



Haryanavi Folk Songs: A Folkloristic Analysis

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Abstract

Haryana, one of the northern states in India, is characterised by its distinct topography, economy, dialect, and folk culture. Its topography has helped people over generations evolve and sustain themselves as a distinct community through uninterrupted interactions. Subsistence farming and cattle breeding, the traditional mainstay of the region's economy, have led scholars to identify the majority of Haryanavi people as a 'peasant' group. Rooted in agrarian and pastoral traditions, the Haryanavi community is fundamentally patrilocal, patrilineal, and patriarchal in its organisation and operation. The cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, of any region is an invaluable source for understanding the socio-cultural practices of the community. Folklore, as a significant aspect of cultural heritage, can be accessed to comprehend the subtle worldview of the community interwoven in the complex networks of folklore communication. Folk narratives, comprising primarily folk songs and folktales, create one such channel, which has evolved spontaneously and encapsulated the lived experiences of people in a figurative manner. Folk songs are perhaps the most crucial part of such oral traditions in any community. The Haryanavi community has also developed an oeuvre of its own folk songs to perpetuate its socio-cultural views and visions. This paper analyses Haryanavi folk songs as a genre of folklore by contextualising them within the grammar of Folkloristics as a discipline.

Key Words: Folkloristics, Folk Song, Haryanavi Culture, Folklore Genre, Gender

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Introduction

The term “folk” has travelled by now a considerable distance to shed the pejorative connotations it accumulated around it when viewed through colonial and imperial lenses during the nineteenth century, it stood for something uncivilised, uncouth, and uneducated. In the postmodern world, ‘folk’ refers to any group of people connected by common occupation, language, or religion. As a collective, ‘folk’ shares certain beliefs and conventions that instil and forge a sense of group identity among its members. The term ‘Folklore’ can be best defined as a comprehensive list of items produced and utilised by a particular ‘folk’ within its specific cultural context. This list includes myths, legends, folk tales, jokes, proverbs, riddles, chants, charms, blessings, curses, oaths, insults, retorts, taunts, teases, toasts, tongue-twisters, greetings, leave-taking formulas, folk costumes, folk dances, folk dramas, folk arts, folk beliefs, folk medicines, folk instrumental music, folk songs, folk speech, folk similes, folk metaphors, folk names, folk games, gestures, symbols, prayers, food recipes, quilt and embroidery designs, types of houses, barns and fences, street vendor’s cries, conventional sounds used to summon animals or give commands, and, naturally, festivals, special days, and customs (Dundes 03). Generally, these items, as well as their scientific study, are referred to as ‘Folklore.’ However, to be more precise and systematic, folklorists prefer to reserve the term ‘Folklore’ for the material itself, while ‘Folkloristics’ for the systematic study of this material. This paper employs a few folkloristic methods to classify Haryanavi folk songs on the basis of their generic characteristics, cultural contexts in which they are sung, and the social functions they perform in shaping Haryanavi ethos.

Like any other cultural zone, the region of Haryana, located in northern India, has cultivated and sustained a rich folk culture characterised by its unique customs and conventions for centuries. The long interaction with the land, its environment, and its destiny has subtly shaped the Haryanavi people into a community. Their rituals and festivals, complemented by oral narratives, embody lived experiences that are deeply embedded in their collective consciousness. As oral narratives play an instrumental role in celebrating various rituals and festivals in Haryana, they are essential

for understanding the essence of Haryanavi folk culture. From the extensive corpus of Haryanavi oral narratives, the researcher has focused exclusively on Haryanavi folk songs, presuming that, due to their diversity and ritualistic significance, these folk songs are better suited to offer profound insights into the ways folklore is integrated into Haryanavi society. In this regard, these folk songs serve as valuable texts for academic inquiry and facilitate a deeper understanding of the discursive practices prevalent in Haryana as a cultural zone.

