



Sanauddin, Noor (2015) Proverbs and patriarchy: analysis of linguistic sexism and gender relations among the Pashtuns of Pakistan. PhD thesis.

<http://theses.gla.ac.uk/6243/>

Copyright and moral rights for this thesis are retained by the author

A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge

This thesis cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the Author

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the Author

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given.



**UNIVERSITY**  
*of*  
**GLASGOW**

**Proverbs and Patriarchy:  
Analysis of Linguistic Sexism and Gender Relations  
among the Pashtuns of Pakistan**

A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

Noor Sanauddin

School of Social and Political Sciences,  
The College Social Sciences  
University of Glasgow, Scotland

March, 2015

## Abstract

This study analyses the ways in which gender relations are expressed and articulated through the use of folk proverbs amongst Pashto-speaking people of Pakistan. Previous work on Pashto proverbs have romanticised proverbs as a cultural asset and a source of Pashtun pride and ethnic identity, and most studies have aimed to promote or preserve folk proverbs. However, there is little recognition in previous literature of the sexist and gendered role of proverbs in Pashtun society. This study argues that Pashto proverbs encode and promote a patriarchal view and sexist ideology, demonstrating this with the help of proverbs as *text* as well as proverbs performance in *context* by Pashto speakers.

The analysis is based on more than 500 proverbs relating to gender, collected from both published sources and through ethnographic fieldwork in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. Qualitative data was collected through 40 interviews conducted with Pashto-speaking men and women of various ages and class/educational backgrounds, along with informal discussions with local people and the personal observations of the researcher.

The study is informed by a combination of theoretical approaches including folkloristics, feminist sociology and sociolinguistics. While establishing that patriarchal structures and values are transmitted through proverbs, the study also reveals that proverbs' meanings and messages are context-bound and women may, therefore, use proverbs in order to discuss, contest and (sometimes) undermine gender ideologies. More specifically, it is argued that: (1) Proverbs as 'wisdom texts' represent the viewpoint of those having the authority to define proper and improper behaviour, and as such, rather than objective reality represent a partial and partisan reality which, in the context of the present research, is sexist and misogynist. (2) While proverbs as 'texts' seem to present a more fixed view of reality, proverbs as 'performance in context' suggest that different speakers may use proverbs for different strategic purposes, such as to establish and negotiate ethnic and gendered identities and power which varies on the basis of gender, age, ethnicity, and class of the interlocutors.

The thesis concludes that, rather than considering folk proverbs as 'factual' and 'valuable' sources of cultural expression, scholars should pay more attention to their 'performatory', 'derogatory' and 'declaratory' aspects as these often relegate women (and 'other', weaker groups) to a lesser position in society.

*Dedicated to Aba, my father*

## Acknowledgements

Writing this thesis has been at turns interesting, frustrating, fun and rewarding. I could not have done it without the help and support of a great many people, and I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincerest thanks.

First and foremost, I am thankful to my supervisors – Dr Francesca Scrinzi, Dr Jennifer Smith and Dr Roona Simpson for enabling me to complete this dissertation. They provided me with the best guidance and have encouraged me whenever I was feeling down. They never lost patience with me and I am truly grateful for this.

I am also thankful to the University of Peshawar for financially supporting my studies at Glasgow and for providing me the required study leave for this purpose. I am also thankful to the School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Glasgow for providing me with the best academic environment and facilities to accomplish this piece of research. I am greatly indebted to the staff members in the school, especially Dr Matthew Waites, Professor Bridget Fowler, Professor Andrew Smith, and Dr Nicole Bourque for extending their support whenever I needed it. I also want to leave a thank you note to my fellow PhD students in the sociology subject area – Stephen, Jeff, Emma, Giuliana, Lito, Francesca, Poppy, Jo, Sylvia and Aizan. I have learnt so much from interacting with these wonderful people.

My thanks also go to my Pakistani friends in Glasgow – Jaffar, Rafiq, Yasar, Shahzad, Inayat, Asif, and Umar – for providing me a homely environment in Scotland. It was because of their cheerful company and our heated debates on social and political issues in our kitchen (we used to call it the “Glasgow Kitchen Show”) that our time in Scotland will remain memorable for life. I am also thankful to Norma DeVilbiss, my “Scottish granny” who never let me feel alone in Glasgow.

I am thankful to all the research participants who took part in this study. My very special thanks go to the three female research assistants who facilitated me in the data collection for this research project. This thesis would not have been possible in its current shape without their cooperation. I am also thankful to Kirsty Kay who helped by proof-reading the final manuscript.

Finally, the one person who has done the most to make this possible has been my father. His faith in me, his belief in the worth of this endeavour, and his compassion and love for me have been a tremendous inspiration. I remember once he came to our primary school and told the class: “My son will do PhD” and when the other kids in the classroom asked him “What is a PhD?” he explained; “It is a big study, very big degree”. Sadly, he passed away before seeing the ‘big degree’ in my hand. I am sorry father; I was a little late.

Noor Sanauddin  
Glasgow, March 2015

## **Author's Declaration**

I declare that the original work presented in this thesis is the work of the author Noor Sanauddin. I have been responsible for all aspects of the study, unless otherwise stated. The research for this thesis was carried out between September 2010 and November 2014. This work has not been submitted for any other course or qualification on a previous occasion.

Noor Sanauddin

## Table of Contents

|  |               |
|--|---------------|
| Abstract .....   | 1             |
| Dedication .....   | 2             |
| Acknowledgements .....   | 3             |
| Author's Declaration .....   | 4             |
| List of Tables and Figures .....   | 8             |
| <br><b>Introduction to the Thesis .....</b>  | <br><b>9</b>  |
| <br><b>Chapter 1: Proverbs and Gender: Review of Literature .....</b>                | <br><b>16</b> |
| Introduction .....   | 16            |
| 1.1. An Overview of Proverb Scholarship .....  | 16            |
| 1.2. Definition of Proverb .....   | 18            |
| 1.2.1. What Proverbs Are: Linguistic and Structural Feature of Proverbs .....        | 19            |
| 1.2.2. What Proverbs Do: Communicative and Behavioural Functions of<br>Proverbs..... | 23            |
| 1.3. Pashto Proverbs: Collections and Studies .....                                  | 26            |
| 1.4. Studies on Proverbs and Gender: Representation and Performance .....            | 30            |
| Summary of the Chapter.....  | 36            |
| <br><b>Chapter 2: Sexism and Patriarchy: A Theoretical Framework .....</b>           | <br><b>38</b> |
| Introduction.....  | 48            |
| 2.1. Definition of Sexism and Sexist Language .....                                  | 39            |
| 2.2. Language and Gender: Research and Theories .....                                | 39            |
| 2.2.1. Theories of Language and Gender.....  | 41            |
| 2.3. Language, Sexism and Ideology .....   | 51            |
| 2.4. Patriarchy and the Reproduction of Gender Relations .....                       | 54            |
| 2.4.1. Sylvia Walby: Six Structures of Patriarchy.....                               | 56            |
| 2.4.2. Deniz Kandiyoti: The Patriarchal Bargain .....                                | 58            |
| 2.4.3. Valentine Moghadam: The Patriarchal Gender Contract.....                      | 59            |
| 2.4.4. R. W. Connell: Hegemonic Masculinity .....                                    | 60            |
| 2.5. A Synthesis of Theories .....   | 62            |
| Summary of the Chapter .....   | 63            |
| <br><b>Chapter 3: Setting the Context: Gender Relations in Pakistan.....</b>         | <br><b>65</b> |
| Introduction.....  | 65            |

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| 3.1. Pakistan, Pashtuns and the Pashto Language.....                        | 66         |
| 3.2. Gender, Family and Household in Pakistan.....                          | 68         |
| 3.3. Gender, Sexuality and Seclusion of Women in Pakistan. ....             | 71         |
| 3.4. Gender, Education and Paid Work in Pakistan.....                       | 75         |
| 3.5. Gender, Nationhood and State Laws in Pakistan.....                     | 78         |
| Summary of the Chapter .....  | 82         |
| <br><b>Chapter 4: Methodology .....</b>                                     | <b>84</b>  |
| Introduction .....  | 84         |
| 4.1. Methods of Data Collection.....  | 84         |
| 4.1.1. Proverbs Selection .....   | 85         |
| 4.1.2. The Fieldwork: Semi-structured Interviews .....                      | 86         |
| 4.1.3. The Participants and Their Recruitment Strategies .....              | 88         |
| 4.1.4. Female Research Assistants: Recruitment, Training, and Fieldwork.... | 92         |
| 4.1.5. Observations, Research Diaries, and Field Notes.....                 | 95         |
| 4.2. Ethical Considerations .....   | 96         |
| 4.3. Some Reflections on the Methods and the Data Collection Process .....  | 98         |
| 4.4. Transcription and Translation .....                                    | 103        |
| 4.5. Data Analysis .....  | 106        |
| 4.5.1. The Proverb Corpus .....   | 107        |
| Summary of the Chapter .....  | 112        |
| <br><b>Chapter 5: The Proverb Corpus: A Descriptive Analysis .....</b>      | <b>114</b> |
| Introduction .....  | 114        |
| 5.1. Reporting of proverbs by participants .....                            | 115        |
| 5.2. Subject Matter of Proverbs .....                                       | 122        |
| 5.3. Patriarchal Discourses in Proverbs .....                               | 132        |
| 5.3.1. Household Production, Gender Division of Labour and Power.....       | 134        |
| 5.3.2. Men's Control of Women's Sexuality.....                              | 138        |
| 5.3.3. Cultural Construction of Masculinity and Femininity.....             | 143        |
| 5.3.4. Male Violence against Women.....                                     | 149        |
| 5.3.5. Preferences for Male Children.....                                   | 151        |
| Summary of the Chapter.....   | 157        |



|  |                |
|--|----------------|
| <b>Chapter 6: Using Proverbs, Doing Gender: The Performative Functions of Proverbs in Negotiating Gendered Social Boundaries .....</b> | <b>159</b>     |
| Introduction .....   | 159            |
| 6.1. The Importance of Context for Proverb Performance .....   | 161            |
| 6.2. Speaking proverbs, ‘Doing Pashto’: Proverbs and Pashtun-ness.....   | 162            |
| 6.3. Proverb Performance as Power: Gender, Generation and Class.....   | 168            |
| 6.3.1. Proverbs, Gender and Generation .....   | 169            |
| 6.3.2. Proverbs, Gender and Class .....  | 177            |
| 6.4. The Pashtuns and Their Gendered ‘Others’ .....  | 185            |
| 6.5. Gender-specific Strategies in Using Proverbs.....   | 190            |
| 6.6. A Proverb of One’s Own? Women’s Subversive Discourses on Patriarchy....   | 195            |
| Summary of the Chapter .....   | 204            |
| <br><b>Conclusion of the Thesis .....</b>  | <br><b>206</b> |
| <br><b>References .....</b>  | <br><b>219</b> |
| <b>Appendix: List of Proverbs .....</b>  | <b>251</b>     |

## List of Tables and Figures

### List of Tables

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Table 4.1: Categories of research participants .....  | 85  |
| Table 4.2: Proverbs collected from different sources .....  | 105 |
| Table 5.1: Number of proverbs reported, by gender of participants.....  | 111 |
| Table 5.2: Number of proverbs reported, by education level of participants.....                                   | 111 |
| Table 5.3: Number of proverbs reported, by age of participants .....  | 112 |
| Table 5.4: Number of proverbs reported, by locality of participants .....   | 112 |
| Table 5.5: Mean and standard deviation of proverbs reported by different<br>categories of participants .....      | 113 |
| Table 5.6: Mean reporting of proverbs by different groups of participants,<br>by gender, age, and education ..... | 114 |
| Table 5.7: Subject matter /targeted characters in proverbs by gender .....  | 127 |
| Table 5.8: Distribution of proverbs into ‘positive’, ‘negative’ and ‘contextual’<br>categories .....              | 123 |
| Table 5.9: Positive, negative and contextual proverbs, by gender .....  | 123 |
| Table 5.10: Positive, negative and contextual proverbs about various<br>categories of male .....                  | 124 |
| Table 5.11: Positive, negative and contextual proverb about various<br>categories of female .....                 | 125 |

### List of Figures

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Figure 3.1: Map showing the administrative division of Pakistan .....  | 61  |
| Figure 4.1: Map showing the location of Khyber Pakhunkhwa (KP)<br>and FATA (Pashtun dominated areas) in Pakistan ..... | 81  |
| Figure 5.1: Words cloud for proverbs related to male .....   | 127 |
| Figure 5.2: Words cloud for proverbs related to female .....   | 127 |
| Figure 5.3: Words cloud for proverbs about young girls .....   | 134 |
| Figure 5.4: Words cloud for proverbs about husband .....   | 142 |
| Figure 5.5: Words cloud for proverbs about wife .....  | 142 |
| Figure 5.6: Words cloud for proverbs about son .....   | 147 |
| Figure 5.7: Words cloud for proverbs about daughter .....  | 147 |

## Introduction

This study is mainly concerned with the interplay between Pashto language and gender relations among the Pashtun people<sup>1</sup> of north-west Pakistan. Specifically, the study is aimed at understanding the role Pashto proverbs play in gender relations and how these proverbs are being used by people to construct gender relations on an everyday basis. The study focuses on one genre of Pashtu folklore – the proverb – which is sometime called the ‘smallest’ literary work (Maria, 2012; Chuchvaha, 2009; Akhtar 1997) or the simplest form of folk philosophy (Chuchvaha, 2009; Ballesteros, 1979). The study falls within a number of broad disciplinary domains including sociolinguistics, the anthropology and sociology of language, gender studies, and folkloristics.

Before introducing the rest of the thesis, I would like to tell the readers my personal story. Born and bred in a Pashtun family, listening to proverbs and other folkloric items (folktales, folksongs, riddles, lullabies etc.) were – and still are – part of my life. The first proverb I remember is relevant to the thesis in hand. The proverb and its context is shared here with the readers as this has played at least some role in why I have undertaken this research. One day while I was a child, I stayed a night in the house of my best friend and classmate, Yousaf. We played a lot that night before going to bed. Early the next morning we had to go to school, but the two friends were too tired to get up. Yousaf’s mother jolted us three times and in order to motivate us, said a proverb which still echoes in my mind:

“Get up my sons, get up. *“Action is male, hesitation is female”* [“*Toukal nar, andekhna khaza*”]”.

The Pashto word for ‘action’ is “*toukal*” which is grammatically masculine, while the word for hesitation is “*andekhna*”, which is grammatically feminine. What Yousaf’s mother was telling us was to act like men, act now, get up, and do not hesitate like females.<sup>2</sup> Now after 25 years or so, whenever in doubt this proverb comes to my mind and my heart whispers: “Noor, do not hesitate, *act now*”.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Pashtuns are also called Pakhtuns, Pathans or Afghans. Because of the two major dialects in the Pashto language, some prefer to call themselves Pashtuns while others call themselves Pakhtuns. The British rulers and anthropologists used to refer to them as ‘Pathan’, and other ethnic groups in Pakistan such as Punjabi also call them by this name, although most Pashtuns/Pakhtuns themselves do not like the name Pathan. Similarly, confusion also exists as to the correct English spelling: thus, one can find a large variation in spelling such as Pakhtun, Pukhtun, Pakhtoon, Pashtun, Pushtun, Pashtoon and Paxtun.

<sup>2</sup> This is a common saying. The English proverb “*He who hesitates is lost*”; or “*You snooze, you lose*” sends the same message: Act now.

The proverb tells us and reminds us (at least me!) that men must be active and quick to make up their minds; women are indecisive and hesitant. And this is what the thesis hopes to investigate.

There are no natural words. “All words have a ‘taste’ of a profession, a genre, a tendency, a particular work, a particular person, a generation, an age group, the day and hour... the contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life” (Bakhtin, 1981:293). When we acquire a language, we also acquire ways of thinking because language is rooted in a culture. In other words, language gives us a whole world-view (Goddard and Patterson 2001:6). When something is realised in the form of a text, written or spoken, the language used reflects choices, conscious or not, that are made from different ways of saying the same thing and these differences carry ideological distinctions (Nair, 2005).

Language and its constituent parts, including proverbs, have been viewed as the most revealing “archive of social life” and its study can contribute to an understanding of the contemporary culture and the past of human society (Mullett, 1972:83) because language is inextricably embedded in the network of socio-cultural relations (Ahearn, 2001; Bakhtin, 1981). Sociolinguists, anthropologists, sociologists, and other social scientists regard language as a form of social action, a cultural resource and a set of socio-cultural practices the study of which provides a starting point for understanding how social relations are conceived, how institutions are organised, how relations of production are experienced and how identity is established (Schieffelin, 1990:16; Ahearn, 2001:110; Scott, 1990; Fan, 1996).

This thesis begins with the assumption that proverbs as a genre of folklore are discourses of patriarchal ideology. As noted by Hamilton (1987:67), proverbs “reflect ideological struggles between the rulers and ruled in a society” and if carefully “unpacked” and “deconstructed”, proverbs can provide some evidence of “voices from below”, i.e., the world-view of the dominated group. Schipper (2004) argues that proverbial messages are an excellent yardstick for finding out the extent to which people continue to accept sexist ideas about women, while Kerschen (2012:3) believes that “the nature of proverbs is such that, while they are brief, they are perhaps the best indicators of attitudes and beliefs... Therefore, if one wants to explore the historical image of women in oral traditions, proverbs are an ideal subject”.

In Pashtun society, proverbs occupy a special place in oral literature and are the most widely used of all folklore (Tair, 1975; Akhtar, 1997). Rather than relics of the past, Pashto proverbs are still widely spoken and play an important role the everyday lives of Pashtuns. They are found in textbooks, radio and television dramas, in “conversation in bazaar and home, between and among men and women” (Bartlotti, 2006:iii), and a “wiser man is considered to be the one who speaks more proverbs” (Khattak, 2006:x). Most proverbs are moralistic and didactic in tone and touch upon all aspects of life and activities. Gender relations are among the most significant topics of proverbs, most of which are full of sexist connotations. Some examples of derogatory and sexist proverbs are following: “*A woman either belongs to home or grave*”, “*A woman goes seven steps ahead of the devil*”, “*Girls are wild plants [they grow quickly, in abundance, but are not valuable]*”, “*A women is footwear, if you do not like [or, if it does not fit], change it*”, “*Marry the virgin immediately, the widow only after seeing her, and never marry the divorced at all*”, “*A woman’s brain lies in her toes*”, “*A woman’s hair is long, but her tongue is even longer*” and “*If she is a woman, she is wrong*”.

As I explain in the first chapter of the thesis, Pashto proverbs and other folklore has received considerable attention and a number of books have been written. However, little attention has been devoted to the gendered aspects of Pashto proverbs, and no published work specifically analyses Pashto proverbs through a gendered lens. Leonard Bartlotti, an expert on Pashto proverbs, notes that:

“The published texts themselves are only assumed to derive from the male repertoire....The existence of women’s proverb repertoires (and/or gender-biased proverb interpretations) in [Pashtun society] should not be ruled out, and women’s proverb usage is a subject for future research” (Bartlotti, 2000:102).

This thesis aims to fill this gap in the literature by studying how proverbs encode gender ideologies among the Pashtun of Pakistan.

Specifically, the research aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To organise a corpus of Pashto proverbs displaying gender relations.
2. To examine patriarchal discourses and power relation in gendered proverbs.
3. To understand how speakers of various genders, age groups and educational levels use (or do not use) proverbs on an everyday basis for negotiating their gender, ethnic, and class identities and statuses.

The study is based on the analysis of more than five hundred gendered proverbs of the Pashto language. Some of these were selected from previously published collections of Pashto proverbs while some were collected through an ethnographic fieldwork among the Pashto speaking people of Pakistan.

The thesis argues that the depiction of men and women in proverbs that are presented as 'wise' and factual are in fact rather sexist. It is widely believed that proverbs contain 'truth', are 'shared resources', and they appeal to 'common sense'. However, this thesis raises questions such as: Whose truth do they speak? Who has the biggest share in them? Is 'common sense' in proverbs really shared by all members of a society? By asking such questions, this thesis has found that proverbs are not always wise, they are not equally shared, and they do not equally appeal to the common sense of certain groups in society. Proverbs are tools working at the service of the dominant groups within a society.

Some may ask about how representative this study is. Although the study is not claiming any generalisations beyond the specific group of people studied, I am confident that because of its distinctive methodology, the study is as representative as possible of Pashtun people as seen in proverbs. As I explain in the methodological chapter (chapter 4), research participants for this study were carefully selected from various groups including men and women, younger and older, educated and uneducated, and rural and urban. In addition, these participants were selected from different districts of majority Pashtun areas in Pakistan, which enhance the geographical coverage of the study. Furthermore, in-depth qualitative data was obtained through a variety of research methods by a team of male-female researchers. To further support this, proverbs were also collected from published collections of Pashto proverbs. These methodological features and the systematic analysis of data greatly enhance the validity and generalisability of the study findings.

Some may argue that a collection and discussion of sexist proverbs and gender stereotypes accomplishes nothing more than helping to popularise and further circulate them. I do not agree because sexist proverbs exist whether or not I choose to collect and study them. I have not invented these proverbs: I have merely reported them. Moreover, I have not merely reported these proverbs but have also identified them as sexist, and by analysing these proverbs from a more critical perspective, I try to expose their 'innocence' to the

readers. By doing this, I am sensitising my readers not to underestimate the potential danger or to be lulled by the ‘wise’ sounding proverbs.<sup>3</sup>

Some may ask about the practical impact of this study and, more specifically, ask whether it will contribute to solving the problem of sexism. I argue that challenging common-sense assumptions is the first step towards any bigger change at a societal level. Thinking from a Gramscian perspective, proverbs are the best examples of the ‘hegemony of common sense’. It is indeed of pragmatic value to study the “pre-suppositional states” of communities in order to understand how change is possible (Harris, 1980:191). Hence, to study gender relations in proverbs is complementary to efforts intended at changing the existing gender relations in society.

To anticipate some of the conclusions that have emerged from this study, it has found that most proverbs tend to perpetuate existing gender relations and power structures, although some dissident voices could be also heard. I have argued that proverbs are strategically used by different categories of speakers to articulate and negotiate gender, ethnic and class relations and identities. Proverbs are far from being completely ‘fixed’ and ‘frozen’ sayings; they are strategically and creatively manipulated by men and women to further their interests. I have argued in the thesis that proverbs are sources of hegemony by elders and men over the younger and women: proverbs are mostly used by older sections of society, especially uneducated men and women in rural areas, who cling to folk knowledge as a means of maintaining their shrinking power in view of the social transformations associated with modernity, including the shifting power structure. Young and educated people either cannot use proverbs as artistically as the older people, or they want to show their modern, educated, urban class position by intentionally not using proverbs which they view as ‘old fashioned’.

The thesis consists of 6 chapters, excluding the introduction and conclusion. Chapter 1 presents a review of the literature on proverb study and the structural and functional aspects of proverbs to understand the place and importance of this particular folklore genre in the lives of people. This chapter also review studies on the relationship between proverbs and gender relations in various cultures of the world. A more critical review of Pashto proverb collection and studies is also presented in order to identify some gaps in the field which this study intends to address.

---

<sup>3</sup> Alan Dundes’ (1975b) study on ethnic slurs in proverbs has justified his collection and study of racist proverbs against similar attacks.

Chapter 2 presents the sociolinguistic and sociological theories of language and gender to help in developing a theoretical framework for this study. The crux of these theories is an understanding of how people “do gender” with the help of language use. These theories can mainly be divided into two categories: those concerned with the use of language in face to face interaction, and those concerned with understanding language as a manifestation of sexist ideology. This chapter also engages with relevant theories of patriarchy to show how language and sexist proverbs are part of patriarchal discourses which serve to produce and sustain unequal gender relations.

Chapter 3 provides a context to the study by introducing the Pashtun social structure and the overall state of gender relations in Pakistan. I explain that the Pashtun code of ideal and honourable behaviour, called *Pashtunwali*, together with religion and state policies provide the main frame of reference for the thoughts and actions of Pashtuns. These thoughts are mostly in the form of proverbs and are acted upon in certain customs and rituals which have negative consequences for women, such as restricting women to within the home.

Chapter 4 of the thesis presents the methodology used in the fieldwork and the details about data collection and analysis. I have explained in this chapter that the methodology adopted for this study is an improvement on previous studies on gender relations in proverbs by combining fieldwork for collecting proverbs from people in addition to proverbs collected from previously published sources. I also explain how the data was collected through qualitative interviews with males and females of different age groups, educational statuses, and localities, with data from female participants collected with the help of three female research assistants hired and trained for this purpose. This chapter also explain the process of developing the proverb corpus analysed in this study.

Chapter 5 provides a descriptive analysis of participants’ proverb reporting behaviour and the content of these proverbs in terms of how it represents men and women, followed by a discussion on some major themes found in these proverbs. These themes are broadly organised according to Walby’s (1990) theory of six structures of patriarchy to show how proverbs works in the service of patriarchy. This chapter is mostly descriptive and treats the proverbs as ‘texts’.

Chapter 6 presents an analysis of proverbs used in *context*. I show how proverbs are actually used by speakers in everyday interaction for various purposes which include the negotiation of ethnic, gender, and class identities. This chapter explains how Pashtuns view



proverbs, why someone may or may not use proverbs in different specific conversational contexts, why and how proverbs are sources of power and social control, and why a speaker may use proverbs differently depending on one's position in the status and power hierarchy of the Pashtun social structure. This chapter provides illustrative examples of proverbs as performed in natural conversation. I also show in this chapter the 'sexual division of folklore' by arguing that women have their own proverbs, some used exclusively by them to express their discontent with patriarchal gender relations.

Lastly, the thesis concludes the major arguments and findings of the research.

Some of the distinctive features of this thesis include the collection of proverbs from both male and female speakers by a team of male and female fieldworkers which is previously unknown in Pashto proverb scholarship. This methodological approach has yielded the collection of 147 proverbs previously uncollected and unpublished. Moreover, this study is also an improvement over most other studies which have mostly collected proverb text, lacking the particular context in which proverbs are actually used. This study has not only collected proverbs texts but also proverbs use in actual and natural contexts along with local people's personal views on proverbs (also called 'oral literary criticism'). Due to this, this study is a response to the much repeated call by folklorists, originally issued by Arewa and Dundes (1964:82): "Let's put the folk back into folklore". As will be seen in chapter 6, this call has been truly answered to a sufficiently greater extent.

# Chapter 1

## Proverbs and Gender: Review of Literature

### Introduction

This chapter presents a critical review of literature on proverbs and proverb scholarship. The discussion in this chapter will help in preparing the ground for the thesis and will help in the selection of Pashto proverbs analysed in later chapters. In order to define proverbs, the chapter looks at both the structural aspects of proverbs (what they are) and the functional aspects of proverbs (what they do), followed by a working definition of proverbs in view of the present study. This chapter then examines the available literature on Pashto proverbs collection and analysis, and identifies gaps in this scholarship which the current study intends to fulfil. Lastly, studies on proverbs and gender relations conducted by different scholars in different parts of the world are critically reviewed in order to better situate the present research in the available literature on proverbs and gender relations.

### 1.1. An Overview of Proverb Scholarship

Proverbs are considered the most ubiquitous genre of folklore, found among all cultures of the world. Milner has noted “the nearly universal distribution” of proverbs throughout the world, “almost irrespective of time, place, level of technical and economic development, language or culture” (1969b:200; cf. Mieder, 2004, 2005). Because of their central role in many aspects of traditional, non-literate societies, the study of proverbs has attracted scholars for centuries. While the seventeenth century is regarded as the “golden age of proverbs” in the West (Obelkevich, 1994), proverbs collection continued throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Whiting, 1994:75).

Some scholars believe that in the Western world the use of proverbs in literature dropped significantly after the eighteenth century, the age associated with reason and enlightenment. However, Wolfgang Mieder (1993, 2004, 2007) and Mokitimi (1995) have

convincingly shown that while some proverbs have been dropped because their language or metaphor does not fit the modern time, new proverbs are emerging constantly to reflect contemporary mores. Mieder argues that even the most sophisticated and best educated people appear to be in need of the pithy wisdom contained in metaphorical proverbs (1993), and as such, there has been no general collapse of proverbiality and no blackout of proverbs during the time of reason and rationality (Mieder, 2000). Whether or not the time of proverbs collections and proverb usage in the West is over, it is certainly not in most parts of Asia and Africa, where much work is still necessary to collect the scattered proverbs from people, and “where proverbs retain not only their currency, but their value as cultural and rhetorical expressions” (Bartlotti, 2000:1).

Proverb scholarship can be broadly divided into two distinct but parallel fields, that is *paremiography* (the collection of proverbs) and *paremiology* (the study of proverbs).<sup>4</sup> In addition, linguists of various schools have created an entire new field of inquiry called “phraseology” that deals with all formulaic language or phraseological units including proverbs, proverbial expressions, quotations, idioms, twin formulas, and other such fixed expressions. Paremiology is much broader than phraseology because it not only looks into the linguistic structure of proverbs, but also deals with their collection and classification, tracing the nature and origin of individual proverbs and investigating their socio-historical significance (Jamal, 2009). In other words, paremiologists usually look at proverbs from a more inclusive point of view as they draw on such fields as anthropology, art, communication, culture, folklore, history, literature, philology, psychology, religion, and sociology (Mieder, 2004). For linguists of the nineteenth century, proverbs were the source material for the comparative philological study of rural “archaic” dialects (Bartlotti, 2000). Historians treated proverbs and other forms of folklore as “immaterial relics”, surviving remnants among the peasant “folk” of the “savage ideas and ways” from which civilisation had evolved (Dundes, 1978:3-4). Sociologists and anthropologists took interest in proverbs studies in the hope to find the reflection of national characters in these small pieces of public philosophies. The main interests behind the study of proverbs was the idea that “the proverbs of a people would provide valuable clue about their character and culture and open paths of communication” (Webster, 1982:173), because proverbs most clearly and abundantly express the social thoughts of traditional societies (Horton, 1967; Mieder and Dundes, 1994). Seitel (1976) has highlighted the importance of proverb study:

---

<sup>4</sup> From Greek, *paremia* = proverb.

“[B]y pushing around these small and apparently simply constructed items, one can discover principles which give order to a wider range of phenomena. Proverbs are the simplest of the metaphorical genres of folklore – songs, folktales, folk play etc. – a genre which clearly and directly is used to serve a social purpose. By investigating the relatively simple use of metaphorical reasoning for social ends in proverbs, one can gain insight into the social use of other, more complex metaphorical genres” (1976:141).

Proverbs collection and proverbs studies will continue for the years to come. But before we say anything more of this, it is pertinent to understand what proverbs are and what functions they play in society.

## 1.2. Definition of Proverb

There are two main approaches to defining proverb – structural and functional – which are explained in the following pages. However, it should be clarified that precisely defining what is a proverb and how it is different from other phraseological units has been a continuous challenge for scholars. Lau *et al.* (2004) note the paradox that a proverb is generally understood to epitomize simplicity and common sense, yet turns out to be both complex and hard to define. The difficulty in defining proverbs stems from the fact that they do not confirm to a neatly categorized genre because their form, origin, content, purpose, structure, and application are so varied as to sometimes give the impression that there is no such single entity as a proverb (Moon, 1997:2).

Archer Taylor, who has been regarded as the “undisputed pope of paremiology” (Siran, 1993:228) and the “doyen of proverb studies” (Mieder, 1997:408) tried to define proverbs in his much quoted book, *The Proverb*, but after writing 200 pages, he came to the conclusion that it is impossible to define a proverb in any meaningful way:

“The definition of the proverb is too difficult to repay the undertaking; and should we fortunately combine within a single definition all the essential elements and give each its proper emphasis, even then we would not have a touchstone. An *incommunicable quality* tells us this sentence is proverbial and that one is not” (Taylor, 1985:3, emphasis added).

Despite this difficulty, many scholars have attempted to reach a concise and universal definition. To begin with a non-specialist opinion, an interesting study in this regard was conducted by Wolfgang Mieder, asking 55 non-academics to write their definitions of a proverb. He then conducted a word-frequency analysis of these definitions and found that a

proverb is commonly thought of as a phrase, saying, sentence, statement or expression of the folk which contains above all wisdom, truth, morals, experience, lessons and advice concerning life and which has been handed down from generation to generation. But since the words simply define a proverb as a basic sentence, it can certainly be stated that the shortest general definition of a proverb is simply “A proverb is wisdom expressed in a sentence” (Mieder, 1985:113).

According to Milner (1969a:199) a proverb has the following characteristics: (a) it is pithy, concise and easily remembered by the use of rhyme, rhythm, repetition, or alliteration; (b) it is vivid, homely, sometimes coarse, deals with people’s primary interests; (c) it singles out something abstract and universal based on experience and observation which might be stated literally or figuratively; (d) it sums up a situation by appealing to humour; (e) it is often linked to another saying which appears to give it the life; and (f) its effect is to raise a statement from the ordinary to emphatic level in order to urge, teach, praise or convince, or alternatively, to warn, blame, restrain or discourage.

Some of the above aspects of proverbs identified by Milner are about the structure of proverbs (what proverbs are), while some of these are about the functional aspects of proverbs (what proverbs do). In the following pages, I discuss the views of proverb scholars about the various structural and functional aspects of proverbs. Later I propose a definition which covers both these important properties of the proverb.

### **1.2.1. What Proverbs Are: Linguistic and Structural Feature of Proverbs**

Proverbs scholars have devoted a great deal of effort to identify the occurrence of certain ‘markers’ which could help in identifying a statement as proverb. Proverb markers are those internal features which make a certain statement a proverb, even if it is presented in isolation, out of its surrounding discourse, and even if it is heard for the first time. Such ‘markers’ can be certain grammatical or syntactic features (e.g., omission of the article, certain patterns, quadripartite structures); semantic markers (e.g., metaphor, parallelism, paradox, irony); lexical markers (e.g., archaic or old-fashioned words; such words as never, always, everybody); phonic markers (e.g., rhyme, alliteration, meter) and so on (Litovkina, 1996:319).

Many proverb scholars agree that proverbs are ‘short’ and ‘pithy’ or ‘pregnant with meaning’ (Taylor, 1985; Lue *et al.*, 2004; Litovkina, 1996). In the words of Lue *et al.* (2004:2), proverbs are “brief and pithy, wise and witty”. For example, proverbs such as

*“Money talks”* and *“Haste makes waste”* contain only two and three words respectively. Though ‘shortness’ and ‘pithiness’ are relative and subjective terms (Taylor, 1985), Norrick (1985) argues that proverbs are ‘pithy’ because most proverbs are figurative in nature which express multiple meanings simultaneously, enabling them to be used for variety of purposes and variety of situations, and because ‘pithiness’ entails word-economy: the shorter a proverb, the pithier it is. For instance, *“Haste makes waste”* consists of only three words but convey a higher degree of lexical meaning per word.

Another feature of proverbs is its ‘completeness’. For most proverb scholars, “proverb means a grammatical sentence expressing an idea complete in itself” (Whiting, 1994:95). In contrast with ‘proverbial phrases’ and other ‘formulaic intensifiers’, proverbs are “self-contained units with a moral weight of their own and an argument that is virtually self-sufficient”; they are nearly always a single sentence statement (Abrahams, 1972:123; Honeck *et al.* 1980). The main aim behind this definitional criterion is to distinguish proverbs from proverbial phrases. For example, *“Easy come easy go”* is a proverb, but *“brown as a berry”* is a proverbial phrase.

The poetic features of proverbs are a much studied topic and many definitions refer to this aspect of proverbs as their defining criterion (Abrahams, 1968; Holbek, 1970; Norrick, 1985; and Milner, 1969a). Norrick (1985) distinguishes ‘external’ poetic features (such as rhyme, rhythm, parallelism, alliteration and so on) and ‘internal’ features (such as metaphor, pun, personification, hyperbole, and so on).<sup>5</sup> According to Norrick (1985), while prosody certainly helps in rendering a statement more memorable, fixed in structure, and thereby increases its chances of becoming inventorized as a unit in a language, it does not entail that all proverbs must exhibit standard prosodic structures. Regarding figuration in proverbs, scholars have pointed out that distinction between literal and figurative meaning is a matter of degree, rather than an absolute dichotomy, and that meaning depends on contexts in which a proverb has been used. As Hasan-Rokem (1982:15) argues, a proverb *x* may be in a metaphorical relationship to context *a*, but in literal relationship to context *b*, and so forth. Therefore it is safe to conclude that both prosody and figuration are common features of proverbs, but neither amounts to a criterion for the definition of proverb.

---

<sup>5</sup> No study, according to my knowledge, has been conducted on the poetic features of Pashto proverbs. Some examples, taken from Arora (1984) and D’Angelo (1977:366-7) of internal and external poetic techniques in English proverbs are: *Alliteration*: Better bend than break. *Rhyme*: Man proposes God disposes. *Metaphor and Simile*: Beauty fades like a flower. *Repetition*: A poor spirit is poorer than a poor purse. *Ellipsis*: Once bitten, twice shy. *Parallelism*: Age and wedlock tame man and beast. *Antithesis*: There is no pleasure without pain. *Paradox*: Absence makes the heart grow fonder. *Personification*: Hunger is the best cook. *Puns*: Call me cousin, but cozen me not. *Hyperbole*: All is fair in love and war, and so on. For a more elaborated discussion of poetic balance in proverbs, see Litvokina (1996), Russo (1983) and Jang (1999).

Some scholars have argued that proverb is ‘rigid and fixed’ in structure and form (Taylor, 1985; Barley, 1972, 1974; Green, 1975). The assumption is that a proverb must be ‘frozen in time’ so that the listener can immediately recall that a proverb is being used. However, as noted by Norrick (1985), many proverbs have their variants even in the same linguistic community. Moreover, certain structural changes or lexical addition to a proverb helps in the interpretation of the proverb and does not change the recognisability of the proverb. In fact, variability is a characteristic trait of proverbs; they can be added to, transformed, and abbreviated (Akbarian, 2012). For example the statement “*It is while the iron is hot that it should be struck*” would be still recognized as a proverbs though its form has been changed slightly. Hence, fixedness is not necessary in definition itself, but it distinguishes proverb from free-phrase genres like jokes and tales.

Proverbs are held as ‘true’ by people, though scholars are aware that the truth aspect of proverb is contextual, not absolute. Honeck *et al.* (1980) assert that *a proverb as a figurative statement is neither necessarily true nor necessarily false*. Being a generalization, a proverb in itself can’t be defined as ‘true’ or ‘false’. A person chooses a proverb according to the demands of the situation - not due to its universal, abstract sense (Mieder, 1989; 1985).

‘Traditionality’, ‘age’, and ‘commonness’ are among other features of proverbs. According to Abrahams (1969:106), proverbs are “traditional items of knowledge” which arise in “recurring performances.” As such, they are viewed as authorless, source-less, and also as non-literary, and their performance is essentially verbal (even if they are later recorded). In fact, tradition is the source from where the proverb draws its authenticity and functional power.

Some paremiologists such as Milner (1969a), Dundes (1975a) and Norrick (1985) have tried to define proverbs by focussing on their specific *syntactic* structures. I briefly review these well-known structural approaches to proverb because these add some value to the present research.

G. B. Milner (1969a:199) defines proverb on the basis of the “symmetrical structure of its form and content”. According to Milner’s theory, a proverb has four parts or ‘quarters’. Each quarter can be given a positive (+) or negative (–) value according to whether it is good or bad, safe or dangerous, friendly or hostile, useful or useless. The four quarters of a proverb can be grouped into two ‘halves’ and these halves count as negative (–) when the

quarters are opposite (+ and –) and as positive (+) when they are both positive or both negative (+ and + or – and –). According to Milner’s theory, the proverb “*New brooms sweep clean*” is positive because both its two parts or ‘halves’ (underlined) give a positive messages, while the proverb “*Soon ripe soon rotten*” would be negative because its second ‘halve’ (underlined) is negative as the word ‘rotten’ gives a negative feeling.<sup>6</sup> Millner’s approach is useful for the current research on Pashto proverbs and gender relations because it can provide clues in identifying whether a proverb about men or women in the data is positive or negative, as I elaborate in chapter 5, section 5.2.

Dundes (1975a) argues that structurally, all proverbs are composed of “a topic and a comment”. The ‘topic’ is the apparent referent, i.e., it is the subject or item which is allegedly described; the ‘comment’ is an assertion about the topic, usually concerning the form, function, characteristic, or action of the topic. The simplest form of proverb would thus be “*Money talks*” in which *money* is the ‘topic’ and *talks* is the ‘comment’. Similarly, proverbs like “*Barking dogs seldom bite*” or “*Still water runs deep*” have topic-comment structures. Dundes concluded that all proverbs are descriptive statements which are composed of at least one topic and one comment, and it is theoretically impossible to have a one word proverb (1975a). In the context of the current research project, Dundes’ approach can help in identifying who is the topic/targeted person in a particular Pashto proverb (e.g., male, female, children, adult and so on) and how these topic/characters are commented upon (see chapter 5, section 5.2 for detail).

Norrick (1985) suggested that properties of proverb and other related items of folklore can be arranged into a matrix by using a +, or a –, or a +/- sign indicating the presence, absence or optional presence of a given classificational property. Norrick developed a comprehensive table showing eleven properties which can be used to distinguish proverbs from other traditional genres like cliché, wellerism<sup>7</sup>, curse, proverbial phrase, riddle, joke, tale, song, slogan, and aphorism. These eleven properties are defined as: “potential free conversational turn, conversational, traditional, spoken, fixed form, didactic, general, figurative, prosodic, entertaining, and humorous” (Norrick, 1985:72). The strength of this method for the current research project is its potential in distinguishing proverbs from

---

<sup>6</sup> The most important issue with Milner’s approach, which he himself has recognized, is the arbitrariness and subjectivity in assignment of plus and minus values to the four quarters of a proverb.

<sup>7</sup> A wellerism is only slightly different from proverb. It comprises a usually well-known quotation followed by a facetious and often humorous sequel. For example, “*Every one to his own taste*”, said the old woman as she kissed the cow”, or “*I have no teeth*”, complains the chicken which eats corn, drinks water, and swallows pebbles” (see Dundes, 1964).



other closely related genres of Pashto folklore such as proverbial phrase and *tappas*<sup>8</sup> (short-songs), as I elaborate in chapter 4, section 4.5.1.

Before putting some concluding remarks on these structural features of proverbs, I will discuss some of the *functional aspects* of proverbs which some scholars have focussed on in order to define proverbs, and which are more important in view of the present thesis.

### **1.2.2. What Proverbs Do: Communicative and Behavioural Functions of Proverbs**

Scholars who have focussed on the communicative and behavioural aspects of proverbs have maintained that proverbs are not only linguistic structures; they play an active social role in the life of both speakers and listeners. By employing proverbs in their speech people wish to strengthen their arguments, express generalisations, influence or manipulate other people, rationalize our own shortcomings, question certain behavioural patterns, satirize social ills, or poke fun at ridiculous situations (Mieder, 1993:11). In Seitel's words, proverbs are best understood as "the strategic social use of metaphor" to serve certain purposes (Seitel, 1976:125). Seitel asserts that these short and traditional statements are used "to further some social end" (1976:127), that is, proverbs are used as rhetorical strategies in a communication event.

The usefulness to this study of these various functions of proverbs can be roughly grouped into five major categories.

Firstly, proverbs promote social integration by validating culture, "justifying its rituals and institutions to those who perform and observe them" (Bascom, 1965:290). When people express dissatisfaction with some accepted aspect of life, a 'wise' proverb will work as explanation. Talking about the functions of folklore in Afghan society, Dupree (1979:51) argues that folkloric items explain the group's origin and justify its existence and "define sexual and age-graded roles and describe ideal interpersonal, in-group and out-group behaviour". In this sense, folklore helps in social integration as folklore reinforces group feeling and satisfies the individual psychologically.

Secondly, folklore functions as "pedagogic devices" (Bascom, 1965:290), as "pedagogical discourse" (Granbom-Herranen, 2010:96), and as a means of teaching morals and values to children (Lawal *et al.*, 1997; Yankah, 2001; Akbarian, 2012). It is precisely because of

---

<sup>8</sup> A *tappa* is a two-line folk song in which the first verse consists of nine syllables and the second verse consists of thirteen syllables. A *tappa* can be sung or simply stated in a narrative style. *Tappa* occupies such an important position that it is sometimes called "the queen of Pashto folklore".

their pedagogical and moralist codes that proverbs are mostly associated with adults (Granbom-Herranen, 2010:96; Yankah, 2001). Talking about Afghan society, Dupree (1979:51) emphasises the pedagogical function of folklore, particularly in the socialisation of children: “The bulk of the Afghans must learn their history, value systems, and codes of conduct through oral means”. Proverbs and folk stories used to be part of primary school curriculums in Pakistan.<sup>9</sup>

Thirdly, proverbs fulfil “the important but often overlooked function of maintaining conformity to the accepted patterns of behaviour ... a means of applying social pressure and exercising social control” (Bascom, 1965:295). As such, proverbs are understood as instruments that create and establish certain social norms and behaviour (Grzybek, 1987; Yankah, 2001; Akbarian, 2012). Speaking of Afghan folktales, Dupree (1979:51) says that they “tend to *perpetuate*, not *protest*, the existing order” (emphasis in original). This function looks similar to the functions discussed earlier, but it is different in the sense that along with educating children and justifying social institutions, some proverbs and other folklores are means of applying social pressures on members of society in order to make them submit to societal norms. In other words, some proverbs are “employed against individuals who attempt to deviate from social conventions with which they are fully familiar” (Bascom, 1965:295).

Fourthly, proverbs reveal people’s frustrations and attempts to escape in fantasy from repressions imposed on them by society (Bascom, 1965:290). They provide a way of expressing what people cannot express in their actual lives. The use of pithy proverbs enables people to hide their own thoughts and say something they would not dare to say in a direct manner. This is a paradox: while proverbs play a vital role in transmitting and maintaining the social norms and in forcing the individual to conform to them, at the same time it provides socially approved outlets for the repressions which these same institutions impose upon individuals. In other words, some proverbs and other folklore could be the true feelings of the suppressed group, i.e., “voices from below” (Hamilton, 1987:74).

Lastly, proverbs are rhetorical devices - the “ornament of speech” (Akbarian, 2012) and “weaponry in natural interaction” (Lieber, 1994:101; Arewa & Dundes, 1964, Yankha, 2001). Proverbs are used for some practical, pragmatical purposes in various circumstances of everyday communication. With the aid of a proverb, one can aim to provide an

---

<sup>9</sup> I have heard from Pashtun elders that until 1960s, examination system in Pakistan’s primary school was based on riddle-like questions: a student’s ability was assessed on the basis of how quickly he/she can answer a riddle.

endorsement to his statements, express doubts, accuse someone of something, justify or excuse somebody, mock somebody, and so on and so forth (Krikmann, 1985:58). The rhetorical and didactic functions of proverbs are of central importance to many scholars. Norrick (1985), Seitel (1976), Abrahams (1972), Krikmann (1985), and Yankah (2001) among others have emphasised that the most important function of proverbs are their didactic properties. When a proverb is quoted, a direct or indirect hint is given to the listener asking him for some behavioural changes according to the situational context.

Now that I have discussed the linguistic and structural features of proverbs as well as their functions, I am in a position to define a proverb by focussing on both its structural/linguistic features (what proverb are) and its social functions (what proverbs do). Let's briefly recap the properties of proverbs discussed so far in order to arrive at a working definition of proverb.

Though 'shortness' is a relative term, proverb has the shortest form among all the varied genres of traditional verbal folk art (Russo, 1983:121). Proverbs are also 'self-contained' or 'complete' sayings as they are semantically complete and meaningful even if we don't know the larger context in which they are used. Though most proverbs have 'fixed forms' due to which they are recognisable/memorable, variation is equally a feature of proverbs. Hence, total frozenness of proverbs is not their defining property. Similarly, proverbs may be considered 'wise' and 'true', but this aspect is contextual. Proverbial truth is not an absolute truth. 'Traditionality' of proverbs is an important defining property which helps to distinguish a proverb from original, current utterances and related genres such as slogans and aphorisms whose authors are known. 'Prosody' or 'poetic features', and 'metaphors' and 'figurations' are common in proverbs but not necessary. Functionally, all proverbs have a 'didactic contents' either in a direct or an indirect way. That is, proverbs are primarily used to teach, inform, edify, warn, caution, instruct and moralise the listener and to normalize any anomaly in social life. This is a defining function of proverb.

Combining the structural and functional aspects of proverb, I will define a proverb as follows: "*A proverb is a short but complete statement carrying folk wisdom in a general and often figurative form to guide behaviour in a recurrent situation*". This, then, becomes our working definition of proverb. Structurally, this definition is restrictive enough to distinguish a proverb from most of the other folklore genres such as folksongs (which are usually longer), riddles (which are neither fixed nor in a statement form), folktales (which are usually longer) and jokes (which are neither traditional, nor wise and are primarily used

for entertainment). Functionally, this definition captures the essential communicative role of proverbs in social life – that is, their didactic role of providing ‘guidance’ in day to day social life.

Now that I have developed a working definition of proverbs in light of previous literature, I now turn more specifically to the collection and studies of Pashto proverbs.

### **1.3. Pashto Proverbs: Collections and Studies**

Naeem (2007:21) notes that there was a “complete silence in study of Pashto folklore till 1850.” After this, European scholars, mostly in the form of British colonial officers-turned-writers and Christian missionaries started collecting Pashto folklore and translated them into European languages, primarily for the purpose of understanding the local culture and facilitating communication between the colonial administrators and the local people (Naeem, 2007; Tair, 1975). Almost all contemporary scholars of Pashto literature agree that the first formal attempt to study Pashto proverbs was made by S. S. Thorburn, a colonial administrative officer of the British Raj whose book *Bannu, Or Our Afghan Frontier* (1876) is devoted to the world view of the Pashtun people as evident in their folktales, ballades, riddles, and proverbs. Regarding women in Pashto proverbs, Thorburn has observed that: “A Pathan [Pashtun] sums up his opinion about the softer sex in two very comprehensive proverbs... “A woman’s wisdom is under her heel”, and “A woman is well either in the house or in the grave”, the argument being that because she is an utter fool, she is only fit to be a plaything and a slave” (Thorburn, 1978 [1876]:251).

The main significance of the book lies in it being the first book on Pashto folklore and the first book to introduce Pashto folklore to the English world, which opened the door for the collection and study of Pashto language folk literature.

The French scholar James Darmesteter is another distinguished name of that period whose two volume book *Chants populaires des Afghans* (1888–1890) includes abundant amounts of Pashto folk poetry as well as linguistic notes, in which he treated Pashto folk poetry as a reflection of social conditions, national character, and political life of Pashtuns. In 1932, Major George Gilbertson produced a two volume dictionary of Pashto idioms in which he included many Pashto proverbs and proverbial expressions along with English translation. Another popular name in the list of orientalists is Jens Enevoldsen whose small book

*Sound the Bells, O Moon Arise: Pashto Proverbs and Folk Songs* (1969) is a selection of a hundred Pashto proverbs and a hundred short-songs (*tappas*) written in Pashto script with English translation.<sup>10</sup>

There is an impressive volume of work on Pashto folklore by local scholars which could be broadly divided into two categories: those conducted by academicians under the auspices of research institutions and those conducted by individuals throughout the Pashtun regions.

The establishment of the Pashto Academy in Peshawar in 1955 gave a formal beginning to the collection and publication of Pashto folklore. An annotated bibliography of Pashto folklore scholarship by local researchers compiled by Hidayatullah Naeem (2007) lists a total of 320 publications. A critical review of this bibliography would lay bare the current state of affairs of Pashto proverbs. Out of the 320 books, only 7 are specifically about proverbs, with the rest about other genres of folklores such as folktales, children stories, ballads, folk songs, and superstitions. The author himself acknowledged that 142 out of 320 annotated books “are currently either out of print or difficult to find” (Naeem, 2007:27). Many of the annotated books are actually booklets, some comprising as little as 20 pages. Moreover, most of the books have been self-published by their respective authors in the shape of chapbooks<sup>11</sup> without any academic supervision and standards, a good number bearing neither the name of the publishers nor the publication dates. Furthermore, not all these books can be categorised as ‘folklore’ in the true sense, because the compiler seems to include everything that says something in *Pashto language* about the *past* of Pashtuns people or the *rural* aspect of Pashtun culture. Much of the literature on Pashto folklore can thus be said to lack academic merit and rigour. Nevertheless, some valuable work has been done by individuals and academics on proverbs. One example is Muhammad Din Zhwak (1965) collection which includes around 2500 Pashto proverbs. Another good source among the earlier collections is that of Akbar S. Ahmad (1975) containing some 200 proverbs with literal translations in English and occasional mentions of equivalents in other languages. These and other such collections, though valuable in the

---

<sup>10</sup> Other significant scholarly works on Pashto language and culture includes those of Henry George Raverty and Sir Olaf Caroe. Raverty must be credited for undertaking the most comprehensive work on Pashto language during the colonial period, publishing his first book on Pashto grammar in 1859, ‘*A Grammar of the Pukhto, Pushto or Language of the Afghans*’ (2 vols.) and ‘*A Dictionary of the Pukhto, Pushto, or Language of the Afghans*’ (1860). ‘*The Pathans*’ (1958) by Sir Olaf Caroe – now rated a classic – is the last standard reference work of significance about Pashtun rendered by an official who served during the colonial period. For a more comprehensive review of ‘Pashto under the British Empire’, see Jan (2009).

time of their publications, have partly lost their importance because of the publication of Tair's massive collection of Pashto proverbs, discussed below.

The most important work on Pashto proverb has been accomplished by Muhammad Nawaz Tair, who compiled a two volume book on Pashto proverbs '*Ruhi Mataloona*' (1975-1981) under the patronage of the Pashto Academy, University of Peshawar. As this is the main source book I have consulted for the current research, and because this is hitherto the most comprehensive book on Pashto proverbs, a slightly critical and elaborated review of this collection, especially its method of proverbs collection, is relevant in order to set the context for the current research on gender and Pashto proverbs.

Tair's *Ruhi Mataloona* (Pashto Proverbs) is the first major contribution of Pashto Academy, University of Peshawar since its establishment in 1955. Explaining how the proverbs were collected for the book under discussion, Syed Khial Bukhari, the then director of Pashto Academy, writes in his forward to the book:

“We made announcements in our [monthly] magazine in which we requested people to send us items of Pashto folklore. We also set out a small remuneration for those who send us proverbs ... which showed very encouraging results in the shape of a large number of proverbs that we received” (Bukhari, in Tair, 1975:2, translation mine).

This compilation exceeds twelve thousands proverbs, more than any other collection of Pashto proverbs. However, Tair seems to be aware that this compilation is still not complete:

“We have the belief that even still there is a large stock of proverbs that is yet to be gathered. Pashtun women and rural peasants can help with Pashto academy a lot by sending us proverbs, because they are the true preservers and protectors of our folk literature, and it is because of them that a large number of Pashto proverbs are preserved today” (Tair, 1975:12, translation mine).

The quotes above and a careful read of the book reveal some important things about the collection. Tair believes – quite rightly – that a large number of Pashto proverbs are still to be collected and published.<sup>12</sup> Tair also considers “women and peasants” as the true preservers (and users) of proverbs. They are the ‘true folks’ according to Tair. It is disappointing therefore to see that women and peasants did not contribute significantly to this proverb collection. In fact, on pages 13-16, Tair lists those people who sent proverbs to

---

<sup>12</sup> Tair's view is validated by this thesis as a significant number of ‘new’ proverbs have been collected for the first time during the course of this thesis. See chapter 5 for more detail.

the academy, and no woman could be found in the long list of proverbs-contributors. This may be because of women's limited access to the academy due to illiteracy and cultural restrictions. A look at the names and locations of the proverbs contributors further reveals that they do not equally represent all areas of Pashtuns. From some districts (such as Kohat) a large number of people contributed proverbs while some other areas (such as Dir, Swat, and Tribal Areas) are either underrepresented or not represented at all. The author states that some proverbs were purposely excluded from the book because of their offensive or "obscene language", or because their contents "could cause insult to members of certain Pashtun tribes" (p.12). However, when it comes to offensive proverbs about women and racist proverbs about other ethnic groups such as Punjabis and Hindus, Tair did not employ any censorship. Furthermore, while the proverbs number over twelve thousand, a lot have been repeated again and again, sometimes mistakenly, other times due to slight variation in the form of a proverb.<sup>13</sup> Lastly, but more importantly, no contextual explanations have been provided to explain the meaning of a certain proverb or how a particular proverb might be used in actual life. In the words of Naeem (2007:93), "this is a good collection; however, Tair has carelessly mixed up this precious treasure of the academy, so that now we do not know which proverb is in its original shape and place and which one is not."

These observations aside, the book is still the most complete, most accessible, most well-known, and the most recommended one for those interested in the study of Pashto proverbs.<sup>14</sup> As I explain in the methodology chapter, I have used this book as the primary source for my own research and the proverbs I collected from the field have been cross-checked with this book.

Tair's collection has summed up earlier collections of Pashto proverbs. However, Pashto proverbs continued to be collected and published. For example, *Writings on the Stones* (n.d) by Sayed Nawaz contain proverbs and other 'wise quotes', as evident from the title of the book. M. Nawaz Khan's (2005) small book (20 pages) on Pashto proverbs contains three hundred and fifty proverbs. Akhtar (1997) has collected proverbs which according to him are known and spoken in district Swat.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> Tair himself acknowledge this on page 12.

<sup>14</sup> The collection (*Ruhi Mataloona*) is complete in the sense that it has incorporated most of the previous smaller collections produced by foreign and local researchers. The author acknowledges at least 9 such earlier collections from which he has benefited (see Tair, 1975:13).

<sup>15</sup> In addition to specific proverb collections, smaller selections or citations of Pashto proverbs can be found in other works dealing with Pashto language, history and culture. For example, volume II of Qazi Rahimullah

While these collections provide an excellent resource for Pashtun proverbs, their usefulness could have been further enhanced by providing some contextual explanations of proverbs and by detailing the methods through which proverbs were collected. Most of the authors have neither explained the method through which they have collected these proverbs nor have they provided any contextual explanation with proverbs.<sup>16</sup>

Overall, there seems to be significant work on proverb collection (paremiography). But as we will see in the section below, no significant work has been done on proverbs study and analysis (paremiology). It is time to move from a ‘collection approach’ towards an ‘analytical approach’ in dealing with Pashto proverbs.

#### 1.4. Studies on Proverbs and Gender: Representation and Performance

Until recently there has been a dearth of interest in gender issues in the field of paremiology. This is not only because the field has been male-dominated, but also because collectors focussed on men as the primary informants while “women seem to have been consulted only if male informants were unavailable or if the material concerned an area thought of as women’s prerogative” (Farrer, 1975: v; cf. Weigle, 1978). In recent decades, however, there has been a blooming of research on gender and folklore.<sup>17</sup>

The vast literature on gender and folklore can be broadly grouped into two major categories: (a) those concerned with studying how folkloric items of a culture *represent* the images of women and men as gendered beings, or how folklore play a role in conditioning attitudes towards women; and (b) those concerned with how men and women *perform* a

---

Khan’s *The Modern Pushtu Instructor* contains a selection of two hundred “proverbs in common use” with variants and English glosses (1943:148-172). Similarly, Dawood (1990 and 2006) also cites a number of proverbs. Some writers have taken a different approach by explaining the background stories behind proverbs. The assumption is that each proverb is in fact a short summary of a long story, anecdote or personal experience of a person or group in a particular time and locality. Two such examples are Zaland (1985) and Shinwari (1990) which includes proverbs along with background stories behind proverbs. The authenticity of these stories, however, is essentially a debatable issue. The most recent collection of Pashto proverbs is the 10 page *Pashto Proverbs Booklet* (2012) by Andrew D. Belyea, a staff member of the NATO forces currently engaged in Afghanistan. The author’s main purpose behind this booklet is to facilitate communication and negotiation between the coalition forces and the local Afghan people. The author believes that the “overwhelming majority” of enemy “have to be persuaded”, not killed or driven into hiding. For this purpose, he found proverbs as the “most appropriate tools”, especially to “broach a sensitive subject” (Belyea, 2012:167-181).

<sup>16</sup> My own comparative review of these collections reveals that most of them have been written by non-academics and seem to have copied proverbs from each other without acknowledgement.

<sup>17</sup> For a historical overview of gender, women and folklore, see de Caro (1983), Jordan and de Caro (1986) and Webster (1986).



certain folkloric genre differently than each other, or the ways that men and women express and project their emotions through a certain folklore. In short, the first types of studies are concerned with ‘gender and representations’, while the second group of studies are concerned with ‘gender and agency’ or ‘gender and performance’. Studies in the first category far outnumber studies in the second category, and even more so in the case of proverbs and gender. The finish folklorist Granbom-Herranen (2010) has aptly summarised this state of affairs:

“First of all, the proverbs have been widely seen as a part of patriarchal masculine speech. Secondly, women have been seen as the object of negative proverbial speech. Women are mostly connected with ... proverbs when the main point has been to examine the underestimation of women and womanhood. This interpretation is the substratum for researchers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and even 21<sup>st</sup> century” (Granbom-Herranen, 2010:95).

In order to expose male chauvinism in folklore of various cultures, scholars have focussed on all forms of folk stories, legends, myths, songs, rhymes and games; but, as Kerschen (2012:3) notes, proverbs “are perhaps the best indicators of attitudes and beliefs” and “if one wants to explore the historical image of women in oral tradition, proverbs are an ideal subject”. Proverbs of all societies are replete with commentary on the ‘nature’ of women (and men, children, ethnic groups, animal and so on) and the relationship of women to one another and to other beings and objects. According to Webster (1986), portrayals of characters in folklore tend to be simplistic and stereotyped, while with regard to women, contrasts are frequently sharp, as between virgins and whores, saints and sinner, healers and witches, and the likes. Noted folklorist Alan Dundes has shown in his essay *The Crowing Hen and the Easter Bunny: Male Chauvinism in American Folklore* (1980) that while boys are discussed first and mentioned in terms of strength and daring, girls are associated with sweet foodstuff and smallness; women are mentioned in association with homemaking and domestic servitude and are expected to marry, while men are associated with activeness and independence; women are told what they should do, which is act like women, and what they should not do, which is act like men; thus, the negative reactions to ‘tomboys’ and ‘whistling girls’

Lois Kerschen in her collection of *American Proverbs about Women: A Reference Guide* (2012 [1998]) notes that:

“Generally speaking, proverbs about women are characterized by biting wit and bitter complaints. While some proverbs are the saccharine, “up on a pedestal” kind (God couldn’t be everywhere; therefore, He made mothers), the majority portray

woman as a sharp-tongued, long-winded, empty-headed, toy-like creature who is faithless to the man by whom she should be ruled and to whom she belongs like property or livestock” (Kerschen, 2012:8).

Much work on representation of women and the construction of gender relations in proverbs have been conducted on African proverbs (e.g., Asimeng-Boahene, 2013; Ncube & Moyo, 2011; Fakoya, 2007; Summar, 1995; Mariam, 1995; Balogun, 2010; Oha, 1998; Hussien, 2004, 2005, 2009; Ennaji, 2008; and Webster, 1982). Webster (1982:181) in a study of Moroccan proverbs has shown that not only women are held to be inferior to men, but they become progressively more so with time, and it is believed that at old age male virtue and female folly reach their ultimate actualization. Hussein (2005) in a series of research studies on representation of women in proverbs of Eastern Africa notes that African oral traditions portray women in general as foolish, weak, jealous, evil, unfaithful, dependent, frivolous and seductive. She further notes that women as a group are criticised for failing to follow the normative path laid out by men, which is kind of ‘blaming the victim’ to justify inequality by finding defect in the victim rather than examining the social and economic factors that contribute to their deficit (Hussein, 2004).

One finds similar conclusions in studies from other parts of the world. With reference to Turkish proverbs, Dorn (1986) maintains that the burden to uphold family honour and moral education of children rests on the shoulder of women, due to which her behaviour is more closely watched than that of men. Han (2001) lists a number of Korean proverbs which limit women’s activities to the household, associate women with misfortune and bad luck, prioritise women’s appearance, and so on. Xiaoping’s (2008) research shows that Chinese proverbs emphasize male positive images or stress male-dominance over females. In contrast, expressions which portray women tend to depict the negative images of the sex, and that “gender-related proverbs echo the dominant social rules and norms concerning behaviours and roles of men and women in a male-dominant society” (2008:39-40). Nakhavaly & Sharifi’s (2013) analysis of Persian proverbs found a “deep-rooted gender biased ideology” with “84% of the negative proverbs against women compared to 16% against men” (2013:195). A number of studies from different countries also found that proverbs consistently depict the boy and his mother in privileged positions while the girl, on the other hand, is looked down upon and is considered a burden (e.g., Kiyimba, 2006; Upadhyaya, 1967, 1968, 1970).

Some researchers have compared proverbs of different cultures/languages to measure and compare attitude towards women. For example, Hussein (2009) compared the

representation of women in sample proverbs from Ethiopia, Sudan, and Kenya, and found a “synchronic prevalence” of the sexist proverbs which show that there are “intercultural similarities in the way women are treated”; and that there is “simultaneity and connectivity” in the patriarchal worldview in the countries which “serve as ideological weapons used to persuade the public of the assumed weaknesses, fragility, and powerlessness of women” (Hussein, 2009:105). Other studies of similar nature and almost similar results include that of Ndungo (2002) on the social construction of gender in Gikuyu and Swahili proverbs, Yusuf’s (2002) comparative study of English and Yoruba proverbs, and Muwati *et al.* (2011) on the cultural construction of mothering/motherhood in Shona and Ndebele proverbs. The most prominent and extensive research on the representation of women in proverbs is that of Mineke Schipper’s (2004) *Never Marry a Woman with Big Feet: Women in Proverbs from around the World*. Schipper argues that proverbial messages are an excellent yardstick for finding out the extent to which people continue to accept particular ideas about women. Like Hussein (2009), Schipper also discovered more similarities than differences in thousands of proverbs about women from across the world.

Many authors explicitly or implicitly argue that most of these derogatory proverbs have been originated by men to express their jealousy and fear of women, and maintain that women have seldom originated proverbs since men have historically dominated literature and society (e.g., Kerschen, 2012; Schipper, 1991, 2004; Dieleman, 1998; Thorburn, 1978; Granbom-Herranen, 2010).

What is common among the studies discussed above is their concern with the *representation* of women and gender relations in proverbs of different cultures and languages. Moreover, these studies not only have reached almost similar results, but they also have methodological similarities. With the exception of a very few, most studies draw upon proverbs previously collected by others; some authors clearly mention the source(s) of the proverbs, however, some have remained totally silent on how they found these proverbs. Second hand *selection of proverbs* from published sources is easier than first hand *collection of proverbs* in terms of time and resources; however, studies based on their authors’ own field research provide a more intimate grasp of the precise connection between the proverb and cultural context. This point has been noted by folklorists:

“Surveys of folklore texts or studies of particular “items” of folklore that are anti-woman are not without value, but they suffer from a weakness that has been a part of folklore studies in general, namely, that the study of texts alone without

reference to the cultural context in which those texts were written yields only limited knowledge about culture and cultural attitudes, especially when the texts may be chosen in “a random and superficial way” (Jordan & de Caro, 1986:503).

First-hand collection of folklore has other, more important, advantages: it is here when the folklorist meets the folks, the *performers*; it is where the *context* of performance can be appreciated; and it is here when the researcher can attend to the *difference* in performance of one or another folklore item by different people of the same culture, say, men and women. This idea of increasing attention towards cultural context of folklore has been termed as “the performance turn” in folklore studies (Bauman, 1975; Ben-Amos, 1971; Abrahams; 1968). As will be seen later, the current research improves on previous studies as proverbs have also been collected from local speakers through qualitative interviews and discussion.

The preceding section notes a good number of studies on the *representation* of gender in proverb texts. There are far fewer studies on the *performance* of proverbs in actual context with reference to gender. Instead, previous studies are focus on the performance of folksongs and folktales by women, or ‘popular culture’ as a general category. Examples of a few such studies that may be roughly categorised under the ‘performance approach’ are discussed below.

Mdluli (2007) in her article *Voicing their Perception, Swazi Women Folk Song*, shows that most of the women’s songs are meant to celebrate the pleasures of love within the institution of marriage. However, she found that “some songs contain elements of satire which give them the potential to be used as “spears” for fighting for social justice and change in society”, such as songs which are critical of early, arranged and polygamous marriages and the practice of wife-beating (2007:87). Adeleye-Fayemi (1994) and Hogan (2008) draw similar conclusions from their separate but similar studies on women’s songs and argue that women’s songs are a crucial medium of political contestation and personal expression that flourishes where written discourse fails. Adeleye-Fayemi argues that folklore

“is part of power relations... between domination and subordination, ... and individual women, in their everyday lives, constantly make guerrilla raids upon patriarchy, win small fleeting victories, keep the enemy constantly on the alert, and gain, and sometimes hold pieces of territory (however small) for themselves” (1994:2).

Similar studies on Indian women's and girls' songs include the work of Nilsson (1984), Narayan, (1986), Tokita-Tanabe (1999), Jain (2009), and Raheja and Gold (1994). The common conclusion of these studies is that women express their deep desires, sorrows and complains through songs which they would not be able to express otherwise in the restrictive and patriarchal environment of South Asian society.

