

Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review

Print ISSN: 3006-5887

Online ISSN: 3006-5895

<https://llrjournal.com/index.php/11>

**Unrevealing The Symbolic Code Of Balochi Proverbial
Discourse**



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Abstract

Abstract

In this research work, entitled *Unraveling the Symbolic Code of Balochi Proverbial Discourse*, the symbolic meanings found in selected Balochi proverbs are analyzed and the importance of preservation of the cultural values and collective wisdom of the Baloch people through their proverbs are explored. Balochi folk literature includes many proverbs, which are short sayings containing moral lessons, social rules and traditional knowledge which are passed on orally. In the study, the qualitative textual analysis approach is used, and fifteen Balochi proverbs have been selected from the book 'Batal, Matal by Sabir Sayad' published by the Balochi Academy, Quetta. The analysis is carried out in Semiotics theoretical context, which is based on Ferdinand de Saussure, Charles Sanders Peirce, and Roland Barthes. The model of signifier and signified that Saussure developed, icons, indexes, and symbols that Peirce developed, as well as denotation, connotation, and myth in Barthes' work are used to shed light on the multiple meanings of these selected proverbs. The results have shown that Balochi proverbs are symbolic cultural texts which are used to convey several values and beliefs. Animals, objects, actions, emotions, and social relationship are used as symbols to represent notions like patience, knowledge, honor, friendship, responsibility, livelihood, fate, emotional control, and resilience. The camel, for instance, represents endurance, and responsibility; blindness represents ignorance; bread represents livelihood, and death represents the result of disgrace. The study also shows that the meaning of these proverbs is predominantly conventional and collective, that is, created by culture and community.

Keywords; Balochi proverbs, semiotics, symbolic code, cultural identity,

Introduction

One of the oldest and longest lasting types of oral literature are proverbs. They are messages of society's knowledge, experiences, beliefs, and values that have been passed down from one generation to another in a succinct and memorable manner. Proverbs are often dense with meaning, being symbolic and metaphorical in their language, as they come from daily life and culture. The importance of proverbs as cultural documents for the communication of a community's worldview, moral outlook, and social identity has been noted by scholars for decades (Mieder, 2004; Finnegan, 2012). Proverbs are not only used for decorative purposes, but they are also reservoirs of indigenous knowledge and remain a part of communication, instruction, and social interaction in many traditional societies (Norrick, 2014; Dundes, 1981).

Proverbs are not just an expression of literal truth, but rather they use systems of symbols, metaphors, and cultural codes to communicate ideas. They seldom have obvious meanings, and usually need cultural knowledge and contextual

understanding to be properly understood. Proverbs use symbolic expressions to enable communities to pass on values, beliefs, customs, and collective experiences in a shortened and meaningful way. Consequently, proverbs are an important area for literary, linguistic, anthropological, and folkloric studies (Taylor, 1931; Mieder, 2004). According to the research, proverbs are rich in symbols which have cultural continuity and have the ability of interpretation, so that by using symbolic language, the proverbs can be transmitted from generation to generation (Eco, 1979; Barthes, 1972).

The research on symbols and signs has been systematically elaborated over the field of Semiotics, comprising the study of the systems of signs and their means of production and communication of meaning. In Ferdinand de Saussure's work in 1916/1983, the concept of the linguistic sign is defined as the signifier and the signified; meaning is constructed from the interaction between these and not from a natural link between words and objects. Charles Sanders Peirce further developed this, suggesting a triadic system of the sign, the icon, the index, and the symbol, which illustrates that meaning is produced in various ways of representation (Peirce, 1931–1958). Later on Roland Barthes further developed the semiotic analysis of cultural texts by examining how commonplace signs take on secondary meanings and cultural myths that mold collective consciousness (Barthes, 1972; Chandler, 2017).

Statement of the Problem

In the field of Balochi literary studies, only some works have focused on the conservation, translation, and interpretive cultural analysis of Baloch proverbs, while very few have investigated the symbolic structures in the interior of these expressions. There is little research that discusses the interaction between the signs, symbols, metaphors, and cultural codes that create meaning in Balochi proverbs. From a semiotic point of view, therefore, the symbolic aspects of the Balochi proverbial sayings have not been extensively investigated. As this gap is a readily apparent lack in Balochi literary criticism, it is especially absent from research that strives to link folklore with current literary theory (Elfenbein, 1990; Jahani & Korn, 2009). The study aims to give both the study of Balochi literature and semiology, folklore, and cultural studies (Saussure, 1916/1983; Barthes, 1972; Peirce, 1931–1958) its contribution.

Research Objectives

1. To investigate the symbolic codes in selected proverbs of Balochi language based on Semiotic Theory.
2. To determine the main sign, symbol and cultural codes used in Balochi proverb.
3. To examine the meaning making of the cultural and social meanings of cultural symbols in the selected Balochi proverbs.

Significance of the Study

The current study is important because it is one of the many studies on Balochi literature, in the context of the oral tradition and the discourse of proverbs. The symbolic nature of Balochi proverbs has been recognized as a source of indigenous knowledge and traditional cultural values, but relatively

Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review

Print ISSN: 3006-5887

Online ISSN: 3006-5895

little focus has been given to Balochi proverbs from the angle of literary theory. This study represents another approach to Balochi proverbs based on Semiotic Theory, which goes beyond documentation and literal interpretation of the texts to the symbolic meaning of the Balochi language (Mieder, 2004; Dundes, 1981).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Literature review is the intellectual basis of any academic research, as it helps researcher to critically engage with existing knowledge, understand the theoretical development, explore, and assess the previous studies and fill the research gap that calls for a new study. A literature review is not just a summary of prior research, but it is intended to bring together various points of view from the research literature and shows the relevance of the current research in continuing scholarly debates (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Hart, 2018). Reviewing earlier scholarship is especially significant in the field of literary studies, where it is crucial to acknowledge and make aware the theoretical assumptions that underlie the ways texts are read and understood. Therefore, conducting a detailed literature review will enable a researcher to place their own research in the context of existing academic research and find out where there is scope for further research (Barry, 2017; Tyson, 2023).

