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Tradition and Transformation: The Role of Pashtunwali in Shaping Women's Political Identities

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Abstract. This research investigates the impact of Pashtunwali on the women of Pashtun's political behavior, concentrating on how it restricts their political involvement. Via feminist geographical framework, the research engages in thematic textual analysis of historical texts and case studies, including the Afghan activist Malala Joya, the study highlights how legal reforms, education and social movements resist the gender's values of Pashtunwali. It concludes that while Pashtunwali implements values of patriarchy, reinterpretation of its values can assist women in their political rights and fostering change.

Keywords: Pashtunwali, gender roles, political identity, women's empowerment, transformation

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Научная статья

Традиция и трансформация: роль пуштунвали в формировании политической идентичности женщин

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Аннотация. Рассматривается традиционный пуштунский кодекс поведения, пуштунвали, и его влияние на политическую идентичность и участие пуштунских женщин. Пуштунвали, неписанный племенной кодекс, регулирующий социальное поведение, устанавливает строгие гендерные роли, которые ограничивают участие женщин в общественной и политической жизни. В кодексе особое внимание уделяется таким понятиям, как честь (нанг), гостеприимство (мелмастья) и уединение (пурда), которые определяют частную и общественную сферы и способствуют ограничению женщин домашними обязанностями. Несмотря на эти ограничения, в статье исследуется, как современные факторы, такие как образование, правовые реформы и общественные движения, меняют гендерное пространство.

Центральное место в исследовании занимает противоречие между традиционными ценностями и современным стремлением к гендерному равенству, поскольку пуштунские женщины все чаще требуют участия в политической и общественной жизни. Используя феминистский географический подход, в статье исследуются способы, с помощью которых пуштунвали создает гендерное пространство, ограничивая мобильность женщин и их политическую активность. В то время как формальное участие в политической жизни по-прежнему в значительной степени ограничено пуштунвали, неформальные формы политического влияния, такие как социальная активность, посредничество в конфликтах и семейные переговоры, позволяют женщинам косвенно участвовать в политических процессах.

В статье использованы этнографические и исторические тексты, а также тематические исследования, в том числе об активности Малалай Джойи, афганской женщины, которая бросила вызов пуштунвали, чтобы утвердить свою политическую идентичность. Сопротивление Джойи подчеркивает потенциал развития пуштунвали, демонстрируя, как образование и феминистские движения бросают вызов патриархальным структурам. Исследование подчеркивает, что, хотя гендерные нормы пуштунвали глубоко укоренились, они не являются непреодолимыми для изменений, особенно по мере того, как женщины получают образование, политические права и участвуют в глобальных феминистских движениях.

В исследовании делается вывод о том, что пуштунвали, несмотря на ограничительные меры, предлагает возможность для переосмысления, где такие ключевые ценности, как прощение и гостеприимство, могут быть адаптированы для содействия гендерному равенству и расширению политических прав и возможностей женщин. В документе содержится призыв к переоценке традиционных норм в патриархальных обществах, предполагающий, что аналогичные преобразования могут быть произведены в отношении гендерных норм в других сельских и племенных обществах, где политическая активность женщин также ограничена культурными традициями. В исследовании подчеркивается, что традиции и современность не обязательно должны быть взаимосвя-

ключающими, и благодаря их переосмыслению гендерное равенство может быть достигнуто в таких культурных рамках, как пуштунвали.

Ключевые слова: пуштунвали, гендерные роли, политическая идентичность, расширение прав и возможностей женщин, трансформация

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Introduction

Pashtunwali is the unwritten tribal code of the Pashtun people, which has been an entrenched framework governing Pashtun community for centuries. It is the compendium guide for social behavior that would regulate interpersonal relations, tribal governance, conflict resolution, and define the roles of individuals. Although deeply embedded within Pashtun identity and tradition [1]. Pashtunwali also compels gendered spaces and roles, with particular emphasis on women's restricted spatial mobility and political engagement. Pashtunwali is the informal tribal code for the Pashtun people that have been an entrenched framework in governing the Pashtun communities for centuries. It is the compendium guide to social behavior that regulates interpersonal relations, tribal governance, conflict resolution, and defines the roles of individuals [2].

