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LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY: A LINGUISTIC STUDY OF WOMEN-CENTRIC HINDI PROVERBS

Akanksha SHARMA & Amitabh VIKRAM DWIVEDI

Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University *

17dln001@smvdu.ac.in / amitabhvikram@yahoo.co.in

Abstract

Language shapes social realities, and also reflects socially constrained identity of an individual so much so that the relationship between language and identity is intertwined. The paper explores how women are represented in the Hindi proverbs. The portrayal of women in these proverbs is mainly negative; they are represented as being devilish, senseless, morally degenerated, and powerless. The study highlights proverbs extracted from the corpus of thousand proverbs from literary and non-literary oral tradition. The paper focuses on the semanticity of proverbs, and finds out how negative representation degrades the identity of women. The linguistic analysis of these proverbs highlights that the women are represented in bad humor, and further pictures their negative image. The paper sums up stating how the meaning depicted by these proverbs reflects the sociolinguistic reality.

Keywords

womanhood, identity, proverbs, semantics, language, oral tradition

* Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University Campus, Sub-Post Office, Katra, Jammu, Jammu and Kashmir, 182320.

LENGUA E IDENTIDAD: UN ESTUDIO LINGÜÍSTICO DE REFRANES HINDI CENTRADOS EN LAS MUJERES

Resumen

El lenguaje da forma a las realidades sociales y también refleja la identidad social de un individuo de manera que hay una estrecha relación entre lengua e identidad. El artículo explora cómo las mujeres están representadas en los proverbios hindi. La representación de la mujer en estos proverbios es principalmente negativa; se las representa como seres diabólicos, insensatos, moralmente degenerados e impotentes. El estudio destaca los refranes extraídos de un corpus de mil refranes que provienen de la tradición oral literaria y no literaria. El artículo se centra en la semántica de los refranes y muestra cómo la representación negativa degrada la identidad de las mujeres. El análisis lingüístico de estos proverbios destaca el mal humor de las mujeres y además ilustra su imagen negativa. El trabajo concluye afirmando que el significado de estos refranes refleja la realidad sociolingüística.

Palabras clave

feminidad, identidad, proverbios, semántica, lengua, tradición oral

1. Introduction

The issue of power and gender-based identities has spawned considerable work in contemporary Indian studies (Bagolun 2010). The question is no longer on the representation of women in literature but how the language has contributed to reflect the social image of women in Indian culture and 'folklore'. Thereupon, the paper is based on the empirical study of Hindi folklore, specifically select women-centric proverbs, illustrating the socio-cultural portrayal of women in the oral tradition. Proverbs are specified speech genre, which contain everyday experiences and common observations in succinct and metaphorical language (Mieder 2004). The portrait of women as depicted in these proverbs is often at social ratification with the conventional stereotype of acquiescent, obedient, and conformist women that is conjured up in a patriarchal mind.

Proverbs can offer insight into how the society has evolved. They can also transmit information that does not pertain to a contemporary society. Although an observation that was true in the past may not continue to be true in the present, the existence of a proverb that relates to that particular observation perpetuates it and makes people take

it for granted as a truth. Consider, for example, the English proverb a woman's place is in the home. This proverb has been used for hundreds of years. However, this proverb does not apply to women in the 21st century. Its only function nowadays could be to serve those who want women to confine to domestic chores. The traditional philosophy of language holds that proverbs, like any other linguistic unit, are produced and consumed by individuals who used them. Therefore, any linguistic usage has a potential to generate both personal/specific and general meanings. Considering this, it becomes necessary to pay attention to the semantic and rhetorical qualities of proverbs, and to find out how such qualities are utilized by individuals in producing meanings-individual as well as general. The nature of language provides each proverb an inherent general meaning due to its syntacto-semantic relationship; however, context in which a proverb is used adds more meaning to it.

The paper focuses upon the semantics of language used for female subjugation and derogation in the Hindi sayings. Proverbs, as forms of figurative communication with didactic functions in studied conversations, were found to possess evidences of male attempt at maintaining control over discourse in society (Obododimma 1998). The image of woman highlighted in these oral traditions is typically a reflection of a demeaning perspective about the identity and position of women in the society. These stereotypical beliefs and statements have been used since ages and passed on from generation to generation through oral tradition.

Despite the fact that various women liberating thoughts have evolved, and there has also been considerable effort of the contemporary society to “expose the sources and dangers of the oppression of women, restoring the identity and dignity of women, and empowering them for national development” (Balogun 2010: 21-36) but the linguistic reality is still the same and follows the beliefs and norms articulated by the society ages before. Thus, the paper is an attempt to draw attention towards the language more specifically, which is a primary medium to preserve any culture, and in this context the Hindi proverbs provide a sample for this study.

