its rules.

B) Gender Based Resistance:

While analyzing tappa one thing must be kept in mind that tappa in Pakhtun society has been mainly sung by women. It is obvious that females are more cognizant and conscious about family and kinship ties. That is why tappa explains female's personality from diverse angles and it also contains elucidation for their family/ kinship relations. Females have been shown as wife, daughter mother and sister. Nevertheless woman has also been portrayed as a beloved and lover. This aspect of love and romantic relationship is momentous and emphasized in tappa. Hence the woman in tappa is portrayed as keeping the dignity and honor of their male family members either it is father or husband. But sometimes when the woman is not treated humanely by her father or brother she then reacts and resists that uneven treatment. This resistance is also shown to the husband or lover when they do not act according to the standards of Pakhtunwali. Thus the resistance themes in tappa are not always nationalistic in nature but it also contains gender based dimension. In such cases tappas contain themes in which the women taunt their male family members when they are unable to look after their women. The resistance is also shown in a way when they stand up against the brutal attitude of males or when a person the woman loves is not loyal.

The Pakhtun woman keeps the dignity of their family and parents but when the parents especially father denies her right of a willful marriage then she repels. These instances of gender resistance are shown in the following lines.

زلميه ننگ راباندي اوكره

پلار مي ظالم دے ما پة اور كيني اچوينه

Translation: O' my beloved come for my rescue; my cruel father is resolute to kill me.

Romance by force is disliked by Pakhtun women and if someone tries to coerce them in making a romantic relationship then they deter.

ياري د زور خبره نه ده

اشنا ته وايه چي خله سمه خوزوپنه

Translation: Romance is not a matter of force; tell my beloved to mind his language.

In Pakhtun society it is very difficult to get involved in a romantic relationship. The girls faces many hardships and restrictions from their parents if they have been through such relationships.

جانانه ستا د زره د پاره

د پلار وهل د مور خبري تيروومه

(Daud, 2021).

Translation: Only for your sake my darling; I am facing the lashing of my father and the scoffs of my mother.

As mentioned above that girls face sufferings due to romantic affiliation and it can cause death to both the girl and the boy. In the following tappa the Pakhtun girl tells her beloved that she is going to be killed by her family members due their romantic relationship. Nevertheless, she tries to convince her beloved to remain firm by accepting the love affair and face the same fate.

سبا مي ستا پة تهمت وژني

چي د رشتيا پة خاے منكر نه شي منپنه

(Alam, 2013).

Translation: My association with you is triggering my death; be steadfast and do not deny your love affair.

The woman in general and Pakhtun woman in specific do not stomach when her husband/ beloved is being loved by somebody else. The Pakhtun woman forgives blunders of her husband but if the husband makes a love affair with someone else then women resist such actions of their husbands. Many women in such cases leave their husbands and go to live in father's/ brother's house. The following tappa shows the resistance of women in such cases.

هره نا خوبنه به دي يوسم
يو پۀ يارئ كبنې دي شريك نه قبلومه

(Khalil, 2017).

Translation: I will tolerate your every sin; but to be loved by someone else.

Being a member of patriarchal society every Pakhtun woman wants her husband to be a breadwinner and provider. In case the husband becomes unable to be a provider and never tries to earn for the family the female then taunts her husband and wishes to become a widow and earn through her own hand rather than living a miserable life with a useless person. The following tappa shows the same theme.

د موزيگي نه كونده بڼه يم
توره څرخه به چلوم خان به ساتمه

(ibid).

Translation: I will prefer to be widow rather to live with an unserviceable man; I will weave to meet my living.

Bride price which is still practiced in various Pakhtun areas has remained a key prerequisite for marrying someone. The beauty of the girl and her family background determines the amount of the bride price. It becomes unacceptable for the girl when her beloved is unable to pay the amount of bride price. The tappa which is given below shows the same where the girl makes it clear to the boy that if he has to marry her then he must be able to pay the sum of bride price otherwise the things will not work.

هندوستانے شه روپی راؤره

په كورنو روپو مي پلار نه دركوينه

(Daud, 2021).

Translation: Bring Hindustani rupee; the local currency is not acceptable to my father.

Being pious and a religious devotee (cleric) during young age is not liked by Pakhtun wives. The cleric often abandons the music and participation in other entertainment/ recreation programs. This sanction is mostly applied on Pakhtun women. The wife in such case disprove the profession of her husband by tell him to do his own job and let her enjoy the life to the fullest by beating drums.

ملا دي خپله ملايي كړي

ماله دي واخلي تمبلگه چي يي وهمه

Translation: Let the mullah (cleric) do his own religious duty; and I shall beat my own drum.

The aforementioned voices of resistance in Pashto tappa are very much obvious through the lens provided by the studies of James C. Scott. Tappa is an illustrative genre which covers the unseen indirect resistance in almost each layer of the social fabric of Pakhtun society. This folkloristic diversity of Pashto literature is capable to study it with the masterpieces of the world folk. It will play a 'glocal' role in globalizing the folkloric wisdom.

Conclusion:

Tappa is an important Pashto folklore genre since times immemorial highlighting various aspects and issues of Pakhtun society. This poetic folklore has been widely used in Pakhtun society. It has been mainly formulated by Pakhtun women and they frequently use it on various occasions. Tappa covers every aspect of Pakhtun society and is equally popular among men and women. There are various themes in tappa in including romantic, historical and resistance themes.

Resistance to foreign aggression has always remained a key feature of Pakhtun society and this resistance to external invaders has persisted a major theme in Pashto Tappa. Pakhtun land has remained a battlefield throughout its history where it has been invaded on numerous occasions. This turmoil has also affected the folklore of Pakhtun society and this is the reason that Pashto tappa contains melodies of resistance.

But this resistance is not always religious in nature (against the people of other religious belief) as some tappas show the secular resistance like in those cases where the aggressor is Muslim. The tappas which became famous during the Mughal era highlights the secular nature of Pakhtuns' folklore resistance.

A significant point is that the resistance themes in tappa are not always nationalistic but it is also gender based. Tappas in such cases depict the resistance shown to the internal discriminations and prejudices especially by women.

Although there is also a common perception that resistance is a domain of Pakhtun men. But this genre of Pashto folklore which is dominated by Pakhtun women shows that they have been equally active in folk resistance as men.

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