A question comes to mind as to why most studies of gender and folklore performance have focused on women's songs and narrative storytelling, but not on proverbs? One explanation might be that in most cultures proverbs are considered to be primarily a male realm; just as folksongs are associated with women, or riddles are associated with children (Hasan-Rokem & Shulman, 1996), proverbs are associated with men (Granbom-Herranen, 2010:100). This is in line with the traditional 'gender dualism' of "reason vs. emotions" – proverbs signify wisdom and reason (hence, men's domain), while songs signify emotions and feelings (hence, women's domain). Among the Pashtuns, Pashto proverbs are associated with men and the Pashto *tappas* (short-songs) are associated with women. Some writers have argued that majority of these *tappas* have been anonymously composed by women (Enevoldsen, 2004; Shaheen, 1984).<sup>18</sup> This may be the reason why studies have approached Pashto *tappas* and others such songs of women to locate women's voices, but not proverbs. Another reason for why gender relations and proverbs have not been examined from the performance point of view is that proverb is "the most difficult" to be examined as far as its actual usage is concerned (Yankah, 1982:144). Yankah has further explained the methodological difficulty in studying proverbs in spontaneous conversation: you can ask a group of women to sing folksongs, you can request a man to tell a folktale, you can ask children to engage in riddles, but you cannot request a person to use a proverb. It is because a proverb does not come on requests; it comes on to mind when an appropriate context has arisen. A person may rattle one proverb after another on the request of the researcher, and he/she may explain the meaning of certain proverbs in their own words, however, this may be called 'proverb recalling' but not proverb performance in actual context (Yankah, 1982). To paraphrase Arewa and Dundes (1964:73), the shelves of folklorists are filled with explanations of how proverbs depict men and women, but few of these explanations come from the how these proverbs are actual used by people in ordinary conversational contexts.

---

<sup>18</sup> Though this claim is hard to verify, for how can something composed 'anonymously' be attributed to men or women with certainty? However, in terms of grammatical gender, *matal* (proverb) is masculine, while *tappa* is a feminine. In fact, *tappa* as a genre always ends with a feminine sounding word, which may be the signal of its anonymous female composer.

Helen Yitah has exceptionally carried out research on proverbs performance from the view point of women as agents, not objects. Yitah (2006a, 2006b, 2009, and 2012) has attempted to document what she calls “proverbial revolt” of Kasena women of Ghana. She examined “how perceptions of gender and female personhood are invoked, evoked, enacted, rejected, consciously reshaped, or completely transformed” and found that women “subvert, contradict, and deconstruct the sexist ideology in Kasena proverbs” and “create a corpus of “counter-proverbs” by which they establish their own signifying terms” (Yitah, 2006a:233).

As mentioned before, no study has been conducted on gender and Pashto proverbs. However, all ethnographic studies on Pashtuns have realized the importance of Pashto proverbs and almost all studies have sporadically quoted proverbs to make a particular point. For example, Papanek (1979), Grima (1985, 1986, 1992), Ahmad (2006, 2005), Frembgen (2006), Billaud (2009) and Lindholm (1982, 1996, 2008) all use Pashto proverbs in their ethnographic works on Pashtun people, though none of them are mainly dealing with proverbs in their respective studies. The only ethnographic study specifically focussing Pashto proverbs is that of Leonard Bartlotti (2000) who conducted his thesis on the mutual relationship between proverbs and religion. Although Bartlotti’s study is not concerned with gender issues, he is aware of the importance of proverbs and gender relations and suggests that Pashtun women’s “involvement in the actual or hypothetical situations reported by various male informants leads us to believe that women, too, are skilled users and interpreters of proverbs” (Bartlotti, 2000:99-100). Bartlotti further recommends that Pashtun “women’s proverb usage” should be “a subject for future research” (2000:102).

## **Summary of the Chapter**

This chapter has reviewed the structural and functional aspects of proverbs discussed by different scholars in the field. It was noted that some scholars have focussed on the specific linguistic ‘markers’ and features of proverbs, while others have defined proverbs on the basis of their syntactic features. Of more relevance to this study, some scholars have also defined proverbs by focussing on the functional roles they play in society, such as promoting group solidarity, ensuring social control, providing opportunity to indirectly voice alternative discourse, working as pedagogical devices for younger generation, and as

‘verbal weaponry’ in ordinary conversation. Keeping in view this literature review, a working definition of proverb was proposed for the purpose of the current study: “A proverb is a short but complete statement carrying traditional wisdom in a general and often figurative form to guide behaviour in a recurrent situation”.

The chapter also reviewed literature on Pashto proverbs compilations and studies till date. It was noted that while an impressive number of collections have been published, many lack academic rigor, and none provide contextual backgrounds to proverbs in actual usage. A review of previous studies on proverbs and gender revealed that most studies have focussed on the representation of gender relations in proverbs, little attentions and efforts have been focussed on the actual performance of proverbs by male and female. In addition, most studies have worked with pre-collected sources of proverbs.

As I will detailed in the chapter on methodology, the present study attempts to fill these gaps by combining fieldwork for collection of proverbs in their socio-cultural contexts along with selecting proverbs from pre-collected sources. In terms of ‘representation’ vs. ‘performance’, the present study also combines these two approaches by looking at not only how Pashto proverbs represent gender relations, but also how gender and proverbs are performed by men and women on a daily basis. In other words, the study is innovative in two ways: firstly, it combines the representation of gender relations in proverbs with the performance of gender and proverbs by men and women, i.e., how gendering takes place in everyday proverbial speech. Secondly, the study combines selection of proverbs from pre-collected sources with proverbs collected first hand through fieldwork as they are being used in actual life. These two aspects make the study distinctive both methodologically as well as conceptually.

## Chapter 2

### Language and Gender: Theoretical Framework

#### Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to develop a theoretical framework to inform my research on Pashto proverbs and gender relations in Pakistan. To do this, I first review the sociolinguistic literature on linguistic sexism and language use by men and women. The study of language and gender is an interdisciplinary endeavour shared by scholars in linguistics, sociology, anthropology, speech communication, social psychology, education, literature, and other disciplines. Many researchers have been concerned primarily with documenting gender-related patterns of language use, but the field has also included the study of language as a lens through which to view social and political aspects of gender relations. The study of gender and language thus not only provides a descriptive account of men and women language usage but also reveals how language functions as a symbolic resource to create and manage personal, social, and cultural meanings and identities. The findings of research on language and gender show that there are verifiable differences between men and women speech patterns which arise from, and further cement, unequal gender relations.

The chapter then presents a more sociological perspective on sexism where I argue that sexism in sociology has been understood as an ideology which provides the basis for the reproduction of unequal gender relations. Drawing on Eagleton and Barrett, I also explain how (sexist) ideologies work by delineating the mechanisms and strategies which help dominant ideologies in sustaining power over those subjected to it. The next section of the chapter presents a critical overview of patriarchy as a conceptual tool for explaining gender relations. In particular, I discuss Walby's (1990) theory of patriarchy and identify its strengths and weakness in the context of the current research. In order to fill the identified gaps in Walby's theory and to broaden the scope of the theoretical framework, I discuss Moghadam (1992), Kandayoki (1988), and Connell (1995, 2005). Lastly, the chapter combines the various theories along with the concepts of 'intersectionality' (Collins, 2000) to make a coherent theoretical framework to inform data analysis in this thesis.



## **2.1. Definition of Sexism and Linguistic Sexism**

The term ‘linguistic sexism’ refers to the existence of certain elements in a language that help expressing bias in favour of one sex on the other. Mostly, the bias is in favour of men. Graddol and Swann (1989:96), for example, define ‘sexism’ as “any discrimination against women or men because of their sex, and made on irrelevant grounds”. Ivy and Backlund (1994:72) note that if sexism refers to attitudes/or behaviours that denigrate one sex, then it follows that ‘linguistic sexism’ would be verbal communication that conveys those attitudes and behaviours. Atkinson (1993:403) defines linguistic sexism as “a wide range of verbal practices, including not only how women are labelled and referred to, but also how language strategies in mixed sex interaction may serve to silence or depreciate women as interactants”. According to Vetterling-Bruggin (1981:3-4), a word or sentence is sexist if it creates, promotes, constitutes and exploits any irrelevant or impertinent marking of the distinction between the sexes.

Many feminists have examined the representation of women in language and have argued that language encodes a culture’s values, and in this way reflects sexist culture. Yet, as Cameron (1990:14) suggests, rather than seeing language as a reflection of society or as a determining factor in social change, “it could be seen as a carrier of ideas and assumptions which become, through their constant re-enactment in discourse, so familiar and conventional we miss their significance.” This chapter outlines the theoretical frameworks I will be drawing on in examining these ideas and assumptions and highlighting their significance for gender relations in Pakistan.

## **2.2. Language and Gender: Research and Theories**

This section presents an overview of sociolinguistic research on gender and language and discusses the various theories that account for the role of language in gender relations. The section first presents some findings from sociolinguistics studies, followed by theories of language and gender.

Starting in late the 1950s and early 1960s, researchers from a variety of academic backgrounds have been interested in the systematic study of language and/in society.

Among these, ‘sociolinguistics’ and ‘sociology of language’ are the two most common fields of study relevant to the current research on language and gender relations.<sup>19</sup> Tagliamonte (2006:4) explains the relationship between ‘sociolinguistics’ and ‘sociology of language’ as follows: “sociolinguistics tends to put emphasis on language in social context, whereas the sociology of language emphasises the social interpretation of language”.<sup>20</sup> According to Trudgill (1974:32), sociolinguistics “is that part of linguistics which is concerned with language as a social and cultural phenomenon”. The labels and approaches of these disciplines are different, but what is common among them is more important – that is, the main focus of these studies is to understanding *who* speak *what* language to *whom*, *when* (Fishman, 1965:67). In addition to that, sociology of language is also more interested in understanding *why* people speak the way they speak, *how* people’s speaking pattern is related to power structures of society, *how* power is sustained through language, and *how* might it be changed to the advantage of those who are dominated by it (Wardaugh, 2010). However, some scholars will not agree with separating sociolinguistics from sociology of language on these grounds. Kendall and Tannen (2001:248) have noted that “language and gender research tend to focus on (1) documenting empirical differences between women’s and men’s speech, especially in cross-sex interaction; (2) describing women’s speech in particular; and, for many, (3) identifying the role of language in creating and maintaining social inequality between women and men”. These three areas of inquiry seem to cross cut the research on language and gender.

The major findings of studies on language and society over the last four decades have been summarised by Burk and Peter (1987:3-4) as follows:

1. Different social groups use different varieties of language.
2. The same people employ different varieties of language in different situations.
3. Language reflects the society in which it is spoken.
4. Language shapes the society in which it is spoken.

Burk and Peter (1987) have observed that the first two points are more descriptive and the last two points are more analytical and more controversial. These points are general and are applicable to all social groups including, but not limited to, gender. In terms of gender specific differences in language use, sociolinguistics research shows some important

---

<sup>19</sup>Other approaches to the study of language and society include ‘ethnolinguistics’, ‘ethnography of speaking’ or ‘ethnography of communication’.

<sup>20</sup>Tagliamonte (2006:3) has further divided ‘sociolinguistics’ into qualitative (ethnography of communication, discourse analysis, etc.) and quantitative (language variation and change) approaches.

differences between men's and women's speech. The major findings have been summarized by Holmes (1998). These are:

1. Women and men develop different pattern of language use.
2. Women tend to focus on the affective functions of an interaction more often than men do.
3. Women tend to use linguistic devices that steer solidarity more often than men do.
4. Women tend to interact in ways which will maintain and increase solidarity, men tend to interact in ways which will maintain and increase their power and status.
5. Women are stylistically more flexible than men.

A number of studies have confirmed the above findings. However, scholars disagree on how to interpret these differences (Wardaugh, 2010). In the following section, I will discuss different theoretical explanations for these differences along with findings of specific studies use to support these claims.

### **2.2.1. Theories of Language and Gender**

Literature on language and gender can be broadly divided into four groups according to the theoretical approach adopted in these studies: the *deficit* approach, the *difference* approach, the *dominance* approach, and the *dynamic* or *social constructionist* approach. These theoretical explanations mainly originate from sociolinguistic studies (both quantitative and qualitative), but scholars from other disciplinary background (especially sociology) have also contributed heavily to these theories. These explanations developed roughly in a historical sequence, though the emergence of a new approach did not mean that the earlier approaches were suspended. In fact, at any one time these different approaches could be described as existing in a state of tension with each other, though, as Coates (2004) has noted, most researchers currently adopt the social constructionist approaches. At the end of the section, I will explain how these theories (or some of them) will be helpful in explaining the usage of proverbs by Pashtun men and women.

#### *The Deficit Approach*

The *deficit* approach was characteristic of the earliest work in the field of language and gender. Its history could be traced back to centuries of 'folklinguistics' beliefs that women speak a 'deficient' language as compared to men. According to Bergvall (1999), the roots of the deficit approach lie in medieval notions of the chain of being – God above man,

above women, above the beasts – in which women were seen as a diminished copy of the original Adam, and women’s language was thus also seen as an imperfect, deviant, or deficient gloss of men’s. Jespersen (1922) in his (in)famous work on language advocated the deficit view, for whom male language is normative and the language of ‘others’ (the ‘child’, the ‘foreigner’ and the ‘woman’) is considered extra to that norm and, as such, deficient. More recently, feminists have classified Robin Lakoff’s pioneering publication *Language and Women’s Place* (1973)<sup>21</sup> under the category of deficit approach. ‘Women’s language’, Lakoff argues, is characterised by linguistic forms which weakens or mitigates the force of an utterance: “weaker” expletives (*Oh, dear* versus *damn*); “trivializing” adjectives (*Divine* versus *great*); tag questions used to express speakers’ opinions (*Isn’t it?*); rising intonation in declaratives (as seen in the second part of the sequence, “*What’s for dinner?*” “*Roast beef?*”); and mitigated requests (*Would you please close the door?* versus *Close the door*) (1975:10-18). Lakoff’s work has been severely criticised in the field for not only its methodological weaknesses and some sweeping claims without empirical evidence, but also for treating men’s language as the ‘norm’, the standard against which women’s language was measured.<sup>22</sup> Cameron (1995, 1996) in her analysis of “verbal hygiene,” traces much of the pressure exerted on women to monitor and “clean up” their deficient language practice. This theoretical approach is neither respected in current research on language and gender, nor is it very much relevant to the research at hand.

### *The Dominance Approach*

An alternative explanation of the difference between men’s and women’s language use emerged in the form of the “*dominance theory*” which holds that language differences between men and women are triggered by inequitable power relations between the two sexes. The well-known proponents of this approach are West and Zimmerman (1975, 1977, 1987) and Fishman (1983). Zimmerman and West (1975:125) found that men interrupted women more than the reverse during conversations and concluded that “just as male dominance is exhibited through male control of macro-institutions in society, it is also exhibited through control of at least a part of one micro-institution”. Fishman (1983) found that in naturally occurring conversations among heterosexual couples, the women

<sup>21</sup> This article was later expanded into a classic monograph, ‘*Language and Women’s Place*’ (1975).

<sup>22</sup> Subsequent research challenged many of Lakoff’s claims (see, for example, Presler, 1986; Holmes, 1982, 1984; and Cameron et al.; 1988 for contradictory results on who uses more tentative language). Lakoff is also blamed for not looking critically at ‘men’s’ language, thereby promoting gender stereotypes. Nevertheless, Lakoff’s work provided the required motivation for further research on gender and language, and to a large extent provided impetus to the emergence of subsequent theoretical approaches of *difference* and *dominance*.

performed more of the conversational “support work” required to sustain conversational interaction with their partners: they produced more listening cues (*mhm, uhuh*); asked more questions; used *you know* and attention-getting beginnings (*this is interesting*) more frequently (presumably to encourage a response); and actively pursued topics raised by men. On the other hand, men were more likely to not respond to turns and topics initiated by the women, and to make more declarative statements. Fishman argues that women’s supportive role in private conversations reflects and reproduces sex-based hierarchies of power within the public sphere.

The main argument of these theorists is that there is a gender division of labour in conversation and that male dominance is not only a cause of this difference, but the difference in turn maintains the dominance. Power and dominance are not only attributes of individual males; the power society grants to males affects and is reflected in conversation, because interaction does not happen in a vacuum. Their conclusions confirm the 1970s feminist slogan, “the personal is political,” by positing that asymmetries in everyday conversational practices reflect and reproduce asymmetries found in the wider social environment. Subsequent research by these scholars and others following this approach has shown that men’s display of power could be seen in a number of ways, such as frequent interruption of women by men (West and Zimmerman 1977), selection of conversation topics (Fishman, 1983), the volume of words (Spender, 1980, 1993), or by their semantic derogation of women (Shultz, 1975). Spender’s *‘Man Made Language’* (1980) and *‘Who Made Language’* (1993) is the extreme version of the dominance approach, which argues that language is made by men to suit their own interests (Spender 1993:408). This theory has its base in the famous Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis on language and nature. Sapir (1949) and Whorf (1956) theorized that human beings see the world through the linguistic expressions that they use; thus reality is andocentric and misogynistic because it is constructed and perpetually reproduced by a language that is controlled by men. Women are silenced, alienated and oppressed because they do not have access to the linguistic sources that determine reality. As a result, women are either deliberately forced to be silent or they are unable to find appropriate words to express their views. It would be right to conclude that this approach analyses gender and language use within a larger context of patriarchy.

One particular strength of this approach is its appreciation that male dominance is enacted through linguistic practices, i.e., that language is not merely gendered, but is also a site for ‘doing gender’ (West and Zimmerman, 1987; Butler, 1990). Moreover, the theory

recognizes that all participants in a discourse, men as well as women, collude in sustaining and perpetuating male dominance and female oppression (Ochs and Taylor, 1995; Coates, 2004). A weakness of the “dominance theory” is that it assumes the gender of the interactant as the ‘master status’ which determines his/her power position in the use of language. The theory does not give much attention to other important factors such as ‘race’, ethnicity, economic class, occupation, education, and age of the interlocutors which, in most cases, go together in social interaction.

### *The Difference Approach*

Another theoretical approach emerged during the 1980s, commonly known as the “*difference approach*”. The main assumption of this approach is that women and men speak ‘differently’ than each other because of differences in the patterns of male and female socialization at an early age. This theory is also known as ‘two-culture theory’ because the theory holds that men and women are brought up in different sociolinguistic sub-cultures: males and females are not socialized in the same way, and boys and girls learn and speak two different languages appropriate to their own sub-culture. Maltz and Brokers (1982) argue that the sources of different cultures lie in the peer groups of middle childhood. In single sex peer groups, the world of girls is one of cooperation and equality of power and girls must learn to read relationships and situations sensitively because of the heavy investment in pair friendship. The world of boys, on the other hand, is hierarchical, dominance is primary, and words are used to attain and maintain dominance, and also to gain and keep an audience and assert identity. This is why women’s speech tends to be interactional, engaging the other during conversation and men’s speech is characterized by arguing, verbal posturing and storytelling (Maltz and Broker, 1982).

Another proponent of this theory is Deborah Tannen (1987):

“Women and men have different experiences....boys and girls grow up in different worlds...and as adults they travel in different world, reinforcing patterns established in childhood. These cultural differences include different expectations about the role of talk in relationships and how it fulfils that role” (Tannen, 1987:125).

The ‘discovery’ of distinct male and female subcultures in the 1980s seems to have been a direct result of women’s growing resistance to being treated as subordinate group (Coates, 2004). During this time, women begin to assert that they had “a different voice, a different physiology and a difference experience of love, work and the family from men” (Humm,

1989:51). Following this approach, some researchers also celebrated and highlighted the positive and cooperative nature of women's language and even claimed women's superiority in certain linguistic domains (Coates, 2004; Bergvall, 1999).

Another stream of research which could be placed within the difference approach comes from "Variationist Linguistics" which uses distinctively quantitative methods to study language variation and change. A large number of studies using variationist quantitative methodology have found that female speakers use a higher proportion of "prestige variety of language form" (Labov, 1966) than male speakers. Trudgill's (1972, 1974) research in Norwich, Macaulay's (1978) study of Glasgow English, Eisikovits' (1987) study on language variation in Australia, and Eckert's (1990, 1998) studies in USA, among many other studies, found one general rule: women use more prestige language (standard dialect) than men in the same social class. The finding is so consistent over decades of sociolinguistics research that it is presented in some textbooks as a fundamental tenet or fact of sociolinguistics (Fasold, 1990; Chambers, 1995; Tagliamonte, 2006). In short, no matter whatever perspective/method a researcher may use, the finding is that women and men talk differently.

To understand why women use more prestige variety of language, a number of explanations have been offered. Trudgill's (1972) explanation of *overt and covert prestige* for gender variation in language is widely accepted. Trudgill argues that women have to acquire social status vicariously, whereas men can acquire it through their occupational status and earning power. Therefore, women are more likely to secure and signal their social status through their use of the standard, overtly prestigious variants. Men, on the other hand, use a higher proportion of nonstandard variants because of their orientation not to the overt norms of the community but to the covert prestige of working class forms, which symbolize the roughness and toughness that is associated both with working class life and with masculinity. A somewhat different explanation comes from Fasold (1990) who argues that women use a higher proportion of standard variants as a strategy for sounding less local and as a way of protest against the traditional (local) norms that place them in an inferior social position to men. Drawing on politeness theory, Deuchar (1988) argued that women's use of the standard form could be seen as a strategy to maintain face in interaction where women are powerless. Though most of these explanations seem plausible, James (1996) has argued that there is far too much variation across and within different communities for any simple analysis to be viable. James noted that local economic conditions, the employment and educational opportunities available to each sex,

social conditions affecting network strengths, the amount of status and respect accorded to women in particular communities and the extent to which they can participate in public life are just some of the factors that may account for the choices that women and men make in the speech forms that they use (1996:119).

While the difference approach seems influential in the study of language and gender, it is also one of the most controversial and feminist critics have pointed out a number of flaws. Firstly, the theory tends to ignore the issue of power in mixed sex interaction. To assume power and culture as separate, and to assume that the two are independent constructs is not only wrong but also harmful for the cause of women (Uchida, 1992; Cameron, 1992, Freed, 1992). Secondly, the notion of ‘separate cultures’ in this theory is problematic because no matter how much time children spend interacting with same-sex peers, they are not completely segregated from the other sex (Uchida, 1992). Thirdly, the difference / two culture theory ignores the interaction of race, class, age, and sexual orientation with sex (Cameron, 1992, 1996). An individual is more than just a “women” when interacting with others. In other words, the theory essentialises men and women by ignoring the influence of other variables (Uchida, 1992).

Some critics have accused both the dominance and difference approaches of being responsible for reproducing gender stereotypes. Talbot (2003), for example, has noted that both approaches rest on a dichotomous conception of gender; neither problematizes the category of gender itself, which resulted in ‘fixing’ the difference between men and women ways of language use. Various critics (e.g., Cameron, 1992; Talbot, 2003) have pointed out that the male and female interactional styles, as described, would equip them perfectly for traditional roles. Furthermore, studies of women and men in other cultures (e.g. Hall and Mary, 1995) challenged the two culture model as overly simplistic, demanding a new examination of the source and effect of gender variation in language – one that could account for cross cultural variation, both within and across gender and cultural boundaries. Bergvall *et al.* (1996) call this a move toward incorporating diversity and a recognition of the continuum of humans’ gendered practices.

Meanwhile, in other fields of social sciences there has been growing dissatisfaction with essentialist difference approaches to the study of gender (e.g., Connell, 1987; West & Zimmerman, 1987; Gal, 1991; Butler, 1990, 1993, Epstein, 1990). These and other such theorists put emphasis on the dynamic aspects of interaction. Referring to this shift, Sara Mills (2003) has noted that whilst Second Wave feminist linguistics assumed that gender



pre-existed the interaction and affected the way that the interaction developed, Third Wave feminists focus on the way that participants bring about their gendered identity in conversation, thus seeing gendering as a process. Drawing on concepts of ‘performativity’ and ‘doing gender’ (Butler, 1990, 2004; West and Zimmerman, 1987), this constructionist approach argues that gender is better seen as a system of culturally constructed relations of power, produced and reproduced in interaction between and among men and women. Gender identity is seen as a social construct rather than as a ‘given’ social category. Instead of seeing men and women as statically ‘being’ in a particular gender, speakers should be seen as ‘doing gender’ during social and linguistic interaction (West and Zimmerman, 1987). This conceptual change also influenced theoretical approaches in sociolinguistic research.

### *The Community of Practice Approach:*

Following the dynamic or social constructionist approach, an important theoretical framework, “*Community of Practice*” (CofP), emerged in the field of sociolinguistics (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 1992, 1999; Eckert, 1998). This work was among the first in the linguistic tradition to provide a systematic means to address the idea that the categories of ‘women’ and ‘men’ should not be treated as presupposed, monolithic variables in studying language variation, but rather themselves should be subject to scrutiny and analysis. The CofP maintains that speakers develop linguistic patterns as they engage in activity in the various communities in which they participate. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet define CofP as follows:

“A community of practice is an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in some common endeavour. Ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations - in short, practices - emerge in the course of their joint activity around that endeavour” (1992:95).

This definition suggests that the concept of a CofP is a dynamic, rich, and complex one. It emphasizes the notion of “practice”, which makes the concept of CofP more compatible with social-constructionist approach than other less dynamic, essentialist approaches. Instead of seeing language use as fixed once for all time and all occasions, this approach argues that the type of language used by a person is dependent on his/her position within the group (*community*) in which he/she takes part (*practice*). And because a person is a member of many groups at the same time (family, work, sports club etc.), his/her language use cannot be fixed and will change according to the situation. An individual hypothesises

what is appropriate within the community of practice and, in speaking, affirm or contest the community's sense of appropriate behaviour (Mills, 2003). In this sense, one's choice of speech style is defining, and is defined by, one's position within a group.

Bergvall (1999:275) has summarised the main principals of CofP approach as:

- a. Recognizing that gender is not fixed and pre-existing – a dynamic verb rather than a static noun.
- b. Considering how gender interacts with other aspects of social identity (e.g., class, race, ethnicity, and age), rather than taking it as an “additive” variable, easily abstractable from a person's other identities.
- c. Challenging premature generalization of the assumptions about gender variations based on studies of small (usually Western, middle-class) populations.
- d. Sharing research with other gender theorists from other fields.
- e. Undertaking local studies of communities across a broader range of social settings, countries, and languages.

According to Coates (2004), researchers taking up a CofP approach emphasise the importance of ‘looking locally’. This bottom-up approach starts with the individual speaker in his or her communities of practice and views gender as a local performance. Additionally, this approach emphasis that gender is constructed locally and that it interacts with other aspects of a person's identity such as age, class, ‘race’, and occupation etc. CofP is well suited to address the complexity of societies where gender roles are in flux and under challenge; where group members might construct differing practices in response to differing social opportunities and settings, such as work within non-traditional fields, or where young people are responding to shifting social expectations (Bergvall, 1999).

To summarize the discussion so far, studies have made at least four important contributions to our understanding of language and gender. These are: (a) that there is an inherent sexism in language itself; (b) that there are differences in the way men and women speak; (c) that men's use of language in a mixed gender interaction parallels their dominant position in society, and (d) that language is simultaneously a tool of suppression as well as subversion. Keeping in mind the ‘Community of Practice’ theory, we can also note a shifting focus from language itself towards social constructionist approach in the recent studies of feminist linguistics. Instead of seeing gender as a pre-existing identity, the analysis is shifting towards seeing gendering as a process, something people *do* in interaction with each other. The CofP approach seems to be a bridging line between individual and the wider society.

How can these theories inform the current research on the social construction of gender in Pashto proverbs in Pakistan?

While the deficit approach has long been abandoned as a useful theoretical approach, the other approaches are still widely followed. Coates and Cameron argue that both “the dominance approach, which stresses the hierarchical nature of gender relations, and the difference approach, which stresses sub-cultural differences between women and men are needed for sociolinguistic research on sex difference” (1988:72). Some scholars have even tried to abolish the dichotomy between *difference* and *dominance* by arguing that the two are not necessarily isolated from each other. Uchida (1992) has argued that the concepts of ‘power’ and ‘(sub) culture’ cannot be separated from ‘gender’, as these three concepts are intertwined:

“If *difference* and *dominance* are treated as different perspectives of looking at sex, we will only get two different pictures from two different angles. We would not be able to get a holistic, multidimensional view. Difference and dominance (and there may be other dimensions) should be seen as simultaneously composing the construct of gender” (Uchida, 1992:563; italic original).

Tannen (1994) has argued that the difference approach, far from negating the issue of power, provides a way to understand how inequalities are created in face-to-face interaction. Explaining this point further, Kendall and Tannen (2001) argue that because dominance is an underlying cause of gender differences, while difference is a sociolinguistic means through which gender differences may be negotiated and acquired, a study of difference does not (and should not) ignore the unequal power relations as an underlying cause of socially learned patterns.

Whether taken together or as separate theories, both these approaches could be helpful in informing the current research. For example, taking the *difference / two-cultural* perspective, it would be interesting to see whether men and women in Pakistan show any difference in the way they use proverbs, and if this relates to other social differences, such as class. Moreover, this approach can also help in analysing whether there is a separate ‘women’s culture’ visible in the proverbs used mostly by women, as against to the ‘men’s culture’ evident in proverbs used mostly by men. This can be done, for example, by looking at gender specific strategic use of proverbs (as discussed in chapter 6, section 6.5 and 6.6).

The *dominance theory* can also inform the current research in a number of ways. For instance, it can be useful in finding out whether proverbs express primarily women's version of reality/women's voices or those of men's, i.e., whose perspective finds more expression in proverbs, and whether it has any relation to the power difference between men and women. In other words, this perspective can also help in exploring whose viewpoint is regarded as the 'norm' against which the others are judged. This perspective can also be helpful in analysing the particular language used in proverbs to see whether women are objectified and stereotyped more than men. This can be done, for example, by looking at whether proverbs objectify women more than men or whether women are more negatively represented in proverbs (as I show in Chapter 5, section 5.2).

The social constructionist (CofP) approach could be even more relevant to the above questions because this approach integrates the difference and dominance approaches by recognizing the processual nature of both language use and gender identity. Learning and maintaining *difference* as well as learning and maintaining *dominance* during conversation are part of 'doing gender' in a variety of situations in which individuals interact. Because the constructionist approach also recognises the intersection of gender with age, ethnicity, social status, and other factors in influencing the speech style, it would help explain proverbs usage by various categories of people. Additionally, this aspect of the theory could also help in explaining whether all men are dominant in all kinds of contexts, or whether there are variations within/between men and within/between women. This theory also takes account of various contexts of interaction (home, neighbourhood, work) which would help in identifying the use of proverbs in these various contexts – e.g., are proverbs equally used in (informal) context of home and the (formal) context of work? These aspects of proverbs' usage are discussed in chapter 6.

While these theories of language and gender are useful, they mostly deal with language as everyday practice in face to face conversation. As we have seen, the CofP focus on the *local setting (community)*, in which individual speakers use linguistic recourses to achieve and construct their gender status. As social scientists have recognised, there is an ideological and hegemonic belief system *beyond* the local setting which forces on speakers certain assumptions of gender roles and behaviour. Woolard & Schieffelin (1994:72) have also noted that we must study the relationship of "the micro-culture of communicative action to political and economic considerations of power and social inequality, confronting macro-social constraints on language and behaviour." In order to connect the local practice of language and proverbs with the large-scale power structure in society, I will now turn

towards the broader sociological understanding of sexism as ideology and male power as a system of patriarchy of which language is a part.

### **2.3. Language, Sexism and Ideology**

Sexism in sociology is seen as an ideology which legitimates and justifies unequal relations of power between men and women. Sexism is a system of beliefs by which people explain, account for, and justify their behaviour in a patriarchal society. Language is the key instrument and medium by which gender ideologies are constructed, perpetuated and propagated. All ideologies, including sexism, operate through certain strategies whereby the social groups holding the dominant ideology maintain their hegemony over the dominated groups. Colette Guillaumin (1995), for example, maintains that unequal system of gender relations – “sexage” – is based on the unequal gender division of work in which men appropriate women’s labour which is supported by ‘naturalizing discourses’. These naturalizing discourses, argue Guillaumin, justify and reproduce sexism. Similarly, Michele Barrett (1988) in her influential essay “Ideology and the Cultural Production of Gender” has stressed the importance of understanding the ideological production of gender. She argues that women’s oppression is rooted in the way people think, feel and believe. Barrett (1988) has outlined a number of general ideological strategies which are equally applicable to the ideological production of gender, especially for the analysis of text and discourses such as proverbs. Terry Eagleton (1991) also believes that ideologies operate by means of the certain discursive strategies used by the dominant group to maintain their power over the dominated groups. These ideological strategies are relevant to analysis of the reproduction of gender relations in proverbs. In the following pages, I will first outline some of the ideological strategies relevant to the current research and then discuss how it will help in the analysis of gender relations in Pashto proverbs.

1. *Rationalization*: Ideology “gives reasons” and explanations for justifying social phenomenon that might otherwise be the object of criticism. In the words of Eagleton (1991:51), “to call ideologies ‘rationalizing’ is already to imply that there is something discreditable about them – that they try to defend the indefensible, cloaking some disreputable motives in high-sounding ethical terms”. While most of these ‘reasons and explanations’ come from the dominant group, the subordinate group may also rationalize their own subordinate position.

2. *Legitimization*: Related to rationalization, this strategy ensures that the dominant group obtain an implicit approval of its authority from the oppressed group. According to Eagleton, a mode of domination is generally legitimated when those subjected to it come to judge their own behaviour by the criteria of their rulers. “Someone with a Liverpool accent who believes he speaks incorrectly has legitimated an established cultural power” (p.55). This quote can be further linked to the ‘community of practice’ theory discussed earlier, where people confirm to the expectations of their group as a whole.
  
3. *Universalization*: This is ‘immortalization’ of the ideology, where ideology presents itself as universal, natural, inborn and immortal. Thus ideology is presented not as a cultural thing which was created and can eventually die, but as something which has been and will remain forever. “Values and interests which are in fact specific to a certain place and time are projected as the values and interests of all humanity” (p.56).
  
4. *Naturalization*: Ideology presents values and beliefs as so identified with the “common sense” of society that they become natural. Ideology is presented as so natural that any alternative seems almost impossible. Like, Eagleton (1991), Colette Guillaumin (1995) argues that ‘naturalizing discourses’ present women as more ‘natural’ than men: what is “socially constructed” is replaced with “natural”, for example, the common assertions that ‘women are naturally more caring’ and that ‘they cook better than men’ are naturalizing discourses.

The four mechanisms are broader tools through which the dominant ideology maintains its power over those subjected to it. In addition to these, and in many ways related to the above, Michele Barrett (1988) has identified further mechanisms by which textual representation and discourses reproduce gender ideology. These include:

1. *Stereotyping*: It is one of the best documented strategies in feminist literature. It can be taken as a sub-set of ‘*naturalization*’ strategy discussed above – isolating a particular group and labelling them with certain features. Stereotyping is an essential element for the maintenance and perpetuation of a hegemonic notion of

femininity. With the passage of time, the “effects” of these stereotypes become the “essential” features of women.

2. *Compensation:* Working as a subset of ‘*rationalization*’ strategy, here the subordinate group is compensated in some way, including the practice of imagery and symbolism that elevate and celebrates women as the apostles of moral strength and courage. The concept of ‘Mother India’ which exalt women as the symbols of the greatness and beauty of the nation-state is one example of compensation to women.
3. *Collusion:* Closely related to ‘*legitimization*’ strategy, women and other subordinate groups may help in maintaining patriarchy consciously or unconsciously by internalizing their own oppression. Women can collude for a number of reasons, which must be determined contextually.

The purpose behind setting out Eagleton’s and Barrett’s ideas is that these mechanisms are helpful in interpreting Pashto proverbs and interview data. These ideas help in understanding how these strategies are practiced by men and women to negotiate their positions in the context of patriarchal social structures of Pashtun society. For example, it would be relevant to look for rationalising strategies employed in Pashto proverbs. Thus we may ask: how are unequal gender relations rationalized through proverbs? Are there some compensatory mechanism found in proverbs through which patriarchal structures compensate women? While looking for naturalizing and universalizing discourses and stereotypes in proverbs, it is worthwhile looking at proverbs to find out how sexist and stereotypical ideas are turned into ‘common sense’ and ‘universal truth’. Do people accept sexist proverbs as truth or are there any differences in the views of different speakers towards proverbs? We can also look to find out the ways proverbs legitimize sexism and the ways in which men ensure legitimization of their authority from women and younger men. Can women’s proverbs usage show that some women collude to maintain patriarchy? Is there any room for subversion? What gender specific strategies are employed by various groups to negotiate their gender identities and statuses?

Answers to these question will be found by looking at how proverbs describes various aspects of gender relations (as discussed in chapter 5, section 5.3), how proverbs are actually used by various categories of participants, and what are the attitudes of speakers towards sexist proverbs and gender relations (discussed in chapter 6).

Moreover, most of these ideological mechanisms are at work in the various structures of patriarchy outlined by Walby (1990), to which we turn now.

## **2.4. Patriarchy and the Reproduction of Gender Relations**

The previous sections outlined the sociolinguistic perspective on sexism which treats sexism as inherent in the language itself as well as acted out by the speakers in daily interaction. I also discussed sexism as an ideology and its specific mechanisms through which gender relations are justified and sustained. While it is true that the exercise of patriarchal power is not a discrete act, i.e., it is dispersed and operates everywhere in social relations in a continuous manner, it is possible to identify some key sites or primary social structures where the exercise of patriarchal power is more visible. In the following discussion, I outline theories of patriarchy which explain the interaction between sexist ideology and sexist practices in a society.

The term ‘patriarchy’ has been used by feminists to make sense of how the unequal gender relations are produced and reproduced in society on an on-going basis. The feminist concept of patriarchy was first systematically set out in 1969 by the American feminist Kate Millett in *Sexual Politics*. According to Millett, the relationship between the sexes in all known societies has been based on men’s power over women; it is therefore political. This patriarchal power is, Millett argued, so universal, so ubiquitous and so complete that it appears ‘natural’ and invisible, until named and contested by feminists. It is maintained by a process of socialization which begins in the family and is reinforced by education, literature and religion; it also rests upon economic exploitation, state power and, ultimately, force (particularly sexual violence and rape). This means that power and politics are not confined to the public worlds of paid employment and government, but extend into the most intimate relationships. Many feminists have found that the concept provides them with powerful way of seeing the world which makes sense of their own experiences, and of identifying the otherwise invisible power politics between genders (Bryson, 1999).

Since the first publication of Millett’s *Sexual Politics* (1969), other feminist writers have developed the analysis of patriarchy in a very wide range of ways depending on which variety of feminism they identify with. Liberal feminism has emphasized the socialization



of men and women into different roles, reinforced by discrimination, prejudice and irrationality, as responsible for women's unequal position in society. Radical feminists (e.g., Firestone, 1974; Brownmiller, 1976; Rich, 1980) trace the cause of women's subordination to the system of sexual relations within the family. Marxist feminists (e.g., Barrett, 1980) found the control of women's labour by men, their unpaid domestic work and exclusion from public sphere and labour market as the cause of women's lower status. Multicultural/global or post-colonial feminists (e.g., Mohanty, 1988) look at comparative differences between the relative privileged status of white women in developed nations and conditions of women in developing countries. In short, these different strands of feminism look at patriarchy from different dimensions and angles, but all share a common aim of showing the cause of women's long-standing marginalization in various spheres of life. These competing analyses and practices clearly involve very different priorities, nevertheless, at a very general level, they can also be seen as complementary, so that theorists working in one area can learn from those working in another. However, other critics argue that feminist use of the term 'patriarchy' has itself become a problem for feminist politics.

The major reason that some theorists have dismissed the usefulness of patriarchy is because of its false universalism and essentialism (Beechey, 1979; Connell, 1990). At some point, the term patriarchy began to imply a fixed and timeless structure that obscured differences in context and reduced all gender relations into one form. Because patriarchy was frequently constructed in static form, it did not permit variation. "Its 'apparent' universal feature came to eclipse its 'true' multiple shapes and forms" (Hunnicut, 2009). In other words, patriarchy has been accused of being *ahistorical*; it does not account for variation across time and space. Postmodernists and poststructuralists have helped us to see society as forever shifting, ambiguous, and fluid in which patriarchal structures, order, customs, and power are "melting", continually taking new shapes (Carrington, 1994; Bauman, 2000).

According to Pollert (1996), patriarchy tends to confuse description and explanation: the concept describes a particular form of male domination rather than explains the relationship between gender and class (Pollert, 1996). Pollert also believes that patriarchy perpetuates abstract structuralism, thereby losing the dynamic tension between structure and agency. Pollert further criticises those theories elevating patriarchy to an autonomous system which privilege gender over class. She believes that theories and research guided

by such theory of patriarchy often lose sight of class altogether, a problem shared by structuralism and post-structuralism theories alike.

Another critique against patriarchy as a theory is that it conceptualizes power in a top-down fashion, ignoring the complexity of power dynamics that exist in patriarchal systems. Patriarchal systems must be understood as “terrains of power” (Flax, 1993) in which both men and women wield varying types and amounts of power. Under patriarchal orders, there are privileges as well as costs that *both* men and women incur. Different resources of protection and resistance are available to men and women in different social positions. A woman’s ‘value’ is determined by race, class, age, appearance, and reproductive status. Hence, a woman is afforded differing amounts of power depending on her social location in this “matrix of domination” (Collins, 1990). Furthermore, individuals do not acquire a set amount of power and privilege ‘once and for all’. As women move through the life course, they may acquire more or less power through age, marital status, and/or education. Paradoxically, some of women’s power may come from their associations with men (Hunnicutt, 2009). Despite being critical of the concept, many feminists are uneasy about abandoning the concept all together (e.g. Beechey, 1987; Acker, 1989; Cockburn, 1991; Gottfried, 1998, Bryson, 1999). Some feminists even attempted to resurrect patriarchy and emphasised its usefulness for explaining gender relations. Silvia Walby (1990) is the most prominent theorist who defended the concept and developed a more comprehensive theory of patriarchy. In the following section, I will first outline her theory and then discuss to what extent the theory is relevant to the analysis of gender relations in Pakistan. In addition, I will also briefly touch upon Kandiyoti (1988), Moghadam (1992, 1998, 2004) and Connell (1987, 1995, 2005) whose ideas about patriarchy and gender relations are also relevant to the current social structure of Pakistan.

#### **2.4.1. Sylvia Walby: Six Structures of Patriarchy**

While post-modern theorists are right in claiming that gender relations may take an infinite number of forms, in actuality there are some widely repeated features and considerable historical continuity in gender relations within and across cultures, which means that it is still useful to talk of ‘patriarchy’ as explanation for the unequal relations between genders. Based on this assumption, the British sociologist Sylvia Walby (1990) developed a more inclusive theory of patriarchy which allows for the analysis of patriarchy across cultures and times. Although her analysis of patriarchy is primarily located in modern Europe, her theory has the potential to explain gender relations in Pakistan as well.

Walby defined “a system of patriarchy” as a “system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women” and which has its base in six interrelated structures (Walby, 1990, 1997). These six structures are: (1) *Paid Work* in which local traditions, states laws, and market policies either restrict women’s access to paid employment or discriminate them in terms of equal pay, nature of jobs etc. (2) *Household Production* where men directly exploit benefits from women unpaid domestic labour. (3) *Culture* which may hold different notions of femininity from masculinity, unequal access to cultural resources; language, literature, and folklore; honour and shame; and other cultural ideals sustaining unequal gender relations. (4) *Sexuality* which includes compulsory heterosexuality, compulsory marriage, and reduction of women’s sexuality to procreation of children, admiration of men’s sexual conquests etc. (5) *Violence* or threat of violence which helps men to keep women in ‘their place’ and discourage them from challenging patriarchy. (6) *The State* which sometimes promotes patriarchy through legislation and public policy, and in some cases, does little to end gender discrimination or to protect women from patriarchal control of men.

Walby maintains that both patriarchy and the status of women changes in response to each other over time. In Europe, for example, Walby maintains that changes in the status of women over time with women’s increased access to the public sphere have resulted in a shift from “*private patriarchy*” to “*public patriarchy*”. Public patriarchy is a form in which women have access to both public and private arenas. They are not barred from the public arenas, but are nevertheless subordinate within them. “Women are no longer restricted to the domestic hearth, but have the whole society in which to roam and be exploited” (Walby, 1990:201).

As mentioned before, Walby’s theory primarily explains gender relations in modern Europe. In applying the theory to the Pakistani context, it would be helpful to point out some potential mismatches between Walby’s theory and the current social structure of Pakistani society. The most important difference between Europe and Pakistan, in terms of Walby’s theory, is that the shift ‘from private patriarchy to public patriarchy’ may not yet be fully visible in Pakistan, or may have a different form than that visible in Europe. As we will see in chapter 3, most Pakistani women are still restricted to home and hearth. Due to this, some of Walby’s six structure of patriarchy may be more relevant to the discussion of gender relations in Pakistan than others. For example, Walby maintains that in today’s Europe, ‘paid work’ is more important than family and household, which is decreasing its importance in determining the lives of women. In Pakistan, the case is almost the opposite:

the family, household and kinship still play more important role in gender relations than paid work (Khattak, 2001; Bari, 2000; Hakim, 1998; Kazi, 1999). In addition, religious teachings and customary laws are likely to occupy a more important place than state laws in some cases and areas in Pakistan. Despite these differences, Walby's six structures may be usefully applied to explain gender relations in Pakistan. For example, there is a gendered division of productive and reproductive work, men largely control women's sexuality, cultural discourses shape ideas and attitudes towards masculinity and femininity, and discriminatory state laws and policies disadvantage Pakistani women. These aspects of Pakistani society in general and the Pashtuns in particular are detailed in chapter 3.

By specifying several rather than simply one base of patriarchy, Walby has successfully avoided the problem of reductionism. The reduction of women's oppression in previous theories to only one base (e.g., reproduction for Firestone (1974) and rape for Brownmiller (1976)) is the reason for their difficulty with historical changes and cultural variation. Moreover, by recognising the change of the form of patriarchy over time (from private to public patriarchy), Walby has been successful in avoiding the essentialist, rigid, and solid ways of thinking about patriarchal structures.

While Walby's theory of patriarchy is a clear improvement over previous conceptualizations of the concept, she is unable to overcome all the difficulties with the concept. As outlined above, the structural social differences between modern Europe and Pakistani society makes Walby's theory partially applicable to explain gender relations among the Pashtuns. In order to accurately explain the system of patriarchy as it operates in societies like Pakistan, I draw on Kandiyoti's (1988) and Moghadam's (1992) theoretical insights to supplement Walby's theory.

#### **2.4.2. Deniz Kandiyoti: The Patriarchal Bargain**

In 1988, Kandiyoti introduced the term "the patriarchal bargain" to explain how women living under patriarchy strategize to maximize security and optimize their life options. She showed that women's responses to male dominance vary widely, according to the objective opportunities available under each particular variant of patriarchy. Such responses range from eager collaboration, whereby women act as devout guardians of patriarchal mores and values, to skilful manoeuvrings to make gains while avoiding overt conflict, to different levels of passive and active resistance. Kandiyoti (1988:278) used the term "classic patriarchy" which according to her is a characteristic feature of societies in South

and East Asia as well as in the Muslim Middle East. The foundation of ‘classic patriarchy’ is the ‘patrilocally extended household’ in which a senior man has authority over all other members, the key source to control women’s social, economic, and political participation and ensuring their continuous subordination and dependence. She aptly identifies that “[t]he cyclical nature of women’s power in the household and their anticipation of inheriting the authority of senior women encourage a thorough internalization of this form of patriarchy by the women themselves” (1988:279). Therefore, she argued, within the system that by and large works against women, some women (e.g., mothers, mother-in-laws) stand to benefit from the unequal gender arrangements, depending on their stage in the life cycle or on their particular familial status. Such women are more likely to strike a bargain with patriarchy (i.e., collude with men) than to resist the system. This was identified as a major source of women’s acquiescence and accommodation to existing gender orders.

#### **2.4.3. Valentine Moghadam: The Patriarchal Gender Contract**

Moghadam (1992, 1998, 2004) also focused on the “belt of classic patriarchy” which includes Pakistan, Afghanistan, and northern India, among others. She describes the transformation of patriarchy and the family due to changing social structures such as economic development, demographic changes, legal reforms, increasing female education and employment in these countries. She also considered the extended, patrilineal, patrilocal, patriarchal, endogamous, and occasionally polygynous family as the most important unit of patriarchy in this region. Within the family the wife’s main role is to maintain the home, care for children, and obey her husband, while men have the authority to control her activities and appearance in the public sphere. Moghadam (2004:145) called this familial arrangement the patriarchal “gender contract” that “is realized within the family and codified by the state in the form of Muslim Family Law or the Personal Status Code”. Moghadam argues that the last few decades have witnessed rapid changes through industrialization and modernizing state systems in this region, in which legal reforms, mass education, demographic changes, and female employment has led to a shift from ‘classic patriarchy’ to ‘neo-patriarchy’ in these societies. However, despite these social transformations, she argues that the original patriarchal “gender contract” is still intact, leading to a continuation of women’s disadvantaged status in all walks of life (Moghadam, 2004:157).

It can be noted that Kandiyoti and Moghadam's conceptualization supplement, rather than contradict, Walby's theory. For example, both Walby and Moghadam argues that patriarchy changes its forms (i.e., from 'private to public patriarchy' and from 'traditional to neo-patriarchy') due to changing socio-economic and political structures yet still retaining its core in male domination – that is, a shift of control by an individual husband and father in the private sphere to “collective appropriations” in the public sphere, and the retention of the “gender contract” despite social transformations.

A weakness common to most theories of patriarchy, including Walby's (1990), is the conceptualization of men in contrast to women, ignoring the power politics among men and among women. Patriarchy does not automatically allocate greater power to men; instead, men have to struggle to maintain their power in comparison to other men and women. While it is true that most men benefits from patriarchy; some marginalized men are victims of patriarchy. Connell's (1995) theory of 'hegemonic masculinity' fills this gap in previous literature which is discussed in the following section.

#### **2.4.4. R. W. Connell: Hegemonic Masculinity**

R. W. Connell (1987, 1997, 1995) popularized the concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' to explain the practices that promote the dominant social position of men and the subordinate social position of women. Theoretically, hegemonic masculinity proposes to explain how and why men maintain dominant social roles over women and other less dominant or subordinated forms of masculinity – complicit, subordinated, and marginalized – in a given society. According to Connell, the task of 'being a man' involves taking on and negotiating hegemonic masculinity. 'Masculinity' “is simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experiences, personality and culture” (Connell, 1995:71). Men's identity strategies are constituted through their complicit or resistant stance to prescribed dominant masculine styles. Hegemony is not automatic, however, but involves contest and constant struggle. Hegemonic masculinity, Connell argues, is centrally connected to the subordination of women. It is a way of being masculine which marginalizes and subordinates not only women's activities but also alternative forms of masculinity such as 'camp' or effeminate masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity is an ideal type, not an actual male character. It is an ideal or set of prescriptive social norms, symbolically represented, but a crucial part of the texture of many routine mundane social and disciplinary activities. While noting that the number of men rigorously practicing the hegemonic pattern in its

entirety may be quite small (Connell, 1995:79), he argues for the salience of these dominant forms of masculinity in providing a much wider group with a 'patriarchal dividends' (Connell, 1997:64), in terms of the overall subordination of women. Hegemonic masculinity thus confers considerable power, vis-a-vis women, not just on the hegemonically masculine but on all men, while at the same time standing as an ideal type against which various ways of 'doing man' can be constructed and performed. There is also a more complex discussion of the interplay of hegemonic, subordinated, complicit and marginalized forms of masculinity, as, for example, when some black men may accept certain aspects of hegemonic masculinity but may be marginalized in relation to the authorization of hegemonic masculinity.

Connell's formulation of hegemonic masculinity has currently "become central to how we theorize, recognize and understand power in a complex yet thoroughly gendered world" (Elias, 2008:386) for its many advantages over previous theories of gender relations, such as 'patriarchy'. First, Connell's analysis of masculinity and gender relations is an anti-essentialist one. Connell (1993, 1995) has emphasized the cultural specificity of masculinities. He argues that masculine characters are not given. Rather, a range of possible styles and personae emerge from the gender regimes found in different cultures and historical periods. Among the possible variety of ways of being masculine, however, some become 'winning styles' and it is these with which men must engage. In other words, this approach allows for diversity. Masculine identities can be studied in the plural rather than in the singular. Second, Connell's work notes the relevance of relations between men as well as relations between men and women for the formation of gendered identities. Third, Connell's theory also takes account of 'intersectionality' by emphasizing the interconnection of gender with other social divisions, such as age, class, religion, 'race', ethnicity, and sexuality. To be a man, a person needs not only to have a male sex but also the culturally approved and idealized age, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation and other culturally agreed upon aspects of being an ideal man. Finally, the concept of 'hegemony' in Connell's theory helps in explaining the broader ideological roots of gender relations and power dynamics. Connell's conception of hegemony draws on Gramsci's (1971) depiction which explains how hegemonic ideologies preserve, legitimate and naturalize the interests of the powerful – marginalizing and subordinating the claims of other groups.

## 2.5. A Synthesis of Theories

The various theories discussed in this chapter explain the different faces and basis of sexism and gender inequality in society. The sociolinguistic theories of language and gender – ‘deficit’, ‘dominance’, ‘differences’, and ‘community of practice’ – argue that there is an inherent sexism in language itself, there are differences in the way men and women speak, men’s use of language parallels their dominant position in society, and that language is a tool of suppression as well as subversion at the same time. These theories will help in examining whose perspective finds more expression in proverbs, and whether it has any relation to the power difference between men and women. More importantly, these theories can help to see if men and women use proverbs differently. The ‘Community of Practice’ theory (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 1992, 1999) is particularly relevant and closely connected to ‘intersectionality’ (Collins, 2000; Brah & Phoenix, 2004; McCall, 2005) because it recognises the intersection of gender with age, ethnicity, social status, and other factors in influencing the speech style.

However, in view of the current research project, a limitation of sociolinguistic theories is that they focus on one aspect of gender and social relations – language. Given that there is an ideological and hegemonic belief system beyond language forcing on speakers certain assumptions of gender roles and behaviour, the chapter also discussed the broader sociological understanding of sexism as ideology which legitimates and justifies unequal relations of power between men and women through discursive strategies (Guillaumin, 1995; Barrett, 1988; Eagleton, 1991). Theories of sexism as ideology along with the sociolinguistic theories of language and gender would help in explaining gender relations.

The major part of the theoretical framework for this thesis takes insight from Walby’s (1990) theory of patriarchy which argues that patriarchy operates under six different but inter-related structures in society – paid work, household production, culture, sexuality, violence, and the state. As discussed earlier, the concept of patriarchy has been criticised for being too essentialist; for being unable to handle historical changes and differences between women, especially those based on ethnicity, ‘race’ and class. While Walby’s theory is a considerable improvement over previous conceptualizations of patriarchy, it is not without limitations. In particular, Walby’s theory is primarily about Europe, I have discussed Kandiyoti’s (1988) concept ‘patriarchal bargain’ and Moghadam’s (1992) concept of ‘patriarchal gender contract’ to supplement Walby’s theory and to make it more



relevant the Muslim South Asian context of Pakistan. In addition, Walby has not much to say about the power politics among men and among women. Given that gender relation is as much a relation among men as it is among men and women, Connell's (1995) theory of 'hegemonic masculinity' helps in filling this gap in Walby's theory and will also broaden the scope of the theatrical framework.

Last but not the least, no discussion of inequality is complete without taking into account the increasingly important concept of 'intersectionality' (Collins, 2000; McCall 2005). The theory of intersectionality suggests that various biological, social and cultural categories such as gender, 'race', ethnicity, class, religious, age, caste, and other axes of identity interact on multiple and often simultaneous levels, contributing to systematic injustice and social inequality. As such, different dimensions of social life cannot be separated out into discrete and pure strands (Collins, 2000; Brah & Phoenix, 2004; McCall, 2005). McCall (2005) argues that the introduction of the intersectionality theory was vital to sociology, claiming that before its development, there was little research that addressed specifically the experiences of people who are subjected to multiple forms of subordination within society. Given that gender and its intersections with class and ethnicity (among others) are simultaneously subjective and structural (Brah & Phoenix, 2004), studying these intersections allows a more complex and dynamic understanding than a focus on gender alone.

In the nutshell, the various theoretical insights discussed in this chapter will be combined to guide the analysis of data in this thesis.

## **Summary of the Chapter**

This chapter reviewed relevant theories of sexism, language, and gender relations in order to develop a theoretical framework for the current research. It was noted that the study of language and gender is concerned with describing how we *do gender with language*. This includes the study of how men and women *use* language; how we use language to talk or speak *to* men and women, and how we talk or speak *about* men and women. The various theoretical approaches to explain the relationship between language and gender agree that men and women speak differently and argue that this difference in language use likely result from, and further cement, the existing gender inequality in society.

The chapter also presented a sociological approach to sexism in which sexism was defined as ideology which provides a justification for the unequal gender relations. Language is a tool through which sexist ideology is manifested and practiced on everyday basis. Eagleton (1991) and Barrett (1988) have identified a number of discursive strategies (e.g., rationalization, naturalization, universalization, collusion etc.) through which ideology operates in language use.

This chapter also critically reviewed theories of patriarchy and reproduction of gender (and transformation of these over time). Walby's (1990) theory was discussed in detail, which argues that patriarchy operates under six different but inter-related structures in society. It also touched upon concepts of the 'patriarchal gender contract' in Muslim society (Moghadam, 1992) and the 'patriarchal bargain' by women in societies characterised by 'classic patriarchy' (Kandiyoti, 1988). These concepts further support Walby's theory and make it more relevant to explaining gender relations in Pakistan. Lastly, the chapter discussed Connell's (1995) theory of 'hegemonic masculinity' and the concept of 'intersectionality' (Collins, 2000; Brah & Phoenix, 2004; McCall, 2005). These concepts and theories together would contribute to better explain linguistic sexism and gender relations in Pakistan.

## Chapter 3

# Setting the Context: Gender Relations in Pakistan and among the Pashtuns

### Introduction

Pakistan falls within the “belt of classic patriarchy”<sup>23</sup> where there is “a culture against women” (Moghadam, 1992; Kandiyoti, 1988). However, the status of women in Pakistan is not homogeneous, largely due to the intersection of gender with other forms of inequality. There is considerable diversity in the status of women across classes, regions, and the rural-urban divide (Bari, 2000; Mumtaz & Shaheed, 1987). Therefore, a woman’s reality varies depending on her membership in the highly educated elite, as part of the urban middle class, or as a rural peasant or resident of a tribal area where customs have remained relatively unchanged over time (Malik, 1997; Mumtaz & Shaheed, 1987). In addition, an important factor that influences the status of a woman in Pakistan is her ethnic background. The Pashtuns, compared to other ethnic group in Pakistan, are considered by scholars (and Pashtuns themselves) to be more ‘conservative’ regarding gender relations, particularly surrounding issues of women’s *purdah* (seclusion of women) (Khan, 2007; Ferdos, 2005; Mumtaz & Shaheed, 1987).

This chapter presents a brief introduction to the country, the Pashtun people and the Pashto language, followed by a detailed discussion of the patriarchal social structure which determines the current status of women and gender relations in Pakistan. The discussion has been broadly organized according to Walby’s (1990:21) “six structures of patriarchy” as discussed in the previous chapter. This includes a discussion on gender relations in the family and household, cultural discourses around sexuality, access of women to education and work, and the role of the state in shaping the status of women and gender relations in the country.

---

<sup>23</sup> Moghadam (1992:107) defined the “belt of classic patriarchy” as including North Africa, the Muslim Middle East (including Turkey and Iran), and South and East Asia (Pakistan, Afghanistan northern India, and rural China). Similarly, Kandiyoti (1988:278) also draws the geographical area of “classic patriarchy” as including North Africa, the Muslim Middle East (including Turkey, Pakistan, and Iran), and South and East Asia (specifically, India and China).

### 3.1. Pakistan, Pashtuns and the Pashto Language

Founded in 1947 as a homeland for India's Muslims, Pakistan is a federation of four provinces (Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Baluchistan) conjoined with the federal capital area, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

**Figure 3.1: Map Showing the Administrative Division of Pakistan**



Source:

CIA World Factbook, [http://catalog.flatworldknowledge.com/bookhub/2657?e=berglee\\_1.0-ch09\\_s03](http://catalog.flatworldknowledge.com/bookhub/2657?e=berglee_1.0-ch09_s03) (downloaded on August 8, 2014).

Pakistan is primarily rural, with only 35% of the population residing in urban areas (Asian Development Bank, 2009). About 97% of the 180 million Pakistanis are Muslim; the remaining 3% of the population is divided equally among Christians, Hindus, and other religions (Blood, 1994). Pakistan is ethnically and linguistically diverse. The geographical boundaries of the four provinces in Pakistan also roughly coincide with the four major ethnic and linguistic groups living in Pakistan: the Punjabis live in Punjab, the Sindhis live

in Sindh, the Baluchs live in Baluchistan, and the Pashtuns mostly live in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.<sup>24</sup>

The Pashtuns are an ethnic group of nearly 40 million people spread across the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Pashtuns are the second most numerous ethnic group of Pakistan (15%), mostly settled in the provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA).<sup>25</sup> Pashtuns speak Pashto, a language belonging to the Indo-Iranian language family (Rahman, 1995). It is widely spoken in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, FATA, Baluchistan, and is also the national language of Afghanistan. In his study of Pashtun regions in Pakistan, Hallberg (1992) reports that Pashto is exclusively spoken by Pashtun men in four out of the six domains of daily interaction, i.e., home, mosque, village council, and speaking to women, while in the other two domains (school and the bazaar) Pashto is spoken (mostly) alongside Urdu (Hallberg, 1992:30-36). Although Hallberg does not explain why ‘speaking to women’ constitutes a separate domain, he explains that men have a higher literacy rate than women and learn Urdu in school and while working in other cities. Most women, on the other hand, can understand only Pashto as most do not attend school and therefore have no opportunity to learn Urdu. Similarly, women’s confinement to home/village life also restricts their chances of learning a language other than Pashto. Therefore, Hallberg found that Pashtun men exclusively use Pashto while talking to women.

Several anthropologists have argued that the three most important aspects of Pashtun identity construction and maintenance are a common patrilineal descent, Islamic religion, and the Pashto language — or more precisely *Pashtunwali*, the Pashtun’s ideal code of conduct (Barth, 1959, 1969; Ahmed, 1976, 1980; Glatzer, 1998; and Lindholm, 1982, 1996). While the issue of matrilineal descent or common ancestry is a question of history,<sup>26</sup> Islam and *Pashtunwali* play an important role in the current socio-political life of Pashtun communities, including gender relations. Most Pashtun identify themselves as Muslim by birth (Barth, 1959), to the extent that sometimes ‘Pashtun-ness’ and ‘Muslim-ness’ overlap (Ahmad, 1980), to the point where being a Pashtun means being a Muslim (Glatzer 1998;

---

<sup>24</sup> The four major ethnic groups are Punjabis, Sindhis, Pashtuns and Baluchs. Apart from these, there are other smaller groups such as Muhajirs (migrants from India), Hazaras, Chitralis and so on, each claiming their own separate ethnic and linguistic identity.

<sup>25</sup> Some scholars such as Spain (1963) have called them ‘the world’s largest tribal society’ because of their large number and their genealogical history which link all Pashtuns to one common ancestor (Glazer, 1998).

<sup>26</sup> The Pashtuns trace their genealogical history to a putative ancestor Qais Abdur Rashid, who lived during 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. (Barth, 1959; Glatzer, 2002). However, the genealogical history of Pashtuns is based on oral traditions and is not verifiable. The origin of Pashtun people is still debated among local and foreign historians.

Bartlotti, 2000; Lindholm, 1982).<sup>27</sup> The third aspect, the Pashto language and *Pashtunwali*, is a more important aspect of Pashtun identity and the most relevant to the present study. In Pashto language, the ideal Pashtun values, traditions, and rules of behaviour are summarised under the word '*Pashtunwali*', which according to Rzehak (2011:5) is "an ethnic self portrait of the Pashtuns according to which the Pashtuns define themselves distinct from other ethnic groups not only due to their language, history and culture, but also due to their behaviour". According to the code of *Pashtunwali*, Pashtuns are ideally trusted and expected to act honourably, which has lead anthropologists to define *Pashtunwali* as "the way of the Pashtuns" (Spain, 1962:25), "the code of honour" (Ahmed, 1980), and "an ethnic identity-marker of Pashtun" (Gankovsky, 1973). Sometimes the word "Pashto" itself is used by Pashtuns to mean the ideal Pashtun values. The word "doing Pashto" (*Pashto kawal*) is used in contrast to "speaking Pashto" (*Pashto wayal*) to emphasise that merely speaking the language does not qualify a person to be called a 'true' Pashtun (Barth, 1959, 1969; Ahmad, 1980; Glatzer, 1998; Bartlotti, 2000, Grima, 2004). *Pashtunwali* is an *ideal* code of honourable behaviour which may not be possible to realise, yet serves as an important guiding principle for behaviour. *Pashtunwali* is essentially patriarchal and has a pervasive influence on all aspects of gender relations and the status of women inside and outside the family. These aspects are discussed in more detail in the following pages.

### 3.2. Gender, Family and Household in Pakistan

The family has been regarded by feminist theorists as one of the primary sites of patriarchy, where the expropriation of women's productive and reproductive labour produce a relation of domination and inequality between men and women (Walby, 1990). Kandiyoti (1988:278) also argues that in regions like Pakistan, "the key to reproduction of classic patriarchy lies in the operations of the patrilocally extended household". Similarly, Moghadam (2004:144) consider the "extended, patrilineal, patrilocal, patriarchal, endogamous, and occasionally polygynous" family as the most important unit of patriarchy in South Asia.

---

<sup>27</sup> This is true in general. However, current public and political debates among Pashtuns concern the relationship between 'Pashtun-ness' and 'Muslim-ness', with nationalists who put more weight on ethnic/cultural aspects claiming a distinguished national identity and Islamists who emphasize more the religious side identifying themselves with the rest of the Muslim community.

In Pakistan, where most people live in joint family system, the role of the family and household in the reproduction of patriarchy is even more central (Ahmed, 1980; Lindholm, 1982): a strict division of labour largely defines male and female roles and rules of gender segregation force women to remain inside the house most of their time. Age and gender are the two important determinants in the division of labour and distribution of family resources and power (Barth, 1959; Boesen, 1983). The father or another elder man (such as uncle or elder brother) leads the family in relation public affairs and make all important decisions regarding the division of responsibilities between family members, arrange marriages of younger members, and manage the family estate (Ahmad, 2006). In 1959, Fredrik Barth explained the power structure in a Pashtun family as:

“[T]he husband and father has all authority; he controls the social intercourse of the family members to the extent of being able, at his pleasure, to cut his wife off from all contact with her natal kin; he controls all property; ... and he alone has the right to dissolve the domestic unit or expel its members, by divorce or by disinheriting the children. These are his formal rights” (Barth, 1959:22).

Barth’s observations are still largely true; women and younger family members are seldom consulted regarding important family decisions (Ahmad, 2006). The structure of the family is also an important element which influences women’s status and autonomy within a particular household. A woman who lives in a nuclear family is relatively free to organise her work according to her wishes. The situation is different in the households where extended families live together. Among the women of the household, older women have more mobility, a greater access to resources and more decision-making power within the household in comparison to younger women. Relations within groups of women in the extended family may appear to be peaceful yet are characterized by a latent antagonism, jealousy, and rivalry (Lindholm, 1996, 2008).

The Pashtun house is usually divided conceptually and physically into *zanana* (women’s) spaces, and *mardana* (men’s spaces). The men’s space is called *hujra*, an exclusively male guest house, usually detached from the *zanana*’s space with a separate entry. Unrelated men are not allowed to cross into the *zanana* spaces, women are not allowed to enter *mardana* spaces (unless otherwise necessary)<sup>28</sup>. An important function of *hujra* is as an informal school where the elder males teach and the younger males learn the Pashtun ideals of honour and masculinity.

---

<sup>28</sup> In case a male member is not present at home, an elderly woman may go to the *mardana* space of *hujra* to entertain a visitor. Similarly, young women may go to sweep/clean the *hujra* in the absence of men/visitors.

As with spatial delineation, work is also distributed into *mardana*, in which men usually manage land, businesses, and positions of public authority, whereas women usually manage the house and perform domestic activities in *zanana* (Ahmed, 1980; Boesen, 1983; Shaheen, 2004). In some cases cross-over does happen, in fields such as agricultural work (e.g., harvesting and thrashing) in which both men and women participate.

The Pashtun family structure encourages male dominance by preferring male children over female children (Faery and Noor, 2004). Boys are considered assets because of their expected support for ageing parents (Lindholm, 1996) and their birth is welcomed through celebrations of different kinds. Girls are considered a liability and their birth not only goes without celebration, but is sometimes even mourned. A woman who produces only girls is blamed and her life can become harder. Such a woman may receive a constant threat of divorce or polygamy from the husband who aspires to have sons by marrying another woman (Isran & Isran, 2012).

Violence against women is usually embedded within patriarchal discourses (Walby, 1990) and is commonplace among Pashtun households and elsewhere in Pakistan. Most often violence against women is seen as a ‘family matter’ and may take many forms, such as wife beating, forced marriage, child marriage, and ‘honour killings’ (Critelli, 2010; Amnesty International, 2002; Naved, 2003; Jilani & Ahmed, 2004; Khan and Hussain, 2008). Religion and culture are often invoked to justify these forms of gender violence. Compared to other ethnic groups in Pakistan, Fikree *et al.* (2005:53) found that the Pashtuns are more likely to abuse their wives. It is difficult to accurately estimate the prevalence of violence against women, primarily because most forms of violence take place within the private spheres of the household (Human Rights Watch, 1999). Nevertheless, it is estimated that 80% of women in Pakistan experience domestic violence (Jilani & Ahmed, 2004). A study by Qureshi *et al.* (1999) found that the husband was the sole perpetrator in 63% of female murder cases. The same study found that the mother-in-law was the next likely perpetrator, although she is less likely to use physical violence. Some Pakistani women accept their condition as fate, and choose to bear the burden of violence because they fear losing the support of their family, community, and ultimately, for the sake of family honour. According to a study by the government of Pakistan in 2001, “42% of women accept violence as part of their fate; 33% feel too helpless to stand up to it; 19% protested and 4% took action against it (Amnesty International, 2004).



