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Landay as the Voice of Pashtun Women's Passion and Social Life

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Keywords

Landay, couplets, women, Pashtuns, culture, Tradition, Values, life, passion.



LANDAY AS THE VOICE OF AFGHAN WOMEN'S PASSION AND SOCIAL LIFE

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Abstract

This paper explores Landay, a form of folk poetry and consist of couplets; the first one consists of nine syllables and the second thirteen. The author of such couplets is generally unknown. Some of them have names of authors or national figures and heroes attached. In the study of a society, various aspects can be discussed like historical background, cultural elements, cultural heritage, which are main points of a society. Furthermore, it gives importance to fundamental values and customs along with life style can be taken to consideration.

To explore any culture we have to study its literature, especially folk literature. Pashtun culture is clearly depicted in Landay, a genre of folk literature. This research seeks to study history of Pashtu Landay, its current situation and future perspectives. Essentially, the research will explore how Landay has been transferred from one generation to another and in specifically it highlights women's contribution in producing Landays. Furthermore, currently, an improvement has been taken in the mode of saying Pashtu Landay by Afghan youth living aboard. Therefore, the research intent to study the process of expressing new way of poetry produced by new generation which draws upon earlier tradition, but is composed in circumstances that are very different from the past. As earlier, these poems were said and sung in the valleys, mountain and deserts, but these days youth have been able to take advantage of new technology to communicate their message through the tradition of the Landay in a modern way.

Introduction

Numerous studies have been conducted on various aspect of Pashtu Landay focusing on the history, forms, types and usages of Landay. However, a different results are suggested within this research because only certain aspects of Landay are discussed and only in Pashtu Language. In order to make it understandable by other nations and culture, it is essential to write in an international language. This paper has collected historical background of Landay and translated Pashtu Landays into English Language in various topics.

For the most part, the literature produced under oriental inspiration articulates Pashtuns as cluster of violent tribes, utter savages with no conformity of the modern world. Pashtuns have a special code for governing their way of life, "Pashtunwali", in which "badal" or "revenge" and "nang" or "honor" are the main factors. Even in pashto short stories, revenge is mentioned as typical characteristics of their daily life (Widmark).

The tradition of oral culture, both secular and religious, has existed in Afghanistan since centuries. Initially, social beliefs, norms, and values were the primary techniques of oral tradition in Afghanistan. Later on, non-formal education also heavily depended of oral form. Pashtu Landay or anonymous Pashtu couplets are one the unique items of Pashtuns' traditions whose authors are unknown. Illiterate Pashtuns men and women expressed their feelings of passions

and sentiments through these couplets. Landay are said and then sung as songs in the mountains, valleys and deserts of the villages. Behind each piece of Landay distinctive feelings of love, peace, sorrow, war, separation, homeland, grief and joy are hidden in which usually men addressed by women. It is because female's emotions are more tenders and insightful as compared to that of the male. Also her voice is sweeter and suitable for the Landay, which adds to its effects (Benewa, 1958).

For centuries, people have articulated the golden moments of their lives in the form of a Landay, thus each Landay is considered as precious as gold. Hence, it is worthwhile investment to collect as many Landays as possible. Although the exact history of Landay is unknown, some date them back to as far in the history as seven thousand years. The following Landay was said by a lover of Khalo who was a commander during Mohammad Ghaznavi's era (Layq 1364)

خمه ت ديدن يار دخ پل ته گ ومل به زه ----- راغلی ل شكري خالو د چي

Translation: "whenever Khalo's soldiers came, I go to meet my lover in Gomal (name of a place in Paktia Province of Afghanistan)".

Methodology

This paper is based on qualitative research. It is based on the studying of accessible books, observations and personal interview with expert of Pashtu literature and as well with young readers. The interviews have been conducted through internet especially through social media.

Discussion

The present research predicated that Landay is folk couplet an oral and often anonymous scrap of song created by and for mostly illiterate people; the more than twenty millions Pashtuns women who span the border between Afghanistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Traditionally Landays are sung aloud, often to the beat of a hand drum, which, along with other kinds of music, was banned by the Taliban from 1996 to 2001, and in some places, still is (Poetry Foundation, 2013).