This paper analyses how Pashtunwali remains relevant today for Pashtun women, especially in relation to state laws and globalized norms, which have initiated external pressure on the system [3]. Although the basics of Pashtunwali relating to nang, or honor, melmastia, or hospitality, and badal, or revenge, remain strongly influential, its gendered framework, purdah, limits women to private, domestic roles, severely circumscribing them to public and political life [4]. This tension between tradition and modernity, particularly in women's rights matters, poses the important question: How does a traditional legal and ethical code like Pashtunwali shape the political identities of Pashtun women? Can it be reinterpreted or challenged to allow greater political agency for women? In what ways do modern developments in education, legal reforms, and social movements cut across the gender norms? This paper shall attempt to answer these questions through a critical review of the gendered spaces created by Pashtunwali, examining the possibility for change as the Pashtun society confronts modernizing forces.

A central question in this research is: In what ways does Pashtunwali, as a traditional and patriarchal code, shape and constrain the political identities and participation of women in Pashtun society, and how might it be reinterpreted or repurposed to open up space for greater female agency in the public sphere? The tension between tradition and modernity forms the crux of this inquiry, as it foregrounds how the gendered construction of Pashtunwali - involving the emphasis on purdah and notions of zan and nang - circumscribes women's mobility and political participation. Through an investigation into education, legal reforms, and modern feminist movements, the study probes the possibility of transformation which can be attained within the Pashtun cultural context. Can Pashtunwali evolve into its core value while leaving an opening for the rising call for women's rights and political representation?

That will orient the research in discussing a possibility of change in the dynamics on the sociopolitical dimensions within the Pashtun society as it struggles with globalization norms and the imposition of modern characteristics of gender equality.

Literature Review

Pashtunwali is the uncoded tribal code of conduct for the people of Pashtun, has been an important framework guiding their personal and social behavior, and social relationships for ages [1]. Several prominent works have formed the understanding of Pashtunwali and its role in defining gender roles, specifically the women's role in the society of Pashtun. Significant contributions in the literature include the early works such as Barth's (1959) "Political Leadership among Swat Pathans", and Elphinstone's (1815) "An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul", as well as a later contribution from the writer like James (1962) in "The Way of the Pathans". These sources provide significant information about the core values of Pashtunwali [2].

In the literature, The Pashtun code of life is often highlighted in terms of its gendered nature, with many scholars noting the rooted patriarchy entrenched in the code. For instance, Colonel Jonathan Hawkins Highlights the complete enforcement of women's responsibilities within domestic domain, where women are considering firstly as a protector and guardian of family respect, restricted by expectations of modesty and submission [5]. The duty of women must be defined through their political and public life's participation. Ashish Shukla (2019) says that women are respected due to their duties in protecting the family honor, and their non participation in the political and public domains proves the importance of patriarchy in Pashtun society [6]. This framework purifies them in invisible in formal political domain like jirga, a council of traditional elders, where important decisions are made.

Further, Barth's ethnographic work (1959) in Swat Pathan society highlights how Pashtunwali's gender values not only govern individual behavior but also combine male dominance in the public domain [7]. Fayaz ud Din (2019) underscores an indirect shift in political participation, perceiving a rise in Pashtun women's involvement in local democracy, credited to growing education levels and developing social behaviors towards women's roles [8]. Shukla (2019) and Hawkins (1950) both point to the cumulative role of women in casual policymaking procedures, though they remain omitted from formal leadership roles.

