
**PASHTO MATALUNA (PROVERBS) AS ENSHRINED CARRIERS OF WISDOM OF
PASHTUN ELDERS: NARRATIVES OF PASHTUN WOMEN OF PAKISTAN**

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ABSTRACT

Pashto Mataluna (proverbs) are considered the vital organs of the Pashtun cultural context. Amongst the other factors, the transmission of Pashtun culture from one generation to the next generation is also dependent on the traditional wisdom of Pashtun elders. The elders, often, present and transmit their lifelong knowledge through the use of Pashto proverbs. This research article presents the stance of Pashtun women on their level of understanding of Pashto proverbs and the worth of these proverbs in their everyday lives. The qualitative research design was adopted and a sample of 39 female Pashtun respondents was selected through consecutive sampling technique. The study was carried out in three districts namely Karak, Charsadda, and Swat in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. The study revealed that Pashto proverbs are having immense importance in Pashtun societies specifically in transmitting Pashtun culture from generation to generation. Pashtuns are very much ethnocentric in keeping their mother language alive. Multiple mediums are utilized for this purpose. Such mediums range from Pashto poetry to the usage of Pashto proverbs, and folktales. Certain Pashto TV channels and newspapers are also serving the purpose of keeping the Pashto language alive. Even speaking Pashto at the household level also plays an important role. Pashtun women acknowledged and identified the importance of the Pashto language particularly the Pashto Proverbs in the interpretation and dissemination of cultural practices, identities, viewpoints, and everyday life experiences from one generation to another.

Keywords: Pashtunwali, Pashto language, Pashto Proverbs, Pashtun Women

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INTRODUCTION

Pashto is *the most vivid symbol of Pashtun character and the measure of Pashtun pride* (Caroe, 1958, p. 65). It is exceptionally esteemed according to Pashtuns that it very well may be considered as one of the diacriticals and key parts of the character (Bartlotti, 2000). In this manner, 'not just basically and truly, however emblematically and expressively in oral writing and current verse, the Pashto language is firmly related with Pashtunwali' (Bartlotti, 2000, p. 71). Barth (1981) has thought about language as a vital and diacritical component, however in itself not adequate: we are not managing a linguistic group'. He stated a famous Pashto proverb as proof of the side of his contention, *He is Pashtun who does Pashto, not (just) the person who communicates in Pashto* (Barth, 1969, p. 119).

In his estimable investigation of Pashto proverbs, Bartlotti (2000) has clarified this saying as the one which indeed perceives Pashto as a character marker, preserver, and agent of communicating and transmitting Pashtunwali among Pashtuns (Grima, 2004, p. 99). Cultural transmission is significant for societal stability as it encourages communication between individuals of various ages and it allows the support of culture-specific knowledge, convictions, and beliefs over generations (Trommsdorff, 2009). In the Pashto language, proverbs are known as *Mataluna*—a highly valued expression of Pashtun identity and survived to guide them on all grounds (everyday life experiences).

Sociologists and anthropologists have taken interest in proverbs studies in the desire to discover the impression of national characters in these little bits of folk philosophies and knowledge. The fundamental interest behind the investigation of proverbs was the possibility that —the precepts of a group would give important insight into their character and culture and open ways of communication (Webster, 1982, p.173). Because these proverbs most plainly and bounteously express the social contemplations of conventional social orders (Dundes, 1980).

In November 1989, the twenty-fifth session of the General Conference of UNESCO received the recommendation on the safeguarding of traditional culture and folklore. In the previously mentioned tradition, UNESCO utilizes the term 'intangible cultural heritage' in the indistinguishable meaning as the customary/traditional culture and folklore. This definition is as per the following; 'Folklores (or customary and pop culture) is the totality of convention-based manifestations of a social group in so far as they mirror its social and social personality; its benchmarks and qualities are transmitted orally, by simulation or by different means. It includes literature, language, folk music and dance, festivals, folklore, traditions, beliefs, architecture, crafted works, and different expressions. It also highlighted and emphasized the role of women in the transmission of intangible cultural heritage. Immaterial culture concerns aspects of our lives that are basic to the coherence and articulation of our social identity. Women are additionally caretakers of intangible cultural heritage.

Women's contribution in different areas of intangible cultural heritage is both focal and essential. Such areas incorporate what might be portrayed as basic domains of culture, and those which are regularly crucial in keeping up familial and firm social relations. They

incorporate dialect, codes of morals, behavioral examples, values and customs, and religious convictions. In many societies, women keep up fundamental roles in the upbringing of children, through which the intergenerational transmission and restoration of a significant number of these basic types of immaterial culture happens. There are a lot of writings on Pashtuns that have been composed from an ethnographic viewpoint however but Pashtun women's interpretation and life experiences about Pashtunwali were unaddressed. Recently, various books have been published in Pakistan and Afghanistan about the Pashtun tribal system, Pashtunwali, jirga, blood feuds, and Pashtun enmities (see Liebl, 2007; Haroon, 2007; Aziz, 2007; 2006; Yousufzai & Gohar, 2005; Ahmad & Boase, 2004; Glatzer, 2002).

