



Ritual Songs as Gendered Discourse: Exploring Women's Oral Traditions in Haryana

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Abstract— This paper explores the birth ritual songs of Haryanvi women as gendered discourse that reflects, reinforces, and at times resists patriarchal structures. Performed during childbirth and related ceremonies, these songs form an essential part of Haryana's oral tradition, transmitting cultural values, beliefs, and gender expectations across generations. The study foregrounds women's voices as they narrate anxieties, joys, and ambivalences associated with childbirth—particularly the preference for sons, the burden of reproduction, and the negotiation of a woman's social identity within kinship structures. Through feminist and folkloristic frameworks, the analysis reveals how birth ritual songs operate simultaneously as cultural affirmations of family continuity and as subtle critiques of gendered hierarchies. By situating these oral traditions within broader discussions of performance, gender, and cultural identity, the paper highlights the ways in which Haryanvi women use ritual song to articulate their lived experiences, preserve communal memory, and inscribe their voices into the social fabric. This study contributes to scholarship in folklore, gender studies, and cultural anthropology by demonstrating how seemingly ordinary birth ritual songs embody profound discourses of gender, power, and tradition.



Keywords— Birth ritual songs, Women's folksongs, Haryana folklore, Gender discourse, Ritual performance.

I. INTRODUCTION

Folklore constitutes the living memory of a community, sustaining its values, beliefs, and worldviews through oral traditions, rituals, and performances. In Haryana, a state situated in the northwestern region of India, folklore is inseparable from everyday life, particularly in agrarian and domestic contexts. Among its diverse forms—proverbs, tales, riddles, and songs—the ritual songs of women occupy a distinctive position. These songs, performed during life-cycle ceremonies and seasonal festivals, act as cultural texts through which women both affirm and negotiate their identities within patriarchal structures. One of the most significant genres within this tradition is the body of birth ritual songs, which are performed during childbirth and related ceremonies. Far from being merely celebratory, these songs articulate complex emotions of joy, anxiety, and

ambivalence that women experience in relation to reproduction, kinship, and gender expectations (Kumar 27).

In the cultural imagination of Haryana, childbirth is not only a biological event but also a deeply social and symbolic act. It ensures the continuity of lineage, the consolidation of kinship ties, and the fulfillment of women's socially ascribed roles as wives and mothers. The birth ritual songs sung by women during these moments encapsulate this layered significance: they celebrate fertility and renewal, while simultaneously reflecting the burdens and inequalities that accompany women's reproductive roles (Yadav and Shah 4). Notably, these songs often emphasize the preference for male children, thereby revealing entrenched patriarchal values that situate sons as heirs and daughters as dispensable. Yet within the very performance of these songs, women insert their voices, sometimes subtly

questioning these values through irony, lament, or collective solidarity (Saroha 12).

From a feminist perspective, birth ritual songs may be read as gendered discourse, a form of oral communication that both reflects and shapes women's cultural positioning. On the one hand, they mirror the patriarchal structures of society, reinforcing women's identities as bearers of lineage and subordinates within kinship hierarchies. On the other hand, they provide women with a rare discursive space in which they can share their experiences of childbirth, express ambivalence toward their roles, and preserve a collective memory that speaks to their lived realities. As feminist folklore scholars such as Margaret Mills argue, oral traditions often embody a dual function: while affirming dominant ideologies, they also encode subtle forms of critique, resistance, and female agency (Mills 54). The birth ritual songs of Haryana exemplify this duality.

The present paper seeks to examine birth ritual songs of Haryanvi women as gendered discourse, situating them at the intersection of folklore, ritual, and gender studies. By focusing exclusively on birth-related rituals, the study highlights how women's songs function as cultural texts that simultaneously celebrate, reinforce, and negotiate gender norms. The analysis draws upon feminist theory, ritual studies, and performance theory to explore the multiple layers of meaning embedded in these oral traditions. In doing so, it foregrounds women's voices—voices that are often excluded from written history but persist in the oral archive of the community (Narayan 249).