Kinship and kinship group are also very important components of the Pakistani social structure, resulting in significant consequences for women. To a greater or lesser extent, kinship decides men and women's access or lack of access to economic resources, social ranking, identity, and marriage partner. Among the Pashtuns, blood relations are preferred over relations created through marriage alone<sup>29</sup>. Kinship is a way of demarcating the in-group from the out-group, limiting women's interactions with the wider society (Ferdos, 2005) because in *Pashtunwali* (and Islam), "social intercourse between men and women is delimited by the criterion of kinship" (Ibraiz, 1993:105). Ideally, women are only permitted to interact socially with those men to whom they cannot legally marry. These men are called *mahram*.<sup>30</sup> Although it is rarely the case in actual practice that women follow such a strict rule of interaction, it does influence their association with non-kin men. Because patriarchy includes the idea that women are property of the family, and by extension, the community, individual women are held responsible to uphold not only the honour of her family, but also the honour of the whole clan.

### 3.3. Gender, Sexuality and Seclusion of Women in Pakistan

Cultural discourses around gender roles and the regulation of sexuality are essential features of patriarchy (Walby, 1990). The two main types of discourse in Pashtun culture are Islam and *Pashtunwali* (the Pashtun's code of conduct). These two domains of ideas and practices sustain essentialist and normative discourses around masculinity and femininity. It can be argued that while religious discourses primarily define masculine and feminine in terms of 'right' and 'wrong' for both genders, the *Pashtunwali* discourse defines such behaviour in terms of 'honour' and 'shame'. As mentioned earlier, Pashtuns identify themselves as Muslims, and they view their social norms to be in complete agreement with their religion (Glatzer, 1998). While it is true that these two discourses support each other in most cases, sometimes there is a clash between the two, in which case culture overrides religion (Ensveldon, 2004; Glatzer, 1998; Boesen, 1979; Malik, 1997). Therefore, it is possible to find cultural practices which the religion defines as

<sup>29</sup> Pashtun also practice consanguineous marriages (especially among cross cousins) which further cement the blood relations among the members of the kin.

<sup>30</sup> *Mahram* is the legal term denoting a relationship by blood, milk, marriage or sexual union which forbids marriage between persons so related. The term is also used in the sense that *mahram* persons are those with whom one can mix freely and be on informal terms. The opposite of *mahram* is *na-mahram* which literally denotes any person of the opposite sex whose kinship does not represent an impediment for marriage. *Na-mahram* also includes cousins and other distant relatives between whom marriage is permitted according to the Islamic law.

‘right’ but *Pashtunwali* considers as ‘shameful’, and vice versa. *Pashtunwali* associates men’s honour with women, and Pashtun masculinity is dependent on the extent to which men protect their honour, which will be discussed further in chapter 5.

Ideal Pashtun masculinity is explained by cultural discourses of *ghairat* and *izzat* (dignity and honour). The concept of *ghairat* pools together almost all values and behavioural rules of the Pashtun code of honour.<sup>31</sup> A person who performs *ghairat* is respectfully called *ghairatmand*. A Pashtun male is expected to ‘do honour’ (*ghairat khawal*) by defending his honour which could be related to anything, but usually concerns his self, his women, his property and his land (Barth, 1959; Ahmed 1980; Lindhlom, 1981; Yousafzai and Gohar, 2005; Ahmed, 2006). Such a person is held in high esteem because “a *ghairatmand* Pashtun personifies the ‘ideal Pashtun’” (Rzehak, 2011:16).

In contrast, an ideal Pashtun woman is considered to be the one who possesses *haya* (modesty) and observes *sharam* (shame). The notions of modesty and shame largely define women’s bodies and behaviour. Women and girls are required to observe shyness of demeanour and to avoid loud speech and laughter (Anderson, 1982; Billaud, 2009). Like elsewhere in Pakistan, Pashtun girls are brought up to be docile, obedient, and nice. Girls are carefully watched as they grow up: they are asked to observe *pardah* from early age and not to mix with boys (Anderson, 1982). Their physical movements are monitored and restricted so that they do not do anything to insult or dishonour the family or male relatives (Faery and Noor, 2004:39). A clear distinction is made between a “*hayadara* (modest) woman” and “*be-sharma* (shameless) woman”. Discourses around women’s modesty and shamelessness mostly revolve around their sexuality and bodily manners and behaviour in the presence of men. Constrained by these concepts, women often live in fear of tarnishing their family’s honour.

Among the Pashtuns, a special term which associates women with men’s honour is “*namus*”, which requires men to protect women from public gaze and to react strongly if the modesty of women is questioned (Billaud, 2009; Rzehak, 2011). “The word *namus* can be translated as ‘honour’, ‘reputation’, ‘esteem’, ‘conscience’, and ‘chasteness’, and it can denote all female members of a household as well” (Rzehak, 2011:16). In the *Pashtunwali* world view, the honour of a Pashtun man and the honour of all females for whom he is responsible are interdependent. The individual man and woman are viewed as a

---

<sup>31</sup> Rzehak (2011:16) maintains that the word “*ghairat* means 1. dignity, self-esteem, pride, ambition; 2. zeal, eagerness, passion; 3. bravery, courage, audacity; 4. indignation, anger; 5. modesty”.

representative of the family, so that failures of the individual result in a loss of face or a loss of honour for the entire family (Bari, 2000). There is considerable pressure on women as the repositories of family honour to maintain harmony and minimize actions that would jeopardize the stability of the family and community (Abraham, 2000; Bari, 2000).

*Purdah* (seclusion of women) and wedding girls at teenage are considered the best ways to defend a female's reputation and by extension one's own honour, as the main rule of conduct is the question of how one's behaviour is evaluated in the eyes of other people (Papanek, 1982; Billaud, 2009; Khan and Samina, 2009; Rzehak, 2011). Explaining the centrality of *purdah* to gender relations in Pakistan, Laird (2007) has noted that:

“This practice [of *purdah*] is neatly summarized in the local expression of “*chardar and chardiwari*”, literally meaning “the veil and the four walls”. This expression encapsulate the idea that women are protected and family honour is retained so long as women remain out of sight and out of reach of unrelated males, when sheltered by the four walls of the home, or when compelled to leave home, by an obscuring veil. This ideal centres women and their activities behind the walls of the family house or compound and assume that only men engage in public activities” (Laird, 2007:15).

Controlling female sexuality is considered to be one of the major determinants of men's control over women: Walby (1990) argues that men's concerns with women's chastity, compulsory heterosexuality and marriage, rape, prostitution and pornography and other cultural practices where women are treated as sexual objects that need to be controlled by men are central notions of a patriarchal society. A man's honour in Pashtun culture is largely related to the extent to which he can ensure control of the sexuality of women in his household.

In the words of Lindsey Young (1984):

“The reasons for seclusion of women in the Muslim context stem from the ideology of an “honour and shame” culture, where chastity and modest behaviour are essential for women, in terms of maintaining and upholding the family honour. Any inappropriate messages given will reflect badly upon the family, and it will experience shame vis-a-vis other members of the community” (Young, 1984: 53)

The honour/shame ideology is at work behind the practice of ‘honour-killing’. The Pashtun concepts of “*tor*” (stigma; lit. ‘black’) and “*paghor*” (taunt) are almost exclusively applied when a woman is molested or otherwise dishonoured.<sup>32</sup> Such an act brings a “*tor*” (stigma) to the family, followed by *paghor* (taunt) from other people in the community. Ideally this

---

<sup>32</sup> A local term for “honour killing” in Pakistan is “*karo-kari*” which literally means “black”.

‘blackness’ (*tor*, stigma) can be ‘whitened’ and the taunt (*paighor*) can be escaped only by taking revenge, which in the context of Pashtuns, often means killing the accused girl and boy.

Compulsory heterosexuality is another way of patriarchal control on women’s sexuality (Walby, 1990; Rich, 1980). While heterosexual marriage is the only legal option for both men and women in Pakistan (Boesen, 1979; Wazir, 2010), the social and legal reaction towards women’s engagement in extra-marital sex is much more severe than men (Frembgen, 2006; Naved, 2003; Patel and Gabit, 2008). There seems to be a deep silence about the existence of homosexuality amongst women in Pakistan. The only indication of the existence of lesbian relations to be found is in a genre of Urdu poetry popular during the nineteenth century, but with the passage of time this kind of poetry fell out of fashion in mainstream literature as it was considered to be ‘shameless poetry’ about ‘shameless women’ (Vanita, 2004; Petievich, 2002). Unlike western countries, where changes in the sexual practices of women such as extra-marital sex, increased access of women to divorce, options to remain single and homosexuality have to some extent helped liberate women’s sexuality from men’s control (Walby, 1990), in Pakistan, these changes have either not yet happened altogether or their magnitude is not yet a significant feature of society.

According to Rich (1980), one way in which patriarchal societies impose sexual boundaries on women is through early and arranged marriage, which is frequent in Pakistan and even more commonly practiced among the Pashtuns (Khan and Samina, 2009; Abraham, 2000). While the average age at the time of marriage has increased in recent years is positive, a large proportion of girls still get married at age 16 to 18, usually within the extended family (Khan and Samina, 2009; Abraham, 2000; Naved, 2003). Although the legal right to consent to marriage exists, arranged marriages fall along a continuum that is defined by the degree of coercion and consent. Forced marriage — in which at least one of the partners has not provided consent — occurs frequently and often leads to domestic disputes (Amnesty International, 1999; Gill, 2004; Jilani & Ahmed, 2004). The minimum age for marriage is set at 18 for men and 16 for women, and penal sanctions exist for contracting child marriages, although in remote areas, child marriage continues to exist (Amnesty International, 1999; Jilani & Ahmed, 2004). State laws also define sexuality in very narrow terms, leaving no room for sexual expression outside heterosexual marriage. The right of a woman to seek divorce from her husband is very

limited. A woman has to go through legal procedures to seek divorce, while a man can divorce his wife at his own will, without appearing in court.

As discussed so far, women in Pakistan are primarily associated with the private sphere, specifically inside the home, to be hidden from public gaze.<sup>33</sup> This severely restricts women's access to the public sphere, which includes education, work, and political participation.

### 3.4. Gender, Education and Paid Work in Pakistan

Women's access to education and paid work varies across different socio-economic classes and regions: women in higher social classes and urban areas have more access to education and work compared to women belonging to lower classes and rural area. In general, however, both *Pashtunwali* and religious attitudes are in agreement over the seclusion and restriction of women which discourage women to pursue education or a career outside the home. As observed by Papanek (1973, 1982), the gender distribution of roles and spaces in Pashtun households extends beyond the home compound, which has the effect of creating "separate worlds" for male and female. The concept of *zanana* (women's spaces) and *mardana* (men's spaces) which are primarily associated with home are also visible in the streets: in public spaces including parks and public transport, as well as all government institutions. Hence, there are *zanana* schools/hospitals/parks and *mardana* schools/hospitals/parks, *zanana* seats and *mardana* seats on public transport, and *zanana* seats in the national and provincial assemblies. There are separate compartments on public busses (Ali, 2001), offices set aside for women employees (Mirza, 1999), curtained cars for women, curtained off sections of lecture rooms specified for female students, and some completely segregated institutions where men cannot enter (Papanek, 1982). The extension of *purdah* to public spaces marks conceptual and physical borders and draws thresholds for women (Mernissi, 1987, 1993), which limit women's mobility and access to education, employment and training opportunities (Bari, 2000; Mumtaz & Shaheed, 1987; Rai *et al.*, 2007). "A woman in the public domain such as employment and politics is considered provocative and offensive ... upsetting the male order and his peace of mind... If the

---

<sup>33</sup>The association of women with the home is so strong that sometime 'women' and 'home' are used synonymously. The Pashto term for 'wife' (*kor-wala*) literally means "the one in the home". Another Pashto term for 'wife' is '*kor-wadana*', literally meaning "home-maker".

woman is unveiled, the situation is aggravated” (Syed, 2010:159). This situation discourages women from education and paid work in Pakistan.

Unfavourable cultural attitudes towards girls’ education, lack of sufficient government investment, and the unstable security in the region have greatly reduced girls’ access to education in Pakistan. The long-lived socio-cultural belief that women play a reproductive role within the confines of the home leads to the belief that educating women holds no value.<sup>34</sup> Gender and regional disparity is evident in enrolment patterns in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. A recent analysis of educational statistics in the province by Mustafa (2012) revealed that female net enrolment in schools was 45% in 2008/09, compared to 56% for males. Of the 154 colleges in the province, 100 are for men which show the unequal educational facilities and opportunities for the two genders. The disparities are greater between rural and urban areas (Bari, 2000; UNDP, 2008; Mustafa, 2012). For Pakistan as a whole, enrolment by girls in rural areas is 45 percentage points lower than that of girls in urban areas; boys’ enrolment is only 10% lower in rural compared to urban areas (Lloyd *et al.*, 2007). The on-going situation with terror activities in the region has also badly affected girls’ education: the Pashtun areas are the worst affected by terrorist events, with “more than 400 schools destroyed” by the Taliban between 2007 and 2013, “70% of which were girls’ schools” (The Guardian, 2012; also see BBC, 2013).<sup>35</sup>

Lack of education directly translates into lower rates of employment. It has been argued that the structure of paid work is patriarchal because it forces women to engage less in paid work, typically earn less, and engage in different jobs than men (Walby, 1990). These patterns are found in Pakistan, albeit with some variations in degree. Working women in Pakistan mainly work out of need, have gender-based wage disparities, are low skilled, are paid low wages, and have to bear the double burden of work along with domestic responsibilities of child care and household work (Mahbub-ul-Haq Human Development Centre, 2000:64). Gender relations (and gender inequalities) are reflected in the market and influence the way economic processes take place. Informal work in the home is mostly excluded from government statistics, leading to a gross underestimation of women’s

<sup>34</sup> Although the government has declared that all children of the ages 5-16 must go to school, majority the 7.261 million out of school children at the primary level in Pakistan are female (UNESCO, 2011).

<sup>35</sup> However, there is a trend toward a greater number of middle and higher income women acquiring a university education and moving into professions such as medicine, teaching, and engineering (Qadeer, 2006). Women make up 43% of all enrollees in tertiary education, and, notably, the educational achievements of female students are higher than those of male students at this level of education (Bari, 2000; UNDP, 2008).

economic contribution. Women's traditional responsibility for the social reproduction of the family — often ignored in economic analyses — leads to different economic behaviours by women compared to men (Khan, 2007; Paul, 1992). According to a comparative human development and employment opportunities report for the South Asian region, only 15% of women in Pakistan were engaged in economic activity (Mahbub-ul-Haq Human Development Centre, 2004).<sup>36</sup>

A comprehensive study in Pakistan by Kazi (1999) explains that multiple constraints circumscribe women's work options in general. These are: (a) exclusion from more remunerative non-farm employment; (b) social mores regarding suitability of particular occupations in the eyes of family members and employers; (c) work in non-farm sectors further away from home and in nearby urban centres are not acceptable and are not compatible with domestic duties; (d) gendered work patterns that keep women in low-paying, low-status activities; and (e) restricted job options and low returns that inhibit parental motivation to invest in girl's education, particularly where resources are limited (Kazi, 1999:387-88). In the urban area where women are found in the formal sector, Kazi (1999) further argues that cultural norms also explain the overwhelming concentration of women in the "respectable lines of teaching and medicine" as well as low social status jobs like sales and secretarial jobs which involve contact with men at a personal level (Kazi, 1999:391). Women in the urban economy are heavily concentrated at the top of the socio-economic hierarchy – 35% of urban working women are "professionals, technicians and associate professionals", while in the informal sector they perform home-based and low-paying piece-rate work, including crafts like sewing and embroidery. Between these two poles women are only marginally represented. A general perception among Pashtuns is that women's employment is likely to have serious effects on their fertility and traditional roles as mothers and care providers in the family, and that it can also have an effect on men's honour (Akram-Lodhi and Haroon, 1996; Kamal, 1999). This attitude of the Pashtuns excludes women from having access to productive resources (Akram-Lodhi and Haroon, 1996).

Women in the formal sector face discrimination in employment and income as well as sexual harassment (Ali, 2001; Bari, 2000; Hussain, 2003). In the work place, there is pressure on women to prove their suitability for a job by showing themselves to be a good and modest woman. As explained by Syed *et al.* (2005), in response to different social and

---

<sup>36</sup> This compares with far higher women's participation rates in neighbouring India (44%), Bangladesh (57%) and Sri Lanka (85%) (Mahbub-ul-Haq Human Development Centre, 2004).

organizational forces and limitations, a woman in an office environment experiences conflicting emotions of fear, anxiety, shame, guilt, depression and anger while searching for a workable balance between defiance and compliance. To survive hostile work environments, women office workers use different strategies to renegotiate (public) space, and to desexualise and redefine gender relations at their workplaces (Mirza, 1999). These strategies include creating social distance between male and female colleagues (for example, by limiting their conversation to work related issues only, by not becoming too frank with male colleagues, and not participating in office parties), developing socially obligatory relationships (for example, by introducing their brothers or husband to their male colleagues, or by befriending female relatives of their male colleagues so that working relations become family relations); integrating male colleagues into a fictive kinship system (for example by calling their male colleagues brothers in order to desexualise the working relationships). They may also create women's spaces inside the office, for example by selecting an office space where there is minimum interaction with male colleagues or visitors. Some observers have also noted that the replacement of the traditional *burqa* by the modern *hijab*, a relatively recent introduction in Pakistan urban cities, has also provided a strategic advantage to working women as wearing *hijab* in the workplace (or university) enable them look 'modest' as well as 'modern', i.e., 'protection' and 'freedom' at the same time, increasing their access to public spaces for education and economic independence (Haque, 2010; Hosseini, 1996; Afary, 1998).

### **3.5. Gender, Nationhood and State Laws in Pakistan**

It has been argued that the state is systematically structured in a way that its policies and actions are more often in the interests of men than women (Walby, 1990). The Pakistani state is no exception as it plays a great role in sustaining patriarchal structures in Pakistan.

An important aspect of state patriarchy in Pakistan is the ways it has used women as a symbol of national identity. As observed by feminist scholars in many countries, women have often been used symbolically to represent nationalist movements and identities. Women are often required to carry the 'burden of representation' of culture; they are constructed as the symbolic bearers of national identity, honour, and traditions (Yuval-Davis, 1997; Choo, 2006). In Pakistan "religion and women have always been part of the public discourses on citizenship and nation" (Jamal, 2006:285). Since its creation in 1947,



Pakistan has been struggling to create a shared identity among its various ethnic and linguistic groups. Religion has been viewed by the state's apparatus as the only factor which could unite the 180 million people, and at the same time differentiate them from Hindus, in order to provide a justification for the creation of Pakistan. This amalgamation of religion with local culture – 'religious nationalism' – has resulted in a heavy burden for women (Shaheed, 2009). For example, in order to create a pure Muslim Pakistani identity, the state tried to 'Islamize' women first by banning the Indian/Hindu *sarhi* and instructed women to wear *shalwar-kameez* with *dupatta/chader* (shawl).<sup>37</sup> In other words, women's bodies become a site for political contestations and boundary markers that visibly and structurally distinguish this 'land of the pious Muslims'<sup>38</sup> from others, especially Hindu India. Successive regimes in Pakistan have often played the religious card in order to gain legitimacy and support by making alliances with right wing religious parties, whose first demand is to curtail women's freedom by various means including repressive laws (Mumtaz & Shaheed, 1987; Shaheed, 2009).

Legally, women in Pakistan have to contend with a double status: the constitution of Pakistan on the one hand states that there should be no discrimination on the basis of sex<sup>39</sup>; on the other hand, certain state laws are obviously discriminatory to women (Bari, 1998; Critelli, 2010). The constitution of Pakistan was promulgated in 1973 — generally considered a liberal period with the politicization of women — and guaranteed equality between women and men (Malik, 1997; Mumtaz & Shaheed, 1987). As well as this, Pakistan has adopted many of the international commitments to protect basic human rights and gender equality that are effective in providing a platform for human rights activist and are useful in courts for advocacy and setting a standard against which to measure national laws (Rai *et al.*, 2007; UNDP, 2008).

However, the equality guaranteed in the constitution and in international conventions is negated by a multitude of discriminatory laws and customary practices. Numerous commentators have observed that religion has been manipulated by the state in Pakistan and used for political purposes to either bolster insecure regimes or obscure vital issues of social and economic justice for the population (Jahangir, 2000; Malik, 1997; Qadeer, 2006;

---

<sup>37</sup> Fatima Jinnah (sister of Pakistan's founder), also called "mother of the nation" who often wore Indian *sarhi* before independence "was requested to switch to '*shalwar kameez*' as an affirmation of Pakistan's independence from India" (Laird, 2007:191).

<sup>38</sup> 'Pakistan' literally means the 'the land of pure/pious people'.

<sup>39</sup> Article 25 of the 1973 constitution of Pakistan states that "All citizens are equal before the law and are entitled to equal protection before the law" and "Steps shall be taken to ensure the full participation of women in all spheres of national life" (cited in Critelli, 2010:239).

Critelli, 2010). Women have suffered disproportionately from distorted interpretations of Islam by the state (Malik, 1997; Critelli, 2010; Shaheed, 2009).

A major step backwards occurred when the military dictator General Zia-ul-Haq took power in 1979 and started an ‘*Islamization*’ process in the country with a number of ‘anti-women laws’ that were based on a conservative interpretation of religious teaching. This caused a reversal of the many advances that had been made by women. Summarizing the role of state and women in Pakistan, Jamal says:

“While “Islam” and “women” have always been part of the public discourses and citizenship and nation in Pakistan, this process intensified with the state-sponsored programme of Islamization ...[when President] Zia-ul-haq... introduced oppressive laws, particularly the notorious *Hudood Ordinance*, and promoted other measures and guidelines that have adversely affected the political, legal, and social position of women” (Jamal, 2006:285)

Women’s rights were severely curtailed by the discriminatory ‘*Hudood Ordinances*’, a law base on ‘Islamic Sharia’ that equated rape with adultery and disallowed a woman’s testimony to prove rape or adultery but instead required the evidence of four Muslim men (Mumtaz & Shaheed, 1987; Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 2003; Jahangir, 2000). The Law of Evidence, enacted in 1984, requires the testimony of two women for that of a man. In 1990, the implementation of the laws of *Qisas* (retribution) and *Diyat* (compensation) further undermined women’s rights to safety and security by privatising the violent crimes of murder and bodily harm and eliminating the possibility of state prosecution (Mumtaz & Shaeed, 1987). These laws created a loophole by which women can be killed in the name of honour without penalty because families, under the law, can forgive offenders and accept compensation (Amnesty International, 2002; Jilani & Ahmed, 2004). Marital rape is not recognized by the state. Even complaints against acts of domestic violence that come under the criminal law, such as physical assault, sexual harassment, battery, or attempted murder, are routinely ignored and often go unreported by police (Jahangir, 2000; Jilani & Ahmed, 2004; Malik, 1997). Women have also been raped, abused, and assaulted while in police custody, further deterring women from seeking help from the state’s judicial system.

When Benazir Bhutto became the Prime Minister of Pakistan in 1988, many progressively-minded women were disappointed by her unwillingness to change repressive laws promulgated by her predecessor (Laird, 2007). During her election campaign, she had promised to repeal the controversial laws such as *Hudood* and *Zina* ordinance that curtailed

the rights of women in Pakistan, but failed to deliver on her promises despite ruling the country for two terms. Speaking in 1994 to the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, she defended the traditional family structure, strongly opposed abortion, and accused the West of “seeking to impose adultery, abortion, sex education, and other such matters on individuals, societies and religions which have their own social ethos” (quoted in Turner, 2003:118).

While most Pakistani women suffer discrimination due to the *presence* of such state laws, some Pashtun women living in the tribal areas are suffering due to the *absence* of state laws. The tribal areas<sup>40</sup> of Pakistan do not come under the control of state law; instead, people in these areas run their affairs through their own centuries-old tribal customs of *Pashtunwali*. The minimum protection from police and the judiciary available to women in settled areas is not available to their sisters in the tribal area. For example, the practice of child marriage was recently banned by the government, but this law does not extend to tribal areas where the practice still continues. There is a secular constitution, religious *sharia* laws for personal issues, and customary laws of the tribal areas, resulting in policies toward women that are contradictory, inconsistent, and without substantive action (Critelli, 2010).<sup>41</sup>

In sharp contrast to General Zia’s ‘Islamization’ policy and anti-women laws in the 1980s, General Musharraf used women as symbols for his “*enlightening moderation*” after 9/11 in an effort to present Pakistan as a modern, progressive state to the West. The *Zina* (fornication) ordinance was repealed and a “Women Protection Bill” was passed in 2006. Musharraf’s regime also encouraged the presence of women in the public sphere. For example, a third of seats in the parliament were allocated for women, and dozens of private TV channels were opened in which women were encouraged to become newscasters and anchors. Another landmark decision made by the Musharraf regime in 2002 ensured women’s representation in the country’s political structures through the reservation of 33%

---

<sup>40</sup> Apart from the four settled areas (provinces) there are seven Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) which have a special status in the legal and administrative system of Pakistan. Most of the affairs in FATA are run by local council of elders with minimal interference from the state. The police and judiciary do not operate there.

<sup>41</sup> The clash between religion, customs, and state laws is not restricted to the Tribal Areas only. In July 2013, for example, the BBC Urdu service reported that a local council of Muslim clerics in a district near Peshawar passed a resolution barring the entry of women in the market during the fasting month of *Ramadan* for the reason that “their presence in the market without a male relative spread immorality in the city”. The head of the local police station declared that the resolution was against the state law which provide guarantee freedom of movement to both men and women. The news could be found on this link:

<[http://www.bbc.co.uk/urdu/pakistan/2013/07/130720\\_karak\\_women\\_banned\\_markets\\_zz.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/urdu/pakistan/2013/07/130720_karak_women_banned_markets_zz.shtml)>

[Accessed: November. 26, 2014].

of seats for them in all three tiers of local government and 17% in the national and provincial legislatures.<sup>42</sup> Seats for women were also allocated in local elections, as a result of which “more than 40,000 women were elected to the local government institutions and 205 in the national and provincial assemblies and the Senate” by 2002 (Bari, 2005).

Nevertheless, there are a number of institutional and cultural hurdles in the way of women’s political empowerment. For example, most of the women elected through reserved quotas usually belong to political/feudal families: they are the wives, daughters and sisters or sisters-in-law of those who are already stakeholders in the power structure of the state. In the assemblies, the “male members denied them development funds and expected them to confine themselves only to women’s issues” (Bari, 2005). Moreover, political parties are structurally patriarchal and non-democratic. In the last general election in 2013, political parties allowed very few women to contest the election, a reflection of patriarchal trends where women are kept out of the public space (Saleem, 2013). Right wing political parties are also hostile towards female candidates and oppose a female as leader. At the local level, many women are kept out of the voting process because they do not have national identity cards (a pre-requisite for voter registration). Community elders and local officials of political parties also illegally bar women from voting in parts of FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Yousaf, 2013; Saleem, 2013; Bari, 2005). The electoral roll for elections held in 2013 comprised 48.6 million male and 37.6 million female voters, which means that almost 10 million females were not registered as voters (Yousaf, 2013).

## **Summary of the Chapter**

This chapter has shown that Pakistan is a diverse country with disparities in social and economic development. The nature and degree of women’s oppression varies wildly throughout the country, and is dependent on the intersections of ethnicity, social class position, and rural/urban location. In the rural and tribal areas, local customs often prevail over national law and patriarchal structures are much stronger. Patriarchal social norms are embodied in strict codes of behaviour, rigid gender separation, family and kinship patterns, and a strong ideology linking family honour to female virtue. At the national level, religion has been used by the state apparatus as an identity marker and women being used as a symbol of national identity means that they have suffered the most from suppressive laws.

---

<sup>42</sup> As a result Pakistan ranks much higher than its neighbours in terms of women’s political participation (World Economic Forum, 2011).

Following years of campaigns by women's rights organisations, there have been some positive steps taken by the government, especially in the sphere of political empowerment. The education ratio among women has also risen in recent years. Many women have increasingly been stepping out of their *zanana* spaces for education, work, media, sports, politics, and other such domains which have traditionally been associated with men. At the grassroots level, however, conditions are still not favourable for the vast majority of women in Pakistan.

## Chapter 4

### Methodology

#### Introduction

Most previous researchers on gender relations and proverbs have concerned themselves with how women and men are represented in proverbs (i.e., what proverbs say about men and women), very few researchers have looked at how men and women themselves use proverbs. A second issue with previous research is that studies on proverbs in Pakistan and elsewhere have mostly looked at proverbs as ‘texts’ selected from previously published collections, devoid of the particular linguistic contexts in which proverbs are used. This study intends to fill this research gap by choosing a methodology which not only looks at proverbs as texts, but also looks at proverb performances in context by Pashto speakers.

This chapter focuses on the methods employed in this research to collect proverbs and to consider the context in which proverbs on issues of gender relations are used among the Pashtuns. Written in a reflexive manner, the first section of the chapter details the ethnographic methods adopted by the study – semi-structured interviews, female research assistants, participants’ recruitment strategies, and field notes and observations. The second section discusses ethical considerations followed by the next section in which I reflect upon the fieldwork in general. The last two sections detail the transcription of interviews and data analysis respectively.

#### 4.1. Methods of Data Collection

The choice of research method primarily depends on the research questions and the type of data the researcher wants to collect. This research aimed at collecting two kinds of data: first, collection of proverbs from pre-existing sources alongside new proverbs collected directly from local people, and second, data on the use of proverbs by Pashto speakers and their attitudes towards proverbs and gender relations. Arewa and Dundes (1964) have stressed upon the importance of researchers recording the context of their texts, as well as speakers’ perception and opinions:

“If there is oral literature, then there is oral literary criticism, that is, native, as opposed to exogenous, literary criticism. The shelves of folklorists are filled with explanations of what folklore means and what its value is, but few of these explanations and valuations come from the folk” (p.73).

Methodologically, the collection of proverbs texts and proverbs use in context by speakers along with ‘oral literary criticism’ requires a combination of library research with fieldwork. These two methods of data collection are explained below.

#### 4.1.1. Proverbs Selection

As explained in chapter 1, selecting proverbs from already published sources is the method used in most previous research studies.<sup>43</sup> Most authors have selected proverbs about gender relations from one or two primary sources of published proverbs of a specific language. As detailed in section 1.3 of chapter 1, a number of Pashto proverbs collections currently exist, among which Tair’s two volume book of Pashto proverbs – *Ruhi Mataloona* (1975, 1981) – is the largest to date. Tair’s book has been consulted as the main source of published proverbs for this study.<sup>44</sup> Along with this, other published books of proverbs were also consulted because Tair’s compilation is not complete: he collected proverbs mainly from Pashtun men and did/could not collect proverbs from women, and deliberately excluded some “obscene proverbs” (Tair, 1975:12), many of which may have been related to gender issues.<sup>45</sup> In addition, scholars have noted that proverbs collections, like dictionaries, usually lag behind the time as they are “highly conservative in scope” (Doyle, 1996:82). As such, it is likely that ‘new’ proverbs may have emerged since Tair’s publication in 1975. I therefore consulted ten other collections of Pashto proverbs published over the last forty years, some of which are found in the library of the Pashto Academy of University of Peshawar, and a few of which were purchased from book shops in Peshawar city. These are: Kamawal (1969), Enevoldsen (2004 [1969], Tair & Edwards (1982), Shinwari (1999), Akhtar (1997), Yasini (2005), Bartlotti & Khattak (2006), Lashkari (n.d), Alkozi (2007), and Zahir (2010).

<sup>43</sup> For example Webster’s (1982) “Women, Sex, and Marriage in Moroccan Proverbs”, Ojoade’s (1983) “African Sexual Proverbs”, Dorn’s (1986) “Gender and Personhood: Turkish Jewish Proverbs and the Politics of Reputation”, Ennaji’s (2008) “Representation of Women in Morocco Arabic and Barber Proverbs”, Hussein’s (2004) “A Cultural Representation of Women in the Oromo Society”, Storm’s (1992) “Women in Japanese Proverbs”, and Nakhavaly & Sharifi’s (2013) “On Sex Discrimination in Persian Proverbs”

<sup>44</sup> Bartlotti (2000) in his study on “Proverbs, Islam and the Construction of Identity among Pashtuns” also used Tair’s collection for selecting Pashto proverbs.

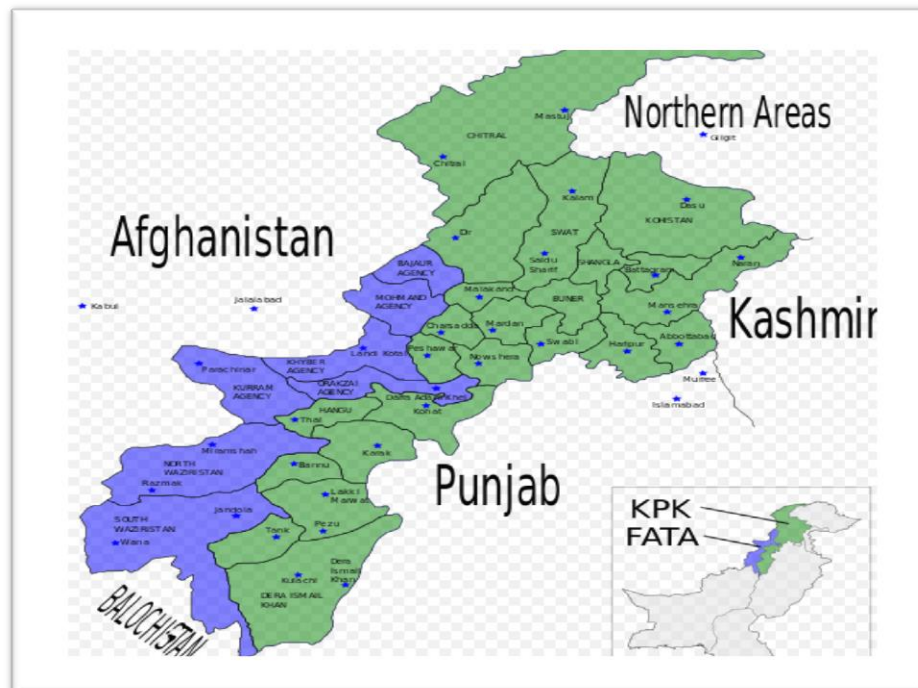
<sup>45</sup> For a more critical and detailed description of Tair’s collection of Pashto proverbs, see section 1.3 of chapter 1.

Based on criteria explained later in this chapter (section 4.5.1), all the eleven collections were carefully scrutinised and a total of 371 proverbs on gender roles and relations were selected. A majority of these proverbs (65%) were found in Tair's collection, with the rest identified in the other collections. This shows that Tair's collection, while the most comprehensive, is far from complete. The current research project also collected 147 new proverbs through fieldwork with local people. These proverbs are not found in any previously printed collection, as discussed later in this chapter.

#### 4.1.2. The Fieldwork: Semi-structured Interviews

Fieldwork was conducted in Pakistan between August 2011 and January 2012 (six months). The main location of the fieldwork was the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province, previously known as the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP)<sup>46</sup>. The population of the province is predominantly ethnic Pashtuns, though other smaller ethnic groups also live in certain parts of the province. The province is adjacent to Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) which is populated almost exclusively by ethnic Pashtuns. Both KP and FATA are adjacent to Afghanistan on the north and to the Punjab province of Pakistan on the south, as shown in the map in figure 4.1.

**Figure 4.1: Map showing the location of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and FATA (Pashtun dominated areas) in Pakistan.**



Source: [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pakistan\\_KPK\\_FATA\\_areas\\_with\\_localisation\\_map.svg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pakistan_KPK_FATA_areas_with_localisation_map.svg)

<sup>46</sup> The name of the province was changed from NWFP to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) in order to give it a Pashtun/Pakhtun identity.



Given the research aims, outlined in the introduction above, interviews were used as the primary method of data collection given their capability of providing in-depth information pertaining to participants' experiences and viewpoints on a particular topic (Burgess, 1981; Bryman, 2008; Creswell, 2007; Turner, 2010). Within sociology, interviewing has been traditionally associated with qualitative research which focuses on the exploration of values, meanings, beliefs, thoughts, experiences, and feelings characteristic of the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell, 2007).

I preferred a 'semi-structured' interview which is structured enough to keep the conversation focussed on the topic, but has enough flexibility to allow for modification according to the situation (Burgess, 1981; Bryman, 2008; Creswell, 2007; Turner, 2010). This type of interview is also compatible with feminist research (Oakley, 1981) as well as sociolinguistic research (Tagliamonte, 2006; Schilling, 2013). According to Schilling (2013:92), the advantage of interviewing over other methods of data collection is that it combines both "elicitation technique" and "observation technique" – that is, the researcher can elicit certain linguistic features (say, proverbs) from the participants, but at the same time the researcher can observe how a certain feature of language is being used.<sup>47</sup> I found this quite useful because I could specifically ask a participant whether they know a certain proverb, how they might use it and how often. The flexible nature of the interview questions allowed for being more informal during the discussion, enabled me to substitute or re-contextualise a question according to the gender, age, education and occupation of the participant, and to further pursue a topic of interest by asking additional, follow-up questions or change questions based on participants' responses.

---

<sup>47</sup> It may be useful here to note a very fundamental difference between a sociological interview and a sociolinguistic interview. Sociologists are interested in participants' comments, point of view, opinion or attitude towards a certain *specific issue*, while sociolinguists are interested in the '*speech*' of the participants. As long as a participant is '*talking*', a sociolinguist is satisfied from the interview. It does not matter whether the speaker is focused on a specific topic or not, it does not matter whether the speaker is talking about her recent shopping experience or narrating a movie scene last watch, it is enough that she is *talking* in vernacular. In sociology, on the other hand, the participants talk on specific topic, pre-selected by the researcher. Describing her sociolinguistic research experience, Tagliamonte (2006:43) says: "the most famous interview in my collection is a two-hour narration by an elderly man about how to breed slugs!" In a sociological interview, this kind of (sluggish!) talk for two hours is extremely unlikely unless the research is about slugs. Keeping in mind this fundamental difference between a sociolinguistic and a sociological interview, it is logical that many of Labov's (1972a) well-known and much followed "principles of sociolinguistic interviews" are not suitable for sociological interviews. For example, Labov (1972a) recommends asking 'emotional questions' during the interviews. These differences also determine the level of efforts put into transcribing the audio tapes: the specific *dialect* of the speaker is the bread and butter of sociolinguists and the speaker speech must be transcribed exactly; a sociologist rarely takes interest in the dialect of a speaker.

### 4.1.3. The Participants and Their Recruitment Strategies

The question of how many participants to interview is an important one, though there seems to be no definite answer. “It depends” is the often heard answer from experts in the field (Baker & Edwards, 2012). It depends upon one’s methodological and epistemological perspectives, the type of research questions, the nature of participants and issues of access, time and resources available for data gathering, and other such pragmatic factors as the time and efforts required for transcription and data handling. Qualitative research methods are often concerned with generating an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon or are focused on meaning (and heterogeneities in meaning) in a given issue, process or situation (Dworkin, 2012). While some experts in qualitative research avoid the topic of ‘how many’ interviews ‘are enough’, some experts are more specific in suggesting numbers. For example, Warren (2002) suggests that the minimum number of interviews needs to be between 20 and 30. Mason (2010) has found that the average number of qualitative interviews conducted by PhD students in UK and Ireland is 30. Adler and Adler (2012:10) maintain that qualitative interviews should be “in the broad range of between a dozen and 60, with 30 being the mean”. Although these guidelines are not meant to be taken as the gold-standard, they are helpful in getting a sense of what is expected from a researcher and what is counted as ‘reasonable’ way of conducting research in a specific field. Bartlott (2000:110) summarises this debate by saying that “one needs enough data to prove the thesis and to avoid the criticism that the conclusions are based on the views of a single individual from the cultural fringe, or simply reflect the bias of the ethnographer”. In sociolinguistics too, the advice is that “a small amount of data is better than an unfinished grandiose project” (Feagin, 2002:21), but on the other hand, “you do not want to be criticised for having too little data” (Tagliamonte, 2006:32).

Keeping in mind these suggestions and experiences of experts, along with the kind and amount of data required for this research project, a total of 40 participants were interviewed for this research. This number is ‘reasonable’ because interviews are not the only method of data collection used in this study. As mentioned earlier, proverbs were also collected by consulting previously published sources which supplement the data gathered

through interviews. In the context of gender and folklore research, forty interviews are noticeably more than most previous studies in the field.<sup>48</sup>

A related decision that a researcher has to make is who to interview. As one of the research objectives is to see if there are any variations in the use of proverbs across age, sex, and social class of the speakers, I decided to split the sample into categories of participants based on age, gender, and educational status of the participants. Both sociologists and sociolinguists maintain that the different social positions and identities of individuals significantly influence their points of view and social practices, including their language use. Studies are increasingly recognizing the intersection of various identities and social statuses of participants in social research. The sociolinguistic approach to language and society is based on the very assumption that the use of certain linguistic devices is correlated in a fairly systematic way with social indices, for example, sex, age and class (Murphy, 2010). It is very rare to find a sociolinguistic study without breaking up its sample into one or more of the aforementioned categories. I paid close attention to age differences because of the impact that age makes on interactions and perceptions of tradition and identity. For example, younger people may have different life experiences than older people which might shape their view of proverbs and Pashtun identity. Similarly, men and women may use proverbs differently or have different attitudes towards sexist proverbs and gender roles and relations. Uneducated men and women might interpret gender relations differently than educated participants due to their different statuses and role in the social structure. Illiterate people are more likely to be poor, live in rural areas, and work in agricultural and other informal work environments, while educated people are more likely to work in formal professions, live in urban areas and have higher social status for having more economic and cultural capitals. These differences are expected to influence their language and proverbs usage. Therefore, the sample of participants was divided on the basis of gender, age and education as shown in Table 4.1.

---

<sup>48</sup> For example, Herskovits (1930) seminal proverb study is based on comments by one single young local informant. Hussein's (2004) study on "Representation of Women in Oromo Proverbs of Eastern Africa" consults six speakers of the local language.

**Table 4.1: Categories of sampled research participants**

| Gender       | Younger (age 30 & below) |           | Older (age above 30) |           | Total            |
|--------------|--------------------------|-----------|----------------------|-----------|------------------|
|              | Uneducated               | Educated  | Uneducated           | Educated  |                  |
| Male         | 5                        | 5         | 5                    | 5         | 20               |
| Female       | 5                        | 5         | 5                    | 5         | 20               |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>10</b>                | <b>10</b> | <b>10</b>            | <b>10</b> | <b>Total: 40</b> |

As can be seen in the table, the 40 participants interviewed for this study were divided equally on the basis of gender, age, and education level. In addition, out of the 40 participants, 9 participants belonged to urban areas while 31 participants belonged to rural areas (not shown in the table). Recruiting equal number of participants from rural and urban areas turned out to be difficult because there is only one urban district in the province – Peshawar. Residents of other small cities and towns do not define themselves as urban. Even in Peshawar, most Pashtuns are recent migrants from rural areas with strong connections and frequent visits to their extended families in villages. Some have lived in Peshawar for 10-15 years but are not domiciled in the city. Instead, they are domiciled in the areas where their parents have permanent address.<sup>49</sup> Such participants, when asked, defined themselves as rural despite their current residence in Peshawar city. Therefore, only 9 participants in the sample identified themselves as urban. In terms of educated vs. uneducated, a participant who had completed high school (10 grades), the minimum required level of education for most public sector jobs in Pakistan, was considered educated. Most of the participants defined as uneducated had never been to school; only three among the uneducated group had been to school but had left the school in grade 2 or 3. In terms of age, participants were grouped into ‘younger’ (30 years and below) and ‘older’ (above 30 years). The age of the younger participants ranged from 22 to 30 years with an average of 26 year old. The age of the older participants ranged from 39 to 70 with an average of 51 years. All of the 20 educated participants (both male and female) were working in the formal sectors. Half of the 10 educated women were working as teachers at various levels, ranging from primary schools to University. Among the uneducated female participants, only two were working in government institutions in the capacity of janitorial staff.

<sup>49</sup> The government of Pakistan issues a domicile certificate to people based on where their parents have permanent residence. For example, I was born in district Karak but am living in Peshawar for the last 20 years. Despite that, my official documents (Domicile Certificates, National Identity Card, and Passport) still mention district Karak as my permanent address.

As evident from the above discussion, participants were selected on the basis of purposive sampling which is the most commonly practiced and most “recommended” in research based on qualitative interviews (Bryman, 2008:333). In sociolinguistic studies, sampling based on “quota or judgement”, according to Schilling (2013:35), “has proven to be well suited for a range of types of studies” which “involves identifying in advance the types of speakers you want to study and then obtaining a certain number of each type of speaker”. The categories of participants are most often selected on the basis of ‘snow-balling’ or what the sociolinguists call “friend of a friend” approach (Tablamente, 2006; Labov, 1984; Schilling, 2013), in which one participant (often a friend) facilitates the recruitment of another relevant participant willing to take part in the research. In a study by Lupton (1996), for example, a team of four interviewers were employed for data collection, each of whom interviewed their ‘personal contacts’. My strategy of participants’ recruitment is similar to Lupton (1996): most of the male participants were my personal contacts (friends, acquaintances, relatives, colleagues) or were friends of my friends. Most of the female participants were the relatives or friends of the three female research assistants who helped me in conducting interviews with female participants (detailed later). In other words, four different networks of personal contacts were utilised to recruit participants which reduces the issue of biasness usually associated with personal contacts as participants.

The interviews lasted for one hour on the average, though a few interviews were up to three hours. Most of the interviews were a type of planned informality and were accompanied by cups of tea and light refreshments. The interview locations varied from participants’ workplaces to the home of participants, to open fields when convenient to the participants. Interviews with female participants took place either at their homes or workplace. Interviews with male participants were mostly held in private with minimum interruptions; however, this was not the case with most female participants (explained later).

For reasons of gender segregation, I was unable to interview all the 20 female participants. I myself interviewed five of the educated female participants who were my personal contacts. The remaining interviews with female participants were conducted by three female research assistants hired for this purpose.

#### 4.1.4. Female Research Assistants: Reflections on Recruitment, Training, and Fieldwork

Because gender is constructed socially and produced relationally, any study about gender has to include both men and women (Lamphere *et al.*, 1997:4). Three female research assistants were employed to help in collecting data for this research. This decision was based on three factors: to overcome my difficulty of access to women participants because of women's seclusion in Pashtun society; to minimise the influence of my male identity and perspective on knowledge production; and to widen the geographic coverage of the research areas by selecting participants from different parts of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

Social scientists working on gender issues are required to be aware of their own gender performances and sex ideologies in the field, along with those of the participants, to better understand the production of knowledge. The field of women and gender studies has been traditionally associated with women, and male involvement in this academic area may be viewed with some resentment by feminist scholars (Enslin, 1994; Berliner, 2008). Some radical feminists, such as Delphy (2004), consider that feminism should be exclusively a women's domain as men "do not know and cannot know ... how it feels to be treated like a women.... No amount of empathy can replace experience" (Delphy, 2004, qtd. in Berliner & Falen, 2008). If this assertion is accepted, then there will be no ethnography as the basic aim of ethnography is to make sense of people/customs different than the researcher's own. Not all women are the same and similarity among women based on gender does not mean that they are sailing in the same boat. Sometimes other differences, such as ethnicity, class and religion, play a more profound role (Zavella, 1997). In this sense, even women cannot *fully* understand other women (Berliner, 2008; Falen, 2008). Still, male researchers conducting research on women related issues may be asked how they were able to access and understand the views of female interlocutors (Berliner & Falen, 2008; Falen, 2008).<sup>50</sup> This is a double-barrelled question and represents the two main issues faced by men conducting research on gender and women's issues: (a) gaining access to the women's world, and (b) the ability to experience/understand the women's point of view. These questions are not totally unjustified, especially in countries like Pakistan where women's seclusion bars men from gaining access to female participants. Writing about the Pashtun, Dupree (1988) argues that "no male anthropologist can successfully study in a Muslim

---

<sup>50</sup> In the first stages of my PhD, I was asked the same question by a fellow PhD student while I was presenting my PhD topic in a departmental seminar in the University of Glasgow. The question was a surprise for me, but it helped me think more on how to fine-tune my methodology.

milieu without a female counterpart, unless he limits himself to male activities. ... only women can collect adequate data on *parda* as practiced in any given Muslim society” (1988:118).

The experience of many male researchers shows that gender does affect access (see Caton, 1990; Falen, 2008; and Brandes, 2008). For example, Steven Caton (1990) admitted that collecting data on women and their poetry was impossible in Yemen. Falen (2008) mentioned his difficulty in gaining access to women’s spaces among the Fon of West Africa. In those cultures where genders are strictly segregated, male researchers have managed to gain access to women’s world by employing female research assistants (e.g., Falen, 2008), by doing collaborative research with other female researchers (e.g., Miescher, 2008), or by gaining access to women through children (e.g., Kulick, 2008). In Pakistan, well-established norms of gender segregation prevent unrelated men and women from being at ease in the presence of each other (Rai *et al.*, 2007; Mumtaz & Shaheed, 1987). Both foreign and local researchers have faced the problem of access to the world of Pashtun women and most male researchers avoid the risk of including female participants in their studies. For example, Asher John conducted a sociolinguistic research study in Pakistan but did not interview female speakers because “[i]t is difficult and often impossible for a male researcher to record women” (John, 2009:9). Leonard Bartlotti (2000) lived for 14 years in Peshawar for his research yet admits that his research represents only the male world view as his contact with women in Peshawar was limited to “families of close local friends” or “educated “upper class” families of the city” (Bartlotti, 2000:102). As mentioned by Dupree (1988), it is common for male anthropologists to be accompanied by their wives who help in collecting data from Pashtun women.<sup>51</sup>

Keeping this in mind, three female research assistants were employed to conduct interviews with female participants and in order to cover different geographical areas of KP province. One of the female research assistants was a PhD student in the department of Pashto language and literature, University of Peshawar. She had recently completed her fieldwork which involved data collection on Pashto folklore, including songs and proverbs, and oral histories related to Pashtun rituals and cultural artefacts. She was well-suited for this research because of her experience in folklore collection and her good knowledge of Pashto as well as English language. However, she was extremely ‘*purdah* conscious’ and was reluctant to conduct interviews beyond her own village and her relatives. Though she

---

<sup>51</sup> Dupree (1988:118) has listed a number of examples of male-female (mostly husband-wife) anthropologists who have jointly conducted ethnographic research on Pashtuns.

managed to conduct interviews in a number of villages, still her interviews were geographically restricted to one district and the participants were mostly drawn from amongst her friends, family members and distant relatives. The other two research assistants were M. Phil students in the Department of Sociology, University of Peshawar. Both of them had good research / fieldwork experience and were familiar with gender issues in Pakistan. One of them had previously worked with NGOs and had a good experience in data collection through interviews and questionnaires.

What make these three female research assistants ideal for this research were that all three were very experienced in conducting academic fieldwork, were originally from rural backgrounds, and had good knowledge of Pashto language and culture. They were also geographically from three different parts of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and conducted interviews in their respective villages which helped in coverage of diverse parts of Pashto speaking people in terms of geography, dialects, and tribal make up. Specifically, the interviews conducted by myself and those conducted by the three female research assistants covered various districts including Peshawar, Sawabi, Mardan, Dir Lower, Dir Upper, Lakki Marwat, Nowshera, Karak, Bannu, Kohat and Charsadda among others. In this way, almost all the Pashtun speaking areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province were covered geographically as well as linguistically. The geographical spread of the sample is also important because different Pashtun sub-tribes living in different districts of the province speak different dialects of Pashto. This has considerably enhanced the representativeness of the study and the proverbs collected. In fact, I found out that some familiar proverbs lexically varied across different dialects, and some proverbs were more well-known in some districts than others.<sup>52</sup>

The research assistants were given extensive training on various aspects of the research in individual sessions lasting for up to five hours. The training included a general introduction to the purpose and nature of the research with emphasis on the qualitative nature of research design. The research assistants were also briefed about different possible ways of recruiting suitable participants based on age, sex, education/class as outlined earlier. Special attention was paid to training the research assistants in the ethics of research and how to obtain informed consent. Each of the assistants was given a copy of the British Sociological Association's Ethical Guidelines (BSA, 2002) and ethical principles were discussed in detail. They were also trained into how to operate the voice recorder. The

---

<sup>52</sup> Analysis of Pashto proverbs for the point of view of their familiarity and popularity across different Pashtun regions and their dialectical features is a potential future project.



research assistants were also asked to contact me in case they faced any unforeseen issue during the fieldwork.

#### **4.1.5. Observations, Research Diaries, and Field Notes**

Sociologists and sociolinguists have acknowledged that ‘the field’ and ‘the fieldwork’ are not some bounded and discrete entities separate from everyday life. The field does not have identifiable borders and, thus the connections between ‘the field’ and our everyday lives mean that we are always in the field (Caplan, 1993; Schrijvers, 1993). Once during the fieldwork I was on my way to meet a participant for an interview in Peshawar city. I hired a taxi because I was running late. I tried to suggest a shorter route to the driver. Fearful of the unknown route which I suggested, he tried to convince me to take a longer route he knew well. I noted his use of proverbs in his reply:

*“May be the route you mention is shorter, but the wise people have said; “Don’t drink water from a jar with closed lid, even if it contains holy water; don’t marry a divorced woman, even if she is [as beautiful as] a fairy; don’t travel on an unseen route, even if it is shorter than the route you have already seen.”*

(Field notes; September, 20, 2011)

These kind of personal observations and reflections of the researcher is an in-built part of qualitative research, and noting down these observations in a research diary in the shape of notes facilitate a reflective awareness of various aspects of the research process, the fieldwork, and data generation and interpretation (Burgess, 1981; Bryman, 2008; Creswell, 2007).

I kept a field diary during the fieldwork in which I noted down any relevant information, procedure, and issues I came across in the field. In particular, I was always attentive to people’s speech to know how they use proverbs in a variety of formal and informal settings including family gatherings, friendship circles, coffee shops and anywhere where two or more people were talking. I noted down dozens of natural speech events in which proverbs were used by speakers. These silent observations of unplanned speech events further substantiated the insight gained from planned interviews in regard to how people use proverbs and for what purposes.

I also used a field diary and took notes during and after the interviews. The female research assistants were also asked to take field notes during and after each interview and to carry a small diary for this purpose. I emphasised that the research assistants must take care to

record important demographic information about each participant, including age, education, marital status, number of children (if married), and family set-up (i.e., whether they are living in joint, nuclear or extended family), the interview location, the particulars of other people if present during the interview, and other such information and personal observations which may not be recorded by the voice recorder.<sup>53</sup>

The field diary and notes allowed me to be more reflexive concerning the research activities and served as ‘external memory’ to my own reflections. It facilitated my understanding of the research process alongside helping in collecting additional data. The field notes of the female research assistants helped me in understanding the life situations of the female participants whom I never met in person.

## **4.2. Ethical Considerations**

This research was conducted with great concern respecting ethical considerations to ensure that the rights, privacy, and safety of the research participants were protected. Before conducting the fieldwork, I obtained ethics approval in May 2011 from the ethics committee of the College of Social Sciences, University of Glasgow. As the research was conducted in my home country, I was familiar with the local contexts and some aspects of particular sensitivities in matters of gender and religious beliefs. The research was conducted in line with the ethical guidelines of British Sociological Association (BSA, 2002) and the Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and Commonwealth (ASA, 1999). Special care was taken to obtain informed consent, to maintain the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants, and to keep the data protected.

Before conducting the interviews, all participants were informed about the general purpose of the study, the major topics to be covered in the discussion, that their participation was voluntary, and that they could decide which questions they would answer or not, or withdraw entirely from the study at any time and for any reason. Before starting the interview, I informed the participants that the data would be used for academic purposes, including the current as well as future projects. All interviews were tape-recorded and it was explained that these tapes were for my personal research use only.

---

<sup>53</sup> One of the research assistants produced a thirty pages long account of her field observations, describing details of each participant’s personal and family background and a commentary on various aspects of the interviews. She also noted down proverbs and poetries she had collected from her participants along with some explanations of the contextual and connotative meanings of certain proverbs.

Educated participants were provided with an information sheet about the research and a consent form. Uneducated participants were briefed verbally and asked for verbal consent for the interview. While all participants granted informed and voluntary consent, less than half of the participants signed the consent form. I had anticipated this before as in Pashtun culture, 'oral commitment' is preferred over 'signature/thumb impression', and sometimes asking for a signature or thumb impression can create suspicions in the mind of the person. Mutual trust and, in some cases, prior friendship and family relations between the researcher and the participants further facilitated voluntary oral consent without any need to sign the form. It is also considered 'rude' in Pashtun culture to insist on a signature, as this may be interpreted that the researcher does not consider the 'oral promise' of the participant of any worth. Therefore, informed consent was obtained through either written or oral means as appropriate.

For female participants (especially uneducated females) who were interviewed in their homes, informed consent was also obtained from a male member of their house before approaching them. This was important because Pashtun women are sometimes not allowed to talk on certain issues, especially in the presence of a voice recorder. In one particular case, a female school teacher was being interviewed when another young teacher entered the room and started taking part in the discussion. After about five minutes when she came to know that the discussion is being recorded, she became worried and told the female research assistant that if her husband came to know about this recording, she will be in trouble. She asked the research assistant to delete the five minutes discussion from the tape. Now the dilemma was that research assistant did not know how to keep the rest of the recording and delete *only* those specific five minutes from the digital recorder. The research assistant tried to convince her that the recording will be confidential and she will delete her conversation later, but the woman did not agree and insisted that "delete my talk right now in front of me". Finally, the research assistant deleted the *whole* file of an almost one hour long interview. In another interview, a male participant shared a story about his sister during the interview. Later, he asked me to delete that part and not to mention his sister and the story in the thesis. I deleted that part from the recording. On a number of occasions, the researcher had to switch off the recorder in the middle of the interview on participants' request. This was mostly because the participant wanted to say something 'sensitive' (such as an 'obscene' proverb or a joke) which he/she did not want to be recorded.

All the data generated during the fieldwork, including digital recordings, field notes, transcripts and written consent forms, was kept confidential. All electronic data stored in both personal and office computers was secured and accessed with passwords that only I had access to it. As an additional measure for ensuring security of the data, the female research assistants were given voice recorders and sufficient batteries only, while I withheld the accessories (data transferring cables) due to which they were unable to transfer the data into their personal computers or to keep a copy of the digital data files. In this way, I ensured that the research assistants did not have a copy of the recorded interviews. Sensitive information about participants' personal and family lives have not been identified unless necessary to contextualise their comments.

In order to keep the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants, alphabetical numerators were assigned to each participant as "pseudonym", for example, ARB, RAZ etc. Later, on the suggestion of the supervisors, these pseudonyms were 'humanized' by replacing the alphabetical numerators with a fake but real-sounding names (such as, Ahmad, Kamran, Aysha, Salma) which protect participants' identity and ensure anonymity, but at the same time make them real individuals speaking their "voice" in the thesis. The participants names in the thesis appear as follows: (Zaman, 39, m, u) in which "Zaman" is the pseudonym of the participant, "39" is his age, the "m" stands for male, and "u" stands for uneducated. Similarly, the reference (Rehana, 42, f, e) means that Rehana is 42 year old educated female. It would be helpful to note that all pseudonyms used in this research ending with "a" are females (e.g., Rehanaa, Nissaa, Sajeelaa), and all other names are male (e.g., Nizam, Zaidan, Zahoor).

### **4.3. Some Reflections on Fieldwork Process**

Social scientists pay considerable attention to questions of positionality and reflexivity in the research process. Reflexive researchers examine how their own shifting positionalities impact on the research process, and demonstrate an awareness of the multiple ways in which their social identities intersect with this process. "Reflexive analysis in research encompasses continual evaluation of subjective responses, intersubjective dynamics, and the research process itself" (Finlay, 2002:532). Narayan (1993) states that every anthropologist carries both a personal and ethnographic self and, therefore, that we belong simultaneously to both personal and professional worlds. Rather than being distinct

entities, our various identities are intersected and our fieldwork is also influenced by these. Reflecting on these identities and acknowledging their role in the field can be a valuable and conscious way of ensuring transparency in research process. My identities as an educated Pashtun male on the one hand and my other identities as a researcher and a teacher might have influenced, both positively and negatively, the fieldwork and data generation process.

The ‘researcher-researched relationship’ can create power imbalances between ‘the subjects’ and ‘the researchers’ (Reynolds, 2002), which can influence the type of interaction taking place between the two. I was aware that my position in the University of Peshawar, coupled with my status as a PhD student in a foreign university, could influence the subject position of some participants. This was realized on a number of occasions when in response to my question during the interviews, some participants would say to me, “You know better than me”. I tried to minimise this ‘knowledge difference’ between me and my participants through a number of ways, such as by not introducing myself as a university teacher (when the participants did not know me before) and by speaking a more colloquial and informal language in order to sound less formal. Labov (1984:33) also recommended this “colloquial format” and advised the interviewer to approximate the vernacular of the interviewee. The idea is that if the researcher sounds relaxed, the interviewee is likely to be informal and relaxed as well (Tagliamonte, 2006). My teaching position also facilitated me in recruiting participants for this research (including scholars of Pashto language and literature), some of whom I knew before as work colleagues. It also facilitated me in finding and employing the services of female research assistants for data collection.

The tape-recorder produced mixed reaction from participants. One highly educated male participant who was ‘expert’ on Pashto folklore was more interested in giving a ‘commentary’ on proverbs and folklore, rather than narrating and reporting proverbs. This participant (Himayat, 58, m, e) had conducted research and produced books and articles on Pashto folklore. He started the interview very formally by first reciting a few verses from the Quran, which is how Muslims usually begin a formal speech. This particular participant avoided using proverbs in his speech and instead was more interested in giving his ‘scholarly commentary’ on proverbs and folklore. I had to remind him that the discussion should be informal and the recording is for my personal use only. In an effort to minimize the influence of the recorder on his speech, I put the recorder into my pocket to keep it away from his eyes, yet he mentioned only three proverbs, the lowest number reported by any male participant. At one point when I tried to elicit proverbs from him, he

said: “Leave it; there are whole books on proverbs. You can find lots of proverbs in books”.

Some techniques I used to minimize the “observer paradox” (Labov, 1972a:113)<sup>54</sup>, in order to make the discussion less formal, included moving the discussion away from the topic for a period, occasional jokes and laughter, and moving the recorder out of sight of the participant. In some cases participants would forget that the recorder was on. In one interview, for example, the participant would ask me again and again: “this is important point; note this” or “write this down”, and when I told him that the recorder is recording all your talk, he said: “Oh I forgot that”. Labov (1972a:10) also recommends this technique for minimising the observer’s effect: encourage the subject to become as involved in the conversation as to ‘forget’ about the recorder resting beside them.

During the fieldwork, I became aware that participants with deep Pashtun nationalist sentiments took a defensive position while talking about Pashtuns culture and gender relations. Afzaal, a senior and educated male participant, was highly critical of the research and thought that this kind of research will cause defamation to Pashtun culture, as evident in the following excerpt from his interview. Note that Afzaal’s elderly mother is also present and takes part in the conversation.

- Researcher: (Introducing the research to the informant). ...I want to know about the relations between men and women in our culture. ... You will tell me about women’s education and work among the Pashtuns. ... Men’s relations with women in home and outside.... We will also talk about Pashto proverbs about women and men.
- Afzaal: There are many weaknesses in us, in our Pashtun culture; for example, not giving women the right to speak about her marital choice, not giving her inheritance right, and many other restrictions. We have many bad proverbs. These are our weaknesses. But now that you are showing this weakness of us to *other* people, *internationally*, to the *West*, this is like ‘rolling up your shirt to expose your private parts in the public’ (Proverbial phrase: *khapala laman pa khpala ochata wal*. i.e., *washing your dirty laundry in the public*). Is it not like this? I do not understand what you are doing. If this is your research, I am surprised!
- Afzaal’s mother: [laugh], yes this is a shame. You should not roll up your shirt in public to reveal your ‘*purdah*’ to others (*purdah* here means private parts of body).
- Afzaal: Yes, this is shame, and you are causing shame to Pashtuns. Is it not like this? I did not expect this from you.

---

<sup>54</sup> According to Labov (1972a:113) the goal of sociolinguistic interview is to collect natural, vernacular speech. This leaves us with a paradox: “we have to observe how people speak when they are not being observed”.

- Researcher: ummm, yes, *Lala Jee* (honorific for elder men), but if we have a weakness; for how long are we going to hide it from people. Are we not supposed to propose a solution to our weakness? What is this to hide our weaknesses?
- Afzaal: And what is this to make public announcement *internationally* about your weakness?
- Afzaal's mother: You should not own your weakness in front of other people.
- Afzaal: I am surprise at your research for the reason that you are showing our bad things internationally. ... What improvement will it make in the lives of Pashtun women? Nothing.
- Researcher: You are right *Lala Jee*. But we have to know the reasons at the base of the problem only then we can propose a solution, for which this type of research is good.
- Afzaal: But see, we also have very good things in our culture. You should write these and highlight them to the world.
- Researcher: Yes, exactly, I am interested in both good and bad. You may tell me the good things of our culture and good proverbs of our language.
- Afzaal: Yes, *that is* what I am saying.

(Afzaal, 65, m, e).

Though Afzaal used a few proverbs later in the discussion, he often tried to defend Pashtun culture by downplaying any sexist proverb/practice. His mother, in her 80s, also used a few proverbs, but she endorsed what Afzaal was saying most of time. This example shows that some Pashtuns who 'love' their culture are not willing to criticise their ways of life, especially when the audience is the "other", such as "the West" in this particular case.

My learning from the field is that participants who could be categorised as 'Pashtun nationalists' emphasise the positive aspects of Pashto proverbs and Pashtun culture and avoid elaborating on any sexist practice/proverbs. Moreover, these participants felt happy that I am collecting Pashto folklore, but at the same time showed resentment towards the research objectives. For example, at the end of an interview when the recorder was off, a 44 year old male participant remarked: "What you are doing is good for the sake of knowledge, but only for knowledge. We have a different culture, much better than the immoral Western culture. Do not be fooled by Western theories and 'shameless feminists'" (Jamal, 44, m, e). Contrary to this, young educated men and women were more critical of certain cultural practices, including gender relations. Even if these participants sometimes justified existing gender relations, they were open to critically reflect upon these. This partly explains why some participants reported more proverbs than others, as discussed in the next chapter.

Some interviews conducted by the female research assistants appeared very unstructured and disorganized. Almost all interview sessions were interrupted by other women and children, to the point that sometimes the individual interviews changed into group interviews in which two or three other women would also participate in the discussion along with the main participant. In some cases, the research assistant went into the background and the women would engage in free style ‘gossip’-like discussion among themselves.<sup>55</sup> The frequent overlaps, cross-talks, and background noise in such interviews made the transcription very difficult and initially I sometimes thought these interviews would not be worthy of inclusion in analysis. However, as the transcription went on and as I judged these interviews from the perspective of sociolinguistics, I realized that these noisy, uncontrolled and overlapping talks are exactly what the sociolinguists call ‘vernacular speech’, which is the most desired data for a sociolinguistic research (Labov, 1984; Tagliamonte, 2006). In fact, Labov (1972b) himself conducted peer group interviews and found that the observer’s effect was greatly minimised because the participants were more natural in talking among themselves and the researcher receded in the background. The research assistants have been able to enter into the women-only ‘speech community’ to record ordinary speech in a very natural setting. This would not have been possible for me as a male researcher in the Pashtun setting. Although I collected more proverbs than female research assistants, the research assistants collected proportionately more naturally occurring proverbs and folksongs. The interviews I conducted myself were more focussed on the topic, the discussion was more relevant to gender issues, and all aspects of the research were covered. While a number of my participants used proverbs in ‘natural contexts’, most of the proverbs I gathered were used by participants in ‘hypothetical’ or ‘reported contexts’.

Most female participants, especially the elderly women, narrated their life stories in an autobiographical style, starting from their childhood to youth and present. These autobiographies were sometimes very long and detailed, yet were sprinkled with proverbs and other folkloric items.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, proverbs in natural context more often popped up in those interviews in which more than one participant took part. In short, the insight for this fieldwork is that narrative interviews with more than one participant are more fruitful for collection of proverbs in ‘natural context’.

---

<sup>55</sup> I am using the term gossip here not in the negative sense of ‘scandal’ stereotypically attributed to women. Here by gossip I mean the informal chat among women about their day to day activities, including exchange of information about themselves and other males and females not present on the scene.

<sup>56</sup> On the autobiographic narrative skills of Pashtun women, see Grima (1985) “The Pukhtun “Tapos”: From Biography to Autobiography”.



I tend to agree with Narayan's observation regarding fieldwork among one's own society:

“The study of one's own society involves an inverse process from the study of an alien one. Instead of learning conceptual categories and then, through fieldwork, finding the contexts in which to apply them, those of us who study societies in which we have pre-existing experience absorb analytic categories that rename and reframe what is already known” (Narayan, 1993:678).

My insider status greatly helped me in understanding the participants' point of view. However, because of the diversity within a culture and across groups, even the most informed local researcher is bound to discover many strange and unfamiliar aspects of one's own society. For example, I have learned a good deal more about regional and tribal differences in the region. In addition, folktales, song and superstitious practices which I have been listening to and observing since childhood became even more interesting. I realized that most of these folktales are clearly gendered; some are discursively constructing gender relations, others have subversive plots in them.<sup>57</sup> My point here is that there is no such thing as a true 'insider' in sociological research. A new pair of 'sociological glasses' can reveal many unfamiliar aspects in a previously familiar cultural practice.