Objectives of the Study

- To explore the significance of the Pashto language as one of the major tools of transmission of Pashtunwali.
- To analyze the experiences of older & younger Pashtun women about Pashto language & proverbs.

Research Question

- What is the role of the Pashto language in the preservation of Pashtunwali?
- How do Pashtun women understand, describe, and interpret Pashtu proverbs as a carrier of the Pashtun's code of conduct?

Materials and Methods

This study adopted the qualitative research design. Locale of the research work included three districts namely Karak, Charsadda, and Swat in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. A sample of 39 respondents was adopted through the consecutive sampling technique. The sample included the Pashtun women having different age brackets with a diverse Pashtun backgrounds from all three selected districts. The data were analyzed through the use of the thematic analysis technique while having theoretical guidance of 'Standpoint Feminism' by 'Dorothy Smith (2010).

Results and Analysis

Pashto proverbs are representative of Pashtun cultural identity. Most of the elder Pashtun women shared the contextual and logical base of Pashto proverbs. They were of the view that meanings and interpretation of proverbs are highly dependent upon the intentions of the conveyer and the perception of the listener. One of the elder Pashtun women-Asiya Bibi, married, educated, and a homemaker from Karak stated: that *Pashto proverbs are having importance since they carry a special message regarding context* (Personal Communication, 04-09-2019).

The majority of my respondents shared and interpreted numerous Pashto proverbs that reflected meaningful themes concerning Pashtunwali and its core principles. Pashtun women have defined Pashto proverbs as an enshrined courier of the wisdom of Pashtun elders over centuries. One of the young Pashtun women-Maryam, educated, single from Karak expressed that she had heard Pashto proverbs from her mother and grandmother. She highlighted that her mother used to express her feelings and communicate values

through proverbs: *I have heard Pashto proverbs from my mother and grandmother. They carry special meanings and are symbolic* (Personal Communication, 06-09-2019).

Young Pashtun women pointed out that they have learned proverbs from their parents and elders throughout their interactions. They were of the view that proverbs are having meaningful content and they provide guidance in constructing reality and defining everyday life experiences. As reported by one of the young Pashtun women-Maria, educated, single from Karak:

I have also heard several proverbs and we usually practice such proverbs in our homes through our elders and parents. Pashto Proverbs are having meaningful content. My mother often uses Pashto proverbs concerning particular situations and contexts (Personal Communication, 04-09-2019).

Categorically, Pashtun women noted a strong relationship between elders and their formulation of proverbs. In daily communication, proverbs are used to be a vehicle for transmitting cultural values and experiences among individuals. They pointed out that proverbs are an effective means of generating messages across various age groups. Furthermore, these proverbs proved to be a treasure of lifelong learnings of ancestors beneficial for the young generation to relate and discern meanings out of their fruitful life endeavors. One of the educated Pashtun women-Saleema, a middle-aged adult, single, working woman from Charsadda shared her thoughts about the relationship between proverbs and elders as:

I have heard some proverbs. I do believe that elders try to convey their message through the use of proverbs. I think it is a very effective way to communicate your message. These proverbs are the product of the lifelong learning of the elders (Personal Communication, 28-11-2019).

It has been observed that Pashtun women are actively engaged in utilizing and interpreting proverbs, songs, and other genres of Pashto language to better communicate and sustain the Pashtun value system across generations. The majority of respondents shared multiple Pashto proverbs highlighting the importance of Pashtunwali and the practical implications of these proverbs. Another Pashtun women-Sadaf, a middle-aged adult, single, serving as a Lecturer from Charsadda expressed her views about the significance of Pashto proverbs in interpreting Pashtunwali. She mentioned and explained various Pashto proverbs that she used to share with her students about Pashtunwali and its multiple parameters such as hospitality, modesty, self-respect, identity, honor, charity, and *tarborwali*, etc. She stated one of the famous Pashto proverbs on the subject of one's identity and social heritage as:

I have heard a lot of Pashto proverbs covering the theme of self-respect, modesty, hospitality, tarborwali, etc., particularly from my mother and I usually share these proverbs with my student too. One of the famous Pashto proverbs on the theme of the importance of Pashtun's identity is: Waye che da kali aye ouzu, Kho da narkha ma ouzu (You may migrate from your village, but do not forget your roots) (Personal Communication, 27-11-2019).

Another respondent- Dr. Rubab, a middle-aged adult, single, serving as an Assistant Professor from Charsadda discussed multiple Pashto proverbs—their importance,

understanding, and manifestation in everyday life. She was of the view that Pashto proverbs serve as a guide in comprehending the basic principles of the Pashtun value system transmitted by elders. Furthermore, she emphasized that these proverbs are extremely close to the real world. She stated:

I have heard many proverbs from my elders, and I try to use them concerning time and place. I believe that these proverbs are very near to reality. I am known for the usage of my proverb language in my university and I feel that I am confident enough to understand the meaning and usage of proverbs (Personal Communication, 27-11-2019).