Pashtu Landay can be discussed under the theory of Cultural Studies. However other related theories for instance Comparative Literature, Gender Studies and Historical Studies may also be given due consideration. Because where Pashtu Landay has affinity to Punjabi Maheya on one hand so it may be viewed in the light of Comparative Literature Theory and on the other hand Landay is generally sing from women side therefore we may also need recourse to Theory of Gender Studies. Similarly, Landay has its own historical background and Historical Studies Theory has to be given consideration while discussing Pashtu Landay.

Limitations

During research, particular attention is given to make the paper comprehensive and authentic as much as possible. As all researches have some limitations, the limitations found for this paper in the material reviewed can be result from linguistics aspects and resources. In linguistics aspects much of the research about Landay is done in Pashtu Language, it was difficult to translate each and every word from Pashtu to English Language. However, a few short articles found with limited information in English. Limited resources were another challenge, the books were not available online and interviewed people were slow in responses.

Findings
In 2012, Bilquees Daud stated Pashtu Landay is a special part of Oral Folkloric Literature (Wolosi Adabyat) that is divided into the parts according to their themes such as, Political Landay, Social Landay, Love Landay, Historical Landay and Patriotic Landay. They all belong to Pashtuns and have traditionally been produced in tribal areas because they are related to poor and very harsh situations, not easy lives of cities. Landay represents the situation of village life

like fighting, traveling, dying, loving, defeating, enemies and others. This tradition of Landay has been among Pashtuns for centuries.

Landay is said by men and women, but there is peculiarity that mostly Landay is sung by women, which reflects the women psychology in very natural and original shape. Generally women are in tribal areas only house wives and don't travel. Men travel to various parts of world for earning livelihood and fights with enemies. Therefore, in villages, Landays are sung for travelers by women who wait for their husbands, sons, brothers and fathers; the trips would could take almost ten years or more. similarly for the death bodies in wars (Daud, 2012).

In the study of Landay, it must be noted that mostly Landay has been sung by female. It mean that women are more aware and conscious regarding family kinship relation. So Landay explains women's character from various angles on one hand and on other hand it has explanation for relationship like mother, sister, daughter and wife. However, woman has been depicted as a lover or beloved. Landay deals with beloved or fiancé. This color of romance is significant and highlighted in Landay. Therefore, Landay from female side depicts male characters with reference father, brother, son and mostly her beloved (Khalil, 2011).

Status of Mother

In the study of Landay woman as mother is greatly honored. Generally, mother's relation with a daughter is significant when a dialogue is depicted in Landay. It show the emotion and sentiments of a lover girl and her dialogue and reasoning with her mother in a very beautiful manner.

کومه باندۀ څه مورتۀ به څه ځي لي به زه ----- کړو وران دي خال زدي د زما

Translation: You have marred the mole of my chin, what would I say to my lamenting and weeping mother about the mishap

In this Landay emotions and sentiments of a beloved daughter has been depicted along with the portrayal of the secret meeting of a lover with her beloved in Pashtuns' culture. The beloved meets her lover secretly and she tries to conceal and give excuse and explanation if any sign is found on her due to the meeting with her lover. It shows that explicit and unbound love and its expression is forbidden in Pashtuns' society.

وارونه راغلل اوس ما په تير شوي تاپه ----- قهر پرېره راته مه مورکي

Translation: Do not get mad on me mother, you have done your turn and how it my turn.

In this Landay a beloved daughter asks her that you have spent and enjoyed your youth and I am in love now it is my turn to enjoy my youth and bloom.

Status of Father

In kinship relations, status of father is also seen in Landay. For examples:

سډ لونه دي کړي کي جنت بنه دي په ما ----- دي جنت کورل که به اباد

Translation: Father's house is like Paradise and I enjoyed the blessing of this paradise.

In this Landay, a daughter's love towards father house has been expressed. This Landay expresses sentiments of newly wedding daughter to whom father house looks like a paradise when she is about to shift to her in-laws.

Landay may be used to complain and lament restrictive Pashtun customs, perceived as downgrading women to the status of mere objects, such as the custom of pre-arranged marriages: ومه لور سد تاخوزه کړه وران خدای دی کور -----! پلاره خرڅه کړم سړی زرو په دی زه

Translation: You sold me to an old man, father[i], May God destroy your home, I was your daughter.

