

## KINSHIP TIES IN PASHTU PROVERBS

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## Original Article

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**Abstract**

*This paper is designed to study the expression of kinship ties in Pashtu proverbs. As an integral part of Pashtun folklore, a proverb is generally cited in a conversation to convey a meaningful remark. The frequent use of proverbs in everyday discussion is to express 'veiled sentiments' of multiple forms which are less likely to be stated in a straightforward manner. In the great body of anthropological works on the Pashtuns, kinship ties are always studied in the broader context of their social, cultural and political functions. The present study, however, neither approves nor goes against the supposed functions of kinship ties. Instead, the work will look at the expression of such ties at the folklore level. It is argued that proverbs are primarily spoken to indicate the opposing nature and level of kinship ties. As affinal or blood relatives come into conflict, they do not go for physical violence directly. Alternatively, they choose proverbs as a battleground to resist and relegate rival counterparts. In order to complete the study, I have selected a number of Pashtu proverbs as units of analysis. Methodologically, this study is based on participant observation and semi-structured interviews as research tools. Through the use of these tools, I have made successful efforts to cover the all-encompassing features of proverbs. Among others, elderly men and women were especially targeted as they held a significant reservoir of proverbs. The field site was Tehsil Killa Saif Ullah in the northern part of Balochistan.*

**Keywords:** affinity, cross-cousin rivalry, consanguinity, extended family, kinship, proverbs,

**Introduction**

I met Yaro<sup>4</sup> at a local shop. He was living in the outskirts of the main city market. There, he belonged to a politically influential *kahole*<sup>5</sup> (family). The family held large tracts of agricultural and barren lands. By virtue of large landholdings, it wielded economic power too. Unfortunately, large landholdings did not necessarily decide issues in his favor because the family members were often involved in land disputes. Interestingly, Yaro did not hesitate to disclose land disputes within his family. Throughout the description, he referred to his rival cousins with insulting proverbial clues. In his portrayal of the cousins, he did not cite them auspiciously, and instead employed the term *tarbor* (cousin) which means an enemy when used in reference to certain proverbs such as, '*tarbor ta tyareymazhweydey*' (a snake in the sleeve), *agha zmatarbordey* (he is my cousin). The rancor and hate he expressed against them in such a disparaging manner drew my attention. Therefore, I decided to choose this topic for further inquiry and keenly observe kinship ties in proverbs.

Among the Pashtuns<sup>6</sup>, the common use of proverbs is to expose the socio-cultural and economic features of their lives. Essentially, the proverbs are used to express, for the most part,

<sup>4</sup>This is a pseudo-name. For privacy concerns, all the local names are pseudo-names and italicized too.

<sup>5</sup>*Kahole* is locally called an extended family. *Kahla* is the adjective of *kahole*. For more detail, see Pehrson, 1966

<sup>6</sup> The term Pashtun refers to Pukhtun or Pakhtun. Majority of anthropologists use the latter two terms. (It depends on the dialect of the Pashto language. See also the way of the Pathans by J.W. Spain).

cultural representation and social actions. Despite the sharing of past experiences and transmission of cultural knowledge through proverbial statements (Mullett, 1972:83), the proverb speakers do not mean to fully buttress the ideas they express in proverbs. Instead, equally important, they criticize centuries-old traditions, cultural systems, and tribalism.

In order to profoundly study the visible features of Pashtun cultural life in proverbs, Bartlotti (2000) has conducted extensive work on proverbs and calls our attention to think more on how Pashtuns represent their understanding of Islam and *Pashtunwali* (code of conduct) through the medium of proverbs. In the beginning of his work, he raises a simple but very important question of, “what can we learn about Pashtun understandings of Islam in relation to Pashtunwali from an examination of the content, meaning and usage of Pashto proverbs” (Bartlotti, 2000: 2). His concerns regarding proverbs are largely raised and covered by Sanauddin (2015), by asserting that, “proverbs as a genre of folklore are discourses of patriarchal ideology... if one wants to explore the historical image of women in oral traditions, proverbs are an ideal subject” (Sanauddin, 2015: 10). Their major themes indicate that Pashtun proverbs are the actual markers of their social actions. In other words, whatever is taking place at the practical ground is largely indicated in proverbs.