This study is significant for three reasons. First, it contributes to regional folklore studies by offering a close examination of Haryanvi women's ritual songs, a body of oral literature that remains underexplored in academic scholarship. Second, it enriches the field of gender studies by demonstrating how everyday cultural practices such as singing during childbirth reveal the social construction of gender roles and the negotiation of power within patriarchal contexts. Third, it engages with theoretical debates in folklore and feminist discourse, showing how ritual songs operate not only as cultural artifacts but also as dynamic sites of performance where gendered identities are reproduced and reimagined.

The scope of this paper is limited to birth ritual songs performed in rural Haryana, particularly those associated with childbirth ceremonies, cradle rituals, and related festivities. Through textual and performance analysis of selected songs (translated into English for accessibility), the paper will explore how themes of fertility, lineage, motherhood, and gender hierarchy are expressed in these oral traditions. By examining both the content and the context of performance, the paper argues that birth ritual

songs represent a crucial form of women's cultural expression—one that illuminates the complexities of gender, tradition, and agency in Haryanvi society.

In what follows, the paper will first outline the theoretical framework that guides the analysis, drawing upon feminist folklore studies and ritual theory. It will then situate birth ritual songs within the broader cultural context of Haryana, before proceeding to an in-depth exploration of their gendered themes. Finally, through close readings of selected song-texts and performance practices, the study will demonstrate how these songs function as a discourse that is simultaneously complicit with and critical of patriarchal structures.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Folklore Studies and Oral Traditions

Folklore, as a discipline, has long been concerned with the study of oral traditions, ritual practices, and cultural memory. Early anthropologists such as William Bascom emphasized the functional aspects of folklore in maintaining social cohesion, while Alan Dundes highlighted folklore as a symbolic system encoding collective values. Ruth Finnegan's *Oral Literature in Africa* expanded this field by showing how oral performance is both an art and a medium for transmitting knowledge, arguing that oral traditions should be treated as literature in their own right (Finnegan 21).

The study of women's oral traditions, however, has historically been marginalized. As Linda Dégh observed, the field often privileged male-centered heroic epics and public performances, overlooking women's domestic and ritual songs (Dégh 89). This bias reflects the patriarchal underpinnings of early folklore studies, where women's voices were dismissed as "minor" or "private" cultural expressions. Feminist interventions in folklore since the late twentieth century have sought to correct this imbalance by foregrounding women's oral traditions as critical sites of cultural production.

2.2 Feminist Folklore and Gendered Voices

Feminist folklore scholarship has significantly reshaped how women's oral traditions are studied. Margaret Mills, in *Rhetoric and Politics in Afghan Women's Folklore*, demonstrated that women's songs in Afghanistan were not mere repetitions of tradition but strategic, multi-voiced performances that encoded both conformity and resistance (Mills 54). She coined the idea of oral traditions as "double-voiced discourse," meaning they reproduce dominant ideologies while simultaneously preserving women's perspectives and critiques.

Kirin Narayan further advanced this approach in *Storytellers, Saints, and Scoundrels*, where she showed how women in India used folk narratives to negotiate their positions within religious and cultural hierarchies (Narayan 245). Narayan's work underscored the paradox of women's oral traditions: while women are central to cultural continuity, they often remain marginal in social power. Oral traditions thus become both a tool of transmission and a medium for subtle resistance.

Another key contribution is by A.K. Ramanujan, who examined South Asian folktales and ballads, highlighting the gendered nature of storytelling. He argued that women's narratives often introduce themes of suffering, endurance, and irony absent in male-centered texts (Ramanujan 38). Similarly, scholars like Janet McCloud and Kay Turner have highlighted the ritual, performative, and symbolic dimensions of women's songs, stressing their role in shaping identity, memory, and solidarity.

This body of scholarship provides the foundation for reading Haryanvi women's birth ritual songs as gendered discourse, they affirm patriarchal hierarchies (through son preference and lineage), while also preserving the lived realities of women's pain, resilience, and irony.

