

## THE REPRESENTATION OF PAKHTUNS IN PAKISTANI URDU DRAMAS: A CASE STUDY OF *SANG-E-MAR MAR* BY HUM TV NETWORK

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### ABSTRACT

*This study examines the representation of Pakhtuns in Pakistani Urdu television dramas, focusing on the popular serial Sang-e-Mar Mar aired by the Hum TV Network. The study analyzes the representation of Pakhtun identity and culture in this drama applying Stuart Hall's Representation Theory. The study analyzes the stereotypes about Pakhtun men as patriarchal, violent, and resistant to modernity, and women as submissive and victims of patriarchy targeting the Pakhtun Community. The study suggests how these representations promote destructive societal prejudices leading to a reductive and negative image of Pakhtuns in Pakistani media, evaluated through critical discourse and semiotic analysis. The study concludes with suggestions for a more accurate, and refined presentation of a nation and ethnic minorities in order to promote cultural understanding and equality through an appropriate media-driven approach.*

**Keywords:** Pakhtuns, Ethnic Minorities, Stereotypes, Pakistani Media, Representation, Media Portrayal.

### INTRODUCTION

The Pakhtuns, Pashtuns or Pathans, are one of the largest ethnic groups in Central and South Asia, primarily residing in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Their total population is estimated to be around 50 to 60 million globally, with most of them concentrated in these two countries (Barth, 1981). In Afghanistan, Pashtuns form the largest ethnic group, making up approximately 42% of the population which is around 12 to 15 million people (Central Intelligence Agency, 2021).

They are particularly prominent in the southern and eastern provinces, such as Kandahar, Nangarhar, and Helmand. In Pakistan, Pashtuns are the second-largest ethnic group, between 35 million and 40 million. The majority of Pakhtuns live in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, formerly known as the North-West

Frontier Province, where they comprise 81% of the total population (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2023). Pashtuns are also found in significant numbers in the Newly Merged Districts, formerly known as the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), Balochistan, and parts of Karachi, one of the largest cities of Pakistan.

About 50-60 million people worldwide speak Pashto, which is part of the Eastern Iranian line of the Indo-Iranian languages (Sims-Williams, 2016). Pashto is far from only a language; it is a symbol of ethnic identity that connects the Pashtuns by virtue of their shared linguistic heritage. Some Pashtuns in Pakistan, particularly those who reside in urban centers, are bilingual or trilingual, and they also speak Urdu and Hindko in addition to

Pashto. About 50-60 million individuals worldwide speak Pashto, which is a member of the Eastern Iranian branch of the Indo-Iranian languages (Sims-Williams, 2016). Pashto is not merely a language; it is a symbol of ethnic identity that unites the Pashtuns by virtue of their shared linguistic heritage. Some Pashtuns in Pakistan, particularly those who reside in urban centers, are bilingual or trilingual, and they also speak Urdu and Hindko in addition to Pashto.

The origins of the Pashtuns trace back to antiquity, with various scholars offering different theories regarding their ancestry. Some accounts suggest that they are the descendants of ancient Indo-Iranians who migrated to the region thousands of years ago (Coyle, 1999). Other theories connect them to the lost tribes of Israel, although this claim remains highly speculative and debated. There exists only speculation, considering whether or not Pakhtuns were counted among the various Israelite communities that collapsed, (Elphinstone, 1815). Pashtuns have resided in the region for an extended period of time, as evidenced by historical records. The Pakhtun resided in their present-day homeland from 2,500 years ago, according to numerous scholars (Barth, 1981). Persian and Greek historical documents from the Achaemenid Empire in the sixth century BC are the first sources that mention and refers to the Pakhtun identity (Dupree, 1973).

The absence of the Jirga system makes the Pashtun social structure inadequate as it is considered the backbone and one of the most important traditional marker of the community. In a democratic manner, the Jirga, a conventional tribal council, settles disputes and makes important decisions of the community. This organization, which is composed of tribal elders, is responsible for resolving property disputes, blood feuds, significant legal matters, and minor family disputes among the community members (Ahmed, 1980). Even prior to the establishment of the modern legal systems in the region, the Jirga has been a decentralized democratic body that has been predicated on judicial agreement and community decision-making and long history and deep roots connected to the community.

