

Revisiting a choq pa bursting shargo (women: the miserable): Feminist critique in Balti folktale

Mairaj Ahmed¹, Muhammad Issa², Muhammad Mustafa³

Department of Languages & Cultural Studies,
University of Baltistan, Skardu PAKISTAN^{1,2}
Lincoln University College, MALAYSIA³
¹Email: mairajmaju@gmail.com

Abstract - This study examines the Balti folktale “Choqpa Bursting Shargo” through a feminist lens, focusing on the representation of female characters and their societal roles. The research aims to explore gender roles, major themes, and the portrayal of patriarchal structures in the narrative. It highlights the elements of oppression and the marginalization of women in a male-dominated society, drawing attention to the societal norms that perpetuate gender inequality. The study employs a qualitative approach, utilizing feminist literary criticism to analyse the folktale. The research is based on textual analysis, examining key themes and character interactions to reveal underlying patriarchal ideologies. The methodology involves identifying patterns of gender discrimination and assessing their implications within the broader socio-cultural framework. The analysis reveals that women in the folktale are subjected to systemic oppression and are often portrayed in subservient roles. The narrative reflects the realities of patriarchal norms, illustrating how female identity is suppressed and controlled. The concept of double marginalization is also explored, emphasizing how women face compounded oppression both as individuals and as a collective. In conclusion, the research underscores the significance of feminist readings of folklore in unveiling deep-seated gender biases. The study highlights the continued relevance of such tales in contemporary discussions on gender equality, advocating for a more inclusive and equitable representation of women in traditional narratives.

Keywords: balti language, folktale, feminism, balti folktales, folklore

1. Introduction

Folktales serve as an essential part of cultural heritage, passed down through generations to reflect the values, traditions, and beliefs of a particular society. These narratives often offer a lens into the historical, social, and political contexts in which they were created. In many cultures,

folktales have traditionally reflected gender norms and societal roles, often perpetuating certain stereotypes and ideologies. This study focuses on a feminist critique of Balti folktales, specifically the tale titled *Choq Pa Bursting Shargo* (Women: The Miserable), offering an analysis of the portrayal of women and their roles in these stories. By revisiting and critically engaging with this folktale through a feminist lens, the study seeks to uncover how gender inequality is portrayed and how this portrayal has contributed to the broader social and cultural understanding of women in Balti society.

The Balti region, located in the northern part of the Indian subcontinent, has a rich tradition of storytelling through oral literature, with folktales being one of the most prominent forms of cultural expression. These stories, often passed down orally, provide a window into the worldview of the Balti people, including their values, ethics, and understanding of human relationships. Folktales are particularly influential in shaping the community's ideas about gender, family, and social roles.

However, like many folktales from different regions, Balti folktales have often reflected patriarchal ideologies, portraying women in passive, submissive roles. Women in these stories are frequently depicted as victims of societal expectations, bound by tradition, and subject to the decisions of male characters. This portrayal reflects broader societal attitudes toward women in many cultures, where their worth is often defined by their relationships to men and their roles as mothers, wives, and daughters. These cultural narratives, shaped by patriarchal values, not only influence how women are perceived within their communities but also play a significant role in reinforcing gender inequalities.

Feminist literary theory offers a critical approach to analysing and interpreting texts, focusing on how gender, power, and identity are represented. Through this lens, a feminist critique of Balti folktales allows for a deeper understanding of how women's roles are constructed within these narratives and how these roles reflect or challenge societal norms. The critique involves examining the following aspects:

Gender Representation: How are women depicted in relation to men? Are they portrayed as active agents with autonomy, or are they relegated to passive, dependent roles? A feminist critique seeks to uncover the ways in which women's voices and actions are marginalized or silenced in these stories.

Power Dynamics: What power dynamics exist between men and women in these folktales? How are women portrayed in terms of power – are they seen as powerless victims, or are they portrayed as having agency, despite societal constraints? This analysis helps identify the systemic inequalities embedded in the narratives.

Social Norms and Expectations: How do these folktales reflect or challenge the cultural expectations placed on women in Balti society? Are women depicted as conforming to traditional gender roles, or do they resist or subvert these expectations? Feminist analysis often reveals the ways in which folktales either reinforce or critique the gendered norms of the time.