Here a young daughter complains to his father, that he has given his hand to an old man by taking money.

Status of Brother

Brother is also mentioned in Landay with nearness and respect, it show that what a sister expects for her brother in Pashtuns' society. Most of the time sister admire her brother bravery and fighting skill. But when her brother is martyred then she remembers him with intense feeling of love and departure.

دې نه بلې ته يرا د وري نداری می دوه ----- زی رگ لونه ورونه دي می دوه

Translation: I have two brothers like flowers and their wives are like nightingales of Teerah (a beautiful hilly area renowned for her water which very good for digestion)

In this Landay the attachment and affection of a sister to her brother has been expressed. She loves her brothers' wives due to her love towards brothers.

خښه ورسره وهي لاس ته وره په په یې خور ----- روان یزی ته غزا یې ورور

Translation: Brother is going to war and sister is soothing his sword and accompanying with him

In this Landay, a sister recounts her brother's bravery and also motivates him to fight against the enemy.

Sometimes sisters complain about brothers, while giving their hands to others. for example:

ورک وې نه ته بل خوی ندی ک یې چې ورونه ----- س تاپی ورونه ک یې چې خوی ندی

Translation: When sisters sit together, they always praise their brothers.

When brothers sit together, they sell their sisters to others.

Status of Husband

Pashtu Landay presents a beautiful picture of love, sacrifice, selflessness, truthfulness of young male and female. Further, the fidelity and sacrifice of married couple can also be seen. A wife always admire her husband's fighting ability and she also motivate him for more courage and bravery. These sentiments and emotion can easily be seen in the following Landays:

مښه ته بند تم نه ته ورو دې بند نه نه زه ----- یې م در سره به میدان س پین په

Translation : I will be with you in the battlefield and Pashtun women don't quite due to the fear of swords.

It gives a reference that during a war a wife encourage and motivates her husband for fight against enemy with the above words.

Status of Mother in-law

Like all other relations status importance to in-laws relation is also can be seen in Landay with respect and importance.

ور س یدمه چ نغول می س توری دق طب ----- ده س پورمی خوا بڼی لمر می خسر دا

Translation: That my father in-law is just a sun, mother in-law is moon and fiancé is just like that stat of pole.

The bride gives a very high status to her in-laws only for the sake of her fiancé, she express her emotion to her mother in-law and father in-law as well.

Hospitality

Hospitality is the important life code of Pashtuns. They are so conscious about this characteristic that they forward hospitality even to their enemy if he comes to his home.

This fundamental element, hospitality of Pashtun culture is very beautifully depicted in fowling Landay

دې نه راغلی می لمانه دک لی دپار ----- ک ری خار ته ری می ته وله دخاون

Translation: O, Lord! I would like to serve my heart to the guests came from the village of my lover.

This Landay give reference to the most important element of Pashtuns' code of life, Hospitality. It can be seen that not only male but also females are unsurpassed in hospitality.

Romance

Women's life in Pashtuns' society is in lots of restriction. However, due to educational development and urbanization these restrictions are decreasing day by day. The concept of love is different from the rest of world. Due to restriction, love is very difficult in Pashtuns society, but whenever someone fall in love then these lovers dare to face every challenge and problem. They have tendency to scarify for their love. This courage can be seen in Pashtu Landay where the love sentiments and emotions have been mentioned from both male and female sides.

شمه به مريم سد تا طمعه په وصال دزه ----- نشد ته نه صديب په زما اخ تر

Translation: I have no Eid in my fate to enjoy. I am waiting for your love of which I would die.

In this Landay, the lover says that he cannot enjoy Eid (a religious festival) due to his separation with his beloved. It means that the meeting with his beloved on Eid day enhances his joy of Eid.

خو په غمه له جانان د او بند کي مي خو که ----- دی خور پر لاره او مور دا شونا

Translation: My lover is sweet then my father and mother, that is why I am crying for him .

In the above Landay the beloved show bold expression for her lover.

Jewelry, Dress and Music

Jewelry, dress and music are important element of Pashtun society and folk. These elements have been mentioned in various Landays.

