Consciousness, Gender and Identity: A Critical Study of Pashto Verbal Folkloric Arts

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November 2025

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Abstract

This paper deconstructs popular theories regarding identity formation, sociocultural consciousness and gender construction through a critical analysis of selected Pashto folkloric arts—myths, legends and *Tappa*. Within the framework of ethnopoetics and sociopoetic and through the tool of Critical Discourse Analysis of the selected Pashto myths, legends and *Tappa*, the study has laid bare the absolutist generalisations, empirical loopholes and logical fallacies in the imperial, orientalist and colonial constructs of history, culture, identity, gender construction and social relations of the Pashtuns. While elaborating on the nature, structure, performance and function of myths, legends and *tappa*, the paper has underscored mythical and folklric underpinnings of identity formation, ethnonational consciousness, gender construction and evolution of social relations of the Pashtuns through unpacking theoretical contradictions and ideological consequences of the orientalist and colonial constructs. In the process of understanding relationship between folkloric discourses and evolution of social relations among the Pashtuns, this study has revisited the popular theories related to the fixed, boxed and frozen construct of the cultural code of *Pakhtunwali*/*Pashtunwali*. Highlighting the theoretical problems posed by the primordialist, modernist and ethnosymbolist approaches to the study of ethnonational identity and nationhood, the study has attempted to reconcile variations in interpretation of nationhood through diverse analytical approaches to the problem. The study suggests interdisciplinary approaches to explore complexities of identity formation, sociocultural consciousness, evolution of social relations and gender construction among the Pashtuns.

Key words: Identity Formation, Gender Construction, Social Relations, Sociocultural Consciousness, Verbal Arts, Folklore, Mythology, Pakhtunwali, Colonialism, Orientalism, Primordialism, Modernism, Ethnosymbolism.

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I- Introduction

While surveying a vast array of literature, mostly by scholars associated with the Mughal court in the 17th and 18th centuries, and the scholars and administrators associated with East India Company and later with the British Empire in the 19th and 20th centuries, one finds logically implausible assumptions and empirically ungrounded theories regarding construction of sociocultural consciousness, ethnonational identity, gender construction, social relations, political governance and ethnic origin of the Pashtuns. Devasher (2022) has raised an interesting point in this regard. He reveals that the Pashtuns usually trace back their origin to the advent of Islam manifested in their narrative of the biological father Qaiyes-turned-Abd-ur-Rashid with an Arab connection. This, he thinks, seems to be a popular oral tradition among the Pashtuns even though this fable may not stand logical or empirical investigation. It appears quite plausible that the Pashtun folks, as a result of centuries of subjugation and colonisation first by the Mughal and later by the British empire, might have internalised some of the hegemonic narratives constructed by the authors associated with the Mughal court and the British crown. The Mughal and the British empires seem to have sustained their hegemonic political arrangement through establishing numerous discursive, cultural, political and economic infrastructure (Urbinati, 1998).

Most of the renowned colonial writers and orientalists who attempted to study the Pashtuns (Caroe,1958; Warburton, 1900; Churchill, 1989; Thorburn, 1876, 1894; Lumsden,1860; Atkinson, 1842; Burnes, 1842; Eyre, 1842; Elphinstone, 1815; Forster, 1798) appear to lack empirical systematicity and logical coherence while exploring patterns of Pashtun culture, society, economy and politics through historical or anthropological lenses. The large gaps in these studies seem to be because of their proclivity to simplify complexity of sociocultural consciousness. These studies have largely assumed that Pashtun culture and society are static and frozen on the basis of their incoherent analysis of some sociocultural structures. Reducing complex, nonlinear and multidimensional evolution of sociocultural consciousness, identity, social relations and political governance of the Pashtuns to a few structural elements of values and traditions, these studies continue to mislead research on and understanding of one of the largest ethnic groups in the north western parts of South Asia. Benedicte Grima (1992) has, although, attempted to revisit construction of consciousness and identity through her filed work for discovering performance of emotions among Pashtun women to reveal some of the complexities and dynamic nature of the construction.

The studies appear to have fixed the Pashtuns in some essentially "tribal characteristics" such as revenge, agnatic rivalries, family feuds, misogynist behavioural system, conservative psychosocial attitudes, and constant inter-clan conflicts. They have largely treated the Pashtuns, as they have treated other ethnonational identities of Asia and Africa, as objects devoid of human collective agency of evolution and dynamism. Even Devasher (2022), in his otherwise substantial work, has attempted to trace origin of the current instability in Afghanistan and in the Pashtun land of Pakistan in the rivalries of the Ghilzai-Durrani duo, Wazir-Mehsud duo, Kakar-Achakzai duo, Yousafzai-Khattak duo etc. In describing these rivalries, the colonial and post-colonial authors have conveniently ignored the multilayered external geo-strategic interests of the empires, powers and ruling elites of the time.

Sadly, the studies conducted in the cold-war era, in the post-cold era and during the 'war-on-terror' on identity, culture, social relations and political economy of the Pashtuns

appear to be largely influenced by the reductionist, incoherent and unsystematic studies carried out during the Mughal subjugation or British colonialism. The question of why and how was a mountain of literature developed that claimed to study cultural code, identity, geography, demography, social relations and political economy of the Pashtuns over the past more than two hundred years may be a separate subject of analysis, though significant in its own right.

An interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approach seems to be adequate for studying complex phenomena such as the subject at hand. For example, the hypothesis that the Pashtuns lived in their present geography centuries before the advent of Islam, and even before the birth of Jesus Christ, needs to be analysed on the basis of recent discoveries in anthropology, genetics, archaeology, linguistics, history, and cultural studies. Multidisciplinary critical inquiries are also required to verify claims of the scholars that the Pashtun clans, who had climbed down the Pamir, lived in the Hindukush and Sulaiman ranges during the Gandhara civilization (324—190 BCE) and during the Zoroastrian period (Bin Naveed, 2015). The absence of written records and the tradition of oral history make the task challenging for objective scholars as it had made the task of colonisers easier to distort the evolutionary chain of the Pashtuns. Hence, joint projects of historians, anthropologists, archaeologists, linguists, philosophers, biotechnologists and literary critics may be designed to determine origins and evolution of one of the largest ethnic groups in the northwestern regions of South Asia—the Pashtuns who have been interchangeably called Pakhtuns, Afghans, Pathans, Kohistanis and Sulaimanis in history—with a fair degree of certainty. This may unravel several sociocultural and sociopolitical knots in the region today. But this can only happen when states of the region and the international community allocate material and discursive resources for the purpose which doesn't seem probable in the near future.

Attanr (Pashtun traditional dance), verbal folk arts such as myths, legends, romances, *Tappa* or *Landey* and folk tales; folk poetry, classical poetry, and music are some of the genres which may provide invaluable insights into the world view, collective consciousness, evolution of value system, collective experiences, evolution of social relations, and evolution of governance system of the Pashtuns. In addition to a great amount of exquisite classical poetry, folkloric verbal arts are distinct aspects of the Pashtun collective and creative genius that have not been fully unpacked in terms of description, interpretation and explanation to get insights related to the construction of Pashtun identity, sociocultural consciousness, social relations and sociopolitical experiences. Many aspects of the Pashtun collective evolution that are concealed from the eyes of the scholars might be revealed through Pashto folkloric verbal arts such as myths, legends, folktales, *Tappa* (a two-lined couplet considered as a complete poem) and *Charbeta* (a long epic poem). The characteristics, values and worldview besides cultural evolution of the Pashtuns will remain elusive until one delves deep in to the folkloric creativity of the Pashtuns as music, festivities and cultural gatherings are intertwined features of the Pashtun social life from antiquity to date, albeit with substantial transformation.

Nomadic life, decentralised social organisation, and subsistence partly pastoral and partly semi-agricultural economy during most of the Pashtuns' collective life till their permanent settlement from 16th century to 19th century necessitated their persistent mobility between South and Central Asia in *khels* (group of kins based on common lineage) and alliances of *khels*. While searching for pastures, banks of rivers, water fountains, plain agricultural lands, pathways and roads that could connect them to large markets, mostly in the east in India but also in the north in Central Asia and in the west in Iran, the Pashtuns most probably created,

developed and practiced their cultural code and diverse social relations to govern their collective lives.

Their dynamic and relative cultural code called *Pakhto* and *Pakhtunwali* (Grima, 1992), emerging from their mutual relationship with Nature (Wynter, 1980), not only connected various *khels* and alliances of *khels* through governing their social and collective life but it also allowed them to create spaces for performance of their aesthetics and emotions through festivities like *attanr*, *ashar* (collective work) , music, poetry, romances, storytelling and *gham-khadi* (mourning and celebrations) in pastures, open spaces (*maidans*), village crossings (chowks), *deras* (guest room and cultural space) and *serais* (bazars where travellers could stay) in the wake of an existential threat in the form of first natural disasters and later from the Mughal empire. It is probably during this era that some part of their population, mostly in plains, was partly influenced by the Turkic-Mongol traditions and social machinations, and partly out of necessity that the Pashtuns developed the concept of *Hujra* and *Bhetak* which might have been originated from *Mansabdari* system of Mughal empire.

Most of the studies on the Pashtuns appear to "rely on cultural patterns that were introduced to the Pashtuns by the Mughals as a tool of indirect governance. These include intangible cultural elements such as the *Jirga* and related terms like *Nanawaty* (expression of regret and shelter) and *Maraka* (form of *Jirga*), as well as tangible cultural heritage like the *Hujra*, which became part of Pakhtun culture in the 17th century as a result of Mughal expansion in the Peshawar Valley and nearby areas. The Mughals introduced *Hujra* to the Pashtuns, who had only recently adopted a settled lifestyle, as a tool of indirect governance. Over time, it evolved and became part of the common Pashtun culture in the Peshawar Valley and nearby regions. It is worth noting that other areas of Pashtun society, except the Peshawar Valley, Malakand Division, and some southern districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, still lack the concept of the *Hujra* among the general population, although guest rooms attached to houses have appeared in some areas only recently" (Takkar, 2025).

A widely common but unsubstantiated perception prevalent over the past two centuries about social organisation of the Pashtuns holds that women in the Pashtun society have been generally reduced to mere objects more than any other ethnonational group in the region. The 'gender binary' and 'gender essentialist' (Thompson, 2024) understanding of the society of an ethnonational entity advertently or inadvertently disregards social evolution, external factors and contextual rationale. While this notion of the 'misogyny' of the Pashtuns generalises Pashtun society from the mountain ranges of the Hindukush to the Indus plains with a single stroke of the brush, it also conveniently ignores agency of Pashtun women expressed through their significant cultural, social, economic and political role in critical junctures of the Pashtun history (Shah, 2012).

Most of the studies on the Pashtuns have conveniently ignored the fact that several clans and alliances of clans of the Pashtun continued to live a nomadic life till the latter half of the 19th and first half of the 20th century. Numerous clans were facilitated to settle down, first, during the era of Amir Abdel Rahman (1880-1901) in Afghanistan, and later, several other clans such as *Nasar*, *Khelji*, and *Tokhi*, etc., "began to settle in the late 1950s (and early 1960s) following the decision of Ayub Khan's martial law government (in Pakistan) to counter the Baloch majority population in Balochistan" while "the *Wazir* and *Mehsud* tribes adopted a settled lifestyle in the 19th century" but "most studies have ignored this aspect of Pashtun

society, where gender roles and rights differ greatly from those among settled communities" (Takkar, 2025). Generalising gender construction and gender roles on the basis of sporadic observations of some settled clans and ascribing fixity to the dynamic construction of gender roles—mostly influenced by Mughal and British accounts—are the gaps found in most of the studies on Pashtuns. How could gender roles be similar in the clans which are in perpetual mobility to the ones settled in the plans?

The human agency demonstrated by the twin strands of the Pashtun women aptly contravenes reductionist postulation by most of the studies. The first strand of the Pashtun women appears to have played active role during the nomadic mobility of their clans not only as the sole family caretakers but also equal participants in the economic production and income generation of the family and the clan. In several cases, this strand of the Pashtun women even played the role of the head of the family and the clan (Sykes, 1940). This strand of the Pashtun women not only reared herd of cattle and initiated a semi-agricultural phase but would also take initiatives to market products of the cattle and cash transitional agriculture in the neighbourhoods where their clans would stay temporarily. '*Bangriwala*' (woman of bangles) and '*Banjarai*' or '*Manjarai*' (woman vender) remained a household term used for the Pashtun nomadic women who would market their produce in public and in the neighbourhoods. I have seen numerous Pashtun women even in the settled districts of the Pashtun land who would run their shops till recently.

The second strands of the Pashtun women appeared to have played a more formal and political role and were somewhat close to power in various phases of the Pashtun history till recently. From Malalai Maiwand to Malala Yousafzai (Abawi, 2023), hundreds of Pashtun women rose to eminence due to their historical and sociopolitical achievements. While friction between centrality and marginality of women in the British society in the 18th and 19th centuries, reflected by the Victorian values of modesty, was still underway as is depicted in the works of Brontes sisters (Takahashi, 2023), poet-mother Nazo Ana (Mashriq Blog, 2023) was busy nurturing her son, Mirwais Hotak, to erect an empire in Kandahar in the first half of 18th century. Zarghuna Ana, mother of Ahmad Shah Durrani, was "one of the biggest Kandahari investors in the regional trade that was flowing between India, Iran, and Central Asia in the mid-18th century" (Goudsouzian, 2010). Even before the Hotaki and Ahmad Shahi empires, hundreds of women had played critical role in one of the most influential social movements of the Pashtun history, the *Roshanite Movement*, initiated by Bayazid Ansari (alias Pir Rokhan) in the 16th century. Hundreds of Pashtun women also remained at the forefront of another cataclysmic sociopolitical movement, the *Khudai Khidmatgar Movement*, in the first half of the 20th century.

The socioculturally reductionist (Edwards, 2024) description of the Pashtuns and other subjugated ethnonational entities by the colonial authors have led to widespread stereotyping, profiling and stigmatisation of ethnonational entities in history. The reductionist discursive tools have been widely instrumentalised by political strategists for hegemony with the coercive consent of the majority of the subjugated nations. This phenomenon continues to blur understanding of the oppressed nationalities around the globe.

It is, hence, important to revisit the subject for deconstructing the reductionist and essentialist framework of studying identity, sociocultural consciousness, social relations, gender construction, and sociopolitical evolution of the Pashtuns. One of the most effective

pathways for understanding evolution of sociocultural consciousness, social relations, identity, women agency and sociopolitical collectivity of the Pashtuns is to unpack Pashto selected Pashto verbal folkloric arts such myths, legends and *Tappa* or *Landey* through a critical analysis. This paper attempts to locate discourse practices and discourse construction to unveil evolution of sociocultural consciousness, formation of identity, gender construction, evolution of social relations and sociopolitical evolution of the Pashtuns through a critical study of selected genres of Pashto verbal folkloric arts such as myths, legends and *Tappa* or *Landey*.

This paper discusses the nature and functions of myths and folklore in the preliminary sections, then critically analyses existing scholarship on Pashto folklore, proceeds to study selected Pashto myths and folklore (*Tappa*), and finally takes stock of the theories related to the construction of identity of the Pashtuns, gender construction among the Pashtuns and sociocultural consciousness of the Pashtuns. In conclusion, the paper summarises core arguments of the present study.

II- Hypothesis

This study is based on two assumptions. First, most of the orientalist, colonial, post-cold war and war-on-terror theories regarding identity formation, gender construction, sociocultural consciousness, evolution of social relations and the cultural code *Pakhtunwali* are based on fragmented empirical evidence, generalised essentialist paradigms, incoherent logical frameworks and reductionist understanding. Second, Pashto folkloric verbal arts such myths, legends and *Tappa* are invaluable treasures which can guide us to systematically understand identity formation, gender construction, sociocultural consciousness and evolution of social relations among the Pashtuns in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

III- Conceptual Framework

This study draws on Sylvia Wynter's (1980) conceptualisation of sociopoetics developed in her work *Black Metamorphosi*s and her paper 'Ethnopoetics or Sociopoetics?' which has been earnestly elaborated by Louiza Odysseos (2024) in her paper 'After rights, after Man? Sylvia Wynter, sociopoetic struggle and the 'undared shape''. The study also attempts to investigate selected genres of Pashto verbal folkloric arts within the framework of ethnopoetics that illuminates construction of culture and identity through studying selected genres Pashto verbal folkloric arts.

Pointing out at the inherent ideological layer in "poetics (Western/ real/true poetics) – ETHNOPOETICS – The Other Poetics", Wynter argues that "these binary oppositions of a Western-dominated structure, expressed in a Western-dominated language, are ideological; i.e., that they mystify and hide the fact that the First World is only First to the extent that the Third World is Third and vice versa; that the ideological meaning of Ethnopoetics and the real meaning that we try to give it, can only be defined in the overall context of the relation between First/Third World – i.e., in its sociopoetic context" (Wynter, 1980: 14).

Wynter has quoted Leopold Sedar Senghor who has expounded that culture is a double relation of Man with nature and nature with man as Man adapts himself to Nature, at the same time as he adapts Nature to his own exigencies and from this contradictory dual process springs his social and economic structure, his art, and his philosophy. The balance lies at the heart of all traditional cultures until the discovery of the New World and the concomitant expansion and mutation of Western civilization. From here on, Senghor writes, "an economic and

instrumental civilization could make us believe that one part of the process, the transformation of Nature by Man, is the very essence of Culture…revolutionary break in thought attitudes, and consciousness that we have termed a mutation; not so much a transition as a rupture, a discontinuity caused by the introduction of a new factor which acted as a catalyst for change in the context of the New World and its large-scale exploitation by the West that initiated Man's revolutionary new relation of Nature. And the new relation to Nature was a new relation to Other Men. This new relation to Nature and other men, metamorphosed Western man and his sense of self so much so that "Nature in the New World became mere land, to be exploited. The change in the relation to Nature was a change, hitherto unknown, in its new qualitative phase in human experience, in the very concept of culture (Wynter, 1980: 6). Hence, the very concept of culture was appropriated for otherising those communities living outside the western sphere of influence, which were discussed under the broader term of 'Ethnopoetics' as they were termed "uncultured", "uncivilised" and "savage". This process spanning over centuries may be unpacked through the conceptualisation of Sociopoetics. Wynter states that "in creating themselves as the norm of men, the Western bourgeoisie created the idea of the primitive, the idea of the savage, of the "despised heathen", of the "ethnos": they created the idea of their own negation" (Wynter, 1980: 7).

Describing the construction of Humanism, Wynter argues that "for the expansion of the Western self, the auto-creation in the sixteenth century was only made possible by the damming up of the potentiality of non-Western man, by the negation of his Being. Once the idea of the Christian medieval ethnos of the West had broken down, it was replaced by another universal, the secular ideology of the bourgeoisie, the concept of HUMANISM. This was the new conceptualization of the new ethnos of Western man, as compared to his former Christian ethnicity. It would be part of the ideology of humanism that whilst it saw itself as a universal, it was universal only in the context of a WESTERN-DOMINATED WORLD. To quote Orwell, and to paraphrase: ALL MEN WERE EQUAL BUT WESTERN MAN WAS MORE EQUAL THAN OTHERS" (Wynter, 1980: 8).

The concept of Western civilisation, in Sylvia Wynter's view, emerged when a normative ethnos (self) was constructed in relation to the 'other'—the 'core' and the 'periphery', in which the core was constructed as European and those outside or far away as the 'other' sometimes called as 'negros' and 'natives' —departing from the Christian Heraldic Vision to the 'conquest of nature'— "Culture and humanity resided in writing. Without writing there was a void. The oral culture of the indigenous civilization was a non-culture, was barbarous. By a process of repetition, "humanity" came to be synonymous with being European; with the "possession" of European culture. To be non-European was to be non-human. The myth of the cultural void of the non-West – The Other – was to be central to the ideology which the West would use in its rise to world domination" (Wynter, 1980: 9).

Elaborating on the material basis for devaluation of the non-white, non-Western and non-European Man through the ideological and scientific construction of humanism, man and nature, Wynter postulates that "the non-white labour that was to be exploited has to be perceived as evil. In the context of idealistic humanism, their less than human status had to be rationally justified. In the context of emergent capitalism, the naked form of slavery under which the labour power of the plantation slave or the encomienda Indian was exploited, the Sepulveda syndrome – like the later more scientific Darwinian-derived theories – served a specific purpose – i.e., it rationalized emergent capitalism's need for relatively more devalued

labour power. The cultural racism implicit in the Sepulveda syndrome cannot be described as an autonomous response of the superstructure, a psychological response inherently embedded in the European psyche. Rather, this cultural racism constituted a central part of the complex ideological apparatus by which Western capitalism would fulfil its imperative of extracting surplus value from non-white labour. Cultural racism is therefore organic to – and not anomalous to – Western capitalism, and ipso facto to Western civilization. In other words, the perception of the Indian, black, native as inherently inferior plays a central role in the actual concrete determination of the value of "inferior" men, and of their "inferior" labour power. The devaluation of their cultures, which implies the devaluation of their humanity, far from being a merely cultural (i.e., superstructural) phenomenon, was rooted in a material base, in the economic infrastructure. It was the "belly" which saw the black as Sambo/brute beast; and the "natives" as homunculi and lesser breeds" (Wynter, 1980: 11).

Elaborating on Sylvia Wynter's conceptualisation, Louiza Odysseos (2024) argues that "Sylvia Wynter's historical-philosophical critique of Man, and search for the human 'after Man', are central for understanding the colonial-modern order and the role of rights within this" and that "Wynter's theorisation and amplification of the sociopoetic struggles and practices – survival, artistic, cultural, and spiritual – of the enslaved, formerly enslaved, and colonized subjects of the Caribbean and the circum-Atlantic, as one fecund 'way out' of colonial-modern rights" (Odysseos, 2024: 1252).

Wynter's conceptual framework appears to have three aspects: "first, her complex, relational view of orders of consciousness and the construction of otherness, which considers consciousness formation to be inseparable from material and epistemological structures. Second, her understanding of the 'hybridly human', of the human as inextricably both mythos and bios, culture and nature. Wynter rejects a restrictive 'biocentric' conception of the human as solely biological entity. Rather, her perspective illuminates the importance of rights 'origin stories' for colonial knowledges and cultural scripts, captured in Wynter's phrase 'the Word of Man'. And, third, related to this hybridly human conception, is her radicalisation of Frantz Fanon's insights about sociogeny as a social, affective, physiological and neurochemical – that is 'sociogenic' – destitution resulting from biosomatically internalising such colonial and racial scripts" (Odysseos, 2024: 1255).

Interpreting Wynter's conceptualisation of the internalisation of hegemonic construction of Man, Odysseos states that "for Wynter, the internalisation of scientific analyses, moral tropes, anthropological descriptions, all the way to societal 'common sense' – all those 'thousand details, anecdotes, stories' out of which the black man is 'woven' by the 'white man' – forms an integral part of the process of auto-institution. Given her understanding of the hybridly human – mythos and bios – she develops Fanon's analysis on skins/masks as inseparable duality, rather than as binary opposition: we are both skin and mask, biological beings who are at the same time 'languaging', *homo narrans* beings. As such, we are physiologically and neurochemically altered by – but can also creatively contest and remake, indeed, reinvent – such myths: a 'sociogenic principle' abuts the genetic principle" (Odysseos, 2024: 1256).

Hence "sociopoetic practices chart abolitionist pathways for draining Man of hegemonic signification, whilst striving towards a reparative and ecumenical co-production of the human" as "the survival, cultural and artistic practices and struggles – 'sociopoetics' –

undertaken by Man's Others to dis-identify from Man and to 're-narrate' the human as an ecumenical, imaginative 'co-production'" (Odysseos, 2024: 1258-1259). Louiza Odysseos is of the view that Sylvia Wynter has propounded survival, cultural, and artistic strategies— sociopoetics— for the hegemonised in the concept of 're-narrating'. According to her, "re-narrating, for Wynter, emerges from her structural/material as well as signifying view of culture as 'primarily, the societal machinery with which a particular society or group symbolically codes its co-identifying sense of self, with reference to which, it then acts both individually and collectively upon the world'. In such a view of culture as Word, auto-poetic re-narration 'is a creative process whereby humans have been able to question binary and oppositional epistemic codifications of sameness and difference to signify, semiolinguistically, the possibility and/or conditions for freedom" (Odysseos, 2024: 1260).