Haryana as a Cultural Zone

It is essential to contextualise Haryanavi folk songs within the historical conditions of their evolution. Cultural territories largely depend on their congruity with geography; moreover, they are shaped by the sociopolitical landscape of the region. Weiss rightly asserts, “[e]thnographic distributional boundaries ‘coincide’ with natural, traffic, economic, territorial, religious, and linguistic boundaries. This external, objectively demonstrable congruence is a symptom of an inner unity of culture” (150). The region of Haryana also constitutes a “cultural province,” deriving its essence from specific geographical and historical circumstances. In popular perception, “Haryana” refers to a cultural region that extends far beyond its current political boundaries. A popular saying in this context states, *Syālik Alwar bich base Haryana, Jit dudh dahi ka khānā* [The land] situated between the Shivalik [range of the Himalayas] and the Alwar region [in Rajasthan] is Haryana, where staple diet is milk and curd). Topographically, the Haryana region is bound by the Shivalik range in the north, the Yamuna river in the east, the Thar desert in the southwest, and the Ghaggar river in the west. According to K. C. Yadav, as these natural boundaries restricted the movement of the inhabitants of this region for many centuries, they developed a sense of community. This gave rise to a distinct Haryanavi culture that is reflected in their language, culinary and sartorial habits, and worldview (23). The most conservative description of Haryana as a linguistic and ethnographic region is provided by G. A. Grierson, “That portion of the tract which consists of the east of the district of Hissar and of the country immediately adjoining is known to natives

as *Hariānā*. . . The bulk of the population of the whole tract consists of persons of the *Jāt* tribe” (66).

Historically, Haryana has played a significant role in shaping India’s destiny as a nation. Surrounded by the Shivalik range in the north and the Thar Desert in the southwest, Haryana served as a natural bottleneck for western invaders on their ambitious expeditions to the enticing Gangetic plains. Numerous battles that determined the fate of India were fought on its soil. Clearly, its reputation as the regular battlefield of India significantly contributed to shaping the Haryanavi folk into sturdy, resilient, and combative individuals. These characteristics were further entrenched by the British, who began recruiting Haryanavi youth into the army on a massive scale during World War I. Moreover, the semi-arid land of this region nurtured a deep-rooted tradition of peasantry and cattle breeding among the Haryanavi people. Thus, the experiences of peasantry and soldiering are deeply embedded into the collective consciousness of Haryanavi culture, and expressed in a crystallised form through various tangible and intangible cultural artefacts. Most of the extant Haryanavi folk songs have evolved from these two lived experiences of the Haryanavi community.

Demographically, Haryana is home to diverse caste and religious groups. Singh et al. identified eighty-two communities residing in Haryana during the Anthropological Survey of India's project called “People of India” in the late 1980s (xiv). Many of the communities currently living in Haryana acknowledge their immigration from other regions at some point in the past. In recent history, the prolonged drought of the *Chālisā* (Vikrami Samvat 1840 alias A. D. 1783) and the Partition (1947) resulted in significant demographic shifts in Haryana. The Haryanavi people, as a folk group, share many socio-cultural practices in the form of customs, rituals, ceremonies, beliefs, and a distinct dialect. The majority of Haryanavi people reside in villages and are predominantly vegetarian. The advent of modern technologies and ideas has brought about noticeable changes in the lives and traditions of Haryanavi folk, particularly after the historical structural transformations like the mechanisation of agriculture, the advent of globalisation, and the spread of digital technology. The impact of these transformations on Haryanavi folklore is more

perceptible in the areas along the Grand Trunk Road and those within the National Capital Region.

