Representation of Men and Women in English Proverbs: Analysis of Power Relationships

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Abstract

This study explores the multiple identities of men and women in English proverbs and power relationships depicted through these identities. This research has not only discussed the representation of female gender but also covered male gender along with relationship shown between both genders in proverbs. 38 proverbs collected from two dictionaries are analyzed through the 3D model of Fairclough. All proverbs are divided into three major categories i.e., proverbs for women, proverbs for men and proverbs involving both genders. Proverbs involving women over numbered those mentioning men. Majority of the proverbs containing women have derogatory remarks for them whereas men are presented with positive connotations. A few proverbs explained the link between men and women in the form of negative and positive dependence. Proverbs involving women display a glimpse of patriarchy by portraying women as a burden, sexual object and fragile. Men on the other hand are explicitly nominated as a gender that owns the world. These proverbs are delivering such power relationships to generations and this could be one of the reasons patriarchies in different forms is still observed in the world. Studying these proverbs about their origins will further help in understanding the picture of genders in English society and how the picture has evolved socially.

Keywords: Fairclough 3D Model, Multiple Identities, English Proverbs; Patriarchy

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Introduction

Proverbs have numerous definitions varying from philosopher to philosopher and dictionary to dictionary. There are many definitions available which tried to explain proverbs precisely and accurately. According to the Cambridge Dictionary of English, a proverb is a short statement known by many people for a long time that expresses some common truth or gives advice. Merriam-Webster defines it in much similar fashion as a precise popular maxim or epigram. More comprehensive definitions are available in literature as different scholars attempted to define proverbs covering the aspects of culture, their distribution, and causes and so on. According to English writer William Penn, “The wisdom of nation lies in their proverbs.” In his book named “Proverbs are never out of season: Popular Wisdom in the Modern Age”, Meider quoted American paremiologist Bartlett Jere Whiting’s (1993) defined proverbs as:

“A proverb is an expression which, owing its birth to the people, testifies to its origin in form and phrase. It expresses what is apparently a fundamental truth – that is, a truism, – in homely language, often adorned, however, with alliteration and rhyme. It is usually short, but need not be; it is usually true, but need not be. Some proverbs have both literal and figurative meaning, either of which makes perfect sense; but more often they have but one of the two. A proverb must be venerable; it must bear the sign of antiquity, and since such signs may be counterfeited by a clever literary man, it should be attested in different places at different times. This last requirement we must often waive in dealing with every literature, where the material at our disposal is complete.” (p.80)

Looking at the origin of proverbs, they were used orally in the beginning without any evidence in written literature. They have roots in the oral traditions of a nation. Proverbs are folk literature
representing the nation’s wisdom in few lines. Mieder (2008) in his book ‘Proverbs speak louder than words: Wisdom in art, culture, folklore, history, literature and mass media’ discussed the formation of proverbs. According to him proverbs just like other folk literature genres such as jokes, riddles etc. do not come down from the sky or are simple products of mythical folks rather they are always intentionally or unintentionally coined by individuals.

He and Zhang (2018) described proverbs as a kind of folk literature that is composed of ordinary people, not scholars or officials. Workers such as peasants, cooks, hunter, sailors etc. formulate proverbs in a nonstandard form to express their experiences. They are literary gateways to language, thinking, culture, and mode of life and other social aspects of a particular nation. The roots of proverbs are in cultural concepts and social encyclopedia of a nation. Proverbs are cultural carrier and transmitters. They usually tend to change precisely over centuries by sticking to the central idea.

Proverbs are transferred from generation to generation. Meider (2008) mentioned four major sources that played a fundamental role particularly in the distribution of European proverbs and it could be generalized to other cultures as well. The first source is Roman and Greek antiquity wisdom which spread through proverbs mostly in the Latin language. Bible as the second most important source of proverbs followed by Medieval Latin as lingua franca the third and fourth source is the modern text.

In short, there are multiples ways through which proverbs spread in different cultures. Few most popular ones including the four sources of Meider are classical languages, antiquity, religious texts, modern text sources, culture etc.

He and Zhang (2018) discussed some essential features of proverbs. According to them, proverbs are both synthesized and used in non-standard form situations. They express the truth to teach people important lessons. The language of proverbs is simple and easy to understand. Besides this they are straightforward. Proverbs tend to have harmonious rhyme which makes them easy to remember and read.
Proverbs are considered culture loaded. They are pieces of language which have accumulated wisdom, distinct cultural implications and strong national characteristics (CCJK website). Culture is not only about traditions or beliefs; it tells us about the thinking and social practices of a society or a nation.

