

## Folk Songs: Reviving the Voices of Haryanvi Women

**Bhawna Singh**

Research Scholar (English Dept.)  
BPS Women's University  
Sonipat, Haryana

**Dr. Shalini Attri**

Associate Professor (English Dept.)  
BPS Women's University  
Sonipat, Haryana

### Abstract

Women's voices in Haryanvi folk songs are a powerful instrument for exploring women's worldviews. Women's folk songs are autobiographical narratives that reflect their political, religious, and intellectual worldviews. This worldview includes their views and reactions to cultural norms and practices, fairs and festivals, superstitions and beliefs, cuisine and attire, as well as activities and pastimes. They are used to communicate the goals, desires, ideas, and feelings of women as well as to provide narratives of how women dealt with the emotional traumas of life. By conveying self-images, these songs play a vital part in the discourse surrounding identity. Folk songs frequently feature the delicate, metaphorical, or even direct speech of women. The genre of women's folk songs known as Jakari is one such cultural artifact in its expressive legacy that portrays the tremulous route of a young woman in Haryana from adolescence to motherhood. When examined critically, Jakari songs display a fascinating pattern of patriarchal domination, women's discontent with it, and women's desire to live in an egalitarian society free from patriarchal constraints. This study explores how Haryanvi women use folk songs to communicate their vision, social cognition, and imagination while also serving as a cathartic release.

**Key words:** Folklore, Feminist, Jakari, Ancient, Voices

### Introduction

Folk is an Anglo-Saxon term for a society that lacks education and knowledge. In general, it alludes to "the entire nation." When the term "folk" comes in compound expressions

like folk sayings, folk dances, or folklore, it only refers to non-civilized communities that significantly depart from the mainstream Western cultures. As a result, it indicates a rural and rustic scene (Shekhawat 34).

Stories, songs, dances, oral traditions, proverbs, jokes, common beliefs, and customs are just a few examples of the cultural aspects that make up folklore, which also incorporates elements from other civilizations and subcultures. The folk songs that portray the socio-cultural

status of women in the society are the most traditional features of Haryanvi culture. Women's perception, social cognition, and fantasy are expressed in folk songs in a therapeutic way.

Women's folklore, particularly those they perform in private, undermines and deconstructs the prevailing patriarchal mindset of society. In these narratives, women end up being both the object and the topic for desire. She is occasionally described in terms that are quite traditional as being appealing, seductive, mysterious, illogical, and also unknowable. In order to defend women's absence from the world of power politics and decision-making, feminists typically reject the spread of such an image of womanhood and refer to it as a male vision of women.

Feminist folklorists, alternatively looked into the women's studies, and try to investigate the reality of women's lives in different cultural contexts. The feminist perspective in folklore may be said to promote –a commitment to understand lore as it arises from and promote a woman-centered ideology (Turner and Serif 1987). The concept tries to deconstruct the preceding ideas and assumptions of power, agency, authority, hierarchies.

Feminists try to study folklore through the women's own experiences and from their perspectives. They found that the role of gender ideology could be very important in making all cultural meanings. Feminists' folklorists argued that truth, understanding and reality have been usually constructed through the male's point of views. So the feminist approach in folklore especially in folk songs establishes gender as the fundamental class for the analysis of cultural expressions (Sandhu 634).

Numerous songs and tales about this sort of woman may be found in Haryanvi folklore. She is shown as being drawn to an unusual figure, typically an outcast, and openly expressing her desires and longings. To fulfill such desires, she can devise any plan to trick the patriarchy's watchdogs. In a society like Haryana where women are not allowed to speak their heart and mind out, the depiction of a woman expressing her desire freely and without shame is not accepted.