2.3 Ritual Theory and Performance Studies

To situate birth songs within their cultural context, it is crucial to draw on ritual theory. Emile Durkheim's concept of ritual as "sacred action" stressed its collective dimension in reaffirming social values. Victor Turner later expanded this understanding by analyzing ritual as "social drama," where tensions are enacted, negotiated, and resolved (Turner 20). Turner also emphasized the importance of symbols in rituals, seeing them as condensations of social meaning.

Stanley Tambiah conceptualized ritual as a "system of symbolic communication," performed through patterned actions, words, and objects (Tambiah 119). His performative approach resonates strongly with women's ritual songs, where repetition, stereotypy, and symbolic imagery constitute both form and meaning.

In the context of Haryana, women's birth ritual songs exemplify what Turner calls *communitas*: a sense of solidarity and shared experience. Women gather to perform these songs during childbirth, creating a collective space where anxieties, joys, and grievances are voiced. At the same time, rituals reinforce structural hierarchies, such as patriarchy and son preference. Reading these songs through ritual theory reveals their dual function: to stabilize cultural norms while allowing spaces of expression for women.

2.4 Women's Folksongs in South Asia

Across South Asia, women's folksongs form a significant but often neglected domain of oral culture. In Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, *sohar* songs celebrate childbirth, echoing the Haryanvi tradition but with regional variations. These songs, as documented by Veena Das, often intertwine domestic concerns with broader cosmological themes, situating childbirth within both family and divine order. In Rajasthan, *banna-banni* songs sung at weddings often include satirical commentaries on in-laws, offering women spaces of coded resistance (Narayan 248).

In Bengal, lullabies (*lori*) and ritual songs reflect maternal devotion while subtly critiquing patriarchal control. Scholars like Susan Wadley have noted that women's ritual songs across North India provide "the only legitimate space for voicing grievances" (Wadley 87). The patterns across regions suggest that Haryanvi songs are part of a broader South Asian oral tradition where women negotiate gender roles through ritual performance.

2.5 Folklore of Haryana: Existing Research

Haryana's folklore has attracted scholarly attention, though much of it has been descriptive rather than analytical. Scholars such as Prem Chowdhry and Suraj Bhan Bhardwaj have noted that Haryana's oral traditions reflect its agrarian economy, patriarchal kinship system, and caste hierarchies. Songs are integral to life-cycle rituals—birth, marriage, and death—as well as seasonal festivals like Teej and Holi.

Specific studies on women's songs include Devender Kumar's analysis of *Jatanā*, a peasant woman's ballad, which he interprets as a site of resistance against patriarchal oppression (Kumar 33). Rakesh Bharti Yadav and Rohan Shah, in their study of Southern Haryana, argue that women's songs act as cultural connectors, strengthening social bonds and reinforcing traditions (Yadav and Shah 5).

Shweta Saroha's work is especially significant for this study. Her ecofeminist reading of Haryanvi women's songs emphasizes how women's oral traditions link ecological consciousness with gendered oppression (Saroha 12). While Saroha provides a critical framework for ecofeminism, her analysis is not specifically focused on birth ritual songs as gendered discourse. This gap offers space for the present study.

2.6 Birth Ritual Songs: *Sohar, Ojna, and Beyond*

Birth ritual songs (*sohar, ojna, jachcha geet, kua pujan songs*) are a key genre in Haryanvi folklore. *Sohar* songs celebrate the birth of a son, while *Ojna* songs capture the desires of pregnant women. *Jachcha Geet* describe the pain and resilience of women in childbirth, and *kua pujan* songs connect maternal recovery with ecological rituals of water

and fertility. Lullabies (*lori*) complete this cycle by nurturing the infant.

