

“My Pain Grows as My Life Dwindles”: Women, Poetry and Resisting State Violence in Taliban Controlled Afghanistan

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Abstract:

Western media reporting on the post-9/11 Taliban regime in Afghanistan propagated the image of Afghani women as being helpless, voiceless victims in desperate need of external intervention to rescue them from oppression – i.e. the faceless woman dressed in the all-encompassing blue burqa. Contrary to such symbolizing, this paper examines the longevity and endurance of Pashtan poetry as a vehicle of resistance for women and girls who have used it to fight against state-sanctioned patriarchal oppression. Not only does this undermine the broader narrative of helplessness propagated by the West, but it illuminates the agency, resilience and bravery of women who challenge the status quo and garner greater participation in public and political discourse.