Haryanavi Folk Songs

The folk songs addressed here in the paper have predominantly been collected from the districts of Hisar, Jind, Bhiwani, and Rohtak between 2012 and 2017. This area broadly corresponds with the core region of Haryana, as noted by Grierson in his *Linguistic Survey of India*. It is also a fact that this area is only a fraction of the broader region of Haryana as it is presently understood. However, this limitation is mitigated by the fact that owing to their migration after marriage, the women informants I interacted with for the purpose of documenting Haryanavi folk songs hailed from various villages beyond these districts, and introduced folk songs from their natal villages to the sites of my fieldwork. It virtually broadened the catchment area of my fieldwork and rendered the corpus of the folk songs thus documented as broadly representative of Haryanavi folk songs. As an ethnographer, I presume that the traditional folk songs could find a suitable environment to sustain themselves in the interior villages away from the national highways and the metropolitan cities. As my purpose in this paper is not to investigate the transformations folk songs have undergone in recent times, I have avoided discussing the folk songs extant along the Grand Trunk Road and those in the National Capital Region. I also presume that women are the true custodians of Haryanavi folk songs, as men rarely partake in singing folk songs in the current times. Till the 1960s, it was common for men also to sing folk songs, such as *Malhor*, especially during harvest season. Haryanavi songs and ballads like *Rāgani*, *Kissā*, *Sākā*, etc., sung primarily by troupes, fall short of the characteristic definition of a typical folk song. For instance, *Rāgani*, unlike a typical folk song, is not an anonymous composition; either it usually bears the stamp of its composer in the concluding stanza, or audiences identify it as a composition of some particular poet. Likewise, mythological and legendary ballads are not sung by common people but by professional troupes. Besides, unlike folk songs, these songs are not part of any specific ritual or rite of passage. Keeping in view such folkloristic insights, only the folk songs sung by women in Haryana nowadays are the Haryanavi folk songs proper.

According to Richard Weiss, “[m]an creates the spiritual bond between natural conditions and objective cultural items, so that the cultural landscape, stamped with his essence, can be seen, using the terminology of the philosophy of culture, as ‘objectified intelligence’” (150). The Haryanavi folk songs can also be regarded as one such example of ‘objectified intelligence’. Haryanavi society is fundamentally patrilocal, patrilineal, and patriarchal in its organisational structure. A woman is expected to leave her natal village upon marriage and live with her husband’s clan in another village. Socially, property rights are passed down from the senior male to the next in line. Men invariably hold the upper hand in any clash of interest with women. Therefore, most of the Haryanavi folk songs as pieces of ‘objectified intelligence’ convey the sentiments of the people towards a typical way of life, arising out of the organisational needs of the society. In this context, Prem Chowdhry’s interpretation of the interplay between culture and lived experience is particularly relevant to Haryanavi women and their folk songs: “Culture helps us to understand the lived practices which characterise a society, its different classes or groups at different historical periods and the ideologies which enable them to experience (i.e., appropriate in consciousness), define and interpret (i.e., make sense of, represent in language, thought and imagery, adopt as moral preferences, etc.), its given conditions of existence” (03). As a significant segment of Haryanavi folklore, Haryanavi folk songs are instrumental in understanding not only the mainstream practices and rituals of Haryana but also the women’s subculture, a fertile ground for subversive tendencies arising out of the patriarchy’s oppressive gender ideology. They subtly reflect the subdued feelings and desires of a woman living under the dominance of a patriarchal peasant lifestyle. Viewed through a gender lens, one can put Haryanavi women’s folk songs into two groups: Ritual songs, which celebrate patriarchy by eulogising the male progenitors and their descendants, and the Secular songs, which subvert patriarchy in many overt and covert ways. To employ James C. Scott’s terminology, the former category represents the “public transcript”—“the open interaction between subordinates and those who dominate”—of Haryanavi culture, while the latter constitutes its “hidden transcript”—“a critique of power spoken behind the backs of the dominant” (02, xii).