Recent studies have exposed that legal and educational reforms are central to optimistic changing in gender norms. Farooq, Bashir and Muhammad (2024) note that educational preaching and campaigns in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have contributed to an important increase in female literacy,

which in turn has permitted to struggle against the gendered restrictions imposed by Pashtunwali. As more women are gaining education, they become aware of their social and political rights. These findings repeat those of Fayaz ud Din (2019), who reports a flow in Pashtun women's participation in local governance' specifically via women's quotas in provincial assemblies and in other departments. These steps, while controversial in more traditional areas, are observed as significant drivers of women's political engagement [7].

Though, Malika Afridi (2019) and other feminist scholars argue that these reforms, while giving rights to women, are still positioned within an agenda that always focuses traditional Pashtun norms. Feminist geography provides a theoretical lens to recognize these gendered spaces, highlighting how women resist the restrictions of Pashtunwali to revive their political identities. Afridi (2019) emphasizes that women, in spite being restricted to private domain, are not passive; they involve in informal political activities like social activism and family mediation, which encourages them to put influence on political decisions [9].

Despite important research on Pashtunwali and its influence on gender roles, there are important gap in literature, importantly in connection to the political involvement of Pashtun women. Much of the existing literature highlights on cultural analysis and the preventive nature of Pashtunwali, but few studies investigate the connection between women's political agency and between traditional gender roles [10]. While Shukla (2019) and Afridi (2019) have started to investigate this connection, they were unsuccessful to fully analyze the particular role of legal reforms, education and social movements in changing for women within the Pashtun context. Additionally, empirical studies on how women in different regions resist these changing dynamics are limited [7].

This study aims to fill these gaps by contribution a detailed examination of the how political identities of Pashtun women are formed by both traditional values and modern factors. By investigating how legal, educational reforms and social movements interconnect with Pashtunwali, this study provides a more significant understanding of how women in Pashtun society negotiate their political rights. It also explores the role of informal political participation, such as social activism and conflict mediation, in reviving political lives in Pashtun communities.

Methodology

This study is following a feminist geographical framework to investigate how the code of Pashtunwali structure and restricts gendered space and, in turn, commands women's political participation. The connection of gender, power, and space highlights how Pashtunwali's multi-dimensional limitations create a boundary between private and public domains, determining women's political identities. The research design is dual in nature, the thematic textual analysis of the main traits of Pashtunwali and case study analysis of Pashtun women who have resisted these limitations. Both methods are managed by secondary sources, providing a complex and empirical and comprehensive basis for the study.

The thematic textual analysis legal, historical and ethnographic texts that highlights the rules of Pashtunwali, such as Nang (Honor), Purdah (Seclusion), Zan (Women's honor). Primary sources for this analysis include Barth's (1959) "Political Leadership among Swat Pathans", Elphinstone's (1815) "An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul", James's "The Way of the Pathans". These sources highlight key perceptions into Pashtunwali and its gender norms. The main principles from these texts will be coded thematically to regulate how Pashtunwali implement gendered barriers, with particular emphasis on women's roles within the private range and the domination of their public involvement.

This study implements also case study of Pashtun woman, focusing on secondary data sources that recorded their experiences of directing or challenging Pashtunwali's gendered limitations. These case study will be drawn from biographies and autobiographies of Pashtun women, which make available personal accounts of their political activism and lives. The media reports and scholarly articles are also included of Pashtun women, including the profile of Malala Joya. Malala Joya is an Afghan activist who resisted both Pashtunwali and patriarchal structures of the Pashtun's code. These case studies will provide valuable insights into how the women of Pashtun have either obeyed to or struggled against the traditional gender roles implemented by Pashtunwali, and how they have involved with public and political life in indirect or refined ways.

The analysis is based entirely on secondary data from legal documents, historical texts, biographies and media reports. All these sources will be analyzed via narrative agender analysis to trace the political routes of Pashtun women, specifically their involvement with or struggle against the Pashtunwali's gender values. Thematic coding will be applied to find repeated themes of gendered space, political participation and the negotiations of cultural roles. Additionally, a comparative approach will be applied to investigate the differences in Pashtunwali's gender values in different settings, highlighting how modern aspects like legal reforms, education and social movements affect women's participation in public life.

