

**Gender Portrayal in Rajput Folksongs:
An Ethnographic Study of Rajput Community in
Bhakkar, Punjab**



Atifa Durrani

**DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY
QUAID-I-AZAM UNIVERSITY
ISLAMABAD
2022**

**Gender Portrayal in Rajput Folksongs:
An Ethnographic Study of Rajput Community in
Bhakkar, Punjab**



Atifa Durrani

Thesis submitted to Quaid-I-Azam University in partial fulfilment
to the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

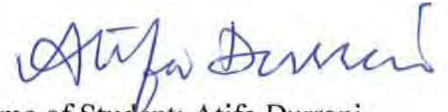
**DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY
QUAID-I-AZAM UNIVERSITY**

ISLAMABAD

2022

Author's Declaration

I Atifa Durrani hereby state that my PhD thesis titled “**GENDER PROTRAYAL IN RAJPUT FOLKSONG: An Ethnographic Study of Rajput Community in Bhakkar, Punjab, Pakistan**” is my own work and has not been submitted previously by me for taking any degree from this University Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad Or anywhere else in the country/world. At any time if my statement is found to be incorrect even after my Graduate the university has the right to withdraw my PhD degree.



Name of Student: Atifa Durrani

Date: 13-10-2021

Plagiarism Undertaking

I solemnly declare that research work presented in the thesis titled "GENDER PROTRAYAL INRAJPUT FOLKSONG An Ethnographic Study of Rajput Community in Bhakkar, Punjab, Pakistan" is solely my research work with no significant contribution from any other person.

Small contribution/help wherever taken has been duly acknowledged and that complete thesis has been written by me.

I understand the zero tolerance policy of the HEC and University Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad towards plagiarism. Therefore I as an Author of the above titled thesis declare that no portion of my thesis has been plagiarized and any material used as reference is properly referred/cited.

I undertake that if I am found guilty of any formal plagiarism in the above titled thesis even after award of PhD degree, the University reserves the rights to withdraw/revoke my PhD degree and that HEC and the University has the right to publish my name on the HEC/University Website on which names of students are placed who submitted plagiarized thesis.

Student/Author Signature 
Name: Atifa Durrani



QUAID-I-AZAM UNIVERSITY, ISLAMABAD
(Department of Anthropology)

Certificate of Approval

This is to certify that the research work presented in this thesis, entitled “**Gender Portrayal in Rajput Folksongs: An Ethnographic Study of Rajput Community in Bhakker, Punjab**” was conducted by **Ms. Atifa Durrani**, under the supervision of Dr. Saadia Abid, Assistant Professor Department of Anthropology, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad.

No part of this thesis has been submitted anywhere else for any other degree. This thesis is submitted to the Department of Anthropology, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, in the partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Field of Anthropology, Department of Anthropology, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad.

Student Name: **Atifa Durrani**

Signature: 

Examination Committee:

a) **External Examiner 1:**

Prof Dr. Saif- ur- Rehman Saif Abbasi
Ex-Chairman, Department of Sociology,
International Islamic University

Signature: 


b) **External Examiner 2:**

Dr. Ayesha Sheraz
Senior Fellow Current Charges,
National Institute of Population Studies, Islamabad

Signature: 

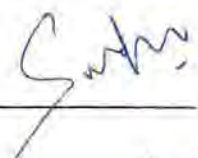
c) **Internal Examiner:**

Dr. Saadia Abid
Assistant Professor
Department of Anthropology
Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad

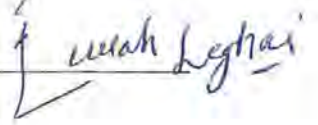
Signature: 

d) **Thesis Supervisor Name:**

Dr. Saadia Abid

Signature: 

Chairman: **Dr. Inam Ullah Leghari**
Associate Professor Department of Anthropology

Signature: 



QUAID-I-AZAM UNIVERSITY, ISLAMABAD
(Department of Anthropology)

Final Approval Letter

This is to certify that we have read dissertation submitted by **Ms. Atifa Durrani** entitled "**Gender Portrayal in Rajput Folksongs: An Ethnographic Study of Rajput Community in Bhakker, Punjab**" as partial fulfillment for the award of Doctorate of Philosophy in Department of Anthropology, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad. We have evaluated the dissertation and found it up to the requirement in its scope and quality for the award of Ph.D. degree.

1) **Thesis Supervisor**

Dr. Saadia Abid
Assistant Professor
Department of Anthropology
Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad

Signature: _____

2) **External Examiner**

Prof Dr. Saif- ur- Rehman Saif Abbasi
Ex-Chairman, Department of Sociology,
International Islamic University, Islamabad.

Signature: _____

3) **External Examiner**

Dr. Ayesha Sheraz
Senior Fellow Current Charges,
National Institute of Population Studies, Islamabad.

Signature: _____

4) **Chairman**

Dr. Inam Ullah Leghari
Associate Professor
Department of Anthropology
Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad

Signature: _____

Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad
(Department of Anthropology)

Ph.D. Examination
Defense of Thesis

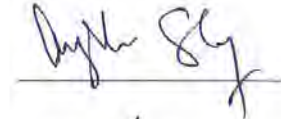
Name of Scholar: Ms Atifa Durrani
Title: Gender Portrayal in Rajput Folksongs: An Ethnographic Study of Rajput Community in Bhakker, Punjab
Thesis Supervisor: Dr. Saadia Abid
Date of Viva-voce: 30th June, 2022

The candidate has successfully defended her thesis. The candidate is recommended for the award of Ph.D. Degree in Anthropology.


1. Prof. Dr.Saif -ur-Rehman Saif Abbasi
(External Examiner)



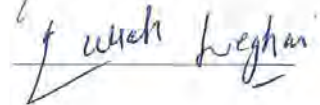
2. Dr. Ayesha Sheraz
(External Examiner)



3. Dr. Saadia Abid
(Thesis Supervisor)



4. Dr. Inam Ullah Leghari
Chairman
Department of Anthropology



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Writing this thesis has been an interesting, frustrating and a rewarding experience for me. I could not have done it without the help and support of many people, and I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincerest thanks to them.

First and foremost, I thank Allah Almighty for all His blessings and endowing me with the passion and intellect that I needed to make this research a possibility.

I owe a deep sense of gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Saadia Abid for enabling me to complete this dissertation and providing me with the best guidance. Her expertise in the field, continuous encouragement and words of wisdom greatly helped me throughout my research work.

I am thankful to all the research participants who took part in this study. My very special thanks go to my sister-in-law, Mrs. Salma Tanveer and her husband, Mr. Rana Zafar Iqbal who facilitated me in the data collection process.

I am also thankful to my sister Saima Durrani and junior colleague Sadia Zaman who not only helped by proof-reading and construing of drafts with me through the final manuscript but encouraged me at various stages of draft writing.

I am very much thankful to my husband Rai Nasir and my sons, Obaid, Shoaib and Owais for their love, understanding and continuing support which helped me complete this research work. Any omission in this brief acknowledgment does not mean lack of gratitude to rest of my friends.

Dedicated to my Abu

DRSML QAU

ABSTRACT

It has long been an indisputable fact that socio-cultural system of the Pakistani society is predominantly patriarchal. Amongst the varied factors, one of them is how gender stereotypes are developed, portrayed and transmitted from generation after generation by means of the traditional folk songs. The present study analyses the role of folk songs in articulating the gender identity roles and relations.

The theoretical perspectives from cultural anthropology, folklore and gender studies have established the fact that patriarchal and stereotypical ideologies are significantly disseminated through folk songs; nonetheless, these folk songs also form and allow subversive spaces for women to reformulate norms and customs. The encoded meanings prevalent in traditional folk songs are context-bound and used by women to challenge, contest and sometimes even undermine gender ideologies. Explicitly, it has also been argued that the folk songs provide Rajput women a culturally acceptable subversive space and forum for sharing experiences with other women, which otherwise is non-viable due to the conservative environment and mobility restrictions.

The research also suggests that folk songs as text represent a false reality. The exaggerated, dramatized lyrics and situations are distant from the social life of the Rajput people living in Bhakkar. Nonetheless, it may be noteworthy to mention that these folksongs shed light on those emotional taboos which otherwise would be improbable to explore. The most distinctive feature of tight cultures is the antecedent of threat and fear, which results in discreet expression of emotions, thus folksongs as a shared tradition, provide a vent to the women to portray their inner sentiments. The Rajput folksongs also throw light on the two opposing dimensions being portrayed: How gender-based constructs such as female submission, men being manly and assertive, are endorsed, while on the other hand these same songs indirectly articulate the ideas of role subversion, patriarchal bargains, women's agency; all of which often leads to inversion by challenging and ridiculing the patriarchal authority.

The analysis is based on 84 wedding and birth folk songs, collected from the Rajput families, residing in the Punjab region of Bhakkar, Pakistan. In-depth interviews were held with the Rajput men and women. Informational conversational sessions were also

held with the Rajput women and a professional singer. Moreover, informal discussions with the local people and personal observation assisted in data enrichment.

To conclude, it would be an understatement to view the Rajput folksongs as mere cultural expression. Rather, they serve much deeper function of communication, defining and establishing of social systems and undermining of patriarchal powers. Attention should also be paid to ways gender is portrayed through these songs. There is a dire need to balance gender roles and break gender stereotypes especially in case of the Rajput women who are relegated to a lesser position in their society. The findings also indicate that there is a crucial need to document and preserve the Rajput folk songs as part of our oral heritage; for them to be rightfully acknowledged and appreciated, and for us to learn from them. Emphasis also needs to be paid upon understanding how these folk songs shape a gender biased system of values, ideologies and thoughts among societies and communities who claim their ownership.

Keywords: Folksongs, Rajput Folksongs, Gender Subversion through Folksongs, Gender and Folksongs, Gender Roles and Relations, Oral Heritage

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Background	1
1.2. Research Questions	4
1.2.1 Primary Research Questions.....	4
1.2.2 Secondary Research Questions.....	5
1.3. Significance of the Study and Objectives.....	5
1.4. Limitations of the Study.....	8
1.5. Chapters Outline.....	10
2. THEORETICAL PARADIGMS AND LITERATURE REVIEW	13
2.1. Theoretical Paradigms.....	13
2.2. Literature Review.....	18
2.2.1. Women and Folklore	18
2.2.2. Women and Folksongs.....	22
2.2.3. Folksongs of Pakistan.....	32
2.2.4 Compilation of Folksongs in Pakistan.....	37
3. METHODOLOGY	42
3.1. Research Methodology.....	42

3.1.1. Selection of the Topic and Locale – A Hard Job Done	43
3.2. Data Collection Process	50
3.2.1. In-Depth Interviews.....	50
3.2.2. Interviewing the Rajput Women.....	53
3.2.3. Interviewing the Rajput Men.....	55
3.2.4. Who Were My Folksingers?.....	58
3.2.5. Folksongs Recording Schedule.....	59
3.2.6. The Rajput Folksongs - An Overview.....	63
3.2.7. Informal Conversation Sessions (ICSs).....	66
3.3. Data Collection Tools.....	67
3.3.1 Key Informants	67
3.3.2. Participant Observation	68
3.3.3. Field Notes.....	73
3.4. Data Analysis.....	74
3.4.1 Translation and Documentation of the Folksongs.....	74
3.4.2. Transcription of Folksongs and Interviews.....	75
3.4.3. Folksongs Recording and Constraints.....	77
3.4.4. Reflexivity and Positioning Myself Within the Community	78
3.4.5. Photography.....	81
4. HISTORY OF RAJPUTS AND THE LOCALE BHAKKAR	82
4.1. Brief History of the Rajputs	82
4.2. The Origin of the Rajputs	84
4.2.1. Foreign Origin Theory	84
4.2.2. Khashtrya Theory	85

4.2.3. Mixed Origin Theory.....	85
4.2.4. AgniKula Theory.....	85
4.3. Chauhans of Bhakkar.....	86
4.4. District Bhakkar – The Locale.....	88
4.5. The Social Ethos of Rajputs Living in Bhakkar.....	90
4.5.1. Family.....	90
4.5.2. Genealogy.....	93
4.5.3. Marriage.....	94
4.5.4. Affinal and Consanguineal Relations.....	96
4.5.5. Language.....	99
4.5.6. <i>Purdah</i> Observation.....	101
4.5.7. Religion.....	103
4.5.8. Education.....	105
4.5.9. Lifestyle.....	105
4.5.10. Leisure Time Activities.....	106
4.6. Kinship Terms.....	107
5. PRE-WEDDING SONGS.....	112
5.1. <i>Butna</i> Ceremony and the Cultural Symbolism.....	112
5.1.1. The Context and the Setting: A Peek into the <i>Butna</i> Ceremony.....	115
5.2. Themes in the <i>Butna</i> Folksongs.....	119
5.2.1. Songs of Praise and Gratitude to the God.....	120
5.2.2. Expressive and Bold Bride.....	122
5.2.3. Subtle Messages of Sexual Liaison.....	126
5.3. The <i>Henna</i> Ceremony.....	131
5.3.1. The Context and the Setting: A Peek into the <i>Henna</i> Ceremony.....	132
5.4. Themes in <i>Henna (Suhag)</i> Folksongs.....	135

5.4.1. The Dynamics of the Maternal Family	136
5.4.2. Reinforcement of Patriarchal Ideology	138
5.4.3. Romantic Expression Conflicting with Social Norms	139
5.4.4. Tradition of Arranged Marriage in Rajput Culture	141
5.4.5. Depiction of the Rajput Men	142
5.4.6. Satire Songs	142
6. THE WEDDING DAY FOLKSONGS (BASED ON AFFINAL RELATIONS)	145
6.1. The Wedding Day	145
6.1.1. The Rituals and Customs.	146
6.1.2. The Scene	147
6.1.3. Getting Ready for the <i>Barat</i>	148
6.1.4. Arrival of <i>Barat</i> at the Bride's home	149
6.1.5. Arrival of <i>Barat</i> at the Groom's home	151
6.2. Thematic Classification of the Wedding Day Folksongs	151
6.2.1. Husband-Wife Thematic Wedding Songs	152
6.2.2. Powerful Women of the Conjugal Family	180
6.2.3. Women in Stereotypical Roles	200
6.2.4. Masculinity as Defined by the Rajputs	205
7. THE WEDDING DAY FOLKSONGS (BASED ON CONSANGUINEAL RELATIONS)	220
7. 1. Thematic Classification	220
7.1.1. Praises and Blessings for the Bridegroom.	221
7.1.2. The Royal Reminiscence	226
7.1.3. The Unwonted Demands of <i>Bana</i>	227
7.1.4. Mother-Daughter Relationship	233
7.1.5. Father-Daughter Relationship	236
7.1.6. Brother-Sister Relationship	237

7.1.7. Relation of Bride with the Natal Men	238
7.1.8. Grandmother as an Untrustworthy Kin	239
7.1.9. Boasting off Grandfather's Wealth	241
7.1.10. Envy for Non-Rajput Girls.....	243
8. JACHCHA SONGS / SOHAR SONGS	246
8.1. The Socio-Cultural Context.....	246
8.1.1. The Backdrop of theEvent.....	250
8.2. Themes in <i>Jachcha/Sohar</i> Songs.....	252
8.2.1. Gratitude Songs to Allah (<i>Allah Wale Gaane</i>).....	253
8.2.2. Explicit Gender Discrimination.....	254
8.2.3. Elevation of Woman's Status as Mother and Daughter-in-law...256	
8.2.4. Expectations from the Paternal andMaternal Relatives on Birth of a Baby Boy.....	257
8.2.5. The Never-Ending Romance with Royalty.....	258
9. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION	261
9.1 Implications of the Study.....	275
9.2 Recommendations for Future Research	277
9.3 Academic Considerations for the Future	279
BIBLIOGRAPHY	282
APPENDICES	

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Details of female interviewees and key informant.....	48
Table 2: Details of male focal persons and interviewees	49
Table 3: Butna ceremony and thematic folksongs (Pre-wedding event)....	120
Table 4: Henna ceremony and folksongs (Pre-wedding event)....	136

DRSML QAU

Table 5: Barat Day ceremony and (husband -wife) folksongs with themes one-day wedding event).....	151
Table 6: Barat Day ceremony and folksongs (related to the conjugal family) with themes.....	180
Table 7. Wedding Day folksongs – Biyah kay Geet (Wedding Day Event).....	200
Table 8. Wedding Day folksongs – Biyah kay Geet (Wedding Day Event).....	205
Table 9. Wedding day Sehra songs.....	220
Table 10. Wedding day songs (related to natal kins).....	233
Table 11. Miscellaneous themes in Wedding songs.....	239
Table 12. Birth of child folksongs – Jachcha/Sohar Songs.....	253

DRSML QAU

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The present study falls within the broad disciplinary domain of anthropology, gender studies and folklore. The Rajput folksongs for the present study were analyzed using the theoretical frameworks from the above-mentioned disciplines. Anthropology as a natural science of cultural diversity, is on par with study of gender as it comprises of cultural relativism and anti-ethnocentrism perspectives. Since anthropologists study various societies with multiplicity of gender roles that exist in cultures thus they are very much aware of the varied social roles assigned to both men and women. Furthermore, anthropology views gender as a social construct, rather than perceived biological differences, which assists in comprehending and defining the way gender models prevail in diversified cultures. Anthropologists understand that each society constructs man and woman in different ways with status and power assigned to them. It would be pertinent to note that anthropological study of gender acknowledges the difference between sex and gender; the former being constituted of perceived biological characteristics whereas the latter emerging as a result of cultural and social norms. Along these lines, it may be safely assumed that anthropological thought is not far away from feminist premise since both believe in the difference of gender and sex rooted in the history of patriarchal ideology, which has long been assumed to be natural and universal (Dei, 2011).