#### 4.4. Transcription and Translation

Transcription refers to the process of reproducing spoken words from an audiotaped interview into written text. In addition to spoken words, various authors have debated the extent to which nonverbal cues (e.g., silence and body language) and emotional aspects (e.g., crying, sighs, and coughs) should be incorporated into transcribed text (Poland, 1995; Wellard & McKenna, 2001). Scholars of sociolinguistic research in particular and qualitative research in general stress the importance of “verbatim” transcription – word-for-word reproduction of verbal data – where the written words are an exact replication of the audio-recorded words (Poland, 1995; Tagliamonte, 2006). However, Poland

---

<sup>57</sup> Once while in the field I saw a small girl (about 10 years) playing in the back yard of her house and singing a song. The feminine feelings in the song caught my attention and I realised how women can express their emotions in songs. The song was critical of Pashtun men living and working in the oil-rich gulf countries (esp. Saudi Arabia, Dubai and Qatar) for years leaving behind their young wives and children. The song could be translated as: *“O God, ruin Dubai, ruin it / All young men are going there // O God, ruin the bazaars of Qatar, ruin it / Despite being married, young girls are living the life of widows [due to the long absence of their husbands] // What is so special in Dubai and Qatar? Come home my love // Youth is a winter's sun, it goes down quickly // O God, ruin Dubai, ruin it / All young men are going there”*. Such songs might be called “voices from below” (Hamilton, 1987:74) which need more attention from folklorists.

(1995:292) has asserted that the very notion of accuracy of transcription is problematic given the inter-subjective nature of human communication and transcription as an interpretative activity. Moreover, the level of details in a transcription depends on the judgement and requirements of the researcher (Tagliamonte, 2006, Poland, 1995; Wellard & Mckenna, 2001) which may vary from one field of inquiry and methods of analysis to another (Halcomb & Davidson, 2006). It is common in qualitative interviews that the researcher does not transcribe certain portion of the interview which is “unlikely to be fruitful” (Bryman, 2008:332).

In this research, I have followed Tagliamonte (2006:54) who recommends that transcription should be “detailed enough to retain enough information” for analysis, and “simple enough to be easily readable and relatively easily transcribed”. I transcribed all the relevant segments in the interviews verbatim, including non-verbal communication such as pauses, cross-talk and laughs. I occasionally omitted irrelevant talk having no significant relation to the research. However, before deciding whether to transcribe a portion or not, I listened to it very carefully to make sure that the specific segment is indeed irrelevant. Sometimes I have briefly mentioned what has been omitted. I developed a transcription protocol for this purpose to ensure consistency within and across all the transcription files.<sup>58</sup>

The transcription was done with the help of the computer program ‘*Transcriber*’, a tool for assisting the manual transcription of speech signals. It is useful for transcribing digital interview files for its user friendly features which enables several layers of speech segmentation: basic segmentation for orthographic transcription (e.g., at each sentence or at each breath), speech turn segmentation (new speaker) and section segmentation (new topic). It also includes features such as glossary for predefined words or expressions (such as proverbs).<sup>59</sup> I myself transcribed all the interviews given that I had first-hand knowledge of the language and the interview process. I wanted to be as faithful to the data as possible by transcribing the interviews in Pashto language. However, as the *Transcriber* in its

---

<sup>58</sup> The transcription protocol included rules and signs. For example, the sign “(?)” in a transcript indicated that a word in the speech is not understandable, or that I am not sure about the actual words used by the speaker; the data inside the round brackets “( )” indicated any information/explanation added by the researcher; the three dots “. . .” indicated any omission of irrelevant talk in the interview, sometimes explaining what has been omitted which appeared in curly brackets “{...}”; the standing brackets “[ ]” indicated crossing-talks in the speech; when a speaker was quoting someone, the speech appears in quotation marks “–”; the Pound Stirling sign “£” was inserted at the start of the sentence in which a proverb or other fixed speech such as poetry was used by the speakers. These and other such rules were followed during the transcription.

<sup>59</sup> The *Transcriber* has been recently updated and its latest version (*Transcriber 1.5.2*) is available free via this web link: <<http://trans.sourceforge.net/en/presentation.php>>.

current form (version 1.5.1) does not support Pashto script, it was agreed with the supervisors to transcribe Pashto into Roman alphabets.<sup>60</sup> Although a tiresome job, I enjoyed the transcription process as it connected me back to the participants and the field. I became more familiar with my data. As I listened to the digital data, I also reflected upon the good, the bad, and the ugly of the interview process.

The transcription phase was followed by a translation. All proverbs occurring in the data were translated into English along with important quotes from participants which have been cited in the thesis. The translation process, as Sechrest *et al.* (1972) argues, is greatly facilitated by the researcher's understanding of the source language and intimate knowledge of the culture. This enables the researcher to pick up the full implications that a term carries for the people under study and makes sure that the cultural connotations of a word are made explicit to the readers. Pashto, like other languages, is a carrier of certain assumptions and values that are difficult to translate into the grammatical and syntactical structure of the English language. Translation of proverbs from one language to another "is difficult; at times, even impossible" (Maria, 2012:281). The culturally embedded elements in proverbs that have no correspondents in the target language cannot be translated; and even if they can be, by paraphrase or exploitation, there is still loss in meaning, because the richness of the language cannot be rendered fully by a foreign reader. Moreover, proverbs are mostly metaphorical and have a specific linguistic structure (such as poeticality) which could not be maintained when translated. A literal translation cannot do full justice to a proverb and can sometimes distort the true meaning of the proverb. The following example of a Pashto proverb about older people show how translation can affect the meaning of a proverb altogether.

- |                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| (a). Pashto Transliteration:   | <i>Sarhay che zoorh shi, shaitan ye woorh shi</i>                  |
| (b). Word-by-word Translation: | Man when old become, devil his small become                        |
| (c). Literal Translation:      | When a man becomes old, his devil becomes small                    |
| (d). Proverbial Translation:   | When a <u>person</u> gets older, his/her devil gets <u>younger</u> |

While translating the proverb, I have changed the word 'man' into 'person' because the man (*sarhay*) in the Pashto proverb is generic noun which could mean both male and female. Secondly, the replacement of the word 'smaller' with 'younger' in the proverbial

---

<sup>60</sup> Although some young Pashtuns including myself have been using Romanized Pashto spellings in online chats and mobile phone SMS, there is currently no standardised spelling system for Romanized Pashto. In order to be consistent throughout the transcription, I developed my own system of Roman spelling for Pashto. The transcription of Pashto in Roman alphabets was not an easy task. It greatly reduced my speed and demanded greater mental energy. However, as I went on with the transcription, my spelling became more standardized and my writing speed improved.

translation has resulted in almost a total opposite meaning. The literal translation sounds like an old person become innocent, the proverbial translation sound the opposite, i.e., a person become more devilish in old age. My familiarity with Pashto language and the context in which this proverb is often used helped me in translating the proverb correctly. However, an issue I faced during translation was that a number of proverbs included obscene terms referring to private parts of the body and sexual actions. As mentioned before, most compilers of Pashto proverbs (e.g., Tair, 1975, 1981 and Yasini, 2005) have either excluded obscene proverbs from their collections or they have ‘cleansed’ such proverbs by employing euphemisms. Most research participants also refrained from directly using taboo words in proverbs during the interviews when the tap-recorder was running. This is because of the difference between spoken and written/recorded mode of conversation. Writing an obscene word becomes even more offensive due to which most authors employ euphemism when writing about sensitive topics. Because of this, I have used the words vagina, penis and arse when these words occur in a proverb, but have avoided more obscene words during translation. It is important to note that while the English words ‘vagina’, ‘penis’ and ‘arse’ may sound neutral in the West, they are relatively offensive in Pakistani culture. I had in my mind that the thesis will be read by people in Pakistan and if I use more offensive and derogatory language, this will reflect badly on my own social standing.

Despite my utmost care and effort, I have to acknowledge that some proverbs could not be translated easily into English. Most proverbs have lost their cultural and linguistic ‘soul’ and ‘taste’ while traveling from Pashto to English. Some proverbs in the corpus may therefore look like plain statements instead of proverbs to someone who does not understand Pashto.

#### **4.5. Data Analysis**

Data analysis in qualitative research is different from quantitative methods in that qualitative analysis “transforms data into findings” but no “formula exists for that transformation” (Patton, 2002:432). Moreover, in qualitative research the data collection and analysis are not entirely exclusive from each other, as some initial analysis also takes place during the field (Flick, 2006; Maxey, 1999). Data handling and organising (such as transcription) also involves some initial familiarity with the emerging themes in data

(Coffey and Atkinson, 1996; Flick, 2006; Mason, 2002). With that in mind, my analysis started in the field and involved several phases and levels of data handling and interpretation. Research diaries and field notes were used both to collect the data and to begin the analysis. After each interview I made notes reflecting on the contents of the interview in general and on the quality of the interaction between the researcher and participants. Besides field notes and research diaries, the analysis process involved constructing transcripts, developing the corpus of gendered proverbs, categorizing proverbs into different themes, translating proverbs and selected quotes from participants, organizing data into themes, and selecting illustrative excerpts from participants to exemplify findings of the study. Some of these aspects have been briefly explained in the preceding sections of this chapter, some will be explained below.

As asserted by Wellard & McKenna (2001), transcription itself is part of the data analysis. During the interview transcription, I was also noting down important themes and interesting comments from participants in a separate file. By the time all the interviews were transcribed, I already had a list of important themes emerging in the data. After completing the transcription, a more detailed and careful analysis of data took place.<sup>61</sup>

The types of data or text that I had to analyse could be broadly divided into two types – proverbs, and participants' commentary on proverbs. These two types also constitute the two analysis chapters in the thesis. Chapter 5 is mostly concerned with proverbs text, and chapter 6 is mostly related with participants' behaviour in proverbs usage, and their opinions, attitudes and commentary on proverbs usage.

An important step was developing a proverb corpus of gendered proverbs for subsequent analysis. The methods, criteria, and processes through which the proverb corpus was developed are detailed below.

#### **4.5.1. The Proverb Corpus**

Proverbs for this research projects were collected through fieldwork (interviews) and from published collections of Pashto proverbs. After a careful search for relevant proverbs in both interviews and published sources, a total of 518 proverbs were identified. This was done in a step by step manner, detailed below.

---

<sup>61</sup> Initially, I tried to use NVivo, the qualitative data analysis software but abandoned the idea in favour of manually organizing the data. It was mainly because the transcripts were in Pashto language while the inbuilt language of NVivo is English. Due to this language mismatch, most features of NVivo could not be utilized for Pashto transcripts.

The fieldwork yielded a large number of proverbs, poetic verses, and other fixed expressions. In step one, all proverbs, poetic verses, and other fixed expressions were extracted from the interview transcripts with the help of a computer programme called AntConc.<sup>62</sup> The initial list of proverbs generated by AntConc exceeded 800 ‘fixed expressions’ which included proverbs, their variants, repetitions, and poetic verses of known poets and *tappas* (short-songs).

The next step was to separate proverbs from ‘poetry’; to differentiate a proverb from its ‘variants’; and more importantly, to separate ‘gendered’ proverbs from ‘general’ proverbs because not all proverbs found in the interviews were relevant to the current research. It was relatively easy to identify an expression as a proverb or poetry, as my insider knowledge of Pashto language and poetry, coupled with the structural differences between proverbs and other folklore genres (such as ‘meter’ and ‘length’, cf. Dundes, 1975a, Norrick, 1985) as reviewed in chapter 1, helped in recognising poetry and differentiating it from proverbs. For example, proverbs and *tappas* differ in that a *tappa* always consists of 22 syllables in two lines (9 and 13 syllables each line) and always ends with ‘a’ sound (e.g., *–ina*, *–una*, *–ena*, *–ama*). Proverbs do not conform to either of these rules. The second issue of differentiating between a proverb and its variant(s) was decided on case-to-case basis; where a variant was caused only by a change in dialect without any change in the meaning of the proverb, the variant was noted but not counted as a separate proverb. Proverb scholars have rightly noted that variability is a characteristic trait of proverbs; they can be added to, transformed, and abbreviated (Akbarian, 2012), and certain structural changes or lexical addition to a proverb helps in the interpretation of the proverb and does not change the recognisability of the proverb (Norrick, 1985). However, where the change in words/form of a proverb’s variant was significant enough to warrant a change in meaning of the proverb, the expression was counted as a separate proverb. An example of a proverb with two variants would be the following proverb stressing the importance of sons. Both variants of the proverb have the same meaning/message, yet their words are slightly different. In fact, the second variant (b) is the shortened version of the first proverb (a).

---

<sup>62</sup>AntConc (version 3.4.3) is a multi-platform, multi-purpose corpus analysis toolkit. AntConc includes a function called *concordance*, which is a list of target words extracted from a given text, or set of texts, often presented in such a way as to indicate the context in which the word is used. This format of presenting information is called ‘KWIC’: Key Word In Context. Concordance software can usually extract and present other types of information too, e.g., identifying the words that most commonly appear near a target word (its ‘common collocates’), word and keyword frequency generators, tools for cluster and lexical bundle analysis, and a word distribution plot (Anthony, 2005). The program (AntConc 3.4.3) can be downloaded via this link: <http://www.laurenceanthony.net/software/antconc/>.

(a) *“Da sro kato ghanam khu ve, da speene khule zaman khu ve”*

“Wheat crop sown early is better, sons produced early are better”.

The first part of the proverb is a suggestion to farmers to sow wheat slightly earlier than usual (during mid-November), which is said to yield more crop. In the second part of the proverb, the word *“speene khule zaman”* means “sons born to a man who has no moustache/beard on his face yet”, which implies ‘marry early to have sons early’. A shorter and simplified version of this proverb is as follows in (b).

(b) *“Zarhi ghanam, zahri zaman”*

*“Early wheat, early sons”*

Proverbs of this kind were considered as one proverb because both the imagery and the meaning of the variants are the same. The third issue of identifying proverbs relevant to the current research was tackled by dividing proverbs into ‘gendered’ and ‘general’ categories. Keeping in mind feminist assertion that linguistic expressions such as proverbs carries patriarchal ideologies and reproduce unequal gender relations (Barrett, 1988; Eagleton, 1991; Ivy and Backlund, 1994; Atkinson, 1993; Vetterling-Braggin, 1981), proverbs were defined as ‘gendered’ if they contained explicit references to gendered categories or gender roles and relations as their subject matter. Using Alan Dundes’ (1975a) ‘topic-comments’ criteria of proverbs structures, all those proverbs were selected from the corpus whose topics were men and women, or more specific characters such as husband, wife, sister, brother, son, daughter, and other kinship/family relations. For, proverbs like *“A man should not be judged by his skin-colour, but by his character”*, *“A woman’s tongue measures twenty meters”* and *“A much loved daughter is a bad daughter-in-law”* have commentary on the nature of their topics (men, women, daughter, respectively). These kinds of proverbs constitute the bulk of the proverbs corpus used in this study. Additionally, although some proverbs did not include any explicit reference to gender roles and relations such as the above, their background stories or the contexts of their use as found in the interviews or where known to me as insider, helped me to mark them as ‘gendered’. It is because some proverbs *text* may be non-gendered but their *use in context* often “contributes to, promotes, causes or results in the oppression of either sex” (Vetterling-Braggin, 1981:3-4). For example, the proverb *“When there is a head, caps are many”* looks ‘general’ as it has no literal / explicit mention of any gender relations. However, it is ‘gendered’ because its contextual meaning is that ‘when there is a man (head), finding a wife (cap) for him is no problem’. Such proverbs were also selected,

though their number is fewer than proverbs which are more explicit about gender relations. Along with this, proverbs about some aspects or phases of life were also considered relevant for an analysis of gender relations. The few proverbs in this category are those related to the topics of household, parents, relatives, marriage, polygamy, sex, divorce, prostitutes, elders, and youth.<sup>63</sup>

Based on the above criteria, a total of 326 relevant proverbs were identified in the interview transcripts. The ‘general’ proverbs, ‘variants’, and ‘poetic’ expressions are not included in the proverbs subjected to analysis in this thesis.<sup>64</sup> To sum up, the 326 proverbs collected through fieldwork are those which I identified as proper proverbs (i.e., excluding variants and poetry), and which have clear gendered implications (i.e., excluding ‘general’ proverbs).

In the next step, the above criteria were then used to extract relevant proverbs from published collections of Pashto proverbs. The eleven (11) books of proverbs consulted for this purpose have been detailed earlier in this chapter (section 4.1.1). A careful scrutiny of all the eleven published collections of Pashto proverb led to a total of 371 ‘gendered’ proverbs being identified.

Finally, the two types of proverbs – (a) proverbs collected from the interviews (326) and (b) proverbs collected from published proverbs sources (371) – were matched/compared to know how many of the proverbs collected from the participants had already been published. It was found that slightly over half (179 out of 326) of the proverbs collected from the field through interviews were already available in published proverbs collections, while a total of 192 proverbs found in published collections were not reported or used by participants during the fieldwork. In addition, 147 proverbs collected from the field are ‘new’ as they have not been previously recorded and published. Table 4.2 summarizes the number of proverbs collected from different sources.

---

<sup>63</sup> Webster (1984) also had this aspect in mind when she selected proverbs for her study on “Honour and Shame in Arabic proverbs”. For Webster, the “honor/shame complex” includes not only these specific terms, but “related subjects” like generosity/hospitality, gossip/reputation, revenge, and family/relatives (1984:179).

<sup>64</sup> The ‘general’ proverbs and poetic verses are reserved data, and have been drawn on wherever helpful to explain specific points in the thesis.



**Table 4.2: Proverbs collected from different sources**

| Source   | No. of Proverbs |
|--|-----------------|
| Common proverbs found in <i>both</i> interviews and books      | 179             |
| Proverbs identified <i>only</i> in books                       | 192             |
| Proverbs identified <i>only</i> in interviews ('new' proverbs) | 147             |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>518</b>      |

As shown in the table above, 147 Pashto proverbs concerning gender relations are recorded here for the first time, and the term 'new' proverbs is used in this thesis to refer to these proverbs. These 'new' proverbs collected from the field are more than a quarter (28%) of the total which suggests that a large number of Pashto proverbs remain unrecorded. The collection of 147 'new' proverbs in this research makes a significant contribution to the archive of Pashto proverbs.

In the next phase, the 518 proverbs were entered into a proverb data-base in a Microsoft Excel sheet, specifying how many of these proverbs were used by whom among the participants or in which published book they were found. This data-base listed the 518 proverbs in Pashto, their English translation, their variant(s) (if any), any important comments/contextual explanation from participants, whether the proverb is already published or whether it is a 'new' proverb, its major targeted person (e.g., male, female, husband, wife, son), its primary subject matter/theme (e.g., work, *purdah*, marriage, violence), and other such information.<sup>65</sup>

The corpus of 518 proverbs was then analysed in four ways. First, proverbs were analysed to ascertain which category of participants (by gender, age, education and location) reported how many proverbs (further explained and detailed in section 5.1, next chapter). Second, the proverb corpus was divided by specific subject matter, in order to know how many proverbs are about males and females (further explained and detailed in section 5.2, next chapter). Third, the corpus was divided into major themes of gender relations broadly corresponding to Walby's (1990) six structure of patriarchy. Some of these have been discussed in detailed in section 5.3 of the next chapter which includes themes such as family and kinship relations, gender division of work, spatial segregation, representation of masculinity, femininity, sexuality, marriage, *purdah*, violence against women, son

<sup>65</sup> Developing this data-base of proverbs took almost two months, in addition to the three months consumed by the transcription process. However, once developed, this data-base in Microsoft Excel greatly facilitated the descriptive analysis of the proverbs corpus as shown in the next chapter.

preferences and socialization of children. Illustrative proverbs corresponding to these have been cited and explained to show their role in the reproduction of patriarchal gender relations. Lastly, the interview transcripts were analysed to consider how various participants actually used proverbs in their conversation, how they viewed and commented on proverbs in order to understand the link between ‘speaking proverbs’ and ‘doing gender’ in real life. This has been discussed in the last analysis chapter where I have explained how proverbs are used by participants for the strategic purpose of negotiating gendered social boundaries. The transcripts were re-read to identify examples of proverbs used in actual contexts in order to exemplify the contested notions of ethnicity, gender and class from the participants’ perspectives. While chapter 5 is more descriptive and is mostly based on Walby’s (1990) conceptualization of patriarchy along with sociolinguistic explanations for the different number of proverbs reported by various categories of participants, chapter 6 draws on broader explanations taking into account the different subject positions (age, gender, ethnicity, class) of participants to see how these intersect to determine their proverbs usage and attitudes towards proverbs. Most of the illustrative excerpts from participants’ use of proverbs in actual contexts are quoted in chapter 6. Knowing that transcribed files can never truly replicate the original audio files (Tagliamonte, 2006; Poland, 1995; Halcomb & Davidson, 2006), audio files of interviews were listened to again and again to ensure that my understanding of these data is correct. Throughout, the analysis is guided by the insight gained from existent ethnographic studies on Pashtuns and proverbs elsewhere in the world (discussed in chapter 1), the sociological and sociolinguistic theories (outlined in chapter 2), the personal observations and insider knowledge of the researcher about the Pashto language and Pashtun society, as well as participants’ comments, insights, and explanations found in the interview transcripts.

## **Summary of the Chapter**

This chapter presented the methodological framework of the study and the details about data collection and analysis in a reflexive manner. Fieldwork was conducted in Pakistan for six months during which qualitative interviews were conducted with 40 male and female participants of various age groups, educational status, and localities. In addition, I also used a field diary and field notes to record my personal observations of various aspects of proverbs speaking behaviours of the Pashtuns. Special attention has been given to ethical considerations throughout the research process to preserve the rights of

participants. Interviews with female participants were conducted with the help of female research assistants qualified and trained to collect good quality data. Participants were selected through networks of friends, colleagues, and family relations.

A total of 518 proverbs have been collected for this study, some from published books of proverbs and some via participants through interviews. The data in the shape of proverbs text and their use in context along with participants' commentary on proverbs and gender relations are discussed in the next two analysis chapters.

## Chapter 5

### The Proverb Corpus: A Descriptive Analysis

#### Introduction

The previous chapter detailed the data that is to be analysed in this chapter. A total of 518 Pashto proverbs were collected for this study, out of which 192 proverbs were found in published books, 179 were commonly found in both published books and interviews, while 147 proverbs were collected through interviews and not previously published. The current chapter is mostly descriptive in nature and has two major aims: to show how many proverbs were collected from different groups of speakers, and to describe their subject matter.

This chapter consists of three major sections. The first section is concerned with the reporting of proverbs by different groups of participants delineated by gender, age, educational status and locality. It is important to show this because the proverb reporting tendency of speakers not only provides a measure of their knowledge of proverbs, but also provides a clue as to the actual use of proverbs. The second section, again descriptive in nature, categorises the corpus of proverbs related to gender issues according to their subject matter and content in order to show how the proverbs position genders in different roles. Proverbs have been classified on the basis of whether they primarily target men or women, and whether they are primarily loaded with ‘positive’, ‘negative’ or ‘neutral’ notions of gender. The third section unpacks and analyses selected proverbs in relation to different themes about gender relations to show the ways proverbs encode patriarchal discourses and reproduce gender relations. For example, it will be shown that some proverbs reassert the idea that the ‘natural’ place for women is in the house, other proverbs reproduce models of hetero-normative masculinity. This section has been organised according to the broader “structures of patriarchy” (Walby, 1990:20), such as gendered division of work, men’s control over women’s sexuality, representation of masculinity and femininity, male violence against women, and preferences of male children as evidenced in the proverbs.

## 5.1: Reporting of Proverbs by Participants

This section presents a picture of the number of proverbs reported by different groups of participants on the basis of gender (men and women), education (educated and uneducated), age (younger and older) and locality (rural and urban). Firstly, I will present the results in tables, with possible interpretations being discussed towards the end of the section. It should be kept in mind here that the tables in this section show the number of proverbs *reported* by different categories of participants, which does not automatically correspond to their *actual use* (Penfield & Duru, 1988; Yankah, 1982). As well as reporting proverbs they knew, participants would also sometimes use a proverb in naturally occurring conversation during the interviews, or recall a particular proverb and say “my mother uses such and such proverb a lot ....” The following two examples will clarify this difference. When asked to recall any proverb she had heard recently, Tahira, a 29 year-old married replied:

“Sometimes my husband teases me and says that he wants to marry a second wife. He says “*Pa yawa khaza ke kho sarhay kund we*” [“*A man with one wife is (almost) a widower*”]. He is just joking, but I do not like it. ... He also says this proverb; “*Su obu kharhe, su mayan rhandu*” [“*The water is muddy and the fish are blind*”]”

(Tahira, 29, f, u)

Tahira has recalled two proverbs. She did not use them in a natural conversation; she merely *reported* the proverbs used by her husband. An example of a proverb *used in actual conversational context* is the following in which Abbas, an uneducated older man, expresses his views on Pashtun women taking up paid jobs:

“These days one can see some women working in offices while their men are wandering here and there doing nothing. I do not say that women should not work, but I say that they should not work with other (unrelated) men. A Pashtun man is responsible to earn. A man should not be so *be-Pashto* (without Pashto) and *be-ghairata* (without honour) to eat what his wife is earning. We say, “*Che da zhrande lande pal ye garze, no poh sha che qissa kharaba da*” [“*When the lower wheel of the grinding-stone starts moving, know that something is wrong*”]. You understand?”<sup>66</sup>

(Abbas, 55, m, u).

I distinguish this *actual use* of proverbs, discussed in the next chapter, from the *reporting* of proverbs described in this chapter. However, the quantity of proverbs participants’ report does correlate to their overall knowledge of proverbs; hence it may give us an indication about their actual competence in proverb performance or use of proverbs.

<sup>66</sup> This proverb will be explained later in section 5.3.3 of this chapter.

The tables below also provide information about the different categories of proverbs in the corpus: ‘new proverbs’ (proverbs collected from participants for the first time) and ‘all reported proverbs’ (proverbs reported by participants, some of which are previously published some are not). The classification process of proverbs into different categories was detailed in the previous chapter. The reason for distinguishing these is to facilitate comparison in the reporting behaviour of participants. For example, it would be useful to know whether certain group of participants were more likely to report ‘new’ proverbs. Moreover, the comparison will also help in knowing whether the unpublished new proverbs are in anyway different than those which have been preciously collected and published. Table 5.1 provides a gender-based distribution of ‘new proverbs’ and ‘all reported proverbs’.

**Table 5.1: Number of proverbs reported, by gender of participants**

| Gender                             | ‘New’ Proverbs | All Reported Proverbs |
|------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Male                               | 80 (54%)       | 176 (54%)             |
| Female                             | 42 (29%)       | 89 (27%)              |
| Both Male and Female <sup>67</sup> | 25 (17%)       | 61 (19%)              |
| <b>Total (100%)</b>                | <b>147</b>     | <b>326</b>            |

The table shows that males exclusively reported more proverbs in total (176) than female participants (89). Males thus reported almost twice as many of the total proverbs as females. This pattern is visible across both the ‘new’ proverbs as well as all proverbs collected from participants. Given that gender intersects with other aspects of a person’s social life (such as education, age and class), it is necessary to see the impact of other factors on proverb reporting patterns. The following table presents a breakdown of reported proverbs according to the educational status of the participants.

**Table 5.2: Number of proverbs reported, by education level of participants**

| Education                    | ‘New’ Proverbs | All Reported Proverbs |
|------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Educated                     | 43 (29%)       | 81 (25%)              |
| Uneducated                   | 59 (40%)       | 147 (45%)             |
| Both Educated and Uneducated | 45 (31%)       | 98 (30%)              |
| <b>Total (100%)</b>          | <b>147</b>     | <b>326</b>            |

<sup>67</sup> Some proverbs were commonly reported by male and female. Table 5.1, for example, shows that 61 proverbs (19%) of the total reported proverbs were commonly collected from male and female participants.

This breakdown shows that uneducated participants reported a higher number of proverbs compared to educated participants. This pattern is consistent over the ‘new’ as well as all the 326 proverbs collected from the participants. While the reporting of proverbs is patterned by education level, this is not as distinct as was with gender, and nearly a third of all participants (educated and uneducated) reported the same number of ‘new’ proverbs (45) as well as all reported proverbs (98). Again, before interpreting these figures in terms of education of the participants alone, it is necessary to examine if the age of participants has any impact on the number of proverbs being reported.

**Table 5.3: Number of proverbs reported, by age of participants**

| Age Group           | ‘New’ Proverbs | All Reported Proverbs |
|---------------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| 30 and Below        | 45 (31%)       | 99 (30%)              |
| Above 30 Years      | 50 (34%)       | 116 (36%)             |
| Both Age Groups     | 52 (35%)       | 111 (34%)             |
| <b>Total (100%)</b> | <b>147</b>     | <b>326</b>            |

As the table above shows, younger participants reported less proverbs compared to participants over 30 years old. The percentage difference between the two groups’ reportage of proverbs is not very wide, as over a third of the proverbs were reported by both groups. This suggests that the age of the participants does not visibly effect their proverb reporting.

The following table shows proverb reporting on the basis of the locality of the participants.

**Table 5.4: Number of proverbs reported, by locality of participants**

| Locality             | ‘New’ Proverbs | All Reported Proverbs |
|----------------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Rural                | 107 (73%)      | 233 (71%)             |
| Urban                | 14 (10%)       | 32 (10%)              |
| Both Rural and Urban | 26 (18%)       | 61 (19%)              |
| <b>Total (100%)</b>  | <b>147</b>     | <b>326</b>            |

The data in this table show a noticeable difference in the number and percentage of proverbs reported by rural and urban dwellers. Compared to urban participants, rural participants reported more proverbs. However, this difference may be less due to locality

than the unequal number of participants from the two areas: less than a quarter of the participants belonged to urban areas. Moreover, as clarified in the next chapter, locality intersects with education and other factors. Urban participants, being on average more educated and less exposed to the informal rural social setup, may be less likely to report or use proverbs for various contextual and cultural reasons. This also holds true for the other tables discussed above: gender, age, education, and locality of participants interlink and intersect in a complex manner, and as such discussion of one factor in isolation from the others would present an incomplete and inaccurate picture.

To provide a clearer, comparative picture of which social group reported how many proverbs, the average numbers of proverbs reported by different categories of participants has been calculated. Table 5.5 compares the average numbers and spread (standard deviation) of proverbs reported by gender, age, education level, and locality of the participants.

**Table 5.5: Mean and standard deviation of proverbs reported by different categories of participants**

| Category of Participants |            | Average proverbs reported | Standard deviation |
|--------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Gender</b>            | Men        | 20                        | 12                 |
|                          | Women      | 13                        | 8                  |
| <b>Age (years)</b>       | 30 & Below | 17                        | 10                 |
|                          | Above 30   | 16                        | 11                 |
| <b>Education</b>         | Uneducated | 19                        | 10                 |
|                          | Educated   | 14                        | 11                 |
| <b>Locality</b>          | Rural      | 18                        | 10                 |
|                          | Urban      | 12                        | 10                 |

Males reported 20 proverbs on average, compared to females who reported 13 proverbs. The average number of proverbs reported by younger and older participants was almost the same (17 and 16 respectively). The uneducated participants reported 19 proverbs, higher than the average of educated participants who reported 14 proverbs. In terms of locality, rural participants reported 18 proverbs while the urban participants reported 12 proverbs on average.

When adjusted for gender, age and education, the picture becomes even clearer, showing which category of the participants reported the highest number of proverbs.



**Table 5.6: Mean numbers reported by participants, by gender, age, and education**

| Age and Education of Participants | Male                  |                      | Female                |                      |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
|                                   | Total No. of proverbs | Mean No. of Proverbs | Total No. of proverbs | Mean No. of Proverbs |
| Young Educated                    | 91                    | 18                   | 110                   | 22                   |
| Young Uneducated                  | 101                   | 20                   | 35                    | 7                    |
| Old Educated                      | 49                    | 10                   | 32                    | 6                    |
| Old Uneducated                    | 148                   | 30                   | 92                    | 18                   |

Table 5.6 above shows the average number of proverbs reported by men and women of different ages and education levels. Older uneducated men reported the highest number of proverbs (N = 148, Average = 30) among all groups of speakers shown in the table. It is significant to note that among male participants, the older educated men reported the lowest numbers of proverbs (Average 10), three times less than reported by uneducated men of the same age group. This pattern is similar among the women: older educated women reported on three times less proverbs (N = 32, Average = 6) as compared to uneducated women of the same age group (N = 92, Average = 18).

To summarise the data presented so far, it has been found that in general male participants reported more proverbs than female participants, older participants reported more proverbs compared to younger participants, uneducated participants reported more proverbs than their educated counterparts, and speakers from rural areas reported more proverbs than urban inhabitants. While the descriptive data explains *who* reported proverbs and *how many*, it does not provide any answers to the question of *why*. To answer this and other such questions, we have to look to qualitative aspects of the data, the subject of the next chapter. However, a few general comments here would be helpful in situating the descriptive data within the larger scholarship surrounding proverbs and their usage in different societies.

Sociolinguists believe that language use is intrinsically correlated with age, gender, class, among other variables. In terms of age, studies have investigated how a particular linguistic variable might change from one age group to another (Murphy, 2010). It has been argued that as typical patterns of language change over generations, some linguistic features get “left behind” with the passage of time, the most often among which are “formulaic utterances, sayings, songs, and poetry” (Tagliamonte, 2011:44). However, rather than being abrupt, this change is gradual from one cohort to another in a

“monotonic” fashion (Labov, 1994:84). Another important finding of sociolinguistic research is that people use speech appropriate to their age group: people use one linguistic feature while young and adopt another as they get older (Murphy, 2010; Tagliamonte, 2011), which may also hold true for proverbs. Although it is difficult to project based on the data collected for this study, it may be that young men and women who reported (or use) less proverbs today may start using proverbs frequently when they get older.<sup>68</sup> In middle age, people tend to become more conservative in language use: they tend to confirm to societal norms of appropriate speech (Tagliamonte, 2011). Younger speakers’ lesser reporting of proverb might be rooted in their perception of the inappropriateness of proverbs with younger age.

The association of proverbs with elder members of society is such a well-known fact that studies do not go into any detail beyond a few rudimentary comments. Most studies start with introducing proverbs as a purview of “elders who tend to reserve the right to use them” (Siran, 1993) with the overriding purpose being pedagogical and didactical (Briggs, 1985; Moon, 1997; Yankah, 2001; Madumulla, 2001; Penfield & Duru, 1988). As will be elaborated on in the next chapter, Pashto proverbs too have strong association with male elders, especially those who are uneducated and who mostly live in rural areas. Educated elders, both male and female, tend to report fewer proverbs compared to uneducated elders as seen in table 5.6. To the best of my knowledge, no study has previously tried to see if education has any influence on proverbs reporting or quoting behaviour of speakers. However, at least two studies have noted the influence of western-oriented education on the knowledge and use of proverb among young males, as discussed below.

In their study of Nigerian youth, Arewa and Dundes (1964) explain that Western-oriented education influences the proverb speaking ability of Nigerian youth. While some speakers are able to “recall the texts of a great number of proverbs”, the educated youth are “not really certain as to precisely how and when they should be employed in particular situations” (1964:70). Similarly, Yankah (1982) observed the influence of education on the proverb usage behaviour of educated African speakers at the Bloomington campus of Indiana University and concluded that the use of proverbs among the educated Africans is generally limited on the campus. However, Yankah argued that when at home in Africa, the natural surroundings, beliefs, attitudes, animals, vegetation, and other local phenomena and objects are constant reminders of the imagery in African proverbs and increase the

---

<sup>68</sup> There is a debate, however, among sociolinguists as to which of the two kinds of studies – ‘apparent-time’ and ‘real-time’ – are best suited to project language change with age (see Eckert, 1997; Bailey, 2002).

urge to use a proverb. When asked why they use fewer proverbs on the campus, the common answer was the difficulty of translation: proverbs are not usually translated, and when the listener does not understand the meaning of a proverb, the speaker is gradually discouraged to use proverb. Yankah also reported that despite the generally low usage of proverbs by western-educated Africans, “there are a few African students whose use of the proverb is remarkable” owing to their socio-cultural background such as rural upbringing and early and continuous exposure to the proverb tradition in their families (Yankah 1982:155).

Unfortunately, Yankah (1982) and Arewa and Dundes (1964) neither detailed the methodology of their studies nor did they report any statistical evidence for their conclusions. Both these studies seem to be based on personal observations of the researchers who have mostly cited scenarios in which a person may or may not use a proverb. Their conclusions, however, do hold true in the case of educated Pashto speakers. As shown in the tables above, young educated speakers not only reported fewer proverbs than older uneducated speakers; they also specifically mentioned that they do not use proverbs mostly due to various external constraints (such as bilingualism, early socialisation, urban life, and formal work environments) which will be explained in the next chapter. Studies in other cultural contexts have found that children in rural areas brought up by their grandparents were often more influenced by proverbs compared to children brought up by third-generation mothers (Duru, 1980), and that “proverbs usage is generally low in urban areas where “folk” ways have been altered” (Penfield & Duru, 1988:125). Yankah’s (1982) observation of a few ‘exceptional’ younger and educated users of proverbs is also evident in this study. For example, Afia, a young educated female speaker reported 33 proverbs – the highest number reported by a single speaker among the women participants.<sup>69</sup> As the next chapter will show, some participants deliberately used proverbs as a marker of ethnic identity, among which Afia is one. This brings us back to the intersection of age and other variables such as gender.

In term of gender, the data shows that men reported more proverbs compared to women. In fact, the difference in proverb reporting on the basis of gender is the most profoundly visible among all the other variables. A number of explanations can be found in the literature as to why women report/use fewer proverbs than men. In chapter 1, it was noted that almost all scholars believe that proverbs as a genre of cultural production and as a

---

<sup>69</sup> This exceptional young educated woman is a reason why the young educated female reported slightly more proverbs (22) on average than other groups of females (see table 5.6).

source of authority is the domain of men, and as such, men are inclined to use them more often than women (e.g., Schipper, 2004; Kerschen, 2012; Webster, 1986; Sumner, 1995; Fakoya, 2007). It is important to reiterate that no study has empirically confirmed this popular academic belief. If reporting proverbs is an indication of proverb use, the data shown in Tables 5.1, 5.5 and 5.6 suggests the validity of this argument: men reported more proverbs than women. In her study on socialization of children in Ibgo society, Duru (1980) found that boys develop a proverb understanding and usage earlier than girls because boys commonly spend more time in the company of men and men use proverbs more often than women.

One explanation for lesser usage of proverbs by women is found in a stream of sociolinguistic studies on the speakers' 'network'. Studies by Milroy (1987) and Milroy & Milroy (1985), for example, have shown that those speakers who have tight networks (such as living in small communities isolated from larger society) are more likely to preserve their distinctive language. In this sense, women's lesser reportage of proverbs may be interpreted by saying that because Pashtun women have been traditionally isolated in the home and restricted to the village, hence are more likely to interact with the immediate kinship and neighbourhood and so are less likely to learn new proverbs. In a sense, proverbs are cultural production and women are disadvantaged in acquiring these cultural products because of their limited exposure beyond the home. Men, on the other hand, are much more mobile and interact with a variety of people from different linguistic, regional, and class backgrounds, hence have more opportunities to learn new proverbs.

The *number and frequency* of proverbs reported by speakers is one aspect. Another, equally important aspect is the nature of proverbs reported, i.e., the *subject matter* or *content* of proverbs, towards which we will now turn.

## **5.2: Subject Matter of Proverbs**

This section is concerned with the content and subject matter of Pashto proverbs. The analysis in this section is based on all 518 proverbs, those reported by the participants as well as those collected from secondary sources. While the previous section was concerned with the reportage of Pashto proverbs *by* different categories of men and women, this section is concerned with what Pashto proverbs say *about* men and women. The corpus of 518 proverbs has been classified in two ways: how many proverbs primarily refer to men

and/or women, and how many of them have primarily positive, negative, or neutral connotations. First, I will explain the method and criteria used for classification of the proverb corpus.

The image, description, and message in a proverb can be positive or negative, or may invoke mixed feelings about the object or topic being discussed. Schipper (1991, 2004) analysed proverbs about women “from around the world” and noted that most proverbs speak negatively of women. Unfortunately, Schipper, like many others who argue that proverbs are mostly negative about women and positive about men, did not elaborate on how she decided if a proverb is positive or negative. It is not a straightforward task to categorise proverbs into the qualitative, judgemental categories of ‘positive’ and ‘negative’, mainly because their meanings are subject to change from text to context and from speaker to listener. There is always the possibility of double meaning within the same proverb (Norrick, 1985), as the production and interpretation of a proverb is the function of a complex interaction between the larger socio-cultural environment and the immediate conversational context, as well as the text of the individual proverb. However, many proverb scholars have argued that such a classification is not only possible, but also desirable. After a brief review of the different classification systems and methods attempted by various scholars, I will explain the method I adopted for classifying the corpus of the 518 Pashto proverbs into ‘positive’, ‘negative’ or ‘contextual’ categories.

Tracy, Patterson, and Halpert (2003) classified a set of 199 English proverbs on the basis of whether they primarily carry a positive/pleasant effect, or a negative/unpleasant warning to the listener. The proverb “*Every cloud has a silver lining*”, for example, was categorised as a ‘positive reframe’ because it redirects a person’s attention towards a positive aspect or implication of a given situation and suggests that there is always reason to hope. The proverb “*All that glitters is not gold*” was categorised as a ‘negative reframe’ as it is cautionary. These researchers also noted a third category: “some proverbs do not fit neatly into the separate categories of positive or negative reframes. These might be called “either” reframes because they seem to involve either positive or negative thought transitions, depending on the situational context” (Tracy *et al.*, 2003; also see Tracy, Greco and Kilburg, 2003). Proverbs of this nature include “*Like father, like son*”, “*History repeats itself*” and so on. These kinds of proverbs allow for multiple interpretations, “so that without a situational context, it is difficult to predict how people might interpret them” (Tracy *et al.*, 2003). Apart from the positive or negative *message* of a proverb as a whole, these authors also noted that the *words* and *images* used in specific proverbs can help in

understanding the positivity or negativity of a proverb. For example, they noted that most of the negative proverbs included cautionary or negative terminology such as “‘can’t, cannot, don’t, never, no, not” or “‘bad, bury, contempt, dangerous, dead, deceive, drowning, evil, spoil, thief, waste, weakest, and worst”” (Tracy *et al.*, 2003). The authors’ classification system seems very relevant and helpful in classifying Pashto proverbs, and I draw on this and other classifications outlined below.

Dieleman (1998) evaluated ancient Egyptian proverbs about women in terms of qualitative value judgements according to criteria similar to that of Tracy *et al.* (2003): proverbs which contained terms with negative connotations (such as prostitute, woman of the street, bad women etc.) were evaluated as negative, and terms with positive connotations (such as mother, wise women, beloved women etc.) were considered positive. He further noted that there are terms which are neutral when taken alone, however the proverbs in which they are used may contain value judgements. Moreover, he makes extensive use of ‘intertextuality’, in which he tried to explain the positivity or negativity of a proverb with the help of other texts from ancient Egyptian literature. Hussein (2004) conducted a study on how women are represented in Oromo proverbs from Eastern Africa in which a corpus of 24 proverbs was evaluated. She classified proverbs into negative and positive by discussing the *content* of each proverb text with a group of six local speakers of the language who situated these proverbs in hypothetical contexts.<sup>70</sup> Previous studies have thus classified proverbs into positive or negative categories by assessing the connotative meanings of individual words and terms in a proverb along with the overall ‘message’ of the proverb, i.e., whether the message is primarily positive/pleasant or negative/unpleasant for the reader/listener. Only Hussein (2004) utilised the help of local people who knew the usual context of the proverbs under study.

Another classification system, though not directly related to positive or negative categorisation of proverbs, is that of Alan Dundes’ (1975a) much quoted “topic-comment” structure of proverbs. Dundes’ approach was discussed in detail in chapter 1. He argues, quite rightly, that proverbs are descriptive elements containing a ‘topic’ and a ‘comment’ structure. The ‘topic’ is the apparent referent, i.e., the subject or item allegedly being

---

<sup>70</sup> Among others who attempted a classification of proverbs into positive and negative categories, Storm’s (1992) study classified 817 Japanese proverbs about women, of which only 29 of them were clearly positive. Storm admits that “these figures are based on my own judgement of what is positive and negative” (Storm, 1992:181). Similarly, Nakhavaly & Sharifi (2013:195) used their own judgment to classify Persian proverbs into positive and negative connotation categories about men and women and also found that the overwhelming majority of the negative proverbs (84%) were against women.

described; the ‘comment’ is an assertion about the topic, usually concerning the nature, form, function, characteristic or action of the topic. Proverbs like “*Barking dogs seldom bite*” or “*Still water runs deep*” etc. have a topic-comment structure (Dundes, 1975a). Dundes did not concern himself with the evaluation of proverbs into positive or negative or some other evaluative categories, but his insightful observation on proverbs structure can be utilized to identify the ‘topic’ of each proverb in the corpus being studied (i.e., the targeted gender), and to see how the ‘comment’ part of the proverb describes the targeted person.

One weakness which is common to all the above cited studies is that none of these researchers collected proverbs themselves. Instead, their corpus of proverbs consisted of selection from already collected/published sources, at the cost of not being able to situate the proverbs in their spoken context. In case of Dieleman (1998), first-hand collection is out of the question because the language and speakers of those ancient Egyptian proverbs no longer exist. Moreover, while Hussein utilised the help of local speakers to decide the positivity or negativity of proverbs, this was with a very small sample of 24 proverbs. As I have collected proverbs through qualitative interviews with local people and am myself an insider to the culture and language of the people under study, I am in a much better position to not only evaluate the content (words and terms) of each proverb, but also interpret the ‘message’ of the proverb by situating it in the local cultural and sociolinguistic context of its usage. Moreover, most of the proverbs collected for this study were discussed with the participants during the interviews and a number of these proverbs were used in actual conversational context by participants. This provides a means through which to judge whether a particular proverb is positive or negative. In other words, the criteria used in this research for categorising proverbs into positive, negative and neutral categories attempt to improve the previous classifications used by other scholars dealing with subjectivity in proverbs.

Another increasingly popular approach to identify subjectivity in a given text is called *sentiment analysis* (or opinion mining). This approach is mainly based in Natural Language Processing in which machine learning is used to determine whether a text is subjective or objective (called *subjectivity classification*) and whether the opinion expressed in the text is positive, negative, or neutral (called *sentiment classification*) (Pang and Lee, 2008; Liu, 2010a, 2012). Sentiment classification can be used to analyse a given document as a whole or each sentence in a document individually. Similar to Tracy *et al.* (2003) and Dieleman (1998) who noted that proverbs could be classified on the basis of

whether they contain certain positive or negative word and phrases, sentiment analysis also generate *opinion lexicon* or *sentiment words*. Positive opinion lexicon (e.g., ‘beautiful’, ‘wonderful’, ‘good’ and ‘amazing’) and negative opinion lexicon (e.g., ‘bad’, ‘poor’, and ‘terrible’) are identified in a text to automatically classify a sentence as either positive or negative. The list of opinion words/lexicon could be generated either manually, or by using a dictionary-based or corpus based- approach (Liu, 2010a).

While sentiment analysis has been successfully used by researchers, it is not without its problems (Liu, 2012). The way that we express sentiment is a complex mix of the linguistic structures of our utterances and the assumed knowledge of the people who we are addressing. It is not easy for a computer to have the ability to understand someone’s intended meaning (pragmatic competence). Sentiment analysis tools have trouble with irony, humour, sarcastic and other subtleties of human speech. Machine learning is still at an early stage of development and ‘emotion’ is really difficult to predict computationally. Cultural factors, linguistic nuances and differing contexts make it extremely difficult to turn a string of written text into a simple positive or negative (Liu, 2010a & b; ). A computer is also more likely to commit error when words have multiple definitions in different context and when a sentence uses ‘false negatives’. (Liu, 2010b; Joe, 2012). For example, where the software sees a negative word like “crap” but doesn’t realize it’s positive in the overall context – “Holy crap! I loved this!” (Joe, 2012).

The above discussion shows that identification and categorization of subjectivity in a text is a subjective process and neither machines nor humans are capable of classifying opinions with hundred percent accuracy. Classifying proverbs into positive or negative categories is even more difficult because proverbs are contextual and the same proverb could imply different meanings in different contexts and for different people (Norrick, 1985; Hasan-Rokem, 1982; Mieder, 1989, 1985; Honeck *et al.*, 1980; Seitel, 1976). For example, when I tried to evaluate Pashto proverbs about women into positive or negative category, I faced a dilemma: the more I interpreted these proverbs from a Pashtun male perspective, I saw positivity in them, but when I evaluated such proverbs from a feminist perspective, I saw negativity in these proverbs. Though I give preference to the feminist interpretation in categorizing these proverbs, the issue of subjectivity could not be completely overcome.

Drawing on these studies, I have classified the corpus of 518 Pashto proverbs into three categories of “positive”, “negative” and “contextual”. Based on the insight gained from



Tracy *et al.* (2003), Dieleman (1998), Dundes (1975a), and Liu (2010), I have looked not only at the overall message of the proverb as a whole, but have also examined the individual terms in the proverbs to see whether they are primarily positive or negative. For example, words such as adultery, beast, boasting, dangerous, dirty, donkey, elopement, evil, enemy, greed, impotent, jealous, shame, quarrels, and ugly are all negative; while words such as beauty, blessing, bravery, dignity, fortune, help, pride and trust are positive. Analysis of the *contents* (words), together with the overall *message* and usual spoken *context* of each proverb, underpinned decisions as to whether to put a particular proverb into positive, negative or contextual categories. For example, the proverbs “*Paradise lies under the feet of the parents*”, “*Men construct a house [building]; women turn it into a home*” and “*Sons should be [at least] four, even if they are black (ugly)*” have been categorised as positive, while proverbs such as “*The mother drank the milk herself, and then chased the neighbour’s cat*”, “*I am a woman, [thus], I am wrong*”<sup>71</sup>, “*The co-wife, even if she is made of butter, will taste like a chilli*”, “*I saw you naked; I was (sexually) aroused*”<sup>72</sup>, “*The donkey is not a [worthy] cattle, the son-in-law is not a [trustworthy] relative*” and “*When the devil himself cannot do something, he sends an old woman there*” have been classified as negative. Examples of ‘contextual’ proverbs are “*A man’s good or bad fortune depends on his wife*”, “*A widow is always on the move [have to work hard]*”, “*If the mother wishes, she can cook even in a spoon*” and “*The mother has passed away, but so has the fever*”.

Two more aspects of proverbs also have to be considered while elaborating on this classification. Firstly, some proverbs of the corpus refer to two or more individuals. To use Dundes’ terminology, sometimes the ‘topic’ of a proverb is more than one person. For example, ‘brother and sisters’, ‘husband and wife’, and ‘sister-in-law and co-wife’ often appear together in the same proverb. In such cases, the comment about the topic was considered more carefully to discover which person is the actual target. For example, a Pashto proverb referring to the contentious relation among the women of the household goes like this: “*When you do the laundry, let your mother see you; when you wash/make your hair, let your sister-in-law see you*”. Who is the actual target in this proverb – the mother or the sister-in-law? The local familial context, the nature of the two activities (washing laundry and washing one’s hair), the suggestion to the listener (who is

<sup>71</sup> Another variant of this proverb is: “*If she is a woman, she is wrong*”.

<sup>72</sup> Another variant of this proverb is: “*You saw me naked and erected your penis*”. This proverb is said of one who desires to take advantage of another’s weakness.

presumably a woman; more specifically, a daughter), and an explanation provided by one of my research participants, suggest that the primary target of proverb is the sister-in-law. This is because washing laundry is a tiresome activity and the mother will show sympathy with the washer, while washing hair is a ‘luxury’ in a rural setting and the sister-in-law will likely feel jealous. As can be seen, the proverb contains a positive message about the mother and a negative message about the sister-in-law, and because the proverb is primarily against the sister-in-law, it has been classified as a negative proverb.

The second, related, consideration was to pay attention to the positivity/negativity of proverbs from the point of view of not only the listener, but also from the perspective of the targeted person, the one who is being *talked about*. This means an addition to Tracy *et al.*’s criteria, which evaluated proverbs from the perspective of the listener/reader, rather than the targeted person or object. In the context of gender in Pashto proverbs, it is more important to evaluate proverbs from the perspective of the targeted person. For example, the proverb about a mother and sister-in-law cited above is positive if the listener is the mother, but negative if the listener is the sister-in-law. Only first-hand knowledge of the competitive relationship between the sisters-in-law in a joint family system can help in understanding the true implication of these proverbs. Therefore, Tracy *et al.*’s (2003) criterion has been slightly customised and expanded for the purpose of the current study by also paying attention to proverbs from the perspectives of (a) its target (b) its listener/reader/speaker, and (c) the local cultural context.

Table 5.7 shows the breakdown of target characters/persons in Pashto proverbs. The table classifies proverbs into those reported by participants (326), and all proverbs (518) in order facilitate comparison among the different kinds of proverbs in the corpus.

**Table 5.7: Subject matter /targeted characters in proverbs by gender**

| Primary Target Character    | Reported Proverbs | All Proverbs |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Male                        | 81 (25%)          | 130 (25%)    |
| Female                      | 229 (70%)         | 362 (70%)    |
| Miscellaneous <sup>73</sup> | 16 (5%)           | 26 (5%)      |
| <b>Total (100%)</b>         | <b>326</b>        | <b>518</b>   |

<sup>73</sup> The 26 proverbs categorised as miscellaneous are those relating to matters such as polygamy (7 proverbs) old age (3 proverbs), parents and children (3 proverbs each), and other miscellaneous topics (10 proverbs).

The table shows that women are the target of 70% of the total proverb topics, while only a quarter (25%) of the proverbs are concerned with men as their subject matter or target. The percentage is the same across different categories of proverbs which suggests that the sample of proverbs collected through fieldwork can accurately represent Pashto proverbs about gender relations. The proverbs corpus was categorized into positive, negative, and contextual categories according to the criteria explained earlier, as shown below.

**Table 5.8: Distribution of proverbs into ‘positive’, ‘negative’ and ‘contextual’ categories**

| Proverbs     | Numbers    |
|--------------|------------|
| Positive     | 103        |
| Negative     | 323        |
| Contextual   | 92         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>518</b> |

The table shows that the number of negative proverbs in the corpus is three times more than proverbs which are positive. 92 proverbs have been declared as ‘contextual’ as they could not be neatly fitted into the former two categories.

A gender-based distribution of these proverbs provides further elaboration.

**Table 5.9: Positive, negative and contextual proverbs, by gender**

| Targeted Gender      | Positive         | Negative         | Contextual      | Total      |
|----------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|------------|
| Proverbs about women | 38 (10%)         | 259 (72%)        | 65 (18%)        | 362        |
| Proverbs about men   | 62 (48%)         | 52 (40%)         | 16 (12%)        | 130        |
| Miscellaneous        | 03 (12%)         | 12 (46%)         | 11 (42%)        | 26         |
| <b>Total</b>         | <b>103 (20%)</b> | <b>323 (62%)</b> | <b>92 (18%)</b> | <b>518</b> |

The data shows that the negativity in proverbs about women is much more evident compared to proverbs about men. Of proverbs concerning women, 72% are negative, compared to 40% of proverbs about men. When it comes to positivity in proverbs, the opposite is the case: male are viewed positively in 48% proverbs while female appear positively in only 10% of the proverbs. This confirms the common observation by many scholars that proverbs are mostly negative in connotation about women (e.g., Kerschen, 2012; Schipper, 2004; Nakhavaly & Sharifi, 2013; Sumner, 1995; Oha, 1998; Hussein,

2004). This finding is strikingly similar to that of Nakhavaly & Sharifi (2013), whose study on Persian proverbs found that out of the 12000 Persian proverbs with some kind of negative connotations, 84% were against women and only 16% against men (Nakhavaly & Sharifi, 2013:195). If all the 323 negative proverbs in the above table are divided on the basis of gender, 80% are about women while only 16% are about men. A different but important question is to ask who might have coined these negative proverbs about women. This question has not been directly addressed in this study. However, a related aspect – who uses them most – is discussed later in this chapter and will be explored in more detail in the next chapter.

However, the fact that neither all women are viewed negatively in proverbs, nor all men are always viewed positively, indicates that gender relations are contested and depend on the specific role a person occupies in the social and kinship hierarchy. As with men and women, relationships among men are also hierarchical.

The following two tables show a breakdown of these positive, negative and contextual proverbs according to the specific persons of the two genders targeted in proverbs.

**Table 5.10: Positive, negative and contextual proverbs about various categories of male**

| Male Characters  | Positive  | Negative  | Contextual | Total      |
|------------------|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|
| Men (in general) | 27        | 8         | 7          | 42         |
| Son(s)           | 22        | 3         | 4          | 29         |
| Husband          | 5         | 14        | 1          | 20         |
| Son-in-law       | 0         | 12        | 0          | 12         |
| Brother(s)       | 6         | 3         | 2          | 10         |
| Father           | 2         | 2         | 1          | 5          |
| Brother-in-law   | 0         | 3         | 0          | 3          |
| Cousin           | 0         | 2         | 0          | 2          |
| Uncle (maternal) | 0         | 2         | 0          | 2          |
| Father-in-law    | 0         | 0         | 1          | 1          |
| Grandson         | 0         | 1         | 0          | 1          |
| Old men          | 0         | 1         | 0          | 1          |
| Step-son         | 0         | 1         | 0          | 1          |
| <b>Total</b>     | <b>62</b> | <b>52</b> | <b>16</b>  | <b>130</b> |

The figures show men in different roles and the number of positive, negative and neutral proverbs about them. Out of the 42 proverbs with ‘man’/ ‘men’ as a general category of subject matter, nearly two thirds (27 out of 42) are positive, while only 8 are negative. Also visible is that some roles appear much less frequently (e.g., father-in-law, grandson, and

step-son are mentioned only once). Proportionately, sons are the most positively represented (22 out of 29), followed by men as a generic category. The ‘brother’ appears positively in most proverbs while the husband is dominantly presented in a negative sense. Similarly, there are no positive proverbs about son-in-laws. Overall, it appears that the more distant the kinship and blood relations, the more negatively they are opined about in proverbs.

**Table 5.11: Positive, negative and contextual proverb about various categories of female**

| Female Characters                              | Positive  | Negative   | Contextual | Total      |
|--|-----------|------------|------------|------------|
| Women (in general)                             | 12        | 127        | 24         | 163        |
| Mother   | 7         | 31         | 15         | 53         |
| Daughter(s)                                    | 8         | 17         | 6          | 31         |
| Wife   | 0         | 18         | 6          | 24         |
| Young Girls/ Virgins                           | 5         | 10         | 5          | 20         |
| Widow  | 1         | 10         | 4          | 15         |
| Sister-in-law                                  | 0         | 10         | 0          | 10         |
| Sister(s)                                      | 2         | 4          | 4          | 10         |
| Co-wife (and her children)                     | 0         | 8          | 0          | 8          |
| Bride  | 1         | 5          | 1          | 7          |
| Mother-in-law                                  | 0         | 4          | 0          | 4          |
| Step-mother                                    | 0         | 3          | 0          | 3          |
| Daughter-in-law                                | 0         | 3          | 0          | 3          |
| Old women                                      | 0         | 3          | 0          | 3          |
| Aunt   | 2         | 0          | 0          | 2          |
| Divorced women                                 | 0         | 2          | 0          | 2          |
| Others (prostitute, midwife, grandmother etc.) | 0         | 4          | 0          | 4          |
| <b>Total</b>                                   | <b>38</b> | <b>259</b> | <b>65</b>  | <b>362</b> |

Table 5.11 shows that there are more negative proverbs about all the different female characters. The only exception is the ‘aunt’ who appears in only two proverbs, both of them positive. It is also interesting and surprising that the ‘mother’ is the second highest negative character in proverbs, despite the fact that mothers are well-respected figures in Pashtun culture as in other cultures. However, a close look at the content and tone of proverbs about mothers and explanations from participants reveal that of many of the negative proverbs about the ‘mother’ are full of sarcasm and humour, and not meant to be taken seriously in most cases. This shows that proverbs *texts* are not necessarily a true reflection of proverbs *contexts*, explained in detail in the next chapter. The wife appears in 24 proverbs, none of which is positive. Similarly, no positive proverb could be seen about

in-laws – sister-in-law<sup>74</sup>, co-wife, mother-in-law, step-mother, and daughter-in-law. The main theme of all proverbs relating to in-laws is rivalry and competition between women which is typical of joint family systems. As with the previous table, the distance of blood relations and its association with negative proverbs is also evident in these figures. The more distant the kin relations (such as in-laws), the more negative proverbs there are about these relations.

It is also noticeable that there is no proverb about female cousins. In Pashtun culture where male and female cousins mostly live together in joint families, and where cross-cousin marriage is the most common and preferred type of marriage, it is surprising that no proverbs in the corpus mention her explicitly. However, the category of ‘sister’ which include 10 proverbs are also applicable to the female cousin, because the Pashto word “*khlor-loor*” used in some of such proverbs literally means “sister and/or daughter” which is often used when referring with respect to one’s close female relatives, especially sister and cousin. The content of these proverbs shows that when the words “*khlor*” (sister) or “*khlor-loor*” (sister and/or daughter) appear in a text, the topics are mostly *purdah*, marriage and the modesty of women. Out of the total 10 proverbs grouped in this category, marriage and *purdah* are the topics of 9 of the proverbs. Moreover, it was observed that whenever the research participants used the word “*khlor-loor*” during an interview, their intention and tone was always positive and respectful towards women, although the consequence of such proverbs is to reinforce ideas of modesty, *purdah*, and compulsory marriage for women. These aspects of proverbs are discussed in the following section.

### 5.3. Patriarchal Discourses in Proverbs

Most of the chapter so far has been concerned with presenting quantitative data concerning the proverbs reported by different participants and the genders and kinship relationships targeted by these proverbs. In this section, I discuss the texts and meanings of individual proverbs to elicit any patriarchal discourse they may encode. Some of the proverbs related to different genders have been plotted into a word cloud format in order to visually demonstrate the major words and themes in proverbs. For example, the 42 proverbs about men in general (Table 5.10) and 163 proverbs about women in general (Table 5.11) were plotted into a word cloud format as shown in Figure 5.1 and Figure 5.2. Although word

---

<sup>74</sup> The category of ‘sister-in-law’ include three sub-categories which are husband’s wife (7 proverbs), husband’s sister (2 proverbs) brother’s wife (1 proverb).



It is pertinent to mention at the outset that it is not easy to neatly group and discuss proverbs under mutually exclusive themes because a single proverb may cut across different aspects of gender relations, such as Walby's (1990) six structures of patriarchy. Despite this difficulty, the forthcoming discussion will be divided into five sub-sections: the gendered division of work, men's control over women's sexuality, representations of masculinity and femininity, male violence against women and biological reproduction, especially the preference for male children.

### **5.3.1. Household Production and the Gendered Division of Work**

The division of work is closely related to power and social status. Status and power also depend on the extent to which a person exercises control over productive resources. Gender, along with other aspects of stratification such as class or ethnicity, is a primary 'social division' reproducing hierarchies and inequalities (both symbolic and material) in resource allocation and consumption (Antias, 2001). Despite increasing opportunities to access education and work in recent times, proverbs portray an exclusionary picture of gendered division of work in which women's primary role is inside the home. As already discussed, the Pashtun have relatively strict divisions of labour and physical space on the basis of gender compared to other ethnic groups in Pakistan. Women's 'expressive role' in the family (Parsons, 1951) and contribution to home-making is sometimes cherished, illustrated in the proverb *"Men construct the house [building]; women turn it into a home"*. Other proverbs associating women with the home, however, are not so positive. For example, the most well-known and frequently reported Pashto proverb about women states that *"A woman is either for home or for grave"*. The proverb suggests in simple but strong terms that the home (*kor*) is the best place for women, beyond which only the grave (*gor*) is waiting for her. The '*kor*' and '*gor*' are private spaces and women are said to have no role in the public spaces between these two. This proverb exaggerates reality, but exaggeration in proverbs is a well-known rhetorical mechanism utilised in all ideological discourses, helping to add force to what is being said (van Dijk, 1997). Other examples of proverbs associating women with the home include *"Woman is the lamp of the home"*, *"Women are responsible for the dignity of home"*, *"A house without women is half empty"* and *"The housewife better knows the household affairs"*. The home and household affairs mentioned in the proverbs above refer to every activity women have traditionally performed, such as cooking, sewing, cleaning, managing the house, and tending the cattle and childcare. Most proverbs place the burden of a well-managed house on to the women. It is also important to note that most of the male participants of this research project



interpreted the above proverbs positively, as appreciative of women's role and status in Pashtun society. Being the "lamp of the home" means that women's indispensable and valuable contributions to home-making are recognised and appreciated. Yet, looking through a gender lens, these proverbs are actually "naturalizing discourses" (Eagleton, 1991; Guillaumin, 1995) which present women as 'natural' home-makers. At the same time, terms like "lamp of the home" are employing a 'compensation strategy' (Barrett, 1988), as women are compensated through being given pleasing titles. While proverbs hold women as primarily responsible for household work, this work is not always cherished. In some proverbs, women are considered to be disorganised and their work devalued. Women are blamed for not being able to work properly and effectively in proverbs such as "*When it is time to milk the cow, the disorganised woman start grinding grain*", and "*A woman's work is always spoiled*". Milking cows and grinding grain are both considered women's work and both performed inside the household arena. However, these proverbs are used to depict women as not knowing how to prioritise household tasks: when it is time to milk the cows, she grinds grain. Similarly, the other proverb mentioned implies that women cannot be entrusted to complete their work to a level deemed satisfactory to men.

The association of women with household work – the kitchen in particular – is illustrated in the following proverbs: "*The power of the mother is limited to the cooking pot*", and "*Mother, mother! You are tied to your sink*". It may be that the kitchen in these proverbs has been used as shorthand for all household chores associated with women. Similarly, the 'mother' in the proverbs is also used as representative of all women in the household, whose power is limited to certain basic activities, primarily related to the kitchen. They do not possess power beyond certain domains. However, these proverbs will be subjected to a more detailed analysis in the next chapter, where it has been shown that different speakers may understand and use these proverbs differently. According to one proverb, the ultimate role of the daughter-in-law is to work in her in-law's kitchen: "*The daughter-in-law is made of the dust of father-in-law's hearth*". This proverb implies that a daughter-in-law is *made* for the purpose of managing the kitchen in her in-law's house.<sup>75</sup> These kinds of discourses are a way of inculcating the "naturalness" of cooking as the primary duty of women.

It is noteworthy, however, that these proverbial discourses do not simply deny women's role in the public sphere, but emphasise the point that even within the home women are not

---

<sup>75</sup> Muslims believe that human beings have been created from dust/earth, the *jinn*s (devils and evil spirits) come from fire, and the angels from light.

supposed to exercise any power or authority. Women may be considered the ‘lamps of the home’, but not the ‘power socket’. The exercise of power and authority by women is viewed negatively in proverbs. For example, the proverb “*Behold! The mother has become the master of the home*” is said ironically on occasions in which an incapable person takes hold of a position of authority. Other proverbs of similar nature includes “*When the mother has authority, the food is spoiled*”, and “*Ruined is the house where the mother is ruling*”. These proverbs postulate that the exercise of power by women is perceived as a threat to the position of men. Therefore, proverbs suggest that men become resentful if women start exercising power in the home. The existence of such proverbs also indicates that some women, especially the mother, may eventually gain some power and authority in the household. This is true in the Pashtun context and will be explained in the next chapter.

Positioned at the other end of the power dynamic, men are expected and socialised to take interests in what is socially constructed as productive work in the public sphere, such as agriculture. One proverb says: “*The son looks towards his father’s field, the daughter looks towards her mother’s (cooking) pot*”. This proverb again naturalises the discourse associating the productive work of agriculture with men and the kitchen-related ‘unproductive’ work with women. The proverb also refers to customary Pashtun laws excluding daughters from inheriting land. Only sons inherit land. This proverb could also be interpreted as a reminder to daughters that they should not look towards the land of their father. The fact is that most Pashtun women, especially in rural areas, work side by side with men as food producers in agriculture and live-stock management along with domestic work.<sup>76</sup> Surprisingly, no proverb mentions women in such roles. The omission of women’s productive work from proverbs seems to be a way of downplaying women’s contribution to the household economy. Most of women’s produce is consumed in the house (such as dairy produce), and because women are not allowed in the market, men change surplus crops into cash, thus women’s labour is appropriated by men. Women may receive a gift periodically in reward for their hard work in agriculture, but such a gift is considered a ‘favour’ from men to women. As argued by Walby (1990) and other feminist scholars, this construction of men’s works as productive and women’s work as reproductive legitimates the appropriation of women’s unpaid labour by men and their lack of access to paid work

---

<sup>76</sup> A report by the Ministry of Women Development, (2004) confirms that 72% of female labour in Pakistan is absorbed by agricultural-related activities. Yet, only those women who are doing paid jobs outside the home are considered as “economically active”, that is, only 15% in Pakistan (Mahboob-ul-Haq Human Development Center, 2004).

in the public sphere in patriarchal capitalistic societies (Guillaumin, 1995; Seccombe, 1974; Barrett, 1980).

Paid work among Pashtun women is a recent phenomenon, thus it is no wonder that few Pashto proverbs can be found on the theme of women's employment – both in the interview data and published collections of proverbs. As mentioned in the methodology chapter, all ten educated women interviewed for this research project were engaged in paid work. Attitudes towards women's employment outside the home vary across the urban/rural divide and depend on the nature of jobs women do. Women's employment challenges the discourse of "hegemonic masculinity" (Connell, 1987, 1995, 2005), according to which earning and providing for the family is the ideal role of hegemonic males. Several proverbs demonstrate women being discouraged from taking up paid jobs, with their earning potential undervalued, for example *"What will be a woman's earning, and what will be a donkey's saddle!"* A donkey's saddle is usually made of old, unusable pieces of rags and sacks, hence is worthless. This proverb denotes that a woman is not able to earn enough to sustain a household. The cultural ideal that men are responsible for earning is so taken for granted that few proverbs address this. One proverb that does specifically attribute earning to men states *"Men earn, women spend / Men bring, women gulp"*.