Storytelling, poetry, and folklore are among the numerous oral traditions that have been handed down through generations by the Pashtun tribe. Rahman Baba and Khushal Khan Khattak, two

distinguished Pashtun poets, encapsulate virtues including "honor, (*ghairat*)" "hospitality(*milmastia*)" and "bravery(*Toora*)" (Rzehak, 2011). The 17th-century warrior-poet Khushal Khan Khattak is recognized worldwide as a Pashto poet, who wrote considerably on the subjects of "tribal unity," "morality," and "ethics" (Olivier, 1996).

The Pashtuns hold traditional "attan" dances in the utmost regard as cultural traditions, and they are the centerpiece of weddings, national festivities, and even times of conflict. According to Noelle (1997), the attan is an expression of the Pashtun people's individuality and solidarity. The Pakhtun's tribal identity is deeply entangled with a complex web of social norms. One of the practices in traditional Pashtun society is the "purdah" norms, which pertain to the modesty and segregation of women (Ahmed, 1977). Pashtun women in urban areas are more likely to be working and have graduated college, whereas traditional "women's roles" are more rigid in rural Pakhtun communities. In certain regions, the practice of paying a "bride price" (*walwar*) and arranged weddings are both deeply ingrained in Pashtun culture. Pashtun communities in urban areas have adopted more egalitarian marriage customs as a consequence of modernization (Ahmed, 1980).

The Pakhtuns have a reputation for their warm hospitality and compassion, despite their strict cultural traditions. Everyone who visits, regardless of whether they are friends or foes, is treated with the the utmost respect, and any individual who mistreats a guest will be subjected to a dishonorable punishment. The foundation of "Pakhtunwali" is the Pashtun value of "melmastia," or hospitality. The primary objective of this study is to determine the manner in which non-Pashtun viewers of Urdu drama interpret particular Pashtun aspects.

### Background of the Study

The media representation of ethnic minorities has been the subject of substantial study in Pakistan and other multiethnic cultures. The media has a long history of presenting inaccurate and biased stereotypes regarding the Pakhtun community. Previous data suggests that a significant number of Pakistani viewers enjoy Urdu dramas based on Pakhtun Culture, that has mostly no connection with modern and educated Pakhtun of the present

age, it may contribute to the propagation of unflattering stereotypes about Pakhtuns through their reductionist representations. The dread these images produced of the Pakhtun, notably in the Pakhtun-themed Hum TV drama "*Sang-e-Mar Mar*," specifically motivated the conduction of this study. The drama's portrayal of Pakhtun identity required a thorough examination and breakdown of the story and characters as a result of its substantial success.

A series of unflattering and damaging portrayals to the identity of Pakhtuns in the media, including films, TV shows, and news reports, greatly inspired this study. The Pakhtun people are only renowned for their aggression, conventional thinking, violence, and backwardness in the media. This mere representation is in complete contrast to the nuanced and diverse Pakhtun culture and society. Some very traditional Pakhtuns may continue to behave in a manner that is stereotypically patriarchal and restricts women to traditional responsibilities of honor, but it is a small number in outskirts of some regions, but that does not mean to judge or analyze a whole community's tradition, culture in the frame of one single lens.

These stereotypes are consistent with the media's portrayal of Pakhtuns as aggressive, traditional, and excessively patriarchal image there is nothing more showed to a Pakhtun identity other than these. Recent studies on minority representation in media suggests that the spreading of such misleading and false information about these communities can be facilitated by negative ethnic stereotypes. Literature evaluations imply that negative ethnic stereotyping have persisted in Pakistani media for a long time. According to Rahman (2010), media representations of Pakhtuns and other minority groups are frequently employed in order to reinforce the prevailing societal narratives.

This is of the greatest significance in the media sector. The media consistently frames numerous negative stereotypes regarding Pakhtuns, as anti-modern, conservative, and their uneducated nature. The Pakhtuns are already marginalized and edged in Pakistani society, and these images could make their situation worse. The subsequent section of this study Analyzes the drama serial "*Sang-e-Mar Mar*," which was most recently broadcasted, with a particular emphasis and showcased the negative angles of the Pakhtuns.