The present chapter explores the existing works related to Balochi proverbial discourse and Semiotic Theory. It first examines the nature and the characteristics of proverbs as an important genre of oral literature before reviewing the evolution of proverb research in folklore, linguistics, anthropology, and literary criticism. It then examines how Semiotics developed as a theory of signs and meaning, and the work of Ferdinand de Saussure, Charles Sanders Peirce, Roland Barthes, and Umberto Eco. They develop theories that serve as a conceptual framework for comprehending symbolic systems that create meaning in literary and cultural works (Cobley, 2010; Chandler, 2017).

The chapter also reviews the literature of proverbs in general and Balochi proverbs. Previous scholarship has shown that proverbs have been studied linguistically, folklorically, sociologically, and anthropologically. Few, however, has studied their symbolic organization from the point of view of Semiotic Theory. Numerous Balochi proverbs have been documented and interpreted, but little has been done to explain the interaction between signs, symbols and cultural codes in order to produce meaning in the context of proverbial discourse (Mieder, 2004; Norrick, 2014). This restriction has been a gap that is important in the study of Baloch literature that the present research will fill. Thus, the chapter revisits the previous literature and bases the framework for the current study on theory. The chapter brings together classical and contemporary theories regarding Semiotics and current research on proverbs and oral literature to show how the analysis of the symbolic richness of proverbial discourses in Balochi can be supported with semiotic analysis. Finally, it serves as the theoretical framework for the textual analysis to be carried out in the following chapters (Eco, 1979; Danesi, 2007).

Understanding Proverbs as Oral Literature

Proverbs are one of the oldest and the longest-lasting types of oral literature, which are pieces of collective wisdom that are contained in a very few words and are able to pass down society's memories through generations. Proverbs are different from regular statements because they pack several experiences, observations and lessons into a short and catchy phrase that is easily passed on orally. They have survived for centuries because they are relevant to their society and adaptable to their culture, and thus are part of the world's intangible cultural heritage. For a long time, scholars have viewed the proverb as less than just a statement of language and more than just a cultural artifact, a community's beliefs, values, customs and experiences. (Taylor, 1931; Mieder, 2004).

Oral literature has a significant role in societies where oral communication is the main means of cultural knowledge exchange, more than written literature. In these traditions, the role of proverbs is multifaceted: education, persuasion, conflict resolution, entertainment, and communal identity. According to Ruth Finnegan (2012) oral genres like proverbs are dynamic genres of communication, which are constantly adapted to the changing social situation and yet they maintain their traditional denotative meanings. Likewise, Dundes (1981) states that proverbs "can give clues about the collective psychology of a community, including its attitudes toward the family, authority, religion, morality and social relations.

Literary value of proverbs is in the composition of word artistry. Often, they use metaphors, symbols, irony, personification, hyperbole, parallelism, and other rhetorical tools to convey meanings that are not in the literal sense of words. Proverbs are figurative, which means that they are not what they literally appear to be, only in a symbolic way, allowing them to give great truths through symbolism. Proverbs are intricate and polyvalent, as they can have various interpretations in the context of the culture and communicative situation in which they are used (Norrick, 2014; Mieder, 2004). For this reason, the scholars consider the proverbs as literary text and pay the same critical attention as they give to the poetry, drama and narrative literature.

Another trait that is true about proverbs is that they rely heavily on culture. A proverb's meaning may not always be deduced from the meanings of its particular words because the meaning is often embedded in the collective memory and shared experiences of the culture. A proverb's communicative power comes from the shared understanding of the speakers in a given cultural community, as Wolfgang Mieder (2004) elucidates. Similarly, Taylor (1931) points out that the expression of collective wisdom, the proverbs become authoritative in the community as a whole, rather than as a set of personal opinions.

Literary in terms, proverbs are very symbolic texts. Their words are often used to designate commonplace experiences of humans, activities in nature, animals, colors, seasons, landscapes and so on as a symbol for a wider experience of human life. For example, a reference to the camel could mean

something different in a different culture, whether it indicates endurance, strength, prosperity, hardship or transformation. This symbolic aspect accounts for the recent tendency in literary studies to approach proverbs not only as linguistic or folkloric but also as signs, symbols and as a process of meaning construction (Barthes 1972; Eco 1976).

In the past thirty years, the study of the proverb has gained more and more interdisciplinary dimensions. Proverbs are now studied by literary critics, folklorists, anthropologists, linguists, sociologists, and semioticians from a variety of methodological points of view, as they are all at the same time linguistic expressions, literary texts, cultural symbols, and social practices. This interdisciplinary trend has resulted in a wide range of new research on the proverb and has inspired researchers to examine how proverbs symbolically help to “preserve cultural identity” and how collective knowledge is passed on “from generation to generation” (Danesi, 2007: 4; Chandler, 2017: 22). As a result, Semiotic Theory is an especially useful lens through which to explore the meaning-making process in Balochi proverbs, because of their symbolic nature.

Ferdinand de Saussure's Theory of the Sign

Ferdinand de Saussure is one of the founding fathers of modern Semiotics, and a pivotal figure in the development of the academic discipline of the study of signs. In his posthumously published *Course in General Linguistics* (1916), he suggested that meaning is not related to any natural link between the objects and the words which represent them but is the result of relations between the words in a structured system of signs. His ideas changed the face of linguistics and provided the intellectual underpinning for that which came later: Structuralism, literary criticism, anthropology, cultural studies, and modern Semiotics. As a result, his theory is still impacting modern textual and cultural analysis (Saussure, 1916/1983, Culler, 1976).

According to Saussure, language is a system of signs, which has two integral parts, the signifier (significant) and the signified (signifié). The signifier is the form of a sign, whether it be a spoken sound, a word, or a visual image; the signified is the mental concept or idea that is represented by a sign. The meaning is only created when the two are put together in relation to each other, and cannot exist on their own, Saussure said. This model was an attack on previously held notions that words have intrinsic meanings and was influential in the development of a view of language as relational and conventional, rather than natural (Saussure 1916/1983; Chandler 2017).