Theoretical Framework

The study of the gendered spaces that have shaped the political identities of women in Pashtun society is done using feminist geography. It explains how space is socially constructed, and gender roles are maintained through division between public and private spaces. The women are confined in the private/domestic sphere, while the Pashtunwali space is dominated more by men in the public sphere. Such spatial segmentation further reinforces male hegemony by excluding women from governance and decision-making powers and ensconcing them again within domestic walls. Subservience and modesty were their domain; politics was not. The built gendered spaces of Pashtun society also directly influence the political identity of women: its restriction upon women's participation in the public sphere. While purdah as a rule keeps women physically away from men, it also prohibits them from any political and public forums, such as the jirga, which serves as the nucleus of tribal government. It underlines the view

that politics is for males and the role of women is confined to the private sphere, which further means a weak political impact by them.

Discussion

Pashtunwali is more than an unwritten cultural code; it also acts as a comprehensive moral, ethical, social, and legal system in the Pashtun society. Compared to the modern systems of statutory law prevalent in the lands, Pashtunwali is very much alive because it lives on through forms like the jirga (tribal council) and social consensus. These customary actions enforce its concepts, making it quite effective in keeping social life in order and relationship norms intact within the Pashtun communities [11]. This is what makes strict gender roles and the corresponding spatial hierarchies defining features of Pashtunwali, mapping the boundaries of public and private life. More central values of Pashtunwali are nang (honor), melmastia (hospitality), badal (revenge), nanawati (forgiveness), and purdah (privacy). These values are highly gendered, reinforcing men's dominance over public domains while restricting women to housecraft. Another such prescription is purdah, which affects for the social and physical distancing of men from women, thus making it virtually impossible for women to be openly worked or to take part in political life [12].

Pashtunwali, on the other hand, provides the ultimate authority in more rural areas, where state governance may be virtually absent or weak. The most profound impact of the code is actually in these contexts, extending beyond the ambit of interpersonal relations to govern also the spatial and social hierarchies that give shape and definition to gendered spaces. Women are expected to maintain family honor through modesty, obedience, and seclusion, and behavior is tightly controlled so that no dishonor befalls the family or tribe [13]. Pashtunwali is not, however, impervious to change. More contact between Pashtun society and outside forces such as globalization, reforms of the state, and women's rights movements may increasingly make the re-construction of the code possible to allow for increased participation of women in public and political life. Education and law reforms have already begun to challenge these traditional gender norms by putting tools in the hands of women to negotiate their roles within Pashtun society. Still, how far Pashtunwali can be changed while its core cultural identity is kept intact is a matter of great debate [3].

In Pashtun society, women are meant to be regarded as guardians of family honor, and their activities have to be monitored in such a way that they do not cause some kind of dishonour to their families. To that end, their conduct, dressing, and public appearance are regulated in such a manner as to meet the expected moral standards [14]. Women, being honor-keepers, are expected mainly to preserve the prestige of their families through submission, modesty, and chastity. In many cases, perceived dishonor among females through acts such as defiance of family expectations, unsanctioned mobility, or transgressing into roles traditionally reserved for the opposite gender will carry with it severe consequences, including social ostracism, physical violence, and even honor killings [12].

The women approach is very strong in patriarchal traditions, where a man is seen as the protector of his female members and the women have to return this by maintaining the moral standard of the family. Public participation, political engagement, and leadership traditionally have been the order of men, as they had to act as representatives of their respective families and tribes before tribal councils (jirgas) and other communal decision-making forums. The exclusion of women from the public sphere legitimizes and perpetuates the mindset that a woman belongs indoors, not outside; in society, it is observed that a woman performs her roles if she had borne children and married [15].

Ultimately, nanawati enables women to bring about negotiations of solutions and persuade conflicted parties to reconcile. As mothers, sisters, or wives, women may have significant influence over male members of their families, guiding their decisions and dictating the direction of tribal feuds. Indeed, it is indirect political participation which allows women to surmount some of the disabilities of Pashtunwali, even though formal leadership lies outside their reach [16].