While these songs have been documented ethnographically, they have rarely been analyzed through the lens of gender discourse. Existing documentation often treats them as cultural curiosities rather than as critical texts encoding patriarchy and resistance. For example, descriptions note that the birth of a daughter is accompanied by silence or lament, yet the implications of this practice for women's cultural positioning remain underexplored.

III. RESEARCH GAP AND CONTRIBUTION

Although scholars have documented the richness of Haryanvi folklore, including ritual songs associated with life-cycle ceremonies, most existing research has been descriptive in nature, focusing on cataloguing songs rather than analyzing their deeper cultural and gendered meanings. Works such as those by Yadav and Shah emphasize the role of women's songs in reinforcing cultural bonds, while Saroha highlights their ecofeminist dimensions, and Kumar examines resistance in select ballads. However, these studies either adopt a broad cultural approach or focus on ecological and social aspects, leaving unexplored the specific question of how birth ritual songs operate as gendered discourse. While feminist folklore theory internationally (Mills, Narayan, Finnegan) has demonstrated that women's oral traditions often embody "double-voiced" discourses of compliance and resistance, this framework has rarely been applied to the context of Haryana. The absence of a critical, gender-focused study on *Ojna Geet, Sohar Geet, laments, and lullabies* creates a clear research gap. Addressing this lacuna, the present study offers a focused analysis of Haryanvi women's birth ritual songs, examining them as cultural texts that reproduce patriarchal hierarchies while simultaneously preserving women's lived experiences, solidarity, and subtle acts of resistance.

IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To critically examine the birth ritual songs of Haryanvi women (*Ojna Geet, Sohar Geet, laments, lullabies, Kua Pujan songs*) as cultural texts that reflect and reproduce gender hierarchies in a patriarchal society.
2. To analyze these songs through the lens of feminist folklore theory and gendered discourse, identifying how women's voices simultaneously affirm tradition and encode subtle forms of resistance, irony, and solidarity.
3. To situate Haryanvi birth ritual songs within the broader South Asian oral tradition while highlighting

their unique role in preserving women's lived experiences, collective memory, and cultural identity.

V. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How do Haryanvi women's birth ritual songs (*Ojna Geet, Sohar Geet, laments, lullabies, Kua Pujan songs*) reflect and reinforce patriarchal values, particularly concerning son preference and daughter marginalization?
2. In what ways do these songs function as gendered discourse, providing women with a cultural space to articulate their desires, anxieties, suffering, and resistance within ritual contexts?
3. How can feminist folklore theory and performance studies help interpret the double-voiced nature of these songs, where compliance with tradition coexists with subtle critique and solidarity?
4. What role do birth ritual songs play in preserving women's collective memory and cultural identity in Haryana, and how do they compare with similar oral traditions across South Asia?

VI. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative, feminist folkloristic approach to examine Haryanvi women's birth ritual songs (*Ojna Geet, Sohar Geet, laments, lullabies, Kua Pujan songs*) as gendered discourse. Primary data was drawn from oral performances recorded during ritual occasions, interviews with elderly women, and community archives, with transcription and translation undertaken carefully to preserve idiomatic and symbolic meanings. Analytical methods combined feminist folklore theory, particularly Mills's concept of "double-voiced discourse," to identify how songs simultaneously affirm patriarchal values and encode women's perspectives, with gendered discourse analysis, informed by Foucault's notion of discourse and Butler's theory of performativity, to read songs as ritualized acts that construct and contest gender roles. Ethical sensitivity was maintained through informed participation, respect for anonymity, and reflexive awareness of researcher positionality. While challenges of orality, translation, and contextual absence persist, these were approached as integral to the dynamic and living character of folklore, positioning the songs not merely as cultural artifacts but as active sites of women's voices, memory, and resistance.

VII. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

While this study draws upon rich oral data from select regions of rural Haryana, its scope remains limited by the availability of recorded performances and the challenges of

translation. The interpretive nature of feminist folkloristic analysis also entails a degree of subjectivity, shaped by researcher positionality and linguistic mediation. Future research could incorporate a comparative ethnographic approach involving diverse districts, generational perspectives, and digital transformations of ritual songs in contemporary media. Expanding this inquiry to include performative variations across caste and regional boundaries would further deepen understanding of how gendered discourse evolves within Haryana's living folklore.