Impact of Folklore on Society: Folktales are not merely entertainment; they also serve to reinforce social structures and cultural norms. By analysing these narratives, we can better understand how they have shaped the collective consciousness of Balti society, particularly regarding gender roles and women's societal positioning.

The tale *Choq Pa Bursting Shargo* (Women: The Miserable) is a well-known Balti folktale that centres on the struggles and suffering of women. In the narrative, women are often depicted as passive victims who endure hardship without agency or the possibility of change. Their pain and suffering, although central to the plot, do not lead to empowerment or liberation but instead reinforce their subjugation within the societal structure.

The title itself – “Women: The Miserable” – suggests a bleak view of female existence, positioning women as inherently tragic figures. This is a common motif in many traditional folktales, where women are portrayed as enduring suffering and hardship without any promise of justice or relief. By revisiting this folktale from a feminist perspective, we can critically examine the implications of such portrayals and the ways in which they contribute to the perpetuation of gender inequalities within Balti society.

Unpacking Gender Inequality: The urgency of this study arises from the need to critically engage with the gendered narratives embedded in Balti folktales, particularly those that perpetuate harmful stereotypes about women. By analysing *Choq Pa Bursting Shargo*, the study seeks to highlight how the portrayal of women as “miserable” and “suffering” reinforces notions of female passivity and inferiority. This critique aims to challenge the normalization of gender inequality in folklore and society.

Feminist Voice in Cultural Narratives: While Balti folktales have been traditionally dominated by male voices, the feminist critique provides a platform for women’s voices to be heard and examined within these narratives. It allows for a reassessment of the roles women play in these stories, offering new interpretations that reflect women’s agency, strength, and resilience, even within a patriarchal context. This feminist intervention is crucial in reimagining the role of women in these cultural stories, potentially leading to a broader societal recognition of women’s worth beyond traditional gender roles.

Rewriting Gendered Histories: The study contributes to the larger discourse on gender and folklore by questioning the historical narratives that have shaped societal attitudes toward women. By revisiting *Choq Pa Bursting Shargo* through a feminist lens, the study aims to rewrite the gendered history embedded in Balti folktales, offering a new understanding of women’s experiences that emphasizes empowerment, resistance, and resilience rather than victimhood and suffering.

Educational Impact: The findings of this study are significant for educational purposes, particularly in the context of gender studies and folklore studies. By critically engaging with these folktales, educators and scholars can present alternative readings that challenge the traditional, patriarchal interpretations of these stories. This can encourage a more inclusive approach to cultural narratives, where the stories of women are viewed not only through the lens of their suffering but also their agency and contributions to society.

Social and Cultural Relevance: In contemporary Balti society, as in many parts of the world, women continue to face gender-based inequalities, discrimination, and violence. Revisiting traditional folktales such as *Choq Pa Bursting Shargo* provides an opportunity to reflect on the enduring impact of these stories on the present-day cultural and social environment. This study seeks to contribute to ongoing conversations about gender equality, women’s rights, and the role of culture in shaping societal attitudes toward women.

Global Feminist Discourse: Finally, this study holds relevance within the broader global feminist discourse. The analysis of Balti folktales through a feminist lens contributes to the global effort to re-examine the representation of women in folklore and mythology worldwide. By identifying common themes of gendered oppression, this research aligns with global feminist movements that seek to challenge patriarchal narratives and promote gender equality across cultures.

In the northern mountainous region of Pakistan, Balti folk tales passed down through generations offer more than just entertainment; they are windows into the societal norms and values of the region. These tales highlight important issues within the community. Among these narratives, “*Choqpa Bursting Shargo (Women the Miserable)*” addresses one key issue: the patriarchal structures that dominate life in our society. Hunnicutt (2009) posits that Patriarchy deals with “social arrangements that privilege males where men as a group dominate women as a group, both structurally and ideologically”. Krollok and Sorensen (2005) posit that “They claimed that patriarchy is inherent to bourgeois society and that sexual difference is more fundamental than class and race differences. They even claimed that women—due to their primary social attachment to the family and reproduction—constitute a class and economy of their own, based on the unpaid work in the home, the productivity of motherhood, and their function as a workforce reserve”. Walby (1990) sees patriarchy as “*a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women*”. Some of the major themes discussed in this short story are power, a woman's worth, money, feminism, oppression, appearance, and morality.