On the contrary, some of the Pashtun proverbs are found to be extremely critical of existing cultural systems and power relations. In these proverbs, patriarchy, social norms and values and/or even religion are substantially contested and negotiated concepts. Pashtun proverbs, on the other hand, cannot be totally considered to be the real markers of their social actions because some of the social actions are barely defied in practice, yet they are challenged at the folklore level. I reported a few commonly spoken proverbs in which the speakers bluntly questioned some actions of what they could not imagine to either allow or ignore in practice. As one of the proverbs states that, *tursalpatkyanuyuteekraeybeydey* (a single scarf is better than a hundred turbans). In this proverbial statement, women are given primacy over men. This saying is most often proclaimed in a situation where a sharp comparison is made between a wicked man and an honorable woman. In reality, the women are barely considered equal to men but in the mentioned proverb they are made equal to men in certain circumstances. In another proverb, *'zrandaka da plarvi, kho pa waar vi'* (while using a machine, everybody must use it on his turn). This proverb too informs the reconstitution of equality and egalitarianism which is ideally present among Pashtuns.

Pashtu proverbs provide a space to those who are socially weak and politically ineffective. In the context of asymmetric power relations, the primary function of proverbs is to challenge hegemonic discourses. As the politically powerless people cannot openly challenge the prevailing hegemony of strong individuals, they choose proverbs to show an expression of anger and resistance. In order to counter a hegemony, Khan & et al (2020) are of the view that those who live under strict state surveillance, find alternatives to express what they cannot state publicly. Their study is unique in covering ‘informal spaces’ the citizens utilize to challenge the hegemonic narrative against their community and promote their own political claims. Similarly, Lila Abu Lughod (2016), in the context of strict social pressure in Arab society, claims that the socially oppressed, particularly women use poetry to express their ‘veiled sentiments’. In comparison to the mentioned works, proverbs too play the similar role of giving due spaces to those who are either powerless or do not find other ways of expression or resistance.

In Pashtun kinship ties, rivals are always the cousins. They are often involved in cross-cousin rivalries (Barth 1959). Despite sharing a common descent, the land remains the major bone

of contention among cousins because this is the land which gives an individual social identity and economic leverage. With reference to land, Lindholm (1986) is of the view that, "One who has no land is in effect, no longer a Pukhtun" (Lindholm 1986, pp.56-57). Meanwhile, a family or a lineage becomes a boiling pot which is constantly vulnerable to on-going disputes between the dominant and dominated cousins. This is always the difference in power relations which decides mutual relationships among cousins. Therefore, weak cousins come in confrontation with powerful counterparts. In effect, the former cannot afford to achieve desired goals by resorting to physical violence. Instead, he chooses proverbs to compete against cousins by presenting them negatively.

With the aim of analyzing kinship ties at the folklore level, this study will take proverbs as a unit of analysis. A key question of how kinship ties are expressed in Pashtu proverbs is put under consideration. It is argued that the performative role of Pashtu proverbs is to reflect the nature and degree of prevailing relationships among consanguine and affine relationships. For instance, if distant relatives are on good terms and conditions, the proverbs must reflect them auspiciously; by the same token, if close relatives are rivals, their rivalry is noticeably expressed in proverbs. In other words, proverbs are a battleground where anger, resistance, and rivalry is expressed.

### **Theoretical background**

The deep understanding of Pashtun folklore is inadequate without giving due attention to the study of proverbs. This is especially the case for the reason that proverbs are the underlying signs of people's character, culture, and interaction (Webster, 1982: 173). Many anthropologists (Hopkins & Marsden, 2013; Lindholm 1982, Grima 1992, Ahmed 2012, and Barth 1959) have paid considerable attention to describe the visible features of Pashtun culture and society. In Pashtun social structure, the role of the mosque, the political significance of *hujra* (guest house), and the mediating role played by leaders in conflict resolution, have considerably gained an anthropological focus. But how these roles and practices reflect their effects in oral literature, or how the latter more or less sustain existing practices intact, is not formally taken into account.