However, when men are unable to perform their breadwinning role, they are criticised in a metaphorical proverb: *"When the lower wheel of the grinding-stone starts moving, know that something is wrong"*. The grinding-stone was until recently an essential household item used for grinding grain. The hand-driven grinding machine consists of two flat stones, one above the other, in between which the grain is to be crushed to make flour. Technically, the upper stone or wheel is moving while the lower stone is fixed to the ground. This proverb is also used referring to sexual intercourse. The upper grinding stone (man) must be working on the lower, passive grinding stone (woman). The proverb means that the man/husband as the upper wheel/stone is responsible for earning money while the woman/wife as the lower wheel should be fixed in its place (i.e., home). When woman start earning money, the relations between the two wheels have been reversed, suggesting that the man has been unable to perform his ideal masculine role and the woman has started 'moving' away from her 'natural' place. This proverb not only carries a negative attitude towards women taking up paid jobs, but also scorns the husband for failing to perform his role of bread-winner. As I will elaborate on later in this chapter, the notion of men as the bread-winner is an important aspect of masculinity (Walby, 1990; Connell,

1995, 2005) in Pakistan. A few of my male participants used a contemptuous phrase to ridicule the husbands of working women. The phrase could be translated as “*the one who lives by licking his wife’s vagina*” to mean that he eats what his wife produces or earns, implying that the man has not achieved the masculine ideal of providing for his family.

In short, proverbs present a gendered division of work in which women are associated with the household and unpaid labour in the private sphere, while men are associated with paid work in the public sphere. Reversal of these roles is discouraged by the devaluing of women’s earnings, and by ridiculing the masculinity of men who are not breadwinners. The gendered division of work also produces gendered divisions of power and authority; men are independent while women are economically dependent on men. Women are primarily defined in relation to men; they lose their independent existence and autonomy. An example of the many proverbs which define women in relationship to men is “*When a woman’s hair is black, she is either a daughter or daughter-in-law; when her hair is grey; she is either a mother or a mother-in-law*”. This proverb touches upon the four life phases of a woman, each defined in relation to men – sister, sister-in-law, mother, and mother-in-law. This means that her status is relational to men – she is sister of brother, wife of a husband etc. – and she cannot remain independent of men. These proverbs justifying the lower place accorded to women in society tell us that a woman is not considered a person, at least a full person in her own right. Moreover, men, by virtue of their control on productive resources, also get the social licence to physically and financially protect women. In short, women’s ‘unproductive’ labour and their lack of access to physical and economic resources leads to their weak “bargaining power” (Kandiyoti, 1988). The low bargaining power of women leaves them at the behest of men, who appropriate their labour as well as their bodies and sexuality.

### **5.3.2. Men’s Control over Women’s Sexuality**

Cultural discourses and practices relating to how a society regulates the sexuality of its members are essential features of patriarchy (Walby, 1990; King, 2008). As explained in chapter 3, the concept of ‘honour and shame’ underlies the social structure of Pashtun society, and as such, these notions inspire most of the proverbs discussed here and in subsequent sections. Numerous scholars have agreed that while honour is more related to men, shame is more related to women, and that men’s honour is depended on the sexual conduct of women (Abu-Lughod, 1986; Papanek, 1973, 1979, 1982; Billaud, 2009; King, 2008; Mojab, 2002; Kulwickic, 2002). The most vulnerable part of Pashtun men’s honour

is to lose control over the women of the household. A woman's chief contribution to the family honour stock is through abstaining from sexually immoral conduct (Abraham, 2000; Bari, 2000; Papanek, 1979).

The Pashto term associating women's modesty with men's honour is "*namus*" which requires men to protect women from public gaze and to react strongly if the modesty of women is in question (Billaud, 2009). The concepts of *izzat* (honour), *sharam* (shame), *haya* (modesty) and *purdah* (seclusion)<sup>77</sup> also explained in chapter 3 are all directly or indirectly related to men's control of women's sexuality. The term modesty (*haya*) is much more comprehensive in its meaning as it includes all the associated concepts mentioned above. One Pashto proverb says: "*Modesty is the name of a woman*". Richard Antoun (1968) notes that:

"Modesty ... has three referents: it refers narrowly to patterns of coverage for various parts of the body; more broadly to various character traits – bashfulness, humility, diffidence, and shyness; and most widely to institutions often associated with the above – the customs and beliefs relating to the chastity, fidelity, purity, seclusion, adultery, animality, and inferiority of women, to the superiority of men, to the legitimacy of children, and to the honour of the group" (Antoun, 1968:672).

As the above quote shows, women's sexuality and bodily behaviour is a primary site of modesty, and controlling women's sexuality is the primary concern of men. The Pashto proverb "*A man's honour lives between the legs of his woman*" clearly and bluntly links men's honour to women's sexuality. Among the Pashtun, the turban (*pagrahy*) is considered as a symbol of men's honour, and because men's honour is largely dependent on the conduct of women, it is said in a proverb that "*Men wear white turbans because of women*". While this proverb seems to credit women for contributing to men's honour, other proverbs emphasise and warn against the potential threat men feel to their honour from women: "*Woman can lower down big turbans*". Consequently, the message of such proverbs for men is to constantly watch the sexual conduct of women in order to secure their "reproductive sovereignty"<sup>78</sup> (King, 2008). The proverb "*God knows the chastity of a blind man's wife*" indicates that a husband is expected to keep a constant check on his wife's extra-marital sexual affairs and that a blind man can never be sure whether his wife

<sup>77</sup> The word used for women in Urdu and also Pashtu is "*aurat*" (from Arabic – *aura*) which literally means "private parts of the body". It suggests that just like private parts of the human body, a woman is considered private - to be kept hidden from the public eye. Sometimes women of the household are called "*sharam*" (shame) to emphasise their seclusion and modesty.

<sup>78</sup> King (2008) argues that "defending women's honour" (*namus*) and "defending the national honour" are similar: a hymen is both a symbolic and real border to membership in the group. "Reproductive sovereignty" (*namus*) and "political sovereignty" (defence of national borders) operates under the same logic.

is faithful or not. Men's fear of women's sexuality is a very prominent theme in Pashto proverbs. The proverb "*What God wants to do, it is done; what woman wants to do, it is done*" is especially used to mean that when a woman wants to cheat on her husband, nothing can stop her from doing it.<sup>79</sup>

The concept of *purdah* and its relationship to women's sexuality has been discussed in detail earlier. Another important means of patriarchal control on women's sexuality is compulsory heterosexual marriages (Walby, 1990; Rich, 1980) which is the only form of legally and socially recognised marriage in Pakistan (Boesen, 1979; Wazir, 2010). Marriage, *purdah* and physical beauty are the prominent theme in proverbs pertaining to young girls, as shown in Figure 5.3.

**Figure 5.3: Words cloud for proverbs about young girls**



Talking about Pashtuns, Boeson (1983) has observed that:

“Men's sexual control of women is realised through the system of arranged marriages where male household heads exchange women and bride-prices, thereby in fact controlling the marital fates of women... A woman has ultimately no right of her own... She has no possibility of choosing her own partner for sex, companionship, and personal happiness (Boeson, 1983:109).

Though much has changed since Boeson's writing, her observation still applies to the vast majority of Pashtun women. Early marriages and arranged marriages are still relatively common in Pakistan (Abraham, 2000). The chief purpose behind the early marriage of girls is to ensure that their sexuality is channelled into the culturally approved practice of marriage. One reason why the birth of a female child is not warmly welcomed is men's

<sup>79</sup> This proverb is rooted in a short story in which a wife challenges her 'over-suspicious' husband that she will cheat on him in his presence. Despite extreme vigilance by the husband, the wife was successful in making love with another man while her husband was present in the home. Hence, it is said that when a woman decides to do something, she will eventually do it.

concerns for her sexuality and the associated threat she can potentially pose to men's honour. Though she may be loved in the family, she is considered a potential threat to the honour of the family. Much before puberty, the conduct of a girl child is guarded by the elders. Most of the proverbs depict the unmarried girl as a liability on the family. As one proverb says, "*A girls' father is never at rest*" because he worries about his daughter's timely marriage. Many girls are betrothed at an early age. Proverbs recommend that girls should be married as early as possible: "*When a girl steps down from the baby-swing, she should be married*", "*A daughter is a basket full of shame; the earlier you put this basket on the shoulders of another man, the better*"<sup>80</sup> and "*When the girl is adult, she belongs to the son-in-law (should be married)*".

It is generally expected that all girls should be married. Parents are under great social pressure to ensure that their daughters marry. While the parents, especially the mother, is actively looking for an acceptable proposal for her daughter's hand, at the same time the unmarried girl is treated with a cautious approach (Shalinsky, 1989). It is said that "*When you cherish/praise a girl, she will elope*". The saying "*Too much love spoils the children*" is generally used to refer to both male and female children, but in case of girl, "spoil" often means "sexual immodesty and immorality". It is believed that an extra affection shown to her may give her the opportunity to transcend normative barriers by eloping or 'running away' with a boy.

Marriage is compulsory for girls and is the only legal way for men and women to engage sexually. However, there are sexual double standards as the social reaction towards women's engagement in extra-marital sex is much more severe than men (Frembgen, 2006; Naved, 2003; Patel and Gabit, 2008). A proverb in this regard says that "*The loss of women's honour cannot be compensated*", meaning that dishonour caused to or by women (such rape, adultery, elopement) cannot be restored. Slight sexual misconduct by a woman outside marriage can lead to severe consequences, not only for her, but also the whole family as this act is taken as a severe threat to the honour of the family. Elopement is considered to be the most heinous crime for a woman, punishable by death (honour-killing). It is one of the few cases in which the resultant loss of family honour cannot be regained completely, even if the both members of the couple are killed. It is because elopement shows that 'the family is loose', i.e., 'they have no control on women'. "*The son of eloped*" is severe abuse for a man, and "*may you elope*" is the common verbal

---

<sup>80</sup> In a variant of this proverb, the phrase "*basket full of shit*" is used for the daughter.

abuse women say to each other when in a verbal fight. Sexual double standards are also evident from the fact that while there is an offensive term for a girl who has eloped, “*mateeza*”, no such word exists for the boy, although both are equally responsible. In most cases, boys take pride in ‘taking away’ a girl like a ‘trophy’, with or without her consent. In order to avoid elopement and other sexual misconduct, keeping women in strict *purdah* and marrying them early is considered the most effective solution.

The sexual objectification of women is an important part of patriarchal and sexist discourses. A number of Pashto proverbs treat women as sexual objects, such as these proverbs which equates women with land to be tilled by men: “*A communal land is a virgin girl; he who tills it first becomes its owner*”, “*A field without fence (woman) is prone to all kind of transgressor animals (men)*”, and “*Women and land has no (fixed) price*”. The first proverb implies that as with a piece of communal land that anyone can clear and plough (and later claim to be its sole owner), a virgin girl becomes the property of the one who claims it first. The second and third proverbs again compare women with land to be bought and sold (a reference to the bride ‘price’) and are passively prone to sexual transgressions by men. These proverbs suggest men’s ownership of women, highlighting the complex relationship between power and sexuality. They also point to the society’s belief that female sexuality is determined by male sexual virility.

The practice of arranged marriage affects both men and women, but women are much more likely to be married without their consent. A number of proverbs advise men when and whom to marry, but no proverb guides women when and whom to marry. This is because Pashtun women do not marry in the active sense of the term; they are ‘married off’ or ‘given in marriage’. Though some educated women have recently started exercising choice in selecting their husband, the practice of ‘giving’ women in marriage to unseen men is still widely practiced among Pashtuns. Some girls remain silent on the day of the marriage. To capture this situation, the Pashtun uses the following proverb: “*A bride’s silence is her consent*”. It is a common observation that most Pashtun girls remain silent at the occasion of their marriage. Whether this silence indicates their consent or resistance is never known. Shame and modesty play a major role here: the bride has to give a performance of her shyness and sadness by keeping silent, looking down, and weeping to the public eye. The more shyly she performs during her wedding, the more her modesty and femininity is appreciated.



### 5.3.3. Representation of Masculinity and Femininity

Cultural ideals of masculinity and femininity are part of gender relations in patriarchal societies (Walby, 1990; Connell, 1987, 1995, 2005). Every society endeavours to inculcate masculine and feminine values among its members. A dominant and hegemonic ideology in every culture works to differentiate male and female and essentialise gender differences. Language, including proverbs, is the main source that creates and maintains patriarchal discourses as it promotes a masculine view of the world at the expense of women, whose version is far less represented in linguistic resources (Walby, 1990; Spender, 1980). Proverbs, being conservative in nature, continue to present a stereotyped masculinity and femininity despite contemporary changes in gender roles.

In a sense, all proverbs are packed with notions of masculinity and femininity; some proverbs set idealised standards for “hegemonic masculinity” and “emphasised femininity” (Connell, 1995, 2005), while other proverbs judge those who do not fit into these two models. Pashto proverbs contain discourses of ideal masculinity in the shape of the “real Pashtun”, or simply “Pashtun”. The real man is normally the one who lives up to the ideal code of *Pashtunwali* which includes in its characteristics the ability to control one’s house (women and children) and to provide for the family. A man who fails to do this would lose his status and honour in the eyes of others. As discussed earlier, the concept of “*ghairat*” (honour), the theme of many proverbs, “personifies the ‘ideal Pashtun’” (Rzehak, 2011:16). On the other hand, the ideal Pashtun woman as outlined in Pashto proverbial discourse is submissive to her husband and other men of the house, keeps her sexual desires suppressed at all time, is modest in her speech and movement, and who is able to endure pain and suffering with courage. While masculinity is judged by a man’s *ghairat* (honour), femininity is judged by the concepts of “*haya*” (modesty) and “*sharam*” (shame) which encapsulate the ideal virtues of femininity of Pashtun culture.

Sociologists have been particularly interested in the construction of masculinity and femininity through socialisation (Weitzman, 1979). For example, long before the onset of puberty, Pashtun girls and boys are barred from playing together and considerable importance is attached to the way a girl carries herself, the way she sits, stands and talks, and interacts with others. Girls are often scolded for jumping and running, as these acts are considered unfeminine and invoke a sense of immodesty (Billaud, 2009; Anderson, 1982; Shalanski, 1987). Similarly, a girl has to be careful about her posture; she should not sit with legs wide apart. The phrase “*You are not a child*” is a constant reminder to a girl to

behave like a woman, even if she *is* a child by legal standards. They are also not allowed out into public areas to roam around in the street. In this way, gender differences between girls and boys keep them separated from an early age. A common proverb mothers use for their children is *“A boy who plays with girls will grow horns and a girl who plays with boys will grow a tail”*.<sup>81</sup> The purpose of this proverb is evident: to keep boys and girl separate, to tell them that they are different, and that their mixing together would damage their personhood. Boys who take interests in games and activities defined as ‘feminine’ are admonished as *“khazonak”* or *“jenotare”* meaning ‘girlish’.

Cultural discourses present men and masculinity as not only different, but also valued more than women and femininity. Examples of proverbs emphasising the importance of male include *“A young man is better even if he is made of straw”* and *“A man is a man whether riding on a horse or sleeping in a cradle”*. These proverbs not only exaggerates manliness, but the second proverb also forecasts that the male will ride a horse, the sign of a strong and brave person – a warrior – in Pashtun culture. Bravery and risk-taking is an almost universal feature of hegemonic masculinity. In the Pashto language, the term *‘merhana’* (bravery) is a derivation from *‘merhu’* which stands for ‘man’, hence synonymous. Proverbs such as *“Bravery is the essence of men”*, *“Men gave their heads but not the battlefield”* and *“To a true man his sickle is his sword”* all present bravery as a sign of real men. Bravery in the Pashtun context is most often used in the sense of a man’s ability to defend his honour, which is mostly related to protection of one’s land and women. It is said that *“A Pashtun dies in defence of either women or land”*. Women, on the other hand, are defined in terms of beauty and jewellery. For example, proverbs such as *“Girls wear bangles, boys wear handcuffs”*<sup>82</sup> and *“A woman is not tired of jewellery and a man of a sword”* depict boys as tough, willing to defend their honour at all cost, even if they have to wear handcuffs, i.e., go to prison. It should be noted here that wearing handcuffs and ending up in prison are sources of masculine pride, rather than shame in Pashtun culture. *“If young men do not go to prisons, what are prisons made for?”* is commonly spoken to mean that going to jail is not shameful, but a matter of pride for young men. Khushhal Khan Khattak (1613-1689), the national poet of the Pashtuns, says: *“Chi main pa wasla na ve, Mard de na way wa zana ta”* [*“If you don’t like weapons you should not call yourself a man”*]. Thus, wearing handcuffs is considered an honourable deed because it shows that

<sup>81</sup> The references to ‘tail’ and ‘horns’ in these proverbs figuratively mean that *“you will earn shame”* or *“you will lose honour”*. The expression of *‘someone has a big tail’* in Pashto means *‘there is a big scandal or gossip’* about the person. The same is the case with ‘horns’, though it is usually associated with *‘stupidity’*.

<sup>82</sup> I also heard this proverb from a British-Pakistani Punjabi speaker in the UK. His version of the proverb was even more rhyming – *“For girls are churhiyan (bangles), for boys are karhiyan (handcuffs)”*.

the person did not make any compromises in defending his honour, regardless of the consequences. The other proverb implies that men love their sword as women are supposed to love their bangles and other jewellery. The centrality of glass bangles as a symbol of femininity and sexuality in South Asia cannot be over-emphasised. In a sense, glass bangles are conceptually opposite to the iron handcuff: bangles (and the women who wear them) are fragile, weak, and sexually attractive, while handcuffs (and the men who wears them) are strong and enduring. Presenting glass bangles to a man is a popular way in South Asia to challenge the masculinity of men.<sup>83</sup>

Traditional cultural definitions equate femininity with passivity and objectification while masculinity is equated with action and activity. The proverb *"Action is male, hesitation is female"* – is a good example of this. Moreover, proverbs often define masculinity in terms of character, not their body. Examples of such proverbs include *"Look at a man's deeds, not whether he is tall or short"*, *"A man's jewellery is his good character"* and *"A man is a man not by his skin-colour, but by his character"*. Men are equated with achievements and prosperity: *"Where there are men, there are achievements"* and *"Where there are men, there are no misfortunes"*. Women, on the other hand, are defined in terms of their bodies and are often commodified: *"The shorter the woman, the more wicked she will be"*, *"The bride measured one foot, her braids measured two"*, *"The girl was worth one rupee, she broke bangles worth ten rupees"*, *"The bride of ten rupees (cheap) urinates on the wedding bed"*, and *"Women are footwear, if you do not like, change it"*.

Men are not only hierarchically organised in relation to women but also to each other in relations of marginalisation and subordination. Some proverbs call for a differentiation among men, for example, *"Men differs, some are rubies some are stones"*, *"Honour the men according to their status (=all men are not equal)"* and *"Look for the superiority in men before distributing shares/rewards"*. The shares/rewards in these proverbs in most cases are "patriarchal dividends" (Connell, 1997:64) which all men get even if they are excluded from the dominant definition of masculinity.

---

<sup>83</sup> Not much has been written on the various aspects of bangles and their role in the life of Pashtun women. A close analysis of Pashto folklore coupled with interviews with various participants suggests that bangles are closely related to sexuality; "Breaking bangles" of girls by boys is often used in Pashto poetry as euphemism for love-making. However, when a boy breaks a girl's bangles, it is love and sexuality; but a girl breaking her own bangles signifies her anger and in some cases is equal to rebellion and shedding her femininity. Red bangles are associated with sexuality, green with fertility. Chawla (2008:nil) has observed that "Bangles represent and invoke marriage and marital status... They denote commitment as well as beauty and celebration. At the same time, they represent playfulness because they have sexual and sensual connotations." It is customary in South Asia that when a woman hears the bad news of her husband's death, she must immediately break/remove her bangles as a sign of grief, but also as a pronouncement of abandoning sexual life.

As explained in the previous section, both men and women are supposed to marry. However for men, marriage is a sign of manliness. Marriage makes the male into a responsible 'man'; as the proverb says, "*A male becomes a man only when he marries*". Marriage is also sometimes called "*kor abadwal*", literally "building a house". This connects the point that a man must not only marry, but also must build his own house. This leads us to another feature of masculinity, as breadwinner and a provider for his family, also discussed previously. A man must also be able to keep his house in order; otherwise, he will be considered less manly which will have a negative effect on his standing outside the home. One proverb says that "*A man who cannot handle his home cannot handle community affairs*" which shows that control of one's home is the prerequisite for a man to be accepted as a responsible man in the public sphere which, as discussed in the next section, often means the use of violence.

It is not enough to domesticate women and provide for the family; 'real' men are expected to be independent of women. According to one proverb, "*Women have no village*" which is used to mean that women are dependent on men and have to go wherever their men (husband) go. A submissive and hen-pecked husband is ridiculed with the proverb "*Although his wife has ground the flour, the dust lies on his neck*". Men's independence also means their ability to be independent in decision making. Men are advised against listening to women's advice: "*Listen to women, but do not obey them*", "*Ruined is the man who listens to the advice of women*". Acting on women's advice would mean men's dependency on women, who are considered short-sighted: the proverb "*Women's vision does not travel beyond the end of the village*" means that women cannot think beyond their immediate surroundings. Even talking to women and becoming frank with women is considered un-manly. For example, it is said that "*The more you talk to women, the more you lose your authority over them*".

As said earlier, the ideal femininity is submissiveness and silence. A large number of proverbs present the stereotypical image of women as talkative and scandal mongers. The ideal Pashtun women, however, are presented as silent sufferers. The two popular proverbs in this category are: "*The earth and the Pashtun women do (should) not speak*" and "*The city was on fire, yet the girls were quiet*". These two proverbs represent the virtue of ideal femininity; women must remain silent and quiet. The first proverb implies that just as the earth does not speak, neither should Pashtun women. The second proverb refers to an extreme situation in which the city has caught fire, yet the girls live up to Pashtun ideals and do not shout for help during the fire, as shouting loudly does not suit a female in the

Pashtun context. These proverbs echo the society's view that women lack (or should lack) agency. Some feminist scholars have observed that the historic absence of women's voices from public life indicates that "gender relations are created ... through different patterns of speaking and contrasting possibilities of expression for men and women" (Gal, 1991:175). Although an opposite interpretation exists with reference to the silence of women and other weaker groups in third world countries<sup>84</sup>, many feminists have generally criticised women's silence as a result and symbol of passivity and powerlessness. According to Gal (1991:175), "those who are denied speech cannot make their expression known and thus cannot influence the course of their lives. Most cultures have specified rules governing men and women's speech demeanour. The English expression summarises this rule: *"Maidens must be mild and meek, swift to hear and slow to speak"* (cited in Stoianova, 2001:138). As I have explained in an earlier chapter, the spatial dimension of *purdah* restricts women, including her voice, to the private sphere of the household. Women are constantly reminded to keep their voice low in the house so that the neighbours do not hear their voice. Vatuk (1982) has observed that among Muslims of South Asia, women are expected to "observe avoidance of loud speech and laughter and the limitation of conversation with non-family males to necessary work topics" (Vatuk, 1982:70). Hence, in order to be a good Pashtun woman, proverbs indicate (the men's wish) that women should talk slowly, and talk less.

As mentioned above, the ideal masculinity also includes men's ability to exercise power in the home and get approval of his authority from his wife. Contrary to the expected romantic relationship between a married couple, proverbs depict the idea that there is a constant struggle for domination between husband and wife. There are fears, complaints, and suspicions towards each other and mutual trust is rare. There are a number of proverbs spelling out the power and authority relationship between husband and wife. Men are clearly given an upper hand in all important matters and women's power is either explicitly reduced to certain basic household issues, or generally subjected to the authority of men by emphasising the wife's obedience to the husband.

---

<sup>84</sup> See, for example Chandra Mohanty's (1988) original critique of Western feminist authors who construct third world women as a homogeneous powerless and muted group often located as implicit *victims* of particular socioeconomic systems. See also Gayatri Spivak (1988) who argues that the attempt to give voice to the third world women and other subaltern groups represented within Western discourse risks reproduction of same colonial discourse. Rather than giving a voice to Pashtun women, my aim here is to present the folkloric view about women's speech, and show elsewhere in the thesis that Pashtun women *do* speak about their lives and that some of them are very vocal in criticising Pashtun as well as Western discourse.

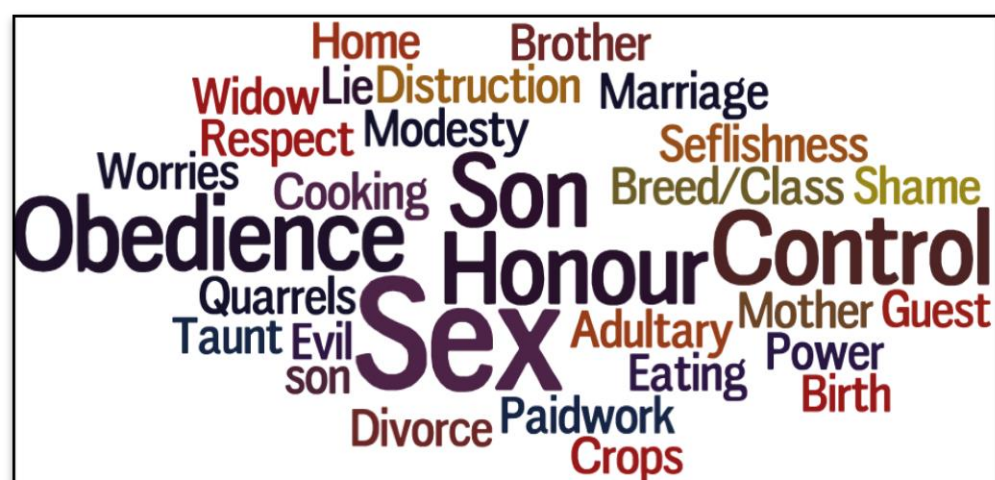
A wife's obedience to her husband's authority is one of the prominent themes in proverbs. The husband has been elevated in his authority over women by proverbs such as, "*The name of the husband is the name of God*"<sup>85</sup>, "*Never belittle a man/husband*", "*Whether the husband is good or bad, the wife owes obedience to him*", and "*If women were allowed to prostrate before someone other than God, they would have been required to prostrate before their husband*".<sup>86</sup> To "prostrate before husband" is the height of obedience, a total submission and this is what women are ideally required to do in relation to their husband.

The words clouds in Figure 5.4 and Figure 5.5 provide a snapshot of the major themes in proverbs about the husband-wife relationship.

**Figure 5.4:** Words cloud for proverbs about husband



**Figure 5.5:** Words cloud for proverbs about wife



<sup>85</sup> In Pashto, the word *khawand* is used to refer to both 'husband' and 'God'. In Urdu, the husband is also called *majazi khuda*, which literally means "artificial God".

<sup>86</sup> This proverb is attributed to the prophet Muhammad.

Most proverbs grant undisputed authority to men over women. However, masculinity is essentially a disputed terrain. There are a number of proverbs through which women challenge their husband's masculinity and ridicule men's sexuality. These are mostly indirect in tone and instead of specifically naming the husband, an imaginary character of "*mozi*" is used in such proverbs. The term *mozi* in Pashto is used to mean 'impotent' or 'covered'. If used by a wife, this word is an indirect insult to the husband who is dubbed as 'impotent'. Some examples of such proverbs used by women are: "*I do not hope to bear a son from "mozi"*", "*Better be a widow than the wife of a "mozi"*" and "*The "mozi" is better than none; at least the bed is filled*". The next chapter further elaborates the concept of *mozi* as it appears in folk songs in which (outspoken) women ostensibly ridicule masculinity and male impotency.

#### **5.3.4. Male Violence against Women**

Men's violence against women is an essential part of patriarchy (Walby, 1990), a manifestation of masculinity (Connell, 1987, 1995, 2005) and according to some feminists, the basis of men's rule over women (Brownmiller, 1976). The most common form of violence against women takes place in their families or at the domestic level, mainly within marital relations (Schular *et al.*, 2008). As detailed in chapter 3, gender-based violence against women in Pakistan takes many different forms, but the most common forms is wife-beating which, according to some estimates, is higher among Pashtuns compared to other ethnic groups in Pakistan (Fikree *et al.*, 2005).

A proverb quoted in the previous section says that "*A man who cannot handle his home cannot handle community affairs*". This proverb sums up the ideal of masculinity which includes one's ability to keep one's house in order. This usually means disciplining women and children of the household, which often involves the threat or actual use of force. Wife-beating is the theme of a number of Pashto proverbs, however the most general proverb advocating physical violence is "*Where there is a stick, there is discipline*". This proverb is used most often for women and children, but is applicable to all situations in which discipline is required. In relation to violence against women, a proverb is used which suggests that "*Keep a woman's stomach filled, and her face under a slap*". The proverb provides normative assumptions on respectable masculinity: the responsibility to feed one's wife comes first; the right to beat her comes later. Wife-beating in Pakistan is culturally as well as religiously sanctioned. Two more proverbs related to wife-beating are: "*A man's kick is the remedy for an unruly woman*" and "*If you cling to your (bad) habit, I*

*will keep my stick*". These proverbs suggest that wife beating is the due right of men. It is also important to note that in violence-related proverbs, men are always the subject: men have either been projected as violent or they are instigated to use violence against women (and other men). Women have never been shown as active subjects; they are the object of violence. In the above proverbs, for example, the 'unruly woman' is the obvious object of violence. Similarly, the 'you' in the second proverb refers to a woman and the 'I' refers to man. The Pashto term "*zhaba wahal*" (meaning "arguing") is especially used for women who argue with men of the house. This is the most common pretext and reason for home-based violence such as wife beating. A proverb especially used in this sense is "*When the tongue goes on talking, the forehead goes on beaten up*" which means that when a woman argues with men, she is bound to be beaten up.

It is common in most joint families in the Pashtun areas that at least one man remains in the home full-time to look after the house while other men do jobs and businesses in far flung areas. One of the primary duties of such a person is to keep discipline over the household. He may or may not use physical force, but must be capable of instilling fear among the women and children of the house because it is said that "*When the father is not home, the mother has no fear*". In order to instil fear in women, the Pashtun believe that "*There must be one mad man in every house*" and "*A Pashtun house is not a house until it has one dog and one angry man*". Most Pashtuns keep dogs for the purpose of protecting crops and other property of the house. Similarly, the role of the 'angry/mad man' is to protect the house from external threats as well as to keep the house in order, especially women.

As previously mentioned, instilling a fear of violence among women is the main tool through which men keep women's conduct in check. Actual physical violence happens as a last resort. However, 'the last resort' of physical violence sometimes includes 'honour killing' and bodily mutilation, often related to alleged sexual misconduct by women. One common proverb mentions the practice of 'nose-cutting' in which the husband inflicts ruthless punishment on his wife by chopping off her nose. One proverb says: "*The husband is trying to cut off her nose, the wife asks him to make her a nose ring*". As observed by Frembgen (2006), the practice of 'nose-cutting' sometimes happens in the tribal areas of Pakistan. The frequency of this proverb's usage is much more than the frequency of actual incidents. Nevertheless, this proverb is a constant reminder for women, even if used as a joke.



Although wife-beating and other forms of violence against women are common among Pashtuns, some proverbs advocate a more respectful form of masculinity that require men to exercise moral rather than physical control over their wives. Connell (1995) has also suggested that not all men use violence to maintain authority or dominance over women, and that the meaning of masculinity changes from time to time. Beating one's wife is not heroic, as heroic violence in the Pashtun context take place between men, and even more so between equals. This aspect of masculinity has been captured in a few proverbs, such as: *"A real man climbs on peaks of mighty mountains; a coward beats his poor wife"*. This proverb contains the idea that beating one's wife is an act of cowardice and denotes a man's failure in public life. Scholars such as Gelles (1972) and Amir (1971) have argued that violence against women is more common amongst lower class men: those poor men for whom it is impossible to achieve the masculine ideal in more honourable ways resort to wife-beating as an easier and cheaper way of performing masculinity. This phenomenon has been captured in another proverb most often used by women: *"Hurt by a rock on the mountain, he came home to break the grinding stone"*. The proverb means that when a man is unable to survive with dignity the harsh realities of life outside or when his masculinity is challenged in the public sphere, he releases his frustration by beating the weaker members of his family. A poor and weaker man has to work hard to maintain his masculinity. One proverb explicitly says that *"A man who is a coward outside is brave inside the home"*. Hence, this proverb shows that wife beating is a sign of cowardice, a feature of marginalised masculinity. Therefore, most 'respectable' Pashtun men usually refrain from using physical force against women.

A humorous Pashto folk song *"He hit me again"* which I have heard women sing in chorus consists of a series of complains of a bad husband who beats his wife. The first two lines of the songs are: *"May his house burn; today he hit me again // I will go to Peshawar to change my husband"*. Unfortunately, I have not been able to identify the complete song anywhere in recorded/written form. However, as I remember, women in this song criticise and make fun of the various pretexts for which a husband may beat his wife, such as for adding more salt to the broth. This shows that although women seemingly accept the patriarchal power, they do not do so without reservation.

### **5.3.5. The Preference for Male Children**

The preference for male children is a common feature of most patriarchal societies (Moghadam, 1992; Gupta *et al.*, 2003; Kapoor, 2014; Sen, 1992, 1999). A preference for

sons has been found in a large number of countries, but appears to be most widespread in East and South Asia, the Middle East and North Africa (Kapoor, 2014; Gupta, 1998; Arnold, 1987, 1992, 1997). The starkest indicator of male preference is the one hundred million 'missing women' worldwide (Sen, 1992, 1999; Gupta, 1998). Slightly more girls than boys are born in every part of the world. In Europe and North America there are 104 women for every 100 men in the population. However, the opposite is the case in Pakistan where there are 91 women for every 100 men (Qadir *et al.*, 2011).<sup>87</sup>

Predominant amongst this preference is the idea that it is more rewarding to give birth to a boy than a girl. Proverbs in many cultures consistently depict the boy and his parents in privileged positions while the girl, on the other hand, is looked at as material property to be acquired and disposed of (Kiyimba, 2006). Arnold *et al.* (1998:301) observe that if the net utility of having a son outweighs that of a daughter, parents are likely to prefer sons to daughters. Studies in South Asia and elsewhere have highlighted two major dimensions of the utility of having a son. The first is their economic utility, mainly based on assistance in agricultural production, wage earnings, and security in the case of illness and during old age. Sons are therefore a virtual necessity in countries with no state pension or welfare support for frail older persons. The second reason for son preference is the social utility which stems from the kinship and descent system and the social status and strength provided to the family by sons (Dyson and Moore 1983; Arnold, 1998; Gupta *et al.*, 2003).

Girls, on the other hand, are often considered to be an economic liability because of the dowry system, as well as the high cost of weddings, especially in higher caste families. Also, it is often humiliating for parents if a suitable marriage partner cannot be found for their daughter at an early age. Additional care needs to be taken when a daughter reaches adolescence, because chastity is considered crucial for her marriage and to protect the honour of the family (Dyson and Moore, 1983; Arnold, 1998; Gupta *et al.*, 2003). Unlike sons who remain with parents and provide them with social and economic insurance during old age, the daughter after marriage is totally incorporated into the husband's household, hence she remains of no value to her parents. If women start earning, this benefits their husband's families, not their parents.

A number of Pashto proverbs carry the idea that sons are economically and socially more rewarding than girls. The Pashto term "*meerat*" is a contemptuous expression used for a

---

<sup>87</sup> Female to male ratio in other Asian countries is also surprisingly low - India (92/100), China (94/100), Bangladesh (94/100) (Qadir *et al.*, 2011).



Among Pashtuns, the failure to have a son from the first wife is the most persuasive reason for the husband to divorce his wife, or to take a second wife (Hazarika, 2000). A folk ritual, also observed in my own home, is that the moment a bride steps inside the home on her wedding day, a male child is presented to her. The bride is supposed to take the child in her lap and play with him for some time. This is, in a way, a message to the bride that she must produce a son and as early as possible. Infertile women are discouraged against contact with the new bride because “a barren woman is thought to be inauspicious and a harbinger of bad luck and barrenness to other women” (Srivastava, 1991:276). The status of a newly married wife amongst her in-laws is not confirmed until a son is born to her (Hakim & Aziz, 1998:728). Other women of the household and neighbourhood constantly inquire of the bride “*are you with hope or not yet?*”, and advise her to “*create a place for yourself*” in the house by producing a son. One proverb which points out the importance of sons for the mother is: “*A son is the knot in the house to which a woman ties herself*” which means that a male child provides a strong foothold to the woman in the husband’s house.

A hostile attitude by the family towards the mother who gives birth to a female child is very common. One proverb usually said by women is: “*On the one hand I give birth to a stillborn girl; on the other hand I have to bear people’s taunts*”. This proverb expresses the feelings of the mother who suffers three misfortunes at the same time – a *stillbirth*, to a *female* child who is not welcomed by the family and because of which the mother is subjected to *taunts*. This proverb is used often when someone faces further agony because of some misfortune that has already befallen on him/her. Instead of sympathising with the grieving mother of the female child, the family inflict more suffering by scolding her and taunting her, i.e., the mother faces a double or triple suffering.

The birth of a boy in a Pashtun house is proudly announced in the village. A special custom in which the birth of a boy is announced is called “*zairy*” which literally means “good news”. Menfolk of the house fire guns in the air to publically announce the news of a boy’s birth, while no such celebrations are seen on the birth of a girl child. In some Pashtuns tribes, there is a birth ritual: if a male child is born, the baby is wrapped in a long cloth, but if a female child is born, the baby is wrapped in a short cloth. In this ritual, the long cloth has a symbolic meaning that “*there is enough cloth for boys, more boys may be*

*born*', while the short cloth means '*there is not enough cloths for girls, more girls may not be born*'.<sup>89</sup>

The Pashtun folk beliefs and practices through which a male child is safeguarded from the 'evil-eye' are relevant here. The Pashtuns largely believe in the power of an 'evil-eye' (*bad nazar*), a concept in which a human or non-human being can cause harm to a person, mostly due to jealousy (Mangal, 2007). A woman having more sons may become worried that some jealous man or woman or evil *jinn* may caste an 'evil-eye' on her sons, causing them to die or become ill. There are many ways to ward-off the 'evil-eye'. One practice, also reported by Frembgen (2006), is for the mother of a boy to pierce the nose or ear of the son and put a ring in it in order to deceive the 'evil-eye' about the sex of the child. Another way to ward-off the evil eye is that the male child is clothed in female costumes for the first few years when the child is especially vulnerable to attracting the 'evil-eye'. This is again a trick to fool the 'evil-eye' about the sex of the child. The two examples show that a boy is 'turned' into a girl through using a nose-ring or female clothes. Looking from a gendered perspective, at least two points are evident in the beliefs and practices surrounding the 'evil-eye'. Firstly, a girl usually does not attract the 'evil-eye', i.e., she is of too little worth to be jealous about, which highlights the generally low status of girls. Secondly, the 'girl' is used as a shield against the 'evil-eye' of the evil person/*jinn* to save the life of a male child who is considered more precious than that of a girl. This interpretation is also supported by various Pashto proverbs. Unlike girls about whom the primary concern of parents is her chastity and sexuality, the most important parental concern for a male child is the wellbeing of his health and life. The Pashtuns say that "*One son is not a son*" which shows that parents want more than a single son, just in case the only son dies before time. High child mortality rates, life-long feuds among Pashtun tribes, and uncertain security in the region encourage parents to have more male children. Another similar proverb is that "*Until you have survived small-pox, you are not my son*".<sup>90</sup> These proverbs indicate that the physical health and the life of a male child are the primary concern for parents.

As mentioned earlier, both men and women suffer terribly in the absence of sons. For women, the suffering involves fear of rejection and mistreatment by her husband. Women

---

<sup>89</sup> The disapproval of a girl being born is sometimes reflected in the way the newborn female child is given a name by the family. When a number of girls are born in a row and the parents do not want more female children to be born, the newly born girl is sometimes named as '*Bass Bibi*' in which "bass" literally means "stop". Another popular Pashtun name of girls is "*Balaneshta*" literally meaning "No more like this".

<sup>90</sup> Small-pox was once so common and fatal that a mother would not take her son for granted until he had survived the disease.

live under a constant sense of marital insecurity and feel terribly guilty for not being able to produce a son. This puts additional pressure on the wife to remain obedient and submissive to the husband and whole family. As observed by Lindholm (1996), while the Pashtun husband prefers male children for the purpose of ensuring male heirs for the family land, the wife prefers male children for the hope that this secures against divorce on the one hand, and potential allies against the husband on the other. Lindsay Young (1984) notes that the strongest woman in the household is usually the one having more male children, and at old age, the sons become even more important as the woman lives with the sons. One proverb indicates that women feel in a kind of competition with other women to produce a son: *"It is easy to compete in any other thing except in producing a male child"*. In some cases where a man has two wives, "the rival wives enter into a competition to see who can produce the most sons. By having more children, one wife can dominate the household and perhaps eventually drive the other wife to her natal home in shame" (Lindholm, 2008:188). As the sons are growing up, the mother's autonomy in the household rise and women gain greater access to the household's resources (Shalinsky, 1989; Wolf, 1972; Gupta *et al.*, 2003). In China, for example, Margery Wolf (1972) has argued that in their old age, women wield the main authority in the household, while old men are relatively marginalised. In India, "[o]ld men withdraw from household affairs and become increasingly shadowy characters, while their wives become the lynchpins of the home, managing their sons, their daughters-in-law and the grandchildren" (Gupta *et al.*, 2003:165). The present study confirms most of these observations and this is discussed in more detail in the next chapter. However, this rise in women's autonomy in old age depends heavily on having the support of grown-up sons. Without this, women can be very vulnerable.

Girls, on the other hand, are despised, devalued and considered a burden. The family is highly conscious that a female belongs to another (her future husband), and is therefore a temporary visitor in the house (Hakim & Aziz, 1998:728). Example of Pashto proverbs reflecting this thinking are: *"Rearing a daughter is to work hard for another man [i.e., husband]"*, *"A daughter belongs to someone else's house [i.e., husband's house]"* and *"It is better to give birth to a daughter than squatting idle"*. Hussein (2009) has reported that this proverb is also used among the Arabic speakers of Ethiopia, where the "meaning of this proverb is that although they [girls] are not in the first order, as males, female can be

useful, for example, as they may attract a fortune when they are married off” (2009:103).<sup>91</sup> Hussein’s explanation may be considered relevant in the Pashtun context, given the practice of bride-price which is widespread among the Pashtuns (Khan and Samina, 2009).

The above examples clearly show the preference for male children. Only a few proverbs speak positively of daughters, such as: “*The birth of a daughter brings seven blessing to the family*” and “*A daughter brings good luck to the home*”.<sup>92</sup> Although sons are celebrated for the various reasons discussed above, it is the daughter who is thought to be more reliably available in times of need. It is said that “*The sons divide parents’ property; the daughters divide (share) their sorrows*” and “*A daughter is always present to share both sorrows and joys with her parents*”. These two proverbs have a similar theme; that daughters share parents’ sorrow throughout their lives.<sup>93</sup>

In short, folk proverbs and rituals depict sons as more valuable than girls for various social and economic reasons; male and female children are discriminated right from their conception to older age; and a lack of sons has severe consequences for both parents, especially the mother.

## Summary of the Chapter

This chapter discussed how many of the total 518 proverbs were reported by different categories of participants. It was shown that overall, men reported more proverbs than women, uneducated participants reported more proverbs than educated participants; older participants reported more proverbs than younger, and rural participants reported more proverbs than urban participants. Among all the participants, older uneducated men and women reported three times more proverbs compared to educated participants of the same

---

<sup>91</sup> It is striking to note that the same proverbs are used across two different languages and cultures – Pakistan and Ethiopia. This is far from being the only Pashto proverbs which is also found in other cultures. It is not within the scope of this research to discuss whether this proverb has ‘travelled’ from one language to another or the two groups have independently coined this proverb. However, a lot of literature is available on the similarity of proverbs across languages which, according to some scholars, indicate the similarity in the working of human mind. Schipper (2004) has observed that there is more similarity in proverbs about women around the world than differences.

<sup>92</sup> Some participants explained that these two proverbs are actually sayings (*ahadiths*) of the prophets Muhammad. However, I could not verify this claim. Moreover, using proverbs and sayings of the prophet are common phenomena and a lot of people did/could not differentiate between proverbs and *ahadiths*.

<sup>93</sup> The message of an English proverb is almost exactly the same: “*A daughter is a daughter for all her life; a son is a son till he gets him a wife*” (qtd.in Bradley, 1996:80).

age group. This indicates that the age, gender and education of participants had an intersecting effect on the number of proverbs being reported.

The chapter also categorised proverbs on the basis of their content in terms of negative, positive and neutral categories. It was found that most of the proverbs in the corpus are targeted at women: proverbs talking about men are far less frequent than those commenting on various aspects of women and femininity. It was also found that the number of proverbs with a negative content is far greater than those with a positive content, and that women-related proverbs are more negative compared to men-related proverbs. In other words, most proverbs depict women in a negative light. This echoes the findings from other studies of gender and proverbs in other cultural contexts.

Lastly, the chapter discussed a sample of proverbs to show how they encode patriarchal discourses and how they play a role in upholding patriarchy. It was shown, for example, that proverbs promote a conservative idea about women's role in the public sphere, advocate traditional ideals of hegemonic masculinity and women's sexuality, endorse violence against women, and convey a more positive image of sons over daughters. The next chapter looks into how these proverbs are used in actual conversation by various groups of participants along with their attitudes towards proverbs.



## Chapter 6

# Using Proverbs, Doing Gender: The Performative Functions of Proverbs in Negotiating Gendered Social Boundaries

## Introduction

Inspired by Bauman's theory of 'folklore as performance' (Bauman, 1975; 1992), and Dell Hymes advocacy of 'ethnography of speaking' (1962), scholars are increasingly moving from proverbs text toward proverbs context: a focus on the agency of variously positioned speakers and actors and their strategic use of folkloric expressions in everyday interactions. This approach has recognised that a proverb is not a thing but a process, and proverb speaking is a form of 'verbal art' (Bauman, 1975; 1992). Like any other artistic performance, the speaker follows certain rules, and aims to achieve certain objectives. 'Performance' has become the key word in proverb studies, emphasising that the meaning of a proverb is dependent on the totality of the cultural and linguistic context in which it is performed. This approach recognises that proverbs are far from fixed and frozen text and can be creatively manipulated by speakers. The same proverb can be applied by the speaker in different ways in different situations for different effects. This 'creativity' of the speaker with respect to the use of proverbs is the main theme of this chapter, with a special focus on when and why a person may choose to use a proverb.

The preceding chapter showed descriptively that proverbs were reported and used by all categories of participants, but some reported them more than others. It was found that men reported more proverbs than women, rural participants reported more proverbs than urban, and young people reported fewer proverbs than the elderly. This chapter focuses on the performative functions of proverbs as they were used in actual conversation. I use the word 'performance' to emphasise that the use of proverbs in actual conversation may be different than the reporting of it. Reporting (as discussed in chapter 5) shows the ability to recall a certain number of proverbs, whereas 'performance' shows the artistic, linguistic, and cultural ability and possibility to effectively quote proverbs during normal, natural, and

ordinary speech. Moreover, the word ‘performance’ as used in linguistic theory emphasises the functional aspects of proverbs, i.e., proverbs are ‘performative speech’ (Austin, 1962): they *do* something for the speaker; contributing to the construction of one’s ethnicity, gender, age, and class. The aim of this chapter is to show how and why (or why not) participants used and interpreted proverbs and how the proverbs “quoting behaviour” (Penfield, 1981:309) of various participants play a role in negotiating their ethnic, gender, age, and class boundaries.

Recent feminist scholarship has recognised the intersection of gender, age, class, and the ethnicity of a person (Choo and Ferree, 2010; Davis, 2008; Yuval-Davis 2006; Espiritu, 2000). It is argued that rather than working in isolation from each other, various social boundaries intersect in a complex manner producing a system of “complex inequality” (McCall, 2005). This chapter takes into account the intersectionality of participants’ subject positions by paying attention to both the agency of individuals on various grounds/levels and the enabling and constraining forces of the society influencing processes of identity production. I draw on examples of proverbs occurring in interview conversations as illustration, as well as participants’ comments on when and why they use (or do not use) proverbs.

The first section explains the importance of context for proverbs performance to show that proverbs are context-bound and their meanings are subject to different interpretations. The second section discusses proverbs as a source of ethnic belonging and argues that saying proverbs as a means of ‘doing *Pashtunwali*’ is closely linked to gender, age, class, and ethnicity. This section explores the functions of proverbs in Pashtun society in light of participants’ comments, focusing on how proverbs as cultural resources are used to uphold *Pashtunwali*, which is essentially patriarchal. This idea has been further elaborated in the third section to explain that proverbs are linked to the exertion of power. In Pashtun culture, power is exerted by men over women (gender) and by elders over younger (generation), and I argue that proverb speaking follows the same pattern. In addition to the conflict between genders and generations, there is another related power struggle based on class – between the uneducated older class and educated younger class. These two groups approach proverbs differently. The former stick to traditional knowledge to maintain their traditional power share, the latter have other means of showing their ‘class distinction’ (Bourdieu, 1984). As mentioned, these aspects of one’s position – ethnicity, gender, age, and class – are related and intersected. The following section demonstrates the strategic use of proverbs by men and women in actual conversation to show how proverbs are

manipulated by speakers to suit their own reality and further their own ends. The last section discusses proverbs used by women only to show that women have their own means of expressing discontent in defiance of patriarchy.

### 6.1. The Importance of Context for Proverb Performance

That proverbs are contextual is well-known. The term ‘context’ means the situation in which “two or more interlocutors related to each other in a particular way communicating to each other about a particular topic in a particular setting” (Fishman, 1972:48). Fishman’s definition includes at least three important aspects: the relation between the interlocutors, the topic under discussion, and the setting. This section is broadly organised according to these aspects. As I will show, these considerations – among others – have important implications for who uses proverbs, how they use them, how many they use, and for what purpose. Firstly, let us consider the importance of conversational context for proverbs usage.

When I tried to elicit proverbs from my participants, the most common response was “I know many proverbs but cannot recall them now”. The reason is the now well-known fact that proverbs are contextual and unless there is a context, there is no proverb (Yankah, 1983). It was observed during fieldwork that while some participants initially said that they do not know many proverbs, as the interview progressed and an appropriate context was developed, dozens of proverbs were recalled and spoken by participants. In one particular interview, the female research assistant had difficulty in eliciting proverbs from a 46 year old woman, who initially could not recall any. When the research assistant changed the topic, the following discussion ensued:

- |              |  |                      |
|--------------|--|----------------------|
| Researcher:  | Tell me something about your marital life, your relations with your husband?   |                      |
| Participant: | You are a woman yourself, and you know it better [Laugh].  |                      |
| Researcher:  | I am not yet married.  |                      |
| Participant: | You are still not married? Oh you’re lucky! “ <i>Paighle khabare nu de, wadu karhe hal nu waye</i> ” [“ <i>The virgins do not know anything, the married do not tell anything</i> ”] |                      |
| Both:        | [Laugh]  | (Gulmina, 46, f, u). |

The way this proverb pops up in the conversation shows that even if the speaker is not able to recall a proverb on request, an appropriate context triggers a relevant proverb. Moreover, the proverb used by the participant in the above extract could have multiple interpretations. It may be that the proverb was intended as a joke (note that both laugh). It may be that the participant wanted to maintain a distance from the researcher due to their different statuses – one is an older, married woman, while the other is a young, unmarried girl. It is possible that the participant did not want to discuss her intimate marital and familial relations with the young unmarried researcher, or to warn against the potential dangers of married life. The participant's exclamatory remark – “*You are still not married? Oh you're lucky!*” – may indicate that the participant is not happy with her own marital life. Alternatively, this proverb might be read to understand that the older, married woman wants to indicate her superior knowledge, experience, and insight that marriage has brought her. This example shows that a proverb can be used for different purposes and is subject to different interpretations depending on the meta-sociolinguistic context and the relations between the speaker and the listener. This chapter will expand on this contextual understanding to explore how negotiation of one's ethnicity, gender, age, and class occurs through proverb use.

## 6.2. Speaking Proverbs, ‘Doing Pashto’: Proverbs and Pashtun-ness

Being part of language and tradition, one of the many functions of proverbs is the capacity to recognize individuals as being part the same group (Norrick, 1985, Maria, 2012, Dupree, 1979, Bascom, 1965). As observed by Norrick (1985:25), a speaker can “signal his membership” to a group and their identification with a specific community by drawing on its stock of proverbs. Participants of this research project also associated Pashto proverbs with their ‘Pashtun-ness’. In the words of Bartlotti (2000:iii), “proverbs are bound up with Pashtun identity”, as proverbs performance and rhetoric is a way of “doing Pashto in the verbal arena”.<sup>94</sup> The anthropologist Akbar S. Ahmad has noted that *Pashtunwali* is unwritten but could be found in the themes of proverbs, metaphors and parable (1980:89).

---

<sup>94</sup> A recent incident will exemplify this pride. A non-Pashtun Pakistani journalist published a column in an Urdu newspaper on October 24, 2011 in which he reported a proverb about Pashtuns: “*Trust a snake, but not a prostitute; trust a prostitute, but not a Pashtun*”. The article caused uproar among some nationalist Pashtuns who filed a legal case against the journalist. The court issued a non-bailable arrest warrant for the journalist. The news about this case could be found via this web link:

When asked whether he uses proverbs, one participant remarked: “Everyone use proverbs; some use more, some use less” (Barakat, 45, m, u). The majority of participants and the written literature call it “*matal*” or “*naqal*” (plural, *mataloona* or *naqloona*), which literally means “copy”. This emphasises that for Pashtuns, a proverb is an example from the past to be copied in future conduct. The majority of Pashto speakers, especially male, regard proverbs as important cultural and linguistic resource. This is evident from the ways the research participants defined proverbs. They emphasised either the rhetorical power of proverbs (such as “the currency of oral transaction” (Kamran, 27, m, e); “taste of the talk” (Farzana, 30, f, e; Zaman, 39, m, u); “weapons of verbal attack” (Rafia, 27, f, e); or their traditional authority in transmitting wisdom (such as “writings on the stones” (Hakim, 30, m, u; Israr, 48, m, e); “relics of the past glory” (Shaheen, 22, m, u); “children of experience” (Ashar, 29, m, e), “concentrated knowledge” (Abid, 45, m, e); “capsules of wisdom” ; “the gold standards for behaviour” (*sika raiju-ul-waqt*) (Afia, 29, f, e) etc. Written Pashto literature is also beset with the view that proverbs are important for Pashtun identity as they are the carriers of Pashtun culture, language, and history (see Tair, 1975; Bartlotti, 2000; Bartlotti and Khattak, 2006; Shinwari, 1999).

Male participants especially viewed proverbs as the ‘beauty of Pashtun culture’ and proverb speaking as a sign of ‘cultured men’:

“Mostly the elder men use proverbs; I mean those who are over fifty or those who are ‘very cultured men’.... [by which] I mean those people who follow old Pashtun culture and traditions; those who love their culture and want to keep the tradition alive...”

(Nizam, 25, m, e).

The speaker appears to associate proverbs with a hegemonic, validated masculinity and ‘cultured men’ who are doing Pashtun culture by using proverbs. The quote also hints at the importance of holding on to Pashtun culture in the context of considerable social changes in the social structure of Pashtun society. When asked why people use proverbs, participants mentioned different reasons and occasions on which proverbs may be used, or are often used. One participant explains:

“A person has done something wrong, and you want to correct him/her. You do this by telling either directly, or by saying a proverb. If the person is intelligent, he/she will understand”

(Hakim, 29, m, u).

This remark provides an argument for the many scholars who think that proverbs embody ‘norms’ and that a corpus of proverbs is a concentration of ‘wisdom’. The last part of the above remark points to the fact that the speaker (the critic) is trying to achieve their goal indirectly. Furthermore, the quotation assumes that proverb users presume the listener is intelligent enough to understand a figurative language. The idea that proverbs are ‘elevated speech’ is aptly captured in a Pashto proverb: “*Aqalmand la ishara, kam aqal la kotak*” [“*To the intelligent, a hint; to the stupid, a stick*”]. A proverb works as a hint for the intelligent listener whose behaviour the speaker wants to change. In this sense, proverbs are normative sentences: they explicitly or implicitly express an ideal behavioural norm.

But what are these ideal behavioural norms? Who might deviate from them? And who has the authority to impose these norms? These are important aspects of proverbs in terms of gender relations and will be discussed later in this chapter. It is necessary to examine some of the main functional properties of Pashto proverbs. The following excerpt from one participant will help to expose these potential social functions. When asked why people quote proverbs, Israr, an older man explained:

- Researcher: Who usually uses more proverbs?
- Participant: Everyone .... but usually community elders (*masharan*).
- Researcher: Why do you think people quote proverbs?
- Participant: For the purpose of supporting their opinion, to make it authentic. They look for background logic in the shape of proverb for what they want to say, or to endorse in another way what they have already said. For example, I have seen many people using proverbs and quoting the poetry of Rahman Baba or Allama Iqbal<sup>95</sup> ...may be they are not confident about their argument for which they lean on the shoulder of someone else.
- Researcher: Is it really that proverbs make the argument more authentic?
- Participant: It depends. It depends on who is on the other side of the duel (*muqabila*). If he is shrewder (*taiz*), he will quote another proverb and cut the first one. If both of the speakers are clever (in proverb usage), this often leads to a kind of proverbial fight... But yes, proverbs do have a force in them. People listen more carefully to a person who uses good proverbs.

(Israr, 48, m, e).

The above quotation contains a number of important aspects of proverb performance. Proverbs are used mostly by elder men. The term “*masharan*” (elders) used by the participant is gender neutral, but is normally used to refer to male elders of the

<sup>95</sup> Rahman Baba is a highly respected Pashto poet and many of his verses are quoted like proverbs. Allama Muhammad Iqbal is the national poet of Pakistan.

household/community. Proverbs are used as authoritative sources to support one's argument. If male elders use these sources, this would mean reproducing social hierarchies, including gender relations. The 'authoritative force' of a proverb was by far the most common reason mentioned by participants, along with other functions. As one participant put it, proverbs are used to cut the matter short: "My father uses proverbs when he does not want to talk more. For example, when he is sad or angry or just when he does not like something under discussion, he says a proverb" (Rafia, 27, f, e). One young man said "[using] proverbs are like adding spices to the talks" (Ashar, 29, m, e), while another said that "proverbs are mostly funny, they arouse laughter" (Farzana, 30, f, e). The data also suggest that proverbs often arouse laughter which could serve another, more subtle function of normalising the situation in order to avoid open conflict among the interlocutors. A 'dry argument' can be sprinkled with comical anecdotes and proverbs. Other reasons for the use of proverbs commonly mentioned by different participants include: "to correct someone", "to indirectly criticise someone", "to ridicule someone", and to "impress someone". All these aspects of proverbs have gendered implications and will be elaborated on later in this chapter.

The transcript above shows that as well as proverbs, people often quote poetic verses by famous poets, religious texts, and other folkloric genres such as short songs for similar purposes. Anderson (1985:207) has also noted that "Pakhtun [Pashtun] speech is liberally sprinkled with *landay* [tappa, short-songs], *mataluna* [proverbs], passages from the Quran and references to *hadith* [sayings of the prophet], which punctuate ordinary discourses and diction". Bartlotti (2000) notes that lines of poetry from the Pashto classic poets are related idiomatically as proverbs in modern Pashto, with a large number of poetic verses and *tappas* as well as text from religious sources quoted by participants during the interviews.

Proverb quoting as "leaning on the shoulders of another" is what may be called "depersonalisation" (Penfield, 1981:312), or what Yankah (1989:326) has called "an intrusion by a third party" during a conversation. Depersonalisation means the speaker indirectly and impersonally conveys their thought, since the proverb does not belong to any particular participant of the interaction. It is a way to bring up a sensitive matter without being held responsible for the statement or risking shame or embarrassment. By inviting a so-called 'third person' in the shape of a proverb to speak on their behalf, the speaker also achieves the most important function of proverb: proving his argument 'objectively' by referring to an already known and established 'truth'. Thus, the depersonalisation of proverbs is a powerful tool for persuasion, indirect criticism, or even insult; in the words of

one participant: “you can always retract from your statement by saying ‘that is not what I meant’; because proverbs are figurative language and its meaning can be manipulated in different ways” (Afia, 29, f, e).

Proverbs performance can be understood as a kind of verbal duel. A participant said: “A proverb is like a full stop in a verbal discussion, much like ‘iron cuts iron’” (Ashar, 29, m, e), Siran (1993:228) has noted that “a proverb can be countered by quoting another proverb”. ‘Proverb duels’, or recall games, are present in various cultures. In parts of Western and Southern Africa – particularly among the Akans and Thogha ethnic groups – children engage in ‘proverb exchange games’ in which the loser is the one who takes long pauses or fails to recall a proverb (Yankah, 1983:34). Such games are not known among the Pashtuns. However, a similar competition occasionally takes place over *tappas* (short-songs), especially among women. Most of the elderly Pashtun women who took part in this research narrated experiences of game-like exchange of *tappas* and other songs.

According to Israr, the participant quoted earlier, “people listen more carefully” to proverb speakers. This indicates that the proverb speaker enjoys a level of prestige during a discussion. Proverbs themselves may be viewed as what the sociolinguists call “prestige variety of language” (Labov, 1966; Trudgill, 1972, 1974). This aspect of proverb indicates the importance of sticking to proverbs and ‘doing Pashto’, as a source of gaining prestige in community. However, not all speakers of proverbs, but only those who can use “good proverbs” receive prestige. A proverb can be ‘good’ or ‘bad’ in different ways. The most important criteria for a good proverb would be to see its relevance to the context, and the way it is performed (Mieder, 1989; Yankah, 1983; Bartlotti, 2000). Since proverbs performance is a skill and a source of ethnic identity and pride, some young participants consciously learn proverbs and the associated rules and skills of correct usage. The following quotations suggest that proverbs hold a place of esteem for some:

“When someone uses good proverbs in his speech, I feel a little jealous, as I think he is a better Pashtun than me”

(Ahmad, 27, m, e).

“I want to learn as many as proverbs from her [my mother] as possible. ... I also use a lot of Urdu and Punjabi proverbs, but when I hear Pashto folk poetry and proverbs, my blood become warmer, like, this is what I really enjoy listening and learning. ...”

(Afia, 29, f, e).



These remarks explain that some participants believe that proverbs are important for their Pashtun-ness. The remarks from Afia, a young educated female are interesting. Afia describes herself as a feminist, and despite her dislike for certain sexist and misogynist features of Pashtun culture and folklore, she feels a ‘blood warming’ love for Pashto proverbs. Her comments suggest that she is validating proverb use as a signifier of her Pashtun identity despite their sexist content. I have already pointed out in the methodology chapter some examples of ‘nationalist Pashtuns’ who overlook sexism in proverbs. My detailed discussion with Afia and other educated people who had subscribed to some feminist ideas reveal that they can feel uncertainty in their ideas. They may be termed ‘reluctant feminists’. On one hand, these participants were working in NGOs promoting women’s rights and some were researching and teaching gender and women’s issues at colleges and universities, at the same time they were also promoting Pashtun cultural ideals by justifying certain sexist practices. For example, Afia bitterly criticised some sexist and discriminatory practices in Pashtun culture, such as gender segregated institutions and arranged marriages, and then said; “but sometimes I think this is the beauty of my culture. Things should be like this. Why should we follow the West?” She used this type of ‘but’ several times during the interview. A teacher in a local university with a degree in gender studies is known for his ‘Pashtun-ness’ and is jokingly famous for ‘teaching feminism with a wrinkle on his forehead’ meaning he does not actually subscribe to these ideas and does not like what he teaches.

Proverbs are viewed by many participants as signifiers of Pashtun-ness and as symbols of ethnic belonging. A number of participants stated appreciation of the current research project as they believed that it will help preserve Pashto folklore. One female participant asked the research assistant to collect women’s work-songs which, in her opinion, are slowly disappearing. Afia, like the other two speakers quoted above, seems to be consciously trying to learn and use proverbs. Another participant described his intentions more clearly:

“I deliberately try to learn more Pashto proverbs. I have studied books for this purpose; I sit with elders for this purpose. ... I intentionally use proverbs when I go to village, and when the elders of the village see me using proverbs, their reaction towards me suddenly change. They give me more respect and I feel that my talks are valued more”

(Jamal, 44, m, e).

Jamal is an educated man currently living in Peshawar city. It is important to note that he intentionally uses proverbs to gain respect in the company of elders in the village. This and other examples show that proverbs are considered a “prestige variety of language” (Labov, 1966; Trudgil, 1972) and the one who can talk in proverbs gains social status among the interactants. Jamal’s remarks can also be explained using ‘Community of Practice’ theory (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 1992, 1999). Amongst elders, one has to learn and speak proverbs in order to be accepted in the community as a valued member.

The main point in the above discussion is that proverbs are sources of expressing traditional knowledge and authority and are used mostly by male elders (patriarchs) to exert their authority on women and younger males. Not all speakers are equally allowed or expected to use proverbs; status within the power structure determines the right to use proverbs. This will be elaborated on in the next section to examine how patriarchy is exercised through proverbs by restricting powerless groups and how this status quo is being subverted by the young, educated urban classes.<sup>96</sup>

### 6.3. Proverb Performance as Power: Gender, Generation, and Class

A “proverb speaker is in a powerful position making it essential to understand who is speaking, whose speech it is that matters” (Granbom-Herranen, 2010:99). In this section, I maintain that the performance of a proverb is tantamount to a performance of power. Understanding proverbs as sources of power is fundamental in explaining who *can* and who *cannot* use proverbs in various contexts. As I have explained in the following section, proverbs are ways of exercising power over *younger men and women* which is what ‘patriarchy’ literally means.

The Pashto concepts of ‘*nareena-khazeena*’ (male and female) and ‘*mashar-kashar*’ (elders and youth) not only convey the idea of gender and age differences, but also the associated power relationships. The rules surrounding power relations are complex and include factors such as sex, age, education or experience, and economic contribution to the family. As a whole, men come before women, seniors come before juniors, consanguinity is prioritised over affinity and so on, while sometimes a combination of these factors determines who wields the power within the family.

---

<sup>96</sup> However, there are some exceptions: for example, Jamal (44) is an educated man and uses proverbs deliberately in the specific context of village life in order to gain acceptance in the company of elders.

### 6.3.1. Proverbs, Gender, and Generation

Considering proverbs as agents of social construction and control, Peter Berger (as cited in Charon, 1993:432) reminds us that “every society has its cognitive policemen who administer the ‘official’ definition of reality”. The agents of social control (in this case proverbs) provide informal and formal punitive measures that are meant to keep women and young men away from behaviour that disrupts the normative structure of the society. The end result is the assurance of greater conformity and order, as opposed to deviance and disorder. A longer version of a quotation previously cited extrapolates the relationship between proverbs and social control mechanisms:

“Mostly the elder men use proverbs; I mean those who are over fifty or those who are ‘very cultured men’ .... [by which] I mean those people who follow old Pashtun culture and traditions; those who love their culture and want to keep the tradition alive, and those who have seen *hujra-jumat*, *jirga-maraka*<sup>97</sup>, and the likes”

(Nizam, 25, m, e).

All the three institutions mentioned in the quote – *hujra* (male guest house), *jumat* (mosque) and *jirga* (council of elders) – are run by elder males and are barred to women, and all are sources of social control. Younger men and children go to mosque to learn and can sit in *hujra* but are not normally supposed to talk in front of elders. The mosque disseminates religious discourses, the *hujra* transmits *Pashtunwali* discourses; the *jirga*, while resolving community disputes, draws on both Islamic and *Pashtunwali* discourses. It follows, then, that all the three institutions are centres for the exercise of patriarchal power of elder males over females and younger males.

The elders who control these institutions and where they use proverbs more often have been termed by the participant as ‘cultured men’. This associates proverbs with culturally idealised forms of manhood, i.e., the ‘hegemonic masculinity’ (Connell, 1995, 2005) which proposes to explain how and why men maintain dominant social roles over women and other perceived subordinate social groups. If proverbs are sources of masculine power and authority, it would be logical to assume that women and children would be reluctant to use them in front of men. Other literature supports this. Schipper (1991:12) argues that in Africa, “women dare not (or are not allowed) to speak proverbs out as freely in front of

<sup>97</sup> *Hujra* means guest-house, *Jumat* means mosque, and *Jirga* and *Maraka* are different names for traditional dispute resolution mechanism (also called council of elders). It is worth noting that when used together, “*hujra-jumat*” [guest-house & mosque] would mean not only the physical structure, but also the activities taking place inside the *hujra* and the mosque. Moreover, *hujra-jumat* is often used in a broader sense to mean ‘culture and religion’ which are sometimes contrasted as the former is secular and the latter is religious.

men, as long as their roles are unequal to those of men in society”. This is indeed true in the Pashtun context as evidenced in the following extract:

- Participant: Most of the men use such offensive proverbs. When women do something wrong and men get angry, they say “*If women had no noses, they would eat shit*”. Now look, men also have noses. I say if men had no noses, they would also eat shit. But see, men do a lot of wrongs, but we woman cannot say this to them, you know.
- Researcher: Why women cannot say this to men?
- Participant: Women cannot say this; like, you cannot say such proverb to your men on their front (*makha makh* = face-to-face), because this is an issue of embarrassment (*malamati*) for men.
- Researcher: But when men use such proverbs, this is a case of embarrassment for women too.
- Participants: This is true, but if we say this, then men will fight, you understand?
- (Gulmina, 46, f, u).

It is important to note that the woman used the phrase “*makha-makh*” meaning “face-to-face”, indicating that women do not use proverbs to men’s faces, and when men are not present they may use proverbs against them. This became evident in other interviews as well:

- Researcher: Do you also use proverbs to your men?
- Participant: Face-to-face or back-to-back? (*Makha-makha ka pashe-sha?*).
- Both: [laugh together]
- (Nazmina, 23, f, e).