Hellweg (2003), Finnegan (1992) and Rothenberg (1984) have, on the other hand, rationalised the concept of ethnopoetics. Their exposition of the concept of ethnopoetics seems to be divergent with the conceptualisation of Sylvia Wynter who appears to have explored hegemonic binary embedded in the concept. Hellweg (2003) argues that "Ethnopoetics brings such use to light, revealing that stories do not reproduce themselves subconsciously as structural variations through diverse tellers, as per French structuralism. Rather, individual narrators create, restructure, and repopulate stories through alternative, even opposed tellings or by including contrasting views of a character, event, or idea within a single telling" (Hellweg, 2003: 283). Finnegan (1992) considers that ethnopoetics is "a term implying particular focus on the voices of non-western peoples— 'a redefinition of poetry in terms of cultural specifics, with an emphasis on those alternative traditions to which the West gave names like "pagan", "gentile", "tribal", "oral", and "ethnic" (Finnegan, 1992: 15). Rothenberg (1984) conceptualises ethnopoetics from almost the same angle as has been previously observed by Sylvia Wynter asserting that ethnopoetics rejects ideational superiority of the art created in the West through including the art which has been excluded from the Western power hierarchy. This, Rothenberg argues, is a strategy aimed against closure and authoritative version—allowing individual voice to free itself from the tutelage of power.

Formation and transformation of collective consciousness and construction of the ethnonational Pashtun identity may best be studied within the conceptual framework of sociopoetics that helps us understand social evolution and social relations of the Pashtuns through studying their folkloric verbal arts. As an integral framework, ethnopoetics may also be taken into consideration because it provides us an instrument to understand construction of Pashtun culture and identity through critical investigation of selected genres of Pashto folkloric verbal arts.

The feudal-mercantile era of the Mughal empire in the 16th century and the British capitalist empire in 19th and 20th century subjugated and colonised the nomadic Pashtuns. The Pashtun clans and alliances of clans, with a pastoral and subsistence economy, had lived largely a nomadic life moving around between South and Central Asia incessantly. They had developed their indigenous standard of living which had organised and governed their collective life till the 16th century when they were subjugated by the Mughals. Their cultural life and historical self were distorted in a way that Sylvia Wynter would term as 'detotalisation' and then the constructed 'retotalisation' of their cultural self to 'civilise', 'culturalise' and 'educate' them.

The vertically warped and the horizontally ruptured memory of the physical subjugation—the capture of Kabul by Mughal king Zaheer-ud-Din Babur in 1508 AD to the possession of Peshawar by Ranjeet Singh in 1828 AD to 1849 AD, and then the seizure of the whole North West and South West of the Pashtun Land by the British from 1849 till 1893/1897—elicit images that might have created collective delirium in the Pashtun collective self. This is perhaps what Sylvia Wynter calls sociogenic construction of the modern-colonial era and its internalisation by the colonised. The political colonisation of the Pashtun Land by the British empire from the first half of the 19th century till the first half of the 20th century amputated the geography of the Pashtun land to dissolve their collective will for governing themselves. The Raj extracted their resources to turn their land into resourceless zones. The British Raj broke down and then re-constructed and deformed their culture to alienate them from their collective consciousness leading to the evaporation of their historical memory. This may have resulted in making them stranger to themselves and leaving them profiled, stigmatised and otherised. It might have ultimately rendered them what Edward Said would term 'dreadful secondariness'.

The Pashtuns appear to have retained their 'orality' and their 'authenticity' through their folktales and folk poetry although feudal-mercantile subjugation and capitalist colonisation had attempted to distort their collective memory by manipulating their folklore through 'collecting' and 'categorising' their folklore. The substance and form of the Pashtuns' collective consciousness expressed in their folktales and folk poetry seem to have demonstrated immense resilience. Expounding this phenomenon in the context of the Black culture, Sylvia Wynter states that "the black experience constituted an existence which daily criticized the abstract consciousness of humanism; that the popular oral culture, which the black created in response to an initial negation of this humanness, constitutes, as culture, the heresy of humanism; and that is why black popular culture – spirituals, blues, jazz, reggae, Afro-Cuban music – and its manifold variants have constituted an underground cultural experience as subversive of the status quo Western culture as was Christianity in the catacombs of the Roman Empire. For it was in this culture that the blacks reinvented themselves as a WE that needed no OTHER to constitute their Being; that laid down the cultural parameters of a concretely universal ethnos" (Wynter, 1980: 10). This is what happened in the case of the Pashtun folkloric verbal arts (myths, legends, folk tales and folk poetry) as well. At the same time "to reinvent the concrete self it is necessary to first recognize abstraction of the self which, imposed on us, we have inherited" (Wynter, 1980: 12).

IV- Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used for this study is linguistic functionalism and social functionalism synthesised with post-structuralist and postcolonial method of inquiry, and informed by feminist, anthropologist, psychoanalytical and neo-Marxist discourses. Linguistic functionalism looks at language in a mutually constitutive relationship with social relations and sociocultural practices. The linguistic and social functionalism analyse processes in conjunction with the functions they perform in a social setting such as cognition, expression, and influence. This approach has been applied by scholars in studies on stylistics, literary criticism, anthropology, sociology and related fields.

These theoretical frameworks may be synthesised for description, interpretation and explanation of myths, legends and *tappa* or *landey* despite their isolated operational domains

as the multiplexity of myths, legends and *tappa* may not be fully unveiled through the application of a single theoretical framework. The social functionalist framework for analysis is complemented by the textuality oriented linguistic functionalism which considers "language as social semiotics (Halliday 1978) and incorporates an orientation into mapping relations between language (text) and social structures and relations (Fairclough, 1995, :10)". Hence, social functionalist and linguistic functionalist frameworks may work as a focal axis for this work with insights from the psychoanalytical, structural, feminist, Marxist, postcolonial and poststructuralist theories for interpretation of Pashto verbal folkloric arts. I argue that each of the framework unveils part of the truth and that their convergence might be of great significance for expounding complex structures such as myths, legends and folk poetry.

While reviewing the existing scholarship and analysing data of folkloric genres, it has been assumed that oral traditions and verbal arts are not neutral textual data "but as ultimately based in, perhaps constituted by, social processes. The procedures of recording, presenting or analysing them are, similarly, human and interactive processes which in turn play a part in structuring the objects of study" (Finnegan, 1992: 2). Finnegan urges the need "to be constantly remembered that the units chosen for classification and analysis—whether genres of 'oral literature', texts of 'myths', syntheses of 'oral tradition', modes of verbal performance, or whatever—are seldom as self-evident as they seem in the published accounts. They have been partly formulated by particular groups of performers and adherents, partly constructed by researchers, in both cases in some sense abstracted from the flow of human action. Comparative terms can never be presumed in advance to fit exactly the ideas and practices they purport to describe, far less provide a definitive and unchallengeable account" (Finnegan, 1992: 4).

Recent discussions on theoretical frameworks puts "emphasis on processes and multiplicity; actor-oriented and interpretive approaches; questioning of binary divides; move away from 'pure' and from narrowly 'verbal' forms; and an interest in the potentially political, contested, or contingent nature of much that had in the past been regarded as fixed and essentially definable as verbally-transcribed texts" (Finnegan, 1992: 48-49).

V- Method of Study

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has been used as an analytical tool for this study. CDA has a "three-dimensional framework: text, discourse practice, sociocultural practice and social relations" (Fairclough, 1995: 9). The CDA envisages that "analysis of text should not be artificially isolated from analysis of institutional and discoursal practices within which texts are embedded…the principle that textual analysis should be combined analysis of practices of production and consumption" (Ibid). The tool is based on the "multifunctionality of language in texts that can be used to operationalise theoretical claims about the socially constitutive properties of discourse and text. Texts in their ideational functioning constitute system of knowledge and belief (including what Foucault refers to as objects) and in their interpersonal functioning they constitute social subjects (or in different terminologies identities, forms of self) and social relations between (categories of) subjects" (Fairclough, 1995: 6).

Finnegan (1992) is of the view that "the raw materials of oral folklore research are 'texts' which has been a recurrent theme in more disciplines than just folklore. This fits the preconception in the writing-dominated intellectual traditions of western culture over the last

centuries that words, communication and art forms are most naturally mediated—and should thus be represented and analysed—through verbal texts" and when "humanistic scholarship was extended to include oral forms, these too were naturally seen as essentially a type of verbal texts, on the same model" (Finnegan, 1992: 16). Elaborating her point, Finnegan thinks that "texts in writing have thus been the focus for linguistic or literary study, have been taken as one form of 'objective data' in anthropological fieldwork, and make up the main body of material in folklore and other archives" (Ibid). Finnegan informs us that "Parry and Lord's famous analyses of South Slavic epic performances have documented how what from one viewpoint might seem the 'same' text may differ among different performances with each version being equally authentic. In many such cases, it turns out, it is misleading to impose the notion of a fixed, correct and self-existing text" (Finnegan, 1992: 17).

Finnegan has raised some interesting questions regarding the traditional concept of text. She asks: "Do all art forms (even verbal art forms) necessarily come in the form of essentially word-based texts—or of sustained, fixed or bounded textual units? Is text (and 'textness') a relative or polysemous rather than absolute phenomenon, needing subtle empirical investigation rather than just recording? Or if there is, in some sense, a more or less settled text, is verbal textness the most significant element and for whom? What if anything is the relation between verbal text and visual image? Some of the consequential questions, it seems, are ethnographic and factual ones. It begins to emerge that referring to something as a 'text' needs to be the start of detailed investigation rather than the end of the matter" (Finnegan, 1992: 18).

While analysing 'texts' of selected genres of Pashto folkloric verbal arts—myths, legends, and *Tappa*—I have attempted to demonstrate sensitivity to "multiple voices and to the distortions resulting from outsiders' reductions of these to single-line written texts" as "the stress on instability, plurality and lack of closure thus links with questions already being considered in the study of oral arts and traditions" (Finnegan, 1992: 19). I have also attempted to give careful attention of various forms of texts of the selected Pashto verbal arts—myths, legends and *Tappa*—while critically analysing their texts: 'Co-text' designates the accompanying discourse in a single text…. 'Meta-text' is any discourse that refers to, describes, or frames the interpretation of text. 'Con-text' is the broader environment (linguistic, social, psychological) to which text responds and on which it operates…. 'Pre-text' encompasses whatever prepares the ground for or justifies the production or interpretation of text. 'Subtext' focuses on whatever understanding or themes form the background or tacit dimensions of a text, inferable but not explicitly stated" as "the constellation of consequences and outcomes of producing, distributing, or receiving a text, whether intended and foreseen or not, might be thought of as an 'after-text'. The precise semantic shading and extension of the term 'text' changes, depending upon which portions of this range of concepts one chooses to include" (Finnegan, 1992: 19).

It is significant to pay attention to the fact that "while few studies of oral tradition and arts may directly label themselves 'post-structuralist', recent work has quite often made use of post-structuralist themes such as those of intertextuality, of multiple rather than single meanings, of rejecting a search for objectively-fixed laws, and generally questioning fixed models of text and meaning" (Finnegan, 1992: 36) as "research on oral forms can no longer be presented as mere 'academic' exercises or theorising about the far away and long ago, but as bringing the researcher into complex involvements with the other —equal—inhabitants of the planet" (Finnegan, 1992: 47).

I have adopted the method of thematic analysis of selected Pashto folkloric verbal arts—myths, legends and *Tappa*—while developing analytical categories as a first step of analysis. In the second step, the thematic analytical categories are studied as emic narratives. The narratives are then analysed in relation to other thematic categories to reveal the discourse of performance of emotions, context of performance and intertextual semantics. In the third step, expression of the construction of consciousness, construction of identities and construction of gender are revealed. I have attempted to put to use the sociolinguistic and social anthropological tool of CDA to conduct the three-pronged analysis of myths, legends and *Tappa* for understanding construction and performance of consciousness embedded in performance of emotions, construction of identity expressed through cognitive categories, and gender construction created through dynamic sociocultural relations.

Pashto myths and legends for analysis in this study have been selected from Muhammad Gul Nuri's three-volume collection of Pashto myths and legends *Milli Hindara* (national mirror) (Nuri, 2017). Nuri's seminal work is a great repository for understanding world view, identity construction, construction of sociocultural consciousness, evolution of social relations, and sociopolitical governance of the Pashtuns. The interpretation of Pashto myths and legends in this study is informed by Abdul Ghafoor Liwal's well-researched Pashto work *Pa Adabiyato Ke Da Astoorey Serana* (Analysis of Myths in Pashto Literature) ((Liwal, 2017), Alan Dundes' *Interpreting Folklore* (Dundes, 1980) and Martha Sims & Martine Stephens' *Living Folklore: An Introduction to the Study of People and Their Traditions* (Sims & Stephens, 2011). *Tappa* or *Landey* have been selected for analysis from Rome's work *Tappey* (2018) and Ulasyar's work (2024) *Da Pakhtu Tapey Siyasi Arakhuna* (Political Aspects of Pashto *Tappa*) in this study.

The published corpus of myths, legends and *Tappa*, for this critical study, have been complemented and validated through my careful attention and field work notes from 2010 till 2020 in almost all districts Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and parts of northern Balochistan, and eastern and southern Afghanistan. I had carefully recorded field notes for a whole decade while carefully listening to the discussion, stories, autobiographic details and narratives by both men and women in the extended kinship, friendship circles and public places in almost all districts Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, northern Balochistan, and eastern and southern Afghanistan, particularly in the case of *Tappa (Landey*) and Pashto proverbs. Myths, legends and *Tappa* for analysis in this study, selected from the texts collected by expert folklorists and specialists of Pashto folkloric verbal arts, have been rationalised through Finnegan's postulation that "the analysis or re-analysis of texts collected by others, whether in published works or archive collections, is another strategy, the more feasible because of the huge numbers of texts collected not just in recent years but in the last century" (Finnegan, 1992).

VI- The Nature, Structure, Performance and Scope of Verbal Folkloric Arts—Myths, Legends and Tappa

Before taking stock of the existing scholarship on the interpretation of Pashto verbal folkloric arts, and before in-depth analysis of Pashto myths, legends and *Tappa*, it seems pertinent to briefly describe selected theories regarding verbal folkloric arts such as myths, legends and folk poetry in general to have an overview of the nature, structure and discourse of myths and folklore.

Bascom defines myths as "prose narratives which, in the society in which they are told, are considered to be truthful accounts of what happened in the remote past. They are accepted on faith; they are taught to be believed; and they can be cited as authority in answer to ignorance, doubt, or disbelief. Myths are the embodiment of dogma; they are usually sacred; and they are often associated with theology and ritual. Their main characters are not usually human beings, but they often have human attributes; they are animals, deities, or culture heroes, whose actions are set in an earlier world, when the earth was different from what it is today, or in another world such as the sky or underworld. Myths account for the origin of the world, of mankind, of death, or for characteristics of birds, animals, geographical features, and the phenomena of nature. They may recount the activities of the deities, their love affairs, their family relationships, their friendships and enmities, their victories and defeats" (Bascom, 1965: 4).

Finnegan (1992) argues that the definition by Bascom (1965) "sums up the commonest (if often unstated) connotations of the term, pointing to its arguably key features. It is not always easily applicable, however. In some African cultures the boundary between 'myth' and 'legend' is blurred (Finnegan 1970: 361), and the term is also widely used in broader senses" (P. 138). As for legend, Finnegan (1992) is of the view that "usages in the past often implied a distinction from both 'myth' and 'folktale', again well enunciated in Bascom's schema (1965) and with much the same features as his treatment of 'myth': widely used and recognised in roughly this sense, but sometimes not fitting detailed ethnographic concepts or practices" (P. 139). The third complementary narrative form, folktales, has been defined by Bascom (1965) as "as dogma or history, they may or may not have happened, and they are not to be taken seriously… may be set in any time and place…. They have been called 'nursery tales' but in many societies, they are not restricted to children. They have also been known as 'fairy tales' but this is inappropriate both because narratives about fairies are usually regarded as true, and because fairies do not appear in most folktales. Fairies, ogres, and even deities may appear, but folktales usually recount the adventures of animal or human characters" (P. 4).

Pashto folkloric verbal arts—myths, legends, and *Tappa*— are considered inexhaustible treasures to mirror, represent, locate and mutually construct world view, social relations, sociocultural consciousness, identities and collective discourses besides reflecting inviduation of an ethnonational collective self, collective consciousness and individual being in simultaneous spatial and temporal configurations. This is what perhaps C.G. Jung would call collective unconscious constructed and transmitted through archetypal images carrying collective latent fears, desires and dreams.

Verbal folkloric arts such as myths, legends and *tappa* are distinguished by their anonymous collective authorship and, hence, their study is required through an analysis of texture, sociocultural practices and social relations within the framework of ethnopoetics and sociopoetics. The critical analysis of discoursal text and its generic typology for the temporal and spacial location and dislocation of collective consciousness of a community, ethnicity or an ethnonational identity has been acknowledged to be of immense value. The nature and structure of myths and folklore are underscored by anonymous unconscious creativity by unknown groups of people, and most often, lend us a hand to navigate through the subconscious collective self of a community. Hence, "to read a culture's myths is to glean information about the culture—about its inner identity, hidden beneath the mask of its every day concerns" (Leeming, 1990: 6). Through myths and folklore "we are journeying through a marvellous

world of metaphor that breathes life into the essential human story; the story of relationship between the known and the unknown, both around and within us, the story of a search for identity in the context of the universal struggle between order and chaos" (Ibid: 9).

Myths and folklore are mostly structured through metaphors that carry multilayered etymological semantics and social semiotics underpinned by a relationship with texture, sociocultural practices and social relations. Both myths and folklore are "the psyche's symbolic renderings of its own working and can be translated as such by the analyst" (Sels, 2011: 57). The psychoanalytic perspective of myth and folklore, postulated by both Sigmund Freud and C.G. Jung, illuminates our understanding through their claim that "myth gives vent to the repressed longings and fears of humankind" and that "all it does is to circumscribe and give an approximate description of an unconscious core of meaning" (Ibid: 59).

Max Muller considered myths as "poetical fantasy from pre-historic times", Durkheim postulated myths to be the "repositories of allegorical instructions to shape the individual to his group", Sigmund Freud thought that myths symbolised subconscious fears, desires and drives, C.G. Jung saw myths to be representing "universal collective unconscious", Mircea Eliade saw a relationship between myths and religious experiences, and Claude Levi-Strauss observed myths to be abstract constructions (Dickerson, 2004: 97). The socio-functionalists expounded that myths played a cementing role in binding societies together as "they signify culture, social structure and interaction" (Doty, 2000:137).

Interestingly, "the feminist critics have argued that canonical fairy tales operate as mechanisms designed to foster the patriarchal control of women by promoting to young and impressionable readers the idea that women are either passive and good or active and evil while Marxist critics, likewise, have suggested that fairy tales, in their authorised forms, are potent carriers of ideological instruction that shape nascent identities in ways that are most beneficial to those with power in society" (Teverson, 2013:6).

The Evolutionist, Anthropologist and the Historical Schools of Thought describe myths and folklore "in terms of the assumed unilinear evolutionary sequence of savagery, barbarism and civilization through which all people were believed to pass, the folk were more or less considered barbarians" (Dundes, 2020: 2). These schools of thought attempted to explore cultural and historical roots of a community and ethnonational entity through the collection and categorisation of myths and folklore mostly overlooking description and interpretation of symbols and metaphors deeply interwoven in the texts of myths and folklore, and hence fail to comprehensively locate understanding of sociocultural consciousness and identities through the study of myths and folklore.

The structuralist school of thought, convincingly elaborated by Claude Levi-Strauss (1995) in his structural study of myths, underscores the study of myths as a parallel with the Saussurean structural analysis in linguistics. The Saussurean structural analysis in linguistics emphasises combination of constituent parts of *langue* and *parole* identified as phonemes, morphemes and seementemes. Myths, although, have more complex order of structure than the linguistic text, hence, mythical composition may be described as gross constituent units.

Meaning in myths may be unveiled through the identification and combination of various features of mythical text. The structural study of myths may be characterised by "economy of explanation; unity of solution; and ability to reconstruct the whole from a

fragment, as well as further stages from previous ones" (Levi-Strauss, 1995: 431). The method Levi-Strauss suggests for the structural study stipulates breaking down mythical story into briefest possible segments, writing them down on a card bearing a number corresponding to the story, consequently, "each card will thus show that a certain function is, at a given time, predicated to a given subject. Or, to put it otherwise, each gross constituent unit will consist in a relation" (Ibid).

The diachronic and synchronic, and reversible and irreversible aspects of the myth are accounted for through finding relations among the bundles of cards stocked together on the basis of relations, and grouping them together thus "we have reorganised our myth according to a time referent of a new nature corresponding to the prerequisite of the initial hypothesis, namely, a two-dimensional time referent which is simultaneously diachronic and synchronic and which accordingly integrates the characteristics of the *langue* on one hand, and those of the *parole* on the other" (Levi-Strass, 1995: 431-432).

Levi-Strauss has demonstrated the method of structural interpretation through the Oedipus myth with the objective to bring order through the use of logic in the interpretation of myths (Levi-Strass, 1995: 433-434& 439). He has reconciled his structural analysis of myths with Freud's psychoanalytic method and asserts that "prevalent attempts to explain alleged differences between the so-called "primitive" mind and scientific thought have resorted to qualitative differences between the working processes of the mind in both cases while assuming that the objects to which they were applying themselves remained very much the same" concluding that "the same logical processes are put to use in myth as in science, and that man has always been thinking equally well; the improvement lies, not in an alleged progress of man's conscience, but in the discovery of new things to which it may apply its unchangeable abilities" (Levi-Strauss, 1995: 444).

The structuralist universalisation of patterns of truth, reality and identity might be complemented by the Poststructuralist approach that has developed three salient features for analysis. The features include: "first, poststructuralism constitutes a set of theoretical stances that serve to critique prevailing assumptions regarding the sources and nature of identity, and the rational, humanist subject of the Enlightenment (Morgan & Clarke, 2011; Kramsch, 2009; Norton, 2000; Weedon, 1997)". "Second, poststructuralism critiques the conditions and foundations of knowledge, particularly with reference to its apparent objectivity and universal applicability (Foucault, 1980)". "Third, poststructuralism critiques the representational capacities of language and texts, foregrounding their intertextuality, multivocality, and at times, indeterminacy (Derrida, 1978; Sarup, 1993)" (Norton & Morgan, 2013: 1). These approaches to theorise identities "have also been influential in the work of cultural theorist, Hall (1997), and postcolonial theorist, Bhabha (2004), who de-essentialise and deconstruct identity categories such as race and gender" (Norton & Morgan, 2013: 3).

The fact is intriguing that certain myths—the myths of gods, myths of deities, fairies, hero myth, the dragon myth, the sphinx myth, the phoenix myth and the like—have remarkable similarities in transcultural mythologies. It is quite fascinating to note, as Rank's dossier has classified, that "Sargon (of Akkad), Moses, Kama (in the Mahabharata), Oedipus, Paris, Telephus, Perseus, Gilgamesh, Cyrus, Tristan, Romulus, Hercules, Jesus, Siegfried and Lohengrin" underscore a peculiar pattern that " involves noble origin; unusual conception; the threat of infanticide, rescue and youthful exile, the exile often involving herding of cattle or

sheep; manifesting kingly bearing; return of the hero upon reaching maturity to claim his due; triumph over an obstructionist, such as battle with a three-headed monster during which the hero often proves invulnerable; the father or Icing's dread becoming justified; marriage to a highborn local; successful reign; but ultimate downfall, exile and mysterious end, often on a hill; disappearance of mortal remains; and a cenotaphic cult at holy sepulchres" (Dickerson, 2004: 91). This can be deciphered through both the linguistic concept of contact among various cultures over the ages, and also through Jung's conceptualisation of the "collective unconsciousness" of humankind. The latter seems to pose a problem for the functionalist conceptualisation of myths that is inclined to study myths in particular sociocultural practices and social relations.