Mieder (2004) calls our attention to this lapse by dividing the domain of proverb studies into two mutually exclusive areas: paremiography (collection of proverbs) and paremiology (study of proverbs). For him, the mere collection of proverbs does not entail the history, structure, function, and more importantly the context of proverbs (Mieder, 2004: xii). Bartlotti (2000) is closely in concurrence with his arguments by stating that, "a number of collections of Pashto proverbs have been made (arranged alphabetically, topically or with brief annotations), there has been relatively little study of Pashto proverb content, and no analysis of Pashto proverb performance" (Bartlotti, 2000: 01). At the local level too, untiring efforts are made to collect a cluster of vanishing proverbs but with the extant lack of considerable attention to the proper context, origin, and history of proverbs. In their non-academic collections, the collectors such as (Kakar, Zaland, Deedar, & Lewal) have made visits to far-flung areas where they tried to access elderly men and women for proverb collection. But despite having a bunch of proverbs, they do not delve into the history and context of proverbs. This lapse can largely be attributed to lack of certain disciplinary skills in folklore studies.

Understandably, proverb users have two fundamental rationales in mind while citing a proverb. Firstly, they use proverbs to express what they cannot state in a straightforward way. Secondly, proverbs are a tool to keep blame at bay from an expected reaction. Meanwhile, the function of proverbs, for users, is to express rancor, hate, and emotions in a way which is moderately acceptable. With this point in mind, Yankah (1989) asserts that proverbs, during discussion, are an intervention by a third person (Yankah (1989:326). In the same way, Arewa and

Dundes (1964) state that, "like other forms of folklore, proverbs may serve as impersonal vehicles for personal communication" (Arewa & Dundes, 1964). Correspondingly, Penfield (1981: 312) is accurately using the term 'depersonalization' for proverb quoting. In sum, proverbs are 'pregnant with meaning(s)' (Taylor, 1985; Lue et al., 2004; Litovkina, 1996).

In Pashtun society, proverbs can simply be found in textbooks, radio, television dramas, markets and households, among both men and women (Bartlotti, 2006: iii). Interestingly, Bartlotti (2006) privileges only men and women for having a big treasure of proverbs, as well Sanauddin (2015), who gives primacy to 'elders and men over the younger and women' and calls this a major source of influence (Sanauddin, 2015: 13) because the intelligent person, among Pashtuns, is the one who uses more proverbs in conversation (Khattak, 2006: x). On the other hand, children are not encouraged to use proverbs especially in conversation with elderly men and women. As proverbs are by all accounts replete with truth, logic and common sense (Sanauddin, 2015: 12), elderly men and women in their counter-arguments may not be able to respond to the children wittily.

Hamilton (1987) claims that proverbs are reflective of the 'ideological struggles' between the dominant and dominated; if proverbs are investigated more deeply, they can be perceived to be voices from below (Hamilton, 1987: 67). His findings are more or less concerned with power relations. As other genres of Pashtun folklore, the voices from below can largely be found in proverbs. There, the *kamzorey* (powerless) express anger and resistance against the powerful ones. In this sense, the function of proverbs is quite similar to what James C. Scott (1985, 1989, 1990) calls "weapons of the weak", "everyday resistance", "infra-politics", and "resistance in disguise".

In kinship ties, the relatives are connected to one another by a common descent. Due to Pashtun notions of pride and honor, there remains an ideal type of equality among all blood relatives. This is largely informed by calling themselves the descendants of a common ancestor and their social standing and economic achievements are not attributed to birth but result in individual efforts (Glatzer, 2002: 270). In the Pashtun social hierarchy, the concept of honor barely allows any asymmetry among individuals. This is especially the case among cousins of a common decent. According to this concept, each cousin is bound by his honor to be equal to his cousins. Consequently, their mutual relationships are perceived, for the most part, on egalitarianism. Sholz (2002) is of the view that the Pashtun social structure is closely similar to "acephalous societies" (Scholz, 2002: 58).