Cultural anthropology is believed to be concerned with the construction of social models that are based on naturally universal domains. These domains are based on family life and kinship relations and are greatly influenced by anthropological perspectives relating to social and political organization, power structure and status. In classical anthropology, it is kinship that constitutes and marks the boundary between female 'nature' and the social construction of gender. Further, kinship has been categorized as domestic or political (Fortes, 1949). Domestic domain links to emotional and sexual characteristics such as those of mother-child relationship and roles assigned to women while the political/juridical domains formulate, understand, and state the identity and social roles of men. Despite the facts, however, classical anthropologists were unable to avoid assumptions based on the cultural organization of gender based on perceived biological and natural differences.

The critical perspective of gender studies has had a profound influence on cultural anthropology. It transformed the course of action by using interpretative and postmodern approaches to understand the issues relevant to gender identity and roles within anthropology. In 1970s, the women researchers developed the ethnographic investigation under the feminist thought. The central idea within the framework argued that the relationship between men and women cannot be divided as natural, universal and absolute for all cultures; rather, it depends upon the cognitive framework and is culturally specific. Butler (1990) asserts that the construction of masculinity and femininity effects the stabilization of gender within a society which in turn, serves the interests of a heterosexual family. Ortner and Whitehead's (1981) collection of influential essays¹ played a vital role in reformulating the terms sex and gender. The gist of these essays elucidate that culturally determined symbols assist in defining gender and thus, maleness and femaleness can only be studied through empirical research. Famous book 'Veiled Sentiments' by Abu-Lughod (1986) paved the way for women researchers to be involved as ethnographers in the discipline of anthropology.

The need of anthropology of gender was significantly felt but anthropologists were skeptical because of two major reasons: Firstly, women seemed invisible and vague voices though existed in the local culture, remained largely unheard. The women were confined to domestic spaces or socially existing environments and were generally excluded from the public sphere. Secondly, with reference to classical anthropology, the presence of western male voice was considered a standard and norm for representing both genders. This could be due to the fact that since women did not have access to public domains, the native male was seen as a prototype of gender discourses. However, the concept of womanhood remained a central point of debate within anthropology as anthropologists realized that women's issue cannot be truly expressed by men. This debate divided the feminists into two groups: one group took the position to challenge the 'differences' between men and women while the other chose to deconstruct the entire alleged theory pertaining to standard western male discourse. Now it can be safely said that contemporary anthropology recognizes the role of gender in various societies. The anthropologists of post-2000 era have been engaged in anthropological

¹ "Sexual Meanings: The Cultural Context of Gender and Sexuality"

research by applying feminist frameworks for understanding and theorizing gendered dynamics of family, power, pleasure, desires, reproduction and violence etc.

Undoubtedly, gender has remained a popular debate issue in folklore studies. The central point of debate being the men's fieldwork for gathering information regarding the issues relevant strictly to women (Gasouka, 2006). In folkloric studies, gender has long been used as an analytical category. The concept of gender as a cultural construct in folkloric studies has enabled women folklore scholars and researchers to understand gender identities and roles. The social construct of gender reflected through the folksongs reveal minutiae of family lives; both natal and conjugal, which formulate and reformulate the women's daily lives interactions. The gender perspective through ethnographic studies (for example, Abu-Lughod, 1986, 1993 and Narayan, 1993 and 1997) has also greatly help understand women's social position, deeply ingrained in a culture, usually by patriarchy.

It would not be wrong to say that anthropologists and folklorists have a few things in common. Both believe that individual's identity is shaped through society and is transmitted from one generation to another not through formal education but rather through the narratives of the people around them and the process of socialization (transference of attitudes, beliefs, values, norms, and behaviors). There may be many folktales, myths, folksongs and proverbs which have defined and reformulated the idea of gender. Furthermore, folksongs maybe one of best oral traditions that have contributed significantly to the formation of gender identities through reinforcement of the social images. Jassal (2012) claims that in the cultures, which do not permit their people to openly express their inner emotions, songs as a form of shared traditions allow people's emotions and tabooed conversations to be expressed (P:3).

Exploring folksongs as one of the genres of folklore, one can find a limitless variety of folksongs in various forms and subject matter, ranging from very simple to highly complex. They are part of many life-cycle ceremonies such as wedding songs, birth songs, death songs, devotional songs and heroic songs, etc. However, folklore scholars do differentiate between men and women folksongs in their context as men describe and talk about a realm beyond a women's space. These songs mostly talk about war, heroism, power and status while the women folksongs mostly describe household

environment, rituals, rites of passage and festivals. And though men and women both sing songs on similar ceremonies, their context, themes, language and performance significantly differ from each other (Harlan, 2003).

In a similar manner, Rajput folksongs are not limited to providing a medium for the unheard population but rather they confirm the social realities and also provide a medium to countenance the reverse social realities which otherwise may not be visible. For example, in one of the songs (no.31) a Rajput husband is called a coward as he could not save his wife from the dacoits and ran away while his wife fought with them. This portrayal of Rajput men in folksongs express a reversed social reality which may be found in folksongs alone but seems absent in real life. Moreover, it is through these folksongs that the gendered realities and roles are also contested and challenged. In short, folksongs can be defined as the voices of the unheard.

Folksongs constitute a significant part of cultural heritage, not merely because they tell us of tales long forgotten but fairly because they play a pivotal role in transmission of ideas and beliefs that provide a framework for a culture to stand upon. It might be of equal importance to study the musical, linguistical and performance aspect of folksongs, however the present study aims to analyze and understand the term 'gender' within the cultural context of the Rajput people. The predilection for the social construct of gender may be partially because of its extensive integration with folklore and gender studies and somewhat because these songs trace back to the history of patriarchy, which in a country like ours is undoubtedly a crucial subject to learn about. The present research comprises of three types of Rajput folksongs as all the songs identified from the participants fit in these three categories i.e., Pre-wedding songs, Wedding songs, jachcha/birth songs, also known as sohar songs.

1.2. Research Questions

1.2.1 Primary Research Questions

1. What role do the Rajput folksongs play in establishing and reinforcing a patriarchal culture by defining gender identities, roles and relationships?
2. How do Rajput men and women interpret the notions of gender identities, roles and relationship present in their folksongs?

1.2.2 Secondary Research Questions

1. What are the main themes present in the Rajput folksongs?
2. How are folksongs interlinked with the ideological and real-life constructed roles and social relations as portrayed through the songs?
3. How do Rajput women perceive/interpret their depiction in Rajput folksongs?

1.3. Significance of the Study and Objectives

The present research is of great significance as it intends to contribute in the collection, documentation and interpretation of the Rajput folksongs, to highlight gender depiction and relationships within the selected Rajput families living in Bhakkar. The findings of the present ethnographic study might prove to be useful to anthropologists and the scholars of gender and folkloric studies by assisting them in understanding the gender relations through the interpretative analysis of folksongs.

The findings of this research study are intended to contribute in the original scholarship to the Rajput oral literature in Pakistan which needs to be collected, documented and understood by others within the cultural context of Rajputs. The research also aims to help the readers gain a better understanding of the social setting where it took place. The social structure in Rajput families under study has women and men segregation where men and women have separate domains in which they interact, similar to any patriarchal society. Men work and interact within the public domain whereas the women in private domains within their homes.

As an ethnographer, I had the advantage and access to the women of Rajput families because of my relatives who were already living there. I recorded and wrote the folksongs those women narrated to me. I observed their daily life activities, their interactions with each other and with men within the family, the contradictions which were shared after interviews and feelings and sentiments expressed and shared in the emic descriptions during the folksongs interpretations. I also observed that the women's voices are subdued in a patriarchal setting and through these folksongs these women register their agency and voice their opinion that is not otherwise socially acceptable

within their community. Few of the female participants² shared that the research study has offered them the opportunity to review and become cognizant of the purpose of folksongs which is much more than just providing them entertainment.

The anthropological significance of this research lies in understanding how the Rajput folksongs depict gender and define roles that influence the daily life activities of both men and women. The anthropological aspect of the study also discusses how the Rajput men and women interact with each other through the socially constructed gender roles.

I am confident that my dissertation will make a significant contribution as well as develop a meaningful connection of anthropology with the overlapping disciplines of gender and folklore studies. My previous experience with Rajput women and their folksongs led me to explore the portrayal of Rajput men in the folksongs. It was interesting for me to include the interpretation of Rajput men regarding how they perceive themselves in imagination and in real life, their nostalgic past and royalty, which corresponds to their lifestyle emulated in the folksongs.

I find it crucial to mention here that it has long been falsely believed and I myself corrected my viewpoint that South Asian women lack agency or ability to protest the family traditions and norms, I not only observed but also through shared experiences while conducting the interviews and informal talks, I realized that the Rajput women have their bold yet muted expressions and fantasies which they subtly express through folksongs. Moreover, they manage to have coded strategies and effective ways in which they negotiate, contest challenges and reinforce socially constructed ideologies existing within the family traditions and societal norms.

Talking about the significance of the research on Rajput folksongs, people may question what may be the practical value and impact of this research study for the readers and the participants? Will it eliminate or contribute in diminishing the patriarchal ideology? I may contend here that challenging and contesting an assumption that has been entrenched in a society as a norm is never easy, yet there is always a first step which needs to be taken. On my behalf, I would like to say that the collection and interpretation

² Kousar, Tai Raeesa, Akhtar Bibi and Sadiqaan Bibi expressed that they never thought about the purpose of the lyrics of the folksongs. How much they have sentiments which reflects a Rajput woman who is away from her parents and bears maltreatment from her in laws.

from emic perspective is the initial step in understanding the gender bias that exists in cultures and is transmitted through folksongs which mirror the Rajput gender relations within the Rajput people under study. Most of the Rajput women who recorded or narrated the folksongs were astounded to know and comprehend the real motives them once they were interpreted. They aligned their own experiences with the sentiments expressed in the folksongs. Hence, the impact of generational transfer of ideologies through folksongs should not be underestimated, as consciously or unconsciously, they are responsible for defining socially constructed gender roles and relationships at a very basic unit i.e. family. Through the folksong collection, it is obvious that folksongs are one of the best sources of information for studying the matrix of gender relations within the communities. The present research on the Rajput community is a living example to prove the point.

The representation of gender relations portrayed in the Rajput folksongs by using ethnography as a main tool of research could not have been practical without utilizing the emic perspective from the people who own these folksongs. Emic approach as one of the most popular tools of anthropology, studies human culture through the members of the culture who own it. Through this approach, the native individuals become the main source of information. In simple words, the emic approach presents the account of the beliefs and worldview of the local people from the main stage, for the readers to gain an understanding of the real culture of the people rather than reading the subjective narrative of the scholar. Without understanding the culture, half relevance of the social milieu is lost which eventually results in the loss of the main context and interest of the readers. Thus, the present study can also be termed holistic and unique in nature as it takes into consideration the emic perspectives and without which some of the findings may be misleading such as why do Rajput women rely on and support each other in daily life activities even when they have estranged relationships?

With reference to Pakistan, the documentation of folksongs in local language has been done by some scholars (Irfan, 2017; Islam, 1986; Salo, 1980; Jonejo, 1985; Lashari, 2007; Qazalbash, 2017). However, most of them have presented their own interpretations of the folksongs and their research studies lack the native contextual understanding of these folk songs. As this research study presents the emic interpretation, anthropological analysis and is based on the voice of the local

participant, it makes it a significant contribution among other Pakistani folksongs collection. In this way, this anthropological research endeavor also aims to fill the gap in the Rajput oral literature by analyzing folksongs that portray gender relations among the Rajput men and women.

The significance of this research highlights the importance to document folksongs. If not, the coming generations will be devoid of the rich cultural heritage that exists in the form of oral literature. The two main contributing factors that pose a threat are socioreligious influences and lack of interest of the Rajput youth in learning and accepting the folksongs as part of their cultural heritage.

This thesis argues that depiction of ideologies relevant to gender relations in folksongs has a significant impact on the lives of the Rajput people. The folksong sung on the events are not just for entertainment and fun but are means to transfer ideology from one generation to another and provide the impetus to shape the societal framework. The research views folksongs as an epistemic resource that have the power to define, shape and reinforce ideologies. In simple words, it may suffice to say that folksongs are the tools working for the dominant and power group (that can be man and women) within a society. The objectives of the study are targeted to accomplish goals that will make significant contribution in the academia of anthropology, gender studies and folkloric studies. To conclude, the research might be viewed as a treatise depicting the pushed aside gender that has long been the victim of condescension by the patriarchal society.

The research aims of the study are:

1. To investigate the main themes found in the Rajput folksongs.
2. To analyze the folk songs in accordance with the Rajput women and men's emic view and interpretations.
3. To explore the correlation between the ideas portrayed in the folksongs and the daily social interactions among Rajput men and women.

1.4. Limitations of the Study

Unlike any valid research, the present research study also had some limitations. The first and foremost being the low generalizability; since only ten (10) Rajput families living in Bhakkar, Punjab, were selected to participate in the research, the results might

not apply to a broader group of people. Secondly, the professional singer, *dadi Sughra*, did not belong to a Rajput clan but only sang songs for the Rajput families. The selection criteria for voluntary participation in this research was to be a Rajput woman who must have some knowledge of the folksongs³. Though, *dadi* was very knowledgeable when it came to the interpretation of the folksongs and her analysis might have more objectivity in them compared to the emic perspectives however, she was an exception to the selection criteria.

Initially, the research study was intended to explore the Rajput folksongs for men which should also be sung by a male professional singer. However, after several failed attempts at finding the male singers, the chosen songs were sung by the female singers. Moreover, much to my disappointment, there were no such Rajput folksongs that may be strictly termed as men folksongs. Therefore, all the folksongs that were collected were sung by women in which men roles and their depiction in daily life interaction is emulated. Although, the folksongs collected for this research were sung by women, yet they described men's roles and their participation in the social life. These folksongs not only presented the women roles and their statuses but also the Rajput men's sociocultural roles. Therefore, the disappointment when I found out that there were no specific male songs, was compensated by the depiction of men's roles and their statuses in women folksongs as well as *Sehra* folksongs which are exclusively sung for the groom (man) and communicate the significant characteristics of the Rajput men.