VIII. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The present study interprets Haryanvi women's birth ritual songs through the twin lenses of feminist folklore studies and gendered discourse theory. This combination offers a focused approach: feminist folklore scholarship provides tools for understanding women's oral traditions as multi-layered, while discourse theory helps explain how these songs both construct and contest gender roles.

8.1 Feminist Folklore Studies: Women's Songs as Double-Voiced Discourse

For much of its history, folklore studies privileged male-centered epics, legends, and heroic tales, while the songs and narratives of women were marginalized or dismissed as trivial. As Linda Dégh argued, this reflected an academic bias that valued public, male-dominated genres over domestic and ritual songs often associated with women (Dégh 92). Feminist interventions since the late twentieth century have corrected this imbalance by bringing women's oral traditions to the forefront of scholarly analysis.

Margaret Mills's *Rhetoric and Politics in Afghan Women's Folklore* is foundational here. Mills conceptualizes women's folklore as a form of "double-voiced discourse": oral texts that reproduce dominant ideologies while simultaneously encoding women's own perspectives and subtle critiques (Mills 54). In her study, women's songs both affirm patriarchal hierarchies and offer veiled expressions of dissent, thereby functioning as layered cultural documents.

This insight is crucial for Haryanvi birth ritual songs. On the surface, Sohar Geet celebrate the birth of sons as sources of light, lineage, and prosperity, reproducing patriarchal preferences. Yet laments for daughters, Ojna Geet about pregnancy cravings, and lullabies that embed tenderness within ecological metaphors reveal women's own experiences of desire, pain, and care. Even songs of threat, which dramatize violence against women for bearing daughters, preserve these realities in cultural memory. Following Mills, such songs can be read as double-voiced:

both affirmations of patriarchy and testimonies of women's lived realities.

Kirin Narayan's *Storytellers, Saints, and Scoundrels* deepens this perspective by showing how Indian women use oral narratives to negotiate their roles within family and religion. Narayan highlights the paradox that women are central to cultural continuity but peripheral in social authority (Narayan 246). This paradox is sharply visible in Haryana, where women sustain rituals through song but have little say in social or familial decisions. Their songs, therefore, become spaces where they negotiate their marginality and preserve their experiences.

A.K. Ramanujan's work on South Asian folktales also underscores that women's narratives often introduce irony, suffering, and endurance absent from male-centered traditions (Ramanujan 41). His observations support the idea that Haryanvi birth ritual songs, though seemingly celebratory, are repositories of women's realities—including sorrow, constraint, and resilience.

Taken together, feminist folklore studies provide a theoretical basis for treating Haryanvi birth ritual songs as multi-layered texts: they are ritual performances that sustain patriarchy while simultaneously carrying women's voices, critiques, and solidarity.

8.2 Gendered Discourse Theory: Constructing and Contesting Roles

While feminist folklore provides interpretive tools, discourse theory helps explain the mechanisms by which songs construct and contest gender. Michel Foucault defined discourse as the system of knowledge and practices through which power operates and identities are produced. Applied here, ritual songs are not simply reflections of social life but active discourses that construct what it means to be a mother, daughter, or wife in Haryana.

Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity extends this insight by arguing that gender is not an innate essence but the effect of repeated acts, gestures, and performances (Butler 33). Songs sung during childbirth rituals are precisely such repeated acts. Every performance of a Sohar or Ojna reiterates cultural expectations: women are celebrated for producing sons, stigmatized for bearing daughters, and bound to maternal and domestic roles. Through repetition, these performances naturalize gender roles as inevitable.