Mythology, as a field of study, must not be mistaken with the actual temporal location of the myths. This field of study has its origin in the 19th century when academia and functionaries of the empires in the West were faced with an ideological dilemma of claiming to 'civilise' the colonies under the project of Enlightenment on the one hand, and in the complexity of finding out correspondence of the 'savagery' and 'primitiveness' in the Greco-Roman mythology, on the other hand. The colonial empires awoke to the reality that Greek stories of gods and heroes could no more be held as 'fables', and 'mythos' and could no more be isolated from 'logos' after researches in psychoanalysis and comparative linguistics ruptured the thin veneer of the so called 'civilised'. This process led to the exploration of myths in the beginning of the 19th century through which "Europe had for the first time come to systematically compare the roots of its own culture — more particularly, the legacy of Antiquity—the roots to the so-called "savage cultures" that resulted in the academic chairs between 1850 to 1890 throughout Europe" and consequently, "Andrew Lang had to declare that mythology was "the quest for an historical condition of the human intellect to which the element in myths, regarded by us as irrational, shall seem rational enough" (Sels, 2011: 60-61).

The study of mythology from various perspectives put the assertion of cultural superiority of certain ethnicities, races and nations to question and paved the way for discovering a connection between knowledge and power on the one hand, and between cultural identities and political subjugation on the other hand. Cohen, quoted by Dickerson, has explored correspondence between ownership of cultural discourses and political marginalisation asserting that "Western intellectual tradition created its own version of the culture of the colonised which it imposes upon them, and then denigrated it, thereby justifying the West's own domination of the colonised as an essentially civilising mission and in so doing they have deprived them of their collective identity" (Dickerson, 2004: P. 95).

Cohen's postulation of the phenomenon contextualises the efforts invested by the Western colonial functionaries, diplomats, military officials, civil servants and missionaries to collect, categorise, interpret and publish oral traditions, folklore and myths of the colonies in the first half of 19th century till the first half of the 20th century and later during the cold war and the War on Terror. Levi-Strauss's structural analysis of myths found compelling evidence in the late 19th century that the so-called 'savage' mind is equivalent if not identical with the "technological rationality of the modem West" (Dickerson, 2004: 90).

William J. Thoms was the first scholar who, according to his own claim, coined a two-letter term folk-lore in a letter he wrote to the journal *Athenæum* on 22 August 1846, though under his pseudonym, Ambrose Merton. He asserts "remember I claim the honour of

introducing the epithet Folk-Lore, as Disraeli does of introducing Father-Land, into the literature of this country" (Miller, 2021: xvi). In the same letter William J. Thoms describes the objectives of his proposal claiming that "no one who has made the manners, customs, observances, superstitions, ballads and proverbs of the olden time his study, but must have arrived at two conclusions: —the first, how much that is curious and interesting in these matters is now entirely lost—the second, how much may yet be rescued by timely exertion" (Miller, 2021: xv). The two-fold objectives of preserving antiquity and rurality were declared to be the aim of such an enterprise.

Consequently, a Folk-Lore Society was established in London in 1878 that was meant for the same purpose as Bennet (1996) has vividly revealed. Bennet is of the view that "the mid-nineteenth-century Thomsian heritage—homage to the myth of rural England, the preservation of the past, library research, and the separation of fieldwork and theory— far from being undermined by these developments, was actually endorsed" as "in many respects evolutionary theory was both a logical expansion of, and a justification for, the impulse towards the documentation of rural areas and the remains of earlier epochs" (Bennet (1996:213). Thus, by specifically interpreting the materials of folklore as fragments and relics, it "encouraged an antiquarian rather than a sociological attitude to contemporary society" (Burrow, 1974:240). Thoms' letter in *Athenæum* alludes to two more concepts—to Anglo-Saxon roots and their expansion to the world at large—which clearly indicated imperial design behind the project of collecting and preserving (not interpreting) the rural, rustic and ancient tangible and intangible relics.

Folklore, with its ubiquitous presence and mutually constitutive marshalling of traditions, values and other diverse sociocultural practices, is distinguished by its minor variations with myths. The diverse mosaic of genres in speech text, written text, songs, tales and dances of folklore seem to be the most organic discipline closely associated with discoursal text construction, discourse practices and sociocultural practices. The concept of 'folk' has undergone substantial transformation over the ages as the folk were initially "understood to be a group of people that constituted the lower stratum of society in contrast to the upper stratum or elite of the society". The folk were contrasted with civilisation as the uncivilised and also with the savage, lower even than the uncivilised on the ladder of evolution" as "the folk were understood to be the illiterate of a literate society". This was expounded "in terms of the assumed unilinear evolutionary sequence of savagery, barbarism and civilisation through which all people were believed to pass" and thus "the folk were more or less considered barbarians" (Dundes, 1980:2).

The folk has now come to denote a group of people who at least have a single common factor among them which "could be a common occupation, language, or religion- but what is important is that a group formed for whatever reason will have some traditions which it calls its own" (Dundes, 1980: 6). The group can be as small as a professional group and as large as a nation. The significant factor is that "folk is not a dependant variable but an independent variable" and that all "folk groups have folklore, and the folklore of such groups provides a socially sanctioned framework for the expression of critical anxiety-producing problems as well as a cherished artistic vehicle for communicating ethos and worldview" (Ibid: 8-9). The diversity of folkloric genres provides for quite a broad scope of reflecting identities, values, rituals and customs of an ethnic, national, racial or any other group. While enshrining the ontology, epistemology and sociocultural practices of an ethnonational group, folklore

represents consciousness of individual and collective being in the way it looks at itself and at the world at large.

UNESCO, in its 1989 'Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore' adopted on 15 Nov 1989 in Paris, posits that "folklore (or traditional and popular culture) is the totality of tradition-based creations of a cultural community, expressed by a group or individuals and recognised as reflecting the expectations of a community in so far as they reflect its cultural and social identity; its standards and values are transmitted orally, by imitation or by other means. Its forms include, among others, language, literature, music, dance, games, mythology, rituals, customs, handicrafts, architecture and other arts" (UNESCO, 1989).

Sims & Stephens (2011) are of the view that "folklore is informally learned, unofficial knowledge about the world, ourselves, our communities, our beliefs, our cultures, and our traditions that is expressed creatively through words, music, customs, actions, behaviours, and materials. It is also the interactive, dynamic process of creating, communicating, and performing as we share that knowledge with other people" (P. 8). Folklore consists of folklife which "is community life and values, artfully expressed in myriad forms and interactions. Universal, diverse, and enduring, it enriches the nation and makes us a commonwealth of cultures" (Sims & Stephens, 2011: 10). Sims & Stephens (2011) has quoted an interesting definition offered by Benjamin Botkin, folklore editor for the Works Progress Administration' Federal Writers Project, in 1938. Botkin expounds that "folklore is a body of traditional belief, custom, and expression, handed down largely by word of mouth and circulating chiefly outside of commercial and academic means of communication and instruction. Every group bound together by common interests and purposes, whether educated or uneducated, rural or urban, possesses a body of traditions which may be called its folklore. Into these traditions enter many elements, individual, popular, and even "literary," but all are absorbed and assimilated through repetition and variation into a pattern which has value and continuity for the group as a whole" (Sims & Stephens, 2011: 10).

Numerous definitions of folklore continue to emerge and remerge but the common features of folklore that most of the scholars agree on, according to Sims & Stephens (2011), are "informal, not formal; unofficial, not official. Second, folklore is considered to be both the "items" people share and study and the active process of communicating folklore to and with others. Other components that folklorists frequently mention are communication, performance, art, group identity, shared beliefs and values, and tradition" (P. 11). According to Sims & Stephens, the American Folklore Society has noted that although there are numerous definitions of folklore but all definitions "challenge the notion of folklore as something that is simply 'old,' 'old-fashioned,' 'exotic,' 'rural,' 'peasant,' 'uneducated,' 'untrue,' or 'dying out' and explains that although "folklore connects people to their past, it is a central part of life in the present, and is at the heart of all cultures—including our own—throughout the world" (AFS website). In all the definitions, several features remain constant: folklore is an active part of human existence and expression, involving art, communication, process, culture, and identity (Sims & Stephens, 2011: 11).

Finnegan (1992) has illuminated some interesting aspects and raised some significant questions about the idea, mode, function, structure and performance of folklore. The conceptualisation of 'antiquity', 'traditionality', and 'rurality' of folklore, in Finnegan's view,

poses several questions that need to be clarified before embarking on the study of folklore or analysis of a genre of folklore. Discussing 'performance' and 'performance event', Finnegan (199) asserts that "oral expression and verbal art is realised in performance rather than as verbal or writable text" (P. 12).

Bascom is of the view that it can no longer be possible "to regard folklore simply as a true and accurate mirror of culture, or to ignore the basic importance of investigating the actual behaviour in any society, the ideal patterns of any culture, and the attitudes of any people whose folklore is to be interpreted" and "even if there are societies in which contrasts between folklore and culture are completely absent, this fact in itself is important to know and to attempt to explain" (Bascom, 1953: 341). Interpretation of folklore invariably requires describing textual properties of folkloric genre, analysing discourse practices in a particular sociocultural environment, locating temporal and spacial identities, and identification of social relations. The analysis of the production, consumption and distribution of folkloric discourses must neither lead to cultural essentialism nor to presupposed generalised conclusions. The right to be different must be complemented by the right to have indigenous knowledge production. The pragmatics of mutually shared practices among diverse ethnonational groups also need to be explored if the analysis is to be logically valid and empirically verifiable.

The description, interpretation and explanation of any genre of folklore heavily depends on social context of folklore, cultural context of a genre of folklore, and the identification of functionalist aspect of a genre of folklore. Consequently, it is significant to understand temporal and spacial aspects of a genre, recognising agent and performer of a genre, and the "dramatic devices employed by the narrator, such as gestures, facial expressions, pantomime, impersonation, or mimicry, and audience participation in the form of laughter, assent or other responses, running criticism or encouragement of the narrator, singing or dancing, or acting out parts in a tale, categories of folklore recognised by the people themselves; and attitudes of the people toward these categories" (Bascom, 1953: 333). All these aspects constitute substantially significant factors in the interpretation of a generic discourse of folklore.

The multidimensional nature and the multiplexity of structural rebus of myths and folklore have turned them into highly covetous disciplines for almost all areas of humanities and social sciences as anthropology, sociology, psychoanalysis, linguistics, philosophy, literature, psychology and cultural studies are engaged in cut throat competition to delve into the deepest recesses of various aspects of myths and folklore to find answers to complex questions facing diverse populations of the globe. In this vein, myths and folklore are of immense significance for understanding the mutually constitutive correspondence between mythology (and folklore) and the textual discourses as has been duly elaborated by Fairclough (1995). The sociocultural consciousness and subconsciousness of collective identities, knowledge production, self, worldview, nationhood, gender construction, and social relations with the surroundings of a particular ethnonational community may only be grasped when the mutually constitutive diverse discourses of their myths and folklore are duly studied both synchronically and diachronically within the framework of ethnopoetics and Sylvia Wynter's conceptualisation of sociopoetics.

VII- Critical Review of the Existing Scholarship on Pashto Verbal Folkloric Arts

Most of the works on the study of Pashto folklore (Ihsan, Shakir & Noor, 2023; Jalal et al, 2021; Khan, 2017; Sanauddin, 2015; Badshah & Khan, 2015; Khan, Naz, Anjum & Khan, 2015; Khan, Sultana, & Naz, 2014; Khan, Bughio & Naz, 2011; Lashkari, 2009; Hawkins, 2009; Bartlotti, 2008; Tair & Edwards, 2006; Enevoldsen, 2004; Grima, 1992; Shaheen, 1989; Tair, 1987; Tair,1980; Ahamd, 1975; Thorburn, 1876; and several others), that one repeatedly comes across, have interpretationally concluded a close correspondence of an essentialised, fixed, boxed and frozen code of honour, agnatic rivalry, revenge, hospitality, masculinity, unequal gender role, unequal gender construction and patriarchy with Pashtun identity, sociocultural consciousness, sociocultural practices and social relations. Most of the works (Thorburn, 1876; Ahamd, 1975; Tair,1980; Tair, 1987; Grima, 1992; Tair & Edwards, 2006; Bartlotti, 2008; Lashkari, 2009; Khan, Bughio, Naz, 2011; Khan, Sultana, & Naz, 2014; Hawkins, 2009; Khan, Naz, Anjum & Khan, 2015; Badshah & Khan, 2015; Sanauddin, 2015; Khan, 2017; Jalal et al, 2021; Ihsan, Shakir & Noor, 2023) have selected only Pashto proverbs (*Mataloona*), and that also gendered proverbs, for their scholarship while a few works (Shaheen, 1989; Enevoldsen, 2004; Ulasyar, 2024) have taken up *Tappa*/*Landey/Misra* for their analysis while just few of others (Kakar, 2012; Kakar, 2019) have dealt with diverse genres in their discussion on Pashto folklore.

With the noted exception of Abdul Ghafoor Liwal's Pashto work on mythology titled as *Pa Adabiyato Ke Da Astoorey Serana* (Analysis of Myths in Literature) (Liwal, 2017) in which he has carried out a detailed review of myths in general and Pashto myths in particular besides some recent collections of folk tales like (Daryab, 2024) and (Gauhar, 2021), one observes that an overwhelming number of studies have been carried out only on two genres of Pashto Folklore—*Mataloona* (proverbs) and *Tappa* (a peculiar folk song). These studies seem to have the recurring themes of honour-code of *Pashtunwali* or *Pakhtunwali* defined as chivalry, revenge, feuds, untrammelled and recalcitrant nature, and independent and ungovernable behaviour with exceptional traits of martial skills, and comments on an unequal representation of gender roles, masculinity and patriarchy. Most of these works rarely inform us about the methods of finding, collecting, retrieving and categorising of *Mataloona* and *Tappa* and almost all the works appear to be deficient in fulfilling the minimum sampling requirements of geographical, territorial and thematic respondents, informants or participants of study for generalising their observations. Most of the works rarely delve deep to describe, interpret and explain for unpacking the finer aspects of Pashto folklore and to relate them with the sociocultural practices and social relations for understanding collective consciousness and unconsciousness, identity formation, gender construction, and knowledge production both synchronically and diachronically.

The twin threads of conclusions and the choice of selecting a single genre of folklore are astoundingly common in most of the works and studies carried out to understand relationship of folklore with cultural identity and cultural practices, and sociocultural consciousness and social relations of the Pashtuns. The methodology adopted for these studies neither informs us about the praxis nor about the theory underpinning the analysis, with the exception of Noor Sanauddin (2015) who has developed a solid framework for data collection, transcription, categorisation and analysis. But even his thesis is fraught with the consistent

inconsistencies and self-contradictory statements that are found in most of the rest of the works and studies.

It will be interesting to describe a few recurring problems in most of the current scholarship on Pashto myths and folklore. First, generalisation on the basis of unrepresentative sampling of geographical locations and populations on the basis of a single genre is the most common gap in most of these works. Thorburn (1876) perceives Bannu to be representative of all Pashtuns as Sanauddin (2015), Khan (2015), Badshah & Ikram (2015), Ahmad (1975), Shaheen (1989), Tair (1989) and others imagine Peshawar Valley of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as representative of all Pashtuns. This seems to be one of the biggest flaws in most of the works on Pashto folklore.

Second, with the exception of Liwal (2017) who has done a detailed analysis of Pashto myths, most of the works rarely take up myths as objects of their analysis. Folklore, especially proverbs, are singled out for academic expedition. Third, with the exception of Sanauddin (3015) who has developed a sold methodology of collecting proverbs, transcription, categorisation, analysis and theoretical frameworks for his PhD thesis, most of the works lack rigorous methodology of data collection, analysis and justification of theoretical frameworks. Fourth, almost all the works that I have come across appear to lack description, interpretation and explanation of textual discourses, context of discourses and intertextual rationalisation and seem to be deficient in relating their analysis to the sociocultural subjectivity of knowledge and identity, contextual cultural practices and social relations. With the exception of Sanauddin (2015), few works have given attention to the functional aspects but presumed the genres of folklore as fixed, boxed and static discourses. Comments on the collections of folkloric genres, if any, are carried out in isolation of texture and sociocultural context.

Fifth, none of the works I have come across appears to have attempted to unpack the text and context of metaphors and symbols that characterise folkloric text. Ostensibly, a superficial discourse has been constructed on the assumption of folklore as "mirroring" and "reflecting" cultural practices, sociocultural consciousness and social relations instead of delving into the correspondence of myths and folklore with functional, historical, cultural and social aspects as mutually constitutive dynamics. Sixth, almost all of the works on Pashto folklore that I have come across have followed the twin thematic threads of *Pakhtunwali/Pashtunwali* and gender construction, patriarchy and masculinity that were for the first time initiated by the imperial land officer in Bannu, S.S. Thorburn in 1876.

Seventh, several works like Khan, Anjum & Naz (2015), Sanauddin (2015) and Jalal et al (2021) contain omissions or commissions of factual errors. For instance, Khan, Sultana & Naz (2015:73) claim that "Khyber Pakhtunkhwa spreads over an area of 74,521 sq.km and has a population of over 22 million". On the other hand, the Population Department of the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa states that "Pakistan is the 6th most populous country of the world with a Population of over 190 million…. The Province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with 8.5 % area of Pakistan is occupied by 12.9% country's population" (Population Welfare Department, Kyber Pakhtunkhwa, 2015: 1). After simple calculation, it turns out that the population of the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was around 24.51 million in 2015 according to government statistics. Jalal et al (2021) mistakes the name of renowned Pashto folklorist of Afghanistan, Muhammad Gul Nuri with Noor Muhammad Noori. Khan, Anjum &

Naz (2015) and Jalal et al (2021) uses the derogatory term of 'KPK' for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa which is constitutionally abbreviated as 'KP', if at all necessary.

One of the starkest omissions has been made by Sanauddin (2015) who relates the gendered Pashto proverbs with the increase of violence against women among Pashtuns. He has unscrupulously related the findings of his generic comments based on the concept of 'mirroring' of the sociocultural context through folklore to another claim that "gender-based violence against women in Pakistan takes many different forms, but the most common forms are wife-beating which according to some estimates, is higher among Pashtuns compared to other ethnic groups in Pakistan (Fikree et al., 2005)" (Sanauddin, 2015: 149). The survey on which this claim is based was carried out in Karachi in 2005 on a sample of only 183 volunteered men selected from three venues in Karachi, namely, a vegetable market, a middle-class clinic and an executive clinic (Fikree, Razzak & Durocher, 2005: 50). A vegetable market is understood to be an uncontrolled open space while environment in clinics may be controlled. The survey itself elaborates that in Karachi, "the Pathans are mainly self-employed (in the vegetable market) or in the transport business" (Ibid). Assumptions and inclination of the authors are evident from the selection of the sample and from the selection of the settings of the sample.

Another study carried out in 2010 precisely underscoring ''constraints in Data Collection' to ascertain violence against women claims that "out of the total registered cases, 55.8% cases were registered as domestic violence. Rape with a share of 39.4% has the second largest part in all registered cases of violence against women (VAW). Punjab is at the top with a share of 73.47% of all registered cases of VAW followed by Sindh with 15.96%, the then NWFP (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) 8.82%, and Balochistan 1.47%" (Sajid, Khan & Farid, 2010: 95). In this survey, Punjab tops the list of incidents of violence against women while the then NWFP (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) stands third.

The above-mentioned study, although, does indicate that though there is "a dearth of data availability on Violence Against Women (VAW)" and that the available official data on VAW indicates "a rising trend in murders of women in the NWFP (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) from 1981 to 2008…women murders rose from 98 in 1981 to 503 in 2008" (Sajid, Khan & Farid, 2010: 95). With a bit of deeper observation, one may easily decipher that 1981-2008 is the era when *Jihadisation* and then *Talibanisation* had taken the Pakhtun land by storm (as a second wave of this phenomenon has currently increased to 80% as reported by South Asia Terrorism Portal and Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies). One can notice more than 200% rise in the overall fatalities of both men and women, targeted killings and murders of men, children and women during the era from 1981 to 2008.

In most of the works on Pashto folkloric verbal arts, generic description of cultural properties is given in isolation of the socio-cultural context and social relations of the time—*Badal* (revenge), *Nang* (honour), rivalries and feuds are highlighted instead of describing worldview, attitudes toward nature, aesthetics, friendship, helping the helpless and keeping word that are abundantly reflected in folklore. It may be because the latter category of properties does not fit into the theoretical framework of primitive, savage, noble savage, uncivilised, martial race and recalcitrance of the Pashtuns. Hence, fixity, fetishism, generalisation, wilful data selection and downgrading numerous significant properties of sociocultural identity characterise most of the works on Pashto folklore.

Exploring this colonial phenomenon, Homi Bhabha, quoted in Leela Gandhi, points out that "Fanon is far too aware of the dangers of the fixity and fetishism of identities within the calcification of colonial culture to recommend that "roots" be struck in the celebratory romance of the past or by homogenising the history of the present' (Bhabha, 1994: 9)". For Fanon, the entrenched discourse of cultural essentialism merely reiterates and gives legitimacy to the insidious racialisation of thought which attends the violent logic of colonial rationality. Accordingly, "the unconditional affirmation of African culture" reinstates the prejudices embodied in "the unconditional affirmation of European culture" (Fanon, 1990: 171)" (Gandhi, 1998: 123).

The paradoxical generalisation and essentialisation is perhaps one of the major reasons that the themes of *Watan* (Land), rivers in the Pashtun land like *Abasin* (The Indus), celebration of nature, praxis of arts, ecstasy of *attanr* (traditional dance), and aesthetics, abundantly reflected in Pashto folklore, rarely capture the fancy of the scholars working on Pashto folkloric verbal arts. The questions that remain unanswered in these multitudes of studies are: Why is there the recurring choice for certain folkloric genre like proverb for analysis? Can gender construction, identity construction, power relations, patriarchy and sexism be generalised after the cursory analysis of only one genre of folklore and that also on the basis of unrepresentative selected gendered texts?

After these general observations on the existing scholarship on Pashto myths and folklore, let us now turn to critical review of the specific instances of some selected influential studies, chronologically ranging from the first collection of Pashto proverbs in 1876 by S. S. Thorburn, a British Indian Civil Servant posted in district Bannu of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, till the PhD research theses and research articles by university teachers and students published in academic journals or on academic websites till 2023, on various genres of Pashto folklore, especially of proverbs.

Septimus Smet Thorburn (S.S. Thorburn) has published two works on various aspects of Pashto and Pashtuns—*Bannu or Our Afghan Frontier* was published in 1876 while *Asiatic Neighbours* was published in 1894.Thorburn has collected several hundreds of Pashto proverbs, translated and categorised them and published them in the second part of his first work published in 1876. Though he has not elaborated on the method of collecting, sifting and categorisation of the proverbs and folktales in his lengthy introduction to the second part of his book, one can assume that due to his colonial position of authority, he may have access to the dominant social groups of district Bannu who might, in all probability, have been either his accomplices or his subordinates in the hierarchical structure of the colonial authority. The two threads of the themes—*Pakhtunwali* defined as revenge and patriarchy among Pashtuns—that he has constructed through the choice of selection of the proverbs and through commentary on the proverbs appear to run through a large part of the corpus of proverbs collected and published by later authors in different times.

Thorburn (1876) pens down the story of some Asad Khan asserting that "the simplest way of affording the reader a glimpse of the inner social life of Pathans will be to conduct him into a well-ordered Bannuchi peasant's household, and invite him to be present at a birth, and afterwards to follow the infant in its progress through life" (Thornburn, 1876: 141—170). Generalising the "well-ordered Bannuchi peasant's household" to the "the inner social life of Pathans", Thorburn sustains his choice of theme to the end of the story when Asad Khan is on

his death bed and utters his last words to his son, Sherdil Khan. It goes like this: “Don't you know me, father, it is your son," said Sherdil, throwing his arms round his neck and crying, "Yes, yes, I see you, my own boy; come nearer, nearer still," said his father faintly. Sherdil put his face close to that of his father. "Listen," whispered the dying man, "my cousin has won—he had thirteen witnesses to my nine—he is your enemy. Remember, *revenge, revenge*! (italicisation is mine) " Those were the last words he spoke. He breathed on for some hours more, but was evidently sinking fast. Towards morning he opened his eyes, and a quiet happy smile stole over his face, then he gave a great sigh, and all was over. " Thank God! " Said Sherdil, " his end was peaceful. He is accepted” (Thorburn, 1876:168).

Thorburn’s other choice of theme, that is gender representation in Pashtun society, is reflected in his comments which go like this: “A Pathan sums up his opinion about the softer sex in two very comprehensive proverbs, which are given below, namely, " 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* (my highlighting and italicization)” but then immediately goes on to qualify his comment saying that “some tribes allow their women as much liberty as any *civilised* (my italicization) nation does; thus, Waziri and Marwat females, whether wives or maidens, do not conceal their faces, and go abroad as much as their lords and masters do” (Thorburn, 1876: 351).