Multiple studies have concluded that these representations are inappropriate. Pakhtuns are frequently depicted in Pakistani cinema as either excessively simplistic or aggressively tribal, which is a misrepresentation (Abbas, 2014). This perspective significantly limits our capacity to comprehend the Pakhtun culture and all that it has contributed to the nation. In a groundbreaking study Ahmed (2017) explores the portrayal of Pakhtuns in Pakistani news reports regarding the unrest in the northwest regions of the country. The majority of the population views Pakhtuns as terrorists and an aggressive ethnic community. Since then, the Pakhtun people have been depicted as an even more stigmatized and "othered" group. "*Sang-e-Mar Mar*" presents stereotypes by claiming to portray society realistically particularly Pakhtuns realistically, despite its good reviews, it sounds more like a folktale rather than real story of a modern Pakhtun. This dramatic work, which takes place in the ancestral territories of the swat valley as it is one of the oldest valley depicting the image of the community as the oldest and rigid civilization of the past, highlights the themes of family honor, rigid social norms, and vengeance. Consider the ruthlessly authoritarian tribal chief Gulistan Khan as an example of the typical Pakhtun character. The drama serial frequently resorts to the outdated model of the patriarchal commander who prioritizes honor, despite its best efforts. Pakhtun males are frequently depicted in Urdu dramas as emotionally distant, rigorous in their adherence to cultural norms, and violent, as per Hum TV Network (Abbas, 2016).

This impression is significantly shaped by the film industry and television dramas. '*Khuda Kay Liye*' (2007) and '*Waar*' (2013) are examples of films that portrayed the Pakhtuns in a negative manner, thus impacting public opinion. The Pakhtun people are confined to fundamental stereotypes in these narratives, which diminishes their diverse and extensive culture. This is consistent with a more extended framework.

This study conceptually discusses the significance of media representation in the formation and preservation of social identities, based on Hall's (1980) concepts. The public's perception that Pakhtuns are fundamentally violent and hostile to modernity is further reinforced by the media's persistently inadequate portrayal of them. This can significantly create a negative impact on the

political and social status of Pakhtuns in the society. In order to establish a more a society based on equality, it is important that we pay close attention to the media's portrayal of these stereotypes and play our role and effort to mitigate their impact.

This research compares '*Sang e Mar Mar*' to prior media portrayals of Pakhtuns to add to the body of knowledge. The study examines the media's portrayal of Pakhtuns in Pakistan with the objective of stressing on the negative impacts of media-driven stereotypes and advocating for more accurate and insightful media portrayal of minority and ethnic communities in Pakistan.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The urdu media spreads negative stereotypes about Pakhtuns, thereby misrepresenting and damaging their real identity. Media depictions of Pakhtuns as extremists, backwards, and violent perpetuate negative prejudices. These depictions lead to misrepresentation and discrimination rather than presenting the vast diversity of Pakhtun culture.

The problem holds the highest priority due to the significant impact of media outlets on the public's opinions. Pakhtuns are often facing structural obstacles throughout the domains of politics and labour as an effect of prejudice and bias, and these are the consequences of persistent prejudices, as an outcome of such representations. This situation is being made worse through the widespread adoption of social media, which is the primary source of all these misconceptions influencing millions of people globally, not just those in Pakistan.

### **Research Question**

This research aims to answer the following question:

- How does '*Sang e Mar Mar*' represent Pakhtuns?

### **Research Objective**

- To critically analyze the portrayal of Pakhtuns in urdu drama "*Sang-e-Mar Mar*" by Hum TV

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is conducted by applying Stuart Hall's Representation Theory, it analyzes the representation of Pakhtuns in the Urdu Drama

*Sang-e-Mar Mar*, a typical story of a Pakhtun family, broadcasted on Hum TV. In the spirit of Hall's argument, media constantly tries to construct reality, instead of simply presenting it as it is, through applying cultural symbols and themes to shape public opinion to correspond with their views on a wider spectrum. *Sang-e-Mar Mar* provides an understanding of Pakhtun culture, which incorporates their traditional attire, language, and practices. These cultural details, despite their authenticity, have an influence on the audience's perception of Pakhtun identity and the messages they convey.

