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## ***A woman's tongue is a double-edged sword***: A Linguo-Cultural Analysis of Yoruba and Punjabi Proverbs

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### ABSTRACT

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This study focuses on Punjabi and (African) Yoruba proverbs mentioning the theme of 'talk' and 'silence' regarding the gender of the speaker. Taking insights from Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (Lazar, 2007), data have been collected through purposive quota sampling from the collections of Punjabi and Yoruba proverbs. The thematic content analysis of the paremiological data from both languages reveals that women have been designated as loquacious in contemptuous terms as an indication of their 'empty brains.' Their argument is assumed to be meaningless as compared to the one offered by some male speakers. Silence in women is appreciated as a chief trait of a socially acceptable character. On the other hand, men's talk has been glorified as an essential trait of '*merdangi*' (manliness), and they are encouraged to talk. In both languages, men are explicitly advised neither to act upon their wives' suggestions nor to share their secrets with them. Feminine discourse has been showcased as an unproductive activity with a strong emphasis on the speakers' unreliability and insincerity. The speakers of these languages have to be aware of the adverse effects of such discourses on silencing the feminine voices for their rights and venting their creative talents. A conscious effort needs to be made by the media and academia to spread more positive discourses to make women an active and productive part of the social dialogue.

**Keywords:** folk wisdom, cultures, speech, Punjabi, African, proverbs, Yoruba, gender

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Proverbs satisfy the human need for communication by giving instant remarks on personal as well as social matters. Being transmitters and reflectors of aggregated insight, they are acknowledged indiscriminately. Ali and Khan (2012) claim that the control and regulation of traditional societies can be ascribed to the fact that the metaphor, we acknowledge intentionally or unintentionally, can have a substantial impact on our reasoning and activity. Concerning language and gender relations, proverbs entail incredible importance because they reflect the conventional power connections between genders (Mieder, 2014; Rasool, 2015).

The present research is focused on the paremiological corpora of Nigerian (Yoruba) and Pakistani (Punjabi) languages for multiple similarities discovered between the respective linguo-cultures, including their respect for orality and traditionality, colonial history, the state of the economy as well as religious affiliations. Having constructed an unfavorable mental and social schema for women, proverbs seem to be reinforcing the patriarchal tendencies of Pakistani and Nigerian Yoruba speech communities (Khan & Awan, 2019; Balogun, 2010). The Punjabi people are a tribe of Indo-Aryan peoples from Punjab, which is found in northern India and eastern Pakistan. Conventionally, the Punjabi identity is free from religion, race, or color. Punjabi is the 12<sup>th</sup> most widely spoken language having 88 million native Punjabi speakers. In Pakistan, Punjabi is the largest spoken language (44.15%) (Ethnologue, 2019). The Yoruba people live mainly in the south-western part of Nigeria, occupying virtually all of the area formerly known as the Western Region. More than 21% of Nigerians are Yoruba (Babatunde, 2015).

The researchers from multiple linguistic and cultural backgrounds have generally focused on the stereotypical representation of women in the folklore and the proverbs (Petrova, 2002). So far, however, there has been little discussion about 'talk' concerning gender in the folklore of Punjabi and/or Yoruba speech communities. This study attempts to bridge the gap and answer the following questions: 1) What is the ideology constructed by Punjabi and Yoruba proverbs about gender regarding talk? 2) How identical/different are the gender-related notions about speech in the proverbs of these languages? 3) How are the patriarchal tendencies communicated through proverbs targeting talk and silence? The following paragraphs provide a brief discussion of relevant literature followed by theoretical framework, methodological approaches, data analysis, discussion, and conclusion.

Schipper (2010) notes, in the proverbs from around the world that "Women are generally connected with apparent charms and men with insight" (p. 121). The thought that ladies have no intellect is exhibited in the sayings of numerous languages and societies worldwide. Siddiqui (2013) focuses in Urdu proverbs on the faulty brain and the transitory beauty of women, their snaring nature, having loose characters, and being quarrelsome. Only one proverb mentions the talk of women and that too in a deprecating tone. Rasool (2015), in her comparative study, demonstrates that both English and Urdu proverbs delineated females as powerless,

mediocre, and auxiliary. She also discusses the theme of 'talk', but her main focus seems to be on English proverbs as she has quoted 14 English sayings while only three phrases from the Urdu data. These three entries might be termed more as 'phrases' than 'proverbs'.