The colonial constructs of rusticity, rurality, uncivilised status, illiterate population and child-like culture seem to be evident in almost all comments that Thorburn pass on the Pashtuns in general. Some of the comments by Thorburn expose the colonial mindset. Such as: “A knowledge of the proverbs current amongst *uncivilized races* is therefore invaluable for the purpose of elucidating their thoughts and feelings” (Thorburn, 1876: 233), “The Pathans, being what they are, *it is unlikely that they were themselves the creators of all their finer proverbs, for there are in some of them a delicacy of expression*, and a subtle knowledge of the finer workings of the human heart” (Ibid: 235), “Being a wild *impulsive child of nature*, *he has, on most occasions, as little command over his features and his voice as a dog, when pleased, has to stop his tail from wagging*” (highlighting and italicisation are mine) (Ibid: 171).

Thorburn’s book is replete with the generalised and essentialised comments on the Pashtuns but perhaps the few comments quoted above are more than sufficient to show subjugation and colonisation of discourses through discursive means, especially through folklore. Leela Gandhi informs us that “in this regard, V. G. Kiernan’s observations about the African experience of colonialism are generally revealing: “The notion of the African as minor took very strong hold. Spaniards and Boers had questioned whether natives had souls: modern Europeans cared less about that but doubted whether they had minds, or minds capable of adult growth. A theory came to be fashionable that mental growth in the African ceased early, that childhood was never left behind” (Gandhi, 1998: 32). What V. G. Kiernan, as quoted by Leela Gandhi, narrates about the African experience seems to be equally true for the subjugated and colonised Pashtuns.

The very categorisation of proverbs by Thorburn under the arbitrary headings clearly indicates a proclivity towards both an evolutionist and profusionist view of unilinear civilisational dynamics of primitive, barbarian, savage, noble savage, folk and enlightened collective. He seems to present a homogenised, essentialised and ordered sociocultural journey of the Pashtuns. Thorburn classified proverbs under the following headings:

Begging (P. 236), Boasting (P. 238), Bravery (P. 241), Class and Local (P. 245), Co-operation (P. 256), Cowardice (P. 257), Custom (P. 259), Death (P. 260), Family (P. 267) Fate (P. 269), Friendship (P. 271), God (P. 278), Good Looks (P. 281), Good and Bad Luck (P. 281), Goodness and Wickedness (P. 285), Haste and Deliberation (P. 288), Home (P. 291), Honour and Shame (P. 292), Husbandry, Weather and Health (P. 296), Ignorance and Foolishness (P. 308), Joy and Sorrow (P. 312), Knowledge (P. 316), Labour (P. 319), Lying (P. 322), Liberality and Parsimony (P. 324), Man's Justice (P. 330), Old Age (P. 332), Poverty 333, Pride, Self-conceit and Lame Excuses (P. 338), Selfishness and Ingratitude (P. 342), Strength (P. 344), Wealth and Women (P. 348).

Akbar S. Ahmad's *Mataloona: Pukhto Proverbs* was published in 1975 forewarded by Sir Olaf Caroe who propounds the romantic rusticity, rurality, primitivity and suburbanity to essentialise the Pashtun land in the contestation of identities (Ahamd, 1975: VII). A civil servant in the early batches of post-partition nation-state of Pakistan, Ahmad (1975) has collected hundreds of Pashto proverbs without elaborating on the method of collecting, sifting, categorising and describing these proverbs, though he has made some cursory comments about the translation of these proverbs into English.

Ahmad (1975) has picked up the same thread of the fixated, exceptionalised and essentialised identity construction through arbitrarily selecting proverbs, as was done by Thorburn (1876) before him, describing them to demonstrate simultaneous humanisation and universalisation. He propounds *Pakhtunwali* as "the code of *chivalry* and *honour* imposed not only upon a segment of society but upon all those who would call themselves Pukhtoon…Pukhtoon must then live up to the expectations envisaged in Pukhto concepts…Pukhtoon as a complimentary adjective is not restricted to those who simply speak the language" (Ahamd, 1975: XIV). He also ascribes universalisation to the Pashto proverbs in the same breath asserting that "it is a striking tribute to the essential oneness of man that similar emotions and ideas find an echo in such diverse areas and peoples" (Ahamd, 1975: XV). The self-contradictory essentialism on the one hand and universal humanism on the other hand in the same vein reveals contradictory nature of constructing identities from the arbitrarily selected Pashto proverbs.

The pairing of essentialism with universal humanism is intriguing as humanism is quite a contentious term the same way as essentialism of *Pakhtunwali* is a field of semiotic contestation. Gandhi (1998) quotes Bernauer and Mahon who point out that "Christianity, the critique of Christianity, science, anti-science, Marxism, existentialism, personalism, National Socialism, and Stalinism have each won the label "humanism" for a time' (Bernauer & Mahon 1994, pp.141–2)…these various humanisms are, however, unified in their belief that underlying the diversity of human experience it is possible, first, to discern a universal and given human nature, and secondly to find it revealed in the common language of rationality…In contrast, poststructuralist and postmodernist anti humanists maintain that any universal or normative postulation of rational unanimity is totalitarian and hostile to the challenges of otherness and difference… For these critics, the very ideas of 'rationality' and 'human nature' are historical constructions and therefore subject to historical investments and limitations (Gandhi, 1998: 27).

The same theme of *revenge* and almost the same consciousness signification of the Pashtuns has been interpreted by Ahmad as was Thorburn's interpretation of the Pashto

proverbs. Ahmad defines this to be "a consciousness of those powerful and irresistible currents that flow about a man living in an environment where guns, violence and sudden death are part of a way of life—individuality, untrammelled and unbound but invariably disunited…the word *tarboor* for cousin means rivalry and enmity" (Ahmad, 1975: XVIII). He has highly eulogised an envoy of the British Raj to the Pashtun Land, Mountstuart Elphinstone, the author of *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul* (1815) who had attempted to convince the world that Pashtuns are "independent, undirected and unrestrained…life less advanced" (Ahmad, 1975: XIX).

The modernist, rationalist and structuralist discourse about the Pashtun—revenge, rivalry, chivalry, untrammelled nature, ungovernable behavioural system, primitive, rural, suburban and uncivilised—constructed by the aristocracy of the British Raj was thus followed by scholars and authors. The colonial discourse was based on the selected genre and arbitrarily selected samples of Pashto folklore. This task was unscrupulously carried out without delving a bit deeper to scratch the surface of symbols and metaphors for reaching the multitudes of sociocultural semiotics and semantic ontology of being. The same discourse of Pashtun's antiquity, authenticity, simplicity, uncivilised life standard and illiteracy seems to have been internalised and disseminated by academics as a fixed formula without questioning validity of the discourse logically and empirically (cf. Shaheen, 1989: 11-15).

Bartlotti (2008) in 'The Gospel in Afghan Pashto Poetry: Proverbs and Folklore' published in David Emmanuel Singh (ed.) *Jesus and the Cross: Reflections of Christians from Islamic Contexts*; Badshah & Khan (2015) in their paper 'Understanding Pakhtun Society through Proverbs'; Khan, Anjum, Naz & Khan (2015) in their study on 'Ordering the Social World: A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Gender Roles in Pakhtun Folk; Gulzar Jalal et al (2021) in their analysis 'Reflective Discourse in Badal in Pakhtun Society', and Qaisar Khan (2017) in his article 'Understanding Gender in Pak-Afghan Pashtun Society: A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Folk Stories' have carried out almost similar selection of genre of folklore, implausible generalisation on the basis of arbitrary selection of sampling and identification of almost the same essentialised and exceptionalised themes—*Pakhtunwali* as defined in terms of revenge, rivalry, chivalry, primitivity, rurality, rusticity and illiteracy. Gender construction, gender role and patriarchy have been identified in the interpretation of the selected genre and selected samples of the genre. The studies are characterised by theoretical and methodological inconsistencies and most often fraught with self-contradictory conclusions.

For instance, Khan, Sultana & Naz (2015) in their article 'The Linguistic Representation of Gender Identities in Pakhtu Proverbs' conclude that "the assembled data indicates that mostly men have authored the books about proverbs (because) of the lack of access to education among Pakhtun women and their confinement to their homes only" (Khan et al. 2015: 77). This kind of generalised conclusion by several researchers on the Pashto folk reveals either their lack of in-depth literature review or impatience to jump to conclusions. With a little bit of effort, they would have found hundreds of Pashtun women engaged in creative and scholarly pursuits over the past several hundred years. Khan, Sultana & Naz (2015) while elaborating their theoretical framework state that, "the study employs the perspectives of Social Learning Theory and Cognitive Development Theory that emphasize the crucial role of communication in the inculcation of masculinity and femininity (Wood, 2007) while dealing the text of proverbs as discourses in a Foucauldian sense, enunciated in critical Post-Structuralist Perspective to mean "ways of constituting knowledge, together with social

practices, forms of subjectivity, and power relations" (Durrani, 2008: 599; see also Weedon, 1997: 105)." (Ibid).

The platitudes of the binaries of 'literate/illiterate' and 'confinement to home' in the above studies demonstrate that they consistently recycle the works of Akbar S. Ahmad, Tair Nawaz, Jene Enevoldsen and Edwards. No or little data has been confirmed from the field, hence, a kind of resuscitation of the age-old trite notions. The theories that the above studies mention also point to domains other than that of the studies at hand or the conclusions they have reached.

The Social Learning Theory stipulates that a human has cognitive abilities and that he/she is neither solely driven by inner forces nor "buffeted helplessly by environmental influences" and that "psychological functioning is best understood in terms of continuous reciprocal interaction between behaviour and its controlling conditions" (Bandura, 1971: 2). Jean Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory expounds that there are " four cognitive developmental stages for children, including sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and the formal operational stage…although Piaget's theories have had a great impact on developmental psychology, his notions have not been fully accepted without critique…Piaget's theory has some shortcomings, including overestimating the ability of adolescence and underestimating infant's capacity…Piaget also neglected cultural and social interaction factors in the development of children's cognition and thinking ability" (Pakpahan & Saragih, 2022: 55). Fixity of the stages, overlooking adolescence and ignoring mutually constitutive interface with sociocultural practices are some of the major flaws in this theory while Foucault has in fact explored connection between knowledge and power and hence insists on mutually constitutive discourses.

Jalal et al (2021) validate the notion of 'Pashtuns as Martial Race' and assert that '*Pashtunwali* means *Badal* (Revenge) and that '*Pashtunwali* and Islam' are closely related. One of the diplomats of the British Raj, Mac Mohan, quoted in Kakar (2021:311), is the one who expounded the theory of martial races during the First World War when the Empire needed foot soldiers for its colonial wars. This theory exulted some races in the then British India to be Martial races: "the Jat Sikhs mighty and curled of beard, the Jute from Jutland, with Moslem and Hindu Rajput, the fierce hillmen from the frontiers, the Tartar from Nepal that we know as Gurkha…the great White King, had summoned them and his white officers would lead them and his white troops fight by their side" (Kakar, 2021: 311). It is interesting to note that the story of Ubaidullah Kaka in Jalal et al (2021) on the theme of revenge corresponds exactly with the Thorburn's story of Asad Khan.

A bulk of discourses, constructed for imperial purposes, is absorbed in these studies without any critical review while analysing Pashto myths and folk tales. These discourses have consistently and systematically focused on essentialism—a colonial discursive strategy— for identifying the Pashtuns with *Badal* (Revenge), macho straits, patriarchy and masculinity. This colonial cultural essentialism racialises thought process and, hence, leads to otherisation of communities and blurring of identity construction.

The PhD thesis of Noor Sanauddin (2015), though far more organised in terms of well-grounded research methodology of data collection, transcription, categorisation and reporting, is impaired by the same prevalent inconsistency of discourse regarding identity construction, gender construction and collective agency of the Pashtuns. Th principles that "Pashto proverb

usage can be viewed as the strategic social use of metaphors (Seitel, 1976)" and that "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" (Sanauddin, 2015: 210) have been rarely applied by the author to critically analyse metaphors and figures of speech of the "518 gendered proverbs" that the study has admirably collected (Ibid: 207).

The corpus development of Pashto proverbs through field work, though of only those which describe gender themes, is significant but work on the corpus of Pashto folklore had already started in 1876. The trend of particularly selecting one genre—proverb—out of multitudes of genres of Pashto folklore, then reducing it to the analysis of gender relations, then generalising it to the whole folklore and then relating it with the sociocultural practices, cultural identities and social relations of all Pashtuns beg numerous questions. How is the relationship of sociocultural practices established with proverb, and that also with the gendered proverbs? What can be the theoretical implications of relating gendered proverbs with the ontological sociocultural consciousness and epistemological sociocultural practices of the Pashtuns in general? How can a relationship of the collective consciousness be established with individual behaviour? All these theoretical and practical questions seem to betray unresolvable inconsistencies in the multitude of studies. The claim "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" (Sanaudin, 2015:1) requires synchronic and diachronic data for analysis.

The generalised statement that "proverbs as a genre of folklore are discourses of patriarchal ideology" (Sanauddin, 2015: 10) would require content sampling, geographical and territorial sampling, and would also be contingent on analytical tools that must lay bare the complex metaphorical structures and unpack the multilayered semantics of symbols embedded in myths and folklore. A few examples from the sample that specifically take up gender as their themes without delving deep into the structures of the genres of folklore, and only "some examples of derogatory and sexist proverbs such as: '*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*" Sanauddin, 2015: 11) without even looking at the condense structure of the text, texture, analysing inter-textual correspondence of other proverbs, and without establishing interface with the social relations would certainly lead to implausible conclusions.

Sanauddin (2015) while developing framework for his thesis asserts that "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 (Sanauddin, 2015:16). The binary oppositions of 'educated'/ 'uneducated', 'rural'/ 'urban' and 'modern/primitive' used in the introduction of the thesis sits perfectly with Gramsci's 'hegemony of common sense' and 'manufacturing consent' that the researcher has indulged in while describing proverbs in terms of gender relations revealing 'modernity' perceived as a colonial project. We have seen that the "postcolonial theory recognises that colonial discourse typically rationalises itself through rigid oppositions such as maturity/immaturity,

civilisation/barbarism, developed/developing, progressive/primitive" and that "critics like Ashish Nandy have especially drawn attention to the colonial use of the homology between childhood and the state of being colonised" (Gandhi, 1998: 32). Description of proverbs in terms of the rigid colonial oppositions of literate/illiterate and rural/urban reinforces colonial discourse in the interpretation of proverbs.

The construction of a workable definition that "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" (Sanauddin, 2015: 25) is useful for the sake of description and interpretation only. The theoretical framework of the 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" (Sanauddin, 2015: 62). This functional theoretical framework is beneficial but is dependent on the general conditions of economy, as availability of market for paid work is essential to measure the share of women in the paid work. The nature of household production, values of culture, nature of sexuality, surveys on violence against women and quantification of state policies in relationship with particular sociocultural environment is of immense importance in this regard. Despite giving examples of how gender and womanhood was constructed in the proverbs of America, Africa, Türkiye and others nations, the researcher continues to essentialise Pashto proverbs for patriarchy and gender inequality for Pashtuns (Sanauddin, 2015: 31-33).

Juxtaposing religion and *Pakhtunwali*, the researcher is led to implausible conclusions without any substantial evidence when he asserts that "religious discourses primarily define masculine and feminine in terms of 'right' and 'wrong' for both genders, the *Pakhtunwali* discourse defines such behaviour in terms of 'honour' and 'shame'" (Sanauddin, 2015:71).

It is pertinent to note that "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" but the researcher goes on to essentialise gender variance in education and paid work for Pashtuns asserting that "both *Pakhtunwali* 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" (Sanauddin, 2015:75). With just a bit of more field work on these lines, the researcher would have observed that in scores of districts, including far flung mountainous districts like Waziristan, Orakzai, Kurram, Shangla and Kohistan of Pakhtunkhwa, elders decry non-availability of girls' schools and educational facilities for girls instead of taking the argument of either *Pakhtunwali* or religion for small ratio of literacy among women in Pakhtunkhwa.

The researcher seems to have indulged in self-contradictory discourse when on the one hand he essentialises the Pashtun code responsible for inequality in gender representation but on the other hand quotes Walby's sound observation 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) (and) the Pakistani state is no exception as it plays a great role in sustaining patriarchal structures in Pakistan" (Sanauddin, 2015: 78).

Quoting from several experts, Sanauddin (2015) reaches some sound conclusions when he claims that "Pashto proverbs are far from being completely 'fixed 'and 'frozen 'sayings".

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 (Sanauddin, 20015: 210). He further asserts that "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, working as anchors on private and private TV channels, and representing their electorate in parliament" (Sanauddin, 2015: 215), as changing social relations and the concomitant changing discourses are permanent features and proverbs are no exception to this phenomenon.

The sane suggestion by Sanauddin (2015: 216-217) to transform the performatory and functional aspects of proverbs is contingent upon the investment on decolonisation of sociocultural and sociopolitical discourse, and decolonisation of the production of knowledge as a whole. The state policies, laws, juridical-legal institutions, narratives of media, discourses of textbooks and discourses constructed in madrassas need to be decolonised, meaning thereby, the decolonisation of the whole discursive infrastructure. The whole discursive infrastructure of state and society is to be geared to dismantle the institutionalisation of patriarchy—and this is no doubt a political act. Essentialisation and association of ethnonational identity of Pashtuns with patriarchy, masculinity and unequal gender construction seems to have been emanated from the cultural hegemony and manufacture of consent.

Barkat Shah Kakar (2019) in his well-organised paper has analysed "Masculinity" in Pashto Folklore under the framework of Antonio Gramsci's Theory of Cultural Hegemony and has developed a sound analytical framework to deconstruct patriarchy and objectification of women in folklore.

Sial Kakar (2012) in his interesting collection of Pashto folklore, *Zariney Paangey*, has collected diverse genres of Pashto folklore of the southern regions of the Pashtun Land which is worth noticing. Though Sial Kakar (2012) has also taken little trouble to inform us about his method of collecting these folk genres but he seems to have invested immense hard work to develop corpus of Pashto folk genres with diligence. Kakar (2012) has collected the following folk genres in his interesting work: *Da Attanr Naarey* (folk slogans for traditional dances of men and women), *Kakarai Gharey* (two-lined folk songs comparable to *Tappa* or *Landey*), Pashto folkloric children's songs, *Alaa Khuri* (folk songs of weddings and festivities created, practiced and sustained by women), *Bulandai* (Pashto folkloric wedding songs), *Barghazai* (another form of folk songs with a kind of historiography), folk tales, Pashto curses, Pashto prayers and good wishes, omens, augury and nomadic folk songs. Kakar's (2012) folk corpus may be used as a great treasure for research students to carry out anthropological, sociological, sociocultural, and linguistic interpretation of the individual folk genres and units of genres.

Since the first collection of proverbs brought out in 1876 AD by S.S. Thorburn, a British Civil Servant posted as Land Settlement Officer in Bannu, almost all the subsequent works seem to be conspicuous by their lack of systematic methodology, description, interpretation and explanation, with the exception of Sanauddin (2015) whose thesis is underpinned by solid research methodology. The existing scholarship on Pashto folklore is intriguingly characterised by the two recurring threads of *Pakhtunwali* and gender representation with a fixed and essentialised approach toward identity construction and social relations of the Pashtuns. The sociocultural context of text production, consumption and distribution, historical discourse,

social relations, and discussion on superstructural discourses appear to be either completely absent in these works or are minimal, inconsistent and unorganised.

The essentialised theme of honour code, *Pakhtunwali*, has been repeatedly regurgitated and complemented by emphasis on unequal gender role, denial of public space for women, male domination and confinement of women at home. The proverb, *Khaza Ya Da Kor da, Ya da Gor* (For women there is either home or grave) has been repeated in almost all collections of Pashto proverbs translated in Urdu, English and other languages but has never been contextualised, described, interpreted and explained. Anybody who has got even a bit of familiarity with Pashto texts and contexts will find it incumbent upon herself to explore the multilayered connotations of '*Khaza*', '*Kor*' and '*Gor*'. One is intrigued to notice that 'kor' and 'gor' is rarely pronounced with closed front vowels in the southern dialects of Pashto but the proverb has been generalised to almost the whole Pashtun land from *Amu Darya* (The Oxus) to *Abasin* (The Indus) with the same phonemes.

While few may contend the fact that inequalities in a society may never be duly resolved unless the issue of gender inequality is properly addressed but the analysis of Pashto folklore by the works discussed above usually tends to conceive patriarchy peculiar to Pashtun sociocultural milieu. These studies conveniently overlook patriarchy and the struggle of feminism on the country level, and in regional and global contexts. The studies mentioned above particularly ignore the role of empires, states, mass media, social media, neoliberal market and corporations in engineering cultural discourses for their economic and political interests.

The apparent lack of description, interpretation and explanation of Pashto folklore may either be due to the influence of the 'technologisation of discourse' or due to the worn-out tools of scholarly analysis. It has been conclusively demonstrated that "discourse, change and hegemony link the 'macro' domain of state, government and policy to the 'micro' domain of discursive practice, by way of the concept of 'technologisation of discourse', a technology of government in a Foucauldian sense, and is linked to what Gramsci called the 'ethical state'—the state as involved in engineering its subjects to fit in with the demands of the economy" (Fairclough, 1995: 87). The technologisation of discourse can be brought to the surface through the sharp tool of Critical Discourse Analysis which looks to "establish connections between properties of texts, features of discourse practice (text production, consumption and distribution) and wider sociocultural practice" (Ibid).

The role of state and empires in perpetuating patriarchy—role of discursive institution like textbooks, madrassa, policies, laws and institutions—has been apparently ignored in the studies on Pashto folklore. Lack of discussion, in the works discussed above, on technologisation of discourse in gender construction, representation and patriarchal discourse in itself proves the fact that deduction of conclusions seems to be deficient and faulty as description and interpretation of folkloric data seem to be distorted.

The keen and consistent interest in gender discourse construction and representation of women in folklore, especially in proverbs, by academia in the West and by metropolitan academia in the region indicates a latent colonial psychosis of superiority complex to engineer the sociocultural discourse, and devise standards for civilised/uncivilised, rational/irrational and mature/immature. Intellectual investment in establishing connection between sexuality and socio-cultural practices seems to be so minimal that the results of deliberations are kept

intentionally obscure. Based on the colonial construction of the binary oppositions, sex and gender are made to interface in a blurring correspondence.

Selective sampling, selective territories and selective sociocultural practices are superficially analysed without looking at the texture, discourse practices, discourse objects like epistemology and system of knowledge-production and discourse subjects like identities, values, customs and rituals. In this monopoly of manipulating discourse constructions, active participation of women in the *Roshaniya* movement of Bayazid Ansari, poet Nazo Ana (the mother of Mirwais Hotak), the author-daughter of Khushal Khan Khattak, Bibi Haleema, the business woman mother of Ahmad Shah Abdali Zarghuna Ana, the Malalai of Mainwand of the Second-Anglo-Afghan War, the scores of women creative writers and activists in *Khudai Khidmatgar Movement*, meticulously compiled by Dr. Wiqar Ali Shah in his magnificent Pashto work *Pukhtaney Khazey aw da Qaam Khidmat* (Pashtun Women and National Service) published by Bacha Khan Research Centre in 2012/2023), and the recent Nobel Laureate Malala Yousafzai would not make the required samples for analysis of gender construction and gender representation to describe *Pakhtunwali*. This data is conveniently put under the category of exceptionalism. If this is indeed a criterion for exceptionalism then perhaps one third population of the Pashtun women squarely fall under this category.

The argument of exceptionalism to rubbish the data of Pashtun women playing social, political and economic roles in public domains reminds one the all too popular statement by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak that puts a finger on the pulse of the coloniser by asserting that "white men are saving brown women from brown men" qualifying her statement a little in the same essay by postulating that "if you are black, poor and woman, you take it three times" (Spivak, 1995).

Gender construction, patriarchy and objectification of women may be analysed under the Gramsci's framework of cultural hegemony and manufacturing of consent (Kakar, 2019) which stipulates that "the form of masculinity that is hegemonic at a given time and place involves a particular institutionalisation of patriarchy; we might say it embodies a particular strategy for the subordination of women" (Kakar, 2019:16). Institutionalisation of patriarchy and gender construction must be synchronically and diachronically analysed as this institutionalisation is neither peculiar to a particular culture nor to a particular era, although classical Marxist critics find its origin in the feudal era that started some ten thousand years ago. Locating patriarchy in the selected gendered Pashto proverbs without recognising the overall dominance of patriarchy and without taking into consideration sociocultural milieu and social relations of the Pashtuns may lead to gross theoretical and practical anomalies that might reinforce the institution of patriarchy rather than deconstructing it.