*Sang-e-Mar Mar* stereotypes the nature of Pakhtuns by frequently employing themes of honor, tribal allegiance, masculinity, and violence to describe Pakhtuns. *Sang-e-Mar Mar* portrays the Pakhtun male as rigid, trapped by tribal norms, a personality who often glorifies conflict to preserve family honor or social status. These representations confirm Hall's position on developing an identity, which is in agreement with the idea of how media representation is not objective rather influenced by social norms. In this case, it may result in stereotyping by advocating for a specific portrayal of Pakhtuns. Since the theory believes that representation has real life consequences bad or good, so the inappropriate representation of Pakhtun can damage their identity, which is a threat to them too.

Pakhtun women are portrayed either subjected to conventional gender stereotypes as well as in rare cases, trying to perform those responsibilities inside patriarchal borders, ending in a very limited portrayal. Hall's statement that stereotyping is used for gaining power is supported through these examples, that indicate that media outlets frequently subject complex groups to damaging characteristics through simplifying them in a restricted manner.

In *Sang-e-Mar Mar*, Pakhtun males have been largely represented as abusive and authoritarian hyper-masculine individuals that thrive on anger, whereas women are portrayed either as submissive or subjects of patriarchal tyranny mainly as damsels in distress. This kind of representation creates broad dynamics of power within Pakistani media, where ethnic minorities, including the Pakhtuns, frequently are portrayed using a confined and limited perspective.



When considering the ways that different audiences interpret the drama, Hall's Encoding/Decoding Model grows significant. The writers and directors infuse *Sang-e-Mar Mar* into particular significance, including the representation of Pakhtun, that focusses solely on its themes of virtue and family. Nevertheless, consumers can interpret those messages in a number of ways. Some viewers, especially those unfamiliar with Pakhtun culture, may accept these portrayals as authentic representations (dominant reading). In contrast, Pakhtun viewers or those critical of media stereotyping may resist these depictions, viewing them as reductive or problematic (oppositional reading). Hall's idea that media texts could be perceived differently according to the cultural and social setting of the individual viewing them is emphasized by the variation in perception.

In addition, the use of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) for the language and story line of *Sang-e-Mar Mar* is used to examine the creation of meaning, that is viewed as maintaining pre-existing ideals which lack solid foundations with respect to of gender and ethnicity.

The language engaged by characters, the conversations regarding reputation and revenge, as well as the struggle between tradition and modernity all serve to a broader narrative which paints Pakhtuns as outcasts to change and growth. This idea is actively delivered.

Moreover, a method of semiotic evaluation been used to unravel both the visual and symbolic elements of *Sang-e-Mar Mar*, which include the Pakhtun identity hinting Pashto language, traditional attire, alongside cultural norms of the community. Sometimes, these representations support rather than question existing stereotypes, which facilitates the understanding of specific representations of Pakhtuns.

The drama *Sang-e-Mar Mar* studies the relationship among socioeconomic status, gender, and race, along with the concept of duality contributes to the portrayal of Pakhtuns. The representation of Pakhtun men to be custodians of custom and honor, that constantly engage in conflict, is in accordance to their description to be socially and economically marginalized. The representation of Pakhtun women is also marked by gender discrimination, that displays their exploitation and helplessness in a patriarchal

culture. In the drama, this framework enables an expanded understanding of the manner the multiple identities meet in order to create a particular portrayal of Pakhtuns.

### Research Methodology

The present research uses Stuart Hall's Media Representation Theory to investigate the stereotypes propagated by the mainstream media which affects the Pakhtun community. Particularly, the theory is put into effect towards the Pakistani drama *Sang-e-Mar Mar*, that is aired from HUM TV. The study is conducted through qualitative approach that offers a comprehensive analysis of the drama's dialogues, characters, norms and cultural practices, these elements coordinate to form a particular image of Pakhtuns. Stuart Hall concept of representation theory expresses that media does not merely reflect by it actively constructs it through selective representations and feed their biased perception to the audience.

This research uses primary data directly taken from the drama '*Sange Mar Mar*'. It analyzes the main characters such as Haji Gulistan Khan, Shireen, Aurang, Shamim, Saif-ur-Rehman, Gulalay, Torah, and others have been closely studied and analyzed to understand how their behaviors, dialogues, actions reflect the portrayal of stereotypical representations of Pakhtun Culture. *Sang e Mar Mar* uses its narrative to represent Pakhtun culture and roots deeply engraved in themes of violence, outdated norms, honor, patriarchy, gender roles, and the conflict between tradition and modernity.