Contexts and Characteristics

A folklorist examines the contexts and the manner in which folk traditions are practised in everyday life as well as on specific occasions by a community. As far as Haryanavi folk songs are concerned, they occur in the context of a peasant family at the helm of affairs. While the ritual songs complement the celebrations surrounding the rites of passage in that family, the profane songs revolve around its routine life and kinship. Haryanavi folk songs are usually a communal activity in that they are sung by a group of women, whether seated or standing. During their rendition, a song is begun by a woman, while the rest of them follow her line by line. No musical instrument worth its name is usually used by women in Haryana while singing their songs. While singing dance songs, they come together in a close circle around the dancer and clap synchronously to keep the beat.

In the Haryana region, every occasion in community life is celebrated by observing certain rituals. These rituals are complemented by the singing of various folk songs, out of which certain pieces have emerged as the essence of these rituals. These folk songs serve as signature songs of particular occasions and, taken together, provide an impressive view of the range and variety of Haryanavi folk songs. For instance, the following refrain of a birth song sets in the celebratory tone associated with the birth of a boy in a Haryanavi family: *Dilli sehr ten sāibā pot mangā dyo.....* The refrain that sets the mood for a marriage ceremony is: *Sui sār ki be tīgā pat kā, potā tikiye be Harchand Rāo kā*. Similarly, the poignant cries—*Hāi hāi e sone ki chidiyā* or *Hāi hāi kelā tod liyā*—signal the passing away of a community member. The refrain of a seasonal song—*Sāmman āyā he mā meri men sunyā ji; hānji koe āyi e naveli tij padi e panjāli hariyal bāg mhn ji*—heralds the season of rains during the month of Sawan. The refrain, *Parasen to beithyā apanā bābal bujhyā kaho to kātyak nhā lyān o Rām*, serves as a clarion call for both the young and the old to embrace piety and renunciation in the month of Kartik, demanding especially from women the utmost devotion and sacrifice for their family's well-being. The refrain from another seasonal song—*Kāchi imali gadarāyi Sāmman mhn budhi e lugāi mastāyi Fāgan mhn*—fills the mind, body, and heart of the

listener with joy and abandon during the month of Falgun, the season of spring during which the festivals of Holi and Fag are celebrated with gaiety and gusto. The sequence of work songs unfolds with refrains such as *Dohrā dohrā re birā merā ugan kā khet bholā ugan kā khet, ānwtā to jānwtā bāi ne tāwdā je* that reflect the arduous labour a Haryanavi woman has to invest in dispensing her chores. Refrains such as *Pānch patāse pānān kā bidlā le debi pe jāiyyo ji, Kit ten āye Arjan Pānde kit ten re āye Hanumān Hanumān piyāre ye dou kit re samāye*, etc., quickly instil a mood of devotion in the listener's mind. The audience feels like dancing to the melodies of refrains like *Merā dāman simā de o ho nanadi ke bire tanne nyu tanne nyu tanne nyu dhonge pe rākhun o ho nanadi ke bire*.

Upon close examination, one can identify the following characteristic features of Haryanavi folk songs: They are communal, anonymous, and ever-evolving, similar to typical folk songs. Nobody claims copyright on them, as they have been composed by anonymous community members. Unlike literary compositions, they do not carry any individual's stamp or signature. Additionally, these folk songs have evolved over time to suit the occasion of their rendition. Every rendition is unique and hence incomparable to any previous one. No one can claim that a particular rendition is the original while the rest are its derivatives. Linguistically, these folk songs serve as a repository of the Haryanavi way of life, encompassing its geography, demography, history, economy, dialect and social structure, all reflected through the myths, motifs, and images they contain. As musical compositions, these songs are minimalistic in their use of musical notes. It allows as many observers to participate in their singing as possible. Most folk songs are composed using three or four adjacent musical notes from the middle and lower octaves; the length of musical lines in different songs varies between eight and twenty-eight measures. Many of the folk songs serve as lyrical expressions wherein the "I" does not signify an individual but rather a persona that embodies the collective experiences shared by the community. Sometimes, experiences referred to in ritual songs possess immediacy that heavily leans upon sentimentality and emotional indulgence. Such compositions revel in hyperbole and try to concretise emotions through vivid imagery. In contrast, profane songs such as *Jakaḍi* are

characterised by their coarseness, straightforwardness, and lack of refinement.