Studying the relationship between gender and language is not a recent interest of social scientists. The link between gender and language in scholarly writings was developed even before the second wave of the Women’s movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Suderland, 2006, p.2). Meider (2008) traces back the study of proverbs to the time of Aristotle. Proverbs are chunks of a language and language is considered as a mirror to nation. Edward et al., (2014) consider language as a pathway to social reality. Being a mirror to the nation, language not only throws light on the nation’s history and culture but also depicts its beliefs and values. All in all gender-related proverbs give us insight into the social reality of a particular gender in the culture of a nation.

There are countless proverbs in various cultures regarding gender roles and gender identities. There are numerous researches recently done about sexism in proverbs belonging to different nations with a major focus on the derogatory representation of women in proverbs. The researchers want to critically analyze English proverbs for multiple identities associated with different genders with a major focus on the representation of women as a part of patriarchal society.

1. How do English proverbs represent men and women in multiple identities?
2. Which power relationships are depicted through these identities?

Previous researches done on English proverbs focused majorly on women’s position illustrated through proverbs. The researchers have used 3D model of Fairclough for the critical explanation and interpretation of proverbs including linguistic features of cultural and social processes.

The researchers have chosen critical discourse analysis (CDA) as an approach for explaining social and cultural aspects of proverbs since CDA treats discourse as "a form of social practice" (Wodak, 2001, cited in Wang, 2006). CDA is in particular interested in figuring out the
relationship between power and language (Wang, 2006) which will help the researchers in analyzing the power relationships depicted in proverbs through multiple identities of men and women.

Fairclough 3D analytic model is categorized into three levels of analysis: the text, the discursive practice, and the sociocultural practice (Rodgers et al. (2005)). According to Mirzaee and Hamidi (2012), these three levels could be simplified as 1- text could be written or spoken, 2- production and interpretation of the text that is an instance of discourse practice, and 3- text as a part of social practice. The second level of analysis in Fairclough 3D model emphasizes on understanding and examination of the process of production, interpretation, and consumption of a text with the third level "sociocultural practice" focusing on issues of power (Rodgers et al., 2005, p.372).

**Methodology**

**Data Collection**

Data is collected from two dictionaries i.e., ‘the Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs’, fifth edition and ‘the Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs’, third edition. Total proverbs have been analyzed under three categories i.e., proverbs for men containing, proverbs for women and proverbs including both genders.

**Theoretical Framework**

The researchers want to analyze and explain the multiple identities both genders i.e., male and female have portrayed in English proverbs. With the help of these identities, the researchers will study power relationships in society and will try to highlight the reasons for such power relations. At first, different identities of women with both positive and negative connotations are explained followed by that of men. Another interesting aspect of proverbs would also be highlighted where the researchers will discuss the proverbs depicting both genders with some kind of interdependence.

All proverbs were not coined at once; these are rather a collection of wisdom which was formulated by a variety of people ranging from philosophers to poets not excluding common man. This is tough to trace back the joint dates of creation of these proverbs. The researchers will try to use the political, social and economic situations that were
prevailing from Elizabethan era to Victorian-era including streaks from current times.

Fairclough 3D model has been used for detailed analysis of selected proverbs because this model covers social paradigms comprehensively enabling the researchers to cover selected aspects.

**Results and Discussion**

All proverbs have been categorized according to genders they involved and the type of linkage between these genders.

**Categories of Women Proverbs**

Most of the proverbs involving women have depicted negative features of them with a few describing positive aspects of women. The researchers have tried to explain them through the following categories.

1. Women as negatively fragile, beautiful and sexual objects
2. Women as unintelligent, unproductive and gullible
3. Women as willful and evil
4. Women as burdensome
5. Women as loquacious
6. Women as a negative and positive homemaker

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serial no.</th>
<th>Proverbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>A woman and a glass are ever in danger.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Woman and a cherry are painted for their harm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>A woman is the weaker vessel.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Representation of Men and Women in English Proverbs

The words used here for showing the fragility of women are ‘vessel’ and ‘glass’. These both things are easy to break and because of this resemblance are being used for women. The adjective ‘weaker’ is used in a comparative degree which shows a woman is here compared to a man and with regard to him is explained weaker.

Women physically are designed in a delicate way to justify the notion of beauty attached to them. The metaphors used are also representing how easy it is to break a woman and play with her feelings more precisely deceiving her emotionally.