In the adjacent cultural settings, Sanauddin, (2015) who studied women in Pakhtu proverbs, reported women as talkative, brainless, and unreliable persons who are unable to process any logical reasoning and impart some useful advice. Men are explicitly advised not to listen to their wives and not to act upon their wives' suggestions. Shah, Sultan, and Kaker (2018) concluded that women are represented as submissive, dependent, and unintelligible after analyzing Balochi proverbs. Khan, Mustafa, and Ali (2017) worked on the construction of multiple gendered identities in the Punjabi proverbs. However, their focus has been the bipolar representation and construction of masculine versus feminine identities in different binary categories. They contended that females have been portrayed in a disadvantaged and face-threatening manner as compared to their male counterparts represented in a more empowered and face-saving manner. Khan et al (2021) investigated animal metaphors in the Punjabi proverbs and revealed interesting findings. Khan, Awan, and Hussain (2019) have compared the gender-related ideologies of Punjabi and Yoruba cultures and found striking similarities. However, they have not investigated proverbs about men and women's talk.

Agyekum (2002) studied gender-based proverbs in the Akan language while Asiyanbola (2007), Adetunji (2010), Balogun (2010) Familusi (2012), Alabi (2012), Olojede (2015), and Agbaje (2016) analyzed proverbs from other African communities including Yoruba and Igbo linguo-cultures and highlighted gender-biased ideologies inherent in these 'cultural sapients.' Ademowo and Balogun (2014) contended that the studies from different African ethnic groups illustrate that proverbs are utilized to explain the profoundly entrenched patriarchal frameworks of African social and cultural living patterns. The studies concluded that these proverbs about females are very oppressive, offensive, and humiliating.

The review of existing literature revealed a few representative studies which have made gender (and talk) their focus. A systematic understanding of how proverbs in Punjabi or Yoruba languages contribute to female silencing is still lacking. The present study bridges this gap by focusing on the speech, talk, and silence in proverbs about gender from the Punjabi and Yoruba corpora.

## **Theoretical framework and methodology**

This study uses Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) as its theoretical framework. FCDA (Lazar, 2007) focuses on how gender and power-based ideological relations are (re)produced and negotiated in representations of gender, and in men and women's societal and individual identities in talk and texts. An

ideological structure based on gender divides human beings men and women, in the relation of dominance and subservience, respectively. 'Gender Relationality' (a central principle of FCDA) entails and explores the identities of 'women' and 'men' with reference to each other. Lazar (2007, 2017) articulates five key (interrelated) principles of FCDA as theory and practice: (i) feminist analytical activism, (ii) gender as ideological structure and practice, (iii) complexity of gender and power relations, (iv) discourse in the (de)construction of gender and (v) Critical reflexivity as praxis.

Analysis of discourse which shows up the workings of power that sustain oppressive social structures/relations contributes to on-going struggles of contestation and change through what may be termed as 'analytical activism'. The aim of feminist critical discourse studies, therefore, is to show up the complex, subtle, and sometimes not so subtle, ways in which frequently taken-for-granted gendered assumptions and hegemonic power relations are discursively produced, sustained, negotiated, and challenged in different contexts and communities. Such an interest is not merely an academic de-construction of texts and talk for its own sake, it comes from an acknowledgement that the issues dealt with (in view of effecting social change) have material and phenomenological consequences for groups of women and men in specific communities (Lazar, 2007).