Feminist critic and academic, Professor Valentine Moghadam, while carrying out a comparative study of the 'patriarchal Axis' of Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan in the 1980s concludes that "the difference in the three cases is that the Afghan state sought to undermine patriarchal structures through land reform and changes in marriage and family law, whereas in Iran and Pakistan the states fostered patriarchal ideology and practices" (Moghadam, 1992). Kayani & Dar's (2019) analysis of the role of entertainment industry, especially of music, in Pakistan and India that perpetuates patriarchal discourse in mass media confirms that "analysis of the content and text of the lyrics of the selected songs shows that language and discursive practices are used to formulate the identity of an individual or group…language is also claimed

to be the basic tool for exercising power and coercion…the clear difference in the gender representation of men and women in these songs is crucial as it promotes gender stereotypes, objectification of the female body, and supports patriarchal ideologies" (Kayani & Dar, 2019: 67).

Rabbia Aslam (2024) carried out a study on the inclusion of Gender and Women Studies in Pakistan and reaches conclusion that "the growing contestation and backlash to the Aurat March and Women and Gender Studies in Pakistan should be seen in a global context in recent years where anti-gender discourses (coupled with transphobia) are widely shared and disseminated."

Drawing on the long lasting resistance of academia and literati against patriarchy and women's objectification in the South Asian Region, Firdous Azim, Professor at BRAC University Dhaka, elucidates that "various social movements that have emerged in the region have had to grapple with issues of gender equality, violence against women, women's social positioning and so on" and this Feminist "activism has engaged with religious fundamentalisms, state repression, sexual violence and livelihood issues, while women have been visibly active in all the political movements in this volatile region" (Azim. 2009: 1-3).

Maitrayee Chaudhuri, a former professor who taught sociology at the Centre for the Study of Social Systems, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, and the author of *Refashioning India: Gender, Media, and a Transformed Public Discourse*, while expounding the struggle against patriarchy in the South Asian region to contextualise the gender issue in the historical and sociocultural environment thinks that "first, feminism is intrinsically linked to ideas of equality and freedom but the road to achieve the same is not easy for societies that are deeply unequal…second, this inequality plays out globally—between states, and within societies" and this "occurs at multiple realms", hence, we need to take cognisance of: (i) the role of social movements, the issues that they raise, and what they render visible and invisible; (ii) the interventions of the state, market, and international institutions in reframing feminist discourse, and (iii) at the level of knowledge construction and unequal ideational representation" concluding that "the contestations that emerge ensure that meanings of neither 'freedom' nor 'equality' remain fixed and unchanging across time and space… by bringing in the varied but linked social, political, economic, and cultural contexts within which feminisms are articulated" (Chaudhuri, 2024).

The social movements in the South Asian region particularly and in the African and Asian continents generally, including the *Roshaniya Movement* and the *Khudai Khidmatgar Movement* in the Pashtun Land, have displayed their sociocultural and sociopolitical consciousness through integrating struggle against the mis-recognition of ethnonational identities, the dispossession and unequal distribution of resources, and patriarchy and gender construction simultaneously. Understanding the intersectionality of ethnonational and racial colonisation, cultural hegemony, institutionalised exploitation and structural violence against the dispossessed social classes, subjugation of women and transphobia is the key to the interpretation of discourses constructed through texts, ideational systems, sociocultural practices and social realities. Engaging with gender construction as an isolated phenomenon detached from colonisation, hegemony and dispossession will certainly weaken the struggle against inequalities as the meanings of freedom and equality are not fixed across time and space, and they work through the interlinked social, political, economic and cultural contexts

as "we live within an endlessly superseding play of dominations that vie for the control of our thoughts, our truths and our actions" (Allen, 2009: 227).

The code of *Pakhtunwali/Pashtunwali*, which is predominantly interpreted through the lens of the discourse of cultural essentialism and sociopolitical and sociocultural exceptionalism, may be explained through unpacking the framework of Foucault's concept of power, the colonial construct of binary oppositions and Gramsci's framework of cultural hegemony. Interestingly, the colonial interpretation initially constructs, then normalises, then perpetuates and then permeates the essentialist discourses of the code of *Pakhtunwali* describing its peculiar traits to be martial skills, masculinity and patriarchy, and then they legitimise their intervention in the form of "civilising mission".

VIII- Critical Analysis of Selected Pashto Folkloric Verbal Arts—Myths, Legends and *Tappa or Landey*

For the critical analysis of Pashto myths and legends, I have selected four myths, legends and folktales from *Milli Hindara* (Nuri, 2017). *Milli Hindara* is generally regarded as one of the most authentic compilations of three collections of Pashto myths and legends collected, sifted, categorised and compiled by eminent Pashto folklorist, the late Muhammad Gul Nuri, with diligence, meticulous care and admirable skill over a period of more than three decades within a wide range of Pashtun regions. The first collection of *Milli Hindara* was published in Kabul in 1939, the second collection in 1946 and the third collection was published in 1973. All the three collections were compiled and published in a single volume by Matiullah Rohiyal in 2017 from *Pakhto Nariwala Maraka*, Kandahar. One can assume with a fair degree of certainty that the renowned folklorist Muhammad Gul Nuri has worked with consistent assiduity and organised meticulousness for several decades to assemble, with proven integrity, the age-old Pashto myths, legends and folktales.

The Pashto myths like the ancient Babylonian, Indian, Egyptian and Greco-Roman myths, appear to demonstrate entangling of mythological creatures of demons, deities, fairies, dragons, phoenix, sphinx and djinns with humans in the relations of love, hatred, support, friendship and enmity (Liwal, 2017: 148). The style and texture of the myths and folktales that Nuri (2017) has collected reflect southern Kandahari dialect. The compilation, especially of the legends, is augmented through underpinning of peculiar folk songs of *Gharey* (two lined poetical expression) and *Landey* or *Tappa* from diverse characters in various scenes of tragedy, comedy, dialogue, negotiations, information, performance and expression of emotions. The temporal ecology of incidents and spacial climate of characters in myths and legends collected by Nuri (2017) help the reader locate synchronic shades and diachronic mapping of discourses through various eras.

The critical study of myths and legends collected by Nuri (2017) may help us understand the worldview of the Pashtuns as they look at themselves and the surrounding world of nature: ontological and epistemological interplay of construction of consciousness, construction of aesthetics, modes and means of production, distribution of resources through distributed sovereignty of power, evolving social relations, cultural formation of identities, norms and values, gender construction, gender roles and supporting systems of morals and rituals.

Through the critical study of the texture, intertextual correspondence, discourse practices and social relations of the myths and legends in *Milli Hindara*, sociocultural and sociopolitical consciousness may be identified, discourse practices may be dissected and social relations may be diagrammed to recognise social semiotics and discoursal semantics of the essence of the Pashtun identity and nationhood. Nuri (2017) has carried out compilation of the texture and meta data of events and characters with an unmatched dexterity locating distinctive dynamics of collective life in the Pashtun Land diachronically and synchronically without indulging in essentialism.

1- Consciousness and Identity in Pashto Folkloric Verbal Arts—Myths and Legends:

The myths and legends that I have selected for critical study in this section are representative of the sociocultural practices, and spacial and temporal ecology. *Zabzabana Khaperai* (Nuri, 2017: 76—96), *Pathey Khan Baresi* (Nuri, 2017: 22—47), *Musa Jan Aw Wali Jan* (Nuri, 2017: 98—144) and *Momin Khan Aw Sherinai* (Nuri, 2017: 145—165) have been selected for critical analysis of texture, discourse practices, sociocultural practices and social relations to unpack the ontological and epistemological constructions and reconstructions of the Pashtuns identity, nationhood, gender construction and sociocultural consciousness.

The myth of *Zabzabana Khaperai* goes like this:

A princess resolves to remain spinster and spends her time in a beautiful garden built by her king-father for her. One day she hears two birds—a parrot and Myna—talking to each other sitting on the twigs of garden trees. They are talking about a strange intoxicating perfume that is oozed out of the locks of a Zabzabana Khaperai (a stammering fairy) who rules a country in some distant lands. The princess asks her father to declare within the kingdom that she will marry anybody who brings her the perfume of the locks of Zabzabana Khaperai. The son of the vizier hears the declaration and sets out to bring the perfume to make the princess his wife. He is unable to complete the task even after a long time and great efforts. One day he comes across a shepherd and tells him the story. The shepherd is handsome, wise and courageous. He accompanies the son of vizier to bring the perfume of Zabzabana Khaperai. They set out on the journey together, reach a far-flung village and befriend a shoemaker who later turns out to be a demon (Dev). The shoemaker sends them to his elder brother, also a demon, across the mountains but he in turn sends them to his eldest brother who is five hundred years old. The eldest demon gives them a flying mat that takes them to the kingdom of Zabzabana Khaperai. The demon also grants the son of vizier a cap which makes him invisible when he puts it on. The shepherd finds shelter in the house of Gulkhandana— the vizier of Zabzabana Khaperai who is born of the wedlock of a human woman and a male fairy. The shepherd seduces Gulkhandana and marries her. She informs the shepherd that Zabzabana Khaperai is invisible to everyone except her (Gulkhandana) and that she accompanies Zabzabana for swimming to a pond regularly. Zabzabana Khaperai and her vizier Gulkhandana both take the shape of doves when they go for swimming so that their identity remains hidden. The shepherd goes to the pond when the two fairies reach there for swimming one day and plays a trick there. He compels Zabzabana to marry him. After marrying Zabzabana, the shepherd intends to leave, take the son of vizier with him who has stayed with the last demon, and leave for their homeland to marry the princess because her condition is fulfilled. Zabzabana oozes out oil of her lock and gives it to him. She and Gulkhandana give him a music instrument (Sorna or Zurna) and other magical articles. The fairies may be summoned for help when someone plays their

musical instruments. The shepherd comes back to the village of the old demon, picks his friend—the son of vizier— from there, plays several tricks on the old demon, and returns to his country to give the fragrant perfume to the princess. The princess refuses to keep her word of marrying anybody who brings her the intoxicating perfume. She refuses to marry the shepherd out of her arrogance. The shepherd and the son of the vizier leave their country in frustration and go to another kingdom where they impress upon the king. The king gives hand of his daughter to the son of the vizier but the princess is in love with a demon and deceives the son of the vizier persistently. The shepherd again comes to his rescue, kills the ugly demon and releases the princess from the clutches of other demons. The shepherd then saves another kingdom from another invasion of the kingdom of another fairy. The queen of this fairyland is impressed by the wise strategies of the shepherd but boasts of her kingdom. The shepherd plays his Sorna that brings Zabzabana, Gulkhandana and their army. The armies of the two fairylands which are ruled by the two fairy queens come face to face with one another. The shepherd divorces Gulkhandana who then marries the son the vizier, the friend of the shepherd. Both armies then punish the two kings of the two kingdoms whose daughters have deserted the shepherd and the son of the vizier. In the end, the son of the vizier stays back along with the half-human, half-fairy Gulkhandana and the shepherd and Zabzabana go back to their kingdom where they start living in peace and tranquillity. (Self-Translation).

In the Greco-Roman and Indian myths, we observe that the ancient human communities symbolise their understanding of themselves and the world around them through rituals and belief systems which are imagined through demons, dragons and deities. The war of Ulyssis with demons, and the battle between Raam with Rawan is a manifestation of human resolve to overcome threats to their phyletic existence. The texture and structure of the myth of *Zabzabana Khaperai* indicate that the collective desire for a beautiful life and potent sexuality have been symbolised in the shape of fairies who take the shape of doves.

Two kingdoms are ruled by the Queen Fairies that may certainly indicate an era of some kind of matriarchy in the Pashtun Land. The desire to overcome the limitation of flying is symbolised in the flying mat and the desire to explore nature and overcome huge obstacles of nature is reflected in the cap and other magical articles provided by Zabzabana and Gulkhandana. The exchange of precious stones for food and horses reveals the era when the economy is run through barter system but the domestication of animals has started as the shepherd has his herds of cattle and the shepherd and his friends travel on horseback.

The consciousness of attachment with homeland has started taking roots as the son of vizier (friend of the shepherd) usually feels nostalgic about his own country during the long journey. The distinctiveness of the Pashtun consciousness may also be observed in the construction of hero myth. In the Egyptian, Greco-Roman, Indian and Iranian myths, the hero usually belongs to a noble origin, travels to far off lands, defeats dragons and demons, is helped by deities sometimes and is antagonised by the same deities at another time, marries a princess and then faces a downfall. The hero of *Zabzabana Khaperai*—the shepherd—in contrast, is of humble origin, travels to far off lands, defeats demons, marries a queen fairy and then lives peacefully hereafter.

Another distinctive feature of this Pashto myth is the ability of the Pashtun shepherd to make close friendships with the unfamiliar and the unknown. The skill to negotiate, the courage to understand the unknown, the spirit to face the danger and the tenacity to confront the evil

distinguishes the hero of this myth from most of the heroes of ancient myths. The intellectual zeal of the hero and commitment of his friend provide us a window to peep into the evolving characteristics of the Pashtun collective self in the face of extremely hard circumstances.

Structuralist and functionalist analysis of the myth leads us to interesting revelations. We find two pairs of kingdoms; the two fairy lands are ruled by two fairy queens while two human kingdoms are ruled by two kings. One may decipher the ratio of patriarchal and matriarchal configuration of power in the particular universe of the myth. Negotiations with the demons, then with the vizier of Queen Zabzabana and later with the king of another human kingdom shows evolving nature of language and distribution of class-domains and class behaviours besides subsistence economy. The structure of twosome pairs—shepherd and his friend, Zabzabana and Gulkhandana, the king and his daughter, Gulkhandana and her mother, the shepherd and Gulkhandana's mother and several married couples—as characters of the myth— may disclose social relations based on mutual interests negotiated through language. The semiotics of the myth also appears to indicate the era when family system was in the initial phase of its evolution.

The gift of Sorna or Zurna, a music instrument, by the fairies to the shepherd, and the dancing nights of the princess of one human kingdom, married to the son of vizier, reflects the evolving nature of fine arts for expression of ecstasy and pleasure. The ontology of being is expressed through the objective realities side by side with the intangible dynamics. The natural and the supernatural live side by side as Gulkhandana is the daughter of a human woman and a male demon. In the ancient Mesopotamian Babylonian civilization, the Epic of Gilgamesh, narrated in the Akkadian language about city-state of Uruk (Erech), the friend of Gilgamesh, Enkidu, has also been represented as half human and half demon (Liwal, 2017: 157). One wonders that Gulkhandana's characteristics may be surprisingly described in parallel with the characteristics of Enkidu as "in sharp contrast to Gilgamesh, Enkidu is a primal man, born and raised in the wilderness with the wild beasts who sets free the animals caught by trappers" (Kovacs, 1989: xix). Reference to the mat of King Solomon in the myth may unpack several historical and political possibilities of the era.

The images of synchronic and diachronic time and space, the consciousness of self and the surroundings, the simultaneous existence of the natural and the supernatural, the barter subsistence economy, evolving structure of social institutions, the equal distribution of power between man and woman, the latent desires of pleasure, the confrontation with the forces which impede access to pleasure, and the collective desire of peace and tranquillity describe ordering of a social world in the myth. The resolve of human consciousness in the context of social semiotics to survive, sustain and negotiate for their survival and sustenance emerges from the structural, functional and psychoanalytic anatomy of characters, events, incidents and environment of the myth *Zabzabana Khaperai* (Liwal, 2017: 157). The myth indicates that Man interacts with Nature rather than appropriates Nature in the Pashtun consciousness. This mutual engagement with nature, in the Pashtun consciousness, allows Man in the process of humanisation to create culture, social relations, identity and gender.

Consistent refrain of "beyond the mountains" in the myth may echo a reference to some distant past to which the Pashtuns may have been collectively linked. The regions beyond Pamir in the north of the Pashtun Land which have mostly remained a battleground for an interplay of various kingdoms by various tribes of Sakas, and between some tribe of Saka and

Achaemenid empire of Persia between 500 BC and 7 BC (Yu, 1988) are evident from the analysis of temporal and spacial ecology of the myth *Zabzabana Khaperai*.

In the following sections, we take up three legends—*Momin Khan Aw Sherinai* (Nuri, 2017: 145—165), *Musa Jan Aw Wali Jan* (Nuri, 2017: 98—144) and *Pathey Khan Baresi* (Nuri, 2017: 22—47) — from *Milli Hindara* for combined critical analysis for two reasons. Firstly, all the three legends encompass several aspects of the developed ethnonational consciousness of Pashtuns in myriad manifestations and, secondly, this may facilitate our intertextual analysis to reach the multilayered composite of meanings effectively through analysis of texture, discourse practices, sociocultural practices and social relations.

Momin Khan and Sherinai

Momin Khan Aw Sherinai is one of the most popular legends of the Pashtun Land. Numerous variants of this legend continue to circulate in various regions of the Pashtun Land. The legend goes like this:

Momin Khan is the only son of his father. He has seven male and one female cousin, named Sherinai (or Sherino). Parents of Momin Khan and Sherinai have betrothed them as soon as they are born. Sherinai's father is the chief of the area (or a clan). When fathers of both Momin Khan and Sherinai pass away, a conflict on chieftainship emerges among the cousins. Half of the people of the clan elect Momin Khan as their leader while half of the people elect Zabardast Khan (brother of Sherinai) as their chief. Keeping in view the differences, the mother of Momin Khan advises Momin Khan to send a delegation to Zabardast Khan for the hand of his sister, Sherinai, who is engaged to Momin Khan in childhood. Momin Khan sends a delegation of elders. Zabardast Khan at first refuses the hand of his sister but later, due to the taunts of Pakhtunwali hurled at him as a Maraka (delegation of elders) is never sent back empty handed, he agrees on the condition of a huge Walvar (a dowry for the bride). Momin Khan does not have enough resources to give away such a large Walvar and hence decides to leave for Hindustan (India) to earn Walvar for his marriage. Leaving his mother and his fiancé crying in pain of separation, Momin Khan along with his close friend Redi Gul reach Hindustan. Upon their arrival, they find out that handsome young male boys put on veil to hide their faces. On the advice of Redi Gul, Momin Khan also starts wearing the veil. They stay put in a caravanserai. The king of the Raj is informed about the handsome young man staying in caravanserai, so, he sends for them. They are brought to his palace. Both Momin Khan and Redi Gul get along with the king quite well. One day Momin Khan dreams of strong wrestlers of the Raj. He asks the king for a fight with his wrestlers. The match is arranged and Momin Khan defeats wrestlers of the king. Momin Khan, one day, sees a letter from the king of another Raj to his host king for the annual levy (Kharaj) taxed on him since long. Momin Khan's honour does not allow this to happen with his friend and leaves for the other Raj to confront the king of the other Raj to restrain him from asking for the annual levy from his host king. When Momin Khan reaches the other Raj, he observes that the other Raj is afflicted by another misery. A dragon daily swallows a virgin sent to him on a camel. Each family of the country has to send a daughter turn by turn. That day is the turn of the princess. She is there on the camel going to the dragon to be swallowed when Momin Khan, sitting at the shop of a goldsmith, sees her wailing but nobody is able to help. She recites a Tappa, 'Pathana nang rabandey oka—plar mey Mughal de ma khamaar lara legina' (Stand by me O, Pathan, my father acts like a Mughal and sends me to the dragon to be swallowed). Momin Khan instantly stands up, and

accompanies the princess to fight with the dragon. He kills the dragon, and the princess loses her heart to him. The king grants Momin Khan half of his Raj and his daughter's hand. Momin Khan refuses everything but asks the king to condone the tax levy on Momin Khan's host king. The king of that Raj instantly agrees but insists on marrying his daughter. Momin Khan is compelled to marry the princess but tells the princess he won't be able to touch her because of his pledge with Sherinai. The princess agrees with this. Momin Khan returns to his host and gives him good news of the writing off the tax. From there, he sets out for his homeland along with the resources he requires for Walvar. The host king gives him a battalion of his army and all the required resources. When this caravan reaches closer to his homeland, Momin Khan hears a rumour that Sherinai has been engaged to someone else. Momin Khan believes the rumour because a Majati (a homeless who is taken care of by someone in the village) who has fled the repression of Zabardast Khan has also told him about the misery of his mother and family at the hands of Zabardast Khan. Momin Khan asks the caravan to camp and goes out in the middle of the night to confirm the news of Sherinai's engagement with someone else. Due to the increasing loot and plunder in the area, brothers of Sherinai would sleep around her bed during the night. Momin Khan breaks into the house of Sherinai and intends to wake her to confirm the news of her engagement with someone else. It is dark and Momin Khan is wearing veil so that he is not recognised. When Sherinai is suddenly disturbed in her fast sleep, she starts shouting which wakes up her brothers from sleep. Not recognising him, and he would not disclose himself due to honour, the brothers of Sherinai attack Momin Khan with their knives while Momin Khan would not fight back. They tear apart his body which causes his instant death in a pool of blood. He is then recognised as Momin Khan. Zabardast Khan then commits suicide due to a severe fit of guilt. The funeral of Momin Khan is being carried by the girls of the village when the princess who has married Momin Khan reaches there. She is accompanied by her forty companions whom she asks to return. The princess pledges to become a curator at the mausoleum of Momin Khan. But the princess also prays for her own death which is instantly fulfilled. Momin Khan's grave is made on a mound for her mother to see her son daily. The mausoleum of Momin Khan later becomes the symbol of an eternal love for the people of the area which they visit regularly. (Self-Translation).

Musa Jan and Wali Jan (Nuri, 2017: 98—144):

There are two brothers, Feroz and Nauroz, who are traders and are wealthy. Feroz has seven daughters and Nauroz has seven sons. Observing that the wives of both of them get pregnant once again, they pledge with each other to marry their son and daughter if one of their wives gives birth to a son and the other gives birth to a daughter. The king (chief of the area), Suhaili, one day surveys his area when his glance falls on the daughter of the second youngest daughter of Feroz, Babai, and he is instantly enamoured by her. Suhaili has already married numerous women. Suhaili sends Maraka (delegation of elders) to the house of Feroz for the hand of Babai but Feroz and Nauroz are in distant lands for trade and, hence, Suhaili has to wait till their return. On the other hand, the wife of Feroz gives birth to another daughter, Gul Makai and wife of Nauroz gives birth to a son, Musa Jan. In the meanwhile, Feroz and Nauroz return from their trade visit and are forced to give the hand of Babai to the chief with the consent of Babai. Both Musa Jan and Gul Makai have reached adolescence when Feroz passes away. Nauroz asks his sister-in-law for the hand of Gul Makai for Musa Jan but she asks for large dowry, hence, the marriage of Gul Makai and Musa Jan remains in limbo. In another area (Tarin), a chivalrous man, Wali Jan, intends to settle scores with Suhaili and abducts Babai when all the

wives of the chief Suhaili are out for entertainment camping in the meadows to enjoy the spring season. Suhaili feels dishonoured and wishes to make for it. He asks for the hand of Gul Makai in return but the family of Gul Makai plans to hide her, though, Suhaili finally finds her with the help of an old woman and confines her till she gives consent for marriage with him. Musa Jan, in the meanwhile, gets frustrated, takes his share from his brothers after the death of his father and sets out for the hillside. He stays put there with a sufi saint who has been living there for a long time. Musa Jan learns playing Rabab from him. Another ascetic comes across Musa Jan in the hillside, informs Musa Jan about the fate of Gul Makai and advises him to take the help of a strong man Wali Jan in the Tarin area. Musa Jan reaches Wali Jan who serves him with heartiest hospitality and takes him inside his home where Musa Jan meets his cousin Babai, the sister of Gul Makai, now the wife of Wali Jan. Babai has given birth to a son Mir Wali from Wali Jan. Wali Jan and Musa Jan launch an assault in the area of Suhaili to bring back Gul Makai but Wali Jan loses his life in the fight. While dying, Wali Jan gives in bequest advice to his son, Mir Wali, to accompany Musa Jan in bringing back Gul Makai as he has made a pledge to him. Mir Wali acts upon the advice of his father and accompanies Musa Jan to bring back Gul Makai. The mission is completed. Musa Jan, out of regret due to the loss of his dear friend Wali Jan for him, again sets out for the hillside and starts living as an ascetic. Suhaili, in the meanwhile, attacks the village of Mir Wali in which Mir Wali loses his life after fighting bravely with the army of Suhaili. Musa Jan hears about all the tumultuous events back in his village and comes to know that Suhaili has taken Gul Makai back after the death of Mir Wali. But Gul Makai is resilient in not giving her consent to Suhaili for marriage as she thinks she is already married to Musa Jan. Musa Jan comes to the area of Suhaili to know about the situation in which Gul Makai lives. A trick is played by Suhaili and Musa Jan is killed. Suhaili now forces Gul Makai for marriage as her husband Musa Jan is no more alive. Gul Makai agrees on the condition of building a mausoleum on the grave of Musa Jan. Suhaili fulfils her wish. She then wishes to visit Musa Jan's mausoleum one last time. She is allowed to do so. During her visit to the mausoleum of Musa Jan, Gul Makai takes her last breath. Suhaili then asks for the hand of Wali Jan's sister and aunt of Mir Wali, Thanu. Being wise and brave, she agrees to the proposal of Suhaili but starts training and preparing women of the family for a decisive battle with Suhaili. In a ferocious battle, Suhaili is killed by Thanu in the battle. Thanu then subdues the chiefs of Suhaili and dominates his kingdom where she marries a poor man and makes him the king of the area.