Classification

To develop a grammar of any folklore, the essential step is its classification into genres, including oral narratives like folktales and folk songs, rituals and festivals, and material culture. According to Dundes, “[u]nderstanding genre helps us appreciate the function that particular types of folklore serve” (11). The grammar of folk song as a genre encompasses two fundamental elements: the word and the melody. This paper primarily focuses on the words that convey the content and the theme. In view of these insights, Haryanavi folk songs can be classified into various categories depending on their content and the occasions when they are sung. The most basic classification of folk songs is governed by the rituals and occasions during which they are sung. The three most significant occasions in human life are birth, marriage, and death, and the rituals associated with these occasions are complemented by folk songs. In the corpus of folk songs, these ritual songs occupy the most significant space. Rest of the folk songs are classified as seasonal songs, work songs, religious hymns, and dance songs. Sadhuram Sharada divides Haryanavi folk songs into five broad categories: Seasonal Songs, Ceremonial Songs, Work Songs, Spiritual Songs, and Miscellaneous Songs (iii). Shankarlal Yadav has been the most prominent Haryanavi folklorist so far, and his categorisation of Haryanavi folk songs is more elaborate. He begins by dividing Haryanavi folk songs into two significant categories: Short folk songs and Long folk songs. He posits that Short folk songs are predominantly sung by women, whereas the Long folk songs are sung by men. He includes ballads like *Nihalde*, *Rājā Risālu*, *Googā*, *Gopichand*, *Bhagat Pooranmal*, *Rāo Kishan Gopāl*, *Jaswant*, *Harfool*, *Alhā*, etc., in the category of Long folk songs. Furthermore, he classifies Short folk songs into the following major categories: Ritual and Ceremonial Songs, Seasonal Songs, Agricultural Songs, Political Songs, and Miscellaneous Songs (72–75).

The researcher’s understanding of Haryanavi folk songs leads him to classify them into four broad genres: Ritual songs, Seasonal

songs, Spiritual Hymns, and Secular/Profane Songs. Ritual songs predominantly encompass compositions related to the birth, wedding, and the last rites of a person. The birth songs comprise melodies reflective of various phases of childbearing, addressing a woman's aspiration for a child, especially a male heir, gestation, emotional fluctuations, anticipations, labour pains, celebrations, and the distribution of gifts, particularly to affinal relatives. The wedding ceremony, in particular, is notably elaborate, encompassing a variety of distinct stages that extend over a considerable duration. These stages include the search for the bride or bridegroom, along with ceremonies such as *sagāi*, *tikā*, *lagan*, *bān*, *bhāt*, *ghudchadhi*, *dhukāv*, *phere*, *vidāyi*, *kānganā*, and additional rites. Haryanavi women celebrate the occasions of birth and wedding with ritualistic singing and dancing. In the event of a death, ritualistic mourning is observed for a period of mostly twelve days. Specific mourning rhymes and hymns are rendered during that period for lamenting the departed soul. Songs sung upon the birth of a son are locally called *biaai*, *bemata*, *syavar* (sobhar), *dai*, *palana*, *chhathi*, *peela*, *jachcha*, etc., while those sung during wedding ceremony are termed *sagāi*, *lagan*, *bhāt*, *haldi*, *tel*, *matanā*, *bān*, *banadā*, *banadi*, *ghodi*, *fere*, *chhann*, *vidāi*, *kanganā*, *juā*, etc.; melodies rendered at the time of death are identified as *sāmpā* or *syāpā*. For the purpose of this paper, all the Haryanavi Folk songs have been translated into English by the author.