Devender kumar has categorized folk songs of Haryanvi women into the following groups: 1.Ritualistic songs; 2.Seasonal songs; 3.Bhajans, and 4. Jakari songs. The majority of ritualistic songs consist of elegies, birth songs, and marriage songs. Seasonal songs are those that are exclusively sung during a certain time of year. For instance, Saaman songs are performed in the month of Shraavan, which is the season of rain and clouds, while Fagan songs are sung in the month of Falgun, season of gladness, and Katyak songs are performed in the month of Kartik, season of god and goddess worship. Bhajans are frequently sung by old women during religious gatherings or during the funeral of an elderly person. Jakari songs are unique in the sense that they can be sung anytime, excluding the occasion of someone's death (2).

This paper exclusively focuses on Haryanvi women's folk songs known as Jakari which reflects not only the dreams and desires of Haryanvi women but also their frustrations and voices of resistance against patriarchal forces.

### Jakari songs

Jakari, a well-known subgenre of Haryanvi women's folk songs, serves as the primary source for the study of a woman's "inner world" in her own words. The majority of Jakari folk songs were created by groups of women who worked in the fields for agricultural work as well as at home doing chores like grinding, cooking, caring for kids and animals, spinning, sewing, and dyeing. The majority of these commonplace duties are performed by young women, therefore Jakari develops into a musical portrayal of their interactions with the tasks at hand. In these songs, they sprinkle their ideas about these pursuits and how culture has impacted families. On a deeper level, they employ these songs to communicate the complex web of longings and wants that are concealed behind the exterior of sharam (bashfulness) and ijat (honor), which are imposed as inherent qualities on a woman's person. If one wants to indicate the beginning of this crucial stage of a woman's life through musical representations, the following folk song might be used:

*“Oh O chah muklave ke Oh O chah muklave ke*

*Mei dussar leke jaoon ri chah muklave ke”*

(See my enthusiasm for Muklava (departure for conjugal home)

I depart with a load of gifts see my enthusiasm for Muklava). (Kumar 4)

The young woman's first meaningful interaction with her spouse is undoubtedly made when she arrives at her conjugal house. Her husband gives her a supportive response as well. He begins to take care of her even helping her with difficult tasks, like grinding.

The diversity of these songs in terms of themes reveals the depth of Jakari folk songs as a genre. Jakari songs also touch on the crucial topics of a woman's critique of herself. By considering her own encounters, she offers an intriguing type of self-analysis in these songs. These kinds of songs provide musical voice to a woman's hidden desires in daily life, making them the best means by which she may express her emotions. In this context, she is no longer an object of desire rather she transforms herself into a desiring subject, undermining societal norms so subtly that individuals in positions of power are blind to the actual nature of the situation. Because she fears being accused of going against her objectives, she employs a range of subversive strategies to avoid doing things she doesn't want to do and risky circumstances that arise as a result of those aims. Therefore, the strongest female friendship may be heard in these tunes (Kumar 12).

### Women voices through different perspectives

In the Haryanvi civilization, men predominate over women. Women rely on males for support and safety throughout their lives. As a woman, she is dependent on and protected by her father, her brothers, her husband, and her sons. Folk songs, which have their own huge genre, are a perfect illustration of it. Folk songs are sung worldwide on occasions of a boy's birth, but no one sings them on a girl's birth. Jachcha songs are traditional songs that describe various son-birth scenarios.

*“Beera k bujhega meri, m su karma ki maadi re,  
Beera tu re hua tha, jab baanti thi mithayi re,  
Beera m re hui thi, jab mayad bhi royi thi re,  
Tu doodh dahi t pala, beera m nue pal gi thi re,  
Tu college khandaya,teri BA MA krayi re,  
M sarkari me ghali , mushkil t dasmi krayi re,  
Tanne nue moj udayi, m maa ki gel kamayi re”.*

Translated by author

[Brother what will you ask about me, I am unlucky,  
Brother when you were born, sweets were distributed,  
Brother when I was born, even mother cried,  
You grew up with proper care, I grew without it,  
You were sent to college, you did your BA and MA,  
I was sent to Govt. School, I did my tenth with difficulty,  
You enjoyed your life, I worked along with mother.]