Analysing the myth of *Zabzabana Khaperai*, the legend of *Momin Khan aw Sherinai*, the legend of *Musa Jan aw Wali Jan* and *Pathey Khan Baresi* (Nuri, 2017: 22—47) in which Pathey Khan and his fifty-nine friends, supported and inspired by Rabia, the wife of the young chief Pathey Khan, remain engaged in a long chivalrous battle with a king of Hindustan and then mummification of the heroes by Rabia, we find gripping disclosures. The mummification of the war heroes by Rabia may be understood through the rituals of the nomadic Sakans who would mummify and take dead bodies of their heroes to their sacred valleys, one such sacred valley was on the banks of the River Hilmand (Liwal, 2017: 188).

The dragon myth in *Momin Khan aw Sherinai* might be unpacked in several layers. In his wonderful thesis *An Exploration of Dragons in Classical Mythology*, Penman (2020) provides us with interesting information about the nature, structure and function of the dragon myth across cultures. He asserts that "monsters as cultural products, do not belong only to the Western tradition, but are a global phenomenon. Intriguingly, there seems to be similarities in

the physical form and use of monsters across a wide variety of cultures and time periods. The dragon appears not only in the Mediterranean world from ancient times, but also in the Chinese tradition for centuries independent of the Western tradition" (Penman, 2020: 18).

Penman thinks that Jungian Psychology foregrounds that the drives which produce monsters like ego, subconscious, shadow, etc., are universal and never change over time as "dragons exist to be representations of the negative side of the human conscious, a part that each of us has and shares due to the collective nature of the human conscious. They exist to symbolise the importance of conquering the darkness of our own mind, and for the representation of the ego, as a representation of the power of the human conscious, to rise above the negative hold within the subconscious" (Penman, 2020: 21). Penman has quoted a substantial work by Martin Arnold, published in 2018 *The Dragon: Fear and Power* which looks at "the traditional dragon-slaying hero narrative as a means of imposing order on chaos and discusses the way that the dragon is symbolic of the terror of nature unleashed, a symbolism that Arnold associates with the universal subconscious fear of human mortality". Penman is of the view that by "exploring dragon narratives from the ancient world to today's modern fantasy, Arnold discusses what is the underlying reason these creatures are constantly being called from our collective imagination" (Penman, 2020: 25).

The dragon slaying hero in the form of Momin Khan in *Momin Khan Aw Sherinai* demonstrates not only courage, bravery, manliness and macho traits but also exhibits unique traits of helping the helpless, keeping promises, making sacrifices to sustain friendship, displaying rare qualities of leadership. At the same time, the dragon-slaying hero carries an Achille's heel as Burgess reveals that "the theory that the "swift-footed" hero was first immobilised by a lower wound before being slain is ultimately favoured, though it is suggested that invulnerable armour and poison may have played a role (Burgess, 1995). The "invulnerable armour and poison" in the case of Momin Khan seems to be his impatience and jumping to conclusions, in the case of *Musa Jan and Wali Jan* it might be the error of judgement and in the case of Pathey Khan and his comrades it seems to be egoism.

One aspect of the legend needs to be particularly pointed out that Zabardast Khan, cousin of Momin Khan, never wishes to kill Momin Khan, and hence, Zabardast Khan takes his own life out of unbearable guilt when he finds out that he has unknowingly killed his cousin. This seems to be one of the pieces of evidence that the fixity and discourse of inherent agnatic rivalry in the Pashtun culture is misplaced.

The dialect, lexicology and the reverberation of *Gharey* and *Landey* (*Tappa)* in the text of the Pashto legends and myths, recorded by Nuri (2017), do not seem to be just for the sake of decorating folkloric text through poetic devices but may indicate evolution of language and expression of aesthetics. The worldview is revealed through an objective relationship with the manifestations of nature like correspondence with forests, hillsides, fountains, animals and birds. The talking birds signal the evolving nature of the construction of hybrid nature of communication through language. The universe of being and consciousness is demonstrated through the inward and outward looking at self and the surroundings and through the textual interpretation of centripetal and centrifugal nature that fabricates an interplay of natural and supernatural beings. The collective desires and dynamics of sexuality are denoted through the fairies and flying mats. Antagonism toward anything that is destructive and the confrontation

of the threat with chivalry is an inward looking at the structures of the collective being or socio-cultural consciousness.

Reflection of *Watan* (Land) and feelings of alienation in other lands, and nostalgia for *Watan* (Land) expressed through the term *Musafari* (travelling) indicate that the boundaries of physical being, social functionality and cultural consciousness have been already defined. The travel to Hindustan by Momin Khan signifies both the tenacity of Pashtun Land in comparison to Hindustan and the relationship of the Pashtun Land with Hindustan in the south east. This may also be conceived as a trend of expanding influence to the east which is later manifested through the establishment of kingdoms during the era of the Pashtun Khilji, Ghurid, Lodhi and Suri dynasties from 13th century to 16th century.

Befriending the unknown and the unfamiliar as in the case of the shepherd in the *Zabzabana Khaperai*, Musa Jan in *Musa Jan aw Wali Jan* and Momin Khan in *Momin Khan aw Sherinai* may denote the diverse sociocultural spaces founded by a socially functional value system. The pastoral economy through shepherding cattle seems to be transforming into trading economy in *Musa Jan Aw Wali Jan* in the form of Nauroz and Feroz. This transformation seems to have congenital interplay with the sufi ascetism and the sociocultural practices. The consciousness of collective being is expressed through the emerging nationness and nationhood from the identities based on primordial relations. Various aspects of the Pashtun collective identity are indicated in several events in *Momin Kha aw Sherinai*, *Musa Jan aw Wali Jan* and *Pathey Khan Baresi*. The hero construction through the values of friendships, hospitality, helping the helpless, keeping one's word and confronting the natural and supernatural dark forces indicates evolution of leadership, indigenous governance, rituals and belief system.

The most interesting features that are unpacked in the Pashto myths and the legends are observed in the construction of gender, registering a kind of negotiation and contestation between men's and women's sociocultural roles. As discussed in the analysis of *Zabzabana Khaperai*, the two kingdoms ruled by human male and the other two kingdoms ruled by female fairies might be conceived as a reflection of friction between the patriarchal and matriarchal worldviews.

Thanu (sister of Wali Jan) in *Musa Jan aw Wali Jan* displays human agency through training and preparing family women for a ferocious battle with the chief Suhaili. She succeeds in overpowering the army of men and establishes her rule through her husband whom she marries of her own accord. The powerful chief Suhaili in Musa Jan and Wali Jan despite his immense power and plenitude is unable to force his choice of marrying Gul Makai upon the family of Gul Makai. The funeral of Momin Khan in *Momin Khan aw Sherinai* is carried by girls. The princess, who has married Momin Khan in *Momin Khan aw Sherinai*, decides to leave her palace to go after Momin Khan and when she sees Momin Khan's dead body, she declares her intent to become caretaker of the Mausoleum of Monin Khan. This signals the display of her utter will and exercising of human agency. The princess shows her free will even through her prayers to die with Momin Khan.

Babai in *Musa Jan Aw Wali Jan* has consented to be the wife of the chief Suhaili unwillingly but Wali Jan abducts her and marries her despite her previous wedlock with Suhaili and becomes the mother of another hero—Mir Wali— of the legend. This may indicate evolving nature of the family system before the construction of *gherat* (honour), mostly repeated by scholars while describing *Pakhtunwali*. The sociocultural space seems to be a

prominent spectacle for negotiating gender role between men and women for living under an undeclared code of *Pakhtunwali* surrendering his/her individual self to the larger communal life. Religious belief system does not seem to have much impact on the individual and collective systems in the myth of *Zabzabana Khaperai*. The religious beliefs are mentioned in several places in the legends but seem to have little impact on the sociocultural life and are mostly limited to rituals and the sufi ascetism.

If one delves deep in the collective subconscious manifested in the myth and the legends described, interpreted and explained above, one reaches the conclusion that the Pashtuns have been forced to live in collective delirium constructed through collective amnesia. A part of the Pashtun self remains passionate to confront the dragon through various strategies the same way as Momin Khan (in *Momin Khan aw Sherinai*) does with the dragon who swallows innocent beings with gender identity of women. The collective self of their gender identity has been under pressure but they reclaim their collective self like Thanu in *Musa Jan aw Wali Jan* and the princess of Hindustan who throws out her veil to reclaim her gender identity and human agency through declaring death to find life through death.

Three fundamental themes emerge from the interpretation of *Zabzabana Khaperai*, *Musa Jan aw Wali Jan*, *Momin Khan aw Sherinai* and *Pathey Khan Baresi*. Fist, the evolution of social relations and sociocultural consciousness in the myth and legends leads one to believe that indigenous ethnonational identity of the Pashtuns has been formed due to interaction with nature and natural manifestations including natural ecology and physical geography during various eras of their history. The consciousness of collective identity manifested in *Watan* (land) and *Musafari* (travel from *Watan*), and the cultural code of indigenous collective social life called as *Pakhtunwali*, have been rarely hinged on *gherat* (honour) specified with women and on agnatic rivalry as has been incessantly constructed by orientalists, colonial authors, cold-war era scholars and war on terror writers.

Second, women's agency is clearly expressed through familial, social and cultural role, and even in the governing role as is in the case of Thanu, during evolution of gender construction. Women sexuality is not demonstrated as a forbidden plant even if one agrees with Grima (1992) that this has been constructed by men to give voice to their idealised woman. Third, engagement with Nature and not exploitation of Nature—forests, meadows, rivers, animals, plants, land, soil, cosmos—has facilitated the Pashtuns to create culture, thoughts and belief systems. One can see multiplicity of realities not a singular notion of reality in the Pashtun ontological and epistemic consciousness.

2- Consciousness, Identity and Gender Construction in Pashto *Tappa* or *Landey* or *Misra or Tikai*:

The debate on the antiquity of the peculiar two-lined Pashto folk song called *Tappa* or *Misra* in Peshawar Valley and northern Pashtun Land, *Landey* in Kandahar, Paktia and the adjacent regions, and *Tikai* in Kabul, Wardak and Nangarhar areas (Ulasyar, 2024; Rafi, 2018; Betani, 2017; Alam, 2013; Benawa, 2011; Enevoldsen, 2000; Shaheen, 1989; Shaheen, 1984; Dawood, 1984; Janati, 1984; Laiq & Ziar, 1984) has been candidly summarised by Usman Ulasyar in his recent Pashto work *Da Pakhto Tappey Siasi Arakhuna* (Political Aspects of Pashto Tappa) (2024: 59-99). The unique Pashto folk genre, having a metrical composition of nine syllables in the first line and thirteen syllables in the second line, is one of the most popular, omniscient and entertaining folk songs in the Pashtun Land. The startling temporal and spacial influence

of *Tappa* in the Pashtun Land seems to be due to a rare and unparalleled amalgamation of the structural and functional characteristics of Pashto *Tappa*.

The astounding consistency, dynamism, and passion of performance of *Tappa* in the Pashtun Land signal articulation of certain individual and collective conscious and unconscious drives in this folk song. Intellectual investment on the discourse construction, consumption and distribution through text production in *Tappa* appears to be astonishingly so common that it may not require particular facilitating environment. All the skills required for collective authorship of this folk seem to have existed and continue to exist in the cultural ecology, sociocultural consciousness and social environment of the Pashtun Land in the form of thoughts, imagination, passions, worldview and belief system.

One of the most important aspects of *Tappa* is its putative generic particularisation for the discourse of women although no such limitation is indicated as essential in either the structure or the functions of *Tappa*. The ostensible unrestrained expression of women in *Tappa* has enabled it to become a cry of resistance against patriarchy and gender inequality in the Pashtun Land. In this regard, *Tappa* seems to be a discursive manifesto of the feminist movement in the Pashtun Land. Benedicte Grima (1992), on the other hand, argues that her field work and participant observation have led her to argue that *Tappa* (*Landey*) are "generally created by men to represent an idealised woman's voice and then called anonymous" (Grima, 1992: 159)[1]. Even if one agrees with this interpretation, the fact remains that *Tappa* provides Pashtun women with a site of contestation to reclaim their agency.

Brevity, simplicity, fluency, metaphorical value, proverbial richness, and symbolic condensation appear as spontaneous collective creativity in *Tappa*. Its authenticity and indigeneity give it an amazing spontaneity expressed through rhythm and melody of music and lyrics in the length and breadth of the Pashtun Land. Some scholars have even attempted to find its parallel in the Vedic hymns (Shaheen, 1984). Being the briefest and the most complete genre in its structure, *Tappa* carries the most effective creative tools of collective communication. *Tappa*, in its discoursal practice, is not frozen and fixed in time and space. It has immense energy for corresponding with the mutually constitutive nature of sociocultural environment and changing social relations. The congenital relationship of *Tappa* with myths, legends, folk tales and proverbs finds expression in a range of mythology, symbols, metaphors, heroes, historical events and allusions (*Talmeehat*) enshrined in Pashto *Tappa*. Having earned the credit of the most widely documented folk genre, *Tappa* continues to play proactive and mutually constitutive role in collective construction of ethnonational identity, gender identity, sociocultural consciousness, discourse practices and changing social relations in the Pashtun Land.

The debate on the antiquity of Tappa shows the signs of a double-edged sword. On the one hand sociocultural and historical antiquity is conceived to provide a strong ground for the collective ethnonational claim of national sovereignty of power but on the other hand antiquity

[1] It is pertinent here to note that I have observed in various phases in the past three decades at least seven Pashtun women of different age groups belonging to different community contexts whom I noticed to have been adept and expressive in regularly reciting *tappa* (*Landey*) and proverbs while narrating events and incidents of the past and present—maternal grandmother of my wife in Swat, my own maternal grandmother in Peshawar, my eldest aunt (sister of my father) in Peshawar, my mother in mother in Badaber, my elder sister in Badaber, a friend's mother in Kabul, and a school teacher in Malakand. I have recorded their *tappas* and proverbs in my fieldwork notebook.

in Asia and Africa has been constructed by the colonisers to establish the discourse of primitiveness, savagery, noble savagery and primordial worldview that is intended to be brought to the fold of 'civilisation'. Occupation in the guise of 'civilising mission' of cultural and ethnonational entities has been historically justified after establishing antiquity of the indigenous communities. This appears to be a discursive strategy to provide a foundation for the 'modernising mission' of the 'modern' and late 'modern' coloniality.

Four significant streams of discourses and themes may be identified in the corpus of *Tappa*. The four streams of discourses that are found consistently, repeatedly and omnisciently in *Tappa* are categorised as follows:

The first important stream of discourses denotes worldview which includes the themes expressing thoughts, imagination and belief system of looking at nature, expressing relationship with the surrounding universe, correspondence with the manifestations of the natural and the supernatural world, inward looking at self, the nature of life and death and the nature of time expressed through the themes of flowers, moon, sun, forests, rivers, gardens, orchards, birds, animals, flora and fauna, seasons like spring, colours, music, aesthetics, dance, love, separation, exodus, migration and much more.

The second significant set of discourses signifies construction of cultural and ethnic identities and sociocultural consciousness. This set of discourses is expressed through the themes of sexual and gender construction, friendships, hospitality, alliances, values, rituals, economy, power configuration, conflict resolution, communal life, governance, geographical and ecological recognition like *Watan* (Land), *Abasin* (The Indus), *Gudar* (water course or fountain from where village women and girls would fetch water), war and peace, *musafari* (travelling, leaving homeland), migration, trade, agriculture, market, occupations, Sufism, belief system, customs, hujra, keeping promises, doing *Pakhto* or *Pashto*, traditions, and subjugation and colonisation through the expression of *Mughalwala* and *Firang* (Brits), and many more.

The third category of influencing discourses reflects Mythology and History. This set of discourses alludes to fire, dragon, heroes like Momin Khan, tragedies like Sher Alam and Maimunai, soma, Sita, Farhad, Yaqub (Jacob), Yousaf (Jozeph), battles with the Mughals, battles with the British colonisers and many more. The fourth category of themes is related to individual human emotions of love, pangs of separation, desire for union, and a desire for living together. All these streams and categories of themes in *Tappa* overlap and cris cross in various and diverse forms.

Critical analysis of *Tappa* needs to closely look at the text, discourse practices, cultural practices and sociocultural consciousness through unpacking multilayered semantics and social semiotics in their metaphors, lexicology, grammatology, mythology, symbols, structure of language, dialects of language, linguistic metaphors, figures of speech and poetic devices. For the selection of the critical analysis of *Tappa*, we shall use diverse sources of corpus mentioned in the methodology section of this paper including a published collection *Tappey* by Rome (2018).

While rendering the Pashto text of *Tappa* into English, which might have several variants in numerous cases, I have not considered outdated terms of 'literal' and 'free' translations but rather adopted the framework of Eugene Nida's dynamic equivalence and

formal equivalence (Saroukhil, Ghalkhani & Hasehmi, 2018). Based on the Halliday's *Systematic Functional Grammar* that describes ideational, interpersonal and textual functions of language, I have attempted to work through the dynamic equivalence to achieve the desired results of translating the original text of Pashto *Tappa* into English. The dynamic equivalence stipulates that translation must attend to "1. Making sense; 2. Conveying the spirit and manner of the original; 3. Having a natural and easy form of expression; 4. Producing a similar response" (Saroukhil, Ghalkhani & Hasehmi, 2018: 104).

The first thread of the discourse of worldview constructed in *Tappa* is communicated through description and manifestations of nature like moon and moonlit nights (*Spogmai*), stars (*stoori*), flowers, especially rose (*Gulab*), seasons like spring (*Sparley, Pasarley*), humid summer like (*Pashaka*l), trees like poplars (*Chenar*), forests and mountains. This description demonstrates the collective consciousness of outward and centrifugal observation of the surrounding world.

Spogmai salam mey yar ta waya

Za salami warta Hamesh walara yama.

(O Moon! Convey my good wishes to my beloved and tell him I always pray for him/ or I always remain acquiescent to him.)

Spogmai mashal rapasey mawra

Da deedan ghal yam da janan deedan la zama.

(Don't chase me with a torch O' Moon! I am going to visit my beloved stealthily.)

Spogmai sar waha rakheja

Yar mey da gulo lo kavi gutey raibina.

(Rise O Moon! My beloved is harvesting flowers lest he cuts his fingers.)

Speeney spogmai hall rata waya

Che me janan maelis da cha sara kavina.

(Give me a tip off O Moon! Who is my beloved busy with at this moment?)

Spogmai tar neem asmana raghla

Be yara khob na shi, ka ma la na razina.

(The moon has reached half of the sky but I cannot sleep. Is it because one cannot sleep without her beloved or is it me only who is sleepless).

Spogmai da beiri sar la raghla

Janan ranaghey shogirey warta kawama.

(The moon has reached right above the berry tree. I keep awake in the sleepless nights because my beloved has yet to come.)

Spogmai talwar kawa rakheja

Zalmi da gulo lo la zi khamaar ye khurina.

(Rise, O Moon, hurry up! The young lads are going to harvest flowers lest they are swallowed by the dragon.)

(Rome, 2018: 194, 231, 232)

Though neither the selection nor the translation of the above *Tappas* might be able to communicate the full scope of the semantics of *spogmai* (moon), a few sets of semantics clearly indicate how a Pashtun (perceivably woman) looks at the nature and associates her emotional, sexual and intellectual self with the nature. The anthropomorphic description of the moon suggests that the nature is perceived as a part of the ontogeny of existence. The moon, in its liminal existence, is expressed autochthonously and not something beyond the indigenous social existence. Harvesting of flowers (sometimes connected with young girls and sometimes with young boys) and dragon in one of the *Tappas* above denote mythological and historical phylogeny of the Pashtuns, connection with Vedic traditions, and confrontation with the dark forces of the universe and the world around in the Pashtun's ontology of being. The *Tappas* above glaringly suggest construction of sexuality and unrestrained expression of sexuality in the Pashtun worldview.

Gul (Flower), *Gulab* (rose), *Pasarley* or *Sparley* (spring season) and *baran* (rain) connote construction of aesthetics, beauty, collective dream of good times, plenitudes, sexuality and growth while *chenar* (poplar) signifies resolve, strong will, recalcitrance and virility in the Pashtun worldview expressed with amazing spontaneity in *Tappa*.

Azghey mey khas pa zra ke mat sho

Ma pa keekar ke da gulab katal guloona.

(A spine pierced through my heart because I was looking for roses in Acacia.)

Gul da gulab sourey da waley

Boi da sanzaley sang da jal maza kawina.

(The rose in flowers, shade of willow in trees and fragrance of mustard twigs in plants are a rare spectacle of delight.)

Gulab da khawro paida kegi

Zama janan tar gul nazak khawro la zeena.

(A flower is grown in the soil but my beloved, more delicate than a flower, goes under the ground.)

Guloona dair darsara rawra

Za da orbal da paasa chattar jorawama.

(Bring me bundles of flowers. I wish to make a roof of flowers over my locks.)

(Rome, 2018: 20, 282, 283)

Sparley ba bia pa gulu rashi

Hair ba mey na shi da khazan spera baduna.

(The spring will blossom once again but I will never forget the dry autumn winds.)

Sparley ka ter sho bia ba rashi

Da thoro khawro musafar kala razina.

(The spring will come again even if it fades now but the traveller who has gone deep into dark soil never comes again.)

Da alaamey da pasarli di

Pa shno taluno key bangri maat shawi deena.

(The broken bangles in the meadows show signs of the spring coming.)

Da alaamey da pasarli di

Juna shotal kri zalmi sail la wati deena.

(This is another sign of the spring coming that the girls are busy collecting grass for cattle and the youth have gone to hang out.)

Baran da zmakey abadi da

Sherina yara za pa ta abada yama.

(Rain is fertility of the soil. I am fertile because of you, my beloved!)

Baran de wi seelai de na wi

Seelai zaalima wranawi pradi koroona.

(Rain is only good without a storm. The storm destroys homes.)

Chinara sta pa zai ka za wey

Ma ba da paanro pa zai kari wu guloona.

(If I were a chenar, I would have grown petals instead of leaves.)

Pezwan pa lwara poza khwand ka

Laka pa lwar chinar ke wachawi taaloona.

(A nose-ring is delightful in a pointed nose just like long swing in a tall chenar.)

(Rome, 2018: 20,31, 32, 68, 96, 184, 282, 310, 311).

The construction and permeation of beauty and aesthetics through shades of diverse colours, peregrination of fragrance around the surrounding environment, and the palpable perceptibility of nature distributed around create an oeuvre of iconographic images in thoughts and imagination—this is the adorable sense of beauty constructed in Pashto *Tappa*. The colour, fragrance and tactility of natural manifestations connected with spontaneous human feelings and astonishing intellectual investment is what makes the worldview of the Pashtuns that is expressed in *Tappa*. *Tappa* attempts to make sense of the 'fertility of the soil'—a symbol of women's sexuality. 'The broken bangles in meadows' are considered signs of spring by a

Pashtun woman. The playfulness and wantonness in the delight and mirth of women have been strikingly expressed through the figures of 'broken bangles in the meadows' which also suggest an antinomic exposition to the proverb 'a woman is either for home or for grave'. This process is then recreated in melodies through a flute and a *Rabab* in the green plains, in the thick forests, on hillside, and in the deserts. The ontogeny, polygeny and sociogeny described in Pashto Tappa exhibits a worldview that has often been left cloaked while discussing the sociopolitical existence of the Pashtuns.