Cherry is a fruit which has been used in poetry so many times for representing a woman and beauty. Interestingly, cherry as a metaphor has been used for representing women in a sexual context in the early 1600s.

This set of proverbs is quoting the beauty and fragility of a woman in a negative way. If the traits of women in Elizabethan era and even after that in the time of Jane Austen’s ‘pride and prejudice’ are studied, they were supposed to act as someone fragile and beautiful to attract suitable marriage suitors. When Elizabeth Bennet used to perform things, which were not according to the typical traditions of that society, other women especially the ladies from Darcy’s side were astonished. Women back then were undoubtedly portrayed as sexual objects and naïve. Those who try to astray from these set paths were put back on it because of pressure from families which were in return under the pressure of society.

Even in the present world in almost all societies a woman who is gorgeous and young is often harassed by the opposite gender. This is why often young, unmarried women are not allowed by families to stay stylish and pretty to save them from any kind of sexual harm which is referred to as well in a proverb where cherry and woman are compared.
Table 2

Proverbs for women as unintelligent and unproductive

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serial No.</th>
<th>Proverbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>A woman’s work is never at an end (never done)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>A woman’s advice is best at a deadlift.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>A woman’s answer is never to seek.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Women in state affairs are like monkeys in glass-shops.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Women will say anything.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Women’s counsel is cold</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Phrases in this set of proverbs such as ‘never at end’, ‘dead lift’, ‘never to seek’, ‘monkeys in glass shop’ and ‘cold’ have been used to present women as an unintelligent creature. This is not the first time that animals or fruits have been used for representing women. But the selection of animal here is ‘monkey’ which has a long history as a trouble maker and unintelligent animal in a way that it does not think about the consequences of its actions. This is a derogatory remark for women to be compared to an animal from which nothing useful could be expected.

The interesting phrase here from a political point of view is ‘state affairs’. Any other word representing politics is not used which shows at the time when these proverbs were coined, women were not allowed to involve in state affairs or give their opinions in these matters.

Analyzing the Elizabethan era for this, women back then had no rights to get hands-on professional jobs and as far as politics was concerned, they were not bagging any political rights as well. One major restriction politically was that they were not allowed to cast vote and it truly depicts the mentality involved in
coining this proverb about the consent of women in state affairs (Gilbertson, 2015).

Women back then even in the 19th century at the time of publication of ‘Pride and Prejudice’ were not having any sound political rights. The representation of common women in the novel does strengthen the notion of not taking serious pieces of advice from women back then. Apart from a few exceptions such as protagonist woman i.e., Elizabeth Bennet, rest were shown busy in gossips that never end. They were not shown usually doing any productive activity.

These proverbs give a glimpse of patriarchy in them and it is evident from the harsh words used for women and the way soft and talkative nature is represented as unproductive and unintelligent. The power here is clearly shown in the hands of men both in politics and at homes leaving women as the gender with no authority and productivity.

Table 3

*Proverbs for women as willful and evil.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serial No.</th>
<th>Proverbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Women are the devil’s nets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Women are like wasps in their anger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Women (wives and wind) are necessary evils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>A bad woman is worse than a bad man.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>There was never a conflict without a woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>The female of the species is more deadly than the male</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The proverbs in this set are all presenting woman as evil and negative especially someone who is capable of harming others and plotting against them.

The word bank of these proverbs is highly negative starting from the words stating women as in association with devils to being a reason for all the conflicts that ever took place or will take place. This category has almost covered all the aspects in which women could be portrayed with the possession of negative and evil charms. The terms i.e., either words or phrases used for this purpose are ‘devil’s nets’, ‘necessary evils’, ‘deadly’ ‘fury’ etc. which are all very negative terms. In a couple of proverbs, women are shown in comparison with men for being more deadly. Again animal i.e., wasp is used to explain the deadliness of the females. The adjective ‘wicked’ has been used instead of bad or evil which portrays someone as in possession of all evilness.

This set has multiple explanations starting from no involvement of women in both world wars to being the one who convinced Adam for tasting the forbidden fruit and becoming the reason for a conflict. Numerous events of history could go in correspondence with the statement that women became the cause of conflicts or wars and the one which is famously quoted around the world as ‘the Trojan war’ where Helen is taken away by Paris of Troy. But if the picture is looked at from a different angle, these two characters were simply used as pawns by the gods who were distributed among their support between Greeks and Trojans. Hera, Athena, and Thetis were on the side of Greeks leaving Aphrodite, Apollo, and Poseidon with Trojans. On the whole, this could be believed that the war was not because of a woman. But if the deadliest wars fought up till now all over the world are analyzed, the reasons were men and men were the ones who committed maximum murders and showered mercilessness upon people. Adolph Hitler and Changez Khan are famous for this and the list has many more. At the same time, history has women who betrayed their countries and prepared warriors as well. This makes it hard to distinguish which gender is eviler because history has pieces of evidence for both genders’ evilness.