The other major limitation was the language. While translating the folksongs from *Haryanvi* to *Urdu* language, I was unable to find any authentic *Haryanvi* language to *Urdu* language dictionary, hence I had to depend entirely upon the local women and my informants for the translation of the *Haryanvi* folksongs into *Urdu* and English. However, I am satisfied to the extent that the folksongs are translated in such a way that their essence is not lost.

On the methodological side, participants self-reporting or under reporting of information may have impacted the research findings and conclusion. It is likely that the participants exaggerated their responses in order to impress me as a researcher or

³ So she can sing or narrate the Rajput folksongs or can inform the researcher of other Rajput women who might know more songs.

they under-reported their personal stories and related information that I may have asked. The reason for under-reporting might have been such that they did not want to face undesirable reaction from either me or their community. Whatever the case might be, the participants' biases such as social desirability may have affected the findings of the study.

Research in Pakistan on Rajput folksongs have been substantially non-existent and thus, due to the scarcity of the available literature on Rajput folksongs it deemed my research a difficult topic to explore. The reason why the readers might not find as much research based literature support. Here I find it necessary to mention here that apart from all the internet struggle to find some relevant literature, I also visited *lok Versa* library, Islamabad that is an authentic and has a relatively prime collection of folklore heritage in Pakistan, however, I hardly came across any collection/research studies relevant to the Rajput folksongs.

An area of interest for the future researchers might be to explore the linguistic, musical, traditional and performance aspect of the Rajput folksongs included in the study.

1.5. Chapters Outline

Chapter 2 is divided into two parts; the first part provides the theoretical frameworks of Butler (1990) and Ortner (1973) on which the thesis is primarily based upon, whereas the theories of biological and cultural determinism support the peripheral understandings of the study. The second part follows a comprehensive review of the pertinent literature that includes women and folklore, gender and folksongs and research studies conducted on Rajputs and Pakistani folksongs collection.

Chapter 3 follows research methodology in detail with combination of various qualitative research tools. The core anthropological techniques of participant observation and fieldwork form the primary part of the methodology. Qualitative data was collected by employing snowball sampling technique, interview guide, open ended questionnaire, informal conversational session whereas secondary data was collected through books and research journals (archive and digital). This chapter also details the process of data collection and strategy for analysis and the

thematic classification of the folksongs. Reflexivity of the participant's experiences and of mine as an inside/outside researcher makes the research understudy an interesting case for anthropology, folklore and gender studies students.

Chapter 4 has two sections. One section outlines a short ethnographic history of the Rajputs. The section provides the basis for the readers to develop an understanding of the Rajput cultural context which is central for understanding their origin and social ethos that describe the worldview of the Rajputs. The second section of the chapter introduces the geographical aspect of the locale and administrative structure of Bhakkar city where the research was conducted.

It would be interesting to know that the next 4 chapters illustrate the discussion and findings from the study. These chapters describe the ceremonies on which the folksongs are sung as interpreted by the participants, highlighting their emic views.

Chapter 5 discusses the pre-wedding songs that are sung on *Butna* and *Henna* ceremonies. The detailed description of the ceremonies and rituals performed along with the folksongs has been mentioned. The thematic analysis of the *Butna* and *Henna* ceremony songs have also been discussed in the chapter.

Chapter 6 confers to the folksongs performed on the wedding day, based on affinal relations. This chapter thematically analyzes the songs specifically related to husbandwife relationship. Furthermore, the chapter provides interpretations of the songs relevant to the conjugal women of the family and at the same time sheds light on the concept of masculinity as defined by the Rajput culture. A significant aspect of gendered-stereotyping, which is a recurring theme in multiple wedding songs, has also been explained.

Chapter 7 also comprises of the wedding day songs; however, these weddings songs specifically discuss the consanguineal relations. Major themes discussed in the chapter relate to the *sehra* songs, performed specifically for the bridegroom, to reminisce about the young groom's royal past. In the backdrop of the Rajput culture, themes related to the love for natal home have also been discussed.

Chapter 8 comprises of Jachcha/Sohar folksongs that are sung on the birth of a child.

This chapter also includes one lullaby that is sung for a baby boy. The description of the celebrations on the birth of the child and interpretation of the Jachcha songs and lullaby are part of this chapter.

Chapter 9 is based on the summary and conclusion of the dissertation. It also presents recommendation for future research endeavors in the disciplines of anthropology, gender studies and folklore for the interested research scholars.

DRSML QAU

2. THEORETICAL PARADIGMS AND LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter is built upon two sections: The theoretical framework and literature review. The theoretical framework is comprised of Butler's theory of Gender Performativity (1999) and Ortner's Key Symbolism (1973). Aside from that, the Biological and Cultural Determinism perspectives have profoundly contributed in understanding the Rajput cultural context in which gender is portrayed. The literature review section is based upon the umbrella term of women and folklore. These terms encompasses all the aspects of female gender portrayal in folksongs. Lastly, it reviews the researches and documentation of Pakistani folksongs.

2.1. Theoretical Paradigms

This dissertation research aims to investigate the gender portrayal of Rajput people through their folksongs, from the vantage point of the selected Rajput men and women living in Bhakkar. The study reports the interpretation of the Rajput folksongs using the emic approach and does not measure any already existing external standard. The goal of using the present approach was to gain a thorough understanding of the cultural context, the fact that folksongs are a culturally constructed music genre and cannot be studied otherwise. The theoretical foundation of this dissertation is Butler's theory of Gender Performativity (1990) and Ortner's Key Symbolism (1973). Both the theories helped analyze the narratives of Rajput men and women. Besides these two major theoretical foundations, the Biological Determinism and Cultural Determinism perspectives have also been discussed as a background framework.

Biological determinism (also known as 'biological essentialism' or 'biologism') refers to a set of theories and defines the way humans are influenced merely by biological mechanisms. This framework tends to explain the human social phenomena through biology, which often precedes and somewhat negates the role of culture in shaping the human behaviours. Sigmund Freud is the leading proponent of this approach. It would be safe to assume that the framework based on biological model claims that human actions are a result of biology and by no means an influence of socio-cultural factors. Though biology does play a vital role in organization of any society but this rigid

causality could only be true pertaining to biological sex (if humans were merely males and females) however, there is a term used interchangeably with sex i.e. gender. Gender, unlike sex is not a strictly rigid concept. It varies greatly through the historical, social and cultural contexts and determines the way member of the opposite sex relate to each other. Therefore, gender under the paradigm of biological determinism is not constant like many other biologically determined characteristics. This is where cultural determinism comes in.

The other background framework relating to cultural determinism asserts the role of culture as destiny as it profoundly impacts the way men and women relate to each other. In other words, group behaviours are a result of cultural and social factors. These theorists do not view human interactions in the strict light of atomism but rather considers the holistic view. According to this framework, male gender is dominant over female gender, which is subservient by nature. The cultural determinism approach thus implies that culture assigns roles and responsibilities to men and women, yet regardless to that it is not static and changes over and with time.

Both frameworks discussed above reflect the way Rajput men and women expressed their viewpoints regarding the role of women and men in their cultural traditions. The gist of their discussion was generally based in agreement with biological determinism—the stance that women are physically and intellectually inferior to men as a result of biological or physical traits and cultural determinism – the approach that it is the Rajput culture that determines the roles and rules for both men and women in the society. The in-depth interviews and informal conversations that shed the light on the two different approaches (biologism and culturalism) assisted in explaining the perceptions and beliefs that have long stood in the way of parity between both the genders. Also, discussing these background frameworks pave the way for more consequential theoretical foundations to follow.

The present study has been drawn on Butler's understanding of gendered subjectivity through performativity. Gender, according to Butler (1990) is a socially constructed term. She has claimed that this term is constructed through repeated performative acts. Here, the focus is *repetition*. These acts, whatever they might be, kept occurring continuously enough for people to accept them as gender norms. Eventually, women

themselves become the narrators and forcers of stereotypical gender norms and performances. Such is the case with the Rajput folksongs that reflect the stereotypical notions about the Rajput men and women⁴. The research study argues that gender (as depicted in the folksongs) is based upon the performative acts and the repetition of these acts have transmuted into widely accepted social norms.

Butler's (1990) understanding of gender correlates to its performativity and claims that gender reality is performative. To put it simply, it is real in the sense when it is performed or acted first and socially constructed later. Furthermore, gender is not a constant or fixed identity, rather it is formed through repeated acts. Over the time, these repeated acts are categorized to incorporate specific gender types which recognize men and women's behaviors in those certain forms. Moreover, she argues that due to the deliberation of gender as a fixed identity, subjective norms become helpful to support the gender stereotypes and patriarchal ideologies existing in a community. Butler (1990), asserts that the performative acts are, as a matter of fact, based upon the inner perception of one's self since that perception is deeply influenced by outer forces (socialization, patriarchy, politics and religion etc.). Thus, the mind and body become an active part of processing certain cultural and historical information and acting likewise. In this way, the gender roles and expectations are considered as standard repeated acts from both men and women. These stereotypical gender roles become standard in the society and any deviation from the 'norm' may be reprimanded. In this way, it may be safe to assume that gender and sex are broadly defined as culturally accepted behaviors from the people of a particular community. These accepted behaviours set certain parameters for the individuals to act accordingly. For example, the strict purdah observation still persists in the Rajput families under study and almost all Rajput women observe purdah while going outside their home⁵. If girls or women don't abide by this tradition, they become subject to gossip or slander, are labeled as *besarum* (shameless) and are considered a threat to the family's honor. As improbable as it may sound, but surprisingly such behaviors exist and are classified as family traditions. The existence of such ideologies is based upon gender identities, reflected

⁴ I do not wish to tarnish the image of women as they sing folksongs which have gender discrimination and may appear as supporters of pro-patriarchal ideology. However, this is not the case as most of them told me that they learnt those songs by heart without fully considering or comprehending the meaning.

⁵ I noted this too that all the Rajput women I met observed purdah in markets in Bhakkar, I did not see or meet any women without purdah.

through folksongs as themes of kinship, relationship, daily life activities, division of labor etc.

Similarly, the relationship between men and women is also a social phenomenon which shapes the gender interaction within a society. It has been accepted as common knowledge that the Rajput culture, religion and traditions have exerted considerable influence on the Rajput community and thus gender stereotypes have played a substantial role in the formation of gender beliefs and ideologies that are truly reflected in the Rajput folksongs. Besides, these stereotypes have been so deeply embedded in the Rajput society that genders have accepted them as the ultimate truth. Shepherd (2006) clearly points out that written or spoken discourses must be understood as systems of meaning production and not merely statements or language as they enable people to understand the world. Similarly, the poetic representation of folksongs may be considered a form of such discourses which incessantly have covered every aspect of the gender relations, societal customs, religion and politics prevalent in the representative community.

The lyrics of the Rajput folksongs present ideologies which help to sustain the status quo. Additionally, these songs define duties and roles where men and women are expected to accomplish and re-accomplish certain acts until they are considered a standard norm for the whole community. Briggs and Bauman (1990), debate that oral narratives like songs, poetry, story etc. are situated communicative practices which are used to maintain social order. On the bright side, Raheja (1997), argues that traditional practices create certain identities in people which can be flexible. Hence, it can be presumed that the images of gender portrayal in Rajput folksongs are culturally constructed. The Rajput folksongs under study also reveal the stereotypical portrayal of women and men through the text of the songs. Therefore, the text of these songs may not be considered as solely a form of written material, but rather having a profound deeper meaning as these lyrics recount the acts of gender in real life of the Rajput people.

The gendered identities prevalent in the families under study, which have emerged as a result of religion, traditions and values, limit the space for any deviance especially for women. However, women take advantage of the folklore forum to register their dissent.

On this wise, folksongs provide them a forum through which they express themselves. It may also be inferred here that various genres of folklore are not merely performances but rather a series of communicative events.

Folksongs can be described as one the best forms of symbolic communication in which key symbols exist. Sahlins (1976), asserts that culture itself is symbolic and its symbolic schema, not the material constraint is what matters the most. Therefore, the symbolism used in the Rajput folksongs offer to explore certain cultural aspects which otherwise may have been ignored. Thus, symbolic perspective is required for analysis of folksongs in order to study the Rajput culture. This discussion paves the way for our second theoretical framework.

The second major theoretical foundation is Ortner's (1973) key symbolism. The theory that confers the study of symbols in cultural ethnography by highlighting the symbolic perspective in anthropological research. Ortner (1973) uses the word "key symbols" and discusses their two major types: summarizing and elaborating symbols. In addition, the theory claims that every culture has their respective symbols, which are pivotal for not only understanding it, but rather these "key symbols" are the basis on which the cultural foundation is formulated upon. Without fully comprehending these symbols, one can't truly understand the essence of the respective culture since cultures come into being as a result of interaction between many basic and conflicting symbols.

Ortner (1973) further explicates the two main symbols introduced in the theory. Summarizing symbols are basic and sacred. Such symbols drive a culture emotionally while, elaborating symbols, on the other hand, are non-sacred and analytical. Such symbols are comprehensive, translatable and communicable. Elaborating symbols either translate into developing mechanisms for action (within a society) or visualizing the order of the world. These symbols can be further examined by the root metaphors and key scenarios that are interconnected to stories, myths, or rituals behind them. It could be safely inferred that the aforementioned symbols are two ends on a spectrum.

In case of the Rajput culture, *purdah*, for example, may be categorized as summarizing symbol while colors of dress, existence of birds and animals, objects of daily use, places of visits, fruits etc. may be grouped as elaborating symbols. Similarly, the Rajput folksongs comply with the same theory of symbolic interpretation and present a series

of texts (lyrics) incorporating symbols along with the root metaphors. This knowledge has been based upon the concept postulated by Rosaldo (1980), which explains that folk poetry is primarily symbolic in nature and demonstrates the relationship between words and the community, from which it belongs to. It also helps illustrate the fact how the Rajput folksongs have become social events and significant sites for displaying sanctioned gender norms. Thus established that folksongs do not exist in vacuum, rather they demonstrate social context, ethnicity, gender relations and economic position of the social group. As Oring (1986) asserts that the study of women-centered folklore provides a unique perspective to a society since it is divergent in presenting experiences of women living in patriarchal and androgenic cultures.

2.2. Literature Review

The literature review discusses the value of folksongs as the means of expression for defining gender identities, roles and responsibilities. There is a significant need to apprehend that folksongs are by no means a dead medium, rather, they are the keepers and the reservoirs of traditions, customs and values passing on from generations. In this section, researches related to folksongs, gender and folklore are presented to shed light on previous work for this study and help develop a rationale.

2.2.1. Women and Folklore

From communicating ideologies, defining roles to depicting characters, it is by no means a rare idea that female persona illustrated in the folklores has always been profoundly influenced by the stereotypical perceptions held by the respective society as researchers such as Farrer (1975) blames the folklorists for their insincerity to establish the significance of female representation in folklore studies. Folklorists only approved and transmitted those images of women which complied with the pre-made ideas, attitudes and beliefs. To make matters worse, the representations of women's expressions in folklore was substantially authenticated and consulted by men, rather than the women themselves. Farrer (1975) also analyzed research studies on numerous folklore genres, spanning over five decades, from the 1930s to 1970s and identified that they were predominantly based on presentation of women in stereotypical roles and encompassed replicated biases towards women's beliefs and customs. Disciplines such

as history, sociology, anthropology, post-colonial studies and folklore, where the sexist system was pervasive, helped shape such point of views. Farrer (1975) concludes that standard (male) genres were used to define folklore. Moreover, women's expression and genres were regarded as non-legitimate forms of folklore. She highlighted the need in folklore genres for the women expression to be considered equally genuine and not to be standardized in comparison to male normal (Farrer, 1975).