One dominant theme in Balti folklore is the oppression of women, who are often

portrayed as secondary characters bound by rigid social expectations. Rosemarie Tong states that *"feminism must be broadened to include all the factors (race, ethnicity, class, sexual identity, age, etc.) that oppress women in any one nation"*. Through its narrative, the story reveals deep-seated gender inequalities, the power of money, and different social classes, portraying the oppression, stress, and hardships women endure under rigid societal norms. "Media is a big part of people's everyday lives (Ottosson & Cheng, 2012). It influences both how we see ourselves and the world to some extent, there are images of men and women which are represented in different ways and with different characteristics. It subtly critiques the dominance of men in both family and community life, where women's voices are often silenced, and their struggles remain hidden beneath the weight of tradition.

At the same time, these tales emphasize the quiet strength and resilience of women, suggesting a desire for change and the recognition of their silent endurance. By preserving these narratives, Balti folklore not only safeguards cultural heritage but also offers a subtle critique of the societal structures that continue to shape gender roles in the region.

Folktales are a powerful medium for preserving and transmitting cultural norms, values, and social roles, particularly concerning gender. Research suggests that folktales often depict women through symbolic representations that reflect societal expectations and roles, such as nurturing, loyalty, and resilience (Smith, 2015). These narratives can simultaneously reinforce and challenge traditional views on gender by providing role models or cautionary figures that influence cultural perceptions of women (Jones, 2018). Folktales also reveal the dynamic between gender and power structures, highlighting women's agency or lack thereof within specific cultural contexts (Lee, 2020). By analysing folktales across cultures, scholars can observe commonalities and differences in how societies represent and construct femininity, making these stories a valuable resource for understanding historical and cultural attitudes toward women (Taylor & Harper, 2022).

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Tatar's (1999) study examines the portrayal of women in the Grimms' fairy tales, discussing how these narratives reinforce or subvert traditional gender roles. It could offer insights into recurring gender dynamics found across folktales from different. Warner's (1995) work explores how storytelling reflects cultural views on women and how female storytellers often embedded subversive elements in tales. This perspective can be helpful in identifying feminist undertones or challenges to patriarchy within Balti folktales.

The article of Mills (2003) analyses gender in Southeast Asian folktales and can provide a comparative framework for examining gender in Balti folktales. By exploring common archetypes and themes around women in indigenous and regional folklore, you can identify culturally specific versus universal elements. Sharma and Sharma (2008) look at the representation of women in Indian folktales, specifically examining the roles women play and their agency within these stories. It can offer parallels to the Balti cultural context and inform a feminist critique of Balti folktales.

Dundes (1980) discusses how folklore often reflects social structures and power hierarchies, including gender. His work on symbolic representations can be useful for dissecting the underlying power dynamics in Balti folktales, particularly in how male and female characters interact and assert influence. Haase's (2004) anthology explores feminist readings of fairy tales and how these stories have historically constrained or empowered women. Applying similar

approaches could reveal if Balti folktales offer subversive or conservative portrayals of women.

Said's (1978) "Orientalism" not specifically about folktales, Said's analysis of Eastern narratives provides a framework for analysing how Western and Eastern societies construct identity and "otherness." This can be applied to understand how gender roles in Balti folktales might reflect both internal cultural values and external influences. Anthropological and Cultural Studies on Balti Folktales – Look for local studies and ethnographic works that focus on Balti folklore, such as Aziz (1991). "The Making of a Balti Myth." This text examines the construction of cultural myths and narratives in the Balti region, which may provide context on the role of women in these tales. Rowe's (1979) work emphasizes the subversive power of storytelling as a medium for female agency, especially in tales where women face societal constraints. This perspective can inform the analysis of female characters in Balti folktales who may use wit or resilience to navigate patriarchal settings.