Evilness is something that has been usually associated with women
and the real reasons for this are unknown. Women are considered to be gifted with the power of manipulation of the minds and that is why they are used by evil forces for making men commit evil deeds (Adler, 2012). Women are generally more prone to getting jealous and devising great plots against one another and such stuff is depicted in movies, novels etc. most of the times. English literature itself has many examples of deadly women villains who without seeking help from others succeeded in killing people such as nurse Rachet from ‘One Flew Over the Cuckoo Nest’ to those who manipulated men for killing their husbands such as Cora Papadakis from ‘The Postman Always Rings Twice’. Once a woman decides to get something done, she will do everything to make it happen and this is what is portrayed through lady characters of these novels.

Nature has put the element of deadliness more in females of species whether they are humans or animals per the duties of females. Females are the ones who are supposed to take care of kids and arrange food etc. for them if fathers are incapable of doing so. Females need to protect their children from evil forces and predators. But as humans are given choice between right and wrong, females are in charge of using these capabilities negatively also which eventually make them deadlier than males.

Table 4

Proverbs for women as burdensome and troublesom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serial No.</th>
<th>Proverbs</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>If you would be HAPPY for a week take a wife; if you would be happy for a month kill a pig; but if you would be happy all your life plant a garden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Marry your son when you will, your daughter when you can</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Marry your daughters betimes, lest they marry themselves</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In this set of proverbs, women are presented with a connotation of being burdens for the family. Women are portrayed as those who are dependent on men for their worth and decisions of life even if it is the most important thing i.e., marriage.

The word ‘daughter’ is used to present women as burdens because they are considered to be dependent on family and the word ‘marry’ is making a connection to former one creating the context of marriage. The phrase ‘take a wife’ is used in a negative connotation representing woman as someone who can be purchased or bought for some time.

The reasons for this dependence are the status of women in the English society especially during the reign of Queen Elizabeth where it was a patriarchal society and women were under complete control of men. Marriages back then were contracts where women were used to bringing wealth to families especially rich families had very strict rules in this regard. Poor women still had some margin of choosing a spouse because they could not be used for bringing wealth to the family (Atkinson, 2019).

The problem of finding out a suitable husband for daughters was a big issue back then and is often depicted in the literature of that time. The all-time famous female writer ‘Jane Austen’ had presented a mirror reflection of the issue of marriages in English society even during the Victorian era. The reason why younger daughters of the Bennet family were trying to get involved with military officers was just to secure a good future by marrying a man with stable financial status. Moreover, parents were also shown involved in the struggle of finding suitable suitors for their daughters. Their stress and concerns about marriage-related stuff were presenting daughters as a burden.

Women back then were not allowed to work for themselves and help families financially which made parents treat daughters as burdens. This even at present is observable in many areas across the world where women are considered a burden because of their no contribution to the family income. What worsens the situation are they being carriers of dowry ultimately putting pressure on a family financially.
Table 5

*Proverbs for women as loquacious.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serial No.</th>
<th>Proverbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Women will have the last word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>One tongue is enough for the woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Many women, many words, many geese, many turds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Woman’s tongue wags like a lamb’s tail</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here in this category of proverbs, the gossiping habit of women has been targeted. ‘Geese’ have been used to metaphor the group of women since both like making talks but in the case of geese, it is a noise.

This is nothing new about women. Women are probably designed in such a way that they like gossiping to kill their time and gossiping also serves the purpose of catharsis. Women might have appeared as chatterboxes in the era of patriarchy in England. They had nothing more productive to do apart from taking care of the house, kids and husbands and this used to be their leisure time activity to gossip about things they like or dislike.

Men in recent studies have been found more talkative than women but their topics differ from those of ladies. Moreover, it is a general practice that new-born babies are under the supervision of mothers and for their language development they must receive inputs. The general talks of mothers even with toddlers appear meaningless. Mothers have to be talkative in this regard.

This is unfair to put a tag of ‘talkative’ on any of the genders because all become loquacious when the topic is of their interest such as men in public speaking, business deals etc. leaving women to hold the second position in such contexts. According to Susan Herring who studied the pattern of men linguists’ messages.
over professional topics in online discussions, the length of men’s messages was twice those of women. (Tannen, 2017).