1.1 Introduction to the proverbs

Proverbs are defined as popular sayings containing advice or statement perceived by the society as a general truth. There are many definitions of proverbs, such as mentioned in *Omani Proverbs* by Jayakar (1987: 72), which are “a key to a nation’s psychology, its political, religious and social ideals and such preoccupations as weather, neighbors and animals”. In the *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, the proverb is defined as “a short pithy saying in general use, held to embody general truth” (Fowler and Fowler 2012: 625). On the other hand, *New World Dictionary of the American Language* by Webster and Guralnik (1970) gives the definition of proverbs as “a short saying in common use that strikingly expresses some obvious truth or familiar experience, adage or maxim”.

Another definition of the proverbs mentioned in the paper *Proverbial Oppression of Women in Yoruba African Culture: A Philosophical Overview* is that, “the proverbs are used not only to reflect on established norms, but also as a means of preserving a community’s memory of past events” (Balogun 2020: 34). Thus the proverb as believed is “a short, well-known saying, expressing a truth or pointing out a moral” (Balogun 2020: 36) and “a short figurative expression or sentence, currently used, commending or reproving the person or thing to which it is applied, and often containing some moral precepts, or rules for our conduct in life” (Baldick 2006: 208).

Proverbs known as ‘lokokti’¹ in Hindi are the verbal expressions of rural folks about their asserted remarks and truths about something or someone. These are figurative statements that do not follow the usual structure of the language (as S-O-V followed by Hindi language) i.e., the structure or word-order of these sayings are flexible with less use of functional or grammatical words than the other lexical items, such as nouns, pronouns, adjectives and adverbs, etc. For instance, [tʃuɾɪʃ pəhnəna] ‘wearing bangles’ is an incomplete sentence but is articulated as a statement for the aim of expressing the

¹ The term ‘lokokti’ is composed of two words ‘lok’ means public and ‘ukəti’ means saying which in turn is defined as the statement used popularly in the public.

powerlessness. Moreover, it is used symbolically for mocking and identifying someone as a weaker sex.

In other words, the proverbs have been used as poetic way² of expressing extensive views of folks with others in a figurative manner. The other significant point being projected by the proverbs are that they are the important parts of Indian folklore which has been made and moreover articulated since ages. India owns richness of tradition, varied literary culture and oral culture, languages and its folklore. As stated by Thompson (1976), that a language without cultural richness looks poor and devastated, and India in this context justifies with such kind of necessities. The language variety in India is a renowned fact and Hindi as a language occupies the center of concern for researchers.

1.2 Hindi

Hindi is one of the widely spoken and understood languages of India which falls under the new Indo-Aryan language family and has adapted either as first or a second language by almost three hundred million people in the North of India (Kachru 2006). Moreover, Hindi is designated as official language of the Republic of India and is also a state language of six major states of Indian constitution viz., Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Uttaranchal (Kachru 2006). The Hindi spoken in the North of India is a mixture of three other languages i.e. Sanskrit, Urdu and English forming a dialectal variation in the Modern Standard Hindi such as Sanskritized, Persianized and Englishized Hindi. The Hindi as a lingua franca has spread over the wide range in India, similarly, its culture and folklore exhibits vast diversity and variation with respect to the regional variation of the language. The Hindi speaking regions in India are shown in the map mentioned below.

² The poetic function given by Roman Jakobson (1960) is one of the six functions of language that are: referential, conative, emotive, metalingual, phatic and poetic. According to Jakobson's model of language, the poetic function focuses on the messages for its own sake.