One of the two basic tenets of Saussure's theory is that of the arbitrariness of the sign. He claimed that there is no natural link between a signifier and the signified. Tree, for example, is not a "tree word," it is just a term that is recognized as such by a linguistic community accepted through social convention. Remember that this is the reason that different languages use different words that name the same thing. Thus, according to the cultural agreement between the parties involved, the meaning of a word depends on nothing else but on the interrelationship between words and reality, and this interrelationship is not objective but only appears to be it (Saussure,

1916/1983; Copley, 2010).

One of the other major contributions of Saussure is that he believed that meaning is created by difference. He argued that the meaning of linguistic signs does not depend on the characteristics of the sign itself but on its difference from other signs in the language system. The identity of a word is not its internal quality, but how it relates to other words. This insight was one of the tenets of Structuralism and had a profound impact on later literary theorists who argued that literary meaning is discovered in patterns of relationships, contrasts, and oppositions found within texts (Culler, 1975; Barry, 2017).

Saussure also introduced the notions of *langue* and *parole*, which changed the way language was studied. *Langue* is the underlying system of language that all members of a speech community share, with its rules and conventions, while *parole* is the individual acts of speaking and writing by language users. This distinction by Saussure proved that each expression exists within a larger system of language. His use of systematic structures later motivated scholars to examine the underlying patterns of literary, folk, mythological and other cultural forms (Saussure, 1916/1983; Hawkes, 2003).

The impact of Saussure's theory is much wider than the field of linguistics. His structural analysis was embraced by literary critics to analyze how texts produce meaning by internal relationships instead of authorial intention and historical context. Claude Lévi-Strauss and his followers, the structuralists, extended Saussurean concepts to myths and cultural systems; Roland Barthes extended them to popular culture, literature, fashion, and mass media. These changes constituted one of the leading arguments of literary criticism and cultural analysis in the 20th century (Lévi-Strauss, 2008; Barthes, 1977).

Charles Sanders Peirce's Triadic Theory of Signs

Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914) is one of the most peculiar of the pioneers of modern Semiotics, since he was the creator of one of the most complete and influential theories of signs. Peirce's view of signs was not so much linguistic as Saussure's, but rather integral in every facet of the human thought, communication, and knowledge. He maintained that one's knowledge of the world is obtained from signs, and that all thinking activity is an interpretation of signs. Thus, his theory is not limited to written texts, but embraces visual images, gestures, objects, sounds, rituals, cultural practices, and literary texts. This general knowledge has proved useful in literary criticism, anthropology, philosophy, communication studies and cultural analysis, fields that Peirce has devoted some of his work with the semiotic approach (Peirce, 1931-1958; Short, 2007).

Peirce's definition of a sign is "something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. This definition aims at making the point that sign themselves don't have any meaning, but signs are interpreted to have meaning. Peirce suggests that each sign is an object and at the same time generates a meaning in the mind of the individual. Therefore, the meaning is not fixed or inherent, but it emerges from a continuous process of interaction between the sign, the object it signifies and the person who

understands it. This dynamic concept of meaning sets Peirce's theory apart from many previous theories that saw signs as mere labels that could be added to objects (Peirce 1931-1958; Chandler 2017).

Peirce was proposing a triadic model of the sign, three parts of which are interrelated, rather than the dyadic model proposed by Saussure, with the three parts being the Representamen, the Object, and the Interpretant. The Representamen is the form in which the sign occurs, in this case, a word, image, gesture, or symbol. The Object is the person or thing referred to by the sign and the Interpretant is the meaning or understanding in the interpreter's mind. These three elements are used in a continuous process called semiosis, by which meaning is continually created and re-created. Peirce asserted that none of these parts could stand alone, for the meaning communicated by one sign often leads to the creation of another sign (Peirce, 1931-1958; Danesi, 2007).

Roland Barthes and the Concept of Myth

Roland Barthes (1915-1980) is considered one of the most important thinkers in modern Semiotics and literary theory for his development of Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistic model to include culture, ideology, literature, media and everyday life. Saussure focused on the role of signs in the language systems, Barthes, however, asserted that signs also have a function in the larger systems of culture, transmitting social values, beliefs and ideologies. His work showed that 'common' things, images, texts and cultural practices have meanings that go beyond what can be discerned in the literal. Thus, Barthes turned Semiotics from a language theory into a complete approach to the understanding of cultural meaning (Barthes, 1972; Allen, 2004).

Barthes' work on Semiotics is best summed up in his highly influential *Mythologies* (1957) where he explored commonplace cultural items like advertisements, fashion, photographs, food, sports and popular media. Barthes did not consider these cultural products as neutral objects but as systems of signs that spread ideological messages. To him, societies are continually generating myths that help them to normalize certain beliefs and values and legitimate certain social structures as universal and unquestioned. In this way, Barthes established Semiotics as a tool that could be used in literature but could be used in anything else that is related to human culture (Barthes, 1972; Chandler, 2017).

One of the key points of Barthes' theory is the difference between denotation and connotation. Denotation: the basic or dictionary meaning of a sign, the meaning that is most direct and widely accepted in a language community. Connotation, on the other hand, can be the secondary meaning which comes from cultural associations, emotional reactions, historical experience, and ideological beliefs. Denotative meanings are more stable than connotative meanings, which rely on common knowledge of culture and time period and therefore can change from one society to another and one era to another. Barthes proposed that reading a text demands both levels of meaning, because there are more connotations in a text than it is literally saying (Barthes, 1977; Culler, 1975).

Semiotics and Proverb Studies

The reason for this is that the meaning of proverbs is seldom conveyed in single words. For this reason, Semiotics has become one of the most useful theories for studying proverbs. Rather, they use signs, metaphors, symbols, and codes that are shared among the members of the culture, which must be interpreted beyond the literal level. Proverbs are succinct statements of wisdom, ideas, values, experiences, beliefs, and cultural identities. Thus, according to Chandler (2017) and Mieder (2004), a semiotic analysis allows researchers to go beyond literal meaning to explore the deeper layers of culture that are present in the proverbial discourse.