Jordan and Kalcik (1985), have explained the reason for such insincerity of the folklorists. They asserted that the significance of women folk performers and women genres in folklore has been overlooked possibly because they were performed in the privacy of the domestic domain which made them invisible in the eyes of the folklorists, which as a result, made them lose their authenticity and validity. In their book '*women's folklore, women's culture*' various essays related to oral expression of women in folklore genres have provided the opportunity for shedding a light into the secluded world of women (their private domain). It was also concluded that men genres and their performances of folksongs, which are based on competitive and individualistic approaches gained popularity, compared to the women genres which were performed in private domain, were under-rated and neglected by the folklorists (Jordan and Kalcik, 1985).

Most of the women's expression were based on personal experiences, narratives, popular beliefs, humor and were represented as 'minor genres' or 'old women tales', making men's work much worthy of research and study in comparison to that of women's. Reviewing previous folkloric research studies, Jordan, and De Caro (1987) put forward three basic assumptions hypothesizing the reasons for under representation of women in folkloric studies. Firstly, the stereotypical perception of women have limited their representation in media and culture. Secondly, the places where men and women perform are different i.e. men's performances are more public and thus easily noticeable whereas the women perform within the private domains of their homes. This leads to their performances going unnoticed and being considered insignificant. The third assumption is that women do not get the overdue acknowledgment to be treated and accepted like artists or performers, with equal capabilities as that of men. Jordan and DeCaro (1987) also assert that value-role of women in folklores illustrate that certain female personas and sex roles depicted in folklore genres tend to degrade

women. Moreover, these sex -roles are used as a reference for other cultures without context and relevance.

Although, the era of feminism has brought change in the folklore studies, however the previously believed perspectives related to women's lives and their traditions have continued to impact and influence the folklores. Folklorists have also realized that their previous researches have missed many folk cultural forms which were related to women. Therefore, folklorists must refresh their studies by incorporating women folklore genres for a better understanding of women's world of folklore (Jordan & DeCaro, 1987).

Kodish (1987) argued that the folklores are subjected to human biasness and to a greater extent influenced by the narrators and writers such as male folklorists represent men as heroes while women as being submissive, passive and silent. Since the importance of family and household work, kin and children, everyday labor and activities cannot be overlooked in folklore studies therefore, Kodish (1987) concluded that it is crucial for folklorists not to rely merely on the substitute narratives, interpretations and sexualized accounts of their own in order to silent women, but rather to examine the real narratives of women and observe their daily life activities. These aspects must be included in the folklore stories and not merely the content retold and defined by men.

The women in their own narratives are not generally voiceless but are challengers to the stereotypes in which they are represented. On the contrary, feminist scholarships have worked to deconstruct the male paradigm and assist in the reformation of some models which focus on women's presence and agency in a culture. Kousaleos (1999) also found out the influence of feminism on folklore. He acknowledged that feminist theories have profoundly impacted the folkloric researches. Tracing the relationship of folklore with feminist scholarship, Kousaleos (1999) explains that feminist movement of 1960s significantly impacted the folklore genre, women's experiences, and their lives in various cultures. Feminist scholarships have also substantially redefined the cultural context and the various folklore genres, has encouraged the practice of female folklorists, which as a result has provided opportunities to folklorists to explore the shrouded areas and genres which were previously ignored or disregarded by the male folklorists. To cater the biasness prevalent in folklore, Kousaleos (1999) also suggested

that other academic disciplines must also develop literary criticism as a tool to identify gender biasness including folklore.

On a similar account, Stoeltje (1988) in her article '*Feminist Revisions*' discusses the impact and reverberation of feminism on women's folklore. The era of feminism has seen a rise in the researches on cultures and societies, which has helped redefine the term 'gender'. Furthermore, these researches have assisted in investigating gender interactions which is undoubtedly one of the most vital part of any culture. Moreover, Stoeltje (1988) claims that the feminist theory, which has been formulated on the three basic principles namely, women's contributions are valuable, inability of the women to reach their full potential due to them being an oppressed group and feminist research which needs to work on social transformation rather than mere critique, has played a consequential role in influencing the academic disciplines, everyday life, and social and political systems of every society. It is also through the compelling arguments made by the feminists that women have become subjects of folklores and research as previously they were merely treated as objects in men's researches.

It is a well-known fact that women have always been portrayed in the folklores with a negative image. Terms like patriarchy and empire have long been associated with masculinity and used as metaphors in the folklores to establish an elevated position for the male characters. To address this issue, various genres of folklore like myths, epics, folktales etc. need to be redefined by the genre differences and similarities which were overshadowed by the patriarchy (Stoeltje, 1988).

Radner and Lancer (1987) have discussed the theory of coding and have explained various formal typology of strategies which women use in folklore and literature. In the male dominated culture, women use certain covert expressions, feminist messages or coding in folksongs, folktales, proverbs or even through the artifacts like quilting or cooking recipes, which are subtly conveyed to other women. Through these ambiguous yet hidden messages, women manage to protect themselves from the harmful responses they may get from the people who can cause trouble after decoding them. These strategies which women use include hidden expression, ideas, beliefs, experiences, sentiments, and attitudes in the dominant culture. In the theory by Radner and Lancer (1987) these strategies are named as appropriation, juxtaposition, indirection,

trivialization, incompetency, and distraction. All of these strategies are used by women in various folklore genres and in different situations where relevant group of people such as women or any other suppressed group can understand while people in power may take it in a non-threatening way.

2.2.2. Women and Folksongs

History has never failed to prove the fact that folksongs have always remained a medium for women to channelize their expressions, especially in patriarchal societies such as that of subcontinent. These lands have a long, painful history of misogynistic traditions and women subjugation. The only vent for the women developed as a form of poetic and musical expression which later shaped up as folksongs. Looking from a researcher's point of view, it is fairly relevant to shed light on the body of literature that discusses the verbal expressions of women.

As early as mid-50s, Bhojpuri folksongs and ballads of Indian society were researched by Upadhyaya (1957). His research on the folksongs uncovered many themes related to elaborate marriage ceremonies and ancient customs in the past where it was considered conventional for a younger son to murder his older brother, all for the sake of throne and his wife. Moreover, themes like separation described pathos of a wife when her husband forbade her to work, and she was forced to stay with the in-laws who treated her badly. In his research, folksongs were seen a vent for the women of Bhojpuri areas to express their feelings and sentiments.

Furthermore, a similar research article by Nilsson (1984) describes the collection and documentation of thirteen folksongs, translated in English from their original Bhojpuri language. The compilation of these folksongs included wedding songs, seasonal songs, work songs and lullabies. Nilsson (1984) explored and ascertained that in the Bhojpuri community, folksongs were considered a typically exclusive female activity and men did not participate in the singing of the songs. For example, wedding songs were mostly sung by women's family members and friends along with the other women from the community. The fact that singing of folksongs was considered an all women activity, the research highlighted the issue for the need to preserve these folksongs before they die out. Moreover, addressing to the folklorists, Nilsson (1984) concluded that the

collection, compilation and documentation of the folksongs and other genres of folklore must be considered an academic priority.

Wade (1972) researched numerous wedding songs sung in the suburbs of Delhi (Gurgaon and Jharsa, India) and Jhanjholi in Haryana state (India). The compiled songs were both secular and religious in nature and reflected upon the stereotypical and patriarchal nature of the gender domains that exist in the researched community.

Wade's (1972) collection of songs highlighted important features of the marriage systems prevalent in the villages namely exogamy and also analyzed the melodies and rhythms of the collected folksongs. Bahadur (1978) also investigated various folksongs, collected from rural and urban areas of India. These folksongs were mainly relevant to ceremonies or rites and were classified by the researcher as religious songs, seasonal songs and wedding songs. The remaining folksongs were categorized as songs affiliated with different castes, songs related to heroism, discussing both heroes and heroines and moral songs. As explained by Bahadur (1972), all of these folksongs illustrate the philosophy, literature, mythology, psychology and sociology of the people who are part of the community and also those who sing them.

Narayan (1986) has provided an insightful view of folk songs. Two different aspects relevant to the analysis of *suhag* (marital) folksongs have come to light. One is the rite of passage while the other is related to developmental psychology. In her first perspective, she takes up Van Gennep (1960)'s approach on 'rites of passage', which anthropologists and sociologists view as the celebration of transitional stages between the roles marked for men and women. Her other stance is based on developmental psychology which emphasizes the transitions as a passage between life cycles and are manifested in psychic tasks for each stage of life. Her research highlighted and reflected the need to incorporate the narratives of the women singing indigenous genres such as *suhag* songs. Without this knowledge, much valuable information may be lost. A point to be noted here is that *suhag* songs are an independent folksong genre and not to be associated with insult songs, which contain the element of satire and mockery and are aimed towards bride and groom's families. *Suhag* songs, on the other hand, talks about the sorrowful sentiments of the bride as she is going to depart from her parental home to conjugal home.

In a research by Narayan (1991), she discussed the metaphorical reference of unmarried girls as birds-*chiryān*⁵ (the word used for girls in *suhag* songs). The metaphor suggesting that girls are similar to birds as they will fly away from their homes one day (to their husband's home). The research also investigated how *suhag* songs are sung for brides in order for her to welcome the transition from a young girl to adulthood and finally adapt to the new roles and life as a wife. The *suhag* songs are a form of expressive emotional support, provided to the girl going through one of the major transitional periods of her life.

Within the context of South Asian cultures, particularly the patriarchal societies such as India and Pakistan, the birth of a son is an important social event marked by celebrations in the families. Moreover, this ceremony is considered a joyful event in which songs are sung, rituals are performed and gifts are given to the new parents. The *sohar* songs, as locally known in the subcontinent region, include all the stages from pregnancy, childbirth and the rituals performed afterwards. Tiwari (1988) categorized the *sohar* songs according to the pregnancy stage in which the mother is in. These folksongs, with their lyrics reflect what a pregnant mother experiences and feels. For instance, the first type of songs are 'songs of anticipation', which covers themes such as time of conception to time of labor, pregnant women cravings, husband and his family's desire for a male child, worshipping of goddesses/local deities etc. The second type are 'songs of rituals and celebrations' which explore the themes of the birth of a child, greeting and wishes for the new parents, preparation of special food and exchange of gifts. All of these songs are sung by women, with or without musical instruments. Such songs tend to be the core of women's oral literature and contain comprehensive information regarding attitudes, beliefs, customs and family rituals performed and practiced on childbirth.

The compilation of the folksongs researched by Srivastava (1991) express women's desires and expressions along the themes of 'common wishes, unexpressed desires and hopes and disappointment in their conjugal relationships. The often overlooked meaning of such songs is contrary to the social lives of the women living in patriarchal societies. An observation of their daily lives may indicate obedient nature, conformism

⁵ sparrows

and conventional attitudes, whereas the songs talk about their unfulfilled wishes, secret hopes and desires. Srivastava (1991) claims that folksongs act as 'safety valve' for women and function like an opportunity for them to express their suppressed feelings and sentiments in a socially acceptable manner. Concluding the thematic research study, Srivastava (1991) infers that many unspoken social realities can be expressed effectively through the medium of folksongs which has social acceptance and is many a times termed as being 'plausible'.

Skinner and fellows (1994) discuss how *teej* songs have been produced, performed and evolved over the time. Their analysis is based on more than 1000 *teej* songs collection in Naudada, a village in Nepal in the years 1986, 1990 and 1991. Teej songs have long been used in the Nepali society to maintain hierarchy and reflect the position of women. The researchers interviewed various members belonging to political and feminist groups. Functionalist approach was used to analyze the *teej* festival songs that serve to release the tension and emotions in order to preserve the status quo existing Nepali society. *Teej* as a ritual reinforces the patriarchal gender relations of Hindu religious ideology in which women willingly or unwillingly accept the restrictions that exist in their society. In Naudada (Nepal) *Teej* festival is the place of dynamic activity and through oral performances (singing of *teej* songs) women express alternative and critical perspectives of their lives. Women voice their resistance and dissent to patriarchal systems of gender and power relations. Their songs are not just a vent for emotions but rather to be considered as the notes of resilience against the maledominated system.

Narayan (1994) in her article '*Women's Songs, Women's Lives. A View from Kangra*' defines folksongs as a 'collective activity arranged for ritual events' and opined that many scholars and folklorists in India ignore the opinion of the singers who sing the folksongs, rather, the focus is entirely on the folksongs text as an 'unproblematic representation of women's prospective'. Narayan (1994) expresses that anthropologists and folklorists have benefitted greatly through their research on the women singers who remained silent and did not express their opinions. These scholars assume that all women are engaged in the same type of cultural production ignoring the differences between them posed by caste and class system, educational background or generation. The main crux of the research article reveals that women singers not only sing songs

for others, but also relate songs to themselves when they suffer from loneliness and experiences of pain.

Narayan (1995) in another research study on Rajput women's folksongs, quotes one of the folksinger's words stating "*everyone may sing but those who suffer understand songs*". The connection of women singers with the songs act as a source of solace, beauty and strength that goes along with the song without suppressing its bitterness which the song reflects. Narayan (1995) infers that folksongs as "collective expression," windows to social relations" and "autobiographical ethnographies" represent the views of the people who own them. Folksongs also exhibit the contemporary realities of social life in a versatile way. Her research is based on two folksongs namely *pakharu* and "*nach git*". *Pakharu* is a ballad and sung on child marriages while "*nach git*" is an energetic dance song that mirrors the discrepancies of the Rajput women's lives from past and present. Narayan (1995) concludes that in Kangra, both songs illustrate the images from the past in order to establish and define the 'family authority' in present-day, which emphasizes married couples may have self-sustainability and make linkages with other people beyond regional boundaries.

Raheja (1995) in her article, *The Once Well-Nourished Women Are Now Grown Thin and Weak': The Poetics and Politics of Famine in Nineteenth Century Women's Song*, comments on the 11 songs collected by Luard (1908) in the colonial subcontinent during famine. These folksongs not only reflect the daily life experiences of women but also became the medium for criticizing the economic conditions and depicting the disparity present in the provision of healthcare services amongst urban and rural areas of India.

The folksongs reflect upon the time of famine when women suffered more than men as they had to look after the children and were usually not given food on priority, despite the fact that women were more often than not the subject of adversities caused by famine, compared to men (Chowdhry 1989). It was a time of chaos and confusion with little or no emotional support for the women, with that being the case, the folksongs did a noteworthy job of capturing the real-life experiences. These songs provided a different outlook on viewing women's oral expressions. Firstly, they critiqued the gendered governed ideologies and kinship practices that are embedded in the traditions which

subordinate women. Secondly, the conceptualization of the ideologies, processed through history, benefitted the women in understanding their own context of life experiences. These songs portrayed the discrepancies faced by both men and women at the time of famine. Raheja (1995) noticed that the songs during the time of famine talk about the 'domestic hierarchy', which continued to be the same as in the other times. The women were expected to feed the entire family first and eat later. Raheja (1995) concludes that the gendered nature of a natural disaster doesn't give relief to a women's hunger yet the optimistic women try to mollify the catastrophic impacts of famine through religious practices and by singing folksongs.

'*Khayal: feeling changes*' is a song that shares its name with a popular folk drama in Rajasthan explored by Gold (1996). She compared the recording of her collected songs in 1993 and claimed that the themes of the songs have changed due to the change in socio-cultural life of the women. The 'old' *khayal* songs recorded in 1993 incorporated family-oriented themes and the sentiments influenced by the new changing economic and social realities. Issues like husband's job, educational opportunities, household issues, along with the patriarchy and traditional gender hierarchies were the major subject matter of these songs. *Khayal* songs are claimed to be affected by the transformation of social and economic realities that took place in the changing world. Most of these songs addressed the husband and demanded the demonstration of love towards their wives. Husbands insist on coming back from city jobs, wars and other distractions which have separated them from their wives.