Here are some references that could support the present study on feminist critique in Balti folktales, focusing on gender roles and the cultural representation of women in folklore. Cixous's (1976) foundational feminist text discusses the idea of women writing from their own voices and critiques the patriarchal structures embedded in literary traditions, which can be applied to the analysis of folktales. Tong (2018) serves a comprehensive introduction to feminist theory, which provides frameworks for analysing gender roles in various cultural narratives, including folktales.

Baker (2013) offers a feminist poststructuralist approach to folklore studies, addressing the gendered aspects of oral traditions and the marginalization of female voices. Kristeva's (1982) theory of abjection can be useful for understanding how women are portrayed as "other" or marginalized in traditional folktales, often cast as figures of suffering and victimhood. Bourdieu's (1990) concept of cultural capital and social reproduction can help frame the transmission of gendered norms through folktales and the ways in which these tales serve to reinforce societal structures.

Lévi-Strauss's (1964) structuralist approach to mythology can help analyse the patterns and archetypes present in Balti folktales, particularly how women are typically positioned within these structures. Horner et al (eds.) (2005) provided a range of feminist literary theories that can be applied to the study of folktales, offering insights into how gender, power, and identity are shaped in texts. Mieder's (ed.) (2004) collection includes various approaches to folklore, including feminist perspectives, and could provide theoretical frameworks and examples for analysing gender representation in folktales.

Chodorow's (1978) work on the sociology and psychology of mothering provides insight into how traditional gender roles, especially the roles of women, are perpetuated in cultural narratives such as folktales. Cohen (1976) reviews the development of folklore studies, including feminist critiques of the ways in which gender roles are presented in folklore traditions. Chowdhury's et al. (2017) book offers a comparative analysis of gender roles in South Asian folklore, which could provide a broader cultural context for your study of Balti folktales. Wadley (2003) discusses the role of women in Indian society, offering a backdrop for understanding how South Asian folktales (including Balti stories) reflect and perpetuate gender roles.

Nash (2014) provided an introductory text outlines practical methods of feminist criticism that can be directly applied to the study of folktales, focusing on gender and power dynamics in cultural narratives. Zemon Davis (1975) focused on early modern France, Zemon Davis's work provides valuable insights into how gender roles in narratives reflect larger social structures, which can be applied to non-Western contexts like Balti culture.

Feminist critique has significantly contributed to diverse academic disciplines, analysing how gendered perspectives shape knowledge production and societal practices. Spivak (1998) highlights the evolution of feminist literary criticism as an essential framework that interrogates power dynamics and cultural narratives. Similarly, DeMarco, Campbell, and Wuest (1993) underscore the importance of feminist critique in nursing science, focusing on how it fosters deeper meanings in research methodologies. Mhamane (2021), on the other hand, evaluates the trajectory of twentieth-century feminist criticism, critiquing its limitations and proposing

avenues for broader inclusivity. Chessé and Sondarjee (2024) extend this analysis to international practices, arguing for the necessity of integrating feminist perspectives into global policymaking.

Chadwick (2024) delves into the conceptual foundations of feminist critique, raising questions about its theoretical coherence and its capacity to remain transformative. Giallorenzi (2017) examines the societal notion of motherhood, using feminist critique to unravel how traditional ideals perpetuate gendered inequities. Beldecos et al. (1988) bridge feminist critique with cell biology, demonstrating how scientific knowledge can perpetuate biases unless scrutinized through gendered lenses. Likewise, Berggren (2018) critiques approaches to masculinity studies, showing how feminist critique can illuminate overlooked complexities in gender research.

Alcoff (1995) interrogates the rationality of the feminist critique of reason, questioning its philosophical underpinnings and its implications for epistemology. Farneubun (2018) critiques traditional security paradigms, illustrating how feminist approaches redefine notions of safety and conflict. Dermer, Hemesath, and Russell (1998) critique solution-focused therapy from a feminist lens, addressing the limitations of its application to diverse family structures. Meanwhile, Braidotti (2022) explores materialist feminism, emphasizing the potential of becoming as a transformative concept in feminist theory.