Therefore, instead of declaring a war against rival cousins, they choose proverbs to represent grudges and the degree of social relationships. This does not mean that proverbs are used by oppressed cousins as tools of resistance. Everyone is equally allowed to express his grievance, pain, and feelings in proverbs. In other words, the usage of proverbs is not exclusively entertained by those who lack political power; even rival groups can make the use of proverbs to negotiate with rival cousins. As mentioned earlier, proverbs contain a wealth of information which can largely cover the social and economic lives of Pashtuns, especially cousins.

### **Kinship in proverbs**

In Tehsil Killa SaifUllah, kinship ties are primarily of two types: consanguinity and affinity. In consanguinity, the individuals are connected to one another through blood and a common

descent. By virtue of this commonality, the relatives share mutual duties and obligations. In affinity, individuals or group of families are linked by the sharing of women in marriages (Ullah, 2021: 76). Among Pashtuns, the study of kinship has gained scholarly attention; but how to analyze the reflection of these ties at the folklore level, is missing to a greater extent. By keeping this in mind, I have successfully collected some of the locally spoken proverbs. Those proverbs are analyzed on the basis of a small number of stories to deeply delve into the context of proverb use. The following section will focus on the significance of proverbs as tools to reflect existing kinship ties.

1. *Watarbora ta be wrora ma sey, wawror ta be zoyamasey*

(My brother is closer to me than my first degree cousin; but my son is closest than the latter.)

When I made a visit to RodhJogezai, I met a lot of people for interviews. There, I conducted multiple interviews with elderly men and women. One day, when I woke up early in the morning, an elderly woman from the hosting family brought breakfast. During the meal, she abruptly asked the reasons for my stay over there. In reply I mentioned kinship ties as the main focus of my study, which piqued her interest and she pronounced the quoted proverb. Later on, I requested her to tell me the use and meaning of the proverb.

This proverb is more equivalent in content but partially in meaning to a popular Arab saying, 'I, against my brothers. I and my brothers against my cousins. I and my brothers and my cousins against the world'. This Pashtu proverb is more exclusive as it restrains the scope of ties inside the *kahole* (extended family). In this proverb, an effort is made, conditioned by prevailing relationships, to shrink the frontiers of ties to the son. In comparison, the Arab saying is more inclusive as it include all Arabs.

The use of this proverb is largely dependent on the mercurial nature of social relationships among family members. If relations are friendly, they are reflected amicably in proverbs, but as cousins come into conflict, they are required to redefine distances in social relationships. According to this proverb, when disputes occur among cousins, ego is required to gain support from those whose category is defined by blood in the genealogical tree. For example, if the conflict occurs with the members of another family, an individual has to gain the support of his first degree cousins, brothers, and sons. But, if the same ego is in dispute with second-degree cousins, he has to depend on support from brothers and sons. In an extreme case, when a dispute occurs within his own *kahole*, he has to call upon the son for whatever help.

Additionally, this proverb entails two important elements: 'friendship' and 'enmity'. In the Pashtun cultural world, these two concepts are the key factors for informing and regulating kinship ties (Ullah, 2021:76). Among the people of the research locale, a conflict is one of the key barometers which, in one way or the other, decides the level of closeness and distance in blood relations. In tribal conflicts such as land disputes, revenge-taking, and killing, it is the *khpal* (own) of whatever degree who has to support the blood relatives whereas the *pradaey* (outside) is not bound by any rule to render any kind of services. For instance, if a conflict occurs between two *kaholes* of the same lineage, the members of each *kahole* are obligated by descent to direct their allegiance towards their own relatives. But, if both rival *kaholes* are in conflict with an outside lineage, they become a single core to defend whatever is at stake. In this situation, an enmity with outside lineage brings friendship inside the *kahole*.