These short exchanges suggest that women do use proverbs against men, but they avoid doing so in face-to-face situations. This is because a forceful proverb used by a woman in front of a man would be perceived as argumentative, and interpreted as a challenge to hegemonic masculinity. Women and younger men in Pashtun culture are not supposed to argue with men. Even to talk aloud in front of elder men is considered an insult. In an interview setting, a group of three women were discussing proverbs and quoting some folk songs. Suddenly there was a silence in the room because the husband of the participant entered the room. The participant said to the researcher in a very slow voice: “here he comes; you visit us some other time and we’ll talk more” (Zarsanga, 62, f, u) and the voice recorder was switched off. This and the other transcripts cited above suggest that women do not talk much in front of men, especially about proverbs or folk songs. The fact that “men will fight” if challenged through proverbs refers to the power dynamics for, as stated earlier, the power is exerted by men over women, not vice versa.

The data suggests that younger female participants were doubly reluctant to use proverbs, being both women and young and so at the very bottom end of the power hierarchy. The following excerpt clarifies:

- Participant: Umm yes, sometimes I use proverbs, but not many because the person looks very mature, before time. But still sometimes a proverb pops into talks.
- Researcher: Do you mean a person looks old when she uses proverbs?
- Participant: Umm, I mean, like, she is considered to be too mature, like beyond her age. I mean people say she is ‘cooked’ (*pakha*).
- Researcher: OK, ok. Like she behaves too much mature?
- Participant: Yes.

(Farzana, 30, f, e)

The term “*pakha*” is negatively used for someone who talks or boasts at a level deemed above their age or social status. It literally means ‘cooked’ or ‘ripe before time’, and is used by an elder to snub a younger person who talks like elders. Farzana avoids using proverbs because she knows that proverbs are the field of elders and that she is not yet old enough to talk in proverbs. A similar response was given by a young male participant:

- Researcher: Who use more proverbs?
- Participant: Elders. Mostly *speen-giri masheran* [white-bearded elders] who sits in *hujra* and *jirga* and solve community disputes.... Young boys also use proverbs but less than elders.
- Researcher: Why do you think the younger use fewer proverbs?
- Participant: Many reasons. They do not know many proverbs... But also if a young boy uses proverbs in front of a “*mashar*” [elder], he is considered a “*mashroot*” [bigmouthed].

(Kamran, 27, m, e)

Like the female participant who used the term ‘*pakha*’ (ripe before time), this young male participant has used the term ‘*mashroot*’. The Pashto term “*mashar*” means an elder, “*mashroot*” means “a younger male who mimics elders”. This is an insulting term used by elders for someone who is speaking or behaving in a manner that surpasses his social status.

These examples illustrate that age alongside gender needs to be considered in the exertion of power which determines who can or cannot use proverbs. A Pashtun child using a proverb to an elderly person would be seen as ridiculous and insulting. This is true in other contexts. A Nigerian proverb states: “*When a child start using proverbs, he should also*

*pay the debts of his father*” (Penfield & Duru, 1988:120), which indicates that proverbs are associated with responsibility and maturity. “Children are expected to acquire these sociolinguistic skills to some degree ... [but] are not permitted to address proverbs to adults” (Penfield & Duru, 1988:120). It has been noted that among the Akan people of Ghana, children do not use proverbs to adults (Boadi, 1972). In Tanzania proverbs are also mostly associated with elders and “it is not usual to hear a child using them in front of an elder, because it is unethical” (Madumullah, 2001:266). “From the perspective of speech proverbs, it is the role of older generation to speak and the younger generation to listen” (Chong, 2001:179). Almost all participants of this research project pointed towards this aspect of proverbial exchange. This is true in the Pashtun context, but as Yankah has commented, ‘age’ and ‘child’ are relative concepts, and in front of a seventy years old man, a thirty year old man may be considered a child, and the age constraint would apply in this context. I realised the relativity of ‘age’ when a participant asked me during one interview: “Have you watched the Pashto drama “*Starhe Ma She*” (*Welcome*) in which two brothers use proverbs in every sentence they speak? The younger brother always says “*da lala khabar me...*” (*as my elder brother says...*) before saying every proverb” (Barakat, 45, m, u).<sup>98</sup> Interestingly, the drama shows that the younger brother (in his 50s) is deferring to his elder brother (in his 60s). The elder brother speaks a lot of proverbs, while the younger when starting with a proverb strategically attributes every proverb to his elder brother. This way, he not only pays respect to his elder brother, but also obtains permission to speak in front of the elders. In a sense, when a speaker foregrounds a proverb by such words as “as my brother says...”, “as the elders say...”, or “as my father or mother says...”, he not only invokes a higher authority on his behalf, but also gets the cultural approval to speak in proverbs in front of elders and authority figures.

That proverbs are used by elders to express their superior social status over younger people is recognised and criticised by some young people. A younger participant, Ashar explained the concept:

“When the elders want to impose their power or respect on the younger, they refer to folk traditions and say “in our time it was not like this”; they use proverbs to correct what they consider to be deviant... both old men and women do exercise power associated with age”

(Ashar, 29, m, e).

---

<sup>98</sup> Three other participants also referred to the Pashto TV serial “*Starhe Ma She*” (*Welcome*), a comedy series aired on PTV, the National Television of Pakistan a few years ago. The serial is available via this link: <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jmba0R1xX5w&list=PL14639EF0B4A00F66>> [Accessed: Feb. 15, 2014].

Although it is not the aim of the present study to investigate the proverb skills of children, one nine year old girl happened to be sitting beside her mother while she was being interviewed. It is interesting that the child knew some proverbs but seemed reluctant to use them:

- |                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| Researcher to participant: | Any other proverb?  |
| Child:                     | [laugh] she also says a lot of dirty things.  |
| Researcher & participant:  | [Laugh],  |
| Child:                     | “ <i>Kase Kase</i> ... [ ]  |
| Participant:               | “ <i>Kase Kase halta za che bia daka raze</i> ” [“ <i>Oh little pot, go there from where you come back full</i> ”].               |
| Researcher:                | What does it mean?  |
| Participant:               | It means if I send you something, you must also send something back. There must be reciprocity.                                   |
| Child to participant:      | And tell that proverb which you said to aunty last night... how was that one?   |
| Participant to the child:  | You tell it.  |
| Child:                     | I have forgotten it, you tell it.   |
| Participant to researcher: | [Laugh] She remembers it but does not want to tell.   |
| Child:                     | [Laugh] No. That one is dirty. [Laugh]  |
| Participant:               | One is this “ <i>Har su boro kho adat nu boro</i> ” [“ <i>Nature cannot be changed</i> ”].  |
| Child:                     | [Laugh] ... And one is this “ <i>Che sal khoyoona ye nor we, you pake da mor we</i> ” [“ <i>As the mother as the daughter</i> ”]. |
| Participant:               | [Laugh], yes, a daughter carries at least some of the mother’s habits.  |
| Researcher:                | Where from have you learnt these proverbs?  |
| Participant:               | From my mother. She uses a lot of them. She even uses proverbs in songs.  |
| Researcher:                | Do you use proverbs yourself?   |
| Participant:               | A lot. A lot  |
| Child:                     | A lot. But now she does not remember many.  |

(Tahira, 29, f, u & her 9 year old daughter)

It is evident that the child knows some proverbs and mentioned three during the interview, but is reluctant to use them. She started a proverb and said its initial words only (*Kase kase...*), paused for a short time, and then the mother cut in and completed the proverb. In the second case, the child says (read: pretends) that she has forgotten the proverb, but actually does not want to say it because “that is dirty (obscene)”. In the third case, the child uses a proverb which means “*As mother as daughter*” and because her mother use proverbs “a lot, a lot”, the child seems to have learnt these proverbs from her mother. It may be argued that the child was reluctant to use the proverb not because she is a child but because she was embarrassed by the ‘dirtyness’ of the proverb. However, the transcript shows that the child was indeed reluctant to use the non-obscene proverb as well. She pronounced the first two words of the proverb – “*Kase kase*” – and then paused to see her mother’s reaction. Before she could say the proverb, her mother took over and

completed the proverb herself. If the ‘pause’ has any meaning, it could be interpreted as reluctance on her part, or as a way of seeking her mother’s permission to speak in front of her and the researcher. It also needs to be noted that the child has demonstrated her skills in proverb recall only, which does not necessarily mean that she will also be able (or allowed) to perform proverbs in actual conversational contexts. Moreover, the above transcript also supports the observation made elsewhere that most of the female participants attributed proverb learning to their mothers.

So far it has been argued that women (and children) are reluctant to use proverbs in front of men, especially face-to-face. This does not, however, mean that women never use proverbs. Women use proverbs among themselves, and sometimes in front of men, even face-to-face. Such women are usually ‘outspoken’ or may actually exercise (almost) equal power with men, such as mothers or grandmothers. Some elderly women may be very frank with men and can waive some gender/age rules due to their mature age. My data show that elderly women not only use more proverbs, but also use obscene and sexist proverbs. This was also reflected in their reportage of more proverbs, as seen in the previous chapter. One explanation can be that older age gives women licence to exercise more power by virtue of no longer being reproductive. They assume masculine behaviour and try to control younger women of the household by using sexist proverbs. The following quote from Rafijan, a young uneducated man is instructive:

“Do you know? When women reach the age of 50 or 60, they behave like men. They do not remain women anymore. I have an aunt, she even talks and walk like men. She walks in the streets and talks to men without a shawl (*chadur*) on her head. Her language is really vulgar and she is not afraid of anyone. Same is the case with my granny. She is always abusing other women, children and even men of the house.... My granny has moustaches like men [laugh]”

(Rafijan, 24, m, u)

This quotation explains that elder women are allowed to forego some aspects of their femininity, and begin exercising some power over younger women as well as younger men. Rafijan’s aunt and grandmother are not only authoritative elderly women, but they also seem to have assumed masculine characteristics and have ‘grown moustaches’ which is one of the most visible signs of men and masculinity in Pashtun culture. An educated young female participant narrated a conversation with her mother:

“My father bought a new bed. The bed was cheaper and my mother did not like that and argued with my father. A few days later the bed broke and was almost unusable. My



mother was angry and said: “*A bride of 10 rupees (= cheap) urinate in the wedding bed*”.<sup>99</sup> By this she meant that the bed was cheaper that is why it did not last longer. At first I laughed at this proverb and then I realized that this is sexist. I asked my mother why she used this proverb. I asked why she compared a bed with a bride. I said: “you yourself are a woman and you are degrading another woman!” She said: “Keep quiet; I am not a bride anymore”

(Sajeela, 27, f, e).

The response of the mother in the quote above – “*I am not a bride anymore*” – partly explains why elder women may use sexist proverbs in relation to younger women. Her age gives her a higher social standing and it may be that elder women feel the power this higher status brings. Such women collude with men in correcting younger women. The quotation also reveals that a derogatory proverb about a bride has been quoted by the mother to a non-sexist topic which explains how proverbs have multiple applications in multiple situations. Moreover, the daughter (the participant) knows that the proverb used is sexist. She tries to correct her mother, but the mother exercises her power by suggesting her to “keep quiet”. Such examples indicate that elder Pashtun women collude with Pashtun men to sustain the patriarchal rule.

My own experience in the field confirms that some elder women use proverbs against men. While collecting data for this thesis in a rural village, I stayed for a night in the house of my 50 year old aunt. The aunt was out of house all day and came home very late. In the evening we were talking informally when her neighbour, an old man of about 70 years came to visit. The following, natural conversation took place:

- |          |   |
|----------|---|
| I:       | Aunty, where were you all the day?  |
| Aunt:    | Son, I have to participate in <i>gham-khadi</i> (events of sorrows and joys) in the village...[ ]   |
| Old man: | “ <i>Che charta dang she, da abay gode ta sang she</i> ” [“ <i>Whenever there is the sound of beating drums, the mother picks up her kit and follow the sound</i> ”]. You cannot find her at home. But I like her very much. She is the BBC of our village. I often sit and chat with her for an hour every evening to know the news about the village. She is a <i>gashti</i> [street hawker]. |
| Aunt:    | You old crippled man, look at your tongue, you say this in front of the guest? Someone has rightly said “ <i>Che da shpeto she, da veshto she</i> ” [“ <i>When a man turns sixty, he does not deserve to live anymore</i> ”].   |

(Field notes; December 7, 2012).

---

<sup>99</sup> The “10 Rupees” in this proverb refers to the bride-price. As a rule, the higher the status (beauty, education, class) of a bride, the higher her bride-price will be. The proverb means that anything cheaper will have some fault. Another, non-sexist proverb of similar meaning is: “*Gran be-qemata nu we, arzan be-elata nu we*”, meaning “*The costly is not without quality, the cheaper is not without fault*”.

It should be noted that the above conversation was light-hearted, and no serious offense was intended. The two proverbs used are both offensive but were used here for the purpose of teasing. The first proverb (“*Whenever there is the sound of beating drums...*”) is generally used for someone who is ‘party-goer’. The man has also used the rather offensive term of ‘*gashti*’ which is used for prostitute or ‘female street hawker’. However, *gashti* was used here by the man to mean that the aunt is wandering around the villages from one house to another and is rarely to be found in her own house. The aunt seemed to have felt embarrassed as she was called *gashti* in my presence, so she took revenge on the man through a proverb about old aged people. Their mature ages give them the privilege to use proverbs against each other as a ‘verbal duel’. Women are not always expected (allowed) to give such a tit-for-tat answer to men. The fact that this aunt replied with very strong words and an ageist proverb (‘*crippled old man*’ and you do not ‘*deserve to live anymore*’) shows that some women gain considerable freedom and authority with age, and that joking relations can surpass gender hierarchies at some points.<sup>100</sup>

This highlights that some relations are relatively more *horizontal*, whereby the social statuses and so power of the interactants is almost equal, such as the aunt and the old man who are relative equals as that both are mature and heads of their own families.<sup>101</sup> The aunt does not belong to the old man’s family; she does not come under his direct control. These relatively horizontal relations between the two allow for the use of sexist/ageist proverbs against each other.

To draw some conclusions from the data analysed so far, proverbs are sources of authority and power and their usage is subjected to the hierarchical structures of gender and generation. Proverb speaking follows the same direction as the exertion of power, i.e., from men to women and from elder to younger people. However, the above conclusion may hold true for gender (male and female) and generation (elders and younger) only. The third factor of education (class) introduces another level of power contestation that needs to be examined.

---

<sup>100</sup> In addition to the proverbs, the aunt has used a very important concept of “*gham-khadi*” to describe her engagement during the day. *Gham-Khadi* means “events of joys and sorrows” such as a death (*gham*) or wedding (*khadi*). The important role of *gham-khadi* in the lives of women is explained later in this chapter.

<sup>101</sup> The aunt’s husband is mentally disabled due to which she is the head of the household.

### 6.3.2. Proverbs, Gender, and Class

A common theme emerging from the data is that educated men and women use fewer folk proverbs than uneducated men and women. As noted in the previous chapter (Table 5.6), older uneducated participants (both male and female) reported three times more proverbs compared to educated participants of the same age group. Reporting of proverbs does not fully reflect the actual usage of proverbs; however, interview discussions also indicate that uneducated older participants use more proverbs than younger educated participants. Neither education nor age alone can explain the disparity in proverb reporting and usage behaviour of the two groups. I propose that while proverbs are more commonly used by elders and by men to convey a sense of their social superiority, educated young people avoid using them because using proverbs would convey an idea of being old fashioned. In order to explain this, I first review some social transformations in Pashtun culture which have changed the social meaning of proverbs in relation to class.<sup>102</sup>

The previous section discussed how proverbs are associated with elders and that younger speakers using proverbs would be labelled as ‘over-matured’ (*pakha*) or ‘big-mouthed’ (*mashroot*). There are three other factors which could explain why the educated class may use fewer proverbs: (a) that folklore is closely associated with rural social settings. The educated class mostly lives in urban areas (for school and work) due to which they do not have much opportunity to learn and use folk proverbs; (b) proverbs are mostly spoken in informal/colloquial contexts, while educated people mostly study and work in institutional contexts where ‘formal speech’ gets preference over ‘folk speech’; and (c) young and educated men and women may intentionally use fewer Pashto proverbs as a sign of their ‘modernity’ or, more subtly, as a strategy of forsaking the traditional hierarchies of power. Conversely, older uneducated men and women intentionally cling to folkways and proverbs as a strategy of upholding their traditional power. This last point is more important and is at the centre of the tussle between traditionalism vs. modernity and between the uneducated vs. educated classes. The fundamental point is that in addition to being sources of power and authority, illiterate older men and women also use proverbs and other folk knowledge as identity markers whereas educated men and women use ‘modern knowledge’ for self-expression.

---

<sup>102</sup> By the term ‘class’, here I mean the cultural distinction based on education level of the participants. The educated class of men and women, mostly young and working in formal institutions in urban areas, though are not an ‘economic class’ in the classic sense of the term, but is nevertheless a social class owing to their perceived status as modern, educated, and progressive as compared to the uneducated, ‘old-fashioned’ and elder generation. In other words, the two classes have different types and amounts of ‘cultural capitals’ (Bourdieu, 1977), which is also reflected in their style of speech.

The most often mentioned reason for the varied usage of proverbs is the varying degree of participants' exposure to a proverb learning and using environment. As mentioned in chapter 3, the institution of *hujra* is an exclusively masculine space and a centre of male socialisation, relaxation and masculinity demonstration. Almost all male participants mentioned the steady decline of *hujra* as an institution and its impact on Pashtun social, cultural and political life. *Hujra* is a great place to observe proverbs being exchanged and learnt. Those well exposed to *hujra* who know the rules of engagement are informally called "*hujra pass*", literally, "*hujra graduates*", to emphasise that *hujra* is a learning institution. When it comes to community affairs, a '*hujra pass*' could be considered wiser than a 'university graduate'. Thus proverbs are used by "those who have seen *hujra-jumat*, *jirga-maraka*, and the likes" (Nizam, 25, m, e), while those younger educated and urban men who have not seen *hujra* and other aspects of rural life uses less proverbs.

Just as with young educated men, participants mentioned that young educated women are also losing the art of learning and using proverbs because

"There used to be *hujra-jumat* for men and *godar-tanoor* (fountain and oven) for women where they would learn and use proverbs and other such activities... now there is no *godar* in my village and the *tanoor* has become restricted to home only"

(Ashar, 29, m, e).

*Godar* is a fountain (or any source of water such as a well) from where rural women collect water and wash clothes. Women would spend hours at the *godar* sitting and chatting, and because men were not allowed to go near the *godar*, women would sometimes sing while washing clothes. *Tanoor*, on the other hand, is a communal oven, shared by the entire neighbourhood where women would bake bread for their families. Both *godar* and *tanoor* are *zanana* (women's) spaces forbidden to men.<sup>103</sup> *Godar* and *tanoor*, like *hujra* and *jumat* for men, are learning places for women. These 'social institutions' of rural life are rapidly in decline due to urbanisation and modernisation. This has mixed results for women; they are no longer required to perform the hard labour of bringing water from streams for which sometimes they had to travel for miles, but at the same time, many older women recalled with a sigh that "*in the past we would work in the*

<sup>103</sup> An important aspect of *godar* is its facilitation of dating between young people. Young girls can briefly see their lovers while on their way to fetch water from the *godar*. For many young girls, *godar* is the only place where they can go to have a chance to see their lovers. There are hundreds of folk songs/*tappas* about the romantic activities taking place around *godar*. Example of such *tappas* about *godar* is: "*I am going to godar, you come after me // I'll be waiting while slowly filling my pitchers with my hands*". A Pashto proverb "*The evening pitcher is full suspicions*" captures the idea that when a young female wants to meet her lover, she pretends to fetch water from the *godar* in the evening.

*field and go to godar without any fear... now there are [unrelated] men everywhere... We are now restricted to home*" (Shamala, 55, f, u). Almost all elderly women from rural areas mentioned the freedom they enjoyed visiting the *godar*, expressing a kind of nostalgic lament when talking about 'the good old days on *godar*'.

Interview data shows that these social transformations have implications for proverbs and folklore usage: young educated men who have not seen *hujra-jumat* and young educated women who have not seen *godar-tanoor* are said to be losing the art of using proverbs as they cannot use proverbs as frequently and as artistically as the older generation. However, another factor may be what may be called the 'formalisation of informal institutions'. Proverbs are supposedly learned and spoken in informal settings. Today most informal social institutions are being replaced by formal institutions: the school has replaced *hujra* as a learning institution, the legal courts are replacing *jirga* as conflict resolution mechanisms, the office is replacing the field as work-place, the water tap is replacing *godar*, and writing is replacing orality. These changes are significant. An older man explained that the young educated class do not know proverbs because formal education has reduced interest in learning proverbs amongst the younger generation:

"Nowadays if you want to go to medical college, you need to remember a chemistry formula rather than a proverb. A proverb cannot guarantee you good grades"

(Jamal, 44, m, e).

Formal education also means that the younger generation has learnt many English and Urdu proverbs and expressions. Young educated participants use these newly learnt English and Urdu expressions as replacements for old Pashto proverbs, and most importantly, as marker of social status and a demonstration of their modern, superior knowledge:

"Educated people have many other ways for expressing their thoughts. They are no longer dependent on [Pashto] proverbs"

(Ahmad, 27, m, e).

"I am using proverbs, but mostly Urdu and sometimes English proverbs instead of Pashto. We have been learning Urdu proverbs in school because the school language is either Urdu or English"

(Nazmina, 23, f, e).

“I think proverbs usage is not decreasing as a whole, only some Pashto proverbs are being replaced by Urdu and English Proverbs... and a person’s ‘net proverbs bank’ (*zakhira*) remains the same”

(Sajeela, 27, f, e).

As these quotations suggest, the young educated class are no longer dependent on Pashto proverbs to express their social status. Quoting Shakespeare, for example, would garner more prestige from educated people than a Pashto proverb. The following conversation is an example of how formal education, work in a formal institution, and an urban life restrains the ability (or willingness) of the speaker to use Pashto proverbs:

|              |   |
|--------------|---|
| Researcher:  | Do you know proverbs?   |
| Participant: | No, not very much.  |
| Researcher:  | Why? What is the reason?  |
| Participant: | I think it is because of work environment, my education, my husband mostly speaks Urdu, I mostly speak Urdu and we live in the city. I have heard people using Pashto proverbs of all kinds, but I personally just don’t care about them. |

(Saima, 41, f, e).

The four factors this educated woman mentions have allowed her to reject old Pashto proverbs. She doesn’t care about them because, as will be shown later, she also believes that these proverbs contain a ‘culture against women’.

The nature of formal vs. informal settings is an important and often mentioned factor in proverb performance. The relationship between speaker and listener as well as the setting of the discussion can range from formal to informal. Proverbs as folk genre are spoken mostly in informal contexts and when the setting becomes formal, the speaker is constrained. Earlier in this chapter, it was discussed that some participants intentionally use proverbs to gain respect and prestige in rural, informal settings. When the context becomes formal, some participants do just the opposite, intentionally trying to avoid using proverbs, such as a teacher in the journalism department of a local college:

“Sometimes when I am trying to explain a point in a lecture, a very appropriate proverb comes to my mind which can help explain what I want to say. But then I think the student will say; ‘look, he is teaching us Pashto’. The rostrum [in the lecture hall] has its own ethics, I have to follow those, or I will lose my respect. Beside, most Pashto proverbs are obscene and cannot be said in front of students, particularly female students. Can you say the [obscene] proverb in the class which I just told you? Never.”

(Kamran, 27, m, e).

Kamran spoke very high of Pashto proverbs and termed them as “currency of oral transaction”, but here he feels contextual constraints; the formal setting of a lecture hall and his role as a teacher constrains his speech and quoting behaviour. A similar answer came from a young educated female working in a public sector organisation. When I asked her the (wrong) question of “why young educated girls like you do not know many proverbs”, she replied:

“No no no, I know many, many proverbs, but I do not use them here [in the office] because proverbs do not suit the [formal] office environment....You know here [if one uses proverbs,] the person ... looks *kalliwal* (villager)”

(Rafia, 27, f, e).

Similar to Karmran, Rafia used the word “*kalliwal*” which literally means ‘ruralite’ or ‘villager’ but connotes a ‘simple’ or ‘naïve person’ who does not know how to behave appropriately in an urban, formal environment. Rafia’s restricted use of traditional and informal speech seems a conscious strategy to show her educated class position. This contrasts speakers who consciously learn and use proverbs to gain prestige in rural settings.

Moreover, some educated women, including Rafia, were aware of the sexist nature of certain Pashto proverbs:

- |              |  |
|--------------|--|
| Participant: | ... but I personally just don’t care about them [proverbs].  |
| Researcher:  | I myself do not know many, but we Pashtuns should know these proverbs; being Pashtuns we should know our culture.  |
| Participant: | Do you think it is a good thing?   |
| Researcher:  | I think it is our culture and we have to preserve it. <sup>104</sup>   |
| Participant: | Then how would you change the culture which is against women. I think the more we ignore these proverbs, they will go out slowly. If we keep on preserving them, this will also preserve the attitude [these proverbs contains]. I think we should destroy these proverbs in some way. |
| Researcher:  | So, that is why you do not use proverbs?   |
| Participant: | Yes, but not entirely for this reason. I just don’t care about these old things. If someone uses them, I just don’t care.  |

(Saima, 41, f, e).

Saima seems to be aware of the sexism in Pashto proverbs and believes that instead of preserving them, ‘we should destroy these proverbs in some way’. These extracts show

<sup>104</sup> This interview was conducted by a female research assistant. Her comment “I think it is our culture and we have to preserve them” is perhaps a good example of her nostalgic position with regard to Pashto proverbs and culture.

that educated classes have replaced Pashto proverbs with other means of expression. Some educated speakers like Saima consciously reject Pashto proverbs due to their sexist content; others, like Kamran and Rafia to show their education in a formal environment – thus to display class belonging. Asimeng-Boahene (2013:130) in her study assessed the attitudes of Western-educated and non-Western educated women towards a set of traditional proverbs in Ghana and found that “Western-educated women participants tended to refute the proverbs while non-Western ones tended to affirm the statements”. The data in my research suggests that educated speakers also use English/Urdu as strategies of ‘doing class’ to differentiate themselves from the older, uneducated class. This last point needs a little more elaboration.

That women use a certain variety of language, different from men, in order to attain prestige is a well-established and -tested notion in the West (Trudgill, 1972, 1974; Macaulay, 1978) Fasold, 1990; Chambers, 1995; Eckert, 1990, 1998). Fatima Sadiqi (2002, 2003) has noted in Morocco that regardless of socio-economic status and educational level, women use language skills to achieve personal and social ‘gains’. However, she notes that:

“Illiterate (presumably monolingual) women use oral genres to achieve personal and social ‘gains’ in their daily use of language, and educated (presumably multilingual) women ‘switch’ from one language (Arabic) to another (French) for the same purpose” (Sadiqi, 2003:1).

My interviews with Pashtun women reveal almost exactly the same pattern. Young and educated Pashtun women (as well as men) show (and show off) their ‘class distinction’ (Bourdieu, 1984) by intentionally code-switching from Pashto to English and Urdu in spoken conversation. It is commonly observed that some educated people intentionally use more English as a sign of their ‘modern’ education and occupation, or to indicate their distinctive urban lifestyle. A detailed analysis of code-switching in the interviews is beyond the scope of this discussion, however, based on my repeated listening to the transcripts, it was evident that educated women used more English words and phrases in conversations than other categories of participants. One male participant, an anthropologist by training, referred to this aspect of language use:

“Young educated women would use more Urdu or English words or dialogues from movies and television to demonstrate their educated status, while [elderly] uneducated women would use more folk stories, proverbs and *tappas* to show that they are more Pashtuns than other.... The elderly women think that they possess more knowledge of



‘authentic’ culture than younger women and girls [whose modern education is considered unauthentic by the older generation], it is a common observation in our households that old uneducated women challenge the knowledge of younger educated women, while the younger educated would do the opposite”

(Abid, 45, f, e).

This explains the power struggles between the uneducated and educated and between generations. The former feels its traditional status threatened from the modern education of the latter. This may partly explain why elderly women assume masculine characters and try to correct the younger generation by using more (sexist) proverbs. Clinging to old proverbs and folk knowledge is the only means through which the uneducated class can show their importance and cultural superiority over the younger educated class. The participant quoted above elaborated this point:

“The elders do not recognize the new education and new expressions as true (*asli*) Pashtun culture. The elders take pride in the old ways and try to establish boundaries with the younger generation through the use of cultural tools”

(Abid, 45, f, e).

This inter-generation and inter-class tussle is also evident in the proud way older women and men narrate their past stories. Most of the uneducated elder women during the interview took special interest in narrating the social change they have seen in relation to the work burden on women in the household, recounting how they and their mothers spent many tiring hours grinding grain between stones (locally called *mechan*) and expressing the opinion that life has become much easier for women. However, they expressed pride in this hard work and ridiculed the ‘lazy’ women of today:

“Everything has changed ... today women live luxurious lives. In our time, we had to husk and grind grain with *mechan* (grinding stones) before cooking every morning, but now women just send a child to take the grain to the grinding mill (*zhRANDA*), ... what they say, “*Obu da dande, worhu da zhRande*” [“*The water comes from the pond, the flour comes from the flour mill*”].

(Zahida, 70, f, u).

This suggests that uneducated elderly women use proverbs to express and affirm their superiority and superior model of femininity vis-à-vis young, educated, and working women. The woman uses a proverb to summarise technological changes and negatively comment on how they have made life easier (or lazier) for women. The proverb means that, unlike old days when women had to travel long distances to collect drinking water and spend long laborious hours grinding grain, nowadays the water easily come from the

ponds (through pipes) and the flour come from the grinding mill. Though all women celebrated this increased ease in women's lives, some elderly women utilised this as an opportunity to exert their gerontocracy by taking pride in their hard work and physical stamina. After recounting the various kinds of hard work she had done in her time, an elder woman jokingly remarked:

“.... Now look at these [younger] women. Sometimes they have pain in their head, sometimes in their back. We used to do more work and produce 10-12 children. There were no hospitals [for assisting child delivery]. But look at these women of today, they are ruptured apart (*woshligi*) by giving birth to one child”

(Zarsanga, 62, u, f).

Other uneducated older women also proudly recounted their experiential knowledge and skills of performing certain events and ‘rites of passages’ which the younger educated women do not know sufficiently. In short, older educated women are using proverbs here to trump the educational superiority of the younger generation, whereas the latter use their modern education and multi-lingual skills for the same effect.

This clash between generations is also evident in proverbs about older people. As noted in the previous chapter (Table 5.9), there are more negative proverbs about mothers. Most of the Pashto proverbs about mothers contain the word “*abay*” which means ‘mother’ as well as ‘grandmother’ and could be used for any elderly woman relative. It seems that these negative and sarcastic proverbs encode resistance of the younger generation (children and grand-children) to the power of older generations. As women assume a matriarchal status in older age, it may be argued that because the mother (or any elderly woman) has more power, therefore there is more resistance against her in the form of sarcastic proverbs. Proverbs such as “*The mother is dead, but her tongue is still alive*”, “*The mother is now old, her lust/desire is still young*”, “*Only when she dies in peace will I know that my mother was faithful*”, “*If the mother has dominated the house, it is because of the father who patronised her*”, “*Behold, the mother has become the master of the home*”, “*Though I stayed awake all the night, my grandmother did not die*”<sup>105</sup>, “*To all others be half, to the mother one and half!*”<sup>106</sup> mostly contain witticism and criticisms against the mother/grandmother/older woman.

<sup>105</sup> This witty proverb is used to refer to something which does not happen despite one's hope.

<sup>106</sup> This proverb is a pun on a greedy mother who demand greater share in everything thing.

The role of uneducated older women in upholding patriarchy through proverbs is well summed up by an educated female participant who is a poet, feminist, and folklorist:

“Elderly women use more proverbs and they play an important role in sustaining gender relations. We know that women are the custodian of folklores; they remember them more and teach them to their young women and children. While men use physical force to maintain their status, elderly women use language for the same effect”

(Fatima, 55, f, e).

In addition to proverbs being sources of authority and power through which speakers negotiate gender, age and class identities, proverbs are also closely related to the phenomenon of ‘othering’. Proverbs are not only means of ‘othering’ women, but they are also used for the ‘production of ethnic others’ which have important gender implication.

#### **6.4. The Pashtuns and Their Gendered ‘Others’**

In this section, I examine the ways in which gender relations can become a terrain through which to produce gendered ‘others’. Discourses of ‘othering’ are commonly based on gender, ethnicity and class, and these aspects often intersect (Weber, 1989). ‘Othering’ is strongly connected with power, pointing out perceived weaknesses in others to position ourselves as stronger or better. It implies a hierarchy and serves to maintain power structures. Gendered and racial ‘othering’ are closely linked and share similar patterns: racism and sexism are considered ideologies based on the naturalisation of social relations of gender and ethnicity (Guillaumin, 1995).

This section will therefore attempt to extract the interplay of gender and ethnicity (and class, to some extent) to show how ‘gendering’ and ethnic ‘othering’ is achieved through Pashto proverbs. The key point is that women are at the centre of ‘othering’ discourses. It is not only women themselves that are ‘othered’, but their social status and dispositions are used to appraise the worth of other ethnicities (Yuval-Davis 1997; Choo, 2006; Espiritu, 2000; Warren, 2009). A very important criterion behind the process of ethnic ‘othering’ is the perceived status of women in these different groups. Like other ethnic groups, Pashtuns use women and gendered relationships to legitimise their identity and to improve their social and cultural position vis-à-vis other ethnic, racial, or national groups. The most important ‘other’ ethnic groups in Pashto proverbs are Hindus, Punjabis, Hindkos, and other professional groups and lower classes (people who live in the area and speak Pashto

but are not accepted as ‘original’ or ‘pure’ Pashtuns<sup>107</sup>). This shows that ‘othering’ could be based on religion (as with Hindus), ethnicity and language (Punjabi and Hindko speakers), or profession (caste/class). The Pashtuns believe that Pashtun women are highly honoured within their own society (due to their *purdah*, modesty) and non-Pashtun women are considered ‘immoral’, ‘free’ or ‘loose’ in matters of sexuality and modesty, a sign of dishonour for Pashtuns. This is more strongly applied to Punjabi and Hindko women.

An interesting extract from an interview with a group of females presents this complex hierarchical intersection of race and gender:

- Researcher: Do you remember any proverbs that men use for women?
- Participant: ummm, yes, a lot. Like if we do something wrong, they say; “*If women had no nose, they would be eating shit*” [Laugh].
- Researcher: Why they [men] say this?
- Participant: They say that women are senseless, unintelligent.
- Researcher: But why? Why are we women less intelligent?
- Participant: I do not know, but sometimes I think this is true. Our men are very intelligent. ... I think there is also some *hadith* (saying of the prophet) that “*Women’s wisdom is incomplete (naqis-ul-aqal)*”. .... And yes, my uncle also says that; “*The wisdom of nine women is equal to the wisdom of one man*”.
- Third woman: No, no. It is not like this. It is that “*The wisdom of one Pashtun man is equal to nine Pashtun women and the wisdom of one Pashtun woman is equal to the wisdom of nine non-Pashtun men*”....
- Researcher: What does it mean? You mean the Punjabis and others?
- Third woman: No. It means those of low caste poor people (*kasabgar*). The other people like barbers, musicians, and such kind of people.

(Nazmina, 23, f, e)

The transcript shows a hierarchy based on gender and class: Pashtun men are at the top, followed by Pashtun women, followed by non-Pashtun ‘others’ who are placed at the lowest rank. This hierarchy is justified with the help of proverbs, religion, and profession. The women seem to have internalised the notion of women being intellectually inferior, but compensate for their low status vis-a-vis Pashtun men by identifying a group with an even lower social status.

The centrality of women to the process of ethnic ‘othering’ in the Pashtun context is also evident when looking at social realities between ethnic groups in the region. Punjabis are

<sup>107</sup> These lower classes are locally called ‘occupational groups’ who mostly engage in low status occupations such as musicians, barbers, and cobblers etc. They are not exactly like the lower ‘caste’ Hindus but are looked down upon by Pashtuns who considered themselves higher in the social stratification ladder.

stereotypically famous among Pashtuns for accepting a girl whom the Pashtuns have rejected because of accusations regarding her chastity and honour. When a Pashtun man threatens a woman in his home, a sentence often heard is “*I will sell you in Punjab*”. The same sentence is also often heard in case of a ‘*black women*’ – the term used for a woman who is accused of adultery.<sup>108</sup> Such a woman is sometimes killed by her male relatives (honour-killing), but sometimes she is punished by being sold in the Punjab or another distant location never to be seen again by her birth family. One such case of ‘*honour-selling*’<sup>109</sup> surfaced in the data in which a young girl (the sister of the participant) got pregnant out of wedlock. This caused great shame and the family tried to hide the incident from people by marrying the two lovers. However, the baby was born much earlier and people of the village sensed the truth. The baby girl was given away to another family who adopted her, and the accused woman was sold in the Punjab:

- Researcher: ... But why was the baby girl given away? Why the husband did not own her?
- Participant: It was that my sister became pregnant before marriage. The marriage took place later, but by that time the case had become known to the people. It could not be kept hidden from people....
- Researcher: And where is your sister now?
- Participant: My sister was given to Punjabis in Mianwali (a district in Punjab province). As you know, those people (Punjabis) do not care too much about these things....<sup>110</sup>

(Khaista, 26, f, u)

This excerpt show that the Punjabis as ethnic ‘other’ have been referred to as somewhat less concerned about matter of honour and shame. Similarly, Hindko speakers (the closest neighbours of the Pashtun who mostly live in the Hazara regions of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province) are also viewed by the Pashtun as sexually ‘free’. One participant used the following proverb, demonstrating Pashtun perceptions about Hindko-speaking ‘others’ of Hazara very bluntly:

<sup>108</sup> The term ‘black’ used for adulterer signifies ‘shame’, ‘accused’, ‘impure’, as against the ‘white’ which signifies ‘cleanliness’, ‘purity’ ‘modesty’. The term is used in all four provinces of Pakistan with slight variation.

<sup>109</sup> By the term ‘honour-selling’ I mean the practice in which a woman accused of illicit sexual relations is sold, instead of being killed. It is relevant to mention that literature in both the East and the West is full of references to the practice of ‘honour-killing’; the practice of ‘honour-selling’, however, is less documented.

<sup>110</sup> Khaista further narrated the story of her sister: “... some people say that she was sold [to Punjabis] for [Rs] 30,000, some say [Rs] 50,000. Anyway, she is there now but the doctors say that “her heart is finished”. She is a breathing corpse.... Now my father [along with family] has also shifted to Rawalpindi, or somewhere, I don’t know exactly”. It is pertinent to explain here that Khaista’s father has shifted to Rawalpindi (a city in Punjab) because of the social pressure and shame which he could not withstand in his native village.

*“Hazara de ruti mehengi hai, te pudhi sasti hai”*

“Vagina is cheaper and bread is expensive in Hazara”

(Ashar, 29, m, e)

These examples show that notions of gender and sexuality are central to the process of ethnic ‘othering’. Another example from an interview with 65 year old educated man contains the same stereotype:

Our Mr X (referring to someone in the family) used to carry his daughter to school on motorcycle, and Mr Y (another male in the house) used to scold her every morning [by saying to her]: “What a shameful behaviour this is, don’t make Punjab out of our village. You should commute to school in *purdah* and honour. On motorcycle, the whole world is watching you. ... Is this Punjab?”

(Mother of Afzaal, 65, m, e)

Sometimes the word ‘liberal’ is used as a synonym for ‘sexual freedom’ in Pakistan.<sup>111</sup> Rather than considering the perceived ‘liberal’ attitudes of Punjabis as a positive, Pashtuns considered it as a sign of shameful ‘other-ness’. Pashtuns do not want to be like them.<sup>112</sup> Espiritu (2000:435) notes that Filipino immigrants use gendered discourse and practices of control over their daughters to “decenter whiteness and locate themselves above the dominant group”. Pashtun men and women have internalised this attitude towards Punjabis, whose perceived ‘shamefulness’ and ‘freedom’ with respect to women is used as a measuring rod against which to compare the honour of Pashtun women.

By projecting Punjabis as immoral (i.e., honourless, shameless) with respect to their lack of control over women, Pashtuns indirectly project themselves as full of honour, with Pashtun women projected as respectful, modest, and pure from the corruption of immorality and sexual ‘liberty’. This is a legitimising strategy (Eagleton, 1991) helping men to create a false consciousness among Pashtun women that they are more respectable. Pashtun women have indeed internalised this thinking, evident from the comments of Afzaal’s mother (mentioned above). Fatima, an older educated woman, also believes that Pashtun women are more respectful than Punjabi women:

<sup>111</sup> Explaining how the term ‘liberal’ has negative connotations in Pakistan, an educated female recounted that “Although my father is a conservative and religious Pashtun, but because he allowed me to get education and live alone in the city for work, people of the village call him liberal and honourless. This is a permanent label attached to my family because of me” (Rafia, 27, f, e).

<sup>112</sup> It also needs to be clarified that Punjabis are neither more ‘shameful’ nor any more ‘liberal’ than Pashtuns; it is a matter of degree and locality. Being a much more developed city, Lahore, the centre of the Punjab, is much more ‘liberal’ and ‘modern’ than most other cities of Pakistan in matters of women’s mobility and employment. In rural areas of the Punjab, the condition of women and the attitude of men towards women, honour, and shame are not much different than those of Pashto speakers.

“...The culture of prostitution is not so much prevalent among Pashtuns because the women here are in tight control. Our women are living more respectful life. We are better than Punjabis where there is *Hera Mandi* (a red light district in Lahore, Punjab) etc.

(Fatima, 55, f, e)

Similar views are expressed by Afzaal:

“...But overall, we Pashtuns give more respect and honour to women as compared to other people such as Punjabis and Sindhis. We give them (women) a seat when they come into a bus, give them the front seat (in public transport). Thank God, our women enjoy more respect. I was in Sindh (province), there are many Hindus and Sindhi women working as labourer in brick kilns, while their husbands do nothing. In Punjab, the same thing; women work in the fields and other such things. They exploit their women”.

(Afzaal, 65, m, e).

It can be observed that Pashtuns suddenly change to a defensive position when the question put to them specifically contains the word ‘Pashtun’. In the methodology chapter I have already explained the defensive (and nationalist) position of Afzaal who resented this research project out of his fear that it would reveal the shameful secrets of Pashtuns to the world. In the above transcript Afzaal tries to justify the Pashtun way of life for women by deflecting shameful behaviour on to other ethnic groups.

Ethnic ‘othering’ also seems to have a more subtle function, being invoked as an escape mechanism: a strategy of avoiding any criticism of Pashtun culture. This is a well-known discourse strategy in which the speaker points out faults in their rivals to undermine their own weaknesses (van Dijk, 1997). Moreover, comparing Pashtuns with the ‘others’ is also a universalising mechanism (Eagleton, 1991): certain gender-based discriminatory practices by Pashtuns are universalised to all people to somehow justify them.

The following transcript highlights both escape and universalising mechanisms:

- |              |   |
|--------------|---|
| Researcher:  | We have seen that among us Pashtuns the birth of a female girl is differently received by the family than the birth of boy. Nowadays, because of the ultrasound system which predicts the sex of the child in advance, negative feelings begin even before the birth of the female child. What do you say about this? |
| Participant: | This is true. But it is also present among the Punjabis, even among the English people.... Yes, this concept is very strong among Pashtuns, but this is everywhere among Punjabis and Sindhis. {Some data omitted}  |
| Researcher:  | In case the wife is a working woman like you, do you think men help in household work? What is your own experience?   |

Participant: They must help us, but they don't. ... This is the nature of our men. But Punjabis also do not do household work.

(Zakira, 55, f, e).

Rather than answering the question, Zakira quickly jumps to compare Pashtuns with Punjabis and Sindhis. It seems that Zakira is indirectly trying to attribute negative behaviours to be universal phenomena and the Pashtuns are not to be blamed. Elsewhere in the interview, it appeared that Zakira was influenced by Pashtun nationalist political rhetoric as she refrained from being openly critical of Pashtun culture. In short, racism and sexism are interlinked and 'othering' is a mechanism to reproduce ethnic boundaries and justify existing gender relations.

In summary, proverbs are used to symbolise ethnic belonging. Proverbs produce gendered and ethnic 'others' to legitimate the existing power structure. However, as explained in chapter 1, proverbs are not fixed and frozen text; their structure can be manipulated to suit the interest of the speaker (Akbarian, 2012). Similarly, being mostly figurative, their meanings are contextual and depend on the intention of the speakers and perception of the listener (Norrick, 1985). In the following section, I demonstrate how men and women may use proverbs differently or the same proverb in different ways to further their own strategic interests in the patriarchal environment.

## 6.5. Gender-specific Strategies in Using Proverbs

Proverbs are essentially 'strategies of survival' and as such, their main purpose of use is to negotiate a way out of a difficult situation (Seitel, 1976; Gibbs, 2001; Bartlotti, 2000). Although some women seem to have internalised patriarchal discourses, women may modify existing proverbs to fit in with their own experiences or point of view. As pointed out in the introductory section, the performance approach to proverbs has recognised that rather than taking proverbs as fixed and frozen text, speakers creatively manipulate them to suit their own interests or their subject positions. The following proverb, for example, was used by both men and women during interviews, but their versions vary slightly:

### Male version:

Researcher: So you think sexual harassment on street is women's fault?



- Participant: No. men are responsible too. But we say that “*Pa kame katway che sar nu we pa haghe ke machan pravazi*” [“*Flies fall in the pot which is not covered*”].
- Researcher: What does it mean?
- Participant: It means that a woman must not remain uncovered, she must observe proper *purdah*, must not reveal herself.... She should be married, because an unmarried woman is like an open pot, without cover, exposed to all type of dangers.

(Zaman, 39, m, u)

**Female version:**

- Researcher: You said a man [husband] is necessary for a woman. Why can a woman not live without a husband?
- Participant: What will you do with people’s mouths? You will have to face all kind of gossips of people. Even if you are as pious as an angel, people will make scandals behind you. It is said, “*Pa katway che sar proot we machan pake nu prevazi*” [“*Flies do not fall in the pot which is covered*”]....
- Researcher: What does the proverb mean?
- Participant: It means that marriage must take place... However, once the marriage has taken place, the husband should not remain absent from home for a long time....

(Gulmina, 46, f, u)

The variation in the proverb is notable. The male emphasises “flies *fall* in the pot which is *not* covered”, the female emphasises that “flies *do not fall*...”. The man’s version seems to point towards mistrust in uncovered women, emphasises the ‘pot’ and places emphasis on *purdah* and marriage as a solution to ‘cover’ the pot; the woman’s version says nothing about uncovered women, emphasises the ‘flies’, and although recognises the necessity of marriage in patriarchal Pashtun culture, places emphasis on the ‘proper performance of marital relations by the husband’.

The three words in the proverb – “flies”, “pot” and “cover” – reveal the metaphorical force in articulating asymmetrical gender relations: the “flies” representing ‘men’ and their sexuality; the “pot” being ‘women’ and their vulnerability; the “cover” representing the ‘protection’ of *purdah* and marriage. Furthermore, the women (pot) are considered passive, without agency, and are vulnerable without “cover”. Men (flies) are active and independent of the pot/cover. The sexist nature of this proverb is evident from the fact that all the burden of ‘cover’ and control is placed on the women, who are dependent, passive, and powerless, and who are the actual victim in this sexual game. It should be noted that although proverbs are comparatively fixed expressions, the above example shows the

potential for manipulation (consciously or unconsciously) to adjust the proverb to one's own perspective.

Proverbs referring to women's domestic work are also interpreted differently by both genders. Even if both agree that a woman's primary role is in the home, the different interpretations of this role are evident from the way a few proverbs have been used and interpreted differently. For example, the proverb "*A woman's work is never done*" was used both by male and female participants but interpreted differently to highlight their opposing attitudes towards domestic labour:

"See, women never finish their work on time. You have to constantly remind them if a certain work is to be done. They start a work, leave that unfinished, and start another....You leave them alone for a minute, they resort to gossip again. They keep themselves busy in petty things all the day".

(Abbass, 55, m, u)

"Have you ever seen women free? The proverb means that women have to do so many works that they are never finished. We get up early to prepare tea, the prepare children for school, then wash utensils, then clothes, and then cooking time arrives. The same in the afternoon... we go to bed later than all ...

(Humaira, 29, f, u)

The idea that the kitchen is a women's place is familiar in most cultures. However, men and women may again interpret this differently for both genders. One example in the data is a proverb used frequently by both men and women participants about the kitchen: "*The power of the mother is the cooking pot*". Most men who used or reported this proverb explained it by emphasising that the power of the mother (and women in general) is *limited* to the kitchen. They further explained that the kitchen or hearth here means domestic activities as a whole, i.e., the women's role in managing the household. In their eyes, this proverb delimits women's roles to the home and suggests that women have no business in affairs outside of it. On the other hand, women participants interpreted the same proverb in a slightly different way but with significant implications. Their primary focus was on the kitchen as the power centre. The following is an extract from an interview with Humaira (29, f, u), and her 55 years old female neighbour (participant 2):

Researcher: What do you mean by this proverb [*"The power of mother is the cooking pot"*]?

Participant 1: It means when she is old and cannot cook anything, she becomes powerless (*be-wassa*, without authority, helpless)...

(Humaira, 29, f, u).

Participant 2: It means that if a woman has the authority to offer some tea or meal for someone, if she can offer something to eat to someone, she has power. But when she has no control on the kitchen, she is helpless; she cannot even entertain her guest in an honourable manner. She becomes powerless. If you come to my home and I do not offer you “*chay-pani*” (tea and water), this would be a ‘*be-Pashto*’, (un-Pashtun-like, dishonour). Isn’t it?

These two women positively associated the kitchen space with power and authority to express that the one who controls the kitchen is in control of the home. The transcript also shows that women use their ‘kitchen power’ as a means of ‘doing their *Pashtunwali*’ and achieving honour. This makes perfect sense in the context of a joint family, where not all women have the authority to spend the household money, cook and offer food of their choice to someone. Only one woman in the joint family has the key to the ‘stockroom’ where food items are stored. Such a woman is considered the most trustworthy by men, hence is entrusted with the keys to this special room.

The concept of ‘kitchen as power centre’ appeared in other interviews with women participants. An elderly participant who had stiff relations with her husband repeatedly referred to “a bad habit” of her husband:

“I do not like men who interfere in women’s activities. My husband has this bad habit that he inquires about everything – “Who was the woman sitting with you? Why did you cook extra food? Why the sugar and oil finished up so quickly? How many times you prepare tea?” – These kinds of questions annoy me a lot. He sometimes enters into the kitchen like women and check different pots. And I am like “what the hell are you doing here in women’s activities”.... You see, women have their own needs, we have friends too; we have to offer food and other gifts to our friends; or do some charity (*khair-amal*) with our poor relatives, or perform other such events of sorrow and joys (*gham-khadi*). But my husband does not like these things. Why? Don’t we [women] have our own Pashto?”

(Zahida, 70, f, u).

The last sentence points to a specifically female version of *Pashto* (‘Pashto’ here means ‘*Pashtunwali*’ or ‘honour’), behaviour considered honourable including their ability to be independent in household affairs, to be able to entertain their friends with honour, and be able to offer charity to their poor relatives or commemorate joyful or sad occasions in a honourable manner. These are the key aspects of Pashtun women’s code of honour (Grima, 1992). Participation in events of *gham-khadi* (joys and sorrows) plays a very central role in Pashtun women’s lives. Two ethnographic works on “*gham-khadi*” by Grima (1992) and Ahmad (2005, 2006) shows that Pashtun women’s dignity is related to how successful she is in participating in these events because they provide the opportunity to demonstrate and perform their ‘Pashtun-ness’. This and the preceding examples suggest that women want freedom in kitchen affairs. In one specific interview setting, the research assistant was

conducting an interview with a middle-aged woman. They were discussing household affairs and workloads. Another woman (in her forties) entered the scene and after a brief exchange of ‘hello-hi’, the interview went on. The newly arrived woman suddenly interrupted and asked the research assistant:

- Woman: What are you writing?  
 Researcher I am writing a book on women and men relations in Pashtun society.  
 Woman: Ummm, write this; Write that men should give us the rights which Islam and the Prophet have given us. Write that, umm, that we should have full authority in household affairs; that we should decide what to cook and other such things in home...

(Shamala, 55, f, u)

This again validates the points made earlier that women know their territorial space and want to defend it. The association between women and kitchen/cooking is historically and cross-culturally very strong (Platzer, 2011; Johnson, 2012). Recognising that the kitchen is a space in the home filled with hidden symbols and ideologies reflecting the identities of its owners (Johnson, 2012), it is important to see how women may utilise this space for negotiating power and status. Discussing the power games played out in the kitchen, Bennett (2006) has observed that its ownership and the objects within it constitutes a major arena for the performance of gender roles in which power is negotiated on a daily basis. Saarikangas (2006:162) similarly observes “The kitchen is ... a gendered and gendering space that in turn shapes and reshapes gender and the meanings attached to it on multiple levels, ranging from its spatial arrangement to social practices and the lived experiences of habitation”. In other words, women ‘make’ the kitchen and the kitchen ‘makes’ women. This makes even more sense in the Pashtun context in which the kitchen is exclusively a women’s sphere, both as a *space* as well as a *role*. Young (1984:87) has observed that in Pakistan “[t]he kitchen area ... is female territory, and although a man can enter here, he does so at the risk of losing face – both in the opinion of the other men, and in the opinion of his wife and family”.

Another kitchen-related proverb is “*When the mother is in power, the broth is spoiled*”. A young man interpreted this proverb as: “You see, when women get authority, everything is turned upside down, the whole home is in chaos... and nothing is in order” (Sajeed, 29, m, u). The same proverb was explained by a young woman: “It is because when woman have no power, they take extra care to cook good bread and food, but when they gain authority, they become careless with cooking, they become... umm...they don’t bother too much

[about cooking]” (Humaira, 29, f, u). These comments are largely similar in the sense that both men and women think women’s empowerment impacts the quality of cooking, but they are different in the sense that men see women’s power in the context of how it impacts the order of the home. The man’s comment could be interpreted to mean that when women assume too much power, it challenges the ‘natural’ order. The woman’s interpretations focus on how power relieves women from putting extra effort into cooking for the family.

The proverbs discussed above are mostly used by both men and women, but they use and interpret them differently for strategic advantage. Some other proverbs, however, seem to be exclusively used by women, and are probably coined by women to reflect their reality.

## 6.6. A Proverb of One’s Own? Women’s Subversive Discourses on Patriarchy

Most of the discussion in this and previous chapters suggests that proverbs are tools of patriarchy and they work to the advantage of men to keep intact the scaffolds of patriarchal structures. Some proverbs play a role in this construction, some justify it. At times, it seems that most women have accepted and internalised these patriarchal ideologies. However, existing studies of women in South Asia and elsewhere have pointed to subtle modes of resistance to such hegemonic forms (e.g., Gold, 1997; Raheja, 1993; Raheja and Gold, 1994; Radner, 1993; Abu-Lughod, 1986, 1990; Yitah, 2006a&b).

One young female participant talked about how Pashtun girls are asked to keep silent and not to argue with male and elders:

We are told to keep quiet, keep quiet ... But “*Main bhi moon main zaban rakhta hon*” [*“I too have a tongue in my mouth”*], but they will say, “keep quiet”. If a girl ask “why?”... They say, “*Walay kho jagarha ve*” [*“‘Why’ breeds quarrel”*].

(Sajeela, 27, f, e).

The expression “*I too have a tongue in my mouth*” is a verse by Mirza Ghalib (1797–1869), a famous Urdu poet. The complete version of the couplet says: “*I too have a tongue in my mouth // Wish someone would seek my version of the story too*”.<sup>113</sup> The other expression – “*‘Why’ breeds quarrel*” – is a commonly spoken Pashto proverb used to

<sup>113</sup> There is a Pashto proverb: “*I too have a tongue in my mouth, though there is cotton on my tongue*” meaning that ‘I am not allowed to speak openly’.

silence someone who asks too many “why” questions. Sajeela’s comment conveys two opposing ideas: the ideal of a submissive femininity, a girl who keeps silent, does not ask questions starting with “why”, and who does not argue with males and elders of the family; whilst also proclaiming her right to speak out because she believes that she too has the right to express herself and her subaltern position. As explained in chapter 1, most studies on proverbs in general and Pashto proverbs in particular have ignored women’s voices. Some Pashtun women are aware of the sexist nature of proverbs and intentionally do not use them, however others use them to express their criticism of patriarchal social structures. We have already seen an example of an educated woman who stated that “proverbs should be destroyed in some ways”, because they “contain a culture against women” (Saima, 41, f, e). Whether aware of sexism in proverbs or not, all female participants seemed to be aware of the power proverbs hold and their practical utility as indirect speech through which to express their own points of view.

Some proverbs seem to have originated from women. It is a complex issue to talk about the origin of a proverb because folklore generally is communal property and the name of its originator (author), if any, is gradually lost over time. However, one of my participants, a professional folklorist, explained the issue of authorship in proverbs by saying:

“See, a donkey will never ridicule herself in a proverb; if you see a proverb in which a donkey has been ridiculed, know that the originator is a human being”

(Himayat, 55, m, e).

In the same vein, if a husband has been ridiculed/criticised in proverbs, it is likely that the originator is a wife/woman. Some proverbs’ grammatical and syntactic structures are such that they only make sense if used by a female. For example, the originator of the proverb “*May I be a guest in my father’s home but not the host*” is a daughter not a son because the word for ‘guest’ in the proverb is ‘*melmana*’ which is grammatically feminine. Though we will never know the exact identity of the anonymous wife or daughter who first authored a particular proverb, the diction, message, and grammar help identify who the author might have been. Based on this, it is safe to say that as with men, women too have expressed their experiences and critical observations in a number of proverbs. As observed by Raheja (1993), most of the women’s proverbs and folklore relates to kinship hierarchies. These proverbs are critical of polygamous marriages and joint family structures which are features of classic patriarchy in the Middle Eastern and South Asian cultures (Moghadam, 1992; Kandiyoti, 1988).

Moreover, a few of these ‘women’s proverbs’ were exclusively used/reported by female speakers, suggesting they might be used exclusively by women. No male speaker reported these proverbs, nor could they be found in the published collections of Pashto proverbs. The following proverbs were reported by female participants only:

“May I be a guest in my father’s home but not the host”

(Naranja, 27, f, u & Adeela, 49, f, u)

“May I be the sister of a brother, but I may not be dependent on him”

(Adeela, 49, f, u)

Both proverbs are used to mean that women do not want to live a life dependent on male relatives. These proverbs recognize the cultural importance of brothers and fathers, as without them women are considered weak, vulnerable, and unfortunate. At the same time, however, women know that life-long dependency on one’s birth family is not desirable. To remain unmarried is considered shameful for a woman, and because the unmarried or divorced woman who lives permanently with her brothers or parents usually ends up in a low status, subjected to maltreatment by her sisters-in-laws (brother’s wives) and other rival women in the joint household. These proverbs show a woman’s desire for independence, both in an economic and relational sense.

Two more proverbs about husbands occurred in the interview. The first criticises ‘bad husbands’ and the second suggests strategies to survive them:

Some men are very good, some are bad. It is matter of luck. Only a lucky woman can have a good husband. ... Some men have such a bad nature that, as Ms ‘X’ (her colleague) once said: *“Pa gho ba de ghai, pa kuss pore ba de khandi”* [*“He will fuck you, but will also laugh at your vagina”*].

(Nissa, 45, f, e).

The speaker has summed up the bad behaviour and ill-treatment of wives by some husbands. The female research assistant who conducted this interview explained this proverb in her field diary: “Women usually use this proverb when they have a fight with their husband. The proverb means that he (the husband) enjoys the wife sexually but also ridicules and degrades the wife”. This proverb is essentially a woman’s proverb as both its grammatical structure as well as its message is feminine. Men cannot use this proverb (unless they change its structure).

The following proverb, which is another ‘women’s proverb’, contains a strategy of dealing with a bad husband:

I have good relations with my husband, but still sometimes I do not share important things with him. All women do this.... My mother often says, “*Da khu khawand na neema kuna pata, da bad khawand na toola kuna pata*”. [“*From a good husband, hide half of your arse; from a bad husband, hide all of your arse*”].

(Rafia, 27, f, 2).

The term “arse” used in this proverb means “secrets”, i.e., never disclose all your secrets to your husband. A similar proverb has been reported from Estonia: “*If your husband is good, stab one eye out of him, if bad, stab two eyes of him*” which is used by women about sharing secrets with one’s husband (Krikmann, 1998:91). This proverb and the accounts of the participants point out the lack of mutual trust between husband and wife and suggest that women use secrets from men to their advantage. This is what Abu-Lughod (1986:23) has called “a conspiracy of silence” on the part of women, which “excludes men from the women’s world” through their secrets. Most of these secrets relate to matters that could result in dire consequences for women in Pashtun society. For example, senior women of the house sometimes hide the love affairs of younger women of the house from men. In some cases, mothers even support their daughters in getting married to the boy of their choice. A male participant used this proverb, “*Loor ye ghla, mor ye mla*”<sup>114</sup> [“*If a daughter engages in extramarital sex, her mother would be at her back*”] (Zaman, 39, m, u), by which he means that the mother knows everything about the daughter’s love affairs. Another proverb puts it more clearly: “*Che mor ye dalala nu she, loor ba ye larha nu she*” [“*The daughter cannot elope unless the mother becomes the broker*”]. This proverb specifically refers to collusion between mother and daughter.

As previously mentioned, women are aware of the power proverbs contain as indirect means to express their views or to show their resentment and criticism of discriminatory and repressive practices. In the following examples of proverbs used in actual conversations, the first was used as a veiled criticism by the speaker against the burden of cooking for a large number of guests, while the second sums up the practice of compulsory and repressive marriages for women.

---

<sup>114</sup> The two rhyming words in this proverb, “*ghla*” means “theft”, which in the context of this proverb means “illicit sexual relations”; and “*mla*” mean “support”, which is used here to mean that the mother knows and secretly supports her daughter’s illicit relations.



“My brother-in-law brought 7–8 guests at a time and then asked me to prepare food and tea for them. I asked why he brings so many [unexpected] guests; he said, “What should I do if the guests come? I have to do some Pashto by offering food. How can I send them back without food?” He was right, but I had to bear the whole burden, and I said; “Right, “*Da bal pa kor sal melmanu su we? hes na*” [“*What are hundred guests at someone else’s house? Nothing*”]”

(Marjana, 28, f, u).

In the above extract, the woman has registered her protest against the burden of preparing food for guest by quoting a proverb. The proverb “*What are hundred guests at someone else’s house?*” is used to mean that no one understand the difficulty of entertaining a guests except the host. In this particular context, the woman, being unable to openly refuse cooking for the guests, uses this proverb as an expression of her unhappiness and to give a message to her brother-in-law.

In another excerpt, Saima criticises the practice of compulsory marriage but believes that women have no choice but to marry. The proverb she uses is a very powerful way of summarising this view.

If I had a choice, I would have not married at all. But you know in this society, you need a *chowkidar* (literally, a watchman) to protect you. A woman cannot remain single because people will talk about her character. Life with a husband is tough, but “*Gor ka gran de, da marhe nakam de*” [“*The grave is narrow, but the corpse has no choice*”].

(Saima, 41, f, e).

Saima has used the term ‘*watchman*’ for husband and thinks that a woman needs a husband to protect her honour, otherwise she will be prone to gossip and rumours. Although she has succumbed to the patriarchal structure of compulsory marriage, the proverb used clearly shows her antipathy towards it. She terms marriage a “*grave*” and the woman “*a corpse*”. The corpse has no choice but to enter the grave – powerful symbolism to explain her hatred towards oppressive marriages in Pashtun society. It should also be noted that the proverb is not gendered or sexist in its lexical/textual sense, but the context of its use makes it perfectly fitting to explain gender relations in the context of marriage. It is interesting to note that Saima has earlier said that she does not use proverbs, and even wanted to “destroy” sexist proverbs. However, in the particular context, she has used a proverb very effectively to criticise compulsory marriages. This shows that proverbs as terse expressions are used by everyone, some for justifying and upholding patriarchy, some (like Saima) for critiquing patriarchal practices.

Sometimes women can turn a sexist proverb into a survival strategy in a hostile environment, such as to avoid workplace harassment, as evidenced in an interview with a working woman:

- Researcher: How do you deal [survive] with male colleagues in the office?
- Participant: umm,... I watch my laughing. [laugh]...because they say “*Jo hanse gai, wo phans gai*” [“*If she smile, she is trapped*”] ... [laugh].
- Researcher: [laugh]... When a woman laugh, they thing that she is a “2 number”<sup>115</sup> ... So you avoid laughing in front of male colleagues?
- Participant: Yes, because otherwise they think that she is in “that” category (i.e., loose character). They will try to exploit your good nature. .... Laughing is my nature. I laugh a lot and because of this I have received many slaps on my face [laugh].
- Researcher: Slaps? How?
- Participant: Like, when I was working in X city, my character was objectionable to many people. People were suspicious about me because I was unmarried at that time, I was living alone in a hostel, and because I used to laugh too much. My brother once came to pick me in his car. On the way, suddenly he stopped the car and slapped me on my face and said: “why were you laughing loudly when the whole market (read: people) was watching you?” [laugh]. Once my husband said to me; “you should not go with me outside [the home] because you laugh too much and you put me into shame in front of men”

(Rehana, 42, f, e)

Rehana used this proverb as a reminder for herself that she must avoid laughing in front of male colleagues in order to maintain her status as a respectable woman. The research assistant, herself a working woman also knew the proverb and the slang (‘2 number’) which men use for women who laugh too much in the presence of men. The same participant turned another sexist proverb upside down and used it as her strategy of dealing with her husband. When asked about what women mostly discuss amongst themselves, Rehana, said:

- Participant: We discuss sex [laughing], like the other day we were discussing [laugh]... we were discussing “women of the heaven” (*janati auratain*)<sup>116</sup> [laugh]
- Researcher: What does it mean?
- Participant: [Laugh]... I cannot tell you now.
- Researcher: Tell me something, please.

<sup>115</sup> The word “2 number”, as opposed to “1 number”, is commonly used as a slang in Pashto and Urdu to refer to a “prostitute” or a prostitute-like woman. The word is also used for any other less desired product or service, such as “a second hand item”, or a “pirated” and “fake” thing as opposed to a “genuine”, “real” thing.

<sup>116</sup> I do not understand what the woman meant by “*women of the heaven*”, nor have I heard this word before.

- Participant: Well, someone said the proverb that “*A woman’s brain lies in her heels*” (= they are stupid). And I said; “*A man’s brain lies in his erected penis*” [laugh]
- Researcher: [Laugh] what do you mean by this?
- Participant: It means that if you ask for some favours from men, ask when their ‘thing’ (penis) is erected. At the time of ‘the work’ (sex), men agree to whatever you ask. [Laugh]... That is the best time. ... When I say I want to buy new clothes or I want to go to my mother’s home, he says; “go go”.
- Researcher: Really? He agrees to all your demands?
- Participant: Yes, during that time, he is like “yes sir, yes sir, yes sir” .... [Laugh]... he agrees to every demand, except to sweep the house for me [both Laugh].

(Rehana, 42, f, e)

It is important to note the way Rehana converts a proverb presenting ‘women as stupid’ into one which is derogatory to men. Changing traditional proverbs by speakers of the new generation are common in many cultures. Raji-Oyelade (1999:75) has called this a “playful blasphemy” with traditions by the new generation in which they use a “supplementary” proverb in place of an “original” proverb with a playful intention. Mieder (2007) has used the term “anti-proverbs” for these new proverbs which are based on the structures of old proverbs but transform the original meaning. Rehana is not alone in this ‘blasphemy’: in some African cultures, women are consciously doing this to change sexist proverbs into gender neutral or to make them sound anti-men (Raji-Oyelade, 1999; Yitah, 2006a & b, 2009).

The transcript also reveals that woman may use their sex to get favours from their husband. It has been reported from elsewhere in the world that sex is also used a resistance technique in marital settings. Bennett (1983), who conducted field-work among Nepali women, states that “women told me frankly that sex, as the means to have children and as the means to influence their husband in their favour, was their most effective weapon in the battle for security and respect in their husband’s house” (Bennett, 1983:176-7). On the other hand, the transcript also indicates how Pashtun women are depended on men’s approval in such petty matters as buying a new dress or simply going to their parental homes. The last sentence in the above conversation – “*he agrees to every demand, except to sweep the house for me*” – is revealing. Though it is intended as a joke, it shows how Pashtun men will not perform certain household tasks.

The association between women and Pashto *tappas* (*short-songs*) has been noted in chapter 1. Some writers have argued that majority of these *tappas* have been anonymously

composed by women (Enevoldsen, 2004; Shaheen, 1984, 1994). Like the Egyptian *Ghinnawas* (little-songs) discussed by Abu-Lughod in her seminal work *Veiled Sentiments* (1986), Pashto *tappas* contain Pashtun women's emotions on all aspects of life. Pashtun women use *tappas* frequently not only for entertainment, but also more critically to express their inner sentiments (Tair, 1980; Grima, 1992; Shaheen, 1984, 1994). When asked about how she knows so many *tappas*, one female participant remarked: "it comes from the inner heart" (Shamala, 55, f, u).

During an interview, Adeela, a forty-nine year old uneducated woman, often recounted her beauty and fair skin when she was young. At one point during the interview, she narrated the following *tappa*:

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <i>Zarga ba cha kargu la warkra/</i>       | Who would have wedded a partridge to a crow?/ |
| <i>Ka pa qismat lekai nu wo naseeboona</i> | If destinies were not fixed on the heavens.   |

(Adeela, 49, f, u)

The research assistant who interviewed this woman later told me that the husband of this woman is "very dark", hence, not a handsome man. Though the woman participant did not explicitly mention this *tappa* in relation to her husband, I was told by the research assistant that "she is beautiful like partridge and her husband is black like a crow".<sup>117</sup> It is possible that the woman was commenting on her badly matched partner in a veiled way. Later during the interview, when asked specifically how she was married to the man, she replied with another *tappa* (though she called it a proverb) which expresses almost the same sentiment of injustice.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <i>Da nadeedawo pa bazar ke /</i>            | In the marketplace of uncivilized people/             |
| <i>Lal kuti-lal sara pa yo baya taleena.</i> | A diamond and a berry are weighted in the same scale. |

(Adeela, 49, f, u)

The woman has used this *tappa* as a way of expressing how different the couple is in their appearance. As with the earlier *tappa*, here too, the woman has used the symbol of a diamond for herself and the symbol of the wild and tasteless berry for her husband.