Quite often than not, the old songs rendered images of wives expecting material gifts from their husbands like jewelry, food etc. which symbolically represented intimacy however, the lyrics of *khayal* reveal that presents and jewelry are not what the new woman desires as she feels doubtful of her educated man and these insecurities instill in her a fear of abandonment. One such insecurity that repeats itself in the narratives of the folksongs illustrate that women fear that men who get educated and turn to cities for jobs may get distracted and eventually cease to come back to their wives in the villages. Additionally, *Khayal* songs have certain other unique themes as they narrate women's anxiety and dilemma but also show their courage to voice against the conservative thinking of men. These women do not demand from their husbands to come home but rather to take them along. All in all, *Khayal* songs reveal the women's

realization of the socio- economic changes that have occurred in the course of time (Gold, 1996).

According to Gold (1997), Rajput women express their expectations and aspirations for husband-and-wife relationship through folksongs however, the image of women reflected in the folksongs was found to be contradictory to the real life of the veiled women of Rajasthan. For example, in a folksong, it is represented that women attempt to establish their dominion in the home by not addressing their husbands directly and rather commanding them. Furthermore, in women's folksongs, men (husband) respond and acquiesced to women's (wife) desires and expectations which may not be the case in social reality. Gold (1997) argues that husband-wife relation expressed in the folksongs may be the best choice for research on oral performances because of certain reasons. Firstly, oral performances incorporating the themes related to husband-wife relations are easily accessible and available in vast number. Secondly, to study an effectual context of gender comparison, husband-wife relationship seems the most appropriate. Lastly, this relation is more controlled, uncertain and shows the most striking behavioral and performance displays in folksongs.

The themes of women's songs include, formalities between husband and wife, modesty, coyness or shame, allurements, and sexual intimacy. These daring themes narrated by veiled faces are socially tolerated when conveyed through the medium of folksongs. Moreover, this resistant energy is released without it unlikely disturbing or adversely affecting the social dynamics since women perform folksongs in the private spaces.

Another thematic study on "*pakharu*" by Narayan (1997) reveals that this song is only sung by upper-caste women i.e. Rajputs, Brahmin or Mahajan for their absent husbands. The main theme of the aforementioned folksong deals with the migration of men to other cities and its psycho-emotional impacts on lives of the women left to stay with the in-laws. *Pakharu* is referred to as 'old women's song' as it provides a link to the past and talks about the olden days when women used to spin wheels to make yarn, used oil lamps instead of electricity and animals like horses were the common means of transportation. Narayan (1997) redefined *pakharu* song as a form of 'collective memory' as it talks about the past events shared and experienced by mostly small and large social groups of women. This folksong not only express the social relation

between women and her husband but also the relation between kin groups linked through marriage. The research highlights the disappointments of upper-class women who accuse their husband of abandoning them in their youthful days, all for the sake of money.

Through her research investigation, Belli (2010) discusses the biography of Rao Gopal Singh- a local Rajput hero who fought against the colonial rule, via the folksongs devoted to him. The research revealed that Rajput men and women tend to differ in their definition of local heroes, in terms of their personal traits communicated through folksongs. In men's folksongs, Gopal Singh is positioned as a historical hero and the themes narrates his bravery, fulfillment of duty and *dharam* (religion/faith) towards his people and rulers. Rao is also credited as having traits of revolutionary heroism, was secular in nature and referred as *vir* (hero) and *deshbhakt* (patriot). All these narrated attributes have deemed Gopal Singh a position of a political hero, who is remembered for his struggle and fight for *swadesh* (independence). However, in women's folksongs, such kind commonly termed as bhajans⁶, Rao Gopal Singh is positioned as a *devata* (deity). The bhajans also admire his amiable and agreeable personality, his dressing sense and his twisted, long mustache which complemented the Rajput's warrior character. However, the women's folksongs remain reticent on Gopal Singh's historic status in the Rajput history and political struggles as a nationalist.

Anjali (2002) researched the folksongs of local women of Garhwali (UP, India), taking into account the ecological perspective and the natural environment in which these women live and interact. She has also studied the impact of major life cycle events such as birth, marriage and death on the social lives of these women but the most notable and distinct feature of her research examines how the environment and seasons of the region have shaped up these women. These women are not oblivious to the environmental changes happening around them and are in fact very much knowledgeable and well-informed. This approach to thinking might have had its roots in the traditional folksongs of the areas. A few prominent recurring themes that can be observed in their folksongs may include warnings for tree cutting, benefits of tree plantation and taking care of tree like a child. Social issues like dowry, illiteracy,

⁶ Songs for the divine

alcoholism among men also exist in these folksongs. Due to its diverse and distinctive results, Anjali's (2002) research can be termed as a 'source material' for the scholars who may like to take into account the ecological context of folklore and folksongs.

Tiwari (2012) reviewed numerous women's songs that they sing on various events of life. These songs not only helped distinguish the biological sexes i.e. male and female but also assisted in shaping the gender ideologies through social and cultural processes. Intergenerational cultural transmission of ideas pertaining to maleness and femaleness, have been made possible due to these folksongs. Through these songs, these ideas are not only developed, but also shaped, accommodated and reinforced. These songs have made it easier for the researchers to investigate the themes present in the rural social life such as the caste system, marriage and kinship, gender, sexuality, power structures, system of patriarchy and family as an organization. Tiwari (2012) concludes that rhythms and melodies of the women's songs show slightly distinct moods and style of performance, when compared to those of men's.

Tiwari (2012) systematically reviewed and analyzed not only the oral performances but also the text of the folksongs. This idiosyncratic approach lead the focus towards the group of women who are quite often marginalized and neglected since most of the female agency has looked and researched the biographies, poems or diaries of the women, belonging to the elite class or middle classes. The verbal expression and voices of the unlettered women have remained hidden, despite them constituting the majority. Thus, the research on folksongs gives voice to the majority of women who may not be popular and known to many but represent the common woman (Tiwari, 2012).

Singh (2015) compares men's folksongs sung by women and women's folksongs sung by men. These folksongs differ in terms of metaphors used, concerns narrated and context; for example, the motif of sexual desires and polygamy is illustrated differently in both tone and narrative. While men's folksongs highlight the sexual desires of women away from their husbands, the female folksongs portray the same concept as romantic wishes. Men's songs discuss the existence of co-wife as an alternative sexual arrangement, to establish their predominance and their sexual right; conversely, polygamy is frowned upon by women in their songs and is articulated as a social concern. Singh (2015) also investigates the reasons why men project their desires in

women's voices but do not express their apprehension in their own masculine voice? Based on the research, it can be concluded that there are two possible answers to these questions. Firstly, the gender stereotypes play a great role and men constricted by them are unconsciously bound to appear as strong and sturdy. This image of men, takes away their right to lament and display their griefs openly. The other probable answer might be that their crying in the songs would be considered a sign of weakness and may term them as 'women'.

Chowdhry's (2015) research in Haryana (India) states that the folksongs of the area explores another dimension of masculinity, which is physical strength and vigor. This factor elucidates the causes of domestic violence and physical torture which women are subjected to. In local terms, a man is not considered *Marrd* (man) if he does not beat his wife. However, in a few folksongs, it is portrayed slightly differently, with women speaking up for themselves, reacting to violence, attacking the idea of masculinity and protesting against domestic violence. Chowdhry (2015) also mentions that affluent people of the area attempted to 'ban' such folksongs and/or replaced them due to their 'indecent lyrics'. Since such songs challenged the masculine power, they were regarded a threat to their manhood. Due to this, men made efforts to ban such songs from being sung. The upper-class women of the area, mostly educated ones, supported men and tried to ignore these songs by not singing them. However, the rural women justified these songs as songs of their rural (*dehati*) culture, owned them and adapted the male logic of keeping the *dehati* culture alive merely in order to preserve a space for rural women.

Das (2016) in his research, explores numerous types of folksongs that represent Asamese culture. These songs include religious and devotional songs, songs of humor, children songs, celebration songs, wedding songs and *bihu* (*festive*) songs, which describe the rural life and the beauty of nature, speaks of the festivals and portrays simple life of locals like farmers etc. In addition, a few folksongs were thought to ward off diseases like smallpox and were sung principally for this purpose. It was concluded that all the folksongs provide women the opportunity to sing and enjoy their womanhood along with the beauty of nature.

Kumar (2017) describes the whole procedure for the arrangement of *ratijaga* (wedding night) mentioned in a *jatana* in Haryana (India), which revolved around the singing of folksongs. The singing of *ratijaga* consists of three sections. The first section begins with the songs for the deities and ancestors and to propitiate the gods. The second section starts after midnight when men are usually asleep, these songs tend to challenge the patriarchal, orthodox culture and norms of the society. For the last section, women sing hymns in praise of gods, sun and the welcome the family kin who would wake up soon. It is only *jatana* that exposes women's counter-hegemonic consciousness against the masculinized gender ideology. *Jatana* songs also project alternative images of men and women which often contradict the expected, stereotypical notions of gender.

Chaudhary (2018) shares that Braj people (living in Uttar Pradesh) are accustomed to singing folksongs during their religious and social ceremonies. These folksongs include flamboyant description of weddings, relationships, symbols and stories of historical, mythological and chivalric legends. In songs, female characters are illustrated as devoted wives and represent the clichéd, stereotypical view of women roles, i.e. to support their husbands under extreme difficulties, hardships and suffering. Like many innumerable folksongs, these also reinforce the same themes of gender roles, social norms and regulations which the women have to abide by, expected sacrifices to be made by women for their husbands and families and the strong relation of women to her parent's house, especially with her brother.

Singh (2018) talks about the women's folksongs from Bhojpur (India). The recurring theme found in these folksongs was 'migration'. Due to the migration of men from the area, the women not only have to manage familial and household chores but also have to work outside the homes. The separation of women from their husbands not only makes them suffer emotionally but they also face social oppression along with sexual exploitation. On one hand, these women might be considered empowered by undertaking social and economic responsibilities in reality but the truth states otherwise. The folksongs talk about the female subjugation in family and society, which still persists. Furthermore, Singh (2018) makes a comparison to the upper-caste women's folksongs and those of the lower-caste women. The results showed astounding differences. The folksongs of the lower-caste women used vulgar language to express their emotions, concerns and experiences which portrays them as uncivilized

and backward in the eyes of the upper caste women. The researcher concludes that women folksongs, which have lived largely through oral transmission, tend to challenge the orthodox doctrines and reveal social realities. Singh (2018) establishes that the ‘mute voice’ of countryside women with their aggressive images are generally not brought into the ‘mainstream discourse of resistance’ and thus have remain marginalized and peripheral.

2.2.3. Folksongs of Pakistan

Unfortunately, the Pakistani folksongs have not been researched much, however, on the bright side, they have been well documented. The dearth of evidence suggests that there is a need to research the folksongs with special reference to anthropological, feminist, folkloric and analytical perspectives. Following section confers the limited researches conducted on folksongs in Pakistan.

Tracing back to the history of folksongs in Pakistan, they were found to be originated from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). Ahmad (1957) shares the core themes of those songs, which revolved around the daily-life activities and the natural beauty of the physical landscapes such as *bhatiali*, boatman song, *Jari*, *bhaoaia* and *mrshidi*. Considered as the land of beauty and river, the folksongs originating from East Pakistan had the recurring theme of nature, the free-spirited boatman, the calm and dreamy landscapes and the blue skies. These folksongs are sung with diverse traditional instruments such as *dotaara*, *banshi* (flute) *mridanga*, *khanjani*, *dogi*, *tobla*, *khole* etc. The researcher concluded that these type of folksongs representing the beauty of nature, marriage songs, snake charmers’ songs, birth songs have played a significant role in keeping the history, traditions and culture alive.

Nasir (1987) in his research article ‘*Baithak: Exorcism in Peshawar, Pakistan*’ describes a social setting in which exorcism is practiced with those women who are supposedly possessed by supernatural beings. The ethnographic account of *baithak* describes an event in which women were healed through special songs, which were believed to ward off mental illnesses. In this ethnographic study, Nasir (1987) talks about the past times in KPK⁷ when young girls were denied the opportunities of social

⁷ Khyber Pukhtun Khawa, North western province of Pakistan

contacts and were allowed restricted mobility only within their family circles. The *baihaks* were arranged by the family members and only the noble women of the family were invited. Nasir (1987) concludes that the songs sung by a *mirasan* (transgender) were considered a form of healing from the mental illnesses. Thus, providing support and opportunities to women to have their own social gatherings in a place where mobility and contacts were socially restricted due to purdah and other socio-cultural traditions.

Hassan's (1995) research "*The Voiceless melodies*" investigates the lives of rural, Punjabi women, from a socio-cultural perspective. The narrative provided a deeper understanding of a Punjabi women, her sentiments and identity through folksongs. Two thousand folksongs pertaining to numerous aspects of Punjabi women's life were explored by Hassan (1995). These songs were collected from books, personal collections of Punjabi scholars and theses and journals. Folksongs were categorized according to their types i.e. birth songs or lullabies, coming of age songs, teenage girls' songs, and wedding songs. The recurrent theme of these compilation focuses on the daily life of a rural Punjabi women, which depicted helplessness and struggles starting from birth till old age. The diverse family environment, societal roles and relationships and the women's dependency on men were also part of the theme.

The content analysis conducted by Hassan (1995) further investigates the myth of 'farmer's daughter' which paints the rural women in Punjabi folk literature as being robust, healthy, beautiful, brave, self-confident and assertive women who have the courage to stand against all odds however, the dissonance in reality is utterly distinct as Hassan deems it as a male fantasy, rather than the actual reality. This picture might have been true for many centuries ago but in the present era, it is far from that. Presently, women of rural Punjab (Pakistan) are malnourished, submissive, and robot-like who go through different stages of life in much shorter span than Punjabi men. The research also explores the difficulties in observing these rural Punjabi women as they tend to go unnoticed and not much literature is present on the subject (Hassan, 1995).

The investigation by Saeed (2007) in her conference paper '*South Asian Folklore: A Common Legacy: Exploring the Roots. Retrieving the Traditions*', argues that unlike the developed countries, the developing countries view the folklore discipline as

descriptive rather than analytic. Saeed (2007) shares her personal observations and experiences within South Asian countries relating to women. She asserted that women are held responsible for cultural, religious, social rituals, rites of passage especially birth and marriage rituals, family relationships with families and friends. Saeed further argues that women are the custodian of the various forms of folklore and it is the folklore which liberates women from the social shackles by providing them with a nonjudgmental space, where they can practice rituals and perform folk customs such as singing. However, Saeed (2007) also claims that these customs and rituals reinforce status quo and strengthen women's stereotypical roles in the society which ultimately become tools for their own oppression. Hence, along these lines, women are not only the carrier of folk traditions but also the transmitters of stereotypical beliefs and attitudes which affect them adversely. The irony is that they challenge their oppressive role yet simultaneously become the medium for transferring the same ideology to other generations (Saeed, 2007).

Fareed (2007) during her research, collected and later critically analyzed the *tappas* (a type of folksongs) sung in Lodharan, a southern Punjabi village of Pakistan. Her thesis looks at the language in *tappas* from a feminist perspective. The research study identifies the gendered language of *tappas*, which have long been sung to establish and reinforce male dominance. Themes like gender inequality, societal expectations and attitudes towards structuring individual identity and gender roles are prevalent. Fareed (2007) also concluded that unlike the other folksongs, these *tappas* are not time-bound and are sung at probably any time, such as weddings, events, during free time etc. The symbolic representation in these *tappas* have allowed women to express their heartfelt sentiments and have become an outlet for their emotions which otherwise would have been hard to express in a patriarchal lead system.