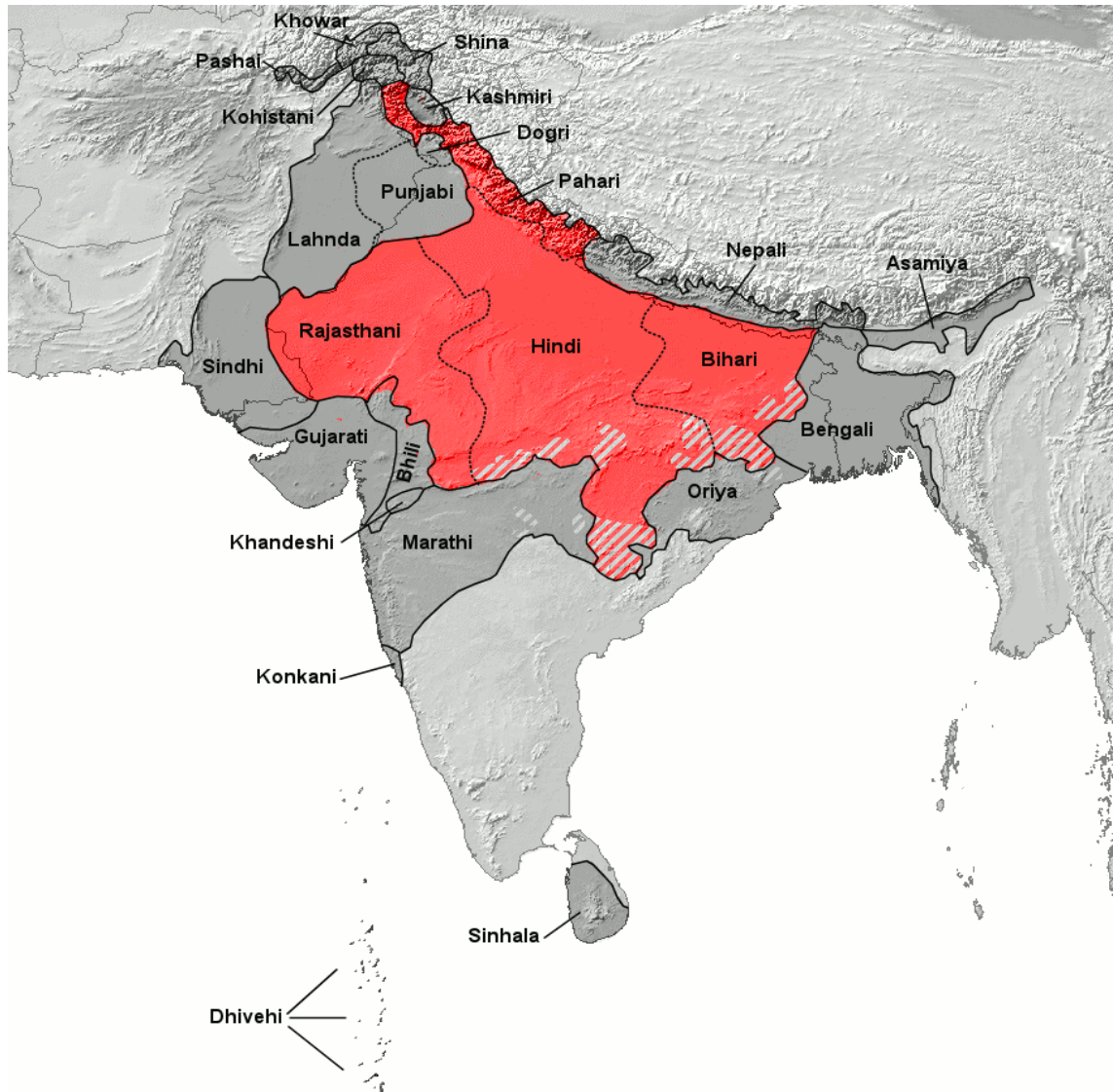


Figure 1. Hindi speaking region in India³ (in red)

2. Research objectives and hypothesis

The research objectives of this paper are as follows:

1. To study the interrelationship between identity and language depicted in the proverbs.
2. To analyze the portrayal of woman in the Hindi proverbs.

³ "Hindi Belt", *Wikipedia*, March 31, 2019; accessed April 05, 2019, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindi_Belt.

3. To highlight the socially constrained patriarchal depiction of woman in women-centric Hindi proverbs.

The Hindi proverbs reflect the socio-cultural reality of society and also create a social identity irrespective of the individual experiences and beliefs; so the research questions are:

1. How do Hindi proverbs portray the identity of women?
2. How does literary folklore reflect the sociolinguistic realities of a society?
3. What is the role of language in shaping the mindset of the society?

3. Methodology

The Hindi language is one of the widely spoken languages of India and the number of speakers is gradually increasing.⁴ Therefore, there is abundance of written as well as oral literature in the Hindi language. In the study of proverbs, after investigating 3500 proverbs and idioms,⁵ 100 such sayings were shortlisted that explicitly or implicitly talk about the state of humankind and out of those 20 proverbs are analyzed. Thereafter, the paper semantically analyses the data for highlighting the literal as well as contextual meaning reflected in the selected set of proverbs.

The data analyzed is collected from textual sources such as books namely: *Proverbs: A handbook* (Mieder 2004) and *Muhavare aur Lokoktiyan* (Gupta 2011). On the other hand, the research papers and articles: Obododimma (1998), Ambu-Saidi (2010) and Dwivedi (2015), on this particular theme of woman's portrayal in folklore of various cultures, provides a theoretical background for the semantic analysis of Hindi proverbs. In brief, the empirical method of research has been adopted in the present study. Moreover, the dictionaries on proverbs such as: *Dictionary of proverbs and their origin* (Flavell & Flavell 2011), *The concise oxford dictionary of proverbs* (Speake & Simpson

⁴ Data on Language and Mother Tongue, (Census of India Website: Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India.2018). http://www.censusindia.gov.in/2011Census/Language_MTs.html.

⁵ Proverbs unlike other linguistic units like verbs, phrases, compounds and idioms have no specific status. They have only philosophical and sociological implications rather than linguistic. Thus, idioms vary from the proverbs in the sense that idioms are used colloquially.