In this qualitative investigation, dictionaries of Punjabi (Shahbaz, 2004) and Yoruba (Owomoyela, 2011) proverbs have been consulted to find out proverbs mentioning gender and talk. Eighteen (18) Punjabi and eleven (11) Yoruba proverbs have been selected through purposive quota sampling in which gender has been mentioned with reference to 'talk'. Cultural informants from both the cultures have been requested to identify familiar/living proverbs to fulfill the condition of 'vitality.' Transliteration of Punjabi proverbs has been done with the help of a website (*Urdu to Roman transliteration*, n.d.). On the other hand, Yoruba orthography employs the Latin alphabets. The Yoruba speakers were consulted for the transliteration of Yoruba proverbs, and they transliterated them by removing the superscripts and diacritics. Thirdly, communicative translation, and thematic content analysis (Petrova, 2019) of the selected proverbs have been conducted with the help of native Punjabi and Yoruba speakers. In the end, comparative cum contrastive analyses have been conducted in the discussion section in order to determine different stereotypes and attitudes that Punjabi and Yoruba societies keep towards their speakers' speech behaviors based on their gender. Only representative proverbs have been discussed in the following section for space issues.

## **Data analysis**

This section contains Yoruba and Punjabi proverbs with their English translations elicited from proverb collections by Owomoyela (2011) and Shahbaz (2004) respectively. As mentioned earlier, first I have tried to analyse 11 Yoruba proverbs

about gender and talk and then 18 Punjabi proverbs. Punjabi proverbs have a sub-section, "Men and Talk", and I have analysed 6 proverbs in that section. After the first proverb, subsequent proverbs have been mentioned with the page numbers from the same collections. However, the last two Yoruba proverbs (x and xi) have been picked along with their translations from Balogun (2010) and Yusuf (2013) respectively. On the other hand, the Punjabi proverbs have been taken from a single source (Shahbaz, 2004), therefore, page numbers have been mentioned against the original proverbs because I have done the English translation myself.

### **Yoruba proverbs about gender and talk**

i. "**Obinrin kì í ròhìn àjò tán**" (Owomoyela, 2011, p. 390).

"A woman is never done telling about the trip she took".

A woman never ceases talking about an experience. She is by nature a talkative being and cannot control herself from talking at length.

ii. **Adásinlrun, obinrin ọ̀dọ̀gọ̀: ẹ̀lẹ̀rú nwaẹ̀rú , ó ní kí wọ̀n jẹ̀ kí ọkọ òun ti oko dé ná**

"A woman's loose mouth is a dangerous thing for the owner and his or her kin" (p. 325).

The Yoruba believe that a wife that cannot control her mouth will someday put herself and her husband in trouble.

iii. "**Obinrin l'eke, obinrin l'odale**"

"The woman is a gossip; the woman is a traitor" (p. 8).

Women tend to indulge in gossip and this habit converts them into traitors as they cannot control themselves and share the hidden facts of their families.

iv. "**A benu mimu bi obe**"

"Her lips are as sharp as the knives"(p. 8).

Nigerian people's belief has found an expression that women don't have verbal control. These proverbs are used to reinforce the commonly believed notion that women talk a lot.

v. "**Obinrin ko ni gògògò**"

"Women have no Adam's apple" (p. 13)

Yoruba people associate women with loquacity; they believe that women lack verbal restraint. Yusuf's (2013) study of some English and Yoruba proverbs notes that both contain various proverbs that show a spiritual denigration of women in different areas, the first being women's association with loquacity, i.e., the belief that women lack verbal restraint.

vi. "**Obinrin. ẹ̀é fínú hàn**"

"A woman is not suitable to expose one's secrets to" (p. 377)

This proverb is used as a note of caution to men who tend to take their women's words seriously.

**vii. "Omùgo èyà̀n nímb óbinrin mule; ojot óbinrin bá mawo lawó bàje"**

"Only a foolish person enters into a secret pact with a woman; the day a woman knows a mystery is the day it is exploded" (p. 135).

The man who believes in a woman and entrusts her with some confidential information is labeled here to be a 'foolish' person as women are believed to be 'leaky pitchers' by default in the Nigerian culture.

**viii. "Mo ku! Mo ku! ", obinrin sisi tun ibi ana re"**

"I'm dead! I'm dead!, cried a woman, yet she went again to the place where she was 'killed' yesterday" (p. 285).

In this proverb, the woman's speech is literalized to portray her as insincere, since her words then become inconsistent with her deeds.

**ix. "Obinrin lodale, obinrin leke, Emo finuhan obinrin"**

"Women are disloyal and deceitful, do not expose your inner thought to a woman" (p. 306).