Moreover, according to studies at University of Maryland School of Medicine, women have an abundance of a protein that helps in language development in mammals as compared to men and that is why they tend to appear talkative (National Geographic, 2013).

Table 6

*Proverbs for women as positive and negative homemakers.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serial No.</th>
<th>Proverbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>A house full furnished makes a woman wise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Men make houses, women make homes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>The more women look in their glass the less they look to their house.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Woman in this set of proverbs has been shown as an entity that shall be confined to the walls of a house along with someone only who is capable of making a house a home.

The furnishing of the house has always been associated with married women. The phrase ‘full furnished’ is presenting both positive and negative portrayal of a woman. A woman had this duty of making a house nicely furnished and beautiful and her wisdom was judged by this in the times of patriarchy or more precisely in Shakespearean age. Women were involved in learning knitting and other stuff that can help them remarkably decorate their houses. This was cruel on the part of men to judge women based on their aesthetic sense. It is positive in the sense that this shows the creativity of women.

Men have been assigned by nature the duty of acting as an earning hand that is capable of building a
Representation of Men and Women in English Proverbs

shelter for his family but he lacks the warmth and loving nature of women which is imparted in them again by divine forces so that they could help their children feel secure at times when they are dependent mothers. Women have naturally been given this element of spreading love and this is why they are labelled as homemakers in a positive sense.

The other side of the picture where women simply lose the balance between making a house beautiful and making themselves pretty, they are portrayed as the ones who lack wisdom and are not good wife material. This could be a matter of fact since keeping house fully furnished and nice is a full-time job and usually, it has been observed that those women who are good at keeping houses clean are not much great at taking cares of themselves as both tasks are time consuming and exhausting.

On the whole, it is shown here that it depends on women what she prefers to do and ultimately that decides her worth as wife.

Women are presented with positive attributes here but in a depending way. They are appreciated for being capable of making a house into a home but this quality is applauded by putting house as a reference point along with marriage. Woman as an individual is not presented with many qualities that make her a great gender.

Categories of Men Proverbs

There are not many proverbs as compared to that of women which are simply involving men, rather they are mostly shown in comparison with women. The researchers have found some proverbs about men which are categorized as below:

1. Men as demanding but not burdensome
2. Men as the ruling gender
3. Men as loyal and lively
4. Men as bad/cruel at a young age
The analysis of these proverbs has shown the comparison between man and woman in the form of son and daughter. Son, on one hand, is shown as demanding but in the very next proverb has appeared to be someone capable of sharing family burdens. Phrase ‘son full and tattered’ are used for former representation and ‘marry your son when you will’ for latter one.

The first proverb has depicted a son as someone who has high demands from the family. This is a general belief that daughters are more compromising and are gifted with the tendency of making sacrifices. Even if they are hungry, bankrupt or emotionally empty, they will not express it usually in order not to distress their parents. This tendency is lacking in sons who in general are believed to be satisfied before daughters. There could be many social reasons to this discrimination. Probably sons are the earning hands of the family and daughters are not on the same level, former’s needs have to be met as a reward for their financial assistance to the family or more particularly to father. Sons are the ones who inherit family status and position moreover they are expected to take care of parents in their old age. May be parents have this insecurity that their sons would not give them proper attention and may not fulfil their demands in old age if they are not pampering them when parents are capable of it. Probably this pampering and importance make sons act tattered even when they have everything to gain more of them.

There is a general perception about boys in almost all societies that they are not bound to any specific age for getting married and they shall not be either. Son is considered as
someone whose marriage is not a big responsibility for the family as he is the earning hand of the family and can contribute to his marriage monetarily. In middle ages, even in the English society women were not allowed to contribute to the financial status of the family. They were limited to house and this is depicted in the second proverb. Women even after getting political and economic rights are still not generally given equal financial status in the family and are considered as a burden and responsibility on the shoulders of parents. Boys have a choice to get married when they want but in the case of girls, they are believed to be married as soon as possible. Getting girls married is generally linked to social relief of parents and the same thing is depicted in the second proverb.