(2000), *Kahavat kosha: Dictionary of proverbs* (Raman 2014) and online blogs on Hindi bhasha and its folklore has also considered for the collection of data for the paper.

4. Data and Interpretation

In the study of proverbs, the references to womanhood operate on two semiotic planes: “one is the allusive plane, which correlate with the remote situation, and the interpretive plane, which correlates with the factual situation” (Obododimma 1998: 87). These planes and situations are essentially interactive in proverbial communication.

The images or representations of women on both the allusive and interpretative planes therefore merit equal attention, since both reveal the placement of woman in the patriarchal culture. However, it is on the allusive plane that representations of womanhood are predominant in the proverbs, which suggests that womanhood itself is an important aspect of the “social semiotic” (Halliday 1993). Generally, the allusive plane yields a dualistic view of woman: the positive and the negative. The positive dimension shows the promotion of face for woman, as could be seen in the following:

1. *dzoru tʃɪkəni, mijā mādʒur*

Wife.N beautiful.ADJ Husband.N labourer.N

Literal meaning: Wife bedecked, husband a labourer.

Culturally bound meaning: Husband may be poor or ugly but wife should be beautiful.

The word *dzoru* which literally means wife, has a cultural connotation of someone on which the force is to be applied and make the person straight. Therefore, the word ‘*dzoru*’ connotes that wife is a person who is subjected to suppression and force. However, here the word *dzoru* is post modified with an adjective [tʃɪkəni] which is a sexual connotation for someone who is beautiful. The first part of this proverb juxtaposes the sexually charged beauty of a wife with the occupational penury of a husband, who in this proverb is a laborer. Technically, the woman is placed on a position where a

comparison is between the physical beauty and the physical work. This seemingly different plane of comparison is, however, placed on a parallel scale, and it is further made justified that an earning man deserves a beautiful wife. Further, the proverb also entails that the primary duty of a wife is to maintain her physical appearance so that she can satisfy the sexual desire of her husband.

Moreover, the linguistic analysis of this proverb suggests that the post-modifier for the first half of the proverb is an adjective whereas the other half is post-modified by noun. This grammatical mismatch also indicates an inequality in the comparison and attributes. However, the two ends of this proverbial thread places man on the subject/agent position and woman as a recipient on the object position. The objectification of woman is observed not only in the folklore but also in the Hindi cinema and in popular advertisements. Nandakumar (2011) highlights the events where woman is placed as an object and man on the other hand, is portrayed as the subject of actions in the cinema.

2. *dʒoru tətʊle gətʰəri, mā tətʊle antəri*

Wife.N search parcel mother.N search bowel

Literal meaning: wife searches in husband's pocket while mother searches in son's bowel.

Culturally bound meaning: A wife wants money and a mother wants her son's health

The seemingly parallel syntactic structure of this proverb has uneven semantic relationship-the representation of woman is dualist, and woman in different roles exhibits different images. Woman as wife is shown as selfish and greedy, and woman as mother is celebrated as considerate and altruistic. We find exposition of dualistic and partial vision of patriarchal society in this proverb. The proverb represents a generalized view prevalent in the Indian society — though [dʒoru] *wife* and *ma* 'mother' are both women — one represents positive womanhood, and the other, the negative. However, this representation does not fit in with the contemporary feminist ideology that looks at

woman in non-binaries, and which is beyond goodness and badness. The proverb advocates the view that “central to the concept of the mother in India is the idea of sacrifice” (Joshi 2003: 1) whereas *dʒoru* as a woman is pictured as the one who upholds materialism.

Moreover, the linguistic analysis of the proverb suggests the repetition of verb [təʈole] ‘search’ in both parts of the proverb which is associated with two different agents. In the first part, [dʒoru] ‘wife’ is acting as an agent which is thus replaced by the word [mã] ‘mother’ in the later part, further, affecting the place of action such as [gəʈʰəri] ‘bale’ in case of wife and [əntəʈi] ‘bowel’ in the case where mother is at the agentive position. However, the nouns [gəʈʰəri] ‘bale’ in the case of wife connotes the pocket which means that wife is concerned about the money in husband’s pocket and on the other hand, [əntəʈi] ‘bowel’ in the next part connotes the selfless nature of mother who is not concerned about money but is worried about her son’s health.

3. *dʒʰəgre kɪ tin dʒəʈ; dʒən, zəmin, dʒər*

Quarrel of three reason/root money land women

Literal meaning: Three reasons of quarrel: women, land and money.

Culturally bound meaning: Most of the quarrels happen in the world because of women, land and money.