A conflict 'outside' the *kahole* is generally understood to be a blessing in disguise. According to the nature of such conflicts, relatives tend to always unite despite having intra-family

conflicts; because they are bound by the common descent to cohesively combat the outsider. As commonly perceived, a conflict creates chaos, widens distance, and more importantly disturb ties within a family, but at the same time, it unites individuals and a group of families together. The theme of this statement is based on a story that Abdul Hadi narrated in the following manner.

We have a small lineage in the larger branch of Kakar<sup>7</sup> tribe. Our lineage consists of seven *kaholes*. Despite the minute structure of our lineage, we are stuck in perpetual conflict with our cousins. The bone of contention is the land. Also, we are poor economically, whereas our rival (cousins) are relatively well-off. They do not consider us their equals. But, as one of our rival cousins killed a man from outside the tribe, we became united without any prior settlement. His killing became the source of spontaneous mediation (Fieldwork: 05/09/2017, Killa SaifUllah).

Beside land as a major bone of contention, Hadi's family members were often involved in intra-family conflicts. Before the killing of a man by his rival cousin, the two families were not at good terms and conditions. They did not visit one another's households at the time of difficulty. In order to settle the dispute, they did have two available options. Firstly, they were supposed to call upon a mediator to get the dispute resolved. Secondly, either of the group had to surrender to the demands of the other. As the first option was not entertained yet, the second one was hardly possible since their honor did not allow them to submit. Without availing any of the options, the killing of a man became the major source of their mediation.

2. *Hagha da azizdeychesaharyakordurshkarawaey, aomashamyahore*

(Who is your relative? Whose house is visible and meal is accessible)

The local resident used this proverb in a meeting for the interview. After getting a formal consent from him, we met at a local restaurant. There, the discussion revolved around the role of kinship ties in local politics. In his discussion, the person used this proverb three times and then I asked him to tell the essence of the proverb. He did not mean to use it in the political context but with regard to the overall social organization.

The key object of this proverb is to elaborate the general patterns of village life. In a village structure, the living individuals or families are most probably the members of a single lineage. In some cases, they are migrants from nearby districts. Locally, they are called *Hamsaya* (neighbors) who are primarily asylum seekers. In order to promote and establish a family-like milieu in the village, the villagers use this proverb to call attention to share something in common. Since the neighbors do not share a common blood or descent with the local populace, this proverb speakers advise to keenly observe *gham-ao-shadi* (happiness and sadness). According to this concept, the villagers must be present at the time of difficulty and participate in joyful moments (Ullah, 2021: 76).

In a village setting, those who share a 'meal' and live together, for the most part, seem to be as members of a single family. The 'sharing of meal' and 'living together' does not mean to regularly eat at lunch and dinner, or live in a single household, rather, certain events are there where the villagers are culturally prescribed to participate for the sake of showing a level of closeness. For instance, on the very first morning of Eid-ul-Adha, villagers are supposed to come together in a village mosque. There, they are required to collectively break the fast. The basic function of this 'get together' is to share something with their fellow men. On the other hand, the

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<sup>7</sup> For more detail, see Fred Scholz, 2002.

concept of 'living together' also does not mean to share a common household in a village, instead, the village itself becomes a household in which the living individuals seem to be the members of a single family.

In this way, the sharing of food in mosques, wedding ceremonies, death anniversaries and living in a single village becomes the key symbols of unity. As mentioned earlier, all the villagers do not share a common blood, nonetheless the close observance of sharing meal and living in a village make them symbolically the members of a single family. At the folklore level too such as in this proverb, the speakers call everyone's attention to carefully attend to the custom of sharing and living. Not an alternative element can be found by the villagers to bring non-blood relatives together except sharing and living.