وي نه په اسه د خزانې چي خامار ل که ----- کړو سور شونډو په په اس مي پ يزوان

Translation: My Peezwan is drooping on my red lips like the guard serpent of treasure.

In this Landay references to jewelry, which beautifies a girl. Beloved compare her lips to a precious treasure and her jewelry as guardian serpent. Peezwan is a jewelry for nose.

ودرومه نه يغ پر وزه په چارگل ل به زه ----- کړه کړه سر په په گړي که تا

Translations: If you decorate your head with turban, I will decorate my nose with Chargul (jewelry)

In this Landay the girl says to her lover that if you tilted your turban on your head I will raise my Chargul on my nose. Tilting the turban on head is a symbol of pride and honor and Chargul is the symbol of beauty.

دي نه راغلي جندي کي ته گوت حجری د ----- نه يسه پر رډو پر رو په رې اب

Translation: Sing with a loud voice with Rabab because the girls has come near to Hujra (guest house)

The reference is made to musical instruments Rabab, it indicates that Pashtuns knew the music and use of different instruments.

Culture

Landay are full of emotions and carry particular message that conveys their mood because they live in a male dominated society where they are generally suppressed (Fizar, 1356). So they raise up their voice against cruel cultural practices enforced on them by the society.

شمه به زره وم وي هل ک م کو تي چي زه ----- کړ ک م کي دې رخه په زما

Translation: My destiny is with a child, till I am brining him up I will get old myself (Daud, 2012)

This Landay criticize a custom in which a young girl was forced to marry a boy to solve a dispute. It is a good example of peaceful resistance against the male dominated social and cultural practices of that time.

Economical Life

Pashtuns are known for their hard work and strong commitment and objective throughout the world. In the beginning, they were usually farmers and agriculturists but gradually they inclined toward business and trade. (Khalil, 2011)

Landay beautifully represents the stiffened and gloomy economic conditions of Pashtuns.
 ځي نه غمه يار له ديا شي غريب بدير يا ----- ځي نه ملکه در ضا په څوک

Translation: No one want to leave his country, but due to his extreme poverty or romance go outside of country

Reference has been made toward poverty in this Landay. Pashtuns travel to other countries especially India for work when they could not find job in Afghanistan.

Pashtuns are warriors, fighters, soldiers and freedom lover by nature. Pashtuns fought all these wars for their honor, freedom and country. Female along with male participated in these wars, and mostly Pashtun female motivates the male for war, honor, and courage. All these can be seen in Pashtu Landays (Khalil, 2011).

Here I would like to mentioned the Malalai of Maiwand, also known as Malala, or Malalai Anna is a national folk hero of Afghanistan who rallied local fighters against the British troops at the 1880 Battle of Maiwand

While in Britain, no one has heard of her, in Afghanistan Malalai (or Malala) is a legend. Smaller facts in the story vary slightly, but although it is Ayub Khan who became known as the Victor of Maiwand, it is said that it was Malalai who actually saved the day (Wahid Momand, 2012).

She was a native of Khig, a tiny village on the edge of the Maiwand battlefield, and the daughter of a shepard. Both her father and fiancée joined with Ayub's army in the attack on the British on July 27th 1880 (which some say was also her wedding day), and like many women, Malalai was there to help tend to the wounded and provide water and spare weapons. Eventually there came a point in the battle where the Afghan army, despite their superior numbers, started to lose morale and the tide seemed to be turning in favour of the British. Seeing this, Malalai took off her veil and shouted out:

سات ينه ته ننگي بي لالا يه خداي پرو----- وئش نه شهيدکي ميوند په که

Translation: Young love! if you don't fall in the battle of Maiwand, by God, someone is saving you as a symbol of shame!. (Poetry foundation, 2013)

This gave many of the Afghan fighters and ghazis a new resolve and they redoubled their efforts. At that moment, one of the leading flag-bearers fell from a British bullet, and Malalai went forward and held up the flag (some versions say she made a flag out of her veil), singing a Landay:

و شرموږ نه کلاب گلکي باغ شي نکي چي ----- کيردم ووين له يار د به خال

With a drop of my sweetheart's blood, shed in defense of the motherland, will I put a beauty spot on my forehead, such as would put to shame the rose in the garden.