The above song depicts the harsh realities a girl faces throughout her life. Right from her birth, she is discriminated at every level. Even her own mother cries at her arrival. She faces many challenges and struggle hard to overcome them. She works more than her counterpart at every stage in her life but still she is discriminated on the basis of gender. Girl child is not even given proper education which is a powerful tool to change the society.

In certain folk songs, a woman tells anecdotes about her own personal experiences. She makes an effort to communicate her sentiments and send messages to the listeners.

*“Janani maa ka kde kise t karaz chukaya na jata,  
No mhine tak rakhe garabh me, kasht bhatara sahata maa,  
Baitha ja n uthya ja n,dookh bhatara sahata maa,  
Kde vaid kde dayi dhore, bhaji bhaji firti maa,  
Maut nishani kaal khadi s,nhi maran t darti maa,  
Apne tann ka khoon bahati, khoon lutaya na jata,  
Janani maa ka kde kise t karaz chukaya na jata”*

Translated by author

[The debt of a mother cannot be repaid by anyone,

Mother keeps her child in womb for nine month, she tolerates many problems,  
Neither she can sit nor stand, mother feels unbearable pain,  
Sometimes to the doctor then to the maid, mother keeps on running in a hurry,  
Mother sees death in front of her, still she is not afraid of it,  
Blood flows out of her body, no one can do this except mother,  
The debt of a mother cannot be repaid by anyone.]

In the given song, the mother says that she has reared her children despite all of the difficulties she has had and that she doesn't anticipate his treating her poorly or speaking poorly of her. The mother gets emotional and says that she keeps her children in her womb for nine months. She further claims that she even faces life threatening situations at the time of their delivery. Hence, the above song shows the unconditional love and sacrifices of a mother in order to get her children in this world. Though, children as they grow, forget to respect and love her and at times she also faces rude behavior of her children.

Earlier, girls were not given education at their parental house; therefore, there are girls who do not want to get married to a person who is highly educated because it becomes very difficult for the uneducated girls to adjust with them.

*“Mere pita n julam kre m lieutenant ke byahi,  
Lieutenant angrezi bole, m usne ghani satayi ,  
Hath jodke kari namaste, lieutenant ke charna me,  
Vo bola goodnight, meri nhi smjh me aayi re,  
Us goodnight ke upar, manne sari raat gavayi re,  
Tadke uthke boli goodnight, idiot kah dhamkayi re,  
Lieutenant angrezi bole,m usne ghani satayi re”*

Translated by author

[My father has put me in a problem; he has married me to a lieutenant,  
Lieutenant speaks English; he troubles me a lot,  
I wished him Namaste and bent down in his feet,  
He said goodnight, I could not understand that,  
I spent my whole night thinking about that “goodnight”,  
I wished him goodnight in the morning, he scolded me saying an idiot].

This song describes how miserable she was when she married an intelligent man. She lacks knowledge, thus she cannot comprehend his English. Therefore, the song is an address to all the parents advising them to avoid educational mismatch marriages; either they should educate their daughters or avoid marrying them with the educated males.

Several Jakari folk songs mention the concept of "honor." Women are portrayed as cultural carriers, and their "belonging" to a family is the only factor in determining their "honor." "Belongingness" might be interpreted as the objectification of women because men, who are the patriarchs of families, treat women as their property. Because women's "voices" are silenced, Jakari is an artistic form of protest against patriarchy (The breakthrough voice, 10-12).

*“Bharaya bharaya daaman m to baap ke t lyai,*

*Vo bhi bech khagya mere baap ka jamai,*

*Aidi neeche thana mere panje pe siphahi,*

*Tanne kaid kra dun mere baap ke jamai”*

Translated by author

[I brought heavy skirt from my father's house,

My father's son in law sold it and spent that money,

Police station is under my heel and constable is on my foot,

I send you to the prison, my father's son in law].

Anger of a married woman is reflected through the song. She raises her voice against her own husband. She is very furious for the wrong deed her husband has done. She brings the clothes from her parent's house and her father's *jamai* (son-in-law) has sold all of them. She told him the power she possesses and threatens to put him in the prison.