### Analysis

This research investigates the narrative that is crafted to create a stereotypical image of Pakhtuns. The key elements of the drama, including dialogues, key characters, cultural practices, and norms, are used to construct a picture of Pakhtuns that is symbolic of broader societal attitudes, rather than an objective representation of reality, when viewed through Hall's theoretical lens. The drama discusses a variety of themes, such as the clash between modernity, education and tradition, honor, violence, patriarchy, and gender roles, all of these are essential elements for perceiving the way in which Pakhtun culture is presented in media.

One of the lead characters of the drama Haji Gulistan in the drama, patriarch head of the family, who is rigid holding on to his traditional values, reluctant to any kind of change especially from the western world, he takes after his father Baran Khan who instilled these values in him and Gulistan Khan kills his father upon his father's order. The figure of Pakhtun men as traditionalists that are rigidly opposed to any form of modernity and progress. Gulistan Khan's personality is crafted as a man who associates tradition with identity. This crafted image by the media is aimed to be decoded by the audience and molding their perception of the Pakhtun community as unbending and trapped in the past as demonstrated by Hall's theory.

**"Ye Hum apne rasm-o-riwaj ko nahi chhod sakte, yeh humari pehchaan hai. Hum iske baghair kuch nahi"**

(We can not abandon our customs and traditions; they are an important element of our identity, we are nothing without them.)

Gulistan Khan's relationship and interaction with his family explains the stereotypical image of Pakhtun society explicitly. A challenge to Gulistan Khan's conservative perspective on modern views is presented by Aurang, who resides in the city and has been educated and shares modern values, their relationship dynamics sets the core narrative element of the drama. Gulistan Khan's statement:

**"Ye Agli bar aisay kapron me aya tou mere puchay baghair isko Goli Mardena"**

You can shoot him next time if you ever spot him wearing such clothes)

Gulistan Khan's statement when he spots Aurang wearing western clothes becomes furious. Gulistan Khan's hatred towards modern values is portrayed through these dialogues. With Gulistan Khan's response, this dialogue represents the tension between modern education and Pakhtun traditionalism.

Aurang's character, represents tension between traditional and modern values in Pakhtun society, the educated son of the family who wants to adopt modernity and education is not welcomed by his father due to his appeal towards the modern values. Aurang's character is a critical component in analyzing Sang-e-Mar Mar's portrayal of modernity in conflict with tradition in Pakhtun society as this supports Hall's theory that argues media does not merely reflect reality, rather, it actively constructs and projects it through selective subtle projections

are evident from the dialogues of these characters. Aurang's disagreements with his father, Gulistan Khan, over the value of education and modern ideology presents a clear representation of this issue. The conversation,

In a particularly emotional exchange, Aurang advises his father

**"Taleem insaan ko behtar banati hai, lekin yahan taleem ka koi matlab nahi."**, (Education improves your life; however, it serves no purpose here).

With Gulistan Khan's response,

**"Yahan meri zameen par angrezi taleem ka koi kaam nahi hai."**

(There is no place for western education on my homeland)

The argument that "Education makes a person better, but here education has no value" represents the conflict between modern ideals and the strict traditionalism of Pakhtun society. The situation is further exacerbated by Gulistan Khan's stand on the rejection of modern education, as proven by his statements, "On my homeland, there is no place for Western education." In order to convey the idea that these two cannot exist harmoniously in Pakhtun society, Sang-e-Mar Mar creates a narrative that suggests modern education is in opposition to Pakhtun cultural values. Shamim, the wife of Gulistan Khan's portrayal as a passive, submissive woman aligns with preconception of women in patriarchal societies. Shamim is not just a mere fictional character, but she is an example of the collective image of Pakhtun women, that is analyzed through a lens of passivity and powerlessness. This is an example of Stuart Hall's idea of how cultural representations form "subjects" in this setting. Shamim appears as the traditional powerless woman in a patriarchal culture. The stereotype of Pakhtun women as passive that lacks choice is portrayed by the way she behaves in front of her husband and her confined role inside the household. Media representations create "subjects" with the process of encoding, as per Stuart Hall. Shamim's character is encoded with the traits of passivity and subordination.