These lines ascribe deceitful behavior to women alone, whereas the act is an attribute of both men and women.

**x. "Esin obinrin sorogun, o le gbéni subù"**

"It is not good for a man to climb on his wife's horse because he can fall to his death" (Balogun, 2010, p. 7).

The horse analogy in this proverb is utilized to speak to the impulses of one's better half. The saying is a warning that men who go by their wives' impulses ruin themselves.

**xi. "Orisa, je n pemeji' obinrin ko denu"**

"When a woman says, 'God, let my husband marry a second wife,' the prayer is not whole-hearted" (Yusuf, 1994, p. 286).

These proverbs delineate the Yorubas' belief that women often pay lip service to concepts they do not really mean. Men should not believe in their women's claims.

## **Punjabi proverbs about gender and talk**

**i. "Kadi murghi di bang vee rawa hoi ay?"** (Shahbaz, 2004, p. 283).

"Can the hen's cluck ever be meaningful?"

A woman's contention does not carry weight and should not be paid attention to. The animal imagery of 'hen' has been used to communicate the lesser value ascribed to women's talk as compared to a 'cock's (men) cluck, which is a symbol of the arrival of a new day.

**ii. "Galleen pai tay wassno gai"** (p. 308).

"The lady involved in gossip is deprived of the happy marriage."

This proverb has expressly made a causal connection between a strained marital relationship and the imprudent utilization of the tongue by the wives.

iii. ***"Bud kirdar ruch jandee aey, bad zuban nai ruchdi"*** (p. 45).

"The woman with moral laxity can be successful in marital life, however, not the one with a bad/bitter tongue."

This proverb encourages a wife to be mindful of the utilization of the tongue as it has an immediate outcome on her married life.

iv. ***"Chupp chapiti kumm sunwarey"*** (p. 55).

"The quiet woman performs effectively."

The connection has been made between the quietness and efficient execution of the domestic chores by women.

v. ***"Moonh di kooli gallan patawaey"*** (p. 234).

"A soft-spoken lady's cheeks will be pulled/pinched."

A piece of indirect advice is imparted in this saying to again warn women/girls about talking pleasantly with the stranger men. This soft speech would encourage them to take undue advantage and they may indulge in physical advancements.

vi. ***"Soch karey so sugherr naar, ker sochey so koorr"*** (p. 251).

"A wise girl thinks before uttering words, while an artless lady would think afterward."

'Think before you speak,' which is a piece of neutral advice, has been used exclusively for a female to lure her toward contemplation and avoid abrupt responses.

vii. ***"Khasmen nal brabri, moonh moonh chotan khaey"*** (p. 173).

"The wife who answers her husband in the same coin will have to face humiliation."

It is a reprimanding proverb for wives who answer back their husbands in the same tone and manner. It is used to make them realize that their lower status demands submission and forbearance when they involve in conflict with their male counterparts.

viii. ***"Runn pai rahay oh vee gai, runn pai salahy oh vee gai"*** (p. 135).

"The wife who keeps wandering would be lost, the wife who keeps asking for suggestions would be lost too."

Generally, women are not confident about their own critical and rational ability, so they keep asking other women for suggestions. It mostly leads to deviations from the norms and acceptable traits.

ix. ***"Galleon lagi tay aata kuttyan khada"*** (p. 308).

"The wife indulged in gossip, the dog ate her flour."

A direct link is being created between the talkative nature of women and the successful completion of her tasks with the use of this metaphorical proverb.

x. ***“Jey shoh akhey phittay moonh tan main jiwi”*** (p. 158).

“If my husband rebukes me, I get a new life.”

This proverb performs a double function: It encourages the husband to speak harshly with his wife to affirm his masculine control and neutralizes such condemnation as something not only logical and rightful but also invigorating for the wife.

xi. ***“Kothay tay charh bokdi, runn sarey lok di”*** (p. 292).

“The lady who makes noise on the roof is the wife of the whole world.”

This proverb is used to taunt a woman who does not practice the norm of keeping the insults to herself and instead keep sharing it with the world.

xii. ***“Jinhy laya galleen, ohday naal tur challi”*** (p. 169).