Meena (Love), *firaq* (separation), time, life and death are encompassed in Pashto *Tappa* to communicate a worldview that is yet to be fully explored. A commitment to self, commitment to the surrounding natural manifestations, and commitment to life is embedded in most of the *Tappa* texts that mutually construct the theme of love, separation, time and space, and life and death. Some of the examples that reflect this thread of the worldview in *Tappa* are given below:

Meena da sar pa badala da

Che sar sathey khawrey ba okrey deedanoona.

(One can achieve his love in exchange of his head. You can never achieve your love if you care for your life.)

Meena de beem rata ghagegi

Da Chamchamar pa shaney haska gharai wrama.

(Your Love is like a pungi for me being played by a charmer. Like a cobra, I hold my head high (due to pride).)

Meena de seend rata bahegi

Khouga laliya za da thandey pakey mrama.

(Love is like a river flowing in front of me. I die of thirst on the banks of this river.)

Meena firaq bandey ziatigi

Wisal pa meena bandey awr olagaweena.

(Separation from the beloved soars love while meeting with the beloved turns love into ashes.)

Meeney lamba bailtoon eerey kram

Khwakha da baad da che pa kom loori mey awrina.

(I am all aflame due to love but separation has turned me into ashes. Now it's up to the wind to take me where it blows.)

Mazigarey de nwar ziarey de

Sok ba ranzoor vi sok da yar da ghama mreena.

(It's sunset time. The sun is disappearing below the horizon. Some may be ailing but many more die because of the pangs of love).

Mazigarey de khairey ma kra

Ta ba da naaz khairey kawey rekhtia ba sheena.

(Never chant curses when it is sunset. You may chant them in dalliance but they may come true).

Janana rasha che pakhula shu

Umar da jami mazigar de teir ba sheena.

(Let's patch up, my beloved! Life is as short as the evening of winter that fades in no time.)

(Rome, 2018: 87, 297, 310, 311).

The discourse of constructing cultural identity is so consistently and abundantly encoded in *Tappa* that it seems to have become the carrier of Pashtun cultural identity, values and customs. We find profuse representation of socioeconomic life like pastoral way of sustaining life, agriculture, trade and keeping barns for domestic dairy animals, evolution of occupations, construction of gender mostly through the description of now-abandoned *Gudar* (a fountain or stream of water usually sheltered by a grove or woodland where young girls would go to fetch water in their pitchers and where most of interaction between young girls and boys would take place), music of flute and *rabab*, unrestrained expression of sexuality, perpetuation of values, doing *Pakhto* or *Pashto*, rituals and Sufism like *Faal* (portending) and *Taaveez* (amulet), superstitions, customs like weddings, engagements and funerals. The term 'banjarai', a woman vendor or peddler, in *Tappa* and sociocultural interaction indicates the public role of women in economy and income generation while banjari (man vendor or peddler) is also found in abundance in sociocultural context.

Gatlai trey porta kai hamzolo

Pa banjari mey da janan gumaan razeena.

(Help him to get rid of the stack of cloth from his head, O my playmates! The peddler might be my beloved!)

Mashra da buso busara da

Da kasharai sara mey ghwa sataley deena.

(Her elder sister is like a stack of hay but I have accompanied her younger sister in grazing cows.)

Gudar pa sar mey qabar jor kai

Che maat mangi paighley zama pa qabar gdeena.

(Build my tomb on the top of a *Gudar* so that young girls put broken pieces of their pitchers on my grave.)

Gudara somra baktawar ye

Che daley daley jeenakai darla razeena.

(How luck you are, O Gudar! Flocks of young girls regularly come to visit you.)

Tang da rabab mey sta pa ghwag sho

Laka Durkho da balai sar ta okhatama.

(I suddenly heard the tune of your rabab. I climbed the rooftop to have a glance at your presence instantly like Durkhanai).

Da Ashna gham pa ma melma de

Da melmano khalak hamaish qadar kaweena.

(The pangs I feel for my beloved are my guests. I nurse them as guests are always taken care of.)

Ka shenkey khaal mey meerateegi

Nang da Pakhto de Ashna na maney kawama.

(The honour of Pakhto requires me not to stop my beloved to touch me even if the Khaal (blue or black marking on face and chin) on my face is washed away).

Koma Pakhto da kom ghairat de

Dostan da dost hujra ke mri jara razeena.

(What kind of honour and Pakhto is this that friends are killed in the Hujra of friends).

Taa da hujrey maelas tamam kro

Za da bandaar jeenakai os ratolawama.

(You have concluded your company in Hujra while I have just started collecting girls for company.)

Kaargha Naarey krey ta ranaghley

Ma da kaargha Naarey pa faal newali deena.

(I have portended the crowing of crow for your arrival but the crow has crowed and you never came, my Beloved!)

Kor ke de banr da kashmalo de

Zaka de boee da partoghakh da ghotey zeena.

(It seems you have grown a grove of Kashmale plants in your home as the fragrance of Kashmale is coming from the knot of your drawstring.)

Da Pir Baba pa banr ke taal de

Paighley prey zaangi mung la waar na rakaweena.

(Young girls continuously swing on the swings installed in the grove of Pir Baba, and never let us take our turn to swing).

Zan la ba dasey taveez okram

Che sta koosa ba zaan ta toura bala krama.

(I will get such an amulet prepared for me that your street will become a black monster for me.)

(Rome: 2018: 69, 77, 81, 92, 105, 131, 138, 146, 193, 266, 269, 278, 281, 284, 304).

It is interesting to note that in the two *Tappas* above, dishonour is attached to conflict while honour and *Pakhto* have been attached with closeness between a man and a woman. The eclectic modes of valorisation of physical, material and intangible imagination and the reification of intellectual and imaginative creativity in *Tappa* is reflected both in direct as well as metaphorical modes of language. The collective life, relationships, gender construction, sexuality and recognition of individual and collective being is quite clearly and openly represented through the text, texture, discourse practices and social relations.

The discourse practices in *Tappa* for constructing sociocultural consciousness and cultural identity are demonstrated through nonlinear as well as symbolically embellished text production which leaves little room for conflicting interpretations of *Tappa*. The close correspondence among text production, discourse practices, sociocultural practices and social relations is uncondensed and unmediated. The symbols and terms of *Watan* (Land as defined through located territory and habitat of dwelling), *Musafari* as journey away from *Watan*, Pakhtun/Pakhtunkhwa, *Abasin* (the Indus as a symbol of ownership and fertility of *Watan*), the subjugation expressed through Mughal and *Mughalwala*, reflection of collectivism through representation of focal sites like Peshawar and Kabul, collective memory of colonisation, and resistance against colonisation evinced through *Firang* and *Angraiz*, reiteration of a collective life of honour, distress of displacement, collective destruction caused by Talibanisation and an intense desire for peace, and abhorrence to war find unparalleled intensive and extensive expression in *Tappa*.

Zan da Watan pa Shama Zaar ka

Che patangan de ziaratuno la razeena.

(Sacrifice your life for the candle of *Watan* so that your tomb becomes an attraction for moths.)

Souk che da Khpal Watan dushman vi

Tal sharminda ba pa aakhir aw duniya weena.

(Those who are disloyal to their *Watan*, they will always remain ashamed here and in the hereafter.)

Watana taa key sa kamey de?

Yakhey Cheeney larey aw dang dang khkuli ghruna.

(O, My Watan! with tall mountains and fountains of azure water, you have all that is needed).

Watan ta zar rasha janana

Da musafaro khwaindey dair kri armanuna.

(Come back to *Watan* as soon as possible. Sisters of travellers anxiously wait for their brothers to come back.)

Watana Taa sara wada kram

Ka pa taa Jang sho za ba makhkey warla zama.

(I make this pledge with you My Watan! You will find me in the front lines if you are ever assaulted.)

Azaad Pakhtun yam azaad khwakh yam

Azaad Watan de azaad Umar tairawoma.

(I am a free Pakhtun and love to live like a free person.)

Khybara Bakht de Mubarak sha

Daa Pakhunkhwa ba de pa ghaig ke garzaweena.

(Be proud of your fate, O, Khyber. Pakhtunkhwa will be carrying you in her lap.)

Da atak ma raporey wuza

Dalta jhandey da Pakhunkhwa walarey deena.

(Don't cross Attok. Here the flags of Pakhtunkhwa are unfurled.)

Abasin bia pa chapo raghey

Pa sar ye rawral kashmiri da khial shaluna.

(The Indus has surged in overflow again. It has brought Kashmiri shawls with its waves).

Da Abasin da manz gulaba

Ya ba de khpal kram ya ba doob darpasey shama.

(O' My Rose! in the middle of the Indus. I will either bring you with me or I will be drowned with you.)

Baad da Kabul da loori raghey

Pa noro treekh wo pa khog olagedana.

(The wind blew from Kabul. It might have been bitter for others but was sweet for me.)

Akhir ba wran she pekhawara

Da Nangrahar juney khirey darta kaweena.

(Due to chanting of curses by the girls of Nangarhar, Peshawar might eventually face destruction.)

Pa Hindustan de saley jor sha

Da be nangai awaz de ramasha maeena.

(Better to be buried in Hindustan instead of the news of your cowardice reaching me here, My Beloved!).

Charta Angraiz charta Chitral de

Be nangi zour shwa angraizan Chitral ta zeena.

(This is so dishonouring that the English succeed to travel long distance and conquer Chitral.)

Zama da pat jwandun pakaar de

Be pata jwand ka bachahi vi wrak de sheena.

(I love to live a life of honour. I even refuse to live like a king without honour.)

Baran waregi tambwan dand shwal

Kadwaley juna da watan armaan kaweena.

(The tents are inundated due to torrential rains. The displaced girls anxiously desire for their own homeland.)

Barana tam sha Khudai da para

Kada pa sar wazira zi lamda ba sheena.

(It must stop raining. The waziri girl will be soaked while leaving home during displacement.)

(Rome, 2018: 18, 20, 24, 31, 44, 45, 92, 95, 110, 129, 128, 130, 160, 213, 320).

Ka rokhanian sara yo zai shwal

Mughal ba waara pa pansai okhejaweena.

(If the Roshanites get united, they can send the Mughals to gallows.)

Da Mughal Zulm ba naskor shi

Che Pir Rokhan toora pa las jang la warzeena.

(The repression of Mughals will come to an end as Pir Rokhan (Bayazid Ansari) confronts them with his unsheathed sword).

Pathaana nang rabandey okra

Plaar mey Mughal de ma khamaar lara legeena.

(Abet me and uphold your honour O, Pathan! My Mughal father is sending me to a dragon to be swallowed.)

(Ulasyar, 2024: 387, 389).

Nourey da heecha kadey na zi

Da yo Pakhtun de kadey khkata pourta wreena.

(No other nation is getting displaced. The Pakhtun continues to be caught in a vicious cycle of displacement.)

Da Sahar bada pa aram za

Da Pakhtunkhwa ghruna zakhmi di khoog ba sheena.

(The morning wind must blow slowly. The hills of Pakhtunkhwa are wounded and would start aching).

Sola ba wran Watan ke rashi

Da khawro laandey zwanan berta na razeena.

(Peace may return to the deserted *Watan* but those who have gone to graves due to war would never come back).

(Ulasyar, 2024: 350-357).

The thematic, temporal and spacial selection of sampling of *Tappa* above makes them eligible for some limited level of generalisation with regards to the constructed threads of discourses of Pashtun's worldview, cultural identity, sociocultural consciousness, social relations and nationhood in *Tappa*.

One of the significant points that emerges from the above selection of and discussion on Tappa is the fact that this folkloric genre is neither fixed, nor frozen in time and place. *Tappa* most often contravenes the code of honour conceived to have caused internecine wars, agnatic rivalries, revenge, and repression on women. Description, explanation and interpretation of *Tappa* clearly indicate that Pashtun identity and sociocultural consciousness defined through fixed and frozen narratives by the colonial discursive structure is misplaced, misguided and interest-driven.

The worldview of the Pashtuns reflected in the text, texture and discourse practices of the above selected *Tappa* reveals modes and shades of aesthetics, intellectual investment in recognising ontology of being, imaginative potency to interact with nature, virility for the celebration of diversity of collective life, and an indigenous creative vigour for expression of social relations. The natural urge for collective and individual survival and growth finds its finest manifestation in Pashto *Tappa*. The mythological and historical allusions in *Tappa* open a widow to rethink construction of the fixed, static, undifferentiated, homogenous, unilinear and boxed collective origin of the Pashtuns mostly constructed and perpetuated during the subjugation of the Mughal empire and colonisation of the British empire.

Tappa illuminates on the process and structure of gender construction through registering unrestrained communication of women's passions, desires, imagination and thoughts which have been conceived and permeated to be taboos. Women are reflected in *Tappa* to have free and unshackled agency of sharing the sociocultural universe of the Pashtuns. The hegemonised construction of the code of honour defined by wars, rivalries, revenge and antagonisms is quite openly challenged in *Tappa*. The extreme abhorrence to wars, Talibanisation, displacement and checkposting have been effectively reflected in *Tappa* as one observes the gradual shift in the production, consumption and distribution of sociocultural discourses revealed in Pashto *Tappa* in the form of representing wars as a devouring monster.

The Pashtun sociocultural consciousness as evinced in *Tappa* carries a territorially located and historically situated construction of *Watan* (land). The ownership of *Watan*, standing for *Watan* and the pride due to *Watan* are astonishingly paralleled in comparison of leaving *Watan* and feeling alienation in other lands in the form of *Musafari* in *Tappa*. *Abasin* (The Indus) as a symbol of growth and fertility of *Watan* adds to the ideational energy of the discourse of *Watan*. The term of doing *Pakhto* complements the intensive and extensive aspects of the discourse of sociocultural consciousness of constructing ethnonational identity. Resistance against the subjugation by Mughal empire is expressed through the term *Mughalwala* and the metaphorical comparison of *Mughals* with the dragon. Discursive confrontation with the British colonialism and yearning for collective freedom has been

mingled with the discourse of honour in *Tappa*. Wars, Talibanisation, checkposting and displacement have been expressed in utter disgust in the contemporary *Tappa*.

It may be quite an exciting intellectual experience for young researchers to explore the universe of meanings in the process of unpacking semantics and social semiotics of individual and sets of *Tappa* through comparative study of textual variance, thematic variance, and collating thematic similarities to reveal stylistics of texts as "texts in their ideational functioning constitute system of knowledge and belief". The researchers in anthropology, archaeology, sociology, political economy, cultural studies, linguistics, literature and history may carry out studies to uncloak the hitherto veiled body of *Tappa*, the task which is yet to be accomplished. This kind of study "requires attention to textual forms, structure and organization at all levels; philosophical, grammatical, lexical and higher level of textual organization in terms of exchange systems (the distribution of speaking turns), the structure of argumentation and generic (activity type) structure" (Fairclough, 1995: 7).

IX- Consciousness, Identity and Gender Construction in *Pakhtunwali*

The subject of Pashtun ethnonational identity and sociocultural consciousness has remained a site of active contestation for a long time. Divergent, contradictory and paradoxical claims have been made regarding the fragments that constitute the whole of *Pakhtunwali/Pashtunwali* mostly defined through fixed, frozen and static characteristics of "*Melmastia* (hospitality), jirga (councils), *purda* (seclusion), masculinity and virility, sexuality, dominance and patriarchy—poly segmentary and acephalous organisation—admiration and recognition by others— (Barth, 1969, 122-123)". *Pakhtunwali* has been fixed as "unencapsulated Pakhtun society revolving around concept of *Nang* (honour) as opposed to Pakhtun groups ordering their social organisation around *Qalang* (taxes and rents) that imply encapsulation, hierarchy and deviance from the Pakhtun ideal type" (Ahmad, 1980: 24).

This discourse is qualified a bit more in the claim that agnatic rivalry and women chastity are reflected as expression of *Nang* principle (Ahamd, 1980: 202) and through the additional traits like "*Melmastia* (hospitality); *Badal* (revenge); and *Nanavat*i, (submission or asylum)" (Ginsburg, 2011:101).

While drawing boundaries of ethnic identity of the Pashtuns and while discussing four geographical, ecological and cultural streams of the Pashtuns and their identity distribution, Barth (1969) is of the view that "in central belt of barren hills running through most of the country are found villages of mixed agriculturalists organised in mixed egalitarian patrilinear descent with an acephalous political form" (Barth, 1969: 120). Barth thinks that in favoured mountainous areas and broader plains, political forms are largely based on segmentary organisation of "Pathan" descent groups, in some places in acephalous systems, elsewhere are integrated in quasi feudal systems within the prevailing states subject to bureaucratic administration.

Barth thinks that some sectors of the Pashtuns live as administrators, traders, craftsmen and labourers in the towns and cities as integrated parts of the two states. Yet another sector of the Pashtuns in the south lives a pastoral nomadic life politically organised partly as clans and alliances of clans with great autonomy while some groups, Barth thinks, practice extensive labour and trading migrations which bring some groups and individuals far out of the "Pathan" country. According to Barth's opinion, such diversities in lifestyle do not appear to impair the

"Pathan's" self-image as an ethnic group with social and distributional boundaries. Barth concludes that members of this society select only certain cultural traits. Borrowing from Olaf Caroe, Barth describes these traits as patrilineal descent, Islam and Customs. He goes on to expound that "the value orientation is based on male autonomy, egality, self-expression and aggressiveness summarised under the concept of honour (*Izzat*)" (Barth, 1969: 120). Barth (1969) asserts that the Pashtun's native expression of self-image is expressed through "three institutions for value orientation: *Melmastia* (hospitality), jirga (councils) and *purda* (seclusion)" (Barth, 1969: 122-123) which, according to him, reflect masculinity and virility, sexuality, dominance and patriarchy, poly segmentary and acephalous organization.

Keeping in view the above anthropological comaritive analysis by Barth, his statement that "the most characteristic feature of Pathan values lies in giving primacy to autonomy (and that) this identity can be sustained only if it can be consummated moderately successfully" (Barth, 1969: 132). This may actually be understood to mean that the identified characteristic of autonomy would only be proved to be consummated when the Pashtuns are able to maintain their self-image through the undifferentiated operationalisation of the fixed values of patriarchy, hospitality, jirga and seclusion of women. But when he says that "urbanisation has changed the Pathan culture and the organisational relevance it is given" (Barth, 1969: 134), he not only contradicts himself but confesses an unfixed and unfrozen construction of ethnic identity.

Moreover, the most characteristic feature of autonomy that Barth (1969) expounds has rationally led to the conclusion that the Pashtuns abhor all kinds of authority, meaning thereby, that the Pashtuns are unable to develop a system of governing themselves due to their innate characteristic features. This reductionist view of the Pashtuns as an ethnonational entity inadvertently justifies their colonisation by distant or neighbouring powers.

Borrowing from Caroe, Barth (1969) describes these traits as patrilineal descent, Islam and customs and make these traits as the unambiguous criteria for ascription to the ethnic group. Fixed, frozen and fraught with fetishism refuted by Pashtuns in folklore and myths, this representation of Pashtuns' self-image and identity seems to have provided rational foundation for the studies on the Pashtuns, especially studies on Pashto proverbs. Generalisation on limited sampling is carried out by Barth (1969) with authoritative tone in astounding audacity. The denial of choice of the Pashtuns' individual and collective self to retain, amend, or transform characteristics of their cultural, ethnic and ethnonational identity is strikingly explicit in the expositions of the identity construction of the Pashtuns as defined by Caroe (1956) and Barth (1969). The fixed, frozen and absolutely generalised characteristics have been expounded with natural fluency without allowing even a shred of doubt to rethink the absolutely generalised characteristics defined for the Pashtuns by 'others.'

Following almost similar disquisition with little variations, Ahmad (1980) reconstructs the fixity of identity discourse of the Pashtuns in terms of *Nang* and *Qalang*. Pashtuns, as he asserts, is divided into "unencapsulated Pakhtun society revolving around concept of *Nang*" (honour) and the "groups ordering their social organisation around *Qalang* (taxes and rents)" which, he thinks, implies "encapsulation, hierarchy and deviance from the Pakhtun ideal type" (Ahmad, 1980: 24). Repostulating the orientalist paradigm of understanding the Pashtuns' social organisation in terms of operative lineage of a subsection of clan, socially relevant universe of a particular 'tribe' and the phyletic boundary that defines him as a Pashtun, Ahmad

(1980) thinks that the Pashtuns are segmentary 'tribes' (Ahmad, 1980: 81) as has already been expounded by Thorburn (1876), Caroe (1956) and Barth (1969).

Ahmad (1980) has made some minor additions that the "unity of *Pakhtunwali* and Islam is symbolised and expressed in village life by the physical juxtaposition of the mosque and the hujra…the two institutions are the focus of life in every settlement and village" (Ahmad, 1980: 106). This postulation leaves one to wonder whether this "physical juxtaposition" actually exists if spacial and temporal sampling of the eastern, western, northern, southern and central regions of the Pashtuns is taken into consideration. Ahmad (1980) has also identified "non-Pakhtun groups among the "Pakhtuns' as 1- Mian Mullah and saintly; and 2- occupational groups" (Ahmad, 1980: 160). Once again, one is left wondering about the criteria Ahmad (1980) has developed for "non-Pakhtuns" among the "Pakhtuns" and the sampling to verify generalisation of such a fixed criterion for being a Pakhtun in the Pakhtun society. Ahmad seems to have attested the orientalist and colonial fixity and fetish nature of "agnatic rivalry" and "women chastity as expression of *Nang* principle" (Ahamd, 1980: 202) in the "ideal type" of the Pashtun identity and social organisation.

Both Barth (1969) and Ahmad (1980) concur on the construction of fixed, frozen and static nature of the Pashtun identity and social organisation which can be easily traced back to Elphinstone (1815), Thorburn (1876) and Caroe (1956). Almost all of these studies suffer from methodological and analytical flaws and logical fallacies. The selected sampling of research participants and respondents have been unduly generalised. In the case of Barth (1969), it was data from only the selected areas of Swat and some of the adjacent areas which made the basis of his generalisation. Discursive textual practices and sociocultural practices even in the selected areas have been left out in interpretation of the collected data. He has founded his conclusion on Caroe (1956) whose imperial political motives behind his interpretation of the Pashtuns are not unconcealed from anyone living in the Pashtun Land.

Ahmad (1980) seems to have borrowed largely from Elphinstone (1815), Thorburn (1876) and Caroe (1956) whose studies are based on arbitrary selection of areas, participants and respondents and whose frameworks are founded on the theoretical paradigm of the early era of modernism occurring simultaneously with the expansion of colonialism. They seem to have theoretically adopted the unilinear distribution of evolution of nations and ethnicities on the scale of barbarian, primitive, savage, noble savage, uncivilised and civilised. Furthermore, Ahmad's (1980) generalisation is based on the study of some selected groups of the now newly merged districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, particularly of district Mohmand. The proclivity of collecting data from a few geographical units in the Pashtun land and then resorting to absolute generalisations regarding Pashtuns from Amu Darya (The Oxus) to Abasin (The Indus) may be found in most of the scholars on Pashtuns.

Borrowing mostly from Barth (1969), Ahmad (1980) and Spain (1972), Ginsburg (2011) has maintained the framework of the colonial constructs about Pashtuns and *Pashtunwali*. He has based his assumptions of the normative anarchy, primitivity, statelessness and uncivilised nature of *Pakhtunwali* on the assertions that "though the Pashtun customs bear some similarity to customary laws of other Afghan tribes, they are distinctive both for their persistence and harshness…they form the primary normative rules in force in the region: governments in both Pakistan and Afghanistan have tenuous reach into the areas where many Pashtuns live and, in some cases, have no contact at all with these populations…Afghanistan

has never really had a central government with effective reach throughout the country, and Pakistani criminal and civil law does not apply, even nominally, in the so-called Tribal Areas of the Northwest Frontier Province" (Ginsburg, 2011: 90).