Her statement,

**"Mera beta hi meri duniya hai, uski ankho se main pori duniya dekhti hoon, mujhay bahar Janay ki kia zarurat hai"**

(My son is my world, I don't have to go outside as I see the world through his eyes), these dialogues confirm her limited existence and the lack of opportunities and freedom to women in her cultural. This portrayal corresponds with the pre-conceived societal stereotype that Pakhtun women have no voice or freedom, which is further explained through the media's depiction of her character.

Shireen's character provides another lens through which to analyze the representation of Pakhtun culture. Shireen is used as compensation in a *SWARA* (vani) arrangement, where she is forced to marry as part of a dispute resolution between families used as a scapegoat to pay for her brother's mistakes and to restore family honor. The drama incorporates such behavior as an image of Pakhtun customs, which is another kind of cultural violence against women. Shireen's passive acceptance of her fate, as proved by her dialogue, confirms the stereotype of Pakhtun women as powerless victims of their family's honor-based decisions.

*"Mujhey meri qismat ka faisla qabool hai, yeh mere ghar walon ka faisla hai"*

(I accept my fate as this is my family's decision). Her lack of say in her life decisions as Pakhtun women mindlessness is made even more apparent her approval by her marriage to Torah, a man who, despite his own discrimination, maintains the cycle of violence against Shireen proving his dominance. Shireen, who has already faced hardships, is found to be assaulted by Torah making her the epitome of his revenge over the Khan family, indicating how the drama portrays women as being trapped in a cycle of male dominance and violence. By applying Hall's theory, this representation can be seen as constructing a particular image of Pakhtun society as one where women are commodified and have little control over their own lives. The audience may decode this as a reflection of broader cultural practices, even though it is a highly selective and dramatic portrayal.

Character of Gulalai first wife of Saifullah adds another perspective to the portrayal of women's oppression in the drama. Gulalai, a married woman who needs maternity medical treatment, expresses a desire to go to the city to see a doctor, her request to medical care is denied by her in-laws as consulting a doctor for maternity treatment is considered unnecessary and undignified for a

woman, supporting the idea that women in Pakhtun society are restricted and denied basic freedom and rights, including the right of basic healthcare. This poses how traditional values often come into conflict with modern needs, in ways that can be harmful to women. Gulalai's situation encodes a message about the limited freedom of women in Pakhtun society, as the drama shows how even health-related decisions are controlled by family members.

Saifullah, the elder son of the family who is expected to serve as a role model for his younger siblings, has two wives, Gulalai and Shireen. This supports the stereotype that Pakhtun men are polygamous and insensitive to the wellbeing of their wives. His actions are portrayed as entirely motivated by a desire to preserve and restore family honor, rather than real concern for his spouses. This encourages the idea that Pakhtun men prefer pride and family reputation over the happiness and basic rights of their wives, which is suggestive of the stereotype of a patriarchal society.

Saifullah's statement:

*"Dou biwiyaan rakhna hamari riwayat hai, aur aurat ko izzat dena hamara farz hai."*

(It's our tradition having two wives, and giving respect to a woman is our firm duty). This dialogue represents the hypocrite nature of Pakhtuns juxtaposes the practice of polygamy with a superficial claim of respect for women, as respecting women and marrying two women neglected the basic rights.

Torah, who feels like an outsider or alien in his own family due to his mixed race and darker skin color, gives us a lens through which one can analyze the subject of race and ethnicity in Pakhtun society.

Torah's character is portrayed as rejected personality as an outcome of his Bengali background and darker skin tone who seeks revenge on Gulistan Khan, which is where Hall's theory of (difference and othering) is relevant. It is evident from his dialogue, *"Mujhe mere rang ke liye hamesha dhutkara gaya hai"*.

The prejudices based on race within the family and, by extension, Pakhtun society are portrayed within the drama through the phrase, "I was always refused by everyone for my skin color." The scene represents a fabricated vision which is meant to create regardless the reality it actually reflects an idea of prejudice and disapproval which consumers

might view as an essential component of Pakhtun culture.

Another tragic figure, Torah's mother, brings a different perspective to the drama's portrayal of honor and cruelty in Pakhtun society. Rakhshi, a Bengali woman, poses in the rain whilst dressed in a *Sarhi*. In the name of honor, Gulistan Khan attacks and murders her, defying the strict cultural norms of the Pakhtun culture, because he views her conduct as dishonorable. In the drama, the narrative regarding the severe repercussions faced by women who break from the norms in Pakhtun culture is conveyed by the fact that Torah's mother gets murdered over an act of self-expression.