Khan's (2012) research explores the significant relationship among disciplines of anthropology, feminism, and literature. The discussion was established by researching the *pukhtun* women's various means of expression such as literary texts, visual representations and folksongs, to highlight the gender disparity prevalent in their patriarchal socio-cultural system. These means of expression are mediums through which *pukhtun* women express and voice their emotions and sentiments. The platform provides them with a space to express their emotions which are generally disregarded

and ignored. Khan (2012) discovers that the popular folksong “*Bibi Shireeny*” reveals a customary pukhtun psyche of inevitable separation between the lovers. The song showcases the romantic interest of man and woman but due to cultural aspect of the *pukhtun* society, most of the folksongs like this one, represent the unavoidable separation between the lovers, depicting the lack of tolerance against love marriages. The grief and separation from the loved one give birth to such type of folksongs, representing the collective experience of sadness and sense of lost love.

Khan and fellows (2012) in another research study conducted on *pukhtun* community that resides along the area of Pakistan-Afghanistan border, investigate the *tappas* of the area. With eight thousand *tappas* collected from books, magazines and journals, the research primarily focused on the feminine and masculine qualities described in them. Men being more vocal and visible in the public domain are featured in those *tappas* as being courageous, daring, and brave, while, on the other hand, the *Pakhtun* women who are generally silent, invisible and remain in their private domain are labelled as men’s honor, and being submissive and having limited or no free choice. These *tappas* are mainly sung by women and significantly relate to the sentiments, emotions and lives of *pukhtun* women busy in their domestic lives. Similar to the other folksongs, these *tappas* have long serve a useful purpose of defining, establishing, embedding and perpetuating the gendered cultural expectations and roles of *pukhtun* men and women (Khan et al., 2012).

Samreen (2013) has researched the Balti folksongs of the eighteenth and nineteenth century which are the cultural representation of folk literature of Baltistan (Pakistan). Samreen (2013) claims that these folksongs are not merely literary texts or poetry but rather speak through the hearts of the people who have passed through the changes of time. These folksongs recount the tales and experiences of people of Baltistan by depicting *Balti* culture and traditions. The folksongs reflect on many aspects of Baltistan by throwing light on the historical, geographical, political, religious, and ethnic life of *Balti* people. Her investigation views the folksongs from a literary perspective, elucidating how the folksongs have emerged as a source of political and social development for the Balti people. The research further discusses how the geography of the area with its bordering areas connecting to Tibet (China), Ladakh (India) and Gilgit, Hunza and Chitral valleys (Pakistan) have profoundly impacted the

folksongs of Baltistan. *Balti* folksongs reflect the historic independence (1947) of Pakistan and India. *Khari Sultan Cho*, *LingspaArzu* and *Balti Baghdoor* folksongs display the culture of Baltistan like in a song 'Cho Amir Haider' narrates that *Balti* men were respectful towards their women who had sacrificed their lives for them. As the folksongs depict the real socio-cultural and socio-political history of Baltistan, there is little to no element of fantasy in them. The events and the incidences narrated in the folksongs like *SingheStagho* and *Kharpocho* have been found to be factual, which have described the sentiments of the *Balti* people at the time of pre-independence. Thus, it may be safe to infer that folksongs not merely narrate the fantasized reality, but can be viewed as the chronicle of historical events (Samreen, 2013).

Zahoor et al., (2014) has examined the rhetorical expression of two Punjabi folksongs through discourse analysis involving figurative language such as metaphors and similes. They reviewed how rhetorical expressions assist in effective communication of the hidden messages in the Punjabi folksongs to the people living in the in district Lodharan (Southern Punjab, Pakistan). Two Punjabi speaking female key informants were hired for the translation of the folksongs from Punjabi to English. The folksongs which were selected for analysis have rhetorical expression with trope and scheme such as metaphor, symbols, alliteration, assonance, repetition, and parallelism. The study concludes that Punjabi folksongs are rich in their rhetorical expression with cultural symbolism attached to them, thus fulfilling the aesthetic need of the Punjabi audience.

2.2.4 Compilation of Folksongs in Pakistan

Pervaiz's (1973) collection of folksongs 'Bun *Phulwari*' traces the history of folk literature during the colonial times and claims that British army generals such as Richard Temple though his book 'Legends of the Punjab' made efforts to preserve folk heritage of Punjab and India. Pervaiz's (1973) collection consisted of *Potohari* folksongs. Tracing the history of *pothohari* language in Punjab, Pervaiz (1973) discusses that it is one of the branches of Punjabi languages which existed in 8th Century BC and is also known as *Hindi*, *Hindko*, *multani*, *Gurmukhi*, *BhaBha*. The book has a more literary style rather than constituting ethnographic details and has failed to incorporate the emic perspective of the *Potohari* people or folk singer. The folksongs

collected are classified according to the life-cycle activities of men and women and include wedding songs, folk games, and romantic fantasies of both men and women.

Another collection and translation of “Mahiye”, type of folksongs researched by Jadoon (1979) discusses its existence in various areas of Punjab province including cities like Rawalpindi, Mianwali, Jhelum, Sargodha and Multan. Islam, (1979) describes the diverse topics of *mahiye* that cover the human emotions and spiritual sentiments. *Mahiye*, according to Islam (1979) is a converse between two main characters, woman and man who talk about various topics like love, satire, friendship, seasons, sin, punishment, rural life, natural and human beauty, god, and fate. In *Mahiye*, a woman’s expression of love towards her lover is exhibited through the use of names like *mahi*, *mahiya*, *sajan*, *sajna*, *dhol*, *dhola*, *yaar*, *chen*, *chand*, *chan ji*, *siayyan*. Men also express their love for their beloveds and call them ‘*mahi*’. Some *mahiye* are not gender specific and are more popular among people for singing.

Raja (1980) collected ‘*loriyaan*’ (lullabies) from rural areas of Pakistan. With a detailed literary introduction, Raja (1980) highlights the mother-child bond reflected in the folk lullabies. Islam as an editor (1980), explains that the word *loriyaan* is derived from word ‘*hilarey*’ which means soft rhythmic movement of mother’s hands and body while holding her child in her arms or lap making him/her fall asleep. The collection of *loriyaan* reflects a mother’s expression of love, affection, desires, fear and anxieties for her child’s future. These folksongs also include tales of the brave and wise men to embed them as role models in the young mind. Another significant aspect of these folksongs focus on siblings’ stories. The themes being sister’s love and prayers for the brother’s future and wedding day celebrations of her brother.

Bukhari (1987) in his collection of folksongs ‘*Sarhad key Lok Geet*’ refers to the folksongs of various ethnic groups residing in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK, formerly known as NWFP). The collection of the folksongs include *kohistani*, *chitralli*, *Gojira* and *hindko* language songs with brief introduction to the socio-cultural life of the people written by the author. Bukhari (1987) distinguishes various contextual levels present within the folksongs. He explains that on the first level folksongs reflect individuality of the area, second level connects folksongs with ethnic solidarity, third level reflects the national solidarity, fourth level makes them part of the eastern heritage

to which they truly belong. The fifth level includes the universality of the human experience. Drawing his attention to the translation of the folksongs in other languages, Bukhari (1987) expresses his concern about the complication of translating folksong to another language. He fears that the songs may not be translated appropriately and much of the wit is lost in translation. However, Bukhari (1987) also acknowledges the fact that if not translated, these folksongs might vanish altogether and may not be understood by the other cultures.

Jonejo's (1985) collection of '*Sindhi Lok Geet*' (folksongs of the Sindh province) is based on Urdu translation of Sindhi folksongs. The author traces the history of various regions that belong to the Sindh province and acknowledges that each area has its own distinct folksongs which are relevant to their socio-cultural milieu. For example, people who live in lower Sindh may have different customs compared to people living in upper Sindh. These folksongs highlight the difference in their dress pattern, jewelry, and wedding rituals. The most important feature of Sindhi folksongs, accentuated by the collector is the way these folksongs incorporate the local geographical landscapes of the province Sindh. For example, the folksongs of Thar Desert area, explain the sociocultural life of the people living in desert. The prominent theme of these folksongs include separation, sadness, love and hate and numerous environmental features like rain, sand dunes and greenery etc. The author's collection of these Sindhi folksongs include many different types of songs such as mystic and spiritual songs, religious songs, romantic songs, separation and sadness songs, harvest songs, husband-wife songs and daily life folksongs which are not specific to any event or ritual. Wedding songs are only sung by women while the rest of the folksongs listed above are sung by both men and women in their free time both inside and outside the homes.

Kazmi's (1985) collection of *Balti lok geet* (folksongs of Baltistan) and their translation in Urdu language explores Baltistan (Pakistan) and its geographical region, historical background and ethos of Balti people. In the book, Balti folksongs are written in Urdu writing script and not in the original Balti writing script; however, the writer has mentioned the alphabets of Balti language for information of readers. The folksongs have been categorized according to the different tribes of Baltistan. Every folksong is translated in Urdu language with a brief cultural context for better understanding of the songs. Besides, references have been provided for difficult Balti words that need

explanation. The book also provides a detailed account of different native folk musical instruments like *gashoopa*, *ringkaar*, *nayokaar* and others that have remained popular in this area.

Islam (1986) documented folksongs of Punjab (Pakistan) and named them as '*Ghoriyan -Shadi Biyah Ke Geet*' (wedding folksongs). The documentation provides a detailed account of the Punjab province and informs the reader of its geography and the variation in geographical features within different regions of the province. The book is a collection of several diverse types of folksongs, with the most prominent among them the wedding songs linked to the rituals, celebrations and rite of passage. Some songs have a general description of the wedding rites and its connection to the socio-cultural life of the people living in different areas of Punjab.

Islam (1986) explains that *ghoriyan* are the type of folksongs that are sung on the wedding day for the bridegroom when he departs to bride's home. The literal meaning of *ghoriyan* is mare, which is symbolically used in folksongs. The author traces the origin of the name of folksongs as *ghoriyan* and talks about the interesting history behind its name. According to Islam (1986) "*ghoriyan ke geet ghoriyan ke baghir mumkin nahin* (P: 10)" which means that these songs may lose their essence without the bridegroom riding the mare. Tracing the history of the name *ghoriyan* given to these songs indicated its roots to the invasions in the subcontinent. The invaders brought horses along with them which later became the part of daily life activities and the major means of transport. Further, the affluent and the rich started using the horses for ceremonies and transportation. It may be assumed that since the groom is considered a special person on the day of his wedding, the people started using horses (mares) for his *barat* procession. The use of mare has a symbolic interpretation as mare is subdued unlike horse and riding on a mare instead of a horse symbolizes the man and woman's union on the wedding day (P:13). The folksongs sung by women relatives specially sister, mother, aunts and other women begin when groom mounts the mare to depart for the bride's home. The significant themes of *ghoriyan* include prayers and admiration for the groom, his family and friends, bravery, warriorship and love for his parents.

Lashari (2007) collected '*Saraiki Lok Sehrey*' that are sung on 17 different life-cycle ceremonies of *saraiki* speaking areas of Southern Punjab (Pakistan). The author traces

the history of the *sehra* folksongs in Southern Punjab and discloses that it is a rich form of oral lore which is transferred orally from one generation to another. Accrediting women as the most noteworthy contributors for keeping the *sehra* songs alive, by being responsible for their preservation and transmission, the author further highlights them as the most auspicious songs, sung only by women on the weddings. These songs are mostly sung by sisters, sister-in-law and other female relatives of the groom (P:12). The dramatized lyrics of these *sehra* songs talk about the handsome features of the bridegroom like his broad forehead, admirable white teeth, shining eyes, his impressive personality along with expensive wrist watch, expensive wedding dress and classy horse carriage. *Sehra* songs express the love and affection of sisters, mother, sisters-in-law for her brother, son, and brother-in-law. These songs also include prayers for bridegroom and his married life. Usually, *sehra* songs are songs of happiness but sometimes in the absence of a son or brother, these songs when sung make the female audience gloomy and may turn the whole atmosphere sombre. A few of the *sehra* songs also portray the local geographical features such as climate and weather, flora and fauna and landscapes. Therefore, *sehra* songs have multiple reflections on the socio-cultural life of the Saraiki speaking areas of Southern Punjab. In the end, the author acknowledges the role of local television and radio channels which broadcast *sehra* songs, thus making it possible for these songs to stay popular among the local population.

Qazalbash (2017) collected folksongs of the *kakar pushtoon* tribe. This compilation includes the bridal songs sung by the bride's friends on her wedding. The narratives regarding the daily life of the *kakar* men and women along with their cultural milieu is defined and provided for a better understanding of the cultural life of the *kakar* people. However, the interpretative narratives of the local people (*kakar* tribe) have not been mentioned in the translation. After unfolding the status of women in tribal societies, Qazalbash (2017) documents various songs of different types including songs about birth of a girl till her death along with all the other occasions that may happen in her daily life. These folksongs express the sentiments of *kakar* girl which she may have for her brothers and other relatives. The themes of folksongs covered in the book include weddings, revenge, early marriage of girls, separation from natal home, separation from husband, child marriage, dowry, domestic violence, domestic fights with in-laws and

love affairs of men and women. Qazalbash (2017) concludes that the folksongs imitate a *kakar* bride's socially sanctioned sentiments that provide her with the medium to not only challenge her traditions but also protest against the tribal customs which otherwise may remain inexpressible.

Irfan (2017) in his compilation of '*Chitral key lok geet*' describes the social and cultural life of *chitrali* people. The collection of the folksongs reveal many themes which are part of the ordinary *chitrali* people related to their physical and geographical environment. Sentimental themes include love, hatred, separation, parents' anger towards their children and husband- wife relations. Many folksongs depict *chitrali* people's shepherd lifestyle, incorporating themes like sheep keeper's life-cycle, status and prestige of a shepherd's life, musical instruments, games, and loneliness while tending his flock. The explanation of the text is based upon the writer's point of view and his own understanding of the folksongs. Compilation lacks emic perspective of the *chitrali* people for socio-cultural description and better understanding.

3. METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents a thorough description of the research process and mentions every component in detail including selection of the topic, population and sample size, data collection process, folksongs recording, in-depth interviews, informal conversational sessions (ICSSs), data analysis and thematic classification of folksongs. This chapter also discusses the role of the researcher and experiences of the participants to ensure both prospective and retrospective reflexivity.

3.1. Research Methodology

A qualitative interpretative approach was chosen to study the research topic for several persuasive reasons. Firstly, qualitative research methods are the most suitable for investigating the cultural meanings that people give to events they experience in their lives (Bogdan and Biklen, 2003; Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). Patton (2002) mentions that qualitative research questions begin with what and how, which motivates researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of what is going on in the lives of the participants who are part of the research study.

Both primary and secondary sources were used for the data collection. Primary data further comprised of two types of data. The first type of data was collected via the conducted in-depth interviews from Rajput women, men, and a few non-Rajput men. Folksongs were recorded along with their culture-specific interpretations from Rajput women. Informal conversational sessions (ICSs) were held with the women who performed folksongs. The second type of data was obtained from recordings of folksong from Rajput women. To enhance the usefulness, quality and rigour of the research, participant observations and field notes were also taken. Participant observation facilitated in recording of folksongs while observing the performance of the singers and their daily life activities. For field notes, many precise yet significant minutiae were written down during the interviews, ICSs, and folksongs recordings.

Secondary data sources were gathered by consulting the libraries, archives, books, research journals, Google scholar articles and online dissertations related to anthropology and folklore.

Additionally, the chapter discusses the justification and efficacy for using each qualitative tool for the present study. The noteworthy information in the form of reflections and in-depth interviews with both men and women has been made part of the chapter along with the faced challenges and opportunities.

Both the fieldwork and interviews were enjoyable for me. Affiliation and experiences with this research study are variants to the fact that I belong to a non-Rajput caste and have been married into a Rajput family that migrated from Ambala (India) and lives in Gujranwala. I have been living in Islamabad since I got married and have never lived in Gujranwala with my in-laws. I would only visit my in-laws on religious occasions, weddings, or funerals of close relatives. My relation with my in-laws have always been cordial and I do not face the social pressures of *purdah*, restriction on mobility or family politics which most of the families living there are involved in. My socialization and lifestyle, being an educated and working woman, have always differed from the consanguineal women relatives. Marrying into a Rajput family and being a non-Rajput makes my positionality interesting and challenging throughout the research process.