“The woman is vulnerable to the gossiping person.”

It is used for a woman who starts having faith in each discussion of a loquacious individual and performs as advised and even remains ready to go with that person.

## Men and talk

xiii. ***“Merd da bolya tay fajar da gerjyaa bertha na jaey”*** (p. 245).

“The roaring cloud of the first light and the words uttered by a man do not go squandered.”

xiv. ***“Merd dee gull tay gaddi da pahiya agay nu janday nay”*** (p. 289).

“Men's words and the tire of a vehicle consistently move ahead.”

A man's speech has been given high value in the above maxims (xiii and xiv) by making a similarity with the morning cloud, which at last outcomes in a downpour, so will the discussion of a man be productive eventually.

xv. ***“Moonh tay kehway taan merd manno”*** (p. 415).

“Think of him as a genuine Man who talks truth in front of an influential person.”

A genuine man will not avoid telling the reality before the guilty party. A point to be noted here is the stress on indirect talk in several Punjabi cultureemes, but when it comes to gender orientation, a real man is expected to be direct and straightforward (Khan and Awan, 2020).

xvi. ***“Jehra runn dee manny oh khwar theenda aey”*** (p. 169)

“The man who consents to his wife, will be embarrassed.”

The man is unequivocally exhorted not to tune in to the exhortation offered by his lady as she is unequipped for rendering some functional suggestion or advice.

xvii. ***“Qol haran jawana da kam nhi”*** (p. 274).

“Real men do not back out.”

This axiom is utilized to remind men that their ‘manhood’ is legitimately connected with the consistency of their words.

xviii. ***“janani nu bhait na dey”*** (p. 73)



“Do not reveal your secrets to a woman/wife.”

It is immediate guidance to men not to impart their classified data to any woman as she is naturally unequipped for guarding a mystery.

## Findings and discussion

The goal of FCD Analysts is to evaluate texts and talk, which helps perpetuate a patriarchal social set up – power relations that deliberately benefit men as a social group and undermine women as another social group. Discourse analysis shows that the systematic analysis of oppressive social relations is itself a type of “analytical resistance” and adds to progressing battles of contestation and amendment. The struggle is against a status quo in favor of a just social set up where gender does not determine the sense of our identity and our relations with others (Lazar, 2017, p. 377). Mobilization of the feminist theory is the main agenda of radical emancipatory FCDA to develop essential mindfulness and create feminist systems for defiance and change.

Regarding gender and talk, several Yoruba proverbs target the garrulous, dangerously hypocritical, insincere, unreliable, and untrustworthy nature of women when they interact. Yoruba proverb ii in “Data Analysis” section is an example in this regard. Men are advised to keep an eye on their women’s actions more than their words as their words are not reliable. They are further advised in some proverbs to neither confide in women, nor act upon their suggestions. Yoruba proverb vi helps us understand that mindset. Some proverbs from other African contexts (like Bemba from Zambia) quoted by Schipper (1991) also reinforce the presence of gender bias when it comes to talking: “*The bearded mouth does not lie*” (p. 231). Women have been represented in Yoruba proverbs as loquacious people who cannot control their tongue as they simply ‘lack Adam’s apple’, and can maintain only “vicious secrecy” when it is time to conceal some of their moral laxities. Primary bad qualities attributed to the Yoruba women in poetry are ‘loose tongue, avarice, and lasciviousness’ (Schipper, 1991, p. 33). A clear warning against confiding in and trusting women has been issued in several proverbs from the Punjabi and Yoruba languages. For example, Hodari and Sobers cite a Yoruba proverb, “Love your wife, but do not trust her” (p. 53) as Shahbaz does a Punjabi proverb, “Do not confide in your wife” (p. 134). These instances reinforce attitudes towards women in patriarchal societies. A Pashto proverb can be quoted to voice the idea behind every advice not to share any secret with a woman: “*When you tell your secrets to a woman, why not tell it to a drummer*” (Sanauddin, 2015, p. 129). Yusuf (1994) agrees that while there may be agreement about the virtue of moderation, sincerity, and prudence in Yoruba social communication, there is a problem with how women’s speech is evaluated concerning these qualities by the Yoruba proverbs. For example, while the practical or metaphorical use of language is allowed for communication in general, women’s speech is literalized and

consequently devalued in proverbs. In other words, the standards for judging women's speech seem to be higher (and less fair) than those with which other classes of speech are evaluated (Shaukat et al, 2017, p. 105; Khan & Awan, 2019, p. 84).