Having outlined the foundational role of Pashtunwali in determining gender roles, the next sections investigate how modern forces, above all education and law reform, challenge such traditional structures. The most important indirect political influence source in the world of Pashtuns is perhaps nanawati that means forgiveness for peace and settlement [17]. Older women in the family are mostly forwarded as negotiators to secure peace and forgiveness between the warring factions [18]. Therefore, in this role, women are now an integral part of social life to maintain harmony in society but are excluded from formal institutions of politics, like the jirga. Navigating these informal channels, Pashtun women have been able to participate in political decisions without head-on challenge to the patriarchal structure of Pashtunwali [6].

As an indicator that provided women with a limited position within political life, conflict mediation proved to be fundamental in itself, but education has rather emerged to be the actual agent challenged by the gendered limitations of Pashtunwali [19]. Although men and women are roughly evenly taking on this program of formal education, women begin to question the traditional norms placed upon them within the private sphere [20]. Education empowers women with knowledge and skills but also increases their understanding of rights and allows them to ask for participation in more public life [21].

One simple example of the power of education is the growing participation of Pashtun women in local elections and as champions of women's rights. More educated women are going to take community leadership roles, challenge the isolation, and push for changes that will allow greater gender equality across social and political landscapes [8]. In this manner, education equips Pashtun women with the capability to define new roles as they enter the public domain from that of the private, domestic one. On the contrary, education equips women with advocacy tools and addresses directly the gender reforms which challenge the existing gender norms embedded within Pashtunwali. As these women begin to take up the public sphere, they change their narrative at both family and community levels

and become role models for future generations. Education has thus now become an instrument through which women's political identities may develop in the Pashtunwali context [17].

At the second level of legal reforms, the political landscape for Pashtun women is being transformed. State-driven initiatives in quota lists for women on local councils and reserved seats in parliament make it possible for more women than have heretofore to be formally represented within decision-making processes [22]. Reforms that impact exclusionary practices of Pashtunwali, that old set of inhibitions surrounding women's presence in the public sphere—have a direct bearing. For example, the introduction of women's quotas in local governance means that Pashtun women are given the opportunity to represent their communities in ways not previously possible. Quotas are highly important in the expansion of women's representation in political institutions and provide a voice for them in matters of policy considerations. Even though opposed by the conservative elements of Pashtun society at its implementation, these reforms mark a giant step forward in the reinterpretation of Pashtunwali to include women in public life [23].

The work of the Pashtun diaspora has, at the same time, been vital to the progress of working out and disseminating progressive ideas among Pashtun society [24]. Many stay within the Western diaspora, where different cultural and legal systems are more likely to support the notion of gender equality. Exposure often then leads to a reinterpretation of those cultural values when members of the diaspora return home, bringing with them perspectives on women's roles in public life that are new for those in their home country [25]. The communities shape the current discourse on women's rights within Pashtun society through remittances, social media, and diaspora activism [26]. Mass movements across transnational feminist movements, for instance the Malala Fund, which campaigns for the right to education and political participation of girls and women, have been impactful in similar ways [27]. They bridge local Pashtun and global feminist activism, resulting in a momentum for change. International activism by Pashtun women, such as Malala Yousafzai, has motivated many within the Pashtun community to reexamine gender roles that the Pashtunwali embedded in their traditions [28].

Although Pashtunwali is extremely flexible in matters other than gender, it has been extremely conservative about change in gender roles, particularly about the participation of women in politics [29]. The code stresses the concept of purda and zan in such a way that it does not allow women to be as mobile as men and restricts their access to most matters of public life [30]. Such challenges to these restrictions are forcefully opposed by the conservative elements in Pashtun society, which view such changes as a threat to the integrity of Pashtunwali and the moral fabric of the tribe [31]. However, education, legal reforms, and feminist movements are increasingly challenging this traditional gender role. The educated women of cities are questioning the traditional constraints imposed by Pashtunwali and especially demanding opportunities to engage in public and political life [32]. Other laws

legislated by the government with the intent to end the discrimination against women, including protection of rights to education, inheritance, and political representation, have also opened new avenues through which women can continue to challenge constraints of Pashtunwali [33].