As mentioned earlier, the majority of our respondents have shared numerous Pashto proverbs and their meanings about Pashtunwali that I have categorized them under meaningful themes. Here, I would like to share my experience with the usage of Pashto proverbs and the role of my mother in developing an interest in the understanding of Pashto proverbs. My mother is a very eloquent narrator in telling proverbs. I still remember that my mother used to tell and share various proverbs with me during household activities. She contextualized proverbs regarding situation, place, and occasion. Before my marriage, I was curious about my mother's ability to recall and relate the bulk of proverbs with the day-to-day situation. Occasionally, I used to ask my mother if I want to compile all Pashto proverbs in my diary and will memorize them. But she always replied (with a smile) with patience and said, 'Dear when you will get married then you will automatically learn to relate proverbs and understand their meanings and association with everyday life experiences and your situation in terms of responsibilities, roles, and behaviors (expected out of them)'. Following is the list of some of the proverbs that I have compiled during my fieldwork:

Table 1.

List of Pashto Proverbs

Sr. No.	Pashto Proverbs	Translation
1.	<i>Shpaye tarmenza we, aghe bala na ma yarega.</i>	Don't lose hope. There is always a way
2.	<i>Pa manda na day, Pa tanda day.</i>	It's not the running around but that which is written on the forehead (or in one's luck)
3.	<i>Bal ta kouye ma kanda, pa akhpala ba pay oughwar zay gay.</i>	Evil begets evil
4.	<i>Kha khaza Jannat dey.</i>	A cheerful wife is the joy of life
5.	<i>Khaza la kor day, ya gour da.</i>	For a woman either the house or the grave
6.	<i>Chi si krii, hagma ba rebi.</i>	You reap what you sow
7.	<i>Zwani lewanay vee.</i>	Youth will have its swing

8.	<i>Khairat da koor na shuru kegi.</i>	Charity begins at home
9.	<i>Akhtar che tair shi no nakreezay pa dewal utapa.</i>	After Eid, of what use is henna? Paint the walls with it.
10.	<i>Awal oukhra da zaan ghwaky, Biya okhra da shkaar ghwakhy.</i>	First, deserve and then desire. No pains, no gains.
11.	<i>Khaple na pradekegi.</i>	One's kin can never become stranger
12.	<i>Yo ghum la abal ghum na sharme ge.</i>	When sorrows come, they come not single spies. But in battalions
13.	<i>Mara khaita Farsi wai.</i>	Intellectualism begins when your needs are met
14.	<i>Ka ghar laoye day, pa sar ay liyar day.</i>	Though the mountain is high, there still be a road to its top
15.	<i>Aqal la baaqalo zada ke gee.</i>	Wisdom is learned from the unwise
16.	<i>Zourawar na ya lary ya ghaly.</i>	With the strong one, either keep your distance or your peace
17.	<i>Rogh surat tal Akhtar day.</i>	Health is wealth
18.	<i>Akhpal biya hum akhpal we.</i>	Blood is thicker than water
19.	<i>Khawand noum da khudaye day.</i>	Husband is another name of God
20.	<i>Chindakha pa louty swara shwa Kabul ay waledou.</i>	A little learning is a dangerous thing
21.	<i>Chay zdaa kray pakhwanai, Hayr ba na kray tar pyrai.</i>	That which is learned in youth is not forgotten in old age
22.	<i>Chay wana zyera shee, Har bala paray ay shpaa shee.</i>	Old age is a disease itself
23.	<i>Chay nan sapak shy, Saba biya warak shy.</i>	If you lose your character, no one will remember you
24.	<i>Chay chasara owsy gay, Pa mazhab daghou yosa.</i>	Practice the religion of those you live with
25.	<i>Chay paakhpala khan ta khan waiye..Khan na day.</i>	Self-praise is no praise
36.	<i>Piyaz day we kho pa niyaz day we.</i>	The onions you serve with affection have value

Conclusion

There is a shred of vivid evidence that Proverbs are having a pivotal place in Pashtuns' social and cultural context. They are considered deemed important by both the Pashtun elders and youngsters for learning the traditional Pashtun codes. When it comes to females' context, mothers and grandmothers, etc. always are in effort to transmit the traditional knowledge through Pashto proverbs during the domestic chores. Pashto language, within the Pashtun culture, is considered to be an important part of Pashtunwali. Pashtun is very much ethnocentric in keeping their mother language alive. Multiple mediums are utilized for this purpose. Such mediums range from Pashto poetry to the usage of Pashto proverbs, and folktales. Certain Pashto TV channels and newspapers are also serving the purpose of keeping the Pashto language alive. Even speaking Pashto at the household level also plays an important role. Pashtun women acknowledged and identified the importance of the Pashto language in the interpretation and dissemination of cultural practices, identities, viewpoints, and everyday life experiences from one generation to another. The Pashto language has played an influential role in strengthening and maintaining Pashtunwali. Undoubtedly, Pashto Proverbs are important source of transmitting folk knowledge from one generation of pashtuns to the next one.

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