While taking into account gender and talk based Punjabi proverbs, a strikingly similar attitude can be observed. Whereas women's talk has been termed as useless and weightless, sense and logic are ascribed to men's assertions. Additionally, the careless use of tongue by a female has been mentioned as the chief cause of problems in her marital life, while her cheerfulness may help her make a successful marriage. The Punjabi proverb iii in "Data Analysis" justifies this attitude. It is surprising that the serious as well as humorous discourses have constructed the Punjabi wives' image as some dangerous, selfish, and unreliable persons (Khan, Mustafa, & Ali, 2017; Khan, Aziz, & Hussain, 2018). 'Silence' as a communicative strategy in women has been appreciated as a positive trait as it ensures submission and reticence. A quiet lady is considered an efficient manager of the household as compared to a talkative one. Being busy in talking most of the time, her brain is assumed not to work properly. She becomes easily vulnerable to be trapped by the guiles of crooked women and coquettish men. The woman who thinks before saying/doing something is appreciated while the impulsive talker is deprecated. Women are explicitly advised to restrict their soft speech as well as their smiles to their family members and especially husbands. Otherwise, their joviality may be misinterpreted by the males as a welcoming sign for dalliance. Schipper (2010) reports that "All over the world, proverbs stress that women are verbally much too gifted and that too contemptuously. Women's speech is simply disparaged, whereas men's talk is praised" (p. 126).

On the other hand, in the Punjabi proverbs, men's talk has been eulogized and glorified to be an essential trait of their manliness. The Punjabi proverb xiii under "Men and Talk" in "Data Analysis" vindicates this view. Their talk is considered something of high value, which would definitely be meaningful, productive, and futuristic as compared to any woman's talk. Furthermore, men are believed to be the owners of their words who know how to honor them. Their straightforwardness is encouraged and attached to their brave countenance. The Punjabi proverb xv under "Men and Talk" in "Data Analysis" testifies to this point of view. Men are explicitly advised not to follow the advice/suggestion offered by their wives as they are not capable of rendering some useful advice. Schipper has also quoted a Turkish proverb, giving a piece of similar advice: "Listen to your wife once every forty years" (2010, p. 122). Charteris-Black has quoted a Hindustani proverb advising men to "*Never listen to your wife's advice: he who takes her advice, has no sense*" (1995, p. 10).

Both the Yoruba and Punjabi proverbs have given a piece of explicit advice not to follow a woman's advice if a man wants to avoid negative consequences.

Silence in men is considered a shameful and deprecated act. They are expected to use their vocal ability to assert themselves and achieve high goals with the help of their strong communicative ability. Like Yoruba proverbs, men are further advised not to share any confidential information with their wives as they are incapable of holding themselves from sharing with other women or men. Schipper (2010) has quoted a Bengali proverb rendering a piece of similar advice: "Do not believe in the roots of yams, muddied water, and a woman's words" (p. 135). Hence, men's talk has been delineated as something rational, productive, and futuristic and a symbol of valor while their silence is discouraged as a sign of timidity and diffidence. A similar notion about men's talk has also been quoted from Italian proverbs by Stone (2006): "Among men of honor, a word is a bond" (p. 482) which is an indication of the presence of astoundingly similar thought patterns about men and women's talk in diverse cross-linguistic and cross-cultural contexts.