The mutinies are explained in detail in the later part of the chapter.

3.1.1. Selection of the Topic and Locale – A Hard Job Done

Choosing a topic for PhD research on Rajput folksongs initiated an interesting debate. I had to justify my choice of topic for its significance and worthiness to my respondents for my scholarly endeavor. Countless questions were asked during the fieldwork involving why and what I was trying to explore, since according to their (both Rajput men and women) perspective the present topic was not relevant to their lives and not worthy enough to be researched. They considered the topics related to women's health /education as being the topics of high significance. However, during interviews and interpretations of songs, few Rajput women expressed their opinion that as the folksong are vanishing, there is a dire need to document and record them as part of our cultural heritage for the future generations.

While reading through this research, individuals may question the generalizability of the study. I would like to elucidate here that the goal of the present research was not to attain generalization but rather to provide a rich contextual understanding of the Rajput culture, their folksongs and how they have played a consequential role in defining and establishing gender norms and roles in a patriarchal society like ours. I do not claim any generalization beyond the group of people who were part of this research. However, I am confident that because of its methodology (in-depth interviews from common women and a professional singer) and inclusion of the emic view of the Rajput women and men who interpreted folksongs with reference to their cultural context, validates its originality and uniqueness. Therefore, this research study may be as representative as possible of merely the Rajput people living in Bhakkar. Furthermore, the Rajput folksongs were collected from the common household women with first handknowledge. This ensured the validity and legitimacy of these songs. These folksongs are not collected through any folklore website/ folksongs books/ journals or archives.

People may question that I may have been selective in collecting the sexist folksongs from the participants (selection bias) and that it would accomplish nothing other than assisting with the documentation and presenting it as an academic accomplishment. I do not agree with this argument since the recorded folksongs were all what the Rajput women knew. The recording process, by no means was influenced by personal bias or

predisposition. The participants were never asked for selective songs; however, it did emerge that a good number of songs comprised of sexist bias and patriarchal ideology. Thus, by choice or by chance, it was found out that the folksongs relevant to the Bhakkar region do promote misogynistic ideologies, sexist stereotypical views and ideas pertaining to patriarchy. These ideas and attitudes are not just sung but being blatantly transferred from generation to generation.

Another factor that I would like to elucidate here is that I do not have any role regarding the lyrics of the folksongs. These songs were solely collected for the purpose of thematic analysis and presented an emic view of the Rajput women and men in their cultural context. Nonetheless, the thematic analysis and their interpretations by the participants identified various themes embedded in these folksongs. These themes were brought to light for both the participants and the readers to develop sensitization to the issue of gender biasness prevalent in our society. It is pertinent to mention here that both participants and readers of the research study must not underestimate the power of cultural folksongs when it comes to communicating ideologies and beliefs. These ideas later provide a framework on which a society develops as a whole. The readers and the participants should also acknowledge the fact that folksongs which were previously devised and labelled solely as a means of entertainment serve a much greater purpose.

They can have a profound impact on the way gender is portrayed, seen and treated. These songs can define the social construction of gender and the relationships attached to it. The impact that they have is undoubtedly transferred from one generation to the next.

In the beginning phase, selection of the locale remained a tough part of my research plan because of my job, family and security situation prevailing in the country⁸. My family was very much concerned about my safety during my fieldwork period. The reason why I started thinking about locale rather early for my PhD studies. After the research topic was finalized, I started to look for a locale which would be accessible from where I was residing i.e. Islamabad, so I may conduct the field research with full devotion and safety. Keeping this in mind, I selected *Kerpa*, a village in which a sizable

⁸ I conducted my research in 2015, the time during which Pakistan was facing terrorism within and from outside the country by different militants' groups. It was considered dangerous to live at a place where security may be compromised.

Rajput community of *Haethiyaal* caste lives and is on the suburbs of Islamabad city. *Fida*⁹ informed me about this village as he belongs from *Kerpa*. I asked *Fida* to arrange a visit for meeting people who might know the Rajput folksongs. After an exploratory visit to the village, we could not find anyone who knew much about the cultural folk songs. *Fida* promised me that he will ask someone about it. But after a couple of weeks, he informed me that there was no one in the village who knew about the Rajput folksongs. I felt disappointed and dropped the idea of *Kerpa* as a research locale.

Following the exclusion of *Kerpa*, I started to explore other possibilities such as the villages in Gujranwala, *Bhoper*¹¹ and Bahawalnagar where sizable Rajput communities live. However, these could not be materialized due to many apprehensions i.e. Bahawalnagar (509 km) is far from Islamabad and I was not sure about the safety and living conditions there. One of my husband's cousin lives in Bahawalnagar but she did not show interest in my research nor did she respond to my many contacts. Besides, I could not find any other acquaintances to help me provide access to the Rajput families of the area. Considering the entire situation, I did not choose Bahawalnagar as a research locale. The other option under consideration was *Bhoper* from where I had previously collected the folksongs for my M.Phil. Studies¹⁰. From my previous experience, I knew that I would not be able to gather new folksongs from the same women folksingers. During my previous data collection, I was stuck at a point of saturation where I was unable to get new folk songs or new information regarding folksongs and Rajput culture. For this reason, I dropped the idea of *Bhoper* (Gujranwala, Punjab) too as a research locale. However, I kept on searching with the assistance of my students, relatives, and friends.

One day, over the phone, I talked about my concern in finding a locale for my PhD research with my sister-in-law, Salma. She showed her interest in helping me out and promised me that she will search for women who may know Rajput folksongs in Bhakkar. She called me after a few days and informed that I could collect and record folk songs in Bhakkar. I requested her for more contacts and remained in touch with

⁹ One of our drivers who lives there and belong to Hathiyaal caste of Rajputs¹¹
Village near Gujranwala city

¹⁰ Atifa Durrani, Portrayal of Women in Rajput Folk Wedding and Birth Songs: An Ethnographic Study of Wahando District Gujranwala (2013) Department of Anthropology, Quaid-I-Azam University Islamabad, Pakistan.

her. After receiving a positive response, I decided on Bhakkar as a research locale for my PhD field work. Although Bhakkar is a bit distant from Islamabad (with the approximate distance being 368 km) but since it fulfilled the essential requirements like accessibility to people and families, availability of folksongs, safe place for fieldwork etc. so I decided to settle down for it. Additionally, Salma has many relatives in Bhakkar. After assurance of availability of folksongs from Salma and my discussions over the phone with a couple of potential women participants, I finally decided to visit Bhakkar for pilot study and collection of folk songs. I visited Bhakkar in November 2015 and went by road with my family. We started the journey early morning and after having some short breaks reached Bhakkar in the evening and stayed at Salma's house for my research fieldwork.

The population of this study was chosen to be the Rajput women and men who knew or could sing folk songs. But as soon as Salma and Rana Zafar¹¹ informed me that there are no folksongs for men or no men sing folk songs my focus shifted towards the women who could sing or knew about the Rajput folksongs.

The selection criterion was quite simple: For women, I selected Rajput women irrespective of their age who could sing or narrate folksongs. I also held in-depth interviews and informal conversation sessions (ICSs) with women folksingers for interpretation of the folksongs. For men, I interviewed those who agreed to give interviews regarding Rajput history in order to understand the historical influence that helped shape those lyrics. My male interviewees were forty-five to seventy plus years old and were well-versed with the history of Rajputs and Rajput men's personality traits as illustrated in the songs.

The sample was kept small for two significant reasons. Firstly, qualitative and descriptive researchers are supported by small samples to obtain elaborated details which with large sample size are tough to manage (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Secondly, few Rajput women knew about folk songs and agreed to record them.

Snowball sampling technique, also known as chain referral sampling (Bernard, 2006) was selected to choose the sample for the research study. This kind of technique is used

¹¹ Salma's husband, my brother-in-law

when the samples required for the study have rare characteristics and/or are difficult to find. In my case, I could hardly find Rajput women who could sing folksongs or agreed to record them. This sampling technique involves primary respondents who propose other potential participants to be used in the research. In other words, snowball sampling is based on referrals from initial participants to generate additional participants and the chain of referrals continues.

Before beginning the fieldwork, I asked Salma for an initial screening of the women folksingers. She contacted her relatives and family friends for information, some of whom, later on, became significant participants. She first confirmed dadi Sughra's willingness to record folk songs. When I reached Bhakkar, in November 2015, dadi Sughra-a doomni¹² as she was locally known, recorded the first folksong for my research. Afterwards, Salma's devarani¹³ referred us to Shahina, who after writing her folksong, further informed us about Kousar and her mother who sometimes sing folksongs on relatives' weddings. While recording folk songs in Kousar's house, we got to know about Raeesa Begum and few other Rajput women who would know about folk songs. In this way snowball or referral technique helped me greatly in reaching out to other possible participants for the research study. On a couple of occasions, I found women folksingers from the audience too and I recorded songs from them. A few times though, referral for songs did not work. Salma and I visited a Rajput family in neighborhood with a referral from a participant but could not get folksongs as some women of that family not only denied knowing any folksongs but were also slightly angry at the fact that someone had told us that they sing folksongs.

Small sample size in the qualitative research studies, at times, puts the researcher in a difficult situation too as warned by Glaser and Strauss (1967). According to them, small samples sometimes may not accommodate the diverse ideas and opinion of all the participants. To overcome this issue, I preferred and included opinions of both men and women regarding their lifestyle, pride and identity, purdah, women's role in the household, division of labor within the house and social ethos along with the literature support. These comments were unique and at times contrasting as well. Additionally, I was well aware of the 'concept of saturation' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) that becomes

¹² A Professional folksinger – belongs to lower caste- Transgender

¹³ Husband's younger brother's wife

a genuine issue in qualitative research with small sample size. To control the issue of saturation, I avoided repetition and overlapping of ideas, gave space to contrasting opinions and situated them in most appropriate placement.

My informants for the folksongs and details of both male and female interview participants are summarized in the tables below:

Table 1. Details of female interviewees and key informant

Sr . no	Name	Age	Marital status	Education	Interview time	Place of interviews	Caste	Relationship With context to Key Informant
1	Salma	55	Married	Grade 12	2 hrs	her home	Rajput	Key informant (sister-in-law)
2	Raeesa Begum	60-65	Married	Illiterate	2 hrs	her home	Rajput	Acquaintance
3	Akhtar Bibi	60+	Married	Illiterate	2 hrs	her home	Rajput	Acquaintance
4	Sidiqaan Bibi	65-70	Married	Illiterate	2 hrs	Her home	Rajput	Acquaintance
5	Kousar	32	Married	Grade5	3 hrs	Her home	Rajput	Acquaintance
6	Safia Bibi	60+	Married	Illiterate	2 hrs	Her home	Rajput	Acquaintance
7	Sajida Bibi	55-60	Married	Illiterate	2hrs	Her home	Rajput	Acquaintance
8	Begum	65-70	Married	Illiterate	3 hrs	Her home	Rajput	Acquaintance
9	Shafiq a Begum	50-55	Married	Illiterate	3 hrs	Her home	Rajput	Acquaintance
10	Shaina Begum	55-60	Married	Illiterate	2 hrs	Salma's home	Rajput	Acquaintance
11	Dadi Sughra	80+	Married	Illiterate	3 hrs	Salma's home	Rajput	Professional singer

Table 2. Details of male focal persons and interviewees

Sr. no	Name	Age	Marital status	Education	Interview time	Place of interviews	Caste	Relationship With context to Key Informant
1	Rana Zafar	55-60	Married	Grade 10	3hrs .30m	Salma's home	Rajput	Key informant
2	Fazul-ur-Rahman	50-55	Married	Grade 14	2hrs	Salma home	Rajput	Relative
3	Khalilur-Rahman	65-70	Married	Grade 16	3hrs 40m	His home	Rajput	Friend
4	Azam Ghauri	70-75	Married	Grade 14	3hrs	His home	Non-Rajput	Friend
5	Rai Nasir	50-55	Married	Masters	2hrs	Salma's home	Rajput	My husband
6	Sabir Rana	55-60	Married	Grade 10	1hr	His home	Rajput	Cousin
7	Rao Mustafa	50-55	Married	Grade 12	2hr	Salma's house	Rajput	Relative
8	Jamil	50-55	Married	Grade 5	2hr	Salma's house	Non-Rajput	Friend
9	Fayyaz Rao	55-60	Married	Illiterate	2hr	Salma's house e	Rajput	Cousin
10	Liaqat	75+	Married	Illiterate	3hr	His home	Rajput	Paternal uncle (taya)

3.2. Data Collection Process

Firsthand information and secondary knowledge were collected through qualitative research tools such as in-depth interviews, participant observations and field notes, along with informal conversation sessions.

3.2.1. In-Depth Interviews

Interview is the method, which helps to obtain data about ideas or events through questioning individuals for required information. I conducted in-depth interviews with ten Rajput women and men. Besides, I also made use of informal conversation sessions (ICSs) with women living nearby my staying place and this too provided me valuable insight regarding their culture. I interviewed both men and women separately due to the observation of *purdah* and traditions of the Rajput families in Bhakkar. Rationally speaking, in-depth interviews were conducted due to the nature of the research since the present study aims to understand the gender portrayal in folksongs and its

interpretation by the Rajput women. In-depth-interviews with the female folksingers and Rajput men were the best source of getting insight and first-hand information, elseways, it would not have been possible to comprehend the cultural context of these folksongs.

The main purpose of interviews and Informal conversation sessions (ICSs) with Rajput men-women was to gain insight concerning the gender portrayal reflected through folksongs. This also assisted in exploring the three major objectives of my research in detail. Firstly, how do women identify with the images of female gender represented in their cultural folksongs? Secondly, how do men perceive their imagery as presented in their folksongs? Lastly, how do both genders reflect upon each other's images in the Rajput folksongs? The input from both interviews and ICSs provided rich details required to further study the topic.

Informal conversation sessions not merely facilitated in exploring the topics which were directly related to the research but also the themes that proved to be quite significant in understanding and explaining the cultural context of the Rajput folksongs. For example, some informal conversation sessions (ICSs) with women about the Rajput lifestyle help me conclude some ideal Rajput characteristics that had been repeatedly mentioned in the folksongs. In another example I refer here, the disappearance of the folksongs or in other words 'the dying music' helped explain the lack of interest of Rajput youth in their mother tongue i.e. *Haryanvi* language.

Moreover, the contradictory opinions from both the genders provided me the insight which otherwise would have been hard to identify. For example, some men did not agree with the nonchalant nature of Rajput men as depicted in the folksongs, while women supported the argument. Furthermore, men denied the contemporary women as being adaptable, especially with the in-laws rather they agreed with some of the folksongs lyrics in which abusing language is used for consanguineal relatives.

I noted down all the interviews as I was not allowed to record any of them for both men and women. Women did not allow me to record their interviews, the reason being the "purdah of voice" (although they did record folksongs). Explaining the *purdah* ethics, one of the women participants described that the "woman's voice should not be heard

by a *na-mahram*¹⁴. Despite my assurance that I will be the only one who would listen to their interviews, they did not agree. With that being said, I followed the research ethics protocol and did not record their interviews. Two women interviewers did not let me record their interviews and folksongs in their voice. One was *Raeesa's* daughter-in-law, who after multiple reminders to *Raeesa Begum* (mother-in-law) sent me one hand-written folksong. Other three, I wrote by myself as *Shahina Begum* narrated them when she visited me at Salma's home. Similarly, I was not allowed by men participants to record their interview either. For them, the *purdah* of voice was not really a factor but they were not comfortable being recorded as they felt fearful that their words might create trouble for them and their family members. Therefore, I took notes after the interviews were completed.