This proverb falls under the term allusive plane where the dualistic interpretation is observed through the placement of woman with the highly important things, on one hand, and equates the adversity of other two with that of a woman, on the other hand. However, this statement is putting the woman in bad light with other two elements viz. land and money for being the root cause of every quarrel in the world. Moreover, the statement is purely a non-factual proclamation of the society over the image and identity of woman which is not only depicted in oral traditions but also in written literature. The woman is thus shown as one of the most quarrelsome, clever and wicked characters along with the other two: [dʒər] ‘money’ and [zəmin] ‘land’. The instance of such facile depiction of woman is realized in various [dohe] ‘couplet’ given by Saint Kabirdas and Tulsidas such as

kəpas bɪnuθa kəpəɾa, kade sureŋ na paje

kəbɪr tʃagɔ gjan kəɪr, kənək kamɪnɪ doje

Meaning: Dirty cotton cannot weave beautiful cloth Sacrifice gold and woman, if you seek wisdom, so says Kabir.”

In this couplet, the *kamɪnɪ* woman is compared with dirty cotton and Kabir das says that the way dirty cotton cannot create a beautiful fabric similarly a path of wisdom cannot be discovered in the company of a woman, in other words, to seek wisdom, one should sacrifice gold along with woman.

4. *dʒər, zəmin, dʒoru dʒor ki, nəɦɪ to kisi ɔr kɪ*

Money.N land.N wife.N power.N of.PREP no then other and of

Literal meaning: Money, land and women should be in control otherwise they will be someone else’s.

Culturally bound meaning: Money, land and women belong to a powerful man and not the weak.

In the statement (4), again the women as *dʒoru* are placed with the other two important elements that are money and land, depicting the dualistic view of society towards women. As it puts the woman in highest position with most importance but, at the same time, paradoxically depicts the powerlessness of woman in social context. On the other hand, it portrays the domination and social power of man over a woman along with the money and land. The word [dʒoru] ‘wife’ is derived from the root [dʒor] ‘strength’ which mean the strength and power and therefore [dʒoru] ‘wife’ means the one who should be kept in control by a powerful man. Here, again the objectification and oppression of woman is observed through the word [dʒor] ‘strength’.

However, on identifying the proverb linguistically it is observed that the use of negation [nəɦɪ to] ‘otherwise’ depicts a cautious tone in the second part of the proverb which in turn is provides a reason to the first part which is an assertive statement. The other point is that [kisi ɔr kɪ] ‘someone else’s’ is used as coordinate clause to the

conjunction [nəɦɪ to] ‘otherwise’. On the first half, [dʒor] ‘strength’ acts as a head whereas in the later half, negation [nəɦɪ to] is post modified by the complement phrase [kisi ɔr ki] ‘someone else’s’, thus construct a semantic relation between the overpowering word like [dʒor] and the negation [nəɦɪ].

5. *gərib ki dʒoru, səbki bʰabʰi*

Poor.N of wife, all sister-in-law.N

Literal meaning: The wife of poor is sister-in-law of all.

Cultural meaning: People often mock at poor and suppress them.

English equivalent: A light purse is a heavy curse.

The proverb (5) compares the light purse with a poor woman and its literal meaning depicts that wife of a poor man is treated in Indian society as an object to mock on. The meaning of word [bʰabʰi] is brother’s wife and which is also used overtly in various Indian pornographies highlighting a promiscuous image of woman. The Indian comic porn is popular with the name Savita bhabhi where [bʰabʰi] is portrayed as licentious lady who is ignored by her husband. This web-comic intended to show “a departure from traditional approach to porn and typecasting of the [bʰabʰi] as a middle-class woman” (Mulmi 2009: 1).

The syntactically unrelated proverb shows a semantic relation of the noun [bʰabʰi] ‘sister-in-law’ in the second half to the noun [dʒoru] ‘wife’ in the first half. The linguistic analysis of the proverb suggests that [gərib ki] where [ki] marks the possession and pre-modifies the noun [dʒoru] in the first part [səbki] ‘everyone’s’ act as a pre-modifier of the noun [bʰabʰi] in the later part of the proverb. However, there is an unparallel relation between the adjective [səbki] and [gərib ki].

6. *dʒoru nə janta, allah miʃã se nata*

Wife.N no people, god.N to.PREP relation

Literal meaning: The one, who do not have wife or anyone, has a relationship with god.

Cultural meaning: The God is with the one who is alone in this world.

The above-mentioned proverb (6), wife *dʒoru* depicts the image of women as an obstacle between the man and the God which says that the man without wife is directly connected to the God. The act of perceiving absolute purity in Hindu religion is possible through the practice of [brəhmtʃərjə] ‘sainthood’ which holds the ideology that “remembrance of the image of woman unsettles the mind of a man” (Sivananda 1988: 7); i.e., for a man to form a relation with god is necessary to disconnect himself from the company of a woman.

In the above-mentioned statements from (1) to (5), the word [dʒoru] is used for women which means ‘wife’, on diverse plane, primarily for the aim of mocking, criticizing and showing the powerlessness of woman in society. In the proverb (2), there is a contradictory situation where the woman is represented as positive as well as negative entity in this particular statement such as [dʒoru] in ‘dʒoru tətʊle gətʰəri’ is criticized for being selfish and devilish whereas the womankind is praised as [mã] in ‘mã tətʊle əntəɾi’ who is portrayed as selfless and loving. These statements are contextual and depict a distinct image of woman in society on different occasions or context.