Seasonal songs are defined as musical compositions sung during the months of Sawan, Kartik, and Fagun. This category also encompasses songs and hymns that are sung throughout the year as part of the cyclical worship of deities including Mahadevji, Sheetala Mata, Bhairon, Sedhal Mata, Hanuman, Panch Peer, Googa, and Bhumia. The songs associated with Sawan capture the essence of the rainy season and the joy associated with swinging the swings in the company of loved ones. The songs sung during the month of Kartik predominantly consist of hymns that praise the deities and emphasise the importance of penance and almsgiving in an individual's life. The songs of Fagun mainly exhibit humorous and erotic themes, as well as a sense of gaiety and festivity. Spiritual hymns are primarily sung by old women during *satsang/ kirtana* (spiritual gatherings) or at the occasion of some old person's death. The realm of spiritual hymns is vast and varied, encompassing not only specific compositions such as

Parbhati, Harjas, Krishna Leela, and Ramayan pada but also *Sagun* and *Nirgun* bhajans.

Secular or Profane songs consist of *Jakaḍi* and Dancing songs, the two most vivid and powerful genres of Haryanavi folk songs. These compositions address profane and commonplace life matters, including the daily bickering between the persona and her affinal kin, discords between husband and wife, backbreaking chores, critical situations in routine life, farewells, and significant historical incidents that have the power to influence the moral and ethical foundations of the community. The Profane songs encompass themes related to peasantry and the daily existence of a peasant and his spouse. In these songs, the persona, who is typically a young bride—either of a peasant or that of a soldier—expresses her innermost feelings and critically analyses her relationships with her kin from a woman’s perspective. She articulates her desires and ambitions, alongside the frustrations arising out of her unfavourable affinal relations. Furthermore, she recounts the arduous life she endures on a daily basis as a peasant woman. Lila Abu-Lughod’s observation that folk songs serve as “a vehicle for personal expression and confidential communication” (26) seems to be more pertinent in the context of *Jakaḍi*. Such songs are nearly extinct now, primarily due to transformations in agricultural practices and also because of the changes in the routine life of a woman in Haryana.

Functions

Traditionally, folk songs are perceived as ritualistic, aimed at complementing the celebrations of rites of passage in a community, or as a means of amusement, intended to alleviate the burdens associated with long working hours. Amusement undeniably constitutes one of the functions of folk songs; however, these songs perform numerous additional functions. Folklorists have identified several functions of folklore, many of which pertain specifically to folk songs. To comprehensively understand the functions performed by Haryanavi folk songs, one must first comprehend the typical pattern Haryanavi women adopt to sing them especially during celebrations of rites of passage like birth and wedding. In a Haryanavi family, almost all ceremonial events are observed in accordance with

Hindu rituals performed by the pandit (priest), with menfolk seated around him. During these moments, Haryanavi women congregate in some corner of the courtyard and begin to sing the songs appropriate to the occasion. They invariably begin their singing session with ritual songs while their menfolk are engaged in performing various stages of the ritual at the direction of the priest. Following the conclusion of the ritual and the dispersal of the menfolk, women switch over to the profane songs called *Jakaḍi*. This marks the second phase of their singing session. While the ritual songs are sung usually by old women, the profane songs are sung by young women. The final segment involves a round of dancing by women. By the end of the singing session, the sacred ambience created by the rituals and the ceremonial songs in the beginning gets virtually diluted, and women depart for their respective homes in a spirit of joy and exuberance, engaged in lively conversation and subdued laughter.

The cocktail of folk songs sung by women in Haryana on appropriate occasions provides a fascinating insight into women's culture. The singing of ritual songs at such occasions is obviously understandable; but why Haryanavi women include profane songs during such singing sessions is intriguing. Viewed from a feminist perspective, the insistence by women to include profane songs, especially *Jakaḍi*, in their singing sessions hints at the agency women want to have even in a rigidly patriarchal setup. This fact broadens the scope of folk songs as agents of continuity and change in Haryanavi culture. The various functions Haryanavi folk songs perform in society ensure their role as active agents. Firstly, Haryanavi folk songs serve an educational purpose for the younger generation of women. They instil in them a sense of awe and reverence for the community's beliefs and rituals. These songs also make them aware of the norms of proper behaviour and etiquette. Most of the ritual songs eulogise the menfolk as all-powerful and resourceful, deserving the undiluted submission of women. These songs depict their women as submitting themselves willingly and wholeheartedly to the whims of the menfolk. This is the most important function of ritual songs, and naturally, their singing is appreciated by menfolk. Besides, ritualistic folk songs play a vital role in fostering a sense of solidarity within the community. Wedding songs that employ fanciful exaggerations and compensatory