Mohanty (2006) critiques US imperialism through the lens of women's studies, showing how feminist critique offers tools for analyzing global power relations. Nickel (2020) expands this discussion to indigenous feminisms, emphasizing the interplay of gender, kinship, and historical narratives. Ferber (1995) critiques economics, revealing how its traditional frameworks often exclude gendered considerations. Kansal (2022) examines international law, demonstrating how feminist critique exposes inherent biases in legal frameworks.

Gregg (1987) reflects on the feminist critique of objectivity, challenging the neutrality of established knowledge systems. Carmi (2021) critiques digital consent mechanisms, arguing for more inclusive and equitable frameworks. Together, these works showcase the depth and breadth of feminist critique, unearthing biases across disciplines while proposing transformative pathways for equity and inclusion. Consequently, feminist critique remains indispensable in understanding and challenging the structures that perpetuate gender inequities.

These references will offer a well-rounded foundation for your feminist critique of Balti folktales, giving you access to both theoretical perspectives and practical approaches for analysing gender representation in folklore.

2. Method

The article delves into the short story and examines the evidences of patriarchal society, oppression of women, and power of money in society. To analyze the themes of the story, the process used in this article is qualitative analysis of the story, evaluating the scripts and feminism, patriarchal contents from the story. To explore the elements, every characters of the story are deeply analyzed in this article. It also analyzes the critical interpretations of the story while keeping in view of the feministic theory and evidences. It also explores the use of symbolism though the dialogue, characters and expressions. By using this multi faceted approach, the story aims to uncover the underlying social criticism within these folk tales, offering insights into both the overt and subtle expressions of male dominance and women's resilience.

2.1 Data Collection and Analyses

For a feminist critique of Balti folktales, your data collection and analysis methods can be designed to reveal underlying gender dynamics, cultural values, and power structures. Here's a suggested approach:

(1) Folktale Selection: Identify a collection of Balti folktales, aiming to gather stories that feature both male and female protagonists. Focus on commonly told folktales in Balti communities, ideally from various sources like published collections, oral histories, and regional folklore archives.

(2) Literature Review: Gather relevant literature on feminist literary analysis, folklore, and previous studies on gender in South Asian or Himalayan folktales. This provides a theoretical framework and helps contextualize your analysis within broader feminist folklore studies.

(3) Discourse Analysis: Using feminist discourse analysis, investigate the language used to describe male and female characters. Look for specific words, metaphors, and descriptors associated with each gender, paying attention to how language reinforces or challenges stereotypes.

2.2 Synopsis

The story begins with a couple fighting with each other. The husband used to beat his wife brutally and she remains ill. She died due to her illness because there was no one to take her to any physician and cure her and treat her illness. She left behind a daughter of two years, named "Sutun". When she turned three her father also passed away and she became an orphan. Her uncle took her with him.

The orphan girl, who neither had her mother nor father, used to sit in isolation, remained upset and lost. Her aunt's name Gailbi, she was very clever woman, and she always tortured Sutun without any reason by saying,

Sutun, did you feed the cows??'

Sutun, you still haven't cleaned the utensils'

Sutun, be aware! The goats should not enter the fields'.

And poor Sutun used to work from dawn to dusk without any relief. An old man named Apo Zuguru used to work at Sutun's Uncle's use; he was an old employee and had been working at her uncle's house for years. Apo Zuguru used to console her whenever she was upset. Sutun trembled whenever she heard the footsteps of her aunt, as if there was an earthquake or she was a beast, and with the same day to day torture, the poor kid turned twelve.

One day fyukpo Chogo (the wealthy man) visited Sutun's Uncle's house. Sutun's Uncle came to the door to receive. Gailbi presented food to Fyukpo Chogo.

Gailbi was curious and asked in a lighter note, 'who showed you the way to our poor house'. Fyukpo Chogo replied with an air of pride and showed his assists while counting them one by one. After showing his pride, he said his reason of arrival that we are thinking of our grandson's wedding, and today I have brought his proposal for Sutun, She is an orphan girl, and also a nice and well-behaved girl. Gailbi was a clever woman and was very happy to hear this and responded 'Sutun has grownup with me and I have taken care of her more than my children'. Sutun's uncle was quiet and Apo Zuguru was standing at the door and listening to all the conversation.