Table 8

*Proverbs for men as the ruling gender.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serial No.</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Boys will be boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>It’s a man’s world</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A Close analysis of these proverbs has put phrases ‘man’s world’ and ‘boys will be boys’ under the limelight for understanding the power this gender has been given since the beginning of the human race. The first proverb has used words ‘man’ and ‘world’ than other synonyms for these words such as boy, male, and earth, universe etc. respectively. This selection of words could be explained through the connotations associated with these words. The word ‘man’ gives a sense of some authority, standard or class. Man is not simply representing the biological differences males have from females rather it is explaining the social, economic and political differences of powers. Same is more or less the case with the word ‘world’. The world is not simply denoting the
planet earth rather it is covering all kind of social, economic, and political aspects. The world is not something concrete or physical rather it is abstract of a place where people live in some hierarchy and they have some kind of power relationships.

As far as the proverb ‘boys will be boys’ is analyzed for power relations or any other significant connotation it has, it is in social practice used as a form of excuse often uttered by the mothers of boys. Not just mothers, but their sisters and spouses also used this proverb in a light mood and tone for referring to the common practices of boys such as winking at girls, forgetting anniversaries or birthdays and the list goes on. This is used when something typically related to boys is exhibited by them.

The proverb ‘it’s a man’s world’ could be explained from diverse perspectives. Men are generally treated as the head of the family. This is a social practice of raising boys in a way that their opinions have edge over daughters. At times the son’s words are given more importance than those of mothers just because he is a man. In the early politics of the world, men were only eligible for high posts and even women were not given any representation in the parliament.

At present, there are many states where equal rights are there but people hesitate to choose women as their heads. Women are not only physically weaker than men but also made socially and economically by adopting such social practices.

There are many other possible explanations for this proverb as proverbs are wise sayings which are depicting the societal practices and universal truths. Islam and Christianity both have the concept of Adam and Eve portraying Eve as second in position to Adam giving a clear indication that this is a world made for a man with a woman as someone created from him.
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Table 9

Proverbs for men as loyal and lively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serial No.</th>
<th>Proverbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Feed a DOG for three days and he will remember your kindness for three years; feed a cat for three years and she will forget your kindness in three days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>A man is as old as he feels, and a woman as old as she looks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This is a common practice to use animals for the representation of human traits and this is what we can trace back to a type of storytelling called ‘Fabula’. It is a general fact about dogs that they are loyal and faithful to their masters or the ones who are taking care of them. The dog could be taken for man because of many reasons and one prominent is their protective nature. Cat is often used connotatively for a woman because of its sassy nature, tantrums and a famous catfight which the animal is often found engaged in. Close analysis of the first proverb represents man as someone who will stay loyal forever or at least is going to remember one’s goodness as compared to a cat which upon trivial issues or disappointment is going to forget all goods you did for her.

The disloyalty mentioned here is not just related to relationships rather there are numerous examples in history where women have cheated on other women and men depending on the context. In an article on a website ‘history collection’ by Natasha Sheldon, there are enlisted 16 all-time famous disloyal women who played with complete nations. Starting from Scandinavian Noble Woman named Brita Tott who was a medieval spy to Aztec Princess called La Malinche who was turned into a slave because she betrayed her country to Spain.

Apart from these incidents of the disloyalty of famous women in past, there is another explanation for this. It is a general description of women in almost all societies that they are quite emotional and could be fooled easily by involving emotions.
Women are not as much exposed to worldly affairs as do men and probably this is why latter are capable of judging people more efficiently. Women have been made by nature sentimental to take care of her relationships whether it is her husband, children or parents. For the most of the life, it is a woman who sacrifices for her relationships and when someone offers to her the care she is giving to others with hidden motives, it has remained common practice that she gets entrapped.

Men on the contrary are having strong worldly wisdom and probably they have a strong sense of justice. Maybe this is why they are not easily trapped through emotional dramas.

There is no evidence stating that men are more devoted in a relationship than women or are never involved in disloyalty. Usually, men are found capable of maintaining two or more relationships at a time. They know dealing with women emotionally very well and even if they are confronted; men get away with cheating claiming it to be a mere mistake. Women are expected to forgive them to maintain the relationship or family and are often presented with excuses that ‘boys will be boys’. This has become somehow a general behaviour towards the disloyalty of men that we try to figure out either the things he was lacking in a relationship or issues in a woman he was committed to. He is generally supported by the females of his family for getting away with disloyalty.

The second proverb has targeted one of the most sensitive issues related to women i.e., their age. It is a normal practice that men in early age are taught not to inquire age from women and are left with an option of guessing it. To explore societal reasons for this sensitivity, the recent statement was given by French author Yann Moix (Williams, 2019) ‘The body of a 25-year-old woman is extraordinary. The body of a woman of 50 is not extraordinary at all”. It is giving an idea that why women need to stay young. This is a universal reality that both men and women need one another for spending their lives because human is a social animal but both have set standards for choosing the other one as your partner. From the perspective of men, it has been generally understood that they prefer young women as their partners and probably women try to stay young and
hide their age to get due attention from the opposite gender.