Such interminable assortment and tedious similitude about gender-biased ideology found in the linguo-cultures of the Punjabi and Yoruba speech communities have revealed that both cultures have strong patriarchal tendencies in ascribing negative stereotypes to women's talk and positive traits to men's verbal behavior. Specifically, the Punjabi data seem to portray a strong inclination toward glorifying men's talk and depreciating women's talk. Her talk has been indirectly compared with the hen's clucking. On the other hand, the 'cock' metaphor is employed to denote the meaningfulness attached to the male discourse. Agyekum (2002) has quoted an Akan adage: "[T]he hen knows that it is dawn, but it looks up to the mouth of the rooster to crow" (p. 41). This implies that talking should be done by the rooster. The ideal is a perfect wife who looks up to her husband with admiring eyes: silently, or at the most, with a few soft, sweet words. This is, for example, expressed in Japanese: "Encouraged by the hen, the cock tells the hour" (Schipper, 2010, p. 123). Speaking in public is a means of power and influence and, as a metaphor known worldwide, the hen and the cock have frequently been used to express the assertion that women should leave the public space for men.

Sanauddin (2015) contends that women and younger men in Pashtun culture (the same is true of the Punjabi culture) are not supposed to argue with men. Even to talk loud in front of older men is considered an insult: "The more you talk to women, the more you lose your authority over them" (p. 142). Vatuk (1982) observes that "among Muslims of South Asia, women are expected to . . . observe avoidance of loud speech and laughter and the limitation of conversation with non-family males to necessary work topics" (p. 70). Hence, to be a good traditional (Punjabi or African) woman, proverbs indicate (as men desire) that women should talk slowly and talk less.

The findings of the study verify the presence of patriarchal tendencies and gender bias prevailing in the overall Punjabi and Yoruba cultures. Sanauddin (2015) argues that men's independence also means their ability to be independent in

decision making. Men are advised against listening to women's advice: "Ruined is the man who listens to women's advice" (p. 121). These proverbs from the Pashto community communicate and reinforce the exact Punjabi ideology about gender and talk. Some feminist scholars observe that "the historical absence of women's voices from public life indicates that. . . gender relations are created ... through different patterns of speaking and contrasting possibilities of expression for men and women" (Gal, 1991, p. 175). According to Gal, "those who are denied speech cannot make their expression known and thus cannot influence the course of their lives" (1991, p. 175). Most cultures have specified rules governing men's and women's speech demeanor. The English expression summarizes this rule: "Maidens must be mild and meek, swift to hear and slow to speak" (Kreschen, 1998, p. 138).

While discussing the perception of silence in Nigerian culture, Medubi (2010) has pointed out that women must be silent in the family and social matters, which shows male supremacy over women (p. 37). Adetunji (2010) has also argued that Nigerian women are either silent or silenced within the dominance paradigm. He (2010) has further identified and interpreted the silencing and marginalization of women in the naming practices of the people of Nigeria: "This translates into a regime of silence and muteness foisted on the female whose language becomes silence. With silence comes an existence on the margins or peripheries of society. With silence also comes domination, exploitation, repression and lack of expression" (p. 15). In addition to silence, Adegbiya (2009, p. 71) has reported that it is culturally demanded that a great deal of politeness be shown to in-laws. Often, silence is a potent negative politeness strategy used by the wife dealing with her in-laws.

A woman's speech has a direct correlation with her acceptance by her husband. Opata quotes an Igbo proverb to the same effect: "The food of a woman who speaks sweetly will never be rejected by her husband" (1992, p. 43). This Igbo proverb reinforces the idea that the Punjabi proverbs have placed particular emphasis on the soft speech by a wife but made it exclusive for her husband. Stone (2006) has reported Danish proverbs with an emphasis on sweet, but few words by women to be appreciated: "Kind words and few are a woman's ornament" (p. 122).

Punjabi proverbs, explicitly emphasize a woman's silence as a positive trait to make her a successful wife. Lebra (1987) also quotes a Japanese proverb encouraging women to remain silent while doing his analysis, "*A woman has never spoiled anything through silence*" (p. 133). Hallsworth and Young (2008) argue in this context that the power to forbid speech presupposes the primacy of power in social relations. It is the capacity to exercise power that provides some with the ability to silence others. The act of silencing constitutes a social practice that can take many forms and can be 'good' or 'bad' depending on the context. The kinds of silencing coded as 'bad' are those that are exercised to prevent free and uncoerced communication. Quan (2015) discusses the consequences of this silencing in a hierarchical society and argues that the one who has more opportunities to speak

out is the one who has a higher social place. The people in the subordinate or lower positions are deprived of the right to speak out their own voices. That is why Chong-ho, while discussing the Korean view of speech, quotes Chiang Tai-Kung, the famous Chinese sage: "A well-taught woman should have a small voice" (1985, p. 29).