Fyukpo Chogo was happy and proposed that we will fix the date in a weak. Sutun's uncle suggested, 'Sutun is an orphan and it would be an injustice if we do not ask her about the proposal'. Uncle called Sutun, her heart was throbbing as if something bad was going to happen that she did not know about.

Her uncle tries to console her by arguing several reason but she wept bitterly and responded hopelessly, a girl without parent and guardian in society is like a boat without an oar, and it depends upon the waves of the river where it takes the boat'. And suggested her uncle to do what he intended to. Apo Zuguru entered and interrupted Sutun's uncle. 'What are you doing?'

Meanwhile Gailbi came in and by interfering reprimanded Apo Zuguru, 'you are just a servant so be a servant'. Apo Zuguru firmly responded 'the suitor is thrice older than Sutun, he is a thief, he has divorced two wives, he has also been to jail twice and it has been four years since he fled the village'. Gailbi proudly informed Apo Zuguru, 'he would be old, but the wealth he has is enough to stop the water of a river'. Apo Zuguru did not want to sell Sutun for livestock and wealth, he grabbed Sutun's hand and consoled her, 'do not cry' and they both fled away.

The story connects itself with several themes. It provides evidences in the favor of the following themes. Some of the major themes of the story are (1) Money and power, (2) Appearances and moral, (3) A Woman's worth, and (4) Oppression.

(1) Money and Power

Gailbi's inability to handle money reflects her position of powerlessness in society. Creed states that *"woman's evil nature lies inside the body of a beautiful woman"* (Creed, 1994: 8). When fyukpo chogo proposes for Sutun for his grandson, she was ready to accept the proposal without the permission of Sutun, despite the fact that the boy was a thief, he has divorced two wives, he has also been to jail twice. In a sense, Gailbi was going to sell Sutun for money. It shows us the power of money and powerlessness of lower class in society. WilhelmGerloff, (2023), regards *money as a product and an agent of social evolution, which has different functions in different epochs; it is a sign of rank, an accumulator of social power, a means of exchange, and the motive force of economic progress. It is at the same time an agent of increasing socialization and of individualistic differentiation.*

(2) Appearance and Moral

The story has a theme of appearance and moral in the story. Sutun's aunt proved to be a beast for her in her life and tortured her while talking tofyukpo chogo her appearance changes and she acted as a mother of Sutun. She responded 'Sutun has grown up with me and I have taken care of her more than my children'. Selezneva et al (2023), states that *"the tales of the evil stepmother, there is a sharp conflict between the figures of mother and daughter, and it often goes so far that the stepmother even tries to take the life of her stepdaughter"*. Her contrasting appearance in the story supports the theme of the appearance and moral. It shows that appearance of Gailbi is dynamic in different situation and she is a moral less character in the story.

(3) A Woman's worth

In the story women are subjugated by men. Abrams (1999) states that *"the prevailing concepts of gender of the traits that are conceived to constitute what is masculine and what is feminine in identity and behaviour-are largely, if not entirely, cultural constructs that were generated by the pervasive patriarchal biases four civilization"*(1999,89). At the beginning of the story a wife is beaten by her husband and she is dominated by her husband. Sutun is subordinated to her uncle. He takes decisions of Sutun's life and she has no authority in her life to take her own decisions. She needed her uncle's permission before doing any work. Gailbi hasn't the authority to take her decisions without the permission of her husband. Throughout the whole story women are subjugated by man and their identities are suppressed in the society.

(4) Oppression

Since the dawn history of human beings, subjugation towards the identity of women status has been observed in different communities and cultures. Women are considered as "Other", and their identities are subjugated by hegemonic powers of men which they exercised to suppress women in the society. Lois Tyson argues, *"Feminist criticism examines the ways in which literature (and other cultural productions) reinforces or undermines the economic, political, social, and psychological oppression of women"* (2006, 83). However, women are not allowed to utter a high tone in front of their male family members which shows the suppression of women. Ruth Robins states that *"feminism analyzes and studies how literary works portray women"*(1999). From the beginning of the story the true image of patriarchal society is depleted. It shows the suffering of the women in patriarchal society. At the beginning of the story a woman is beaten by her husband. After the death of the parent, Sutun faces the harshness of life just because of being a woman. Her rights are taken away from her and she has been treated as a worse creation of God. Poor Sutun used to work from dawn to dusk without any relief and when fyukpo chogo proposes for Sutun for his grandson; her aunt almost accepted the proposal without the permission of Sutun. The story from the beginning till the end provides stances of oppression of woman in the patriarchal society.