Ginsburg (2011) has unscrupulously depended on the Elphinstonian notion of describing the Pakhtuns as untrammelled, ungovernable, decentralised and disparate which he has described in terms of 'independent' and 'autonomous'. He perpetuates the discourse of constructing Pashtun identity through the assertions that *Pashtunwali* "conventionally described as comprising three key concepts: *Melmastia* (hospitality); *Badal*, (revenge); and *Nanavati* (submission or asylum) … Specific bad actions are accompanied by *nerkhs*, the recognised sanction to be imposed. These can consist of a fine or debt (*Por*) to be paid as compensation for liability (*tawan*) or of other penalties. The content of the *Por* can involve compensation in cash or women" (Ginsburg, 2011: 101).

After regurgitating the platitudes, Ginsburg (2011) then asserts his absolute generalisation that "more broadly, Pashtun practices violate virtually every provision of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the equality provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights" and that "there are two major normative problems with the *Pashtunwali*: One concerns the treatment of women, and the other concerns the high levels of violence associated with the region" (Ginsburg, 2011: 109). He proposes a 'revolutionary' measure saying that "my proposal is to domesticate the *Pashtunwali* by appearing to reinforce it. To do so requires the introduction of literacy and a recording system for jirga decisions" (Ginsburg, 2011:111).

Ginsburg's (2011) conclusions of the historically evolved political dispensation in Afghanistan and in the mountainous belts of the Pashtun Land are based on minimal synchronic data which exclude taking stock of the continuous and externally imposed ruptures created over the past several hundred years of subjugation and colonisation. Furthermore, Ginsburg's absolute and reductionist notions suffer from numerous factual errors. One cannot simply assume a coincidence of findings in Ginsburg (2011). The 'findings' of the characteristics of *Pakhtunwali* and the Pashtun ethnonational identity were constructed long ago through a consistent perpetuation of the imperial epistemology. This kind of interpretation has been historically geared towards justification for the use of military and kinetic power for colonisation and occupation.

While Shukla's (2015) observations in the last section of his article seem to be based on concrete evidence and plausible logic, his understanding of the Pashtuns' identity and sociocultural consciousness is largely founded on the assumptions and discourses constructed in the era of Mughal subjugation and the British colonisation and then advertently or inadvertently perpetuated by a host of experts and intellectuals. Borrowing from Ahmad (1980), Shukla expresses his opinion that "the Pashtuns are broadly categorised into two major groups—*Nang* and *Qalang*. The *Nang* (Highland Pashtuns) primarily reside in the mountainous regions, while the *Qalang* (Lowland Pashtuns) live in the fertile lowland areas. According to David B. Edward, *Nang* societies are "acephalous and segmentary in structure" and their codes of conduct are bound by traditional codes of honour. In contrast, *Qalang* Pashtuns are hierarchical and their social interactions are asymmetrical and structured primarily by the economics of patron-client relations" (Shukla, 2015:46). He explains it a bit more: "There are four vital components of *Pashtunwali — Ghairat* (honour), *Melmastia* (generous hospitality),

Nanavati (sanctuary or refuge) and *Badal* (revenge)". Shukla (2015) goes on to perpetuate that "in order to maintain a high sense of dignity and identity, all members of Pashtun society are required to give utmost priority to these codes". Shukla thinks that "*Ghairat* is the most important component, which according to Ahmed Rashid, the noted journalist, "is maintained by constant feuding revolving around *zar* (gold), *zan* (women) and *zamin* (land)" (Shukla, 2015: 49).

The divergence, contradictions and paradoxes in interpretations found in the analyses of what constitutes a Pakhtun appears to be due to the data collected from diverse units of the Pakhtun physical geography and social ecology. The discursive infrastructure of encapsulative, subjugative and colonial narratives to naturalise a common sense through ideational generalisations, fixity, and essentialism in defining Pakhtun culture, identity and sociocultural consciousness has been used unscrupulously. The inability of most of the analysists—Elphinstone (1815), Thorburn (1876), Caroe (1956), Barth (1969), Spain (1972), Ahmad (1980) and Lindholm (1996)—to reconcile the contradictions of their analyses may be identified in two fundamental streams of discourse construction.

First, the analysts perceived that the hegemonic discourses about the Pashtun identity and sociocultural consciousness have been constructed by the Pashtuns themselves. Second, the analysts implausibly detached themselves from the collective yearnings of the Pashtuns for re-cognition of their ethnonational identity, expression of their collective agency for re-distribution of resources for a better life, and their intense desire and consistent struggle for sovereign autonomous collective living. This consciousness operated through the collective desire of a consociational democratic governance. Failure to reconcile the apparent contradictions led the analysts to conceive fragments as the whole due to limited sampling and a complacent desire for jumping to conclusions. In short, anthropological, archaeological, geographical, historical, sociological, political and linguistic studies of the Pashtuns have been rarely attempted as a multidisciplinary project. Intellectual investment has been rarely made to find out ruptures in the collective cognition of the Pashtuns depriving them of exercising their own collective agency. These ruptures seem to have been caused by consistent and systematic subjugation by Mughal empire, colonisation and hegemony by the British empire, and later through necropolitics by states of the region.

A semblance of fixed, boxed and static 'tribalism', then neo-tribalism and then re-tribalisation was constructed through the rationing of selected data from selected places through selected tools of analysis to create a prominent straw man. The conclusions on the basis of the selected data largely suffer from factual errors. For example, Shukla (2015) claims that the Pashtuns are "estimated to be more than twenty-five million members, ethnic Pashtun constitute the largest tribal group of the world" ((Shukla, 2015: 45) while Ginsburg (2011) asserts "the Pashtuns are the ethnic group of some forty million that occupies a large swath of territory across Afghanistan and Pakistan that has never been completely integrated into a state" (Ginsburg, 2011: 89). The most probable estimate of Pashtun populations documented by Abubakar Siddique (2014) in his *The Pashtun Question: The Unresolved Key of Pakistan and Afghanistan Future* is 50 million in 2014.

Recently, three young researchers (Aziz, Ali & Khan, 2021) from the universities of Islamabad carried out an interesting qualitative research project on the viewpoints of the Pashtun women regarding the code of *Pashtunwali* on a selected sample from the districts of

Karak, Charsadda and Swat of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Amidst the hackneyed studies previously carried out mostly based on the paradigms developed by orientalists of the colonial era, this research study is a breath of fresh air. Besides dismantling most of the stereotyping of the Pashtun culture and ethnonational identity, the study has also deconstructed widespread imposed narratives about Pashtun women. The study reveals that "*Pashtunwali* is not rigid and static but dynamic and transformative in nature. *Pashtunwali* as a symbolic framework is adaptable. It has become evident that *Pashtunwali* can be utilised, moulded, developed, and deconstructed with the passage of time in Pashtun societies. Previous scholarship on *Pashtunwali* has focused only on fixed and constructed notions of the Pashtuns' ethnic identity, jirga system, authority, and dominant values of *Pashtunwali* such as hospitality, honour, revenge, and rivalry, etc., at length and ignored the transformative perspective of *Pashtunwali*" (Aziz, Ali & Khan, 2021: 207).

Nature, formation and function of cultural and ethnonational identity, and nationhood have remained a site of ideational contestation for anthropologists, linguists, historians, sociologists and political economists for a long time. This contestation is manifest in the development of primordialist, modernist and enthnosymbolist approaches to ethnic, cultural and national identity formations. It will be worthwhile to synthesise potent constituent parts of primordial, modernist and enthnosymbolist approaches with insights from the post-modernist, postcolonial and poststructuralist paradigms for understanding ethnonational identity, sociocultural consciousness, and evolution of social relations of the Pashtuns.

Baumann (2004) has described the primordialist approach to ethnic and ethnonational identity in detail. He is of the view that "primordialists believe that ethnicity is a natural phenomenon with its foundations in family and kinship ties (Geertz 1963; Shils 1957); ethnicity emerges out of nepotism and reproductive fitness, narrowing down the social concept into biological terms" (Baumann, 2004:13). Primordial approach to ethnonational identity has taken two forms—the sociobiological and the cultural. The sociobiological form of primordialism as expounded by Pierre van den Berghe stipulates that ethnonational identities are expression of extended kinship "deriving ultimately from individual genetic reproductive drives" (Smith, 2009: 8). The process ultimately creates wider groups of 'inclusive fitness', beyond the extended family; these include ethnic groups and nations.

During transformation from extended family to ethnonational identity "biology is supplemented by culture, the recognition of affinities with others by means of cultural signs such as common food, dress, speech and customs". As the exponent of the theory, van den Berghe, has later supplemented his earlier analysis by a more specific theory of nations in terms of the rise of states exercising coercion within a given territory but this further weakens the derivation of nations from the biological substratum" while the "the cultural form of primordialism stipulates that although nationalism was oriented to the creation of a secular state order, ethnic groups and nations emerged from the cleavages created by the cultural givens" (Smith, 2009: 9).

The solely primordial approach to ethnicity has been quite convincingly refuted by several scholars pointing out that "primordialist approaches fail to consider the historically situated and culturally constructed nature of the very concepts that are central to their argument, most notably 'ethnic group' and 'nation'" (Baumann, 2004:13).

Consciousness, Gender and Identity
Khadim Hussain

Before dilating upon his theory of Ethnosymbolism, Athony D. Smith in his seminal work, *Ethno-Symbolism and Nationalism: A Cultural Approach*, (2009) gives a brief account of 'modernist approach' to ethnonational identity and then registers his critique. He summarises the modernist approach which include ":1. nationalism, the ideology and movement, is both recent and novel; 2. nations, too, are recent and novel; 3. both are the products of 'modernisation', the global movement of societies to the state of 'modernity'" (Smith, 2009: 6). In this framework, there is no question of finding roots of 'nation' and 'nationalism'. This framework also assumes that "the idea that nations are 'real' sociological communities, and not simply constructs of the analyst or discursive formations without enduring 'substance' " while according to "Deutsch, Gellner, Tom Nairn and others, nation is composed of discrete populations, a given territory, a distinct set of institutions and roles, and parallel, but unique, cultures" but "in this sense, the nation was a specific kind of sociological community, one on whose behalf leaders could mobilise its population to make sacrifices, including the ultimate sacrifice" (Smith, 2009: 7).

The second assumption of the modernist approach to ethnonational identity as Smith elaborates is that "nations might not possess ethnic 'navels', but there had to be some elements, including territory, to make it possible to differentiate a given population from others and bind it together…following Herder, language was often the favoured cement, but a pre-existing state tradition could also provide the necessary glue…so, despite a certain strident denial of pre-existing community, the modernists' 'modern nation' was not entirely devoid of ancestral materials on which to work" (Ibid).

Though modernist perspective has contributed to the concepts of sociological realism, historical embeddedness and collective political action but it overlooks the fact that "the nation (and ethnonational entity) is a relationship of temporally deep and territorially bounded but translocal nativity, and examples of this relationship can be found long before the French Revolution, extending as far back as ancient Egypt and Israel" (Smith, 2009: 9). While rejecting all mega narratives, the post-modernists, on the other hand, hold that nation is ultimately a fiction engineered by elites constructing values and traditions to achieve social control "as Hobsbawm and Ranger had claimed, or, taking their cue from Anderson, as a novel form of 'imagined community', a discursive formation of linguistic and symbolic practices" (Smith, 2009: 12).

This is beyond one's comprehension to see how Hobsbawm, Ranger and Anderson might have taken physical territory, historically situated entity, socially functional groups of population and culturally bounded people as only "imagined communities" or "discursively and linguistically constituted ideas". Numerous scholars, including Smith (2009), have demonstrated that global market might have broadened ethnic composition of several western states but has in fact reinvigorated nation and nationalism instead of attenuating it.

Another interesting paradigm for understanding ethnicity, nation, nationhood and nationalism that needs to be taken into consideration is ethno-symbolism which converges with the modernist paradigm in acknowledging the fact that ethnonational entities and nations are concrete sociological communities, in conceiving nations as dynamic purposive communities of action, and in recognising that nations are historical communities embedded in specific historical and geo-cultural contexts (Smith, 2009). But "where modernists tend to downplay ethnic ties, ethno-symbolism regards ethnic identities and communities as crucial for the

formation and persistence of nations" as "nations may be partly forged by political institutions, over the long term they require ethnocultural resources to create a solidarity community, mainly because of the critical importance for a sense of national identity of subjective dimensions" and "important as are economic, political and military developments, it is the inner changes and reinterpretations that are so critical for the shaping and persistence of nations" (Smith 2009: 21).

The modernist claim of origination of nations from the early 18th century appears to be an outright oversimplification of the complex interplay of cultural values, historical situatedness, ethnic identity, social community and purposive activity as subjective drivers for nationhood, and economy, political institutions, juridical-legal infrastructure, sovereignty of power and group interests as objective manifestations of the nationhood.

While summarising the primordial, modernist and ethnosymbolist approaches to ethnonational identity and formation of nation, nationality, nationhood and nationalism, Leoussi & Grosby (2007) have pointed out an important implication of "overly deterministic, whether historical or sociobiological, accounts of nationality, where the existence of one form of the nation is presented as a necessary, uniform result of either the 'historical forces' of 'modernity' (as in the work of Gellner, Anderson and Hobsbawm) or our biological drives (as in the work of van den Berges), and where the 'engineers' are elites manipulating or inventing traditions to further one's interest, for example 'power' in the form of the state, the market, or the 'inclusive fitness' of kinship, depending upon the analyst" because "such accounts minimise, if not altogether eliminate, what is crucial to the existence of the nation: its meaning to its members such that the nation is, as Smith has rightly put it, 'a community of history and destiny'" as we find in "Herder's observation: the fact that any nation can be only relatively stable precisely because of this centrality of meaning to its existence" (Leoussi & Grosby, 2007:2).

The problem to articulate an ethnonational identity seems to be academically rooted in how to reconcile the potent biological, social, cultural, historical and states' institutional components of the same idea. Culture is an amorphous idea expressed through sociocultural practices of a people which may certainly have correspondence with biological ecology but not in an exclusive manner. Perhaps the problem of articulating an ethnonational identity can be reconciled if culture is conceptualised as the site where biological ecology, social functionality and state institutional development is evenly distributed and interact among themselves organically. The amorphous nature of culture is evident in the fact that it outlines both the discoursal and functional aspects of an ethnonational identity as it touches the boundaries of identity formation on the one end of its continuum and grasps complexity of imagination for expression of aesthetics on the other end of its continuum.

While perpetuation of diversity and celebration of culture are the basis for maintaining an ethnonational identity, culture's 'soft belly' invites perpetual engineering by the states, markets, religious radical groups and corporations. Cultural discourse, cultural epistemology and cultural practices are vulnerable to the discursive manipulation of the elites. Leoussi & Grosby (2007) ponder on the complexity of cultural construction and find out that variability and malleability are the characteristics of any particular nation over time and from one nation to another. This conceptualisation may apparently produce theoretical problems and the "problems are unavoidable, as this variability and malleability are features common to all forms

of human association because of the unavoidable presence of a developing multiplicity of meanings arising out of the heterogeneous pursuits of humanity" and "these different meanings coalesce into a complex, (which) are recognised, and thereby shared by a number of individuals who by doing so constitute a bounded collectivity" leading to "a bounded complex of unevenly shared, changing and heterogeneous meanings (what is then termed) as culture" (Leoussi & Grosby, 2007:1-2).

The biggest theoretical and practical problem with most of the studies on Pashtun ethnonational identity referred to above is that they assume the Pashtun 'ethnicity' and 'ethnonational identity' as essentially tribal, fixed, determined and primitive only. The political economy of misrecognition and cultural engineering—what Gramsci would term 'cultural hegemony' and coercive 'consent', and what Galtung would term as 'cultural violence'—has been advertently or inadvertently overlooked. Political economy of recognition is contingent on the discourses of sociocultural consciousness expressed through cultural practices and ethnonational claims stipulating ownership of resources, re-distribution of resources and the material basis for autonomous governance and sovereignty of power. This can only happen when objectification of the Pashtuns for regional and international strategic interests is brought to an end. Fanon (1986) has discussed this process in the case of Antillean society proclaiming it as a neurotic society because of the same reason of Re-Cognition and Mis-Cognition when he asserts that "Man is human only to the extent to which he tries to impose his existence on another man in order to be recognised by him" and goes on to conclude that "in order to win the certainty of oneself, the incorporation of the concept of recognition is essential" (Fanon, 1986: 216-217).

Another discernible gap in the studies on ethnicity, nation and nationalism of the Pashtuns may be observed in the fact that most of the scholarship frames problems of contestation among various elements presupposing an ethnicity and a nation with a state. Little attention has been given to the nations that are located in multi-national states like India, United States of America, Australia, South Africa, United Kingdom, Federal Republic of Germany, Pakistan and scores of others throughout the world. The pressure on ethnonational entity due to the efforts of striking a balance between ethnonational identity and the project of 'nation building' in the present international system needs to be studied in depth.

X- Conclusion

Setting aside the debate of primordalists, modernists and ethnosymbists, two undeniable facts in the contemporary world continue to determine nationhood globally. First, collective consciousness of a defined territory, collective identity of a community based on tangible and intangible culture, concomitant sense of historical situatedness inscribed on the collective memory of population for hundreds of years linked through ethnonational identity, dynamic social community, collective ownership of material resources, and sociopolitical institutions for exercising sovereignty of power. Second, presence of a political will expressed through organised struggle to master their own destiny and to govern themselves through their collective will and consociational political arrangement.

All the objective and discursive elements of the Pashtun ethnonational identity have resiliently persisted for at least the past fifteen hundred years without ruptures in the continuity of Pashtun sociocultural consciousness although their sovereign collective governance have been ruptured several times through political subjugation and colonisation. A collective

consciousness, albeit with diversity of regions and variation of ecology, of territorial boundaries tenaciously linked with historical situatedness and cultural boundedness; collective historical memories reflected and created through mutually constituted and constitutive discourses in myths, folklore, the ever floutingly expanding creative expression in music, poetry, fiction and drama; and the vigorous zeal of its overwhelming population across gender boundaries and across the so called configuration of class to locate theoretical and material roots of their current dispossession and disparate political condition caused and resulted by economic misery. The material basis, territorial consciousness of physical boundaries, a functional society, sociocultural consciousness and awareness of cultural identity have so far sustained the Pashtuns ethnonationally, culturally, historically, politically and economically.

Three significant Pashto novels—*Da Smasey Yaran* by Ustad Saaduddin Shpoon published in 2002, *David Jones* (previously titled as *Baghdadi Peer*) by Naseer Ahmad Ahmadi published in 2020 and translated by Dorkhanai Zahin for Lmar Media in 2023, and *Pradey* by Eimal Pasarley published in 2023—have explored the collective historical and contemporary memories, rooted in historical temporality, through their exquisite art, literary skills and overflowing imagination. *Da Smasey Yaran* (2002) maps out a village in the Pashtun Land ravaged by wars physically and influenced by the impact of war neurotically. I have used the terminology of collective delirium of the Pashtuns previously in this section which parallels with the artistic description of a community broken internally and externally due to continuous, long and imposed wars. The protagonists in the end of the novel demolish some of the traditions that stand in the way of their aspirations.

Baghdadi Peer (2020) or *David Jones* (2023) probes the chaos of social relations manifested in intercommunal and interpersonal break up of relations. The novel is synchronically and historically situated in a particular era—the second and third decade of the twentieth century. The discourses that caused this chaos and ruptures in social relations are externally constructed. The agents of the discourses ostensibly intend to bring the Pashtun Land under their subjugation. They devise strategies shrewdly, implement them effectively and succeed in permeating the externally constructed discourses with overwhelming results. The incisively artistic construction through the unembellished but stylistically unique style, *Baghdadi Peer* or *David Jones* unfolds cracks in social relations presupposing uninterrupted sociocultural consciousness.

Pradey (2023) (the other, estranged), through its expository uncontrived style, enunciates with incisive precision the emotive condition of displacement, dismemberment and alienation. Dislocated from his own land and bringing consistently to light the contrasting value system and social relations of the territorial ecology where he has been displaced, the protagonist adopts strategies of survival that causes unbearable instability in his neurotic and psychological systems. The protagonist continuously remains under severe pressure of anxious qualms of being alien (*Pradey*) and being unwanted. The agony of being 'supportless', being 'alone' and being 'without hope' demonstrates his unconscious awareness of his sociocultural location that he has been evicted from.

The Pashtuns have a vigorous tangible culture reflected in mass cultural institutions in the form of normative customs and gatherings, cultural practices like rituals and cultural traditional practices in some variations in almost all the communities of the Pashtuns—with no or little exception to urban/rural, southern/northern, eastern/western and settled/tribal

settlements of the Pashtuns. The productive culture of the Pashtuns is manifest in the prevalence of indigenous and modern skills that produce marketable products like footwear, dresses, dairy products, agricultural produce (tobacco, sugar, fruits & vegetables, honey, corn, etc), fabric and leather etc. The robust intangible and creative Pashun culture is demonstrated through its rich music, folklore, numerous styles of *Attanr* (traditional dance), a rich tradition of poetry, fiction, drama and numerous fine arts. The historical and comparative culture of Pashtuns is denoted in their growingly functional language with numerous dialects, and historical traditions with astonishing continuity. Dynamism of Pashto language can be gauged from the fact that it is now in operation in almost all digital fora, AI technology, mass media and social media around the globe.

The Pashtuns in their physical geography have been living comfortably and in alliance with scores of other cultural identities such as the Seraikis and Baloch in the south and the southwest, the Dardic communities, the Kalasha, the Tajik, the Uzbek, the Nuristanis and the Hazara in the north and north west, and the Hindko Awans in various parts of the same geography. They continue to mutually benefit from the diversity of cultural and lingual identities.

Despite the fact that the Pashtun land is historically situated, culturally bounded, socially functional, territorially broken in separate administrative units but ideationally and linguistically well connected, ecologically diverse but environmentally comfortable in most of the tracts of the land, materially resourceful and geographically connected with significant players on the world stage through proximity with Central Asia, the Middle East and Eastern Europe. The Pashtun Land, on the other hand, continues to be the battlefield of wars of attrition among regional states, and remain to be administratively broken, economically deprived of its resources, culturally stereotyped and politically handicapped to exercise their collective will through equitable representation in the affairs of the state. At the same time, stability among the states of the region and balance in the international political power play in the region may remain a distant dream until the Pashtun question in the region is resolved.

Bashir Matta (2016) in his lofty poetic style identifies four major causal categories that have created problems to the maintenance, distribution and sustenance of the Pashtun ethnonational identity and the Pashtuns' claim to resources and equitable and autonomous representation in the structure of governance of the state. First, diminution of inter-regional communication among Pashtuns that is causing temporal and spacial cleavages in their ethnonational identity (Matta, 2016: 155). Apparently, the Pashtuns have been compelled to sustain their collective being through the primordially oriented close kinship relations. The close kinship relations seem to preclude evolution and growth of Pashtun nationhood. Second, the Pashtun regions are cut off from one another as they are not connected with one another through metalled highways (Matta, 2016: 160). Neither are they connected through railroads. This shortcoming has recently been made for to a great extent through the expansion of information technology and social media. Third, the eastern neighbourhood of the Pashtuns that is having wealth and green pastures plays a melting pot for the ethnonational identity of the Pashtuns (Matta, 2016: 164). This transforms parts of the Pashtuns into what some scholars term as 'statist' Pashtuns—those coopted by the powerful sections of the state. Fourth, the Pashtuns are not linked with the rest of the world through seaways and ports (Matta, 2016: 165).

Some Pashtun scholars weigh up that the historically situated and long ethnonational peregrination of the Pashtuns have formed three categories of the Pashtuns in terms of their aspirations for tangible and intangible accomplishments (Devasher, 2022). The Statist Pashtuns who are more or less coopted by and melted into the state structures and consider this as an effective way to attain material and immaterial benefits for their ethnonational entity. Among these assimilated groups may also be included "the groups who live simply to feed themselves. Their population is spread across cities like Peshawar and Karachi, having moved from their villages due to militancy and the so-called war against terrorism. Those living in cities work as daily wage labourers, while in rural areas they work as rented labourers on lands or in small businesses" (Takkar, 2025). The Pashtunised Islamists who consider that they can achieve their autonomous ethnonational status through synthesising religion with their ethnonational identity so as to become a force to reckon with. The secular nationalists who believe in organised political struggle for debunking the discursive narratives of the state and for achieving long term constitutional guarantees for attaining material benefits for their ethnonational entity besides addressing the issues of misrecognition and resource distribution in both cultural ideational domains and in the domains of political structural arrangement of the state.

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