Despite the fact that the current generation of Haryanvi women tends to prefer mainstream music, a significant portion of them have recently begun using the internet in a trend focused on their folk songs. Their self-driven attempts to get awareness and attention online appear to be replacing the long-standing, predominately male Haryanvi popular music industry.

Because it frequently arises as a reaction to a perceived loss of masculine power over this area, Prem Chowdhry claims that the rise in crime against women has correlated with women's increasing exposure in public (43). In this regard, academics and practitioners alike ought to pay more attention to how Haryanvi women's voices are presented to an unfiltered audience online and how they engage with it. Understanding how folklore is enacted with and problematized by media, both old and new, is essential because making folklore to convey tradition is "a fundamental human talent and need" (Bronner, ch.1).

## Conclusion

Songs play an important role in people's lives. They talk about things like caste, kinship and marriage, work cultures, gender, power, sexuality, family life, patriarchy, and many types of agency in the culture they come from. Folk songs perpetuate and support societal ideals and roles from one generation to the next. In the community that upholds and adheres to it, they preserve social order in this way. Vocal tones (songs) of commonplace conduct in present many rites of revolt that permit social cohesion and the prevailing ideology to rule in daily life.

Similarly, one of the ways that women express themselves is via music; music provides a platform for women to speak out against the power structure. Folk songs amuse people while challenging the patriarchal structure of the home, where women are expected to be obedient and meek both physically and emotionally. She may express her anxieties, insecurities, and oppressive feelings through music because such songs show how dominant beliefs are not only tolerated and reinforced but also fought and questioned.

The women express their outrage and tyranny in a manner appropriate to their particular cultures. In this instance, they are satirizing relationships and protesting through music in a way that they otherwise could not. Patriarchal connections like those with a husband, father, brother, and mother-in-law are in turn questioned, scorned, and ridiculed. Women who sing folk songs, then, not only communicate their thoughts and feelings to others but also create a platform from which they can deliver a message of dissent in line with their own cultural paradigm.

### Works Cited

1. Bronner, Simon. "Folklore and the Internet: Vernacular Expression in a Digital World", edited by Trevor J. Blank. Utah State University Press, Logan. 2009.
2. Chowdhry, Prem. "Masculine Spaces: Rural Male Culture in North India." Economic and Political weekly, vol.49, no.47, pp.41-49. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/24481028](http://www.jstor.org/stable/24481028)
3. Kumar, Devender. "Jakari- Life Songs of Haryanvi Women.docx".  
[www.academia.edu/29809958/Jakari\\_Life\\_Songs\\_of\\_Haryanvi\\_Women\\_doc](http://www.academia.edu/29809958/Jakari_Life_Songs_of_Haryanvi_Women_doc)
4. Pahal, Shalu. "Jakari Folk Songs: A Protest Against Patriarchy By Women." The Breakthrough voice, 7 August, 2020.  
*Inbreakthrough.Org/Jakari-Folk-Songs-A-Protest-Against-Patriarchy-By-Women/*
5. Sandhu, Veerdeep. "Patterns of Violence in the Folk Songs ( Boliyan) of Punjab." Volume 7, issue 3,IJRAR August 2020. pp.633-639
6. Shekhawat, Santosh Kanwar. "Women's Voices in the Folk Songs of Rajasthan". Journal of Arts.Vol.9(1),34-45(2020).  
[www.academia.edu/76691869/Womens\\_Voices\\_in\\_the\\_Folk\\_Songs\\_of\\_Rajasthan](http://www.academia.edu/76691869/Womens_Voices_in_the_Folk_Songs_of_Rajasthan)
7. Turner, K. & Seriff, S. (1987) "Giving an Altar: The Ideology of Reproduction in a St. Joseph's Day Feast. The Journal of American Folklore. Vol.WO Number398. Folklore and Feminism. 446-460.