### 3. *Maatlaaskhpaliozhey la zi*

(The broken hand comes back to shoulder)

*Khpalba da marhkikhuwanmartadanaghwarzawi*

(After you are killed by your relative, your corpse will not be thrown in the open sky)

I captured this proverb in a tribal Jirga arranged for the settlement of a major dispute between two influential families. The tribal chief and headmen were equally involved in its mediation to bring the conflict to an end. Due to the nature of my topic, I participated to closely observe the initial arrangements of the Jirga. After the completion of all preliminary requirements, the mediators chose a particular day to bring the two rival parties to a forum. During the proceedings, I heard this proverb many times and therefore I wanted to deeply understand its meaning.

The local level debates about intra-tribe rivalries are replete with the continual mention of these two proverbs. Especially, where the conversation revolves around cross-cousin rivalry. Furthermore, these proverbs are commonly cited in tribal councils, mosques, and especially in the mediatory process of major conflicts. Apparently, the proverbs seem to give antagonistic connotations, but in reality they convey a positive meaning. The proverb users cite these proverbs where they wish and expect a conflict resolution. So, there is a kind of advice in the mention of the proverbs.

While attending a *Jirga*<sup>8</sup> (the tribal council where major conflicts are resolved), I came across the recurrent usage of these proverbs. In the resolution of a major conflict between two tribally influential families, the tribal chief arranged a tribal council locally called *Jirga*. He was not alone in this whole process, rather, the headmen of small tribes were equally involved in its arrangements. During the *Jirga*, the warring parties were asked first of all to briefly put their reservations before the audience. After the completion of their arguments, a religious cleric issued a religious provision in which he supplicated for an immediate end to the conflict. Finally, the key mediator directed the quorum to the concluding remarks. In their speeches, one of the leaders from the assassin's side used the first proverb twice in his argument. The religious cleric and the mediator too cited both the proverbs twice in their remarks. So, the use of these proverbs by each individual at this particular moment meant to wish an end to the existing conflict.

There are some other supplementary dictums similar in meaning and content to these proverbs. In essence, they do not fall in the domain of proverbs, but function as proverbs. For

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<sup>8</sup>For more detail, see Chaudhary 1999, and Lyon 2019.

instance, when the discussion is all about the importance of blood ties, the people state that, '*raghawaey mu nasta*' (we are stuck together). Another popular saying says that, '*na la kootsarakootstaaona be kootakootsta*' (we are at war when we get together, but friends when separate). These popular sayings are quite similar to what Lindholm (1982) says about the significance of blood ties in a lineage, "Even though one's turbur are, by definition, one's enemies, they also are the people one turns to in cases of external aggression (Lindholm, 1982: 62).

#### 4. *Tarbor da tyareymazhweydey*

(Cousins are snakes in sleeves)

This proverb is quite common in the daily conversation of people. When I made a visit to a nearby village, I met a tribal headman. He was involved in the mediation of small-scale disputes in the village. His own family had encountered numerous intra-tribe clashes. Before I could get his attention to kinship ties, the headman used this proverb in the context of cross-cousin rivalry. Further, I requested him to tell the actual meaning of the proverb.

This proverb is totally in line with the existing anthropological notion of cross-cousin rivalry among Pashtuns. A great body of anthropological works (Barth 1959, Lindholm 1986 & 1996, Ahmad 1972) are to a larger extent concerned with the subject matter of this proverb. Not a single scholarly study can be found which ignores cross-cousin rivalry in the Pashtun social structure. At the social level, the rivalry does not cause major disruptions in the structure of Pashtun kinship system but affect their social relations. Thus, the conflicting nature of such relationships are easily detectable in Pashtun proverbs. In order to substantiate the relevance of this proverb, a villager named Atta narrated his story in the following manner:

My father has one brother who has five sons. Ours is not an extended family. In 1986, one of our close relatives killed a distant relative. According to the local custom, we were compelled to flee the village. We migrated to a nearby district. There, we spent seven years. Besides migration, we were under the constant surveillance of police. Finally, the conflict got resolved in 1992 and we came back to the village. In 2002, a gun was stolen from my cousin's house. Without any evidence, he lodged an FIR against my father's brother's son. He was taken by the Police and sent for remand for three days. Without finding any evidence, he was released from police custody. The one who lodged an FIR against my cousin was the same person for whom we migrated to a nearby village and sacrificed. Furthermore, I can only conclude that cousins are snakes in sleeves (Fieldwork: 12/03/2018, Killa SaifUllah).