mechanisms effectively fulfil this purpose. For instance, in one wedding song, the groom's brothers are proclaimed to be the natural leaders of the entire clan: *Ye bhāiyān mhn sirdār bēte Harchand ke e.* (The sons of Harchand are the leaders of the clan). The older Haryanavi women impart cultural guidance to their younger generation through these songs. In a folk song, elderly women counsel the bride to adhere to specific norms of behaviour to demonstrate her piety and well-breeding: *E baṛ pipaḷ katwāiye maṭnā chardī gaū hatāiye maṭnā pāṇi mh daḷā bagāiye maṭnā e beti gāl divāiye maṭnā.* (O my daughter, never get a tree like banyan and pipal felled; never shoo away grazing cows; never throw a clod into a pond; and never give an opportunity for others to belittle us). Haryanavi folk songs help reinforce the prevailing institutions, beliefs, and attitudes. The existence of a robust patriarchal structure and the subordinate status of women are evident in these folk songs. The mechanism of patriarchy has been so deeply internalised by Haryanavi women that in one particular folk song, the persona, a woman who is barren, implores her husband to get remarried so that he may have a son to perpetuate his lineage: *Bin pāni papaiyā ṭarsē dekhye o bin puṭṭar māṭā ṭarsē dekhye o tū dūjā byāh karvāle* (O husband, see how much papaiyyā [a bird] pines for water, likewise a woman for a son; I beseech you to get remarried).

Folk songs serve as a means to alleviate social friction and dissatisfaction while helping individuals, particularly young women, adapt to the unfavourable circumstances of their lives. Numerous comforting and soothing folk songs sung during the bride's farewell are significant in this context. The following farewell song is especially noteworthy for its soothing tone: *Yo ghar chhodyā bābal ṭerā mannē chhodi ṭeri deḷṭeriyān, nyū maṭ jānē e lādo mhāri ṭannē rākhān ānwaṇ jāṇeriyān.* (Dear father, I'm leaving your home and your threshold forever; my dear daughter, don't get disheartened, you'll always be welcome in this home). Certain folk songs also serve as a mechanism for exerting social pressure and enforcing social control on those individuals who have the potential to jeopardise the existing social system. In this context, the most suspicious member of a patriarchal society is a young woman whose sexuality is regarded as a potential threat to the entire society. There are many folk songs in Haryana that admonish a woman who is dissatisfied with her life

and strongly advise her to come to terms with prevailing social and cultural norms. These songs not only ask her to accept the world as it exists and recognise her designated role within it but also to find satisfaction in the given circumstances. This function performed by folk songs remains relevant throughout a Haryanavi woman's adult life. In a profane song, as a groom departs for a distant land, his bride implores him to send her back to her natal home, fearing that her conjugal kin will not let her live peacefully in his absence. Nevertheless, the groom insists vehemently that she stay back in her conjugal home, contending: *Pihar maṭnā jāiye rē gori sab ṭariyān muh kāḷā hogā; mere bāp kē kuṅbā bhāri ismēn ṭerā gujārā hogā.* (Dear bride, if you return to your natal clan, it will blemish our reputation; my father's clan is large enough to accommodate you).