Scholarship focused mostly on the collection, classification, and translation of proverbial expressions. Proverbs were seen by early scholars as a source of folk wisdom and their linguistic form, stylistic elements and historical background were studied. While these descriptive strategies greatly helped preserve the oral traditions, they tended to ignore the intricate symbolic processes involved in the creation of meaning in the proverb. In recent years, scholars have been increasingly proposing that proverbs are cultural texts which must be understood in terms of systems of signs and not just as linguistic units (Taylor, 1931; Norrick, 2014).

It was during the late twentieth century that the study of proverbs began to be approached with the framework of Semiotics. It was only towards the end of the 20th century that the study of proverb started to be viewed through the lens of Semiotics. Proverbs use familiar objects, animals, landscapes, occupations, and experiences to convey ideas that have culturally established meanings. These signs typically do not stand alone but are meaningful within a larger cultural code that is common to community members. Therefore, to understand a proverb, apart from linguistic competence, the interpreter must also have cultural understanding to be able to understand the symbolic meaning of the proverb (Danesi, 2007; Eco, 1979).

Proverb studies have been enhanced from the theories of Ferdinand de Saussure, Charles Sanders Peirce, and Roland Barthes, which each provide differing perspectives on the manner of the operation of signs in language and culture. The structural model of Saussure illustrates how the propositional meaning is realized in the relationships between signs, and the triadic model of Peirce shows how the propositional meaning is realized by three levels of interpretation: icons, indexes and symbols. Barthes continues this analysis by demonstrating how commonplace signs turn into cultural myths through second-order signification. As a combination of these theories, they form a full theoretical structure to understand proverbs as a complex system of symbolic communications instead of a simple advice-giving system (Saussure 1916/1983; Peirce 1931-1958; Barthes 1972).

Conceptual Framework

The Semiotic Theory was used as the main approach for analyzing the symbolic codes used in the selected Balochi proverbs in the present study. According to Semiotics language is a system of signs that are used to build meaning and convey information. Proverbs are symbolic, and do not express

Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review

Print ISSN: 3006-5887

Online ISSN: 3006-5895

things outright, which makes Semiotic theory an appropriate approach to analyzing how cultural meanings are coded in proverbial discourse (Chandler, 2017; Danesi, 2007).

This research stems from a conceptual framework that combines the theories of Ferdinand de Saussure, Charles Sanders Peirce, and Roland Barthes. Saussure's theory deals with the relationship between the signifier and signified in the creation of meaning, whereby the meaning of the linguistic sign depends on the conventions and rules of society, rather than natural relationships (Saussure 1916/1983; Culler 1976). Peirce's triadic model further extends this understanding by distinguishing icons, indexes, and symbols, which enables the researcher to determine how signs work in Balochi proverbs (Peirce, 1931-1958; Short, 2007). The semiotics of denotation, connotation, myth and second order of signification also help to understand how common signs are given additional cultural and ideological meanings because of their associated social beliefs and traditions (Barthes, 1972; Allen, 2003).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Research methodology is the systematic procedures by which a study is designed, carried out and interpreted. It is the blueprint of the research because it explains the methods used for data collection, analysis, and interpretation in answering the research questions. A well-developed methodology helps to make the research findings credible, transparent, and trustworthy and ensures the research is conducted in a logical sequence and is accepted by the scientific community (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Qualitative research can be used for interpretive analysis because it explores language, symbols, beliefs, values, and cultural practices that are appropriate for literary and folkloric studies (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Flick, 2022). A Semiotic Analysis" is focused on investigating the interplay of symbolic codes in the selected Balochi proverbs in the construction of cultural meanings. The study is descriptive and interpretive research design as well. The descriptive aspect is based on identification of the symbolic features found in selected Balochi proverbs and the interpretive aspect is based on interpreting the symbolic features and how they build cultural meaning through systems of signs. This twofold process allows the researcher to transcend the descriptive phase of the research to the stage of literary interpretation, also outlined in the goals of the Semiotic analysis (Crotty, 1998; Patton, 2015). fifteen (15) authentic Balochi sayings were chosen from Batal, Matal (بتل، متل) of Sabir Sayad, published by the Balochi Academy, Quetta (2023) as the population for this study. It is a modern scholarly initiative to preserve and record Balochi proverb and is regarded as an authentic source for literary and cultural studies.

Theoretical Framework

The combination of the three theories of Saussure, Peirce and Barthes offers a systematic analytical framework for the interpretation of the symbolic codes of Balochi proverbial discourse. These theories are not used independently in the present work; instead, they are integrated to form a sequential analytical procedure that leads to the interpretation of each proverb selected.

The Analytical Procedure is composed of the following steps:

1. Selection of a proverb from authentic published sources in Balochi.
2. Analysis of key words and phrases in the proverb.
3. Saussurean Analysis: Analysis of the relationship between signifier and signified.
4. Peircean Analysis: Analysis of identified signs as icons, indexes, or symbols.
5. Barthesian Analysis: Denotative, connotative, and mythical meanings.
6. Cultural Interpretation: Information regarding the symbolic code and the interpretation of the same in terms of Baloch cultural values, beliefs, and collective identity.
7. Interpretive Conclusion: Discussion of overall symbolism of the proverb in terms of the goals of the study.

Data Analysis

Introduction

This chapter carries out a semiotic reading of fifteen Balochi proverbs drawn from Sabir Sayad's *Batal, Matal* (2023). Rather than treating proverbs as decorative sayings, the discussion approaches them as compact cultural texts: each one packs together moral judgment, social expectation, and a shared way of seeing the world that has been passed down through oral repetition. What makes a proverb interesting to a semiotician is precisely that it says less than it means a single line about a camel or a blind man carries centuries of accumulated social experience behind it.

Thematic Semiotic Analysis of Balochi Proverbs

Proverb 1: آس که کپیٹ، تر ءُ بَشک نہ زانت

Translation: "Anger is temporary madness."