In this case study, Atta concluded his story by stating this proverb. Besides this, there are other popular maxims which refer to cousins in a derogatory manner, for example, '*tarbor, tarbordey*' (cousin is cousin). Ostensibly, there does not exist a pejorative term in the proverb, but refers to a cousin in an insulting manner. In effect, the social meaning of this proverb contains veiled anger and hate towards cousins. If two persons talk about a conflict, they do not address each other by, 'who is your enemy? Instead, they ask, '*tarborlarey*' (do you have a cousins?). If the reply is affirmative, he understandably refers to an enemy. This 'two words sentence' what Taylor, 1985; Lue et al., 2004; Litovkina, 1996 call 'pregnant with meaning' covers a lot of clues.

#### 5. *Aka Khadreydey*

(Paternal uncle is the enemy)

In a short visit to a village, I met a number of people from a single extended family. The family was locally well-known for playing a crucial role in elections. Unfortunately, the same family was

involved in intra-family land disputes as well. The dispute was quite sharp between the paternal cousin and his brother's living sons. In order to fully understand the reservations on both sides, I firstly interviewed the paternal cousin. Later on, I met his brother's sons. The bone of contention between both the parties was hereditary land. In a long semi-structured interview with one of his nephews, he started his conversation by stating the proverb.

This proverb is primarily asserted in a conversation to solely signify the conflicting relations between a paternal uncle and his brother's children. In a majority of the cases pointed out in the fieldwork, the respondents were of the view that paternal cousins are always jealous of the achievements the nephews may attempt to gain. Sometimes, this can lead to open rivalry when the children of a paternal uncle cannot compete with their cousins in education, business, or certain patterns of behavior. This open rivalry does not mean they resort to violence, but rather it affects their mutual relations.

In a relationship between the paternal uncle and his nephews, seniority plays an important role. Among Pashtuns, paternal uncles, due to seniority, always expect their nephews to be guided before getting involved in conflicts, considering the paternal uncle has to defend the nephews. The responsibility of financial support in conflict resolution is taken by the uncles if their nephews come into conflict with an external enemy. Therefore, they expect their nephews to be guided. On the other hand, the nephews do not feel constrained to be subjected to the directions of paternal uncles.

As stated earlier, both the uncle and a nephew can equally make use of this proverb. Either of them can cite it in a conversation to describe the conflicting relationships. In some cases, when the father of a child dies, the mutual relationships between the paternal uncles and orphans become more complicated. As the paternal uncle cannot afford to financially back the orphans for too long, the orphaned children feel disappointed. In this situation, the relevance of this proverb on the nephews' side comes into line with existing relations. Grudges on the nephews' side is closely observed by a story told by Abdullah:

I have two brothers and one sister. When our father was alive, he got us admitted in a private school. He would pick and drop my sister and brothers. But when our father died, we hardly managed to pay the heavy fees. Economically, we could not afford to attend school, so one of our paternal uncles became ready to help. Though his children were studying in private schools, he wanted us to switch to a government school (Fieldwork: 12/11/2017, Killa SaifUllah).

In his story, the teller expected his paternal uncle to pay the dues of his sister and brothers after their father died. Instead of letting them continue their studies in a private school, the uncle wished to shift the children to a public school which is not always good with regard to education quality. The lack of interest in nephews' education may have been caused due to financial burden. According to the locally common perception, the paternal uncles always wish to see their nephews more prosperous in career but up to a certain degree. They are not supposed to be more successful than their cousins.