Results and Analysis

A very critical finding of this study is the constant and deeply felt tension between traditional gender norms of Pashtunwali and the growing demand for women's political participation in modern Pashtun society. As Pashtunwali continues to be a highly influential force over the roles of women, especially at the rural level, it has been mentioned that some factors are causing transformations in women's political identities [34]. These findings in the study indicate that gender roles defined within Pashtunwali are still embedded but not completely impervious to change, especially when women take advantage of social movement, education, and legal reforms in order to step out into public life.

Naturally enough, it reflects the tension of complex dynamics between Pashtunwali's expectations of long-seated, gendered conduct and the imperative of rising women in the political arena of modern Pashtun society. Traditional values of zan (women's honor) and nang (family honor) continue to exercise considerable control over women's roles—a fact particularly pertinent in rural areas, which is still beholden to the traditional social framework of Pashtunwali [35]. However, it can be seen how education, amongst many other elements, is playing a key role in shaping the transformation of women's political identities as well as the ascendance of women's rights movements. Despite these developments however, the strong hold zan and nang continue to have over social conduct and the way and manner women participate in it set the bounds for political participation.

Still, the biggest hindrance that continues to this date and remains prevalent in women's participation with public and political life is the focus on zan and nang within Pashtunwali. Zan is the honor of women but not a personal attribute; it is actually a collective one. The attitude of a woman and her behavior, even her appearance in public, reflects directly upon the family and tribe [36]. Any political expedition into the public leadership directly undermines the nang of the family; anything that amounts to activity dislodging it from such roles is therefore detrimental to its survival [37]. This very cultural structure leads to strict restraint on movements, relations, and public appearances of women. Their lives are very strictly governed for modest standards and purda [38]. Analysis underlines strict public space nature in villages where Pashtunwali is the order of the day that somehow allows women in any form of public life, especially to be present in political domains like jirga. Here again their participation has been widely ostracized or resisted as this is considered to be against the profound zan and nang. Even when women expressed an interest in public decision-making, there were heavy societal and familial forces to pull them in the opposite direction, thereby perpetuating the notion that politics is exclusively a male preserve [39].

The result was that women often remained within the private sphere, wherein their contributions would be limited strictly to domestic and familial responsibilities, with practically no input into political matters [15].

The research, however, also makes a few notations regarding powerful Pashtun families in which women have managed, over the years, to exert influence indirectly. Such women are often placed into the role of a custodian of family honor; they are often allowed into disputes among the tribes or between conflicting parties. In such scenarios, women are informal political actors who employ their roles inside the family framework to influence some decisions political [40]. For instance, a woman can apply her role as an intermediary for negotiations or appeal for reconciliation while remaining within the confines of Pashtunwali but adhering to all tenets. This duality in the role of adherence to tradition and subtle manipulation of power dynamics indicates that while Pashtunwali creates strict limitations within public roles for women, it offers an extent of flexibility when women act upon the code's general ideals of family honor. This pattern of indirect political participation underlines the complex ways by which women may exercise influence even in the context of Pashtunwali [41].

Perhaps one of the strongest transformative agents opposing the status quo, by imbibing progressive values within the ethos of Pashtunwali, is education [42]. With increased access to formal education on the part of Pashtun women, they are in a better position to challenge such strict rules imposed on them within the cultural framework and demand higher participation in public life [43]. From the study, the very fact that emerges is that the educated women are more likely to negate the typical gender roles and imbibe such politically significant practices such as voting and running for offices, advocacy, and organizing in their respective communities.