7. *dajən* *ko* *bʰi* *damad* *pəjara*

Witch.N of.PREP also Son-in-law.N dear

Literal meaning: A witch too loves her son-in-law.

Culturally bound meaning: Even if a woman is bad but she loves her son-in-law.

The statement (7) depicts the positive quality of women irrespective of whether she is good or evil, she loves her son-in-law. The word [dajən]⁶ ‘evil woman’ is used for a bad woman who may have bad qualities or is evil with other but her son-in-law is always dear to her. The word ‘*damad*’ in Hindi is used for daughter’s husband. The word [dajən] ‘witch’ is related to witchcraft and black magic that is prevalent in India since ancient times. It is believed that [dajən] are mostly woman who possess some sort of negative powers and spirits. This superstition about the witches has enforced the domination of

⁶ The term [dajən] originated from the Sanskrit term ‘dakini’ which refers to the female supernatural being. The term appears in the medieval period Hindu texts and also referred as Kali in some legends, which feed on human flesh and blood.

woman and gave rise to another term which is 'witch hunting'. The witch hunting is essentially the act of violence against women who are branded as [dajən] in the society. A report on the gruesome practice of which hunting reveals the reality of woman's derogation and domination in various states of India (Vats 2015). The semantic analysis of the proverb suggests that the syntactic use of [b^{hi}] 'too/also' highlights specifically the honor of a man as [damad] 'son-in-law' in Indian society.

8. *doli nā kəhar, biwi hui hē tejar*

Palanquin.n no carrier.N wife done is ready

Literal meaning: There is neither a palanquin nor a carrier of palanquin but wife/bride is ready.

Culturally bound meaning: when someone is ready to go without an invite.

The statement (8) describes the impulsive nature of woman specifically wife's [biwi]. The proverb is applicable to woman only because of the explicit use of word [biwi]. The culturally bound meaning shows the applicability of the statement to anyone who is restless and impetuous. Moreover, the relationship between literal and cultural meaning depicts a clear comparison of impulsiveness to one of the negative quality of a wife who is being an object of patriarchy. The reference to palanquin highlights one of the rituals of Hindu marriage which is used as a carriage of bride.

9. *dʒɪse piʃa tʃahe wəɦɪ suhagin*

Who husband want.V they married woman.N

Literal meaning: A women is married only if her husband accepts her or loves her.

Culturally bound meaning: The one, who is blessed by the owner, is promoted and is respected.

This particular proverb nullifies the importance of wife's role in married life. It creates a false expression about the identity of woman in her marital status which asserts that it completely depends on husband's will whether to keep her wife or not. The culturally bound meaning of this proverb asserts the man as superior and women as an

inferior whose role is neglected. The word [suhagin] is used in India for a woman who is married and wears [suhag] or [sindhoor] ‘vermillion’ which signifies the long life for a husband (Pathak 2014) but there is no such ritual for a man in Indian culture which signifies his marital status. The semantic analysis of the proverb also indicates the possession and right of a man over a woman.

10. *g^hər mē nəɦɪ dane, buɽ^hija tʃəlɪ b^hunane*
Home.N in.PREP no.NEG grain.OBL old woman.N go.V.F.PROG

Literal meaning: No food grains left at home, still the old lady occupant declares (to her neighbors) that she is going as usual to the kiln to get a lot of grains (she pretends she has) parched-roasted (before she could eat).”

Culturally bound meaning: Bare larder but big invites

The proverb reflects the woman as pretentious who has nothing to eat but is going to get her grains parched roasted as is mentioned in literal meaning of the proverb. This proverb not only shows the critical view of the society towards a woman but also reflects the economic status of India in the past. The culture has played a prominent role in reflecting the poverty, domination, patriarchy and many other issues prevalent in India which are of main concern (Small, Harding & Lamont 2010).

11. *təkə ki buɽ^hija, anna tāt muɽaji*
taka.N Of old woman, anna.N tenant rent

Culturally bound meaning: To take care of the things that is not worth the trouble, or to spend time and money in the maintenance of cheap things.

12. *dəmɽɪ kɪ buɽ^hija, təkə sɪr muɽaji*
Currency ADJ of old woman.N taka.n head.N cost.N

Here, in the above statements (11) and (12) the woman is objectified. The identity of an old woman [buɽ^hija] is projected as a useless object that is not worth spending

money and care on. The proverb says that the cost of an old woman is [təka] but her expenditures are highly expensive. The [təka], [anna] and [dəmɾɪ] are the ancient Indian currencies (Ashodhya 2016). These currencies are used in various Hindi sayings such as [tʃəmɾɪ dʒæ pər dəmɾɪ nə jae], [soləh anne sətʃ], etc. The use of words such as [təka], [anna] and [dəmɾɪ] in the proverb quantifies the nouns attaches to it. For instance, in the first half 'dəmɾɪ kɪ buɾʰija' [dəmɾɪ] is quantifying the noun [buɾʰija] 'old woman'. The semantic analysis of the proverbs (11) and (12) suggests the comparison of old woman with an inanimate object.