#### *6. Khorayae da mama da menidushmandey*

(A sister's son is the eternal enemy of a maternal uncle)

This proverb is always spoken by women in cases where their sons are involved in clashes with their maternal uncles. Especially in cases in which mothers support brothers vis-à-vis sons. In my visit to a nearby village in the town, I met my friend's mother. She was considered, in the vicinity,

to be very helpful by going for marriage proposals and making sure she was present in delivery cases. In a brief meeting, she quoted this proverb in a non-serious manner. As I requested her to tell the main theme of the proverb, she acknowledged my request and explained it.

Among the Pashtuns, the relationship between a maternal uncle and his nephew is quite different between the latter and his paternal cousins. In the latter case, the cousins share a common blood and descent. By virtue of blood, they share a joint estate which is the land which always becomes a major source of contention. On the contrary, the relationship between a maternal uncle and nephews is constrained because they do not share blood. The issues become more complicated when the mother of nephew is from the same lineage as the father.

There is constant rivalry between the mother's son (*Khorayaye*) and her brother (*Mama*). Here too, the bone of contention is the land a mother is denied a part. The denied part of a mother includes the land, cash, agricultural fields or property. Both *mama* (maternal uncle) and *khoraey* (nephews) do not share the property; instead, there is the mother who is sandwiched between her brother and the son. In majority of the cases, the brother denies her a part in land by the use of whatever means, whereas the nephew struggles to retake his mother's part in the property. At the social level, the honor and public face of a maternal uncle does not allow him to surrender to the demands of nephews. In the research locale, people hardly consider their women in the property of their parents. They do not give property rights to daughters and sisters. As a rule, the denied part is not claimed through legal means by daughters and sisters in their conjugal families. Therefore, their sons take the responsibility of struggling against maternal uncles to take the legal property rights of the mothers.

In a conflict between *mama* and *khoraey*, the father of the latter is not bound to be involved. He always leaves the conflict at the disposal of his sons. Yes, his moral support must lie with the sons, as the property in question can benefit him too. Thus, this is a kind of 'passive' rather than 'active' conflict between the individuals of two different families. Instead of going for legal actions or becoming extremely violent, the expression of this conflict is always caught in the oral literature of Pashtuns. In such conflicts, the nephew challenges the traditional authority of maternal uncles, the latter gives a heavy emphasis to the use of this proverb.

Besides land as a bone of contention, there is always a constant power struggle between both the individuals. Culturally, the maternal uncle has a kind of status and authority which is socially prescribed to be considered. On the other hand, the nephews are also informed by their honor to be fully independent of maternal uncles' patronage. For a maternal uncle, an obedient nephew is fine. The matter worsens if the nephew becomes disobedient and the relevance of this proverb becomes undeniable.

### Conclusion

A proverb is a small statement replete with meaning. It is one of the genres of folklore which largely reflects people's actions and thoughts. Whatever is taking place at the practical ground or what the people think, expect, or resist is to a greater extent expressed in the proverbs. The primary aim of a proverb use is to convey a particular message, comment, or judgment which the speakers cannot assert in a straightforward manner. As mentioned earlier, proverb speakers have two points in mind while using proverbs. Firstly, they express all that which is not possible at the practical ground. Secondly, the speakers use proverbs to depersonalize the burden a proverb carries.

In Pashtun society, people always use proverbs to convey a particular message. Their proverbs represent their actions, thoughts, behavior, and certain ways of thinking. Things become quite complicated when it comes to kinship ties in which the rivals are always the cousins. In order to avoid direct confrontation and assassinate their character too, the proverbs are the available tools to utilize. It does not mean to blame cousins in proverbs, instead, each powerful member of a family or lineage can become the key object of a proverb. With the same objective in mind, proverbs are spoken to describe the nature of relations with non-blood relatives too. Among others, proverb use is highly important in the context of asymmetric relations among the cousins of different social and economic standing. In a family or lineage, the politically weak members resort to proverbs to resist the hegemony of powerful counterparts.

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