While education helps in achieving personal power, it goes beyond this as there is an elongation of changing wider society. Insofar as women make their appearance in public and political life, they dethrone stereotypes that for centuries have confined women to the private sphere. Visible role models make it easier for other women to mimic them, and ripples create waves that affect how communities come to understand gender roles. The presence of educated women in political spaces legitimized the idea that there is a space for women's quality contribution to governance, leadership, and community development, which encourages more women to take active work in politics. Though Pashtunwali still regulates the role of women in society, there is a critical avenue through which women can redefine their identities and assert their political rights within the frame of tradition [44].

Social movements, especially women's rights and peacebuilding movements have become very important arenas of social change for the redefinition of women's political identity within the prism of Pashtunwali. Social movements therefore become arenas from which women can begin to take up active political action, declare equal gender status, and seek to transform the use of male-female relationality based on Pashtunwali. The collective aspect of social movements enables women to struggle

for laws that will be enacted on their favor, enhance their political representation, and heighten the consciousness of their rights—all contrary to the cultural tradition that defines the roles of each within society [45].

From the discussion, it is evident that organizations for Afghan and Pakistani women's rights have been very active in fighting for the inclusion of women into public decision-making processes rather than excluding them, particularly within the cultural forums, like the *jirga*. These organizations have played an important role in lobbying for legal changes that promote women's rights and make their participation in other political spheres an eventuality. For example, advocacy to include more women in political spheres has led to having more women in the areas Pashtunwali is practiced, as results of quotas and reserved seats in local councils and national parliaments [46].

These social movements' impacts go beyond immediate legal reform because by advocating reforms on women's inheritance rights, ownership of property, and access to education, these movements are slowly rearranging the attitude of society toward women's roles in the public sphere [47]. With the occurrence of these reforms, women would get new opportunities for political participation without negating the core values of Pashtunwali. This equilibrium between tradition and modernity is essential to regions where there is a struggle to move forward women's rights in the face of challenge from local conservative factions [48].

Case Study: Malalai Joya – Defying Tradition to Assert Political Identity

The activist, Malalai Joya is an outspoken Afghan and former member of the Afghan parliament representing how a Pashtun woman navigated and challenged the constraints of Pashtunwali to express her political identity. Joya was born in 1978 in Afghanistan's Farah Province [48]. She became one of the loudest critics against the Taliban and Afghan warlords, criticizing corruption and violence in the region, which had become epidemics. While Joya comes from an orthodox Pashtun family, she goes against the grain of norms that suggest one ought to remain confined in the private sphere as stipulated by Pashtunwali by making herself extremely visible and confrontational in a public sense [49].

Joya learned about *zan* (women's honor) and *purda* (seclusion) that are an integral part of Pashtunwali since childhood. The norms suggest that women should always be kept hidden behind closed doors so that the honor of the family is always safe and secure. However, she also perceived the ability of education in breaking those bonds [50]. Her mother had formally been educated, and this taught Joya the independence of her seeking knowledge as a form of empowerment. With education, Joya is given access to intellectual tools and social awareness that will challenge the patriarchal systems ruling her society [51]. Her political life has in fact started with the fall of Taliban's regime in early 2000s, because she is an activist for women rights and is struggling for literacy programs to reach the women and girls in refugee camps. She finally spoke out against

warlords and fundamentalists who will dominate Afghan politics; they differ in many ways, though sharing the same patriarchal values as Pashtunwali. In this, Joya squarely put a challenge to the gender ideology of Pashtunwali, which viewed the public appearance of women as offending the honor of the family [52].

Her most notable defiance was in 2003, when she presented to Afghanistan's Constitutional Loya Jirga - the Grand Assembly-but she opposed publicly the inclusion of warlords in the assembly. Speaking out to a largely patriarchal audience, her speech was both a challenge to the power of the warlords and to the gendered norms of Pashtunwali that aimed to silence women in politics. Joya's actions were highly controversial because she busted the unwritten rules of Pashtunwali by commanding her place in the traditionally male-dominated political landscape [53]. Despite many severe attempts on her life to assassinate her and undermine her movements, Joya did not back down in this glorious mission of fighting for women's rights and democracy in Afghanistan. This was set against the conservative Pashtun concept of *zan*, under which a woman's behavior is seen as reflecting the family and the tribe she comes from and can shame them all. This was a marked departure from the past when she played the role of deviationist - a woman who can sit through public scorn and violate Pashtunwali strictures in order to mete out justice and equal gender rights [54].