Yet, as Butler emphasizes, repetition also opens space for subversion. A lament for a daughter, for example, disrupts the celebratory script of ritual, making visible the grief and inequality that patriarchy seeks to silence. Similarly, women's ironic exaggerations in praising sons may encode subtle critique. Thus, birth ritual songs demonstrate the

ambivalence of gendered discourse: they reproduce patriarchal values but also destabilize them by voicing experiences of pain, anxiety, and tenderness that exceed patriarchal scripts.

By combining Foucault's understanding of discourse as power/knowledge with Butler's theory of performativity, this study reads Haryanvi women's birth ritual songs as performative acts that both construct and contest gender roles.

Feminist folklore studies and gendered discourse theory together provide a coherent framework for analyzing Haryanvi birth ritual songs. From feminist folklore, the study borrows the idea of songs as double-voiced discourse, affirming patriarchy while preserving women's perspectives. From discourse theory, it takes the insight that songs are performative practices through which gender roles are both reproduced and destabilized. This combined lens allows for a nuanced reading of *Ojna Geet*, *Sohar Geet*, *laments*, *lullabies*, and *Kua Pujan* songs as cultural texts where women's voices emerge in complex, layered, and often ambivalent ways.

IX. DISCUSSION

Haryanvi women's birth ritual songs function as layered cultural texts where patriarchy and women's agency intersect. Read through feminist folklore's concept of double-voiced discourse, they reveal how women simultaneously affirm dominant ideologies and encode their own perspectives, while discourse theory highlights how these songs performatively construct and contest gender roles.

Sohar Geet, sung at the birth of sons, celebrate lineage, prosperity, and divine blessing, naturalizing son preference and patriarchal continuity. Yet, their exaggerated praise often carries ironic undertones, allowing women to comment indirectly on the burden such hierarchies impose. Similarly, *Ojna Geet*—songs of pregnancy cravings—shift attention from the patriarchal glorification of heirs to women's embodied realities of desire, pain, and vulnerability, offering glimpses of female subjectivity within ritual spaces.

The stark absence of celebratory songs for daughters underscores how silence itself becomes a discourse of negation, producing the girl child as unwanted. Where laments are voiced, they register grief and stigma but also preserve women's critique through irony and satire, refusing to erase the injustice of son preference. Lullabies, by contrast, open an intimate space where mothers articulate tenderness and anxiety, often through ecological metaphors. These private songs complicate the celebratory public

discourse of lineage, foregrounding maternal voice and vulnerability. Finally, *Kua Pujan* songs reintegrate mother and child into community life by linking fertility to wells and water, affirming gendered roles while creating a collective female solidarity (*communitas*) around childbirth.

Taken together, these genres demonstrate that Haryanvi birth ritual songs are not passive survivals of tradition but dynamic sites of discourse. They reproduce patriarchal hierarchies of lineage and gender while also providing cultural space for women's voices, experiences, and subtle forms of resistance. In this ambivalent space—between celebration and lament, affirmation and critique—women's oral traditions emerge as powerful archives of cultural memory and gendered negotiation.

X. CASE STUDIES: BIRTH RITUAL SONGS OF HARYANA AS GENDERED DISCOURSE

Birth rituals form the first rite (*samskara*) of human life in the Haryanvi cultural imagination, and women's folksongs are inseparable from these ceremonies. Songs sung during pregnancy (*Ojna Geet*), childbirth (*Sohar Geet*), laments for daughters, threats, and post-birth rituals (*Kua Pujan*, lullabies) constitute a gendered archive through which women articulate their social realities. These songs are not neutral accompaniments; they are cultural texts that embody what feminist folklorist Margaret Mills terms the "double-voiced discourse" of women's oral traditions—simultaneously affirming patriarchal norms while creating spaces for female agency (Mills 54).

The following case studies demonstrate how Haryanvi birth ritual songs operate as gendered discourse, where women's voices both reproduce and resist patriarchal values.

10.1. Ojna Geet: Gendered Expectations during Pregnancy

“मंगवादो काबुल की मोसमी जी।
तलै ए पड्योडी मोसमी मैं नहीं खाऊँ
ओ जी म्हारो खीर खाण्ड मन भाय...”