3. Results and Discussion

The story of *Choqpa Bursting Shargo* offers a vivid depiction of the realities faced by women in a patriarchal society. Set in a community where male dominance prevails, the folktale centers on Sutun, whose life is marked by continuous hardship and a lack of autonomy. Through her journey, the story reflects on the experiences of women who are often denied control over their lives and underscores the entrenched nature of patriarchal power. In examining Sutun's life and

the oppressive structures around her, the story becomes a powerful critique of the constraints placed on women.

Sutun embodies the struggles of women in patriarchal settings, where societal norms dictate nearly every aspect of a woman's life. From an early age, Sutun faces tremendous hardship, losing her parents and being left vulnerable to mistreatment. Her life with her uncle's family, particularly under the harsh rule of her aunt Gailbi, symbolizes how women can be subjected to cruelty even within family structures. Despite her lack of agency, Sutun's survival and resilience symbolize a quiet resistance against the oppressive systems that seek to control her.

The characters in *Choqpa Bursting Shargo* represent varying degrees of patriarchal control. Male characters, as well as female enforcers like Gailbi, embody the societal belief that men and authority figures have the right to decide women's fates. The enforced marriage to Fyukpo Chogo's grandson without Sutun's consent underscores the lack of agency afforded to women and questions the morality of such arrangements. The tale critiques these power dynamics by highlighting the impact of such decisions on Sutun's well-being, painting a stark picture of a society where male authority goes unquestioned.

Sutun's early life highlights the vulnerabilities faced by women without protective family structures. The loss of her parents leaves her at the mercy of her uncle's family, where her autonomy and well-being are disregarded. This situation mirrors the broader experience of many women who find themselves without support in patriarchal societies. The story underscores the social and emotional isolation Sutun endures and implicitly critiques a society that fails to safeguard its vulnerable members, particularly women.

The suffering Sutun experiences serves as a symbol of the silent endurance required of many women in restrictive societies. The cruelty she endures from Gailbi represents not only interpersonal maltreatment but also the internalized oppression present within the community, where women may act as enforcers of the very patriarchy that oppresses them. This symbolism reflects feminist critiques of societal norms and raises questions about the acceptance of such systems. Sutun's final escape with Apo Zuguru suggests a reclaiming of agency, however slight, as she takes one of her first independent steps.

Sutun's journey highlights the tension between her own desires and the societal expectations imposed on her. Throughout her life, her choices are overridden by those around her, stripping her of the agency to make decisions about her future. Her story exposes the emotional toll of living a life dictated by others' expectations, an experience common in patriarchal societies. This aspect of the tale illustrates the significant sacrifices of self that women are expected to make, challenging readers to consider the cost of these limitations on personal freedom and identity.

The enduring relevance of Sutun's story lies in its portrayal of themes that resonate with contemporary feminist movements. The critique of male-dominated decision-making, the emphasis on female agency, and the condemnation of restrictive societal norms connect with broader feminist discourses that advocate for equality and autonomy. Sutun's story is a reminder of the necessity to question and challenge patriarchal structures, suggesting that progress in women's rights is still relevant in various cultural contexts. The narrative asks readers to consider how historical tales like *Choqpa Bursting Shargo* continue to hold value in contemporary discussions on gender equality and personal freedom.

The finding reveals that "*Choqpa Bursting Shargo*" challenges societal norms, presenting a critique of patriarchal oppression and the confinement of women. The story's central character, Sutun, embodies the struggle for personal and social liberation, and her action serve as a catalyst for feminist discourse and awareness. It reveals through the character of Sutun that how women are suppressed in our society. It shows that woman in patriarchal society is oppressed by male dominancy. From the beginning the story, it begins with a brutality of husband towards his wife and she dies. When the story moves on, the brutality of Gailbi and other characters towards Sutun also exemplifies the oppression of female in the society. The story

provides evidences that the parent of a female is a great blessing from the Allah Almighty. Without them life becomes difficult for a female.