At its most literal, this proverb likens an angry person to someone temporarily out of their mind both lose the capacity to tell right from wrong. In Saussurean terms, the word for anger (آس) is the signifier, but what it signifies here is broader than the emotion itself: it is a state of clouded judgment that overrides moral awareness. Peirce's framework is useful for pinning down why this works as a proverb at all. Anger is not being used as an icon (it does not physically resemble madness) or an index (it does not simply point to madness as an effect); it operates as a symbol, standing in, by cultural convention, for irrationality and moral instability more generally. Read through Barthes, the denotative layer is simply the emotional state of anger. Connotatively, the proverb pushes further, suggesting a loss of self-command and clouded reasoning. Its mythic function the deeper, almost invisible belief it naturalizes is that emotional restraint is not optional but a precondition for social harmony in Baloch life. This fits a broader pattern in Balochi folk literature, where anger is treated less as a private feeling than as a public risk: it threatens relationships, honour, and the wider social order, which is why

patience and self-control are held up as virtues worth actively cultivating rather than simply admired from a distance.

Proverb 2: دلء كه گپے به نیت، الم زبان ء کثیت.

Translation: "Whatever the mind thinks, the tongue speaks."

The proverb rests on a simple but consequential claim: speech gives away what the mind is actually thinking, whether or not the speaker intends it to. Two signifiers are in play "heart" (دل) and "tongue" (زبان) and together they signify the relationship between inner thought and outer expression. In Peircean terms the tongue functions as an index rather than a symbol: it does not merely represent thought by convention, it points directly to it, the way smoke points to fire. Denotatively, the line is about speaking what one thinks. Connotatively, it implies that character is legible through language that a person's real intentions eventually surface in how they talk. Mythically, it entrenches the idea that speech is a moral mirror, a test of sincerity rather than a neutral communication tool. Given how much weight Balochi culture places on truthful speech, the warning embedded here is practical as much as philosophical: careless words are not just socially awkward, they are treated as evidence, capable of damaging trust and reputation in ways that are hard to undo.

Proverb 3: انسان بے علمء کور انت

Translation: "Man without knowledge is blind."

Here a person without knowledge is compared directly to someone who cannot see the way ahead. "Blind" (کور) is the signifier; what it signifies is ignorance not a physical condition but an intellectual one, a lack of guidance in navigating the world.

Blindness functions symbolically rather than iconically: the connection between sightlessness and ignorance is not a literal resemblance but a culturally agreed-upon equivalence built up over generations of use.

At the denotative level the proverb describes physical blindness; connotatively it gestures toward intellectual darkness; mythically it installs knowledge as something close to moral light the thing that allows a person to distinguish truth from falsehood at all.

This reflects a broader Balochi conviction that education is not merely useful but formative: it is what equips someone to participate responsibly in social life, and its absence is treated as a genuine handicap rather than simply a gap to be filled later.

Proverb 4: شوک ء کیمت نیست

Translation: "Nothing is impossible to a willing mind."

Determination, the proverb claims, is enough to overcome most obstacles. "Willing mind" (شوک) signifies determination and strong intention.

It functions symbolically, representing human resolve through cultural convention about what perseverance can achieve.

Denotatively it concerns willingness itself; connotatively it suggests perseverance and confidence; mythically it holds that determination is capable of overcoming real obstacles.

Balochi folk literature consistently rewards courage and persistence in the face

of hardship, and this proverb is a direct expression of that value.

Proverb 5: برات اگاں کورے نہ بیت، گہار دلمانگ انت

Translation: "Man proposes, God disposes."

Human planning, the proverb suggests, only ever goes so far; the outcome is ultimately decided elsewhere. "God" (گہار) is the signifier, and what it signifies is a governing authority over human fate that no amount of foresight can override.

God functions symbolically the term carries meaning only through the shared religious and cultural conventions of the community that uses it, not through any resemblance or direct causal link.

Denotatively, the line contrasts human intention with divine decision; connotatively it recommends humility in the face of circumstance; mythically it locates ultimate power outside human hands altogether.

This sits within a broader current of Balochi folk belief in which acceptance of outcomes patience rather than resistance is framed less as passivity and more as a form of wisdom, an appropriate response to the limits of human control.

Proverb 6: دوست ہما انت کہ سگیاں گون انت

Translation: "A friend in need is a friend indeed."

The test of friendship, on this view, comes not in easy times but in hard ones. "Friend" (دوست) signifies loyalty and dependable companionship qualities that only become visible under pressure.

Friend operates as a symbol, its meaning anchored in shared social convention about what genuine obligation looks like rather than any literal or causal property of friendship itself.

Denotatively the proverb names a friend who helps during difficulty; connotatively it implies reliability and emotional support; mythically it insists that friendship is proven through adversity, not through declarations of affection.

Given how central mutual assistance is to communal life in Balochi culture, this reading fits naturally relationships are judged less by what people say about them and more by what they hold up under strain.

Proverb 7: اُشتر وتی بار ء وت بار، بس واجہ ء جی ء جان ء لوٹیت

Translation: "The camel carries its own burden; yet sweet command can move body and soul."

Every being carries its own load, the proverb suggests, but kind words retain a persuasive power of their own. "Camel" (اُشتر) and "burden" (بار) signify responsibility, endurance, and personal duty.

The camel functions symbolically as a figure of patience and burden-bearing, while burden itself symbolizes life's responsibilities more generally.

Denotatively the proverb pictures a camel carrying its load; connotatively it suggests human endurance and the persuasive power of respectful speech; mythically it holds that kindness moves people more effectively than force.

The camel's centrality here is unsurprising given its historical role in Baloch pastoral and desert life, and the proverb pairs that endurance neatly with a reminder about how people respond best to respectful communication.

Proverb 8: جن پہ کلوه آپس نہ نیت

Translation: "Sweet words alone do not butter the bread."

Pleasant talk, the proverb warns, does not by itself put food on the table. "Bread" (کلوہ) signifies livelihood and material necessity more broadly.

Bread works symbolically here, standing for economic survival through cultural convention rather than any physical connection between the word and the concept.

Denotatively the proverb concerns bread as food; connotatively it points to practical livelihood; mythically it insists that action, not eloquence, is what sustains a person.