The last act of violence in *Sang-e-Mar Mar* communicates an explicit point about the damaging effects of a constant commitment to outdated norms of reputation and vengeance. The drama's representation of Pakhtun culture as being entrapped in a vivacious loop of bloody disputes, in which revenge is the only way of repairing respect, is demonstrated by the drama's focus on bloodshed till its end.

In the end, the actors and story of '*Sang-e-Mar Mar*' contribute in establishing an image of Pakhtun culture. Also, it applies Stuart Hall's Representation Theory to investigate the particular meanings of honor, violence, and dominance that these representations depict. The hierarchical system that limits the options as well as identity of the women in the story, such as Shireen, Shamim, Torah's mother, and Gulalay, is represented. Conversely, males, notably Gulistan Khan, are portrayed as protecting conventional ideals through violence and control. Aurang's contribution to the drama provides an obvious contrast, showing the Pakhtun community's denial of modernism and education, thus maintaining the misconception of Pakhtuns being opposed to change. The drama's destructive ending acts to even more strengthen the idea that Pakhtun society, to be depicted in *Sang-e-Mar Mar*, is defined by patterns of honor based bloodshed and vengeance. It also affects ways that audiences approach Pakhtun culture using the lenses of customs, patriarchy, and opposition to change.

### Discussion and Conclusion

Stuart Hall's Representation Theory was used to analyze the Urdu drama Serial *Sang-e-Mar Mar* released by Hum TV, an independent Pakistani

television channel. The portrayal of the Pakhtun community as stereotyped and otherized throughout the story alters their customs and reputation. It continually spreads misconceptions regarding the Pakhtuns, painting them as rigid, aggressive and unable to change. Such kind of presentation has the power to significantly impact people by affecting the audience's views in a biased manner.

The representation of Pakhtun males remaining aggressive and controlling constitutes one of the many primary themes of the narrative. The drama serial maintains the stereotype of Pakhtuns as an ethnic group that is excessively cruel and honor-obsessed by continually showing their obsession with family honor and their willingness to impose it through violence. The common perception that Pakhtun culture is completely misogynistic is strengthened by its representation of women as submissive and powerless. This confined mindset failed to acknowledge the broad range of experiences which currently exist within the Pakhtun culture, where women, as those from every other cultural backgrounds, hold freedom.

*Sang-e-Mar Mar* encourages a false narrative that limits understanding about the individuals, roles, and work of real-life Pakhtun people by constantly presenting them to be violent and slaves of patriarchy. Likewise, the drama's representation of modernization along with education, particularly the way in which they are condemned by elder Pakhtun figures, suggests that Pakhtuns are firmly against change. This is inaccurate representation that fails to reflect the truth that a significant number of Pakhtuns in today's world who prioritize education and are women actively contributing to modern society.

The drama alters the reality of a diverse and complex culture by mainly presenting Pakhtuns through a lens of patriarchy, aggression, and resistance to change. Although these portrayals might satisfy the drama's narrative demands they unfairly presents Pakhtuns in a consistent negative light, that can have a lasting impact on how the community views them both inside and outside Pakistan.

The concrete effects for ethnic populations should not be the sole focus when it comes to artistic execution of such images in the media. These portrayals build an umbrella for what is believed by wider audiences, especially for people who have no



direct exposure with Pakhtun culture. The Pakhtuns are portrayed as people who are known through their territorial conflicts, as opposed to by their fortitude, hospitality, and services to a broad national as well as cultural context as a consequence of their strong focus on violence.

Pakistan constitutes an ethnically rich country making it especially vulnerable towards the negative consequences of such portrayal. The media possesses been known to either create awareness or nurture division. By consistently portraying the Pakhtun people in a historically misleading way, *Sang-e-Mar Mar* promotes stereotypes which obstruct their ethnic and social integration.

In the end, it's important that content and media creators overcome these shallow stereotypes and offer an authentic portrayal of ethnic communities like the Pakhtuns, that are defined by diversity and depth. More accurate and realistic awareness of the country's unique cultural legacy would be gained by authentic and fair representation, that would deliver an engaging narrative experience. When dismantling stereotypes and promoting a media landscape that values diversity over disputes, the damages resulting from generations of inaccurate portrayals can be reduced.

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