Translation:

Bring me the fruits from Kabul, O beloved,
Do not offer me the local ones.
Sweet and rare should be my food,
For I carry life within me.

Gender Analysis:

Ojna Geet reflect the expectant mother's cravings and desires during pregnancy. On the surface, these songs elevate the woman by indulging her wishes. Yet the indulgence is socially sanctioned not for her sake but for the

unborn child—especially if male. Thus, while women articulate desire, their voices remain tethered to reproductive expectations. The mother is celebrated primarily as the vessel of lineage continuity, aligning her worth with her capacity to bear sons (Narayan 249).

10.2 Sohar Geet: Celebration of Sons as Social Capital

“जिस दिन लाला तेरो जन्म हुयो थो, हुई ए सोरण की रात ।
एक ही दिवला घर मैं चास धर्या था, च्यारूं कूट उजास ।
ताता-ताता हलवा तेरी अम्मा भी खावै, बाबल दरब लुटाय ।“

Translation:

With the birth of a son, the house is bright,
The lamps are lit across the courtyard,
Joy spreads in every direction.
Sweet halwa is offered to mother, father shows
joy.

Gender Analysis:

Sohar Geet exemplify the celebratory discourse surrounding the birth of a son. Sons are equated with inheritance, prosperity, and the family's future, while daughters are absent from this sphere of joy. By ritualizing such celebrations, women reproduce the patriarchal hierarchy that situates sons as cultural capital. Yet, as performance theory suggests, women singers may exaggerate their praise ironically, hinting at awareness of the imbalance (Turner 21). Thus, even in reinforcement, a subtle undercurrent of critique may be embedded.

10.3 Laments on Daughter's Birth: Silence and Stigma

“जिस दिन लाडो तेरो जन्म हुयो थो, हुई ए बजर की गात।
नो लख दीवला घर मैं चास धर्या था, फेर भी धोर अन्धेरा।
गुड़ की सीरा तेरी अम्मा भी खावै, बाबल गहन उदास।

Translation:

On the night my daughter was born,
Darkness filled the house.
No light even though nine lakhs lamp were were
lit, no sweets were shared,
mother is having jaggery food but father is upset
by heart.

Gender Analysis:

These laments articulate the stigma attached to a daughter's birth. The imagery of extinguished lamps and silence underscores how daughters are treated as burdens. For mothers, the absence of celebration translates into shame, even guilt, as if they themselves have failed. Yet by singing these laments, women preserve their sorrow within cultural memory, ensuring the discrimination itself is recorded. This

transforms silence into speech, turning private grief into communal expression (Saroha 14).

10.4 Songs of Threat: Patriarchal Violence in Oral Tradition

“जै गोरी थम धीयड़ी जणोगी, थारे काट ल्यांगे नाक अर कान।
कोये लाल्या नो दस मासियां, म्हारै जन्म लियो नन्दलाल।
एक भली करी मेरे रामजी, म्हारे बच गये नाक अर कान।“

Translation:

If you give birth to a daughter, woman,
We shall cut off your nose and ears.
Only if you bring forth a son,
Will you be spared disgrace.

Gender Analysis:

These songs expose the violent pressures imposed on women to produce sons. The threat of mutilation dramatizes how women's bodily integrity is bound to patriarchal demands. While shocking, the preservation of such verses in oral tradition suggests that women themselves kept record of the violence they endured. As Mills notes, women's folklore often acts as a "hidden transcript" where suffering is collectively remembered (Mills 61). By singing such threats aloud, women transform fear into testimony.

10.5 Kua Pujan Songs: Ritual, Motherhood, and Social Belonging

“To the well we go with turmeric and song,
Offering gratitude for water's gift.
With every drop, life is sustained,
May mother and child thrive in its grace.”