An Igbo proverb from the adjacent Yoruba culture emphasizes the maintenance of silence between the husband and wife. Opata writes, "*Seeing and keeping silent makes it possible for husband and wife to live in peace*". (Opata, 1992, p. 202). Another proverb from Nigeria stamps the role of a wife's speech habits in earning love or hatred of her spouse, "*When a woman's bad tongue earns her husband's hatred, she should not blame him*" (Opata, 1992, p. 203). Kerschen (1998), in her book on American proverbs about women, argues that underlying the lack of respect is, in actuality, a fear that women indeed might have something important to say, "The conversation of a woman is worth all the libraries in the world" (p. 113). In that case, men would have to share leadership. To prevent such a turn of events, men developed the philosophy that "*A woman has never spoiled anything with silence*" (p. 127). All this complaining about a woman's talkativeness is a way of trying to silence them altogether. Societies just need to create a myth that women talk too much and have a perfect right to tell them to shut up.

In the view of our culturematic analysis, the words of Yusuf (1994) have summarized the broader picture, "Woman's speech, according to Yoruba proverbs, violates the ethics of proportion, and is an unreliable index of her capabilities or intentions" (p. 286) and "Their talk is a problematic product of the extreme urge to react to situations by speaking. Her speech is seen as an expression of extreme (suicidal) foolhardiness which violates the ethics of self-preservation" (p. 287). The proverbs from both languages, therefore, place a low ethical value on their speech. This implies that much premium should not be placed on women's speech since it violates the ethics of sincerity. The speech is not regarded as a dependable index of her circumstances. To quote Yusuf (1994) again, "Considering these cross-cultural recommendations of verbal discretion and the equally widespread stereotype of the loquacious woman, it would seem to be suggested that women's speech would normally violate the ethics of responsible social communication" (p. 289).

The problem with this behavior is that such proverbs, disguised as "the wisdom of many, the wit of one" (Mieder, 2008, p. 5) (the traditional definition of a proverb) buy their wit and retribution at the expense of 'others'. Besides the moral, there is a consequence to consider. As a living organism permeating human life, folklore is accepted without thought just as any other form of propaganda. Subliminal cuts are dangerous, so short and unobtrusive that they slip into our subconscious and program our thinking without knowing the source. An FCDA based investigation of covert and overt connections of gender and discrimination has created an overall impression that "the attitude of the proverbs toward women's

speech is that it is immodest” (Yusuf, 2013, p. 288). From the traditional male-biased perspective, the proverbs indicate that women's speech has a low ethical value. In other words, the standards for judging women's speech seem to be higher (and less fair) than those with which other classes of speech are evaluated.

This study lays bare the prevailing gendered ideology to deconstruct the hegemony and symbolic verbal aggression against women, which is one of the fundamental aims of Feminist CDA. The study concludes that the proverbial view of gender and talk, in Punjabi as well as Yoruba proverbs, is visibly biased against women and favorable towards men. Women's talk has been depreciated, and their silence is appreciated while men's talk is delineated as a significant part of their 'manliness'. Men are advised neither to listen to the female voices nor to share any secret information with them. Such discourses are systematically employed by traditional asymmetrical societies to maintain gender imbalance in favor of one gender. According to Gal (1991), “the women who are denied speech cannot make their expression known and thus cannot influence the course of their lives” (p. 197) As Sanauddin (2015) recommends, “rather than considering folk proverbs as valuable and factual sources of cultural expression, scholars should pay more attention to their ‘performatory’, ‘derogatory’ as well as ‘declaratory’” aspects as these often relegate women (and ‘other’, weaker groups) to a lesser position in society” (p. 211), this study brings to light patriarchal attitudes and preferences in the African and Punjabi societies with references to the status accorded to women. These traditional social attitudes are supported by folklore and traditional wisdom packed in proverbs.

### **Declaration of Conflicts of Interest**

The author declared no conflicts of interest with respect to the authorship and publication of this article.

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