13. *ʃəkin buɾʰija, tʃətaji ka lehanga*
 Fashionable.ADJ old woman. N woven straw.N of.POSS skirt.N
 Literal meaning: Fashionable hag, in a skirt of woven straw.

14. *dilli ki dilwali, muh chikəna pet kʰali*
 Delhi.N of.POSS open-hearted.ADJ.F face flaunting stomach empty
 Literal meaning: Flaunting girls of Delhi, stomach empty and faces slick.

The semantically related proverbs (13) and (14) depict the same ideology of the society about the woman who tries to fit in with the growing world of fashion. There is an unfair denunciation of the beautiful female in the above mention statements (13) and (14). There is no established causal connection between physical beauty and faults in character. This proverb confuses, perhaps even equates, elegance and admiration with a promiscuous lifestyle.

15. *ap hare or bahu ko ma re*
 You.HON.N fail/lose and.CON daughter-in-law of Kill
 Literal meaning: Hitting your wife/daughter-in-law for own lose.
 Culturally bound meaning: To take out ones frustration on someone else.

In the proverb (16) women are objectified and treated as a thing to take out frustration of man. It says that if a man loses or had a bad day, he can take out his anger

and frustration on his wife or sister-in-law. In a way, the women in this particular context are depicted as weaker sex and male on the other hand as a superior and stronger one. The image reflected in this statement does not correlate with the contemporary situation where women are much concerned and aware about their rights and social equality. The proverb highlights the domestic violence on woman in India who are just treated as an object and possession of a man.

16. *jəb ank^h ki fəram nəhi rək^htɪ to kya rək^htɪ*

When.PREP eye of shame no keep.V then what keep

Literal meaning: If modesty in eyes is lost then all is lost.

Culturally bound meaning: The modesty and shame lies in the eyes of a women. If it's lost then all is lost.

17. *nətəni jəb bās pər tʃə^hi to g^huŋg^hət kja*

Actress.N when bamboo.N on.PREP hop.V then veil.N what

English equivalent: One might as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb.

Culturally bound meaning: A sinful person is shameless and is not ashamed of his/her deeds.

The [nətəni] 'actress' in these proverbs is shown as a shameless person and it says that if an actress is climbing on the bamboo then there is no need to cover her face with [g^huŋg^hət] 'veil' which is used as a symbol of women's modesty. The proverb depicts the patricentric mindset of the society. The same is reflected in the proverb (15) where women are supposed to keep their shame and modesty in the eyes. It explicitly imparts that a modest women should always be in [g^huŋg^hət] 'veil' and also make a harsh judgment about the women performing an act. The [g^huŋg^hət] 'veil' is glorified among Indian in the name of modesty, respect and shame. The researchers identify that the intention behind any form of pardah 'veil', irrespective of the region and religion is "to control women's sexuality by controlling her mobility and freedom" (Mishar 2017: 15).

18. *tʃuɽɪjǎ pehnəna*

Bangle.N wear.V

Literal meaning: wearing bangles

Culturally bound meaning: To be weak like women

This proverb is used very often in India to show the weakness of someone. This statement is used for both men and women, but it says that wearing bangles is a symbol of weakness and inferiority. The [tʃuɽɪjǎ] ‘bangles’ is one of the [soləha ʃingar] ‘sixteen ornaments’ of Indian woman that signifies the marital status of a woman (Pathak 2014). The word /tʃuɽɪjǎ/ ‘bangles’ connotes that women are subjected to delicacy and modesty.

Again, the statement (18) is representing women as a weaker sex.

19. *dʒəhər ki puɽɪja*

Poison.N of paper-packet.N

Literal meaning: A paper-packet of poison

Culturally bound meaning: A woman who is troublemaker or quarrelsome.

This statement is used for woman or girl who is straightforward or quarrelsome. This is applicable to only woman as /ki/ indicates possession with feminine marker /i/ in Hindi (Agnihotri 2013). Here, the woman is compared with the poison.

20. *tɪɽɪja bɪna to nəɾ hɛ esa, rah bətau hove jəsa*

Wife.N without so man.N is.PRES.AUX this path traveler is like

Literal meaning: A man without woman is like a wayfarer on the road.

Culturally bound meaning: There is no place for a man without woman.