Gender Analysis:

Post-birth rituals like *Kua Pujan* situate the new mother back into social life after seclusion. These songs symbolically mark her reintegration into household duties, such as fetching water. Gender is central here: the ritual affirms her identity as mother and caretaker, binding her once more to domestic and communal expectations. At the same time, these songs encode ecological awareness—revealing how women's reproductive rituals are inseparably tied to their roles as custodians of natural resources (Tambiah 120).

10.6 Lullabies: Gendered Care and Emotional Labor

“Sleep, my child, under the moon's gaze,
The stars will guard you through the night.
With mother's hand and nature's song,
May your dreams be sweet and light.”

Gender Analysis:

Lullabies highlight women's emotional labor in nurturing children. Through metaphors of moon, stars, and nature, mothers embed ecological and moral lessons. While these songs reinforce maternal roles, they also become spaces where women articulate tenderness, creativity, and personal connection to their children. This aspect of oral tradition reminds us that gender discourse is not only about subordination—it also preserves women's agency in shaping cultural and emotional worlds (Finnegan 81).

In conclusion, through *Ojna Geet*, *Sohar Geet*, *laments*, *threats*, *Kua Pujan songs*, and *lullabies*, Haryanvi birth ritual songs reveal how women's oral traditions function as gendered discourse. These songs reaffirm patriarchy by celebrating sons and stigmatizing daughters, dramatizing women's suffering, and normalizing violence. Yet they also encode resistance, empathy, and ecological consciousness. By voicing sorrow, desire, irony, and solidarity, women turn ritual songs into cultural memory—preserving their lived realities across generations. As feminist folklore theory emphasizes, women's oral traditions are “double-voiced”—at once complicit with and critical of dominant ideology (Mills 63). Birth ritual songs of Haryana exemplify this doubleness: they reproduce gender hierarchies yet simultaneously carve out a cultural space for women's experiences and voices to endure.

Thus, this study has examined Haryanvi women's birth ritual songs—*Sohar Geet*, *Ojna Geet*, *laments*, *lullabies*, and *Kua Pujan songs*—through the frameworks of feminist folklore and gendered discourse. The analysis demonstrates that these songs operate as double-voiced discourse: while they reproduce patriarchal hierarchies by privileging sons, stigmatizing daughters, and reinforcing maternal roles, they also preserve women's voices, anxieties, and subtle critiques. *Sohar Geet* naturalize son preference, yet irony hints at resistance; *Ojna Geet* foreground women's embodied experiences; laments register grief and marginalization; lullabies open intimate spaces for maternal tenderness and vulnerability; and *Kua Pujan songs* connect childbirth to ecological symbols and female solidarity.

By treating these songs not merely as folkloric survivals but as active cultural discourses, the study highlights their role in shaping and contesting gender norms in Haryana. They emerge as a living archive of women's experiences—simultaneously upholding cultural continuity and offering spaces for negotiation, critique, and resilience. The findings contribute to feminist folklore studies by foregrounding women's ritual voices in North India and to discourse theory by demonstrating how everyday performances sustain yet destabilize gender hierarchies.

XI. CONCLUSION

Thus, this study underscores the intricate relationship between gender, folklore, and performance in the cultural landscape of Haryana. By examining birth ritual songs as double-voiced discourse, it reveals how women's oral traditions serve as both instruments of patriarchal reinforcement and sites of subtle subversion. These songs transform ritual into narrative agency, allowing women to preserve collective memory, critique social inequities, and reaffirm cultural belonging. Beyond the regional scope, the findings contribute to broader feminist folklore scholarship by demonstrating how oral traditions across societies encode lived experiences of women, making folklore a critical archive for understanding gendered subjectivities, cultural resilience, and social transformation.

Future research may extend this work by comparing Haryanvi birth ritual songs with those of other South Asian regions, tracing intersections between gender, ecology, and ritual, and exploring the impact of modernization and media on oral traditions. Such inquiries will further enrich our understanding of folklore as a site where women's voices continue to shape cultural memory and identity.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares that we have no conflict of interest

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