This matches a strong current of self-reliance running through Balochi tradition, where promises unaccompanied by effort are treated with suspicion rather than taken at face value.

Proverb 9: بخت کم کپیٹ، اُشتر ۽ سرا بم گچک وارت

Translation: "When misfortune strikes, even a dog bites the camel."

Bad luck, the proverb observes, can invert the usual order of strength even the weak may trouble the strong. "Dog" (گچک) and "camel" (اُشتر) signify a reversal of expected power relations under misfortune.

Both animals function symbolically: the dog stands for opportunism, the camel for strength and endurance, their pairing conventional rather than literal.

Denotatively the proverb pictures a dog biting a camel; connotatively it suggests humiliation and reversed fortune; mythically it holds that misfortune can reduce even the powerful to vulnerability.

This reflects a Balochi awareness of how unpredictable fortune can be — social power, however solid it looks, is treated as fragile under pressure.

Proverb 10: چہ بے حیائش زند ۽ غیرت ۽ مرگ گہتر انت

Translation: "Death is better than disgrace."

The comparison is stark: a life lived in disgrace is judged worse than death met with honour. "Disgrace" (بے حیائی) signifies the loss of honour and social standing.

Disgrace functions symbolically, representing dishonour and moral failure through cultural convention rather than through resemblance or direct causation.

Denotatively the proverb concerns disgraceful living; connotatively it evokes shame and social rejection; mythically it installs honour as one of the highest values a person can hold.

Because honour occupies such a central place in Balochi social life, this proverb reads as something closer to a statement of communal priorities than a simple aphorism dignity is worth protecting even at real cost.

Proverb 11: حر نوں چے زانت پیر ۽ پوپل ۽ جایگ

Translation: "What should a cow know of the value of a precious ornament?"

The image is deliberately absurd a cow has no use for jewellery and that absurdity is the point: someone without understanding cannot recognize something valuable when they see it. "Cow" (حر) signifies limited understanding, an inability to appreciate worth.

The cow functions symbolically, representing simplicity and a lack of refined judgment by cultural convention rather than by any literal property of cows. Denotatively the proverb pairs a cow with a precious ornament; connotatively it implies ignorance of value; mythically it suggests that genuine appreciation is only available to those who already possess knowledge and discernment. The underlying belief that value is not self-evident, but requires an educated eye to recognize recurs across Balochi folk sayings that link wisdom with the capacity to judge rightly.

Proverb 12: پشی و تی مات ء گندیت میاؤ کنت

Translation: "The cat sees its mother and meows."

A kitten learns to meow, the proverb observes, by watching its mother do it and by extension, people pick up behavior from those closest to them. "Cat" (پشی) signifies imitation and inherited behavior.

Unlike the cow above, the cat here functions as an index: its meowing is not a cultural symbol for imitation but direct evidence of learning through observation as it happens.

Denotatively the line describes a cat meowing after watching its mother; connotatively it points to social learning and inherited habit; mythically it frames human character as substantially shaped by family environment.

This lends weight, within Balochi culture, to the idea that upbringing matters good example within the household is treated as formative, not incidental, to how a person turns out.

Proverb 13: واب نیم مرگ انت

Translation: "Sleeping is half death."

Sleep, on this reading, is a kind of rehearsal for death a temporary withdrawal from the world that resembles it closely enough to be unsettling. "Sleep" (واب) signifies vulnerability and temporary inactivity.

Sleep functions as an icon here, since the resemblance is direct: stillness and reduced awareness during sleep genuinely look like the stillness of death, rather than merely standing for it by convention.

Denotatively the proverb describes the physical act of sleeping; connotatively it suggests human fragility; mythically it reminds listeners that life itself is temporary and only partly within human control.

In Balochi folk thought this small, everyday act becomes a quiet meditation on mortality proof that even the most ordinary experiences can carry philosophical weight.

Proverb 14: چه دیدگان ساه دوست تر انت

Translation: "Life is sweet to everyone."

No matter their circumstances, the proverb claims, everyone clings to life. "Life" (ساه) signifies a universal human attachment to existence.

Life functions symbolically, representing survival and hope through shared cultural understanding rather than through any resemblance or causal link.

Denotatively the proverb is simply about life itself; connotatively it evokes the natural desire for survival and happiness; mythically it treats this attachment as a universal condition, cutting across status and circumstance.

The proverb's appeal lies in its levelling quality it applies as much to the

powerful as the powerless, which is arguably why it has survived in everyday use.

Proverb 15: خُدا ۛ لٲ بے توار انت

Translation: *"The long arm of the Almighty makes no sound when it strikes."*

Divine justice, the proverb suggests, does not announce itself it acts quietly and still lands its blow. "God's arm" (خُدا ۛ لٲ) signifies divine power exercised without warning.

God's arm functions symbolically, its meaning resting on shared religious convention about unseen but effective authority.

Denotatively the image is of an arm striking without sound; connotatively it suggests justice that is hidden but inevitable; mythically it affirms that divine power works beyond human perception and ultimately prevails.

This belief in silent but certain accountability recurs across Balochi folk literature, functioning as a check on behavior even where no worldly authority is watching.

Comprehensive Discussion of Symbolic Codes

Taken together, fifteen proverbs point to something larger than any single reading: Balochi proverbial discourse operates as a coherent symbolic system through which the community preserves and transmits its values, moral commitments, and shared worldview. None of these sayings function merely as advice or entertainment. They are, in effect, compressed cultural texts vessels carrying generations of social experience and locally developed wisdom. Working through signs drawn from animals, everyday objects, actions, emotions, and social relationships, the proverbs communicate meanings that reach well past their literal wording, and in doing so help sustain a continuous sense of Balochi cultural identity.

One pattern that stands out across the analysis is the recurring use of animals as cultural signs. The camel, cow, cat, and dog each carry meaning rooted in the lived experience of Baloch society rather than in zoology. The camel represents patience, endurance, and the capacity to bear responsibility, a meaning that traces directly back to its historical role in pastoral and desert life. The cow, by contrast, signals limited understanding an inability to recognize value while the cat stands for imitation and behavior learned through observation. The dog, particularly in proverbs about misfortune, represents opportunism or a reversal of the power relations one would normally expect. These associations show how readily Balochi proverbs draw on familiar elements of the surrounding natural and social world to deliver moral lessons and social commentary (Chandler, 2017; Danesi, 2007).