The meaning of word [tɪɽɪja] is [strɪ]/ ‘female’ signifies womanhood unlike [dʒoru] which signifies the one that should be kept under control and moreover, the word is derived from the word [dʒor] ‘strength’. The statement (20) is creating a contradictory vision with other mentioned proverbs which are somehow degrading or mocking at women and making a harsh judgment whereas the proverb (20) is celebrating the

importance of woman in man's life. It says that without wife [tɪɾɪja], [nər] man is like a wayfarer on the strange road without any goal and guidance.

Here, in this proverb there is deviation observed from the consistent pattern followed by the other proverbs such as in previous proverbs there is an explicit association of woman with the things and characters which advocates powerlessness, cruelty, objectification, etc. Moreover, the linguistic overview of this proverb asserts that [esa] and [jæsa] 'like' ending with [a] sound shows masculinity and is associated with the word [nər] 'male' in the first part of the proverb and [rah bəʈau] on the other part.

5. Analysis

The qualitative analysis of this study explores the impact of language in creating and destroying a cultural identity by considering women-centric proverbs in Hindi. The woman plays a crucial role in Hindi folklore and similarly folklore enacts as a medium for woman to reflect their desires, feelings and emotions whereas the proverbs possess to have quality or reflection of male authoritative cultural rhetoric. Thus, the proverbs exhibit the social degradation of woman's identity in a rhetorical form. The study, therefore, is an insight into the false ideological possibilities of meaning-making in proverbs. Further, the paper looks into the fact that proverbs were constructed ages before in the patriarchal society where the identity of woman was created and portrayed with the male-centric mindset which does not hold the situation and stature of woman in contemporary India. The proverbs are used for comparing the remote situation and the stated experience from the past which may or may not be applicable to the present circumstances. "There is always some relationship between two situations being compared: the proverb statement and its referent in the social context" (Akoma 2011: 187).

The analysis of the 20 proverbs taken for the study illustrates the generalized view of the society towards the woman and in one way or another it defames the image of woman through language. The central concern of the paper is to highlight the impact of

language used in the folklore to portray the identity of woman. During the study 20 proverbs were analyzed which reflects the womanhood and identity of woman in the folklore. In the data, the words used for woman to depict their image are [dʒoru] 'wife', [dajən] 'witch', [suhagɪn] 'married', [buɽ^hija] 'old woman', [bəhu] 'daughter-in-law', [mã] 'mother', etc. and the adjectives served through these words are powerlessness, greed, shame, selfishness, and alike. Table (1) mentioned below illustrates these words with the implicit interpretation of qualities associated with those terms for woman in the proverbs.

Words	(Representation of women)						
	Powerless	Greedy	Cruel/devilish	Selfish	Selfless/loving	Object	Shameless
/dʒoru/ 'wife'	√	√	×	√	×	×	√
/mã/ 'mother'	×	×	×	×	√	×	×
/dajən/ 'witch'	×	×	√	×	×	×	×
/suhagɪn/ 'married woman'	√	×	×	×	×	√	×
/buɽ ^h ija/ 'old woman'	×	√	×	×	×	×	×
/bəhu/ 'daughter-in-law'	√	×	×	×	×	√	×

Table 1. Words representing identity of woman

Table (2) describes the negative use of words in the proverbs to create a pessimistic identity of womanhood and the applicability of such themes is also mentioned in the table.

Words	Symbolizes	Applicability
/dʒoru/ 'wife'	(i) vulnerable (ii) Greed (iii) Selfishness (iv) Audaciousness	To woman only
/dajən/ 'witch'	(i) cruelty (ii) being ungrateful	To woman only
/bɪwɪ/ 'wife'	(i) powerlessness (ii) objective	To woman only
/buɾʰija/ 'old woman'	(i) greed (ii) over ambitious	To woman only
/tʃuɾija/ 'bangles'	(i) weakness (ii) inferiority	To both man and woman
/tiriʃa/ 'women/wife'	(i) strength (ii) importance	To woman only

Table 2. Negative symbol in the proverbs and its applicability

6. Conclusion

The analysis reveals that the 20 woman-centric proverbs represent the image of woman in 6 different roles which in turn symbolizes various negative sub-themes. The majority of the proverbs are applicable to woman only because of the feminine markers present there in the statements. The other reason that governs the applicability factor is the direct use of feminine nouns such as [dʒoru] 'wife', [dajən] 'witch', [bɪwɪ] 'wife', [buɾʰija] 'old woman', [tʃuɾija] 'bangles', [tiriʃa] 'women/wife'. The study depicts that despite the fact that there are proverbs in Hindi folklore that are typically women-centric with a feminine marker and that may apply to both women and men, but most of these proverbs refer to negative images or tasks. In other words, the negative identity has been constructed as well as transmitted through generations by referring to women as inferior in oral traditions. The paper aimed at highlighting the language prominently for uncovering the stereotypical images portrayed in the woman-centric proverbs. The study is not conclusive and further the additions can be made with different approaches.

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