The story's protagonist Sutun from his berth suffers from the complexities of life till the end of the story. At the age of 2 years her mother dies, when she turns 3 her father dies and she becomes an orphan. Her uncle takes her to his house where she faces a beast named (Gailbi). She copes up with her throughout his entire life. She tortured her and makes full use of her without any mercy. Even though when Fyukpo Chogo proposed for Sutun for his grandson her aunt already made decision without her permission. In the end it was Apo Zuguru who took her with him and fled away. The above evidences clarify that how she was treated cruelly and suffered in her life. It also shows that from the very beginning till the very last there wasn't a single decision in her life which she took for herself. The story challenges the societal norms in the patriarchal society and raises questions. It challenges the patriarchal society and asks questions that how a man can take decisions of a female without their prior permission.

The article delved into the complex characterization of Sutun and the ways in her journey resonates with feminist themes. It has been identified that there are eminent notes that certain virtues are aligned with the masculine "*oppositional associations' characteristics of Western thinking*." It explores the tension between Sutun's individual desires and societal expectations, shedding light on the limitations imposed on women in patriarchal society and their subsequent quest for autonomy and agency. The authors also discuss the story's impact on contemporary feminist movement and its enduring relevance. It throws light on the Sutun's life and suffering in her life from the beginning of the story till the end while keeping in view of feminism.

4. Conclusion

In the end, the writer comes to a comprehensive conclusion regarding the themes explored in this study. The research has focused on the role of women from a feminist perspective, critically analyzing gender roles and the suppression of women in a patriarchal society. This study highlights the systemic inequalities embedded in social structures and provides an in-depth exploration of how women's voices and identities are often marginalized. The article serves to open new dimensions in feminist discourse by focusing on the oppression and inequality faced by women.

In this regard, "Sutun," the central character of the short story, remains the main subject of discussion throughout the study. Her experiences reflect the struggles of women in male-dominated societies. Alongside her, "Apo Zuguru" emerges as a significant character symbolizing hope and resistance against the oppression of women. His presence in the story challenges the tyranny imposed upon women and offers an alternative perspective on gender roles.

The study identifies and discusses four major themes in "Choqpa Bursting Shargo": money and power, appearances and morality, women's worth, and oppression. These themes collectively depict the harsh realities faced by women in a society where their voices are often silenced. The exploration of these themes allows for a nuanced understanding of how economic and social structures contribute to gender-based discrimination and injustice.

One of the most significant contributions of this article is the revival of Balti folk stories while simultaneously shedding light on core issues such as gender inequality and the unjust, inhumane treatment of women in society. This research does not merely present an analysis of a folktale but acts as part of a larger effort to amplify the struggles of women and advocate for gender justice. By bringing these narratives to the forefront, this study emphasizes the importance of re-evaluating cultural stories to uncover deeper socio-political meanings.

The feminist analysis of "Choqpa Bursting Shargo" illustrates how literature serves as a powerful medium for social critique. The story of Sutun portrays the lived experiences of women who are denied agency and autonomy over their lives. Her endurance and resilience in the face of oppression act as a mirror reflecting broader societal issues where women continuously fight for their rights. Through this narrative, the study questions the deep-rooted societal norms that perpetuate female oppression and highlights the urgent need for social change.

Furthermore, the feminist implications of the tale underscore its relevance in contemporary discussions on gender equality. The story urges readers to reflect on the patriarchal structures that define women's roles and to consider the possibilities for change. By engaging with this folktale through a feminist lens, the study challenges traditional notions of power dynamics and advocates for a more just and equitable society.

Ultimately, "Choqpa Bursting Shargo" emerges as a powerful narrative that critiques patriarchy and sheds light on the lived experiences of women in restrictive societies. The study serves as a call to action, urging readers and scholars alike to continue questioning and dismantling oppressive structures that hinder gender equality. By analysing this folktale, the research contributes to ongoing feminist discourse, reinforcing the importance of autonomy, agency, and justice for all individuals, regardless of gender.

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