A second pattern involves the way abstract cultural values get attached to concrete, everyday signs. Knowledge, honour, friendship, fate, anger, determination, and livelihood are all expressed through images that any member of the community would immediately recognize. Blindness stands for ignorance; bread stands for livelihood and material need; death, when set against disgrace, becomes a way of asserting just how central honour is to Baloch identity. Friendship, meanwhile, is represented through the image of

Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review

Print ISSN: 3006-5887

Online ISSN: 3006-5895

support offered during hardship reinforcing loyalty and mutual obligation as communal, not merely personal, values. Collectively, these signs turn the proverbs into something closer to moral guides than casual sayings, nudging individuals toward culturally sanctioned behavior (Mieder, 2004; Finnegan, 2012).

Viewed through Saussure, each proverb illustrates the gap between a linguistic expression and the concept it evokes. Words such as "camel," "blindness," "bread," "anger," and "heart" function as signifiers whose meaning is not exhausted by their dictionary definitions it depends on what the Baloch community has collectively agreed those words should evoke. The proverb "Man without knowledge is blind," for instance, uses blindness not to describe a physical condition but to signify a lack of intellectual guidance, exactly the kind of socially constructed association Saussure's model predicts (Saussure, 1916/1983).

Peirce's typology, meanwhile, helps distinguish how different proverbs achieve their meaning. A handful operate as icons, where the sign resembles what it stands for sleep resembling death in "Sleeping is half death" is the clearest case in this set. Others function as indexes, pointing to a causal or experiential relationship, as with speech revealing inner thought in "Whatever the mind thinks, the tongue speaks." Most of the analyzed proverbs, however, work as symbols: their meaning depends on cultural convention rather than resemblance or direct causation. The camel again offers the clearest example it comes to represent patience and endurance not because of any physical likeness, but because of an association built up and reinforced within Balochi society over time (Peirce, 1931–1958).

Barthes' three levels denotation, connotation, and myth help surface the ideological undercurrents running beneath the proverbs' surface meanings. At the denotative level, each proverb offers a fairly direct moral or practical lesson. At the connotative level, broader associations start to emerge, touching on honour, wisdom, responsibility, perseverance, and social cohesion. At the mythic level, these associations harden into something closer to unquestioned belief the value system that shapes how the Baloch people see the world. "Death is better than disgrace" makes this layering especially visible: denotatively it weighs death against disgrace, connotatively it elevates honour above almost everything else, and mythically it installs dignity and reputation as central to both individual and communal identity (Barthes, 1972).

Read together, the symbolic codes running through these proverbs point to a fairly stable set of core values in Balochi folk culture: patience and endurance (carried by the camel), knowledge and wisdom (carried by light and its absence), honour and dignity (carried by death and disgrace), loyalty and friendship (carried by support offered during hardship), responsibility and hard work (carried by burden-bearing and timely action), and resilience in the face of misfortune (carried by images of shifting fortune). The fact that these patterns recur so consistently suggests the proverbs function as something like a moral compass for the community not isolated pieces of advice, but a connected system guiding personal conduct, social relations, and ethical

decision-making.

DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

Major Findings

Several patterns recur clearly enough across the data to count as findings in their own right:

- Animals as cultural symbols the camel consistently stands for patience, endurance, and responsibility; the cow for limited understanding; the cat for imitation and inherited behaviour; and the dog, particularly in proverbs about misfortune, for opportunism or vulnerability.
- Knowledge and wisdom proverbs built around blindness, light, and learning treat intellectual awareness as something close to a moral good in Balochi culture, not merely a practical advantage.
- Honour and dignity proverbs invoking disgrace, death, and reputation confirm just how central honour is to Balochi social life, often ranking it above material or even physical concerns.
- Friendship and social relations proverbs about support offered during hardship show that loyalty and mutual assistance are treated as communal obligations rather than personal preferences.
- Livelihood and practical wisdom proverbs concerning bread, labour, burden-bearing, and timely action reflect a cultural premium on responsibility, effort, and getting things done rather than merely intending to.
- Fate and divine will proverbs referring to God, fortune, and misfortune point to a strong underlying belief in destiny and divine authority operating beyond human control.

Taken together, these six patterns suggest that Balochi proverbs are doing more than dispensing scattered advice. They function as a coordinated system of values patience, wisdom, honour, loyalty, responsibility, resilience, and faith in divine will reinforcing one another across different proverbs and different thematic areas.

Discussion of Findings

Balochi Proverbs as Symbolic Cultural Texts

The first and broadest finding of this study is that Balochi proverbs operate as symbolic cultural texts embedded within Balochi folk literature, not simply as short pieces of practical advice. Working through compressed, often metaphorical language, they encode cultural experience and moral instruction that would take far longer to state directly. This is consistent with the wider view in proverb scholarship that proverbs function as repositories of collective memory and indigenous wisdom rather than as isolated linguistic curiosities (Mieder, 2004).

What the analysis in Chapter Four made visible is that each proverb rests on a network of signifiers pointing toward signified meanings well beyond their surface sense. "Man without knowledge is blind," for instance, uses blindness as its signifier, but what is actually being signified is ignorance and the

absence of intellectual guidance not any physical condition. "Death is better than disgrace" works the same way: death is the signifier, and what it signifies is the ultimate cost of losing honour and dignity. These pairings are a fairly direct illustration of Saussure's argument that meaning arises from the association between a linguistic sign and a culturally shared concept, rather than from any inherent connection between word and referent (Saussure, 1916/1983).

A further finding worth noting is that the proverbs rarely operate on a single level. Their denotative sense offers a fairly direct moral or practical lesson, but a connotative layer sits just beneath it, drawing in broader associations tied to honour, wisdom, responsibility, and social harmony. Beyond that, at what Barthes (1972) calls the level of myth, the proverbs do quieter but more powerful work: they reinforce collective beliefs and ideological assumptions that shape how the Baloch community sees the world, often without the speaker consciously registering that this is happening.