A man’s role in a relationship is to provide the female with protection and care which is not related to his age factor at all (Bacon, n.d.). Moreover, it is general practice in societies all over the world that women prefer marrying older men and vice versa. A research about a decade ago stated that preindustrial Finland men shall marry women with 15 years age difference to have healthy children (Biello, 2007). This depicts that people’s belief that men are as old as they feel rather, they look maybe because whatever expected from them in a relationship has nothing to do with age.

Table 10

Proverbs for men as cruel/bad at a young age.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serial No.</th>
<th>Proverbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Better be an old man’s darling, than a young man’s slave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>A good man is hard to find</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This pair of proverbs is portraying a negative picture of men as cruel, dishonest, and carefree and the list males. The interesting thing in the second proverb is the adjective used ‘good’. This is referring to the overall qualities of man. No other adjective like ‘honest man’, ‘decent man’ etc. has been used instead ‘good’ is used expressed an overall flaw of a man.

If we look at the style of the first proverb, it appears more like a warning than a piece of advice. The two nouns on different extremes i.e., slave and darling have been used to make it sound more like a warning. If it were to act as an advisor, the word ‘wife’ could have been used instead of ‘darling; and ‘slave’.

It has been generally observed that old men because of their age gap biologically become soft-spoken and
dependent on their wives for most of the things. An interesting thing to be discussed here is the reason women give for choosing older men for keeps going. From the hardships of finding a decent and nice man which is addressed as a good man in the proverb to the advice given about preferring old man in a relationship, man is shown as someone who with power in hands is no one to rely on completely.

In both proverbs again the word ‘man’ is used other than any other synonym which could present dating/marriage. According to Patrick et al. in 2019, women are assumed to choose older men to secure some financial support, the environment in which they want to raise their children and so on. All these economic, social and biological reasons make a young woman a darling of an older man. But if we look at men when they are in the early thirties and late twenties, they are generally under the sheer pressure of developing their career and secure future. If they get married in that age, there are fewer chances for a wife to enjoy a luxurious life until and unless the guy is some millionaire. This first proverb is simply referring to the reality of the economical struggle of men in early age and the usual need of women for being with someone financially stable in a balanced way.

Categories for Representation of Both Genders

There are few proverbs which are representing both males and females and are categorized into two categories as below:

1. Negative dependence
2. Positive dependence
Table 11

Proverbs showing negative dependence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serial No.</th>
<th>Proverbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>A blind man’s wife needs no paint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>A deaf husband and a blind wife are always a happy couple</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This category includes those proverbs in which both genders in a marital context are showing negative dependence on each other. In these proverbs, harsh words are used for the depiction of situations in which husband and wife could stay happy forever. Words such as ‘blind’, ‘deaf’ and ‘no paint’ could have been replaced by decent words which convey no harshness.

This is not the issue of current decade or century rather many scholars, psychologists and researchers have been digging into the affairs of married life and how they could be resolved in a proper way to make marriage a happy relationship for both husband and wife. In these proverbs, the most common issues of husband and wife are being targeted in a mock tone. A woman has a moral and religious duty of staying gorgeous and well dressed for her husband. This not only gets her relationship stronger with husband but also decreases the chances of disloyalty by the husband because men have been generally found violating vows of marriage for other beautiful ladies. But if a husband is blind, society takes away the right of looking gorgeous by wearing nice dresses and putting on makeup from a woman because she has no one to commend her. This shows that the wife has to suffer equally from the imparities of a husband without asking for her consent. This is what society expects from her.

Analysis of the second proverb has mentioned the weaknesses of both genders i.e., talks for women and lack of beauty of men. Usually, women have been observed to be prettier than men and pretty women usually want handsome men to make their wedding couple perfect. Women are the ones which give attention to minor details
such as hair of groom, his muscles, and belly etc. before accepting him by heart. If a woman is blind, she is unable to pay attention to these details eventually accepting her husband as a beautiful man. For men, the gossiping habits of women are often bothersome and they do show desires of finding a perfect solution for this problem and it is considered as a blessing for a man to be deaf in married life. In this way, he does not have to listen to his wife who is chattering most of the times.