While Joya's actions have brought much criticism, her work is an evident example of reinterpretation of Pashtunwali. Radical feminist scholars would argue that Pashtunwali is highly patriarchal but can be reinterpreted and can become inclusive. In this regard, the case of Joya illustrates the manner in which she challenged traditional roles of women under Pashtun culture by making appeals to broader justice and fairness that are cultural values also at the heart of Pashtunwali. Her lobbying on behalf of Afghan women's rights can be appreciated as an attempt to redefine the boundaries in today's Afghanistan through Pashtunwali: that Afghan women's involvement in politics is a significant and essential aspect of national progress [55].

Joya's life experience in public oratory, political activism, and international advocacy illustrates how women, even those living under the restrictive framework of Pashtunwali, can assume political identities using education and activism [56]. Her activism has created an atmosphere where other Afghan and Pakistani women are beginning to take more liberties in challenging traditional gender roles, effectively changing over time and meaningfully how the Pashtun view the public lives of women [57].

Malalai Joya is another clear manifestation of the interaction between tradition and modernity that lives in the lives of Pashtun women today. Pashtunwali has certain strict gender roles and restrictions on public activity determined by it, but what Joya did symbolizes that change is possible within these very traditional systems. This is where the transformation from the refugee camp to the parliament by Joya makes visible how education and politics can contest and assume control of political life over patriarchal norms. The controversial acts of Joya, hence, redo the face-changing scenarios of women's

political identities in Pashtun society and raise powerful arguments for a reinterpretation of traditional values so that these women's growing role in politics is taken into account.

Conclusion

His study of Pashtunwali provides clear evidence of deep tension between tradition and transformation as it shapes the women's political identities within Pashtun society. While putting up a heavy restriction on the participation of women within the public sphere, it also throws open doors for the women to engage in political activities by employing informal mechanisms. The dilemma of tradition and transformation stands right at the center of evolving political identities of Pashtun women as they need restraint within Pashtunwali and their demands for representation and equality in politics. Everything-ranging from education, legal reforms, to social movements has really contributed to changing political identities of women in ways that they can bridge tradition and claims to participate in politics.

Further and future studies should instead be focused on how to reinterpret or reposition this traditional Pashtun code for the advancement of gender equality and women's political empowerment in Pashtun society. That would mean going deeper into where tradition, law, and gender converge as locations of congruence and conflict that allow scholars and policymakers to dig deeper into the complexities of the representations of women within tribal and patriarchal societies. This research points to a deep tension between tradition and transformation in how Pashtunwali shapes women's political identities. The code of Pashtunwali severely limits women's public life but also offers the possibility, though limited, by which women may influence politics, indirectly or in family structures. The difficulty lies in how this patriarchally rooted system can adapt and open its way for increasing pressure to include women in the political world and for greater gender equality.

The implications of the findings of this research are more general: how the law and customary codes in other patriarchal societies could similarly be reworked to interpret newer, more inclusive gender norms. Pashtunwali is not unique in its role as a cultural system preserving male dominance while marginalizing women from public and political life. Such cultural codes exist across other tribal and rural societies around the world and provide the context for social regulation. The main insight here is that such traditional norms are fundamentally amenable to transformation through feminist reinterpretation and policy reform. This can be applied to other contexts in which the political agency of women is constrained by deeply entrenched cultural practices. The world women's rights movement and increasing consciousness of gender equality norms have already begun influencing cultures like the Pashtuns, hence tradition should not really go against modernity. Through reinterpretation of values like *nana-wati* (forgiveness) and *melmastia* (hospitality) by the means of inclusivity allows the culture to stay alive but it also provides progress at the same time.

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