But then Malalai was herself struck down and killed. However, her words had spurred on her countrymen and soon the British lines gave way, broke and turned, leading to a disastrous retreat back to Kandahar and the biggest defeat for the Anglo-Indian army in the Second Afghan War. Ayub Khan afterwards gave a special honor to Malalai and she was buried at her village, where her grave can still be found (Green Ewing, 2005).

From the above Landays it is clear that in Pashtun society male will not compromise from sacrificing everything for sake of country, religion and honor or self-esteem. Same case for females, they are not only motivating force but also face all the troubles and hardship of war and play important role in wars.

Religious Life

Pashtuns nation is entirely Muslims therefore in Pashtu folk poetry best Landays are related to Islam in the perspective of Islamic benefit and information regarding Allah and his attributes, Prophet (SAW) and Islamic rules and rituals attachment to the Holy Quran.

ورک وپ نه شان یو روزی له ان سان او مچ ----- دی پ اچا غنی پ روردگ ار

Translation: Allah is the ultimate and only king and owner of every thing and he feed human and animal alike

ش دینه به په پاتې ل باسی مینې زورې دا ----- ده بنه ر سول د خدای دم پ نه

Love of Allah and Holy Prophet (SAW) is the best of all; others are just time pass of the world and will remain here.

Modern Life

In the last decade, Landay has changed because of socio-economic and political situation of the time. It indicate that the tradition is still alive because Landay are passed on from generation to generation in written and spoken forms (Daud 2012).

Today's develop technology and globalization has also reflects up on Pashtuns culture. The place of romance migrated to the internet. The audience for this genre has benefitted from social media like Facebook, Twitter and blogs. They convey their thoughts in written form and as well in recorded cassettes.

جواب ونه راته راک وه مه خوله سد پینه په ----- وله می ماشد بین روسی ت و پ په

Translation: Shoot me with a black Russian gun, but don't give me rude words of your mouth.

ک وپ نه وپ شد تل منگو په نه شد ته ب و ت ل ی ----- دی پ ارلمان دپ یغلوگ ودر

Translation: Godar (water place for ladies) is the parliament of ladies, they don't have bottles but hit each other with Mangai (the countainer in which ladies carry water from Godar) This Landay is a satirical take on the Afghan Parliament a medium for expressing non-violent political dissent.

پ اران ونه وشی ب اندی در مس یچونو د چي ----- او سه ب یداره شد په نیمه په

Translation: Be awake at midnight, so messages rain will fall on you

وننه نم برورک ری می ته ه لک نادان ----- ک رم عذاب په ی ی مس کال ونو په

Translation: Bothering me with miss calls, I have given my cell-number to foolish boy.

The above two Landays are about the modern technology specially cell phone. These Landays show the use of modern technology.

May God destroy the White House and kill the man, who sent U.S cruise missile to burn my homeland

This Landay symbolize the recent war of US in Afghanistan after 9/11.

Conclusions and Future Study

The study indicates that Pashtu Landay is one of the oldest genres of Pashtu folk poetry. It can be said that folk literature of any nation presents it's real and original picture of its social, cultural and original values. Landay can be sue as primary source in the study of Pashtuns culture, values, lifestyle and standard. Without studying Landay, knowing about Pashtuns culture is essentially not completed, because Landay is culture and culture is the spirit and soul of society.

In the earlier discussion, it is evident that Landay has been a tradition among Pashtuns for a considerable period of time and still continues to kindle interest even amongst the young generation. It shows their attachment to their history, language and culture values. Moreover, the young generation has been bringing changes in society through the use of modern technology.

In order to survive this folk literature and pass to the next generation, Landay should be documented and transferred to the next generation. Because, it is difficult to collect to survive these Landays through memory, with the passing out of the older generation, a significant part of Pashtun heritage may be lost forever. Another reason could be the gap of communication between young and old generations. There is a fear that Landays are modified from place to place and populations of each area have changed, but currently the pure form of Landays are amended somehow which does not have the same syllables. To conclude with, the young generation should take the knowledge of Landay from the elders and scholars and make it in forms of soft and hard copies for the next generation.

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