Reflection of Balochi Cultural Values

Read across the full set of fifteen proverbs, several core Balochi cultural values surface with enough consistency to be treated as a genuine finding rather than a coincidence of the sample:

- Patience and endurance, carried mainly through the camel and the broader motif of burden-bearing.
- Knowledge and wisdom, carried through the paired imagery of light and blindness.
- Honour and dignity, carried through the pairing of death and disgrace.
- Loyalty and friendship, carried through signs of support offered specifically during hardship.
- Responsibility and hard work, carried through burden-bearing and an insistence on timely action.
- Resilience in the face of misfortune, carried through images of shifting or unstable fortune.

These recurring values suggest that Balochi proverbs are not simply reflecting culture passively they are actively doing the work of a moral compass, guiding individuals through questions of personal conduct, social obligation, and ethical decision-making. The consistency of this pattern across otherwise unrelated proverbs also points to something about Balochi folk literature more generally: it plays a real, ongoing role in maintaining cultural continuity, keeping these values in circulation across generations rather than letting them fade into historical record alone.

Semiotic Interpretation through Saussure, Peirce, and Barthes

Bringing Saussure, Peirce, and Barthes together, rather than relying on any one of them alone, turned out to be necessary rather than merely thorough. Each theorist answers a different question the proverbs raise. Saussure's signifier/signified model was what allowed the study to separate a proverb's literal wording from the culturally shared concept it actually points to. Peirce's classification of signs went a step further, showing that most of the proverbs

Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review

Print ISSN: 3006-5887

Online ISSN: 3006-5895

analysed function as symbols meaning their interpretation depends on cultural convention though a smaller number work instead as icons or indexes, where resemblance or direct causal connection does the interpretive work instead.

Barthes' three-part model denotation, connotation, and myth is what ultimately surfaced the deeper ideological content running beneath the proverbs. "Death is better than disgrace" is a useful case in point: at the denotative level it simply weighs death against disgrace; at the connotative level it elevates honour above almost every competing consideration; and at the mythic level it entrenches the belief that dignity and reputation are foundational to both individual and communal identity. Following the proverb through all three levels, rather than stopping at the first, is what reveals how much ideological work a short saying like this is actually doing.

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Conclusions

The central conclusion of this study is that Balochi proverbs form a rich symbolic system, one through which the Baloch community preserves and communicates collective wisdom, moral principle, social norm, and cultural worldview. Working through the selected proverbs made clear that their meaning reaches well past the literal wording it is grounded instead in the lived cultural experience and values of Baloch society.

A consistent finding across the analysis was how often animals, objects, actions, emotions, and social relationships were called on as symbolic signs. The camel, for instance, comes to represent patience, endurance, and responsibility, while the cow instead signals limited understanding. Bread stands for livelihood and material sustenance; blindness stands for ignorance; death, set against disgrace, stands for the ultimate cost of dishonour. What these recurring associations show is that Balochi proverbs are doing something more than describing daily life they are actively turning ordinary experience into moral and cultural instruction. A further conclusion is that these proverbs operate, for the most part, as symbols in the strict semiotic sense: their meaning depends on cultural convention and communal understanding rather than on resemblance or direct causal connection. Saussure's signifier/signified model was what allowed this study to establish just how closely the proverbs' linguistic expressions are tied to concepts the community already shares. Peirce's classification of signs went further still,

confirming that most of the proverb's function primarily as symbols, though a smaller number carry iconic or indexical qualities as well. Barthes' concepts of denotation, connotation, and myth then did the work of surfacing the deeper ideological meanings running beneath the proverbs' surface sense.

Recommendations for Literary and Cultural Scholarship

- Promotion of Balochi proverb studies scholars should give more systematic attention to Balochi proverbs as a significant component of Balochi folk literature and cultural heritage, rather than treating them as a minor branch of folklore documentation.
- Application of literary theories researchers could bring a wider range of literary and cultural theories to bear on Balochi proverbial discourse, including structuralism, post-structuralism, discourse analysis, and cognitive linguistics, each of which would likely surface different aspects of these texts than a semiotic reading alone.
- Documentation and preservation collecting and documenting Balochi proverbs from different regions and dialects should be treated as a priority, given how much of this oral tradition remains undocumented and therefore vulnerable to loss.
- Inclusion in academic curricula Balochi proverbs and other forms of Balochi folk literature deserve a place in academic curricula, both to build awareness of Balochi cultural values and to keep this literary heritage in active circulation among younger scholars.
- Translation and accessibility more careful translation of Balochi proverbs into English and other languages would help make Balochi folk wisdom accessible to a wider scholarly audience than currently engages with it.

Areas for Further Research

This study was deliberately confined to fifteen selected proverbs from Sabir Sayad's *Batal, Matal* (2023). That scope was necessary for a focused, theoretically grounded analysis, but it also leaves a number of directions genuinely open for future work:

- Expansion of the corpus a larger collection of Balochi proverbs, drawn from different regions and dialects, would likely reveal additional symbolic patterns and thematic variation beyond what a fifteen-proverb sample can show.
- Comparative proverb studies comparing Balochi proverbs against those of other regional languages could clarify which symbolic representations and cultural values are distinctly Balochi and which are more broadly shared.
- Performance context there is room to study how these proverbs are actually performed, transmitted, and used in everyday communication today, rather than treating them solely as fixed written texts.
- Gender perspectives how gender roles and social representation appear within Balochi proverbial discourse would repay focused, dedicated attention.

Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review

Print ISSN: 3006-5887

Online ISSN: 3006-5895

- Socio-cultural functions future work could examine the part these proverbs play in shaping social behaviours, resolving conflict, delivering moral education, and reinforcing community identity.
- Interdisciplinary approaches combining semiotics with anthropology, sociology, linguistics, and folklore studies would likely produce a fuller picture of Balochi proverbial discourse than any one discipline can offer alone.

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