In addition to serving the interests of patriarchy, certain Haryanavi folk songs function as a medium for women to express their angst and protest against the sexual hegemony practised by menfolk. Such songs accomplish this task by enabling women to articulate their distress arising from the harsh realities of their day-to-day existence in a creative manner. These folk songs, accompanied by the gestures and expressions of women singers, turn out to be a site suitable for "reading meta-messages in ordinary language" (Das 198). In one notable profane song, the persona addresses her brother and laments the discrimination she endures as a girl: *Bīr āpān mā ke jāye re he re āpān lōte ek sarir ke kismaṭ nāyri nyāri re.* (O brother, we were born of the same womb; but our destinies are so different). At the moment of such strong artistic expressions, women singers become meditative, with sadness reflected on their faces. The force with which women sing such songs hints at their grit to snatch agency from the hands of patriarchy and become the carvers of their own destinies. Once women let their imaginations run free, they come up with more subversive folk songs. In their repertoire, there are folk songs that explore a range of ingenious actions and strategies to subvert patriarchy. The imaginative compensations for the denial of satisfactions in real life that women allow themselves to enjoy in these folk songs emerge as daydreams and departures from the dominant cultural ethos. In one such folk song, a Haryanavi woman, tired of her physical and emotional exploitation by her conjugal kin, engages herself in a fantastic situation: *Sās meri kā sir bharkē sē naṇadi kē*

bukhār e, pati mere ki ankhiyān dukkhēn din sovē ni rāt e, tīnuvān nē katthe karke le chāli bāzār e, baṛke seḥr mh rukkā māryā le ḥyo sastā māl e. (My husband's mother has a headache, his sister fever; my husband has eyesore and can't sleep in day or night; I gathered them all and took to the bazaar; entering the bazaar, I harked: come and buy cheap products). Such songs strongly defy the popular image of a woman which has been aptly described by Raheja and Gold in the following words: "The Indian woman has all too frequently been portrayed as a silent shadow, given in marriage by one patrilineal group to another, veiled and mute before affinal kinsmen, and unquestioningly accepting a single discourse that ratifies her own subordination and a negative view of femaleness and sexuality" (3-4).

If one holds the belief that the essence of the community is encapsulated in its folklore, the spirit of Haryanavi women is profoundly manifested through their secular folk songs. Bauman and Briggs state that "the act of performing folklore transforms static texts into dynamic expressions" (73), and thus, folk performances provide insights into how people negotiate their identity over time. The secular folk songs of Haryanavi women are one of the few domains that remain unmediated by patriarchal hegemony. These folk songs provide singers with a distinctive space to articulate their thoughts and feelings beyond the male gaze. As Kumar asserts: "the subversive potential of a subcultural performance is directly proportional to its distance from the public gaze" (58), the absence of menfolk during the singing of secular songs increases their subversive potential. It is noteworthy that while singing these folk songs, young women criticise and ridicule their affinal relations, even in the presence of their most adversarial kin, including their mother-in-law and sister-in-law. The beauty of these singing sessions is that rarely does anyone take the imaginative discourse personally or any criticism to heart. This implicit understanding shared by Haryanavi women, both young and old, suggests the presence of feminine solidarity among them, no matter how fleeting or ephemeral it may be. In a nutshell, viewed from a folkloristic perspective, Haryanavi folk songs illuminate broader concerns of power dynamics revolving around gender.

Conclusion

Folkloristics provides essential frameworks for investigating how diverse forms of folklore contribute to the formation of cultural identity while serving pragmatic functions within the community. The world of folklore is highly intricate and allusive. Various folklore genres constitute a system composed of complex channels of communication both within a culture and among diverse cultures. Comparative study of analogous genres across folk cultures has the potential to promote a profound understanding among various communities. Within the same tradition, they reflect the composite nature of a specific folk culture. In this context, the Haryanavi folk songs not only provide insights into customs, rituals, and the worldview of the Haryanavi community but also act as a conduit for analysing the lived experiences of people. Their ongoing evolution is a testament to their resilient nature, which accommodates the perpetuation of tradition as well as adaptation to contemporary contexts.

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