<sup>117</sup> The partridge bird is a symbol of feminine beauty in Pashtun culture because of its colourful feathers, beautiful eyes, and cat-like movement. The black crow, on the other hand, is a symbol of ugliness. A famous Pashto proverb, also known in Urdu and Punjabi languages, is contrasting the two birds: "*The crow tried to walk like a partridge and forgot how to walk (in a decent way)*".

Interpreting these *tappa* is not straightforward. The speaker does not often explain what they actually mean by a particular proverb or *tappa*, or any other folkloric item. Only the particular linguistic and meta-linguistic contexts can provide a clue to what message the participant wants to convey. The multiplicity of meaning in women's folklore has been stressed by some feminist writers. Radner (1993:vii), for example, argue that "women who have been dominated, silenced, and marginalised" rely on "coding" by using certain signals in situations where only certain members of the audience (such as other women) would understand the message.<sup>118</sup> 'Coding' protects marginalised women from the negative consequences of being perceived as subversive. In Pashtun culture where women are not allowed to vocalise their dissatisfaction in marriage, these *tappas* are powerful 'coded messages' through which women convey their negative emotions and feelings of frustration. Dozens of such *tappa* appeared in the interviews, a selection of which follows:<sup>119</sup>

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <i>Soorat me khpal waak me praday de/</i>      | My body is mine, but controlled by others/                |
| <i>Khudaya darwakhle da bewaka sooratona</i>   | Oh God, take back this puppet body                        |
| <i>Da naseeboono ka zangal ve/</i>             | If fates were like trees in a jungle/                     |
| <i>Ma ba da khpal qismat ta or wolagawona</i>  | I would have burnt [the tree of] my fate                  |
| <i>Da tooro jang ve ma ba okrhe/</i>           | Had it been a battle of swords, I'd have fought it/       |
| <i>Da naseeb jang de warkhata wolarha yama</i> | It's a battle of fate; I'm standing helpless and nervous. |

These songs contain the feelings of women regarding their lack of control and autonomy over their own personhood. Their bodies are over regulated (through *purdah*, and rules of modesty), and they feel helpless and unhappy with their destinies over which they have no control. As well as revealing their helplessness and desire for change, these *tappas* also provide an outlet for women to express their anger and frustration indirectly.

Sexual jokes and sarcastic songs about male impotency similarly seek to undermine notions of male superiority and are a well-developed genre in the Indian sub-continent (Raheja & Gold, 1994). Some women's proverbs ridiculing impotent husbands were discussed in chapter 5. However, women also ridicule the impotency of husbands through *tappas*. The following *tappas* about a coward or impotent husband were reported by

<sup>118</sup> Also see Scott (1990) '*Hidden Transcripts*' in which he argues that dominated class have their own hidden codes for communication and resistance against domination.

<sup>119</sup> Some of these *tappas* were used interchangeably with proverbs, as some women could not differentiate between proverbs and *tappas*.

participants, although not used in actual conversation. These *tappas* use the term ‘*mozi*’ (translated as ‘impotent’, ‘covered’, or ‘the awful one’) and are sung/spoken by women to ridicule their (impotent) husband or to show their unhappiness, and express their contempt and resentment towards their husband.

*Da kote teer rabande proot ve /*  
*Rabande nu de ve mozi sarhe lasoona*

Better the ceiling beam befall on me /  
Than the hands of a ‘*mozi*’ on my breasts.

*Mozigay kat ta khatay nu she /*  
*Da kat pa khpo ke warta piaske jorhawama*

*Mozi* cannot climb on my bed /  
I’ll make a ladder for him besides my bed.

*Khawanda bia de maskhotan ko /*  
*Da gullu lakhte da muziano kat ta zeena*

Oh God, the night is falling again /  
young girls will go into bed with ‘*mozis*’.

*Che mozigay sharho ke shmar sho /*  
*Zu da Allah qudrat ta fikar wakhistama*

When ‘*mozi*’ was counted among men /  
I was shocked by the strangeness of this world

Women ridicule the masculinity of men, showing their marital discontent, and as the last *tappa* shows, believe that some men should not be counted as men. While a longer discussion and citation of *tappas* is not possible here, *tappas*, in a nutshell, deal with women’s common wishes, unexpressed emotions, unfulfilled desires, hopes, disappointments, and their reaction to certain repressive social environment. Moreover, the image of women reflected in some of the above quoted songs is sometimes in sharp contrast to conventional stereotype of an obedient, acquiescent, and conformist Pashtun woman that is conjured up in one’s mind. Although Pashtun women are suppressed, they too have tongues in their mouths, and have stories that deserve to be listened to.

## Summary of the Chapter

This chapter has explained that proverbs are context-dependent and that the same proverb may be used and interpreted differently by different speakers in different contexts for different purposes. Proverbs are bound up with Pashtun identity and cultural pride and their usage is considered a sign of ‘cultured’ and ‘wise’ men. However, not everyone is equally skilful in (or even allowed to) use proverbs.

Proverbs are sources of traditional power which are mostly used by elder males to enforce patriarchal power over women and young men. Women and children, being the subordinate groups, do not usually use proverbs in front of men. However, in older age, women are able to forego some aspects of their femininity and assume a more masculine role in which they join hands with elder males to exert social control over younger women and men. Proverbs are mostly used in rural, informal setting in which proverbs are considered a prestige variety of language. Some speakers intentionally learn and use more proverbs to gain prestige in rural and informal contexts. The opposite occurs in urban areas where educated men and women working in formal institutional contexts avoid using proverbs because proverbs do not hold a prestigious position in a formal context. In such contexts, formal speech would get more prestige.

On another level, the older uneducated classes adhere to proverbs (as signifiers of 'traditional' knowledge) as a resource to maintain their power share in the traditional power structure, while the younger educated classes, some of whom are also aware of sexism in proverbs, do not use them as a way of resisting the traditional power structure. Instead, this new generation of educated men and women use their modern education and multi-lingual resources to define their educated status and superior 'modern' knowledge in order to express their distinction from the older generation and rural/uneducated classes.

Finally, this chapter also argued that women make strategic use of proverbs for their own interests, their interpretation of some proverbs differs from that of men, and some proverbs are exclusively used by women to criticise, undermine, and destabilise patriarchy.

## Conclusion of the Thesis

This section summarises the major findings and arguments concluded from the study on linguistic sexism and gender relations in Pashto proverbs. I will explain that proverbs are ideological tools for reproduction of gender relations. As such, the production of proverbs seems to be unequal, with most proverbs seeming to have originated from men. The reporting and speaking of proverbs is also unequal as some participants in the study reported them more than others and some sections of society, especially males and elders, have more right to use them. This suggests that proverbs can be considered as a display of power and social status. At the same time, proverbs' speaking is also a strategy to negotiate one's gendered social boundaries. I will also show that the methodology adopted in this thesis has resulted in a more thorough analysis of gender relations in proverbs compared to previous studies on the subject.

This study finds truth in Dupree's statement that proverbs and folklore "tend to perpetuate the existing social system rather than challenging it" (1979:51), as well as Guillaumin's (1995) argument that sexism and racism are the ideological facets of unequal social relations which they contribute to legitimate and perpetuate. This study suggests that proverbs present a 'given' reality, and in the context of the present study, a 'patriarchal reality', transmitted in a ready-made form to the present and new generations. Proverbs are discourses of sexist and patriarchal ideology which help interpret and reinforce the viewpoint of the dominant group.

This thesis has argued that speakers of the same language may have unequal access to the use of proverbs, meaning that not all groups can equally use and manipulate proverbs for negotiating their varied identities. This is evident from proverbs reporting and speaking behaviour of the participants discussed in chapters 5 and 6 of the thesis. It was shown that overall, men reported more proverbs than women, uneducated participants reported more proverbs than educated participants; older participants reported more proverbs than younger, and rural participants reported more proverbs than their urban counterparts. Amongst all the participants, older uneducated men and women reported three times more proverbs than educated participants of the same age group (see section 5.1, especially Table 5.6). These findings are supported by sociolinguistic patterns. For example, scholars believe that proverbs as a genre of cultural production and as a source of authority is the



domain of men, and as such, men are inclined to use them more often than women (e.g., Schipper, 2004; Kerschen, 2012; Webster, 1986; Sumner, 1995; Fakoya, 2007). Additionally, sociolinguistic studies (e.g., Milroy, 1987) have shown that people living in 'tight networks' (such as Pashtun women who are largely isolated from the outside world) are less likely to learn new linguistic features (such as proverbs). Duru (1980) has argued that in Nigeria, male children learn to use proverbs more quickly compared to female children. In terms of age, it is an established fact that people use language appropriate to their age group (Labov, 1994; Murphy, 2010; Tagliamonte, 2011) and because proverbs are culturally associated with elders (Siran, 1993; Briggs, 1985; Yankah, 2001; Madumulla, 2001; Penfield & Duru, 1988), young people are less likely than elders to report and use proverbs. Previous studies have recognised that western-oriented education and urban lifestyles have an effect on the knowledge and use of proverbs among people (e.g., Arewa and Dundes, 1964; Yankah, 1982; Duru, 1980; Penfield and Duru, 1988). Although proverbs are context-bound figures of speech and the reporting of them may not correspond to their actual usage, this study has found that there is a clear link between reporting and usage. In chapter 6 of this thesis it was shown, for example, that male elders use more proverbs than women and children and that uneducated participants use more proverbs than educated people.

The 518 gendered proverbs analysed in this thesis revealed that most of the proverbs speak from a man's perspective and in their 'language'; women's voices are grossly underrepresented in proverbs. This is evident in the fact that women are the target of 362 (70%) of the total proverbs, compared to men who are the target of only 130 (25%) of proverbs. Of these, women are negatively represented in 72%, while men appear negatively in 40% of the total proverbs. When it comes to positivity in proverbs, the opposite is the case: men are viewed positively in 48% of the proverbs while women appear positively only 10% of the time (see table 5.7 and table 5.9). This confirms the common observation by many scholars that proverbs are mostly negative about women (Webster, 1986; Schipper, 1991, 2004; Nakhavaly & Sharifi, 2013). For example, Nakhavaly & Sharifi (2013:195) have found that in the corpus of Iranian proverbs, 84% of the negative proverbs were against women while only 16% were against men". In one collection of Oromo proverbs, Sumner (1995:327) found sixteen proverbs on the topic of women; almost all were negative. This seems to be due to two factors; firstly, there are actually more negative and fewer positive proverbs about women, and secondly, proverbs

collection has been a male dominated activity which has ignored negative proverbs about men. These two issues are further discussed later in this section.

The results of this research project are similar to most previous studies on the representation of women and the construction of gender relations in proverbs reviewed in chapter one. Previous studies have found that proverbs present a negative view of women (e.g., Kerschen, 2012; Asimeng-Boahene, 2013; Schipper, 2004; Fakoya, 2007; Balogun, 2010; Oha, 1998; Hussein, 2009; Ennaji, 2008; and Webster, 1982).

Proverbs have been discussed in chapter 5 to show how they fall in line with Walby's (1990) theory of patriarchy, Connells' (1995) concepts of hegemonic masculinity, and Barrett (1988) and Giulliamin's (1995) idea of the ideological reproduction of gender relations. Pashto proverbs depict women as economically and socially dependent on men. Women are mostly presented relationally to men in the capacity of daughter, sister, wife, mother etc. while men are either independent of these relations or presented as protectors and providers in the capacity of son, brother, father or husband. Women are associated with the home and household management, with proverbs showing women in the public sphere almost non-existent. Most proverbs portray a negative image of women and their actions often more negatively. Where women's actions are positively recognised, men are the primary beneficiaries of these positive features or actions of women. Proverbs show that men's honour is dependent on women (*"A man's honour lies between the legs of his woman"* and *"A Pashtun dies in defence of either women or land"*.) and the person who can keep check on women is considered an honourable man. Proverbs represent idealised forms of masculinity and femininity and promote a masculine view of the world at the expense of women, whose version is far less represented in linguistic resources (Walby, 1990; Spender, 1980). While masculinity is judged by a man's *ghairat and namus* (pride and honour), femininity is judged by the concepts of *"haya"* (modesty) and *"sharam"* (shame) which encapsulate the ideal virtues of femininity of Pashtun culture. Men are presented as tough and brave (*"A woman is not tired of jewellery and a man of a sword"*), women are advised to be modest in body and speech (*"Modesty is the name of a woman"*); to keep silent at all time (*"The earth and Pashtun woman do [should] not speak"*); and to keep away from mingling with men (*"A girl who play with boys will grow a tail"*). Sons are preferred over daughters (*"A home that does not have a male child should be demolished"*) and their physical health is a matter of more concern (*"Unless you have survived small pox, you are not my son"*). Daughters on the other hand are not welcomed, and giving birth to a daughter is considered a lesser achievement (*"Better give birth to*

*daughter than squatting idle*”). Proverbs advise marrying girls off early as a strategy to keep a check on their sexuality. Men’s fear of women’s sexuality is a major theme in Pashto proverbs (“*A girl’s father is never at rest*” and “*God knows the chastity of a blind man’s wife*”). Proverbs represent women as agents of evil and indiscipline and as the source of most moral problems in the society. Women are equated with the devil (“*Where the devil himself cannot go, he sends an old women*”; “*Woman goes seven steps ahead of the devil*” and “*Women’s gossips breeds evil*”). Men are advised to beware of their trickery and to keep them in check (“*Beware of the danger of woman, a tilted wall, and a mad dog*” and “*Always keep the sword, woman, and the horse under your hand*”). In these findings, this study goes some way to contribute to the findings of studies by Schipper (2004), Hussein, (2009) in highlighting that there are more similarities than differences in proverbs about gender relations across cultures and continents. This also suggests that the foundation of patriarchy is basically the same everywhere.

Sexist proverbs emphasise men’s positive and women’s negative qualities, and deemphasise their converse qualities. For example, “*The name (status) of husband is the name (status) of God*” and “*A young man is better even if he is made of straws*”) emphasise and exaggerate a positive image of men but present women in highly negative form, e.g., “*A women goes seven foot ahead of the devil*” and “*Women’s tongue measure twenty meters*”). This is exactly what Teun A. van Dijk (1997) has said about racist and sexist ideological discourse: “Basically, the overall strategy of most ideological discourse is a very general one: ... Emphasize positive things about Us; Emphasize negative things about Them; De-emphasize negative things about Us; De-emphasize positive things about Them (1997:44, caps original). The corpus of proverbs collected for this study also show how most proverbs are addressed to men, who are advised to do certain things (e.g., “*Keep women under your hand...*”) or refrain from doing certain things (e.g., “*Ruined is the man who listens to the advice of women*”). Women are mostly talked about rather than addressed in proverbs (e.g., “*Women’s tongue measures twenty meters*”). In this way women are given the status of passive object, not an active subject in proverbs. That is the reason why there are more proverbs in the corpus about women (361) compared to men (130). In other words, men are the ‘us’, women are the ‘they’ or the ‘others’ in most proverbs. Women seldom appear as active subjects in proverbs. However, when they are

the agent in proverbs, their actions are presented mostly negatively (e.g., “*When two women sit together, they have in their hand the hairs of a third woman*”<sup>120</sup>).

Pashto proverb usage can be viewed as the “strategic social use of metaphors” (Seitel, 1976). This thesis has also presented how ethnic and gender relations are articulated and negotiated through proverbs. Based on the theoretical approach of “folklore as performance” and “ethnography of speaking” (Bouman, 1975; Hyme, 1962; Seitel, 1976; Arewa & Dundes 1964), it has been argued that Pashto proverbs are far from being completely ‘fixed’ and ‘frozen’ sayings. Rather, proverb speaking is a *performance in context* during which a speaker can choose or reject to use a proverb, may be stressing certain aspects of it or manipulating fixed sayings to suit their own interests at stake at the time of interaction. Due to the metaphorical and figurative language that makes up proverbial language, it is possible for the speaker to transform its meaning according to the situational requirement. The meaning of a proverb is negotiable, constrained, and conditioned by strategic and contextual factors (Yankah, 1983). While proverbs as ‘texts’ seem to present a more fixed view of reality, proverbs as ‘performance in context’ suggest that different speakers may use proverbs for different purposes, such as strategies to establish their ethnic or gendered identities, and to negotiate the variable power based on the age, gender, class, and ethnicity of the interlocutors.

The thesis confirms Bartlotti’s (2000:385) observation that “proverbs communicate primary symbols and values of Pashtun culture”. The core symbols and values of Pashtun cultures were discussed in chapter 3 of the thesis where it was noted that the concept of Pashtunwali sums up Pashtun values and is the main cultural framework that defines the Pashtun notions of self and ‘other’, honour and shame, masculinity and femininity, and other important aspects which determine gender relations. Pashtuns utilise proverbs to draw and maintain ethnic boundaries with other groups. In other words, proverbs content and quoting behaviour are examples of media for the reassertion and symbolic expression of ethnic boundaries. For example, it was shown that Punjabis are the significant proverbial “other” whose un-Pashtun qualities are explicitly contrasted with those of the Pashtun. It was argued in the thesis that ‘othering’ and ‘gendering’ (or ‘racism’ and ‘sexism’) are often linked in proverbial speech. The Pashtun are quick to point out the sexual ‘liberty’ and freedom of women of other communities in order to ‘prove’ that their

---

<sup>120</sup> Meaning that women gossip and create scandals against each other.

way of life is better and that Pashtun women live a more respectful life if compared with other ethnic groups.

This thesis has argued that proverbs follow on from the exertion of power. The power structure of Pashtun society in which men have power over women and elders have power over younger members of the society determine who can or cannot use proverbs. In other words, proverb speaking is dependent on one's position in the power hierarchy. Proverbs are sources of traditional power mostly used by elder males to enforce patriarchal values over women and men. Women and children, being the subordinate groups, do not usually use proverbs in front of men. However, in older age, women are able to forego some aspects of their femininity and assume a more masculine role in which they join elder men in 'correcting' younger men and women. It was noted that proverbs are mostly used in rural, informal settings in which proverbs are considered a prestige variety of language. The interviews discovered that the opposite happened in urban, formal contexts in which educated working men and women avoid using proverbs because they do not hold a prestigious position in formal settings.

The thesis has argued that proverb speaking or not speaking is also a source of maintaining one's class boundaries and distinctions (Bourdieu, 1984). The older uneducated class adheres to proverbs as a means to maintain their share of the traditional power structure, while younger educated classes, some of whom are also aware of sexism in proverbs, do not use them. By doing this, the younger educated class is signalling their resisting against or breaking away from traditional structures of power. Instead, this new generation of educated men and women use their modern education and multi-lingual recourse (particularly code-switching from Pashto to English) to define their 'modern', educated status and superior knowledge. In this way, they distinguish themselves from the rural, uneducated, older generation.

Previous studies have argued that most proverbs originate from men to express their jealousy and fear of women, and maintain that seldom proverbs originate from women due to patriarchal structures of cultural production throughout history (e.g., Kerschen, 2012; Schipper, 2004; Dieleman, 1998; Thorburn, 1978; Balogum, 2010). For example, Kerschen (2012:9) argues that "logic suggests [that] women have seldom originated proverbs since men have historically dominated literature and society". Analysis of the research conducted in this thesis finds cause for disagreement with this view. It is true that most proverbs seem to have originated from men, but to say that women have not originated

proverbs of their own does not seem to be true. On the contrary, I have argued and have shown in the thesis (section 6.6) that a number of proverbs clearly appear to have originated from women. I believe that previous scholars have been erroneous in their conclusions because of certain methodological weaknesses in their studies. As discussed in chapter 1 in detail, the major limitation of previous studies has been that they have not personally collected proverbs in the field. Crucially, most previous studies have neglected to even interview women at all. Rather, these scholars have worked with previously collected proverb compendiums. Furthermore, I have argued that published collections are largely gender-blind and gender biased because almost all of them have been compiled by males who have purposefully or accidentally ignored women's proverbs, or have not bothered to collect proverbs from women speakers. This observation applies even more so to the Pashto collections: out of more than a dozen Pashto proverbs collections I am aware of, not one bears a woman's name as its collector or editor. Jordan and Kalcik (1985:xi) have rightly criticised the gender blindness of paremiology: "Folklore studies... have described women as men see (or don't see) them. A tendency to see the world in male terms has influenced what kind of data folklorists have looked for and from whom, and also what data they have actually collected and from whom". Farrer (1975) makes similar observations, arguing that women's folklore genres have accorded attention only if they fit in with the prevailing image of women and that folklore data and theories are based on only half (the male half) of the relevant data. Therefore, my hypothesis is that the analysis of gender in relation to proverbs requires more fieldwork, especially first-hand collecting of proverbs *from* both men and women *by* both men and women

The methodological approach used in this study is distinctive from most previous studies: proverbs were selected from previously published sources as well as by conducting intensive fieldwork interviews among the local speakers of the Pashto language. Moreover, proverbs analysed in this study were collected by a team of male-female researchers (myself and three female research assistants). Furthermore, proverbs were collected from both men and women, speakers of different age groups, educational status, and localities. This more inclusive approach has enabled the discovery that Pashtun women have their own proverbs in which they criticise patriarchal structures such as dependency on male, compulsory marriage, polygamy, unrequited love, and bad marital relations. They express their critical voices against patriarchy through certain women-centred proverbs. Additionally, it has been shown that women may sometimes use the same proverb differently than men by creatively manipulating a more general proverb to their advantage.

This finding supports results of recent studies on proverbs conducted by Yita (2006a, 2006b, 2009), who found that African women use proverbs to undermine patriarchy and contest gender relations by ‘proverbial jesting’.

Most of the Pashto proverbs about husbands in the corpus collected for this thesis, along with proverbs about relationships amongst co-wives, sisters-in-law, mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law have been coined by women. Still, the corpus of 518 proverbs includes more male-centred proverbs than those speaking women’s voices. This provides strong evidence to the claim that proverbs are primarily a masculine form of speech (Granbom-Herranen, 2010:100) and tools of patriarchal ideology. The dominant ideology will never let the views of the dominated class flourish, even in the form of folklore.

That being said, it is possible to see women’s expression in other kinds of folklore. This is visible in Pashto *tappas* (short-songs), a more ‘female’ genre among the various Pashto folklores. This thesis confirms findings in other literature that *tappas* are used by women more than men, and most of these *tappas* are the expressions of women’s feelings, desires and aspirations (e.g., Shaheen, 1984). I have referred to some of these folksongs in the thesis which indeed show that most *tappas* are expressing women’s sorrows, complaints, fears – in other words, their emotions. It was mentioned that proverbs are associated with wisdom and reason; in that case *tappas* are associated with emotions and feelings. This conceptual dichotomy between men/reason and women/emotion is a fundamental aspect of most (patriarchal) societies. From a functionalist perspective, women’s songs could be interpreted as a “safety-valves” in which “women are afforded an opportunity to express their bottled-up feelings and longings in a socially acceptable form” (Srivastava, 1991:269). From the perspective of social and cultural reproduction, these songs could be interpreted as sites and spaces for alternative voices, as “weapons of the weak” (Scott, 1985) through which women resist, criticise and defy dominant discourses. I believe that these songs provide a veiled opportunity to Pashtun women through which they vicariously achieve what they cannot imagine possible in real life: they can criticise what they want, can imaginatively cross the boundary of modest speech and other such defiant and deviant acts without being judged. This aspect of *tappas* finds similarities in the Bedouin (Egypt) poetic genre called *ghinnawas* (little songs) studied by Abu-Lughod (1986), which provide women with a culturally constituted and accepted discourse “to give voice to those personal sentiments that seem to violate the cultural ideals” (Abu-Lughod, 1986:238).

Another way of analysing women's song and proverbs is to look for women's 'demands' as they occur in women's folklore; that is, to see what women lack and miss in their lives, to see who has the power to give them these things, and what their relationships are with those who hold that power. For example, proverbs and *tappas* discussed in this thesis show that women's demands includes proper marital performance by the husband, they want a home of their own where they do not have to share emotional and economic resources with other women (sister-in-law, co-wife etc.); they want to be independent in kitchen-related affairs and be able to perform their version of honourable Pashtunwali, to be able to give gifts to their friends without interference from the men of the household. One female participant referred to these things and said that "women want to be a queen of small things" (Farzana, 30, f, e). These small things could be matters requiring huge amounts of negotiation for women, which can be located in their folklore. A closer comparison of women's proverbs and *tappas* with those of men's reveals that men's proverbs are direct, women's are indirect; men's proverbs mostly talks about women as general category, women's proverbs mostly target a specific man (mostly the husband). Another feature of women's folklore is that these are mostly in the form of 'prayers' or 'complaints'. For example, the two proverbs "*May I be the sister of a brother, but I may not be dependent of him*" and "*May I be a guest in my fathers' home but not the host*" are both prayers in their linguistic structures. Examples of 'complaint' proverbs would be "*He will fuck you but will also laugh at your vagina*", and "*On the one hand I give birth to a stillborn girl; on the other hand I have to face people's taunts*". The *tappas* noted in chapter 6 are mostly prayers (e.g., "*My body is mine, but controlled by others // Oh God, take back this puppet body*"). Folklorists have noted that complaint, prayers, and cursing are effectively used by women who are unable to react physically, particularly against men: "Under such circumstances, cursing remains the only way to demonstrate emotional reaction such as anger, or hatred of unfair treatment" (Vanci-Osam, 1998:75). This brings about the question of how effective these "every day forms of [proverbial] resistance" (Scott, 1985) are in achieving their ends? Are they capable of inflecting cracks in the solid walls of patriarchal castles or are they no more than just "rituals of resistance" (Gutmann, 1993). I want to leave the question unanswered. However, I believe that the "weapons of the weak" (Scott, 1985) will be weak in the literal sense. My experience is that Pashtun men do not feel any real threat from this 'weak' weaponry of women. Moreover, these weapons are *indirect*, not specific to named individuals. To paraphrase Scott (1985: xvii), everyday acts of resistance from women make no headlines in the circles of patriarchal ideologue; therefore, men largely ignore them.



This research has also contributed by collecting 518 Pashto proverbs about gender relations, among which 147 are collected from the field for the first time. This is not only hugely important from the viewpoint of gender and folklore research, but even more vital from a paremiographical point of view. Such an attempt is unknown in Pakistan. In other cultures, scholars have compiled proverbs about “women” (cf. Schipper, 1991, 2004; Kerschen, 2012, etc.). The identification of 147 new proverbs on one specific topic (gender relations) proves the argument made in the thesis that available compendiums of Pashto proverbs are incomplete and that a significant number of proverbs are yet to be gathered. Proverb scholars should take a special note of this point.

Pashtun women do not belong to ‘either the home or the grave’: though a majority of Pashtun women are still housewives and are not engaged in paid jobs outside the home, a growing number of Pashtun women go to school, teach in universities, some are anchoring on national TV, other are busy making laws in parliament. Proverbs seem to be behind the times; they do not fully represent the contemporary status of Pashtun women. Rather, the study suggests that Pashto proverbs usage is in decline among the younger generations due to more formal education practices in Urdu and English, alongside the gradual takeover of traditional institutions – where proverbs are mostly used and learnt – by more formal institutions. An additional factor for the gradual decline of proverbs usage is urbanisation. It was noted that proverbs are mostly used when both speaker and listener speak the same language. This is not often possible in urban areas where people from multi-lingual backgrounds live together. Despite this, it was noted that being ideological discourse, proverbs change their medium and content with the changing conditions in society. Sexist Pashto proverbs have entered mass media, especially Pashto TV serials. Pashto proverbs have also entered social media discourse through which these proverbs are circulated to a large number of recipients with one click. Sexist proverbial discourses also change their content to fit changes in society. Schipper (2004) and Mariam (1995) have found that newly coined sexist proverbs borrow metaphors from technological domains and use more recent images (as compared to archaic vocabulary which is a feature of more proverbs). I have avoided discussing these aspects of Pashto proverbs. However, I have observed people coining sexist proverbs to fit in with perceptions of these younger generations. For example, a proverb recently shared by one of my Pashtun ‘Facebook friends’ reads: “*The three fastest means of communication are telephone, television and a tell-a-woman*”. Another Facebook friend translated a Chinese proverb and shared it on Facebook: “*Beware of red chilli and a beautiful woman*”. When Benazir Bhutto became the Prime Minister of

Pakistan, a proverb was coined and quickly became known throughout Pakistan: “*Even if a woman becomes Benazir, she will sleep under Zardari*”.<sup>121</sup> This shows that as long as sexist ideologies exist, sexist discourse will continue to appear and reappear in new shapes.

One question I asked some of my participants was how to change the discriminatory proverbs and gender relations in Pashtun culture. Some participants offered their recommendations without being asked. The question is: What to do with sexist proverbs? Should we leave them as they are and allow them to continue painting a negative image of Pashtun women? Or, should we take an emancipatory position by suggesting a change in these proverbs to liberate men and women from their negative effects? At least two suggestions came from my educated participants, one female and one male:

“I think we should destroy these [sexist] proverbs in some way”

(Saima, 41, f, e).

“Many Pashto proverbs seem out-dated to me, they were mostly coined in the past, may be in 17<sup>th</sup> century. I think we need new proverbs for the new century”

(Ashar, 29, m, e).

The suggestion from Saima sounds good but seems far from practical. To destroy sexist proverbs in ‘*some way*’ shows an uncertainty of how it can be practically achieved. Proverbs are not some material ‘things’ to be crushed between two stones, nor can we force speakers not to use proverbs. Ashar has hinted towards the possibility of coining new proverbs to replace old and out-dated ones. In fact, Meider (2007) and Mokitimi (1995) have convincingly demonstrated that new proverbs are indeed being coined.

Keeping this in mind, some scholars looking at gender and sexist proverbs have suggested (and have themselves attempted) to convert sexist proverbs to be gender neutral or to look positive altogether. In the context of sexist proverbs in Africa, Raji-Oyelade (1999) has called for a “post-proverbial exercise” which involves a reconstructive engagement with some sexist African proverbs. The author refers to this exercise as “a normative rupture in the production [and interpretation] of this traditional verbal genre”, and it results in the emergence of “new proverbs with new forms, new meanings, and, perhaps, new values” (Raji-Oyelade 1999:75). Yitah (2006a, 2006b, 2009) has shown that some women intentionally created anti-proverbs to counter sexist proverbs. Attending to the call from Raji-Oyelade, Balogun (2010) urged African women to engage with sexist proverbs and

<sup>121</sup> Zardari is the name of the husband of Benazir Bhutto. A number of other sexist jokes-cum-proverbs were coined during Benazir’s government. For example, “*When it is night, Zardari f\*\*ks Benazir; when it is day, Benazir f\*\*ks Pakistan*”. (Note: this thesis does not include the collection and analysis of such newly coined proverbs).

rupture those that do not accurately present full notions of personhood. Balogun even attempted to kick off this “post-proverbial exercise” by de/reconstructing old and sexist proverbs. She argues that “by so doing, it is expected that traditional patriarchal proverbial representations will gradually be deconstructed to allow for the true liberation and empowerment of women” (Balogun, 2010:32). Other scholars have called upon schools where proverbs are part of the curriculum to exclude sexist proverbs from being taught to children. It would be appropriate to suggest that the media should be sensitised to refrain from using sexist proverbs to limit the perpetuation of gender stereotypes in the public sphere.

In my view, a more practical and a more fruitful way of dealing with sexist proverbs is not to hide and try to forget them, but in fact to highlight them, and utilise them as pedagogical tools for creating awareness against sexism. In other words, it is possible to use the same proverbs to promote awareness of sexist and racist stereotypes, so that individual goals are not hampered by traditional values. By teaching children (and adults) the ways proverbs encode and promote sexism, racism, and other prejudices and inequalities we can achieve the goal of deconstructing the view that proverbs are ‘given’ and ‘eternal’ truths.

In short, this thesis has analysed proverbs, the smallest folkloric genre, in the hope to learn some big lessons about the gendered world of the Pashtun people. I have shown that the artistic verbal communication using proverbs is one of the social processes by which actors construct, negotiate and express symbolic understandings of the self and ‘other’, ethnic, gender, and class identities. The study provided evidence of how proverbs are mostly sexist discourse and their continued performance in everyday speech contributes to the social construction and reproduction of patriarchal gendered ideology. I have argued that proverbs are ways of ‘doing’ Pashto, through which the Pashtun define themselves and Pashtunwali. I have argued that proverbs are weapons of verbal attack to defend oneself and position during social interaction. I have explored various ways actors draw upon and manipulate the symbolic meanings embodied in proverbs to achieve their own social ends. I have argued that proverbs are a means of social control and their speaking follows the same direction as the exercise of power within society. They are mostly used by men and elders to shape and maintain the existing gender relations. We have also seen politicised and subversive meanings associated with proverbs, and the way proverbs give autonomous ‘voices’ and social space for dissension to actors, both male and female. Most of these proverbs contain ‘voices from above’ – that is, the voices of the dominant group; but some of them also contain ‘voices from below’ (i.e., of the marginalised, subordinate, and

subaltern groups). The message of the thesis is that rather than considering folk proverbs as 'factual' and 'valuable' sources of cultural expression, scholars should pay more attention to their 'performatory' aspects as most of these are products of dominant gender ideology. The expression "old is gold" with respect to proverbs may be reconsidered to acknowledge that seemingly "golden sayings" may actually be "golden chains" of patriarchy which sustain asymmetrical gender relations in society.

## References

- Abraham, M. (2000). *Speaking the Unspeakable: Marital Violence among South Asian Immigrants in the United States*, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Abrahams, R. D. (1968). Introductory Remarks to a Rhetorical Theory of Folklore, *Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 81, pp.44–159.
- Abrahams, R. D. (1969). The Complex Relations of Simple Forms, *Genre*, Vol. 2, pp.104–128.
- Abrahams, R. D. (1972). “Proverbs and Proverbial Expressions”, In R. M. Dorson (ed.) *Folklore and Folklife*, Chicago, Cambridge University Press, pp.117–127.
- Abu-Lughod, Lila. (1986). *Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
- Abu-Lughod, Lila. (1990). The Romance of Resistance: Tracing Transformation of Power through Bedouin Women, *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 17, No. 1, pp.41–51.
- Acker, Joan. (1989). The Problem with Patriarchy, *Sociology*, Vol. 23, No. 2, pp.235–240
- Adeleye-Fayemi, B. (1994). *Gender, Sexuality, and Popular Culture in Nigeria*, Evanston, IL: Program of African Studies, Northwestern University, No. 8, pp.1–2.
- Adler, P. A. and Adler, P. (2012). “Expert Voices”, In Baker, S. E., & Edwards, R. (eds.) *How Many Qualitative Interviews is Enough? Expert Voices and Early Career Reflections on Sampling and Cases in Qualitative Research*, National Centre For Research Methods (Discussion Paper), pp.8-11, [Online]  
<<http://eprints.ncrm.ac.uk/2273/>> [Accessed: June 02, 2014].
- Afary J. (1998). The War against Feminism in The Name of the Almighty: Making Sense of Gender and Muslim Fundamentalism, *New Left Review*, Vol. 224, pp.89–110.
- Ahearn, L. M. (2001). Language and Agency, *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 30, pp.109–137.
- Ahmad, Amineh. (2005). Death and Celebration among Muslim Women: A Case Study from Pakistan, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 4, pp.929–980.
- Ahmad, Amineh. (2006). *Sorrow and Joy among Muslim Women: The Pakhtuns of*
- Ahmed, A. S. (1975). *Mataluna: Pukhto Proverb*, Oxford University Press, Karachi.
- Ahmed, A. S. (1976). *Millennium and Charisma among Pathans: A Critical Essay in Social Anthropology*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Ahmed, A. S. (1980). *Pukhtun Economy and Society: Traditional Structure and Economic Development in a Tribal Society*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.

- Akbarian, Is'haaq. (2012). What Counts as a Proverb? The Case of NTC's Dictionary of Proverbs and Clichés, *Lexikos*, Vol. 22, pp.1–19.
- Akhtar, M. Akhtar. (1997). *Da Pakhto Mataloona (Pashto Proverbs)* [in Pashto], Swat, Shoaib Sons Publishers.
- Akram-Lodhi, & Haroon. A. (1996). 'You Are Not Excused From Cooking': Peasants and the Gender Division of Labor in Pakistan, *Feminist Economics*, Vol. 2, No. 2, pp.87–105.
- Ali, Kamran, Sardar. (2001). Women, Work and Public Spaces: Conflict and Coexistence in Karachi's Poor Neighbourhoods, *International Journal of Urban and regional Research*, Vol. 36, No. 3, pp.585–605.
- Alkozi, Talash. (2007). *Ulashi Ghwara Mataloona (Esteemed Folk Proverbs)* [in Pashto], Peshawar, Danish Publishers.
- Amir, Menachem. (1971). *Patterns in Forcible Rape*, Chicago, Chicago University Press.
- Amnesty International. (1999). *Pakistan: Violence against Women in the Name of Honor*, Karachi, Pakistan.
- Amnesty International. (2002). *Pakistan: Insufficient Protection of Women*, Karachi, Pakistan.
- Amnesty International. (2004). *Making Violence against Women Count: Facts and Figures - a Summary*, News Service No: 50, [Online]  
<<http://www.amnesty.org.au/svaw/comments/2370/>> [Accessed: November 06, 2014].
- Anderson, Jon. (1982). Social Structure and the Veil: Comportment and the Composition of Interaction in Afghanistan, *Anthropos*, Vol. 77, No. 4, pp.397–420.
- Anderson, Jon. (1985). Sentimental Ambivalence and the Exegesis of "Self" in Afghanistan, *Anthropological Quarterly*, Vol. 58, No. 4, pp.203–211.
- Anthias, Floya. (2001). The Concept of 'Social Division' and Theorising Social Stratification: Looking at Ethnicity and Class, *Sociology*, Vol. 35, pp.835–854.
- Anthony, Laurence (2005) AntConc: Design and Development of a Freeware Corpus Analysis Toolkit for the Technical Writing Classroom, *IEEE International Professional Communication Conference Proceedings*, pp.729–737.
- Antoun, Richard T. (1968). On the Modesty of Women in Arab Muslim Villages: A Study in the Accommodation of Traditions, *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 70, No. 4, pp.671–697.
- Arewa, E. O., & Dundes, Alan. (1964). Proverbs and the Ethnography of Speaking Folklore, *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 66, No. 6, pp.70–85.

- Arnold, F.; Choe, M. K. & Roy, T. K. (1998). Son Preference, the Family-building Process and Child Mortality in India, *Population Studies: A Journal of Demography*, Vol. 52, No. 3, pp.301–315.
- Arnold, Fred. (1987). The Effect of Sex Preference on Fertility and Family Planning: Empirical Evidence, *Population Bulletin of the United Nations*, Vol. 23–24, pp.44–55.
- Arnold, Fred. (1992). Sex Preference and its Demographic and Health Implications, *International Family Planning Perspectives*, Vol. 18, pp.93–101.
- Arnold, Fred. (1997). *Gender Preference for Children*, DHS Comparative Studies No. 23. Calverton, Maryland: Macro International. Hills, California, Sage Publications.
- Arora, S. L. (1984). The Perception of Proverbiality, *Proverbium: Year Book of International Proverb Scholarship*, Vol. 1, pp.1–38.
- Asian Development Bank. (2009). Asian Development Bank and Pakistan: Fact Sheet. Islamabad, Pakistan: [Online]  
<[http://www.adb.org/Documents/Fact\\_Sheets/PAK.pdf](http://www.adb.org/Documents/Fact_Sheets/PAK.pdf)> [Accessed: January 04, 2012].
- Asimeng-Boahene, Lewis. (2013). The Social Construction of Sub-Saharan Women's Status through African Proverbs, *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 4, No. 1, pp.123–131.
- Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and Commonwealth. (1999). Ethical Guidelines for Good Research Practice, (Online)  
<<http://www.theasa.org/ethics/guidelines.shtml>> [Accessed: February 12, 2015].
- Atkinson, K. (1993). "Language and Gender", In Jackson, S. *et al.* (eds.) *Women's Studies: A Reader*, Hertfordshire, Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Austin, J. L. (1962). *How to Do Things with Words*, Oxford, Clarendon Press.
- Bailey, Guy. (2002). *The Handbook of Language Variation and Change*, Oxford, Blackwell.
- Baker, S. E., & Edwards, R. (2012). *How Many Qualitative Interviews is Enough? Expert Voices and Early Career Reflections on Sampling and Cases in Qualitative Research*, National Centre For Research Methods (Discussion Paper), [Online]  
<<http://eprints.ncrm.ac.uk/2273/>> [Accessed: June 02, 2014].
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. (1981). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M.M. Bakhtin*, (ed.) Michael Holquist, Translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, Austin, University of Texas Press.
- Ballesteros, O. A. (1979). Mexican Proverbs: The Philosophy, Wisdom and Humour of a People, Burnet, Texas, Eakin Press.

- Balogum, O. A. (2010). Proverbial Oppression of Women in Yoruba African Culture: A Philosophical Overview, *Thought and Practice: A Journal of Philosophical Overview of Kenya, New Series*, Vol. 2, No.1, pp.21–36.
- Bari, F. (1998). “Gender, Disaster, and Empowerment: A Case Study from Pakistan”, In Enarson and Morrow (eds.), *The Gendered Terrain of Disaster*, Westport, Connecticut, Greenwood, pp.125–132.
- Bari, F. (2000). *Country Briefing Paper: Women in Pakistan*, Islamabad, Pakistan: Asian Development Bank Programs Department and Office of Environment and Social Development.
- Bari, F. (2005). *Women’s Political Participation: Issues and Challenges, Report for United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW)*, [Online] <<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/enabling-environment2005/docs/EGM-WPD-EE-2005-EP.12%20%20draft%20F.pdf>> [Accessed: July 20, 2014].
- Barley, Nigel. (1972). A Structural Approach to the Proverb and Maxim with Special Reference to the Anglo-Saxon Corpus, *Proverbium: Yearbook of International Proverb Scholarship*, Vol. 20, pp.737–750.
- Barley, Nigel. (1974). The Proverb and Related Problems of Genre Definition, *Proverbium: Yearbook of International Proverb Scholarship*, Vol. 23, pp.880–884.
- Barrett, Michel. (1980). *Women’s Oppression Today: Problems in Marxist Feminist Analysis*, London, Verso.
- Barrett, Michele. (1988). “Ideology and the Cultural Production of Gender”, In Her *Women’s Oppression Today: The Marxist/Feminist Encounter* (Revised Edition), London, Verso, pp.84–113.
- Barth, F. (1959). *Political Leadership among Swat Pathans*, London, Athlone Press.
- Barth, F. (1969) “Pathan Identity and its Maintenance”, In F. Barth (ed). *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Cultural Differences*, London, George Allen and Unwin, pp.117–134.
- Bartlotti, L. N. (eds). (2006). “Introduction”, In Bartlotti, L. N. and Khattak, R. J. S. (eds.) *Ruhi Mataloona, Pashto Proverbs*, InterLit Foundation Peshawar and Pashto Academy, University of Peshawar.
- Bartlotti, L. N. and Khattak, R. J. S. (eds). (2006). *Ruhi Mataloona, Pashto Proverbs*, InterLit Foundation Peshawar and Pashto Academy, University of Peshawar.
- Bartlotti, Leonard N. (2000). Negotiating Pakhto: Proverbs, Islam and the Construction of Identity among Pashtuns. Unpublished Thesis (PhD), University of Wales, Oxford Centre for Mission Studies.
- Bascom, William R. (1965). “Four Functions of Folklore”, In Dundes, Alan (ed.) *The Study of Folklore*, Englewood Cliffs NJ:, Prentice-Hall, pp.279–291.



- Bauman, Richard. (1975). *Verbal Art as Performance*, Rowley, Mass., Newbury House Publishers.
- Bauman, Richard. (1992). "Folklore", In Richard Bauman (ed.). *Folklore, Cultural Performances, and Popular Entertainment: A Communication-centred Handbook*, Oxford University Press.
- Bauman, Z. (2000). *Liquid Modernity*, Cambridge, UK, Polity.
- BBC. (2013). *Taliban Continue to Target Schools*, [Online] 15 February 2013  
<<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-21479169>> [Accessed: July 12, 2014].
- Beechey, V. (1979). On Patriarchy, *Feminist Review*, Vol. 3, pp.66–82.
- Belyea, Andrew D. (2012). Colliding Discourses: The (Impossible?) Art of Persuasion in Afghanistan, *Journal of Military Experience*, Vol. 2: No. 1, pp.167–194.
- Ben-Amos, Dan. (1971). Toward a Definition of Folklore in Context, *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 84, No. 331, pp.3–15.
- Bennett, Katy. (2006). Kitchen Drama: Performances, Patriarchy and Power Dynamics in a Dorset Farmhouse Kitchen, *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography*, Vol. 13, No.2, pp.153–160.
- Bennett, Lynn. (1983). *Dangerous Wives and Sacred Sisters, Social and Symbolic Roles of High Caste Women in Nepal*, New York, Columbia University Press.
- Bergvall, V. L. (1999). Towards a Comprehensive Theory of Language and Gender, *Language and Society*, Vol. 28, pp.273–293.
- Bergvall, V. L., Bing, J, and Freed, A. (eds.) (1996), *Rethinking Language and Gender Research: Theory and Practice*, London, Longman.
- Berliner, D. & Fallen, D. J. (2008). Introduction to Special Section on Men Doing Anthropology, *Men and Masculinities, Special issues on Men doing Anthropology of Women*, Vol. 11, No. 2, pp.135–144.
- Berliner, David. (2008). The Anthropologist in the Middle of a Tug-of-War. *Men and Masculinities, Special issues on Men doing Anthropology of Women*, Vol. 11, No. 2, pp.174–185.
- Billaud, J. (2009). Visible Under the Veil: Dissimulation, Performance and Agency in an Islamic Public Space, *Journal of International Women's Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 1, pp.120–135.
- Blood, P. (1994). *Pakistan: A Country Study*, Washington, DC: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, [Online] <<http://purl.access.gpo.gov/GPO/LPS40523>> [Accessed: July 14, 2013].
- Boadi, L. (1972). "The Language of the Proverb in Akan" In Dorson, R. (ed.) *African Folklore*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press.

- Boesen, I. W. (1979). Women, Honour and Love: Some Aspects of Pashtoons' Women Lives in Eastern Afghanistan, *Folk*, Vol. 21–22, pp.228–239.
- Boeson, I. W. (1983). "Conflict and Solidarity among Pashtun Women's Lives", In Bo Utas (ed.) *Women in Islamic Societies*, London, Curzon Press, pp.104–127.
- Bourdieu, Pierre (1984). *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. (1977). *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Cambridge University Press.
- Bradley, Harriet. (1996). *Fractured Identities, Changing Patterns of Inequality*, Cambridge, Polity Press.
- Brah, A. & Phoenix, A. (2004) Ain't I A Woman? Revisiting Intersectionality, *Journal of International Women's Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 3, pp.75–86
- Brandes, Stanley. (2008). The Things We Carry, *Men and Masculinities, Special issues on Men doing Anthropology of Women*, Vol. 11, No. 2, pp.145–153.
- Briggs, Charles, L. (1985). The Pragmatics of Proverb Performances in New Mexico Spanish, *American Anthropologist, New Series*, Vol. 87, No. 4, pp.793–810.
- British Sociological Association. (2002). Statement of Ethical Practice for the British Sociological Association, (Online)  
<<http://www.britisoc.co.uk/media/27107/StatementofEthicalPractice.pdf?1423753403175>> [Accessed: February 12, 2015).
- Brownmiller, Susan. (1976). *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape*, Harmondsworth, Penguin.
- Bryman, A. (2008). *Social Research Methods* (3rd ed.), Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Bryson, V. (1999). *Feminist Debates: Issues of Theory and Political Practice*, London, Macmillan and Palgrave.
- Burgess, R. G. (1981). Keeping a Research Diary, *Cambridge Journal of Education*, Vol. 11, No. 1, pp.75–83.
- Burke, P and Peter, R. (eds.) (1987). *The Social History of Language*, Cambridge University Press.
- Butler, Judith. (1990). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, London, Routledge.
- Butler, Judith. (1993). *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*, London, Routledge.
- Butler, Judith. (2004). *Undoing Gender*, New York, Routledge.
- Cameron, D. (1990). *The Feminist Critique of Language*, New York, Routledge, Chapman, and Hall.

- Cameron, D. (1992). Review of Tannen 'You Just Don't Understand', *Feminist and Psychology*, Vol. 2, pp.465–8.
- Cameron, D. (1996). "The Language Gender Interface: Challenging Co-optation", In Victoria Bergvall, Janet Bing, and Alice Freed (eds.), *Rethinking Language and Gender Research: Theory and Practice*, London, Longman, pp.31–53.
- Cameron, D. (2005). Language, Gender and Sexuality: Current Issues and New Directions, *Applied Linguistics*, Vol. 26, No. 4, pp.482–502.
- Cameron, D., *et al.* (1988). "Lakoff in Context: The Social and Linguistic Functions of Tag Questions", In J. Coates, & Cameron, D. (eds.) *Women in Their Speech Communities*, New York, Longman, pp.74–93.
- Cameron, Deborah. (1995). *Verbal Hygiene*, London and New York, Routledge.
- Caplan, P. (1993). "Learning Gender: Fieldwork in a Tanzanian Coastal Village, 1965–85", In D. Bell, P. Caplan & W. J. Karim (eds.) *Gendered Fields: Women, Men and Ethnography*, London and New York, Routledge, pp.168–81.
- Caroe, O. (1958) *The Pathans, 550 BC to AD1957*, London, Macmillan.
- Carrington, K. (1994). Postmodernism and Feminist Criminologies: Disconnecting Discourses? *International Journal of the Sociology of Law*, Vol. 22, pp.261–277.
- Caton, Steven. (1990). *Peaks of Yemen I Summon*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
- Chambers, J. K. (1995). *Sociolinguistic Theory: Linguistic Variation and its Social Significance*, Oxford, Blackwell.
- Charon, J. M. (1993). *The Meaning of Sociology: A Reader*, (4th ed.) Englewood Cliffs, NJ:, Prentice Hall.
- Chawla, Devika. (2008). Poetic Arrivals and Departures: Bodying the Ethnographic Field in Verse, *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, Vol. 9, No. 2, Art. 24.
- Chong, Larry D. (2001). Cross-Linguistic Perspectives on Proverbs about Speech and Silence, *Studies in Modern Grammar*, Vol. 26, pp.179–196.
- Choo, H. Y. and Ferree, M. M. (2010). Practicing Intersectionality in Sociological Research: A Critical Analysis of Inclusions, Interactions, and Institutions in the Study of Inequalities, *Sociological Theory*, Vol. 28, No. 2, pp.129–149.
- Choo, Hae Yeon. (2006). Gendered Modernity and Ethnicized Citizenship: North Korean Settlers in Contemporary South Korea, *Gender & Society*, Vol. 20, No.5, pp.576–604.
- Chuchvaha, H. (2009). Book Review: 'Peoples of the World on Life and Death, Health and Illness, Patients and Physicians: Proverbs and Sayings', *Folklorica*, Vol. 14, pp.188–190.

- Coates, J. & Cameron, D. (eds.). (1988). *Women in their Speech Communities*, New York, Longman.
- Coates, Jennifer. (2004). *Women, Men and Language*, Edinburgh, Pearson Education Limited.
- Cockburn, C. (1991). *In the Way of Women: Men's Resistance to Sex Equality in Organizations*, London, UK, Macmillan.
- Coffey, A. & Atkinson, P. (1996). *Making Sense of Qualitative Data Analysis: Complementary Research Strategies*, London, Sage.
- Collins, Patricia Hill. (1990). *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, New York, Routledge.
- Collins, Patricia Hill. (2000). Gender, Black Feminism, and Black Political Economy, *Annals of American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 568, No.1, pp. 41–53.
- Connell, R. W. (1987). *Gender and Power*, Stanford, CA:, Stanford University Press.
- Connell, R. W. (1990). The State, Gender, and Sexual Politics, *Theory and Society*, Vol. 19, pp.507–544.
- Connell, R. W. (1993). The Big Picture: Masculinities in Recent World History, *Theory and Society*, Vol. 22, No. 5, pp.597–623.
- Connell, R. W. (1997). Gender Politics for Men, *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, Vol. 17, No. 1/2, pp.62–77.
- Connell, R. W. and Messerschmidt, J. W. (2005). Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept, *Gender & Society*, Vol. 19, No. 6, pp.829–859.
- Connell, R.W. (1995). *Masculinities*, Cambridge, Polity Press.
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (2nd ed), London, Sage.
- Critelli, F. M. (2010). Beyond the Veil in Pakistan, *Affilia: Journal of Women and Social Work*, Vol. 25, No. 3, pp.236–249.
- D'Angelo, F. J. (1977). Some Uses of Proverbs, *College Composition and Communication*, Vol. 28, No.4, pp.365–369.
- Darmesteter, James. (1888-1890). *Chants Populaires des Afghans*, Paris.
- Davis, Kathy. (2008). Intersectionality as Buzzword: A Sociology of Science Perspective on What Makes a Feminist Theory Successful, *Feminist Theory*, Vol. 9, No.8, pp.67–85.
- Dawood, D. K. (1990). *Pakhto Adab Ke Matal (Proverb in Pashto Literature)* [in Pashto], Peshawar, University Book Agency.

- Dawood, D. K. (2006). *Khushal aw Folklore [Khushal and Folklore]* [in Pashto], Peshawar, Pashto Academy, University of Peshawar.
- de Caro, F. A. (1983). *Women and Folklore: A Bibliographical Survey*, Westport, Conn., and London, Greenwood Press.
- Deuchar, Margaret. (1988). "A Pragmatic Account of Women's Use of Standard Speech", In Jennifer Coates & Deborah Cameron (eds.) *Women in Their Speech Communities*, London, Longman, pp.27–32.
- Dieleman, Jacco. (1998). Fear of Women? Representations of Women in Domestic Wisdom Texts, *Studies Zur Altgyptischen Kultur*, Vol. 25, pp.7–46.
- Dorn, Pamela J. (1986). Gender and Personhood: Turkish Jewish Proverbs and the Politics of Reputation, *Women's Study Int. Forum*, Vol. 9, No. 3, pp.295–301.
- Doyle, C. C. (1996). On 'New' Proverbs and the Conservativeness of Proverb Dictionaries, *Proverbium: Yearbook of International Proverb Scholarship*, Vol. 13, pp.69–84.
- Dundes, Alan. (1964). Some Yoruba Wellerisms, Dialogue Proverbs, and Tongue-Twisters, *Folklore*, Vol. 15, No. 2, pp.113–120.
- Dundes, Alan. (1975a). On the Structure of Proverbs, *Proverbium: Yearbook of International Proverb Scholarship*, Vol. 25, pp.961–973.
- Dundes, Alan. (1975b). Slurs International: Folk Comparisons of Ethnicity and National Character, *Southern Folklore Quarterly*, Vol. 39, pp.15–34.
- Dundes, Alan. (1978). Who are the Folk? In his *Essays in Folkloristics*, Meerut, India, Folklore Institute, pp.1–21.
- Dundes, Alan. (1980). "The Crowing Hen and the Easter Bunny: Male Chauvinism in American Folklore", In his *Interpreting Folklore*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, pp.161–175.
- Dupree, Louis. (1979). Functions of Folklore in Afghan Society, *Asian Affairs*, Vol. 66, No. 1, pp.51–61.
- Dupree, Louis. (1988). Religion and Politics in Muslim Society: A Review Article With a Few Side Comments, *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 3, No. 3, pp.117–124.
- Duru, M. S. (1980). *Socialization Among the Ibgo: An Intersectional Study of Cultural Patterns, Familial Roles and Child Rearing Practices*, Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of Maryland College Park.
- Dworkin, Shari L. (2012). Sample Size Policy for Qualitative Studies Using In-Depth Interviews, *Archives of Sexual Behaviour*, Vol. 41, pp.1319–1320.
- Dyson, T. & Moore, M. (1983). On Kinship Structure, Female Autonomy and Demographic Behaviour in India, *Population and Development Review*, Vol. 9, No.1, pp.35–60.

- Eagleton, Terry. (1991). *Ideology: An Introduction*, London, Verso.
- Eckert, P. & McConnell-Ginet, S. (1992). Think Practically and Look Locally: Language and Gender as Community-based Practice, *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 21, pp.461–90.
- Eckert, P. & McConnell-Ginet, S. (1999). New Generalisations and Explanations in Language and Gender Research, *Language in Society*, Vol. 28, No. 2, pp.185–203.
- Eckert, P. (1990). The Whole Women: Sex and Gender Differences in Variation, *Language Variation and Change*, Vol. 1, pp.245–67.
- Eckert, P. (1998). “Gender and Sociolinguistic Variation”, In Coates and Jennifer (eds.). *Language and Gender: A Reader*, Oxford, Blackwell, pp.64–75.
- Eckert, Penelope (1997). “Age as a Sociolinguistic Variable”, In Coulmas, Florian (ed.) *The Handbook of Sociolinguistics*, Oxford, Blackwell, pp.151–67.
- Eisikovits, Edina. (1987). Variation in the Lexical Verb in Inner-Sydney English, *Australian Journal of Linguistics*, Vol. 7, No.1, pp.1–24.
- Elias, Juanita. (2008). Hegemonic Masculinities in International Politics, *Men and Masculinities*, Vol. 10, No. 4, pp.383–388.
- Enevoldsen. J. (2004 [1969]) *Sound the Bells, O Moon, Arise and Shine*, Peshawar, The InterLit Foundation / University Book Agency.
- Ennaji, Moha. (2008). Representation of Women in Morocco Arabic and Barber Proverbs, *International Journal of Soc. Lang*, Vol. 190, pp.167–181.
- Enslin, Elizabet. (1994). Beyond Writing: Feminist Practice and the Limitations of Ethnography, *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 9, pp.537–68.
- Epstein, J. (1990). Either/or–Neither/Both: Sexual Ambiguity and the Ideology of Gender, *Genders*, Vol. 7, pp.99–142.
- Espiritu, Yen L. (2000). *Asian American Women and Men*, Walnut Creek, CA:, Altamira Press.
- Faery, R. B. and Noor, M. J.. (2004). *Daughters of Eve: Violence against Women in Pakistan*, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, [Online] <<http://dspace.mit.edu/bitstream/handle/1721.1/32771/57570690.pdf>> [Accessed: March 11, 2013].
- Fakoya, A. A. (2007). Sexually-grounded Proverbs and Discourse Relevance: Insight from Yuruba, *California Linguistic Notes*, Vol. XXXII, No. 2, pp.1–29.
- Fallen, D. J. (2008). The “Other” Gender? : Reflections on Fieldwork in Benin, *Men and Masculinities, Special issues on Men doing Anthropology of Women*, Vol. 11, No. 2, pp.164–173.

- Fan, Carol. C. (1996). Language, Gender and Chinese Culture, *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society*, Vol. 10, No. 1, pp.95–114.
- Farrer, Claire R. (1975). Introduction: Women and Folklore: Images and Genres, *Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 88, pp.v–xv.
- Fasold, Ralph. (1990). *The Sociolinguistics of Language*, Oxford, Blackwell.
- Feagin, Crawford. (2002). “Entering the Community: Fieldwork”, In J. K. Chambers *et al.* (eds.) *The Handbook of Language Variation and Change*, Malden and Oxford, Blackwell Publishers, pp.20–39.
- Ferdos, Amber. (2005). Social Status of Rural and Urban Working Women in Pakistan – A Comparative Study, Master Thesis, Osnabrück University, [Online] [≤http://repositorium.uni-osnabrueck.de/handle/urn:nbn:de:gbv:700-2006053115>](http://repositorium.uni-osnabrueck.de/handle/urn:nbn:de:gbv:700-2006053115) [Accessed: August 24, 2013]
- Fikree, F. F; Razzak, J. A. & Durocher, J. (2005). Attitudes of Pakistani Men to Domestic Violence: A Study from Karachi, Pakistan, *The Journal of Men’s Health and Gender*, Vol. 2, No.1, pp.49–58.
- Finlay L. (2002). Negotiating the Swamp: The Opportunity and Challenge of Reflexivity in Research Practice, *Qualitative Research*, Vol. 12, No. 3, pp.531–45.
- Firestone, S. (1974). *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution*, New York, Morrow.
- Fishman, J. A. (1965). Who Speak What Language to Who and When, *La Linguistique*, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp.67–88.
- Fishman, J. A. (1972). “The Sociology of Language”, In Giglioli, P. P. (ed.) *Language and Social Context*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, pp.45–58.
- Fishman, P. M. (1983). “Interaction: The Work Female Do”, In B. Thorne, C. Kramarae and N. Henley (eds.) *Language, Gender and Society*, Row Lay, MA, Newbury House, pp.397– 406.
- Flax, J. (1993). *Disputed Subjects: Essays on Psychoanalysis, Politics and Philosophy*, New York, Routledge.
- Flick, U. (2006). *An Introduction to Qualitative Research: Book 1 of the SAGE Qualitative Research Kit*, (3rd ed.), London, Sage.
- Freed, Alice. (1992). “We Understand Perfectly: A Critique of Tannen’s View of Miscommunication”, In Hall, Kira *et al.* (eds.) *Locating Power Proceeding of Second Berkeley Women & Language Conference*, University of California, Los Angeles, pp.144–52.
- Frembgen, J. W. (2006). Honour, Shame, and Bodily Mutilation: Cutting off the Nose among Tribal Societies in Pakistan, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain & Ireland*, Vol. 16, No. 03, pp.243– 260.

- Gal, Susan. (1991). Between Speech and Silence: The Problematic of Research on Language and Gender, In Micaela di Leonardo (ed.), *Gender at the Crossroads of Knowledge: Feminist Anthropology in the Postmodern Era*, Berkeley, University of California Press, pp.175–203.
- Gankovsky, Y. V. (1973). *The Peoples of Pakistan*, Translated from Russian by Igor Gavrilov, Lahore, Peoples' Publishing House.
- Gelles, Richard J. (1972). *The Violent Home*, Beverly Hills, Calif, Sage publications.
- Gibbs, Raymond W. (2001). Proverbial Themes We Live By, *Poetics*, Vol. 29, pp.167–188.
- Gilbertson, G. W. (1932). *The Pakhto Idiom: A Dictionary*, Hertford.
- Gill, A. (2004). Voicing the Silent Fear: South Asian Women's Experiences of Domestic Violence, *Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, Vol. 43, pp.465–483.
- Glatzer, Bernt. (1998). "Being Pashtun-Being Muslim: Concepts of Person and War in Afghanistan", In B. Glatzer, (ed.) *Essays on South Asian Society: Culture and Politics II*, Working Paper 9, Berlin, Zentrum Moderner Orient, pp. 83–94.
- Glatzer, Bernt. (2002). "The Pashtun Tribal System", In G. Pfeffer and D. K. Behera (eds.) *Contemporary Society: Tribal Studies (Concept of Tribal Society: Vol. 5)*, New Delhi, Concept Publishers, pp.265–282.
- Goddard, A. & Patterson, L. M. (2001). *Language and Gender*, London, Routledge.
- Gold, A. G. (1997). Outspoken Women: Representations of Female Voices in a Rajasthani Folklore Community, *Oral Tradition*, Vol. 12, No.1, pp.103–133.
- Gottfried, Heidi. (1998). Beyond Patriarchy? Theorizing Gender and Class, *Sociology*, Vol. 32, No. 3, pp.451–468.
- Graddol, D. & Swann, J. (1989). *Gender Voices*, Oxford, Blackswell.
- Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from Prison Notebooks*, London, Lawrence and Wishart.
- Granbom-Herranen, Liisa. (2010). Women's Place in Finnish Proverbs from Childhood, *Folklore: Electronic Journal of Folklore*, Vol. 46, pp.95-110.
- Green, Georgia M. (1975). *Nonsense and Reference; Or the Conversational Use of Proverbs*, Papers from the Eleventh Regional Meeting of the Chicago Linguistic Society, Greenwood, pp.226–239.
- Grima, Benedicte. (1985). The Pukhtun "Tapos": From Biography to Autobiography, *Asian Folklore Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 2, pp.241–267.
- Grima, Benedicte. (1986). Suffering as Easthetic and Ethic among Pashtun Women, *Women's Studies Int. Forum*, Vol. 9, No. 3, pp.235–242.



- Grima, Benedicte. (1992). *The Performance of Emotion Among Paxtun Women: The Misfortunes Which Have Befallen Me*, University of Texas Press, USA.
- Grima, Benedicte. (2004). *Secrets From the Field: An Ethnographer's Notes From North Western Pakistan*, Bloomington, Author House.
- Grzybek, Peter. (1987). Foundations of Semiotic Proverb Study, *Proverbium: Yearbook of International Proverb Scholarship*, Vol. 4, pp.39–85.
- Guillaumin, Colette. (1995). *Racism, Sexism, Power and Ideology*, London, Routledge.
- Gupta, M. D. (1995). Life Course Perspectives on Women's Autonomy and Health Outcomes, *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 97, No.3, pp.481–91.
- Gupta, M. D. (1998). Missing Girls in China, South Korea and India: Causes and Policy Implications, *Harvard University Centre for Population and Development Studies Working Paper 98-03*, MA., Cambridge.
- Gupta, M. D. *et al.* (2003). Why is Son Preference So Persistent in East and South Asia? A Cross-country Study of China, India and the Republic of Korea, *The Journal of Development Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 2, pp.153–187.
- Gutmann, C. Matthew. (1993). Rituals of Resistance: A Critique of the Theory of Everyday Forms of Resistance, *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 20, No. 2, pp.74–92.
- Hakim, A. & Aziz, A. (1998). Socio-Cultural, Religious, and Political Aspects of the Status of Women in Pakistan, *The Pakistan Development Review*, Vol. 37, No. 4/2, pp.727–746.
- Halcomb, E. J. & Davidson, P. M. (2006). Is Verbatim Transcription of Interview Data always Necessary? *Applied Nursing Research*, Vol. 19, pp.38–42.
- Hall, K, and Bucholts, Mary. (ed.) (1995). *Gender Articulated: Language and the Socially Constructed Self*, New York, Routledge.
- Hallberg, Daniel. G. (1992). *Sociolinguistic Survey of Northern Pakistan: Pashto, Waneci,Ormuri. Vol. 4*, Islamabad and Bucks, National Institute of Pakistan Studies, Quaid-e-Azam University Islamabad and Summer Institute of Linguistics Bucks (UK).
- Hamilton, C. A. (1987). Ideology and Oral Traditions: Listening to the 'Voices From Below', *History in Africa*, Vol. 14, pp.67–86.
- Han, Heungsik. (2001). Gender Discrimination in the Korean Language, *The Society for Gender Studies in Japanese*, [Online]  
<<http://www.gender.jp/journal/no6/04Han.html>> (Accessed: April 15, 2012).
- Haque, Riffat. (2010). Gender and Nexus of Purdah Culture in Public Policy, *South Asian Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 2, pp.303–210.
- Harris, Leonard. (1980). Romanticism and Scientism in Africa, *Présence Africaine*, Vol. 113, pp.175–92.

- Hasan-Rokem, G. (1982). *Proverbs in Israeli Folk Narratives: A Structural Semantic Analysis*, Helsinki, Suomalainen Tiedekatemia.
- Hasan-Rokem, Galit & Shulman, David (eds.). (1996). *Untying the Knot: On Riddles and Other Enigmatic Modes*, Oxford, Oxford University Press,
- Hazarika, G. (2000). Gender Differences in Children's Nutrition & Access to Health Care in Pakistan, *The Journal of Development Studies*, Vol. 37, No.1, pp.73–92.
- Herskovits, Melville J. (1930). Kru Proverbs, *Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 43, pp.225–293.
- Hogan, Brian. (2008). Gendered Modes of Resistance: Power and Women's Songs in West Africa, *Pacific Review of Ethnomusicology*, Vol. 13, University of California, Los Angeles, [Online] <<http://www.ethnomusicologyreview.ucla.edu>> [Accessed: July 20, 2014].
- Holbek, Bengt. (1970). Proverb Style, *Proverbium: Yearbook of International Proverb Scholarship*, Vol. 15, pp.54–56.
- Holmes, J. (1998). "Women's Talk: The Question of Sociolinguistic Universals", In J. Coates (ed.) *Language and Gender: A Reader*, Oxford, Blackwell.
- Holmes, Janet. (1982). The Function of Tag Questions, *English Language Research Journal*, Vol. 3, pp.40–65.
- Holmes, Janet. (1984). Hedging Your Bets and Sitting on the Fence: Some Evidence for Hedges as Support Structures, *Te Reo*, Vol. 27, pp.47–62.
- Honeck, Richard P., et al. (1980). "Proverbs, Meaning and Group Structure", In Honeck, Richard P. & Hoffmann, Robert R. (eds.) *Cognition and Figurative Language*, Hillsdale, N. J., Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, pp.127–162.
- Horton, R. (1967). African Traditional Thought and Western Science, *Africa*, Vol. 37, No.2, pp.155–187.
- Hosseini, Ziba Mir. (1996). "Women and Politics in Post-Khomeini Iran: Divorce, Veiling and Emerging Feminist Voices", In Haleh Afshar (ed.) *Women and Politics in Third World*, London, Routledge.
- Human Rights Commission of Pakistan. (2003). *Annual report 2003*, [Online] <[www.hrcp.cjb.net](http://www.hrcp.cjb.net)> (Accessed: June 04, 2012).
- Human Rights Watch. (1999). *Crime or Custom? Violence against Women in Pakistan*, [Online] <[www.hrw.org/reports/1999/Pakistan](http://www.hrw.org/reports/1999/Pakistan)> [Accessed: June 03, 2012].
- Humm, Maggie. (1989). *The Dictionary of Feminist Theory*, London, Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Hunnicut, Gwen. (2009). Varieties of Patriarchy and Violence against Women: Resurrecting "Patriarchy" As a Theoretical Tool, *Violence Against Women*, Vol. XX, No. X, pp.553–573.