Table 12

*Proverbs for positive dependence.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serial No.</th>
<th>Proverbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>A good husband makes a good wife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>A worthy woman is the crown of her husband.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Behind every successful man is a woman</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Proverbs in this category are presenting the positive picture of the relationship between both genders whether it is a marital relationship, mother-son relationship or vice versa. These proverbs have put forward the notion that both genders need each other for happy relationships because both are gifted with different characteristics.

In the first proverb, adjective ‘good’ has been used for both husband and wife which covers all qualities one needs to be nice and gentle and probably this is the reason ‘good’ is preferred as an adjective. In the second proverb, there is a use of word ‘husband’ but in contrast ‘wife’ is not there rather the phrase we see is a combination of adjective and noun i.e., ‘worthy woman’. Contradictory to the first proverb, the selection of adjective in the second one has made criteria strict for a female to become a crown of man. Probably here the wife is not just adding joy to his life rather is going to be his crown and crown...
has to be beautiful to be worn on the head to add to the handsomeness of a husband. In the third proverb, general words ‘man’ and ‘woman’ are used to state a fact which applies to every relationship. This could be the reason there is no mention of a particular relationship where man is successful because of a woman.

The first proverb is referring to the idea that in the Elizabethan era with the consent of parents, boys were eligible for getting married at the age of 14 and girls at 12. This was acceptable but boys tend to not get married at the ages from 20 to 30. On the other hand, girls’ preferable marriage age was either 17 or 21 (“5 facts about marriage, love, and sex in Shakespeare’s England”, 2016). The age of 17 to 21 is where a human regardless of a gender normally starts understanding worldly affairs and it is easy to mould young mind into a way one wants to do it. A young girl if married at this age is going to have a major influence from her husband and if he is having great qualities, the wife is automatically going to imitate them. This proverb fits into the situation England were having at the time of Queen Elizabeth but if we look at this from Pakistani context, this is what often has been observed happening in underprivileged areas where girls are depending on husbands for all types of grooming.

The second proverb is not only confined to 15th or 16th-century situation but it is still observable at present times. This proverb has possibly more than one explanation. If worthy here is taken in terms of wealth and money, in Elizabethan era, women with a good amount of money were treated as the crown of a husband and same is observable in present societies around the world. But looking at the streak of moral values, this proverb acts as both good news and advice for both wife and husband respectively that a wife with good morals, great qualities etc. eventually serves the purpose of a crown of a husband which every woman wants to achieve.

This is nature’s law that both genders are made to rely on each other and the role of a woman in the life of a man is very important. A woman has a nurturing and nourishing nature; she is capable of ruling the heart and mind of man and this is why a woman has always a great share of credit in the success of man.
Conclusions

The researchers have explained the multiple identities of both genders and the kind of power relationships depicted through proverbs.

Proverbs for women are greater in number than men that indicate she has been a subject of interest for centuries and her position in the power circle is not clear. These proverbs are also an attempt to define the position of women in the power structure of society.

Women are portrayed in a way that they by default qualities are targeted with derogatory remarks such as their talking habit which is essential for newly born babies and they are also born with a high quantity of protein that helps in language development. Moreover, proverbs related not to seeking any kind of advice from women and showing them as forbidden ones in politics are a mirror to patriarchy at the time of formulation of these proverbs. Deadly nature of women is again presented in a way that they are symbols of danger and are at the bottom of a conflict. There is not even a single proverb portraying their deadly nature with a positive connotation.

Females are in few proverbs attributed with great qualities but about marriage and home, not on an individual basis.

Proverbs are transmitted from generations to generations and that is why this could also be one of the reasons patriarchal notion is still found in societies.

The negative attributes of men are presented positively and even if they are explicit, societal practices accept them positively such as son full and tattered. Males attributes are expressed with individuality and most of the proverbs talking about men have presented them in positive manners keeping power in their hands.

Few proverbs have shown the dependence of both genders on each other where the notion of women rights could be observed. Women have been given importance but in a limited way and that too from the reference of a man. She is crown but of a husband, she in herself is not a crown, she is wise but if taking care of the house. Power in both conditions relies upon men.

One interesting thing to be noted here is the gender who has formulated these proverbs. Back in
Elizabethan time, the power was relying upon the hands of men. It would be significant to further investigate the origins of proverbs and discuss them according to the features of those eras. This will help researchers understand whether such proverbs are applicable in present times or not.

The researchers could not figure out the meanings of a few proverbs that were excerpts of some literature-based proverbs. With more extensive study, such proverbs can reinforce the findings further.

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