- Hussain, A. (2003). *Pakistan National Human Development Report: Poverty, Growth and Governance*, Karachi, Oxford University Press.
- Hussein, J. W. (2004). A Cultural Representation of Women in the Oromo Society, *African Study Monographs*, Vol. 25, No. 3, pp.103–147.
- Hussein, J. W. (2005). The Social and Ethno-Cultural Construction of Masculinity and Femininity in African Proverbs, *African Study Monographs*, Vol. 26, No. 2, pp.59–87.
- Hussein, J. W. (2009). A Discursive Representation of Women in Sample Proverbs from Ethiopia, Sudan, and Kenya, *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 40, No. 3, pp.98–108.
- Hymes, D. (1962). “The Ethnography of Speaking”, In Gladwin, T. and Sturtevant, W. (eds.) *Anthropology and Human Behaviour*, Washington D. C., Anthropological Society of Washington, pp.15–53.
- Ibraz, T. S. (1993). The Cultural Context of Women’s Productive Invisibility: A Case Study of Pakistani Village, *Pakistan Development Review*, Vol. 32, No. I, pp.101–125.
- Isran, S. & Isran, M. A. (2012). Patriarchy and Women in Pakistan: A Critical Analysis, *Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research in Business*, Vol. 4, No.6, pp.835–859.
- Ivy, D. K. and Backlund, P. (1994). *Exploring Gender Speak: Personal Effectiveness in Gender Communication*, New York, McGraw-Hill.
- Jahangir, A. (2000). “Human Rights in Pakistan: A System in the Making”, In S. Power & G. Allison (eds.) *Realizing Human Rights*, New York, NY., St. Martin’s Press, pp.167–224.
- Jain, Naresh, K. (2009). Folk Imagination: Women in Indian Love Legends, *Intersection: Gender and Sexuality in Asia and the Pacific*, Vol. 22, [Online] <<http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue22/jain.htm>> [Accessed: March, 23, 2013].
- Jamal, Amina. (2006). Gender, Citizenship, and the Nation-State in Pakistan: Wilful Daughters or Free Citizen?, *Signs*, Vol. 31, No. 2, pp:283–304.
- Jamal, Munira. (2009). What is a Proverb? Theoretical Remarks, [Online] < [www.lingua-jip.de](http://www.lingua-jip.de)> [Accessed: October, 20, 2013].
- James, Deborah (1996). “Women, Men and Prestige Speech Forms: A Critical Review”, In V. L. Bergvall, J.M. Bing and A. F. Freed (eds.) *Rethinking Language and Gender Research: Theory and Practice*, London, Longman, pp.98–125.
- Jan, Ali. (2009). Pashto Under the British Empire, [Online] <<http://britishempire.co.uk/article/pashto.htm>> [Accessed: August 26, 2013].
- Jang, Tae-Sang. (1999). A Poetic Structure in Hausa Proverbs, *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 30, No.1, pp.83–115.

- Jespersen, Otto (1922). "The Woman", In his *Language: Its Nature, Development, and Origins*, London, Allen & Unwin, pp.237–254.
- Jilani, H., & Ahmed, E. (2004). "Violence Against Women: The Legal System and Institutional Responses in Pakistan", In S. Gooneselere (ed.) *Violence, Law and Women's Rights in South Asia*, CA:, Thousand Oaks and Sage, pp.147–205.
- Joe, Mullich. (2012). Improving the Effectiveness of Customer Sentiment Analysis, (Online) <http://data-informed.com/improving-effectiveness-of-customer-sentiment-analysis/> [Accessed: February 15, 2015].
- John, A. (2009). Two Dialects One Region: A Sociolinguistic Approach to Dialects as Identity Markers, Unpublished Graduate Dissertation, Ball State University, Indiana. [Online] <[http://cardinalscholar.bsu.edu/704/1/Ajohn\\_2009-3\\_BODY.pdf](http://cardinalscholar.bsu.edu/704/1/Ajohn_2009-3_BODY.pdf)> [Accessed: March 03, 2012].
- Johnson, M. P. (2012). *Gender Dichotomies in the Kitchen: Feminine and Masculine Qualities of Spaces and Artifact*, Unpublished Master Thesis, The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.
- Jordan, Rosan A. & de Caro, F. A. (1986). Women and the Study of Folklore, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, Vol. 11, No. 3, pp.500–518.
- Jordan, Rosan A., & Susan J. Kalcik. (1985). *Women's Folklore, Women's Culture*, University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Kamal, S. (1999). Effects of the Interplay of Formal and Customary Laws on Women in Tribal Cultures, Paper Presented at the 7th Interdisciplinary Congress on Women, Women's World 1999, Norway, Tromso.
- Kamawal, G. (1969). *Ulsi Malghalary (Folk Diamonds)* [in Pashto], Peshawar, Mahan Publishing Society.
- Kandiyoti, D. (1988). Bargaining with Patriarchy, *Gender and Society*, Vol. 2, No.3, pp.274–290.
- Kapoor, S. (2014). "Negotiating with Patriarchy: Gender and Childhood in India", In Nandita Chaudhary *et al.* (eds.) *Cultural Realities of Being: Abstract Ideas within Everyday Lives*, Sussex, Routledge, pp.49–68.
- Kazi, Shahnaz. (1999). "Gender Inequalities and Development in Pakistan", In Shahrugh Rafi Khan (ed). *50 Years of Pakistan's Economy: Traditional Topics and Contemporary Concerns*, Karachi, Oxford University Press, pp.376–414.
- Kendall, S. & Tannen, D. (2001). "Discourse and Gender", In Deborah Schiffrin, Deborah Tannen, and Heidi E. Hamilton (eds.) *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, London, Blackwell, pp.248–267.
- Kerschen, L. (2012). *American Proverbs about Women: A Reference Guide*. Westport, Conn., Greenwood press.

- Khan, A. & Hussain, R. (2008). Violence against Women in Pakistan: Perception and Experience of Domestic Violence, *Asian Studies Review*, Vol. 32, No. 2, pp.239–253.
- Khan, Aysha. (2007). *Women and Paid Work in Pakistan, Collective for Social Science Research*, Karachi, Pakistan.
- Khan, M. N. (2005). *Da Mataloono Guldasta (A Bouquet of Proverbs)* [in Pashto], Peshawar, University Book Agency.
- Khan, Qazi Rahimullah. (1943). *The Modern Pushtu Instructor, Volume II*, Peshawar, London Book Co.
- Khan, S. and Samina. (2009). Patriarchal Social and Administrative Practices in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), Pakistan: A Case Study for Gender Inclusive Reforms, *Research Journal of Area Study Centre*, Vol. 65, [Online] <[http://www.asc-centralasia.edu.pk/Issue\\_65/toc.html](http://www.asc-centralasia.edu.pk/Issue_65/toc.html)> [Accessed: April, 17, 2014].
- Khattak, R. J. S. (2006). “Introduction”, In Bartlotti, L. N. and Khattak, R. J. S. (eds.) *Ruhi Mataloona, Pashto Proverbs*, InterLit Foundation Peshawar and Pashto Academy, University of Peshawar.
- Khattak, Saba, G. (2001). “Women, Work and Empowerment,” In Asad Sayeed and Saba Gul Khattak. (eds.) *Women’s Work and Empowerment Issues in an Era of Economic Liberalization: A Case Study of Pakistan’s Urban Manufacturing Sector*. Institute of Labor Education & Research (PILER) and Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan, pp.65–87.
- King, Diane E. (2008). The Personal is Patrilineal: *Namus* as Sovereignty, *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, Vol. 15, No. 3, pp.317–342.
- Kiyimba, Abasi. (2006). Gendering Social Destiny in the Proverbs of the Baganda: Reflections on Boys and Girls Becoming Men and Women, *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 2, pp.253–270.
- Krikmann, Arvo. (1985). Some Additional Aspects of Semantic Indefiniteness of Proverbs, *Proverbium: Yearbook of International Proverb Scholarship*, Vol. 2, pp.58–85.
- Krikmann, Arvo. (1998). On the Relationships of the Rhetorical, Modal, Logical, and Syntactic Planes in Estonian Proverbs (Part 2), *Electronic Journal of Folklore*, Vol. 8, pp.51–49.
- Kulick, Don. (2008). Gender Politics, *Men and Masculinities, Special issues on Men doing Anthropology of Women*, Vol. 11, No. 2, pp.186–192.
- Kulwicki, Anahid D. (2002). The Practice of Honor Crimes: A Glimpse of Domestic Violence in the Arab World, *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*, Vol. 23, No. 1, pp.77–87.
- Labov, William. (1966). *The Social Stratification of English in New York City*, Washington D. C., Centre for Applied Linguistics.

- Labov, William. (1972a). Some Principles of Sociolinguistic Methodology, *Language and Society*, Vol. 1, pp.97–12.
- Labov, William. (1972b). *Language in the Inner City: Studies in the Black English Vernacular*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Labov, William. (1984). “Field methods of the project on linguistic change and variation”, In John Baugh & Joel Sherzer (eds.) *Language in Use*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, pp.28–53.
- Labov, William. (1994). *Principles of Linguistic Change: Internal Factors*, Oxford, Blackwell.
- Laird, K. F. (2007). *Whose Islam? Pakistani Women's Political Action Groups Speak Out*, ProQuest, Washington University in St. Louis.
- Lakoff, R. (1973). Language and Women’s Place, *Language and Society*, Vol. 2, pp.45–80.
- Lakoff, R. (1975). *Language and Women’s Place*, New York, Harper and Row.
- Lamphere, L.; Helena, R. & Patricia, Z. (1997). “Introduction”, In L. Lamphere, H. Ragone, and P. Zavella, (eds.) *Situated Lives*, New York, Routledge, pp.1–19.
- Lashkari, M. Anwar. (n.d). *Ulası Mataloona (Folk Proverbs)* [in Pashto], Peshawar, Zaib Art Publishers.
- Lau, K. J.; Tokofsky, P. & Winick, S. D. (2004). *What Goes Around Comes Around: The Circulation of Proverbs in Contemporary Life*, State University Press Publications, Book 33.
- Lawal, A.; Ajayi, B. & Raji, W. (1997). A Pragmatic Study of Selected Pairs of Yoruba Proverbs, *Journal of Pragmatics*, Vol. 27, pp.635–652.
- Lieber, Michael D. (1994). “Analogic Ambiguity: A Paradox of Proverb Usage”, In Mieder, Wolfgang (ed.) *Wise Words: Essays on the Proverb*, New York and London, Garland Publishing, pp.99–126.
- Lindholm, Charles (ed.). (1996 [1980]). *The Frontier Perspective*, New York, Oxford University Press.
- Lindholm, Charles. (1982). *Generosity and Jealousy: The Swat Pukhtun of Northern Pakistan*, New York, Columbia University Press.
- Lindholm, Charles. (2008). Polygamy in Islamic Law and Pukhtun Practice, *Ethnology, Special Issue: “Trash” Food; Polygyny*, Vol. 47, No. 2/3, pp.181–193.
- Lindholm, Cherry. (1996). “The Swat Pukhtun Family as a Political Training Ground”, In Charles Lindholm (ed.) *The Frontier Perspective*, New York, Oxford University Press.

- Litovkina, A. T. (1996). A Few Aspects of a Semiotic Approach to Proverbs with Special Reference to Two Important American Publications, *Semiotica*, Vol. 108, pp.307–80.
- Liu, B. (2010a). “Sentiment Analysis and Subjectivity”, In Nitin Indurkha, Fred J. Damerau (eds.), *Handbook of Natural Language Processing*, 2nd edition, Boca Raton, Chapman and Hall/CRC Press, pp.627–666.
- Liu, Bing And Zhang, Lei. (2012). “A Survey of Opinion Mining and Sentiment Analysis”, In C. C. Aggarwal and C. X. Zhai (eds.), *Mining Text Data*, Boston/Dordrecht/London, Kluwer Academic Publishers, pp.415–463
- Liu, Bing. (2010b). Sentiment Analysis: A Multi-Faceted Problem, *IEEE Intelligent Systems*, Vol. 25, No. 3, pp.76–80.
- Lloyd, Cynthia B., Cem, Mete, & Monica J. Grant. (2007). “Rural Girls in Pakistan: Constraints of Policy and Culture”, In M. Lewis and M. Lockhead (eds.) *Exclusion, Gender and Education: Case Studies from the Developing World*, Washington, D.C., Centre for Global Development, pp.99–118.
- Lupton, D. (1996). *Food, the Body and the Self*, London, Sage.
- Macaulay, R. K. S. (1978). “Variation and Consistency in Glaswegian English”, In Trudgill, Peter (ed.) *Sociolinguistic Patterns in British English*, London, Edward Arnold, pp.132–43.
- Madumulla, J. S. (2001). Proverbs: A pack of Lies?, *Utafiti [new Series], Special Issue*, Vol. 4, pp.257–274.
- Mahbub-ul-Haq Human Development Center. (2000). *Human Development in South Asia: The Gender Question 2000*, Karachi, Oxford University Press.
- Mahbub-ul-Haq Human Development Centre. (2004). *The Human Development in South Asia 2003: The Employment Challenge*, Karachi, Oxford University Press.
- Malik, I. (1997). *The State and Civil Society in Pakistan*, New York, NY, St. Martin’s Press.
- Maltz, D. N. & Broker, R. A. (1982). A Cultural Approach to Male-Female Miscommunication, In J. J. Gumperz (eds.), *Language and Social Identity*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp.195–216.
- Mangal, A. M. (2007). *Some Folklore Traditions of Pashtuns*, [in Pashto], Peshawar, Al-Azhar Publishers.
- Maria, A. (2012). Paremiological Aspects in the Construction of National Identity, *Procedia - Social and Behavioural Sciences*, Vol. 63, pp.276–282.
- Mariam, Yeshe Habte. (1995). *A Critical Analysis of Amharic Proverbs on Women*, Unpublished Master Thesis, Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, Netherlands.
- Mason, J. (2002). *Qualitative Researching* (2nd ed.), London, Sage.

- Mason, M. (2010). Sample Size and Saturation in PhD Studies Using Qualitative Interviews, *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, Vol. 11, No. 3, Art. 8, [Online] <<http://nbnresolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs100387>> [Accessed: Nov.04, 2014].
- Maxey, I. (1999). Beyond Boundaries? Activism, Academia, Reflexivity and Research, *Area*, Vol. 31, No. 3, pp.199–208.
- McCall, Leslie. (2005). The Complexity of Intersectionality, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, Vol. 30, No. 3, pp.1771–1800.
- Mdluli, Sisana. (2007). Voicing their Perception: Swazi Women's Folk Songs, *Muziki*, Vol. 4, No. 1, pp.87–110.
- Mernissi, F. (1987). *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamic in Modern Muslim Society*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press.
- Mernissi, F. (1993). *The Forgotten Queens of Islam*, Cambridge, Polity Press.
- Mieder, W., & Dundes, A. (eds.). (1994). *The Wisdom of Many: Essays on The Proverb*. University of Wisconsin Press.
- Mieder, Wolfgang . (2007). Anti-proverbs and Mass Communication: The Interplay of Traditional and Innovative Folklore, *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica*, Vol. 25, No. 1, pp.17–45.
- Mieder, Wolfgang, (1997). "Modern Paremiology in Retrospect and Prospect", In *Actas del I Congreso Internacional de Paremiología, Paremia*, Madrid, [Online] <<http://www.paremia.org/wp-content/uploads/P6-64.pdf>> (Accessed: August 19, 2013).
- Mieder, Wolfgang. (1985). Popular Views of the Proverb, *Proverbium: Yearbook of International Proverb Scholarship*, Vol. 2, pp.109–143.
- Mieder, Wolfgang. (1989). *American Proverbs: A Study of Text and Context*, New York, Paris, Peter Lang.
- Mieder, Wolfgang. (1993). *Proverbs are Never Out of Season: Popular Wisdom in the Modern Age*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Mieder, Wolfgang. (2000). "A Man of Fashion Never Has Recourse to Proverbs": Lord Chesterfield's Tilting at Proverbial Windmills, *Folklore*, Vol.111, No. 1, pp.32–42.
- Mieder, Wolfgang. (2004). *Proverbs: A Handbook*. London, Greenwood Press.
- Mieder, Wolfgang. (2005). *Proverbs are the Best Policy*, All USU Press Publications, Book 49.
- Miescher, Stephen F. (2008). Masculinities, Intersectionality, and Collaborative Approaches, *Men and Masculinities, Special issues on Men doing Anthropology of Women*, Vol. 11, No. 2, pp.227–233.
- Millett, Kate. (2000 [1969]). *Sexual Politics*, Urbana, University of Illinois Press.



- Mills, Sara. (2003). Third Wave Feminist Linguistics and the Analysis of Sexism, *Discourse Analysis* [Online]  
<<http://extra.shu.ac.uk/daol/articles/closed/2003/001/mills2003001-paper.html>>  
[Accessed: March 16, 2013].
- Milner, G. B. (1969a). Quadripartite Structures, *Proverbium: Yearbook of International Proverb Scholarship*, Vol. 14, pp.379–83.
- Milner, G. B. (1969b). What is a Proverb?, *New Society*, Vol. 332, pp.199–202.
- Milroy, J. and Milroy, L. (1985). Linguistic Change, Social Network and Speaker Innovation, *Journal of Linguistics*, Vol. 21, pp.339–84.
- Milroy, L. (1987). *Language and Social Networks* (2nd ed.), Oxford, Blackwell.
- Ministry of Women and Development, Social Welfare and Special Education. (2004). *A Gender Review of the Political and Administrative Systems in Pakistan, Vol. II-A*, Islamabad, Pakistan.
- Mirza, Jasmin. (1999). Accommodating Purdah to the Workplace: Gender in the Office Sector in Pakistan, *The Pakistan Development Review*, Vol. 38, No. 2, pp.187–206.
- Moghadam, V. (1992). Patriarchy and the Politics of Gender in Modernising Societies in Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan, *International Sociology*, Vol. 7, pp.35–53.
- Moghadam, V. M. (1998). *Women, Work and Economic Reform in the Middle East and North Africa*, Boulder, Colorado, Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Moghadam, V. M. (2004). Patriarchy in Transition: Women and the Changing Family in Middle East, *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, Vol. 35, pp.137–162.
- Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. (1988). Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses, *Feminist Review*, Vol. 30, pp.61–88.
- Mojab, Shahrzad. (2002). Honor Killing: Culture, Politics and Theory, *Middle East Women's Studies Review*, Vol. 17, No 1/2, [Online]  
<<http://www.amews.org/review/reviewarticles/-mojabfinal.htm>> [Accessed: March 16, 2014].
- Mokitimi, I. M. (1995). A Critique of Western Definitions of Literature: Proverbs as Literature of the Illiterate, Paper Presented in the Faculty of Humanities Seminar Series, October 24, 1995.
- Moon, Paul. (1997). Traditional Maori Proverbs: Some General Themes, *Deep South*, Vol. 3, No. 1, [Online] <<http://www.otago.ac.nz/deepsouth/vol3no1/moon2.html>>  
[Accessed: July 12, 2013].
- Mullet, C. F. (1972). Language as Social Study, *The History Teacher*, Vol. 6, No. 1, pp.83–96.
- Mumtaz, K., & Shaheed, F. (1987). *Women of Pakistan: Two Steps Forward, One Step Back?* London, Zed Books.

- Murphy, Brona. (2010). *Corpus and Sociolinguistics: Investigating Age and Gender in Female Talk*, Amsterdam and Philadelphia, John Benjamins Publishing Co.
- Mustafa, Ghulam. (2012). *Education Policy Analysis Report of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa*, UNESCO, Pakistan, [Online]  
<[http://unesco.org.pk/education/documents/situationanalysis/Policy\\_Analysis\\_Report\\_of\\_KP.pdf](http://unesco.org.pk/education/documents/situationanalysis/Policy_Analysis_Report_of_KP.pdf)> [Accessed: July 22, 2014].
- Muwati, I.; Gambahaya, Z.; & Gwekwerere, T. (2011). Africana Womanism and African Proverbs: Theoretical Grounding of Mothering/Motherhood in Shona and Ndebele Cultural Discourse, *The Western Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 1, pp.1–8.
- Naeem, Hidayatullah. (2007). *Pashto Folklore ki Tashrihi Fehrast (Annotated Bibliography of Pashto Folklore)* [in Urdu], Pashto Academy, University of Peshawar.
- Nair, R. (2005). Recognizing Sexist Language Through Children Literature, *The English Teacher*, Vol. 34, pp.51–59.
- Nakhavaly, F. & Sharifi, S. (2013). On Sex Discrimination in Persian Proverbs, *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1, pp.195–200.
- Narayan, K. (1986). Birds on a Branch: Girlfriends' Wedding Songs in Kangra, *Ethos*, Vol. 14, pp.47–75.
- Narayan, K. (1993). How Native is a "Native" Anthropologist?, *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 95, No. 3, pp.671–686.
- National Library of Scotland. (2002). "Chapbooks", (Online)  
<<http://www.nls.uk/collections/rare-books/collections/chapbooks>> [Accessed: February 13, 2015].
- Naved, R. T. (2003). *Violence against Women in South Asia: A Situation Analysis, Report Prepared for UNFPA*, Kathmandu, Nepal.
- Nawaz, Syed. (n.d). *Da Kanrhi Karkhe (Writings on the Stones)*, [in Pashto], Garhi Kapoora, Mardan.
- Ncube, B. & Moyo, T. (2011). Portraying Women as the Other: Ndebele Proverbs and Idioms in Context of Gender Construction, *Africana*, Vol. 5, No. 3, pp.126–142.
- Ndungo, Catherine. (2002). Social Construction of Gender with Special Reference to Gikuyu and Swahili Proverbs, *Fabula*, Vol. 43, No. 1/2, pp.64–74.
- Nilsson, Usha. (1984). A Selection of Women's Folk Songs, *Journal of South Asian Folklore*, Vol. 19, No. 1, pp.117–123.
- Norricks, Neal R. (1985). *How Proverbs Mean: Semantic Studies in English Proverbs*, Berlin, New York and Amsterdam, Mouton Publishers.
- Northern Pakistan*, New York, Cambridge University Press.

- Oakley, A. (1981). "Interviewing Women: A Contradiction in Terms?", In H. Roberts (ed.) *Doing Feminist Research*, London, Routledge & Kagan Paul.
- Obelkevich, James. (1994). "Proverbs and Social History", In Meider, Wolfgang (ed.) *Wise Words: Essays on the Proverb*, New York and London, Garland Publishing, pp.211–252.
- Ochs, E., & Taylor, C. (1995). The 'Father Knows Best': Dynamic in Family Dinner Narratives, In K. Hall and M. Bucholt. (ed.) *Gender Articulated: Language and the Socially Constructed Self*, New York, Routledge, pp.97–121.
- Oha, O. (1998). The Semantics of Female Devaluation in Igbo Proverbs, *African Study Monographs*, Vol. 19, No. 2, pp.87–102.
- Ojoade, J. O. (1983). African Sexual Proverbs: Some Yoruba Examples, *Folklore*, Vol. 94, No. 2, pp.201–213.
- Pang, Bo; Lee, Lillian (2008). Opinion Mining and Sentiment Analysis, *Foundations and Trends in Information Retrieval*, Vol. 2, Issue 1-2, pp.1–135.
- Papanek, Hanna (1982). "Purdah in Pakistan: Seclusion and Modern Occupations for Women", In Papanet, H. and Minault, G. (eds.) *Separate World: Studies of Purdah in South Asia*, New Delhi, Chanakya, pp.190–216.
- Papanek, Hanna. (1973). Purdah: Separate Worlds and Symbolic Shelter, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 15, No. 3, pp.289–325.
- Papanek, Hanna. (1979). Family Status Production: The "Work" and "Non-Work" of Women, *Signs, The Labour of Women: Work and Family*, Vol. 4, No. 4, pp.775–781.
- Parsons, Talcott. (1951). *The Social System*, New York, Free Press.
- Patel, S. & Gadit, A. M. (2008). Karo-Kari: A Form of Honour Killing in Pakistan, *Transcultural Psychiatry*, Vol. 45, No. 4, pp.683–694.
- Patton, Michael Q. (2002). *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*, (3rd ed.), Thousand Oaks, C.A., Sage.
- Paul, Bimal Kanti. (1992). Female Activity Space in Rural Bangladesh, *Geographical Review*, Vol. 82, No. 1, pp.1–12.
- Penfield, J. & Duru, M. (1988). Proverbs: Metaphors That Teach, *Anthropological Quarterly*, Vol. 61, No. 3, pp.119–128.
- Penfield, J. A. (1981). Quoting Behaviour in Igbo Society, *Research in African Literature, Special Issue on Oral Traditions*, Vol. 12, No. 3, pp.309–337.
- Petievich, Carla. (2002). "Doganas and Zanakhis: The Invention and Subsequent Erasure of Urdu Poetry's "Lesbian" Voice", In Ruth Vanita (ed.) *Queering India Same-Sex Love and Eroticism in Indian Culture and Society*, London, Routledge.

- Platzer, Rosalie. (2011). *Women Not in the Kitchen: A Look at Gender Equality in the Restaurant Industry*, Unpublished Bachelor Thesis, the Faculty of the History Department, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. [Online] <<http://digitalcommons.calpoly.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1017&context=histp>> [Accessed: June 24, 2014].
- Poland, B. (1995). Transcription Quality as an Aspect of Rigor in Qualitative Research, *Qualitative Inquiry*, Vol. 1, No. 3, pp.290–310.
- Pollert, Anna. (1996). Gender and Class Revisited; or, the Poverty of “Patriarchy”, *Sociology*, Vol. 30, No. 4, pp. 639 – 659.
- Presler, Bent. (1986). *Linguistic Sex Roles in Conversation: Social Variations in the Expressiveness of Tentativeness in English*, Berlin, Muoton de Gruyter.
- Qadeer, M. (2006). *Pakistan: Social and Cultural Transformation in a Muslim Nation*, New York, NY, Routledge.
- Qadir, F; Khan, M. M; Medhin, G. & Prince M. (2011). Male Gender Preference, Female Gender Disadvantage as Risk Factors for Psychological Morbidity in Pakistani Women of Childbearing Age – A Life Course Perspective, *BMC Public Health*, Vol. 11, No. 745, [Online] <<http://www.biomedcentral.com/content/pdf/1471-2458-11-745.pdf>> [Accessed: July 07, 2014].
- Qureshi, A. F., et al. (1999). *Domestic Violence: Determinants and Consequences, A Report Prepared for WHO Centre*, Kobe Japan, Karachi, Pakistan
- Radner, Joan N. (ed.) (1993). *Feminist Messages: Coding in Women Folklore*, Urbana, University of Illinois Press.
- Raheja, G. G. (1993). “Women’s Speech Genres, Kinship, and Contradiction”, In Nita Kumar (ed.) *Women as Subject*, Calcutta, Stree Publications.
- Raheja, G. G. and Gold, A. G. (1994). *Listen to the Heron’s Words: Reimagining Gender and Kinship in North India*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
- Rahman, Tariq. (1995). The Pashto language and Identity-formation in Pakistan, *Contemporary South Asia*, Vol. 4, No. 2, pp.151–70.
- Rai, S.; Shah, N., & Ayaz, A. (2007). Achieving Gender Equality in Public Offices in Pakistan, Islamabad, Pakistan: United Nations Development Programme, [Online] <[http://undp.org.pk/images/publications/Shirin Rai’s report-Achieving Gender Equality in Public Offices in Pakistan.pdf](http://undp.org.pk/images/publications/Shirin_Rai's_report-Achieving_Gender_Equality_in_Public_Offices_in_Pakistan.pdf)> [Accessed: September 12, 213].
- Raji-Oyelade, A. (1999). Postproverbs in Yoruba Culture: A Playful Blasphemy. *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 30, No. 1, pp.74–82.
- Raverty, H. G. (1981 [1859]). *A Grammar of the Pukhto, Pushto, or Language of the Afghans*, (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), Peshawar.
- Raverty, H. G. (1982 [1860]). *A Dictionary of the Pukhto, Pushto, or Language of the Afghans*, Peshawar, Saeed Book Bank.

- Reynolds, T. (2002). "On Relations Between Black Female Researchers and Participants", In May, T. (ed.) *Qualitative Research in Action*, London, Sage Publications, pp.300–309.
- Rich, Adrienne. (1980). Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence, *Signs*, Vol. 5, No. 4, pp.631–60.
- Russo, Joseph. (1983). The Poetics of Ancient Greek Proverbs, *Journal of Folklore Reserach*, Vol. 20, No. 2/3, pp.121–130.
- Rzehak, Lutz. (2011). *Doing Pashto: Pashtunwali as the Ideal of Honourable Behaviour and Tribal Life among the Pashtuns*, Afghan Analyst Network, Thematic Report, [Online] <<https://www.afghanistan-analysts.net/index.asp?id=1567>> [Accessed: July 20, 2014].
- Saarikangas, Kirsi. (2006). Displays of the Everyday: Relations Between Gender and the Visibility of Domestic Work in the Modern Finnish Kitchen From the 1930s to the 1950s, *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography*, Vol. 13, No. 2, pp.161–172.
- Sadiqi, Fatima. (2002). *Women, Gender and Language in Morocco*, Brill Academic Publishers.
- Sadiqi, Fatima. (2003). Women and Linguistic Space, *Women and Language*, Vol. 26, No 1, pp.35–43.
- Saleem, Ishrat. (2013). Women's Political Participation, Pakistan Gender News, [Online] <<http://www.pakistangendernews.org/womens-political-participation/>> [Accessed: July 12, 2014].
- Sapir, E. (1949). *Selected Writings of Edward Sapir*, (ed.) D. Mandelbaum, Barkely, University of Californian Press.
- Schieffelin, B. B. (1990). *The Give and Take of Every-day Life: Language Socialization in Kaluli Children*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Schilling, Natalie. (2013). *Sociolinguistic Fieldwork*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Schipper, Mineke. (1991). *Sources of All Evil: African Proverbs and Sayings on Women*, London, Allison and Busby Books.
- Schipper, Mineke. (2004 [1994]). *Never Marry a Woman with Big Feet: Women in Proverbs from Around the World*, Yale University Press.
- Schrijvers, J. (1993). "Motherhood Experienced and Conceptualised: Changing Images in Sri Lanka and the Netherlands", In D. Bell, P. Caplan & W. J. Karim (eds.), *Gendered Fields: Women, Men and Ethnography*, London and New York, Routledge, pp.143–58.
- Schuler, S. R. et al. (2008). Women's Rights, Domestic Violence, and Recourse Seeking in Rural Bangladesh, *Violence Against Women*, Vol. 14, No. 3, pp.326–345.

- Scott, J. C. (1990). *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, New Heaven, Yale University Press.
- Scott, J.C. (1985). *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, New Heavens, Yale University Press.
- Seccombe, Wally. (1974). The Housewife and Her Labour under Capitalism, *New Life Review*, Vol. 38, pp.3–24.
- Sechrest, L.; Fay, T. L. & Zaidi, S. M. H. (1972). Problems of Translation in Cross-Cultural Research, *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, Vol. 3, No. 1, pp.41–56.
- Seitel, P. (1976). “Proverbs: A Social Use of Metaphor”, In Ben-Amos, D. (ed.) *Folk Genre*, Texas, University of Texas Press, pp.125–143.
- Sen, A. (1992). Missing Women, *British Medical Journal*, Vol. 304, pp.587–588.
- Sen, A. (1999). *Development as Freedom*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Shaheed, F. (2009). *Gender, Religion and the Quest for Justice in Pakistan*, Lahore, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), [Online] <<http://users.ox.ac.uk/~qehwemc/documents/WEBPakistandrft.pdf>> [Accessed: July 18, 2014].
- Shaheen, Salma. (1984). *Rohi Sandare, Volume I (Pashto Tappas)* [in Pashto], Peshawar, Pashto Academy, Peshawar University.
- Shaheen, Salma. (1994). *Rohi Sandare, Volume II (Pashto Tappas)* [in Pashto], Peshawar, Pashto Academy, Peshawar University.
- Shaheen, Salma. (2004). Status of Women in Pukhtoon Society, Pashto Academy, University of Peshawar, [Online] <<http://pashto.upesh.edu.pk/articles.htm>> [Accessed: May 12, 2013].
- Shalinsky, Audrey. (1989). Women’s Relationships in Traditional Northern Afghanistan, *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 8, No.1, pp.117–129.
- Shinwari, M. Khan. (1999). *Da Mataloono Qisse (Stories of Proverbs)* [in Pashto], Peshawar, Master Printers.
- Shultz, M. (1975). “The Semantic Derogation of Women”, In Thorne, B. and Henley, N. (eds.) *Language and Sex: Difference and Dominance*, Rowley, MA, Newbury House, pp.64–73.
- Siran, Jean-Louis. (1993). Rhetoric, Tradition and Communication: The Dialectic of Meaning in Proverb Use, *Man, New Series*, Vol. 28, No. 2, pp.225–242.
- Spain, James W. (1962). *The Way of the Pathans*, Karachi, Oxford University Press.
- Spain, James W. (1963). *The Pathan Borderland*, The Hague, Mouton.
- Spender, D. (1980). *Man Made Language*, Boston, Routledge.

- Spender, D. (1993). "Language and Reality: Who Made the World?" In Jackson, S. *et al.* (eds.) *Women's Studies: A Reader*, Herfordshire, Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Spivak, Gayatri. (1988). "Can the Subaltern Speak?", In Cary Nelson and Larry (eds.) *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, Grossberg, Chicago, University of Illinois Press, pp.271–313.
- Srivastava, I. (1991). Woman as Portrayed in Women's Folk Songs of North India, *Asian Folklore Studies*, Vol. 50, No. 2, pp.269–310.
- Stoianova, Inga. (2001). The Concept of "Woman" in Chinese, English, Romanian and Russian Paremylogy, Paper Presented at the International Conference on "Paradigm of Chinese Culture: Background Values and the Image of Civilization, Free International University of Moldova, March 24, 2001.
- Storm, Hiroko. (1992). Women in Japanese Proverbs, *Asian Folklore Studies*, Vol. 51, No. 2, pp.167–182.
- Sumner, Claude. (1995). *Oromo Wisdom Literature, Vol. 1: Proverbs, Collection and Analysis*. Addis Ababa, Gudina Tumsa Foundation.
- Syed, J., Ali, F. & Winstanley, D. (2005). In Pursuit of Modesty: Contextual Emotional Labour and the Dilemma for Working Women in Islamic Societies, *International Journal of Work, Organization and Emotion*, Vol. 1, pp.150–167.
- Syed, Jawad. (2010). A Historical Perspective on Islamic Modesty and its Implications for Female Employment, *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal*, Vol. 29, No. 2, pp.150–166.
- Tagliamonte, S. A. (2011). *Variationist Sociolinguistics: Change, Observation, Interpretation*, Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell.
- Tagliamonte, Sali A. (2006). *Analysing Sociolinguistic Variation*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Tair, Mohammad Nawaz and Edwards, T. C. (1982). *Rohi Matloona: Pashto Proverbs* [in Pashto with English Glosses], Peshawar, Pashto Academy, University of Peshawar.
- Tair, Mohammad Nawaz. (1975). *Rohi Matloona (Pashto Proverbs) Volume I* [in Pashto], Peshawar: Pashto Academy, Peshawar University.
- Tair, Mohammad Nawaz. (1980). *Folk Culture: Tappa aw Zhwad (Folk Culture: Tappa and Life)* [in Pashto], Peshawar, Ghani Sons Printers.
- Tair, Mohammad Nawaz. (1981). *Rohi Matloona (Pashto Proverbs) Volume II* [in Pashto], Peshawar: Pashto Academy, Peshawar University.
- Talbot, Marry. (2003). "Gender Stereotypes: Reproduction and Challenge", In Janet Holmes and Miriam Meyerhoff (eds.) *The Handbook of Language and Gender*, Blackwell Publishing, pp.468–488,

- Tannen, D. (1987). *That is Not What I Meant! How Conversational Style Makes and Breaks Relationships*, New York, Ballantine.
- Tannen, D. (1994). *Gender and Discourse*, New York, Oxford University Press.
- Taylor, Archer. (1985 [1931]). *The Proverb and an Index to 'The Proverb'*, Berlin, Peter Lang Publishers.
- The Guardian. (2012). Pakistan Rebuilds its Education Network after Taliban are Driven out of Swat, Tuesday 26 June 2012. [Online] <<http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2012/jun/26/pakistan-education-swat-valley-taliban>> [Accessed: July 20, 2014].
- Thorburn, S. S. (1978 [1876]). *Bannu: Our Afghan Frontier*, Lahore, Sang-E-Meel Publications.
- Tokita-Tanabe, Yumiko. (1999). Play and Eros: Girls Swing Play and Swing Songs in Orissa, India, *Journal of the Japanese Association for South Asian Studies*, Vol. 11, pp.25–50.
- Tracy, R., Greco, N., Felix, E., & Kilburg, D. (2003). Reframing and Wisdom Within Proverbs, *Imagination, Cognition, & Personality*, Vol. 22, pp.117–162.
- Tracy, R., Patterson, B. G., & Halpert, J.A. (2003). A Truth-Based Approach for Identifying the Best and Worst Proverbs, Paper Presented at the Meeting of the Midwestern Psychological Association, Chicago.
- Trudgill, Peter. (1972). Sex, Covert Prestige and Linguistic Change in Upper British English of Norwich, *Language and Society*, Vol. 1, pp.179–195.
- Trudgill, Peter. (1974). *The Social Differentiation of English in Norwich*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Turner, Brian S. (2003). *Islam: Critical Concept in Sociology*, Routledge.
- Turner, D. W. III. (2010). Qualitative Interview Design: A Practical Guide for Novice Investigators, *The Qualitative Report*, Vol. 15, No.3, pp.754–760.
- Uchida, Aki. (1992). When “Difference” is “Dominance”: A Critique of the “Anti-Power-Based” Cultural Approach to Sex Differences, *Language in Society*, Vol. 21, pp.547–568.
- UNESCO. (2011). Education For All Global Monitoring Report, [Online] <<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/efareport/the-report-and-efa/>> [Accessed: July 21, 2014].
- United National Development Programme. (2008). Human Development Report 2007/2008, New York.
- Upadhyaya, H. S. (1968). Mother-Daughter Relationship Patterns in the Hindu Joint Family: A Study Based on the Analysis of the Bhojpuri Folksongs of India, *Folklore*, Vol. 79, pp.217–26.



- Upadhyaya, H. S. (1970). Indian Family Structure and the Bhojpuri Riddles, *Folklore*, Vol. 81, pp.115–131.
- Upadhyaya, K. D. (1967). Society as Depicted in Indian Folk-Narratives, *Fabula*, Vol. 9, pp.155–161.
- van Dijk, T. A. (1997). *Discourse Studies: A Multidisciplinary Introduction*, London, Sage.
- Vanci-Osam, Ulker. (1998). May You Be Shot with Greasy Bullets: Curse Utterances in Turkish, *Asian Folklore Studies*, Vol. 57, No.1, pp.71–86.
- Vanita, Ruth. (2004). “Married Among Their Companions”: Female Homoerotic Relations in Nineteenth-Century Urdu Rekhti Poetry in India, *Journal of Women’s History*, Vol. 16, No.1, pp.12–53.
- Vatuk, S. (1982). “Purdah Revisited: A Comparison of Hindu and Muslim Reinterpretation of the Cultural Meaning of Purdah in South Asia”, In Papanet, H. and Minault, G. (eds.) *Separate World: Studies of Purdah in South Asia*, New Delhi, Chanakya.
- Vetterling-Braggin, M. (ed.). (1981). *Sexist Language: A Modern Philosophical Analysis*, US, Littlefield Adams.
- Walby, S. (1990). *Theorizing Patriarchy*, Oxford, Blackwell Publishing.
- Walby, S. (1992). “Post-Postmodernism? Theorising Social Complexity”, In M. Barrett & A. Phillips (eds.) *Destabilising Theory: Contemporary Feminist Debates*, Cambridge, Polity Press.
- Walby, S. (1997). *Gender Transformations*, London, Routledge.
- Wardough, Ronald. (2010). *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.), Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell.
- Warren, C. A. B. (2002). “Qualitative Interviewing”, in J. F. Gubrium and J. A. Holstein (eds.) *Handbook of Interview Research: Context and Method*, Thousand Oaks, CA., Sage.
- Warren, Sarah D. (2009). Identity Performances in Argentina How Will We Recognize Each Other as Mapuche?: Gender and Ethnic Identity Performances in Argentina, *Gender & Society*, Vol. 23, No. 6, pp.768–789.
- Wazir, M. M. K. (2010). Violence Against Women: Violation of Right to Life of Women in FATA, *Pakistan Journal of Criminology*, Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 33–52.
- Weber, Lynn. (1998). A Conceptual Framework for Understanding Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality, *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, Vol. 22, pp.13–32.
- Webster, S. K. (1982). Women, Sex, and Marriage in Moroccan Proverbs, *Int. Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 14, pp.173–184.

- Webster, S. K. (1984). *The Shadow of a Noble Man: Honor and Shame in Arabic Proverbs*, Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Indiana University.
- Webster, S. K. (1986). Women and Folklore: Performance, Characters, Scholarship, *Women's Study Int' Forum*, Vol. 9, No. 3, pp.219–226.
- Weigle, Marta. (1978). Women as Verbal Artists: Reclaiming the Daughters of Enheduanna, *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies (Special Issue on Women and Folklore)*, Vol. 3, No. 3, pp.1–9.
- Weitzman, Lenore J. (1979). *Sex Role Socialization*, Palo Alto, CA, Mayfield.
- Wellard, S., & McKenna, L. (2001). Turning Tapes into Text: Issues Surrounding the Transcription of Interviews, *Contemporary Nurse*, Vol. 11, No. 2/3, pp.180–186.
- West, C. and Zimmerman, D. (1977). Women's Place in Every Day Talk: Reflections on Parent-Child Interaction, *Social Problems*, Vol. 14, pp.521–529.
- West, C. and Zimmerman, D. (1987). Doing Gender, *Gender and Society*, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp.125–151.
- Whiting, B. J. (1994 [1932]). "The Nature of the Proverb", In Harris, Joseph & Mieder, Wolfgang (eds.) *When Evensong and Morrowsong Accord: Three Essays on the Proverb*, Cambridge, MA, Department of English and American Literature and Language, Harvard University, pp.87–113.
- Whorf, B. L. (1956). *Language, Thought and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf*, Cambridge, MA, MIT Press.
- Wolf, Margery. (1972). *Women and the Family in Rural Taiwan*, Stanford, CA., Stanford University Press.
- Woolard, Katherine. & Schieffelin, Bambi. (1994). Language Ideology, *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 23, pp.55–82.
- World Economic Forum. (2011). *The Global Gender Gap Report 2011*, Geneva, Switzerland.
- Xiaoping, Y. (2008). Gender-Specific Asymmetries in Chinese Language, *MP: An Online Feminist Journal*, Vol. 2, No.1, pp.31–41.
- Yankah, Kwesi. (1982). The Proverb and the Western-Educated African: Use or Neglect? *Folklore Forum*, Vol. 15, pp.143–58.
- Yankah, Kwesi. (1983). Toward a Performance-centred Theory of The Proverb, *Critical Arts: South-North Cultural and Media Studies*, Vol. 3, No.1, pp.29–43.
- Yankah, Kwesi. (1989). Proverbs: The Aesthetics of Traditional Communication, *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 20, No. 3, pp.325–346.

- Yankah, Kwesi. (2001). "Proverb", In Duranti, A (ed.) *Key Terms in Language and Culture*, Malden, MA, Blackwell and American Anthropology Association, pp.201–203.
- Yasini, M. A. (2005). *Ualsi Panga (Folkloric Treasure)* [in Pashto], Peshawar, Sapi Publishers.
- Yitah, Halen. (2006a). Throwing Stones in Jest: Kasena Women's "Proverbial" Revolt, *Oral Tradition*, Vol. 21, No. 2, pp.233–249.
- Yitah, Halen. (2006b). *Saying Their Own 'Truth': Kasena Women's (De)construction of Gender Through Proverbial Jest*, University of South Carolina Press.
- Yitah, Halen. (2009). "Fighting with Proverbs": Kasena Women's (Re)Definition of Female Personhood through Proverbial Jest, *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 40, No. 3, pp.74–95.
- Yitah, Halen. (2012). Kasena Women's Critique of Gender Roles and Gender Justice Through Proverbial Jest, *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 1, pp.9–20.
- Young, Caroline S. L. (1984). *Upholding the Veil: Hindu Women's Perceptions of Gender and Caste Identity in Rural Pakistan*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Edinburgh, UK.
- Yousaf, Huma. (2013). The Evolving Role of Women in Pakistani Politics, NOREF Expert Analysis, [Online]  
<[http://www.peacebuilding.no/var/ezflow\\_site/storage/original/application/c832356e4ede2cff568363e27bb152b0.pdf](http://www.peacebuilding.no/var/ezflow_site/storage/original/application/c832356e4ede2cff568363e27bb152b0.pdf)> [Accessed: July 23, 2014].
- Yousufzai, H. M. and Gohar, A. (2005). *Towards Understanding Pukhtoon Jirga*, Peshawar, Just Peace International Publisher.
- Yusuf, Y. K. (2002). Sexism, English and Yoruba, *Linguistik Online*, Vol. 11, No. 2/02, [Online] <[http://www.linguistik-online.de/11\\_02/yusuf.pdf](http://www.linguistik-online.de/11_02/yusuf.pdf)> (Accessed: March 11, 2013).
- Yuval-Davis, Nira. (1997). *Gender and Nation*, London, Sage.
- Yuval-Davis, Nira. (2006). Intersectionality and Feminist Politics, *European Journal of Women's Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 9, pp.193–209.
- Zahir, S. Zahir (2010). *Wrandeno Su Praikhi Na De (Proverbs of Old People)* [in Pashto], Lakki Marwat, Takhti Khel Pashto Literary Society.
- Zaland, Abul Khair. (1985). *Da Mataloono Qisse (Background Stories of Pashto Proverbs)* [in Pashto], Queta, Pashto Academy, Baluchistan,
- Zavella, Patricia. (1997). "Feminist Insider Dilemmas", In L. Lamphere, H. Ragone, and P. Zavella, (eds.) *Situated Lives*, New York, Routledge, pp.42–61.

Zhwak, Muhammad Din. (1965). *Pakhto Matloona (Pashto Proverbs)* [in Pashto], Kabul, Pakhto Adabi Tolana.

Zimmerman, Don and West, Candace. (1975). "Sex Roles, Interruptions and Silence in Conversation", In Barrie Thorne and Nancy Henley (eds.) *Language and Sex, Difference and Dominance*, Towley, MA, Newbury House, pp.105–129.

## Appendix: List of Proverbs

Of the total 518 proverbs used in this research, only those 147 which are collected for the first time during this project are listed below. These proverbs could not be found in the previously published books of Pashto proverbs. The rest of the proverbs could be found in books; therefore, they are shown in this appendix.

- 1     ***Androor ka lwesht we, wrandar la bas da.***  
*The sister-in-law may be just one feet, she is enough for her brother's wife.*  
 (Referring to rivalry between sister-in-laws in a joint household)
- 2     ***Androor kashra khwakhe we.***  
*The sister-in-law is the younger mother-in-law.*  
 (Referring to rivalry between mother-in-law, daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law)
- 3     ***Be-agla sarhi ow pa sarwoo ke hes farak neshta.***  
*A man without reason is no better than a beast.*
- 4     ***Buday da shaitan troor da.***  
*The old woman is a devil's aunt.*
- 5     ***Che aurata we, ghalata we.***  
*If she is a woman, she is wrong.*
- 6     ***Che ghwa ghojale la zi, badray/khadray mechane la zi.***  
*When it is time to milk the cow, the disorganised woman starts grinding grain.*
- 7     ***Che jwunday ye da merhu ye, che mrha she bia da plar.***  
*When the daughter is alive, she belongs to her husband, when she is dead, she belongs to her father.*  
 (According to Pashtun customs, the parental family is responsible for the funeral rites of the deceased a women)
- 8     ***Che khaze ta hal way, no dam ta ye wale nu waye.***  
*When you tell your secrets to a woman, why not tell it to a drummer.*  
 (Referring to women as news-mongers, i.e., they can't keep secrets)
- 9     ***Che khuday ye kawe ow khaze ye kawe hagma kegi.***  
*What God wants to do, it is done; what a woman wants to do, it is done*
- 10    ***Che kunda she, pa manda she.***  
*A widow is always on the move.*  
 (I.e., she has to work hard to make a living)
- 11    ***Che kus ye kog we, bakht ye khog we.***  
*The ugly woman has the brightest fortune.*

- 12 ***Che maikhke rashi, da ghwagano zay wrak she.***  
*When a buffalo comes into the shed, the cows lose their place/status*  
 (Referring to a new woman in the home (e.g., co-wife, daughter-in-law) who will compromise the power of the existing women)
- 13 ***Che oye khandal, nu pake da /Jo hans gaye, wo pans gay.***  
*When she [a woman] laughs, she is trapped.*  
 (I.e., a woman's smile confirms her consent for love)
- 14 ***Che pa khawand drana ye, pa tool kale dranu ye, ow che pa khawand spaka we, pa tool kali spaka we.***  
*A woman's social status is relative to her husband's treatment of her.*
- 15 ***Che rotay kama she kor wala gramawa, che salan kam she melma gramawa.***  
*When the bread is less, blame the wife; when the broth is less, blame the guest.*
- 16 ***Che somra teeta we, domra paleeta we.***  
*The shorter the woman, the more wicked she will be.*
- 17 ***Che soomra ye zaman we, domra qaderman we.***  
*The more sons, the more social status.*
- 18 ***Che yawa we दौरा क्हा वे, चे दूवे शे सारसे शे, चे दूरे शे पा क्हादा सारा सवार शे.***  
*When there is one woman in the home, she is good; when they are two, they are like crocodiles (fight); when they are three, they ride the walls and roofs of the house.*  
 (I.e., more than one woman cannot live peacefully in one house)
- 19 ***Da ade waak tar katway pore de.***  
*The power of the mother is limited to the cooking pot.*
- 20 ***Da bacha wror na malang merhu khu we.***  
*A husband, even if a bagger, is better for a woman than to live with a brother, even if the brother is a king.*  
 (I.e., a unmarried women have no status; dependence on brother is bad for a women)
- 21 ***Da dala sarhe kor ke melma masher we.***  
*When a man is hen-pecked, a guest behaves as host in his house.*
- 22 ***Da duniya tolo na ghat darogh da de che dree khaze ghale naste way.***  
*The biggest lie of the world is that 'three women were sitting quite'.*  
 (I.e., women cannot stop talking)
- 23 ***Da dwa ano / laso rupo nave kho ba pa kat ke metiazal kave.***  
*The bride of ten rupees (=cheap) urinates on the wedding bed.*
- 24 ***Da ghru pa teega khug sho, da kor mechan ye mata krha.***  
*Hurt by a rock on the mountain, he came home to break the grinding stone.*  
 (Referring to wife-beating)

- 25 ***Da insan khushbakhti ow nekbakhti da hagma khaze sara arha larhi.***  
*A man's good or bad fortune depends on his wife.*
- 26 ***Halakan ow jenakay che you zai lobe kave no khkar lakay ba ye oshi.***  
*A boy who plays with girls will grow horns and a girl who plays with boys will grow a tail.*  
 (I.e., boys and girls should not play together)
- 27 ***Da jenay che waikhtu toor we, ya loor we ya angoor we, che waikhtu ye speen we, ya khwakhe she ya mor we.***  
*When a woman's hair is black, she is either a daughter or daughter-in-law; when her hair is grey; she is either a mother or a mother-in-law.*
- 28 ***Da kam fasal che werhu nu we, haghe ta mal wargadigi.***  
*A field without fence (woman) is prone to all kind of transgressor animals (men).*
- 29 ***Da khaze sera ba bal sarhe pa sar da.***  
*A girl's shadow falls on the head of another man.*  
 (I.e., she has to be married, thus, of no benefit to the parents)
- 30 ***Da khaze shal gaza zhaba we.***  
*A woman's tongue measures twenty meters.*
- 31 ***Da khaze soch, ow da zhami bad zar badlegi.***  
*A woman's mind and winter's wind change often.*
- 32 ***Da khaze waikhtu ogad de, kho zhaba ye da haghe na hum ogada da.***  
*A woman hair is long, but her tongue is even longer.*
- 33 ***Da khazo awra, mana ye ma.***  
*Listen to women, but do not obey them.*
- 34 ***Da khazo da you wekhtu / kamsay lande sal makra we.***  
*Beneath every hair of a woman, there are a hundred trickeries.*  
 (I.e., women are tricksters)
- 35 ***Da Khazo Kali na ve.***  
*Women have no village.*  
 (I.e., women are depending on men and have move along their men go)
- 36 ***Da khazo kar hamesha kharab we.***  
*A woman's work is always spoiled.*
- 37 ***Da khazo khabara pa you ghug awra, pa bal ye ghurzawa.***  
*Listen to women's words on one ear; throw it through the other ear.*
- 38 ***Da khazo khabaro na shar jorhegi.***  
*Women's gossips breeds evils/quarrels.*

- 39 ***Da khazo khule sooray we.***  
*Women's mouths have no locks.*  
 (I.e., they cannot maintain secrets)
- 40 ***Da khazo nazar da kali na bahar na lagi.***  
*Women's vision does not travel beyond the end of the village.*  
 (I.e., women are short-sighted)
- 41 ***Da khazo sara che soomra ziate khabare kawē, domra ba de da stargos sru kamigi.***  
*The more you talk to women, the more you lose your authority over them.*
- 42 ***Da khazo sharam pa nanawato nu wapās kegi.***  
*The loss of women's honour cannot be compensated / restored.*
- 43 ***Da khazo zīarat nu we.***  
*There is no shrine of a woman saint.*  
 (I.e., women cannot be/have never been religious leaders)
- 44 ***Da khu / ajiz sarhe aurata, da tool kali wrandar we.***  
*A poor man's wife is the sister-in-law of the whole village.*
- 45 ***Da khu khawand na neema kuna pata, da bad khawand na toola kuna pata.***  
*From a good husband, hide half of your arse, from a bad husband; hide all of your arse.*  
 (I.e., never share all your secrets with your husband)
- 46 ***Da khwakhe da angoor loond sar bade she.***  
*The mother-in-law does not like the wet hair of the daughter-in-law.*  
 (I.e., they are jealousy of each other)
- 47 ***Da khwakhe ow da angoor da shpe ow da pesho da.***  
*A mother-in-law and daughter-in-law are like a cat and a dog*
- 48 ***Da kome paighle che sifat oke hagma mateeza takhti.***  
*When you cherish/praise a girl, she will elope.*
- 49 ***Da kor khabar bahar ma kaway ow da bahar khabara kor ma kaway.***  
*What is in the home, let it be; what is out of home, let it be.*  
 (I.e., do not tell the secret of the home outside and vice versa)
- 50 ***Da kunde zoy da kunde merhu we.***  
*The son of a widow is her 'husband'.*  
 (I.e., the son takes the responsibility to physically and financially protect her mother)
- 51 ***Da lonrho plar hamesha starhe we.***  
*A girls' father is never at rest.*  
 (I.e., he worries about daughters' chastity and marriage)



- 52 ***Da nave khamoshi da nave raza ve.***  
*A bride's silence is her consent.*
- 53 ***Da perhe na soka walwata, khwakhe ta ye bahan melawo shwa.***  
*The daughter-in-law drop a piece of dough, the mother-in-law got a pretext to fight.*
- 54 ***Da plar da kor me melmana ke kho korbana me ma ke.***  
*Let I be a guest in my father's home but not the host.*  
(I.e., a daughter does not want to be dependent on her father for all her life)
- 55 ***Da sarhe ezzat da khaze da khpo mainz de de.***  
*A man's honour lives between the legs of his woman.*
- 56 ***Da sarhe pata da khaze na maloomigi.***  
*A man is known by the qualities of his wife.*
- 57 ***Da sarhi kar ta gora, ghat warhoke ye su kave.***  
*Look at a man's deeds, not whether he is tall or short.*
- 58 ***Da shpe toley khaze you shante we.***  
*When it is dark/night, all women are the same.*  
(I.e., they are objects of sexual pleasure)
- 59 ***Da siyalay har kar asan de kho zoy zegawal gran de.***  
*It is easy to compete in any other thing except in producing a male child.*
- 60 ***Da spere khaze sal kala omar we.***  
*A bad woman lives for hundred years.*
- 61 ***a yawe Pukhtane khaze aqal da nah nayanoow julagano baraber we.***  
*The intelligence of one Pashtun men is equal to nine Pashtun women and the intelligence of one Pashtun woman is equal to nine non-Pashtun men.*
- 62 ***Da zamano nom khog de kho cha la ye su okrhal.***  
*Though sweet is the name of the sons, they seldom come up to the expectations.*
- 63 ***Che da zhrande lande pull ye garzi, poh sha che kar kharab de.***  
*When the lower wheel of the grinding-stone starts moving, know that something is wrong.*  
(Referring to man who does not work while his wife is earning).
- 64 ***Da zmake na ow Puhtane khaze na ghad nu rakhezhi.***  
*The earth and the Pashtun women do (should) not speak.*
- 65 ***Danga khaza kam agla we.***  
*The taller the woman, the lesser her intelligence.*

- 66 ***Dwayam khawand da zangoon totey de.***  
*A second husband is like a knee-patch.*  
 (I.e., marrying twice is a shame for a woman)
- 67 ***Dwe khaze che keni da drayame wekhtu ye pa laso ke we.***  
*When two women sit together, they have in their hand the hair of a third woman.*  
 (I.e., women back-bite against each other).
- 68 ***Hazara te rooti mengi hain te pudi sasti hai.***  
*Bread is expensive and vagina is cheaper in Hazara.*
- 79 ***Jenakay paleet bote de, zar zar, zar ghategi.***  
*Girls are like weeds: that grow in abundance and grow quickly.*
- 70 ***Jenay che da katki na rakozi, wadu wa ye.***  
*When a girl steps down from the baby-swing, she should be married.*
- 71 ***Ka chery da Allah na elawa bal cha ta sujda lagedi, nu khazo ba khawand ta sujda kawala.***  
*If women were allowed to prostrate before someone other than God, they would have been required to prostrate before their husband.*
- 72 ***Ka khaze khe we no charta ba pake paighambar ragale wo.***  
*If women were capable of leadership, there would have been a women prophet!*
- 73 ***Ka mor khra we, aulad ta kha we.***  
*Though the mother may be a donkey, only her children know her worth.*
- 74 ***Ka shpa tiara da, khor loor khkara da.***  
*Though the night may be dark, but a sister/daughter is visible.*  
 (Referring to incest, i.e., do not confuse a sister/daughter with wife)
- 75 ***Ka wror kha way khuday ba zan la paida karhe wo.***  
*If a brother was a good thing, God would have created one for Himself.*  
 (Referring to fight among brothers)
- 76 ***Kam kor ke che loor oshi haghe ke owu noora owaregi.***  
*The birth of a daughter brings seven blessings to the family.*
- 77 ***Kam sarhay che kor na she sambalawale hagma da kali masheri nu shi kawala.***  
*A man who cannot handle his home cannot handle community affairs.*  
 (I.e., to be a community leader, a man must demonstrate leadership and control in his home first)
- 78 ***Khar sarwoo ke nu de, zoom pa reshto ke nu de.***  
*The donkey is not a [worthy] cattle, the son-in-law is not a [trustworthy] relative.*

- 79 ***Khawand da khaze da sar soray we.***  
*The husband is a shadow over the head of the wife.*  
 (I.e., the husband is the protector of wife)
- 80 ***Khawand kawal asan we kho chulay achalawal gran we.***  
*It is easy to marry a man, but it is not easy to keep a house.*
- 81 ***Khaza da fasad Jarh de.***  
*Women are the roots of all evils.*
- 82 ***Khaza da khpo saplay da, ka khwakha de nu badala ye ka.***  
*Women are footwear, if you do not like, change it.*
- 83 ***Khaza da shaitan na owa qadama makhke zi.***  
*A woman goes seven steps ahead of the devil.*
- 84 ***Khaza hess kala hum ozgara nu we.***  
*A woman's work is never done.*
- 85 ***Khaza loor loyawal bal la khwari kawal de.***  
*Rearing a daughter is to work hard for another man [i.e., husband.*  
*(That is because she has to be married off ultimately)*
- 86 ***Khaza naqisa qoum de.***  
*Women are incomplete species.*  
 (Referring to lack of women's intellectual growth)
- 87 ***Khaza nu takht ghwarhi nu bakht ghwari, da you shay sakht ghwarhi.***  
*A woman neither wants a fortune nor a crown, but a hard penis.*
- 88 ***Khaza ow sarhe da jwand dwa paye de.***  
*A man and the woman are the two wheels of the vehicle of life.*
- 89 ***Khaza ow sheesha har wakht pa khtra ke we.***  
*A woman and a glass are always in danger.*
- 90 ***Khaza pa hay paida kigi, pa hay wadegi, pa hay mrha kegi.***  
*A woman is born with sorrow, married with sorrow, and die with sorrow.*
- 91 ***Khaza pa khaita daka sata, ow pa saperha ye lande sata.***  
*Keep a woman's stomach filled, and her face under a slap.*
- 92 ***Khaza pa nikah da, zmaka pa inteqal.***  
*A woman's ownership is confirmed by marriage contract, and a land's ownership is by transfer paper.*
- 93 ***Khaze daire khabare kave zaka che da doy dwa khule we, sarhe dair soch kave zaka che da doy dwa saroona we.***  
*Women talk more because they have two mouths; men think more because they have two heads.*  
 (Referring to sexual organs)

- 94 ***Khaze halaq Hujro ta nu bozi.***  
*Woman should not be taken out to the hujra.*  
 (Hujra = guest house = means public space)
- 95 ***Khaze ta darogh wayalo ke gunnah neshta.***  
*Telling lie to the wife is not a sin.*
- 96 ***Khazo Baba adam la hum dhuka warkarhe wa.***  
*Woman has even cheated Adam.*  
 (Referring to Biblical /Quranic story of devil/serpent cheating Eve, who in return cheat Adam)
- 97 ***Khor loor da ameer sarhe kawa, ow ghwa da ghareeb sarhe kawa.***  
*Marry the sister/daughter of a rich man, and buy the cow of a poor man.*
- 98 ***Khor loor da pradi dairan khazal da.***  
*A woman is a junk on the dunghill of someone else.*  
 (I.e., she belongs to someone else's house)
- 99 ***Khre ta che "Laila" owaye bia wakhu na khware.***  
*When you call a donkey a 'Laila' ('darling'), she refuses to eat grass.*  
 ('Laila' is a legendary folk-heroine, a beautiful woman. This is used to mean that when you praise women, they forget their status).
- 100 ***Kuna barbanda bangrhi pa las.***  
*Bare buttocks, yet bangles on hands.*  
 (I.e., she cannot afford to cloth herself, yet she does not compromise on being fashionable).
- 101 ***Kuss me kuss larho, khair me khair onusho.***  
*Giving vagina is not charity.*  
 (This is a story-proverb: a prostitute wanted to donate money for building a mosque, the Imam replied that money earned through vagina (prostitution) is not charitable)
- 102 ***Kuss ta gora pa khwarh awdas ta gora.***  
*Look, a woman is taking allusion on the river side!*  
 (This is said to mean that women cannot perform certain activities)
- 103 ***Loor che kala hissa oghwarhi, hagma loor pake nu she.***  
*When daughter takes her share in her father's land, she ceases her right to be a daughter.*
- 104 ***Loor da bal kor da.***  
*A daughter belongs to someone else's house [i.e., husband's house].*
- 105 ***Loor da mor leche wazare de.***  
*The daughter is the hands and shoulders of the mother.*

- 106 **Loor da sharam tokray da, da bal ogo ye achawa.**  
*A daughter is a basket full of shame; the earlier you put this basket on the shoulders of another man, the better.*
- 107 **Loor khu da kho ghamoona ye dair we.**  
*A daughter is good, but she is a source of many worries.*
- 108 **Loor ye ghla, mor ye mla.**  
*The mother is the master-mind of her daughter's affairs.*
- 109 **Mal me da sara zar, sar me da namoosa.**  
*Scarify my wealth for my head; scarify my head for my women/honour.*
- 110 **Nar che wadu oki hala sarhay shi.**  
*A male becomes a man only when he marries.*
- 111 **Nar zoy da khaze mogay de.**  
*A son is the knot in the house to which a woman ties herself.*
- 112 **Nazawale loor bada angoor we.**  
*A much loved daughter is a bad daughter-in-law.*
- 113 **Noor da ghru sar wahi, namarda khpal tabar wahi.**  
*A real man climbs on peaks of mighty mountains; a coward man beats his poor wife.*
- 114 **Pa ghō me ghay, pa kus pase me khande.**  
*You are fucking me, but are also laughing at my vagina!*
- 115 **Pa kor ke you lewanay khu we.**  
*There must be one mad man in every house.*
- 116 **Pa loor hum gham tood we, hum khadi.**  
*A daughter is always present to share both sorrows and joys with her parents.*
- 117 **Pa ma ye zaka zoor da che da shpag zamano moor da.**  
*She has power over me, because she is the mother of six sons.*
- 118 **Pa yawa khaza ke kho sarhay kund we.**  
*A man with one wife is [almost] a widower.*
- 119 **Pa you ghla sarhay nu ghal kegi.**  
*A man does not become thief on one theft only.  
 (I.e., one bad action does not turn a man into a bad man)*
- 120 **Parwa me darta neshat ka tu tair she pa London, os me zhanrhi de zaman.**  
*May you go beyond London; I don't care as my sons are now grown up.  
 (Go beyond London means 'get lost'. Women say this to husband when her sons are grown up)*

- 121 ***Pesho hum da kus mermana shwa.***  
*The cat also has a vagina!*  
 (This is said to belittle a boastful woman)
- 122 ***Pukhtano kor ke spay nu ve, levany nu ve, hagha kor nu de.***  
*A Pashtun house is not a house until it has one dog and one angry man.*
- 123 ***Pukhtun ta da zoom kara khob nu warzi.***  
*A Pashtun cannot sleep sound in the son-in-law's house.*  
 (It is because the son-in-law is despised by most Pashtuns)
- 124 ***Rang da khazo wrak sha, baikh obasi da sarho.***  
*God prevent men from the treachery of women.*
- 125 ***Sarhay che da shpeto she, da weshto she.***  
*When a man turns sixty, he does not deserve to live anymore.*
- 126 ***Sarhay ka kasher we, da kor masher we.***  
*A man, though he may be younger, has the responsibility to control his home.*
- 127 ***Sarhe kor jorhawe, khaze ye abadawe.***  
*Men construct a house [building]; women turn it into a home.*
- 128 ***Sarho ta khuday ezzat warkarhe de.***  
*Men's authority [over women] is God's decision.*
- 129 ***Shamilat paighal khaza da, che da sara larha da hagha shwa.***  
*A communal land is a virgin girl; he who tills it first becomes its owner.*
- 130 ***Shara ke rawa de, kho da halqo na pa ghla de.***  
*Though it is lawful in Islam, but should be hidden from the people.*  
 (Referring to marital sex, i.e., all things should not be done in public, even if lawful)
- 131 ***Shiatan che kam kar pa khpala nu she kawale, halta boday khaza olegi.***  
*Where the devil himself cannot go, there he sends an old woman.*
- 132 ***Shkoor de dak we, ka da piatso we ka anghano.***  
*Let there be enough bread, be that of barley or wheat.*  
 (Bread means children, barley means girls, wheat mean boys)
- 133 ***Shtamana Khaza sarhe na ghulam jorhawe.***  
*He who marries a wealthy woman sells his liberty.*
- 134 ***Sok che da bal mor ta kanzali kave, da khaple more kanzali ba waori.***  
*He who curses another's mother is inviting his own mother to be cursed.*
- 135 ***Tango mewa nu da, Sando reshta nu da.***  
*Peach should not be counted as fruit; the brother-in-law (wife's sister's husband) should not be regarded as a relative.*

- 136 **Toor da ve kho saloor da ve.**  
*Sons should be [at least] four, even if they are black (ugly).*
- 137 **Wran sarhay khuday pak pa loonrho samave.**  
*When God wants to tame a proud man, He gives him daughters.*
- 138 **Wraze dwa de da khushay, Awal che zoy ye zegi bal che rawrhi nawakay.**  
*There are two days of rejoicing for a woman: the first when she gives birth to a male child, the second when she brings him a wife.*
- 139 **You ba de paiso sate, you ba de jirgo sate, you ba de topako tamacho sate.**  
*Every house should have three men: one for earning money, another for reconciliation of disputes, and another for defending the house through his gun.*
- 140 **Zama che sok sando kegi haghū ta zu sanda wayam.**  
*There is no difference between the husband of my wife's sister and the bull in my house.*  
 (The wife's sister's husband is despised by most Pashtuns)
- 141 **Zama hum khulu ke zhaba shita kho pa zhaba me wekhtu de.**  
*I too have a tongue in my mouth, but there is cotton on my tongue.*  
 (I.e., I have the tongue to speak, but am not allowed to speak)
- 142 **Zaman de kor veshi, lonrha ghamoona.**  
*The sons divide parents' property; the daughters divide (share) their sorrows.*
- 143 **Zan che khawre ke, no ranrha wraze ba mome.**  
*Be dust, to find a dawn.*  
 (This is mostly used for women to mean that if you give sacrifices today, you will get its benefits tomorrow)
- 144 **Zhaba ow okhke da khaze toora da.**  
*A woman's weapon is her tongue and tears.*
- 145 **Zoom da lastonrhi mar de.**  
*The son-in-law is the snake up the slave*
- 146 **Zoy da plar matte we.**  
*The son is the shoulders of the fathers.*  
 (I.e., physical and financial support)
- 147 **Zwan da khaso hum khu we.**  
*A young man is better even if he is made of straw.*