Rana Zafar arranged interviews with men and remained with me during those interviews. During the interviews, he also helped me understand some of the *haryanvi language* words used by Rajput men during the conversation. At the beginning of the interviews, he would introduce me and my purpose of meeting with them. To make the data more valid, I also interviewed two non-Rajput men who have close relations with Rajput families. I asked open-ended general questions from the men during their interviews such as, who are the real Rajput characters? Do these traits still exist in the Rajput men? How would you define a real Rajput man? Other questions relevant to the Rajput's history and origin were also asked. Most of the interviews were conducted in *Urdu/Haryanvi* language as it was comprehensible for both me and the respondents. Most of the participants could speak fluent *Urdu* with *Haryanvi* dialect.

Hospitality is a prominent feature of Rajput culture, which explains the reason why I was graciously received by everybody. Historically, Rajputs have been well-known for their hospitality, which they take pride in and boast about frequently. Extending hospitality to the outsiders have been part of their culture and an act of their forefathers. It is considered a matter of honor and prestige if they fail to serve their guests well. They would frequently quote many examples from their proud history, validating their hospitable nature. The most popular one was of *Rana Ratan Singh*¹⁵ and *Allauddin*

¹⁴ Men whom women are not allowed to meet in privacy

¹⁵ Rajput ruler of Chittoor – a name of place in India

Khilji meeting at *Chittoor*¹⁶. *Rana Rattan Singh* welcomed *Allauddin Khilji*¹⁷ and served him well even though he was fully aware that *Allauddin Khilji* was his enemy and didn't have good intentions for the Rajputs (Tiwari, 1960).

Fortunately, I was lucky enough to witness their amazing hospitality first-hand. The reason being such that Salma and Rana Zafar have very strong ties with the families and accompanied me almost everywhere. Secondly, most of the families I visited, I met them for the first time, which put them under pressure to prove that Rajput's hospitality is exceptional. They also commented that although *Pathans*¹⁸ are famous for their hospitality, but Rajputs are no less than *Pathans* when it comes to that. It is customary for the guests to eat and drink at the host's house before they leave.

3.2.2. Interviewing the Rajput Women

I received unclear and perplexed replies from the women who were asked for the interviews. They had some apprehensions which were clearly visible in their remarks such as a few commented that they do not have credible information about the Rajput culture. Someone was worried about what I would ask from her whereas the others were fearful of their families and commented that they might get into trouble if their families will get to know about the interview. Some had concerns like what if this interview will get telecasted on television or radio? A few did not even reply and just gave me baffled smiles. At the beginning of my research, women participants were primarily inquisitive and interested in knowing the "usefulness" and "beneficiality" of the research findings. However, as the research proceeded, women started to talk more about the importance and meaning of the folksongs.

The average time of women interviews was two-three hours. Some interviews were conducted in bits and pieces due to the time available to them after completing household chores, arrival of uninvited guests and their hesitation for the interview in presence of the male family members. In-depth interviews were conducted with openended questions and my approach was to encourage women for the recording and

¹⁶ Name of a place in India

¹⁷ A rival of Rana Ratan Singh and a ruler of Delhi

¹⁸ An ethnic group in Pakistan, majority of this ethnic group now live in province Khyber Pakhtun Khawa

explaining the cultural interpretation of the folksongs. The interviews were conducted in the *Urdu* language as all the participants speak and understand the language.

The women participants I interviewed were illiterate, strict *purdah* observers and restricted to their homes. These women usually got the *Quran* education in their homes by a *moulani*¹⁹. Previously, it was not considered significant or culturally acceptable for women to go outside from homes to schools. Additionally, at that time (sixty to seventy years ago) there were no schools in their villages. Among the interviewees, only *Kousar* went to school up to grade five. After completing class two, her parents did not allow her to go to school for further education because of social pressure related to *purdah* and Rajput traditions. However, *Salma* got education till 12th grade as before getting married she used to live with her brother in a city.

The average age of the women interviewees ranged from thirty to seventy plus years. Only *Kousar* was 32 years old and youngest of all the female interviewees. The interviews were mostly conducted in conversational style and at some points, I had to redirect the conversation to ensure it stays on-track and in harmony with my research objectives. Silence, smiles and pauses during interviews along with body gestures were all part of the interview process. They had an unspoken fear that due to my educational background, they might not be able to contest with me in the choice of “proper” words. Therefore, it was more of women’s talk rather than formal discussion. Nonetheless, they were cautious about communicating their feelings and emotions while talking about their natal families, in-laws, and real life experiences.

Women's interviews had various salient features, a few of them have been stated below:

3.2.2.1. Power Balance and Imbalance During the Interview Process

According to Wolf (1996), power dynamics is always present in a research relationship; whether it is between researchers or between researcher and participants. This dynamics makes it even more necessary to encourage reflexivity. Keeping the above factor in mind, it was crucial to understand how I can minimize the differences between myself and the participants during the interviews. To do this, I not only asked questions from women participants but I also replied to their questions related to my family, education,

¹⁹ The wife of maulvi -the religious man. She teaches the *Quran* to women and girls only.

and job. This two-way question-answer session eased them out and transformed the power dynamics. Any feelings of intimidation that they might have felt were also lessened. Rajput women did tend to rank me highly for being an educated and working woman, having both personal and financial freedom to work and thus they named my field research activity as a “luxury” which they could not afford but the privileges they seemed to be proud of were that they were Rajput and married to Rajput men of royal and martial race. Hence, Rajput women considered themselves higher in status than me. Despite all my efforts, I must admit here that some power imbalances remained that could not be overcome by my high educational level or me being a working woman. The fact did remain that I did not belong to the Rajput clan. Nevertheless, the group homogeneity served in favor that this prominent power imbalance did not hinder the actual spirit of research.

3.2.2.2. Interview as an Empowering Process

Initially, it was hard to begin the interviews as women were shy and nervous but later on, it became a source of disclosure of feelings and emotions for them. Interviews provided them with a space to express their voices that were not only heard but documented too. Women who participated in interviews not only answered the relevant research questions but expressed their opinions about how they felt about being an interviewee in the research. It was a pleasant surprise for me that women who were reluctant and apprehensive in the beginning were expressing their opinion about being a part of the research process. One of the interviewees expressed at the end of her interview that she felt a sense of pleasure by taking part in a research as an interviewee and as a singer. One of them confessed that she is “pleased to tell me what they know, and their men do not”. Another confided in me that she felt “a sense of credibility that they have some knowledge and information to share”. One reiterated to me that she had not “shared her feelings with anyone before like how she shared them with me”. One was of the opinion that revisiting the past and sharing memories of their parents was nostalgic yet a fulfilling experience for her.

3.2.2.3 Importance of Nonverbal Cues during Interview

James (1985; as cited in Dickson-Swift et al., 2007) mentions that during an interview, researchers should take account of both verbal and non-verbal communication as

sometimes women (or other subordinate groups) may not verbally express their feelings rather they may express themselves in subtle ways. I observed and documented body movements and gestures, facial expressions and intonation and inflection of the voices. All these were made part of my field notes which provided a better understanding of the interviews. I observed that at the beginning of the interviews, women participants were nervous, hesitant to talk, hands clutched and made less eye contact. Gradually, as the conversation proceeded, tension was released with the change in the body gesture. Women used more hand movements, had a relaxed sitting and standing posture, smiled and laughed more and even made frequent eye contact with me.

3.2.3. Interviewing the Rajput Men

I interviewed Rajput men after recording approximately half of the folk songs from women. I did it purposely so as to understand the image of Rajput men as narrated in the folk songs. After listening to the folksongs, I noted down prominent characteristics of the Rajput man's personality. Keeping the notion of the "ideal Rajput" traits as presented in their folksongs, I framed the interview questions for men.

The interviews I conducted with men were longer in duration as every interviewer started with Rajput history regardless of what question I asked. Men interviews were conducted without household interruptions in contrast to women which were interrupted by children, household chores, uninvited guests and arrival of their men from jobs. For a few interviews, my husband and most of the times, Rana Zafar accompanied me for the interviews with men as it was culturally unacceptable for my family that I interview non-family men without them. Rana Zafar had good reputation and social networking with the men whom I met for interviews. Due to this reason, when he accompanied me, men showed their willingness for interviews. I interviewed ten men in all in which eight out of ten were Rajput men and two were non-Rajput who were married to Rajput women. Interviewees' average ages ranged from fifty to seventy.

Here, it might interest the readers to know more about the interview setting and arrangement. While conducting the interviews with men, I followed Rajput traditions and covered myself including my face with a large shawl. I was not seated in front of the men interviewees; instead, Rana Zafar would sit in front of the interviewees and I

sat at a distance, though in the same room. The participants did not make eye contact with me while replying to the questions, rather they would make eye contact with Rana Zafar or my husband. The average duration of the interviews with men ranged from two to two and a half hours. These interviews were taken in the participant's home in the afternoon after the men came back from their jobs. Most of the participants talked about Rajput traits in a historical context when Rajputs were rulers of some parts of India. They generally believed that Rajput men still have those personality traits which their rulers had, especially commitment to a cause, resilience, bravery, and generosity. The two participants who were not Rajput but married to Rajput women were seemed to be more in awe of the Rajput men. They perceived their relation as being something that they should be proud of since they had been married into the clan and were part of a royal caste and belonged to a noble family through marriage. I was told that these men have strong business ties and long family relations with Rajputs of the area. We were always served with tea and snacks during or after the interviews.

3.2.3.1. Reflection on Interviews Conducted with Men

Rajput men as compared to women, were more confident as they deal with other people and work outside homes. Some of them were confused at the beginning of the interviews. Presumably, they felt awkward when a woman questioned them in a formal setting. Talking directly to the women is not a tradition in Rajput culture as one of the interviewees during an interview expressed "In our culture men usually ask and women are answerable to their questions" (with laughter).²⁰

Men interviewees generally did not take the interruptions very well when I had to bring the discussion back to the research questions to keep it on track. One of them expressed his disapproval by commenting, "Yes, I understand what you want to know but all the information is interlinked and without 'telling you' the cultural context, how would you be able to write it correctly?" So, for the most part during the interviews I had to wait and listen patiently. I noted down relevant information while listening.

²⁰ I quoted this statement primarily to reflect the mindset of the Rajput men and their perception regarding women. Being a researcher, I did not comment on such a misogynistic opinion, even though, on a personal level it was hard to tolerate.

Another element that I noticed during the interviews was the male participants were curious and apprehensive about the questions asked by me. They also seemed concerned about the wording and narration of their conversation. Moreover, they were skeptical about the interviews arranged with the women and expressed their doubts regarding the women's ability to comprehend and understand my questions. According to them, women are not educated, lack confidence and exposure of the outside world. They warned me that I may not get "adequate" and "good" data from the household women. It is also worth mentioning here that few participants expressed their gratitude and acknowledged that my research on/about Rajput and their history (as they understood it) that is neglected by the Rajput themselves, may bring about consequential effects. One of the respondents, Abdur- Rehman was very happy that I am researching on Rajput origin and history.

Many times, during the conversation, I felt that the hierarchical relationship which existed between me and men interviewees, made them uncomfortable. The disparity, which was making them uncomfortable was my education and the fact that I am a working woman. Most of the men I interviewed were either illiterate or had under graduate education. Only my husband and Khalil ur Rehman had post graduate degrees.

Couple of men interviewees ridiculed my education and said to my husband "*itna perh ke kia kerna hey?* (What will she do after getting higher education?). They also taunted my working woman status and made a couple of remarks about it like "*aurat ki kamaee main barkat nahi hoti*" (A woman's earnings lack blessing from Allah) and "*aurat ki jaga to gher main hee hoti hey*" (A woman's place is in her home) "*aurat ko gher he sambhalna chaheye*" (women should only take care of her home), As a researcher, I did not react or showed my exasperation and accepted those comments and suggestions with a big heart.

While conducting interviews, most of the men talked about the nostalgic stories from the past, their Rajput ancestors; their origin and history. Even though these stories were not directly related to my topic of research, I still managed to filter and extract relevant information. Nevertheless, I heard a few stories from the older men that in fact, helped me better understand Rajput man's personality and traits in their cultural context. The participants also expressed their happiness and gratitude as they get to revisit their past

with my questions which according to them nobody seemed interested in anymore and were “never asked or talked about in discussions”.

3.2.4. Who Were My Folksingers?

It is critical to mention here that most of the Rajput women who recorded folksongs were ordinary housewives. They had learned the songs verbally and memorized the lyrics through performances and practice from their mothers or aunts when they were in their teens or were young. Therefore, they cannot be called “folksingers” in the true sense of the word, who had been trained in singing and performing folksongs on functions/ceremonies etc. Since these women singers had not benefited from any kind of formal institution as far as the performance of the folksongs is concerned.

An exception in this regard was *dadi Sughra* who was a professional singer (*doomni*). *Dadi* was a fragile, poor and an old woman of over eighty and lived with her step-son. Her tiny home was within walking distance from Salma’s house. She told me that in the past, she used to go to Rajput family functions to sing folksongs and dance, but due to the inclination of Rajput towards religion, that had stopped and she was no longer invited to sing folksongs on weddings or childbirth. She also informed me that she has relations with few Rajput families for many years and some of the Rajput families still support her financially. *Dadi Sughra* had a loud and melodious voice, irrespective of her poor health and she sang folksongs with energy and zest without taking pauses during singing. She expressed her grief by commenting on the fact that people do not like to call her on their ceremonies for singing anymore (which is the only profession she knows of). She also told me that after her death, nobody will follow her legacy of singing folksongs in ceremonies since her daughter-in-law does not know how to sing or dance either. Her granddaughters and a grandson go to school. She would never like them to choose her profession for a living. She explained that there is no scope for professional singers in Bhakkar. Therefore, it would be a realistic approach for her to opt for another profession or learn other skills for financial survival.

3.2.5. Folksongs Recording Schedule

I reached Bhakkar in November 2015. After arrival at Salma's house, I started my fieldwork from the very next day. The next morning, we got ready and dressed up in a big shawl (a covering from head to toe) and went to meet the first folk singer *dadi* (grandmother) *Sughra*. *Dadi Sughra* was a *doomni*²¹, lived near Salma's home at ten minutes walking distance. We went through the small streets and reached *dadi*'s home. *Dadi* was happy to receive us and after serving tea and snacks, informed us that she will come tomorrow to Salma's house and record the folksongs there. She did not want to record the songs in her home as it was small and noisy because of her grandchildren and the street noise. The next morning near 9.00 am, *dadi* came and she recorded five folksongs for me at Salma's house.

I visited women singers many times for recording and interviews. On couple of occasions, I remained unsuccessful in finding the right person on right time to record the folksongs, despite having set the time and date with the women beforehand. I was informed that there were three women who knew folksongs, but they were not in Bhakkar at that time and had gone to other cities for family visits. We took their contact numbers and information about their tentative return and planned our next visits accordingly. I waited one week for a female singer who had promised that she will be back on the pre-scheduled date but did not come. Later, I heard the news that she fell ill and was staying at her relative's home.

Salma and I made some new contacts and planned our visits accordingly. Mostly, I tried to adjust my schedule for recordings and interviewees according to the participants' daily life routine. It was a great relief though that most of the women singers live at a walking distance of ten to fifteen minutes from Salma's house. Thus, whenever they ask us to come for interviews and recordings, we were able to reach them instantly. Only *dadi Sughra* was the most punctual woman singer as she recorded her folk songs on the scheduled time and date. It was obvious that she was an old lady and didn't participate in most of the household chores. Her daughter-in-law had the main responsibility for the household chores.

²¹ Professional singer; locally known as *doomni*

Most of the folksongs were recorded in women singers' homes and took a great deal of time. At times, the voice quality would be poor due to the singers' old age or breathing problems and I had to pause or give them short breaks. Moreover, the singers needed breaks in between.

Unfortunately, I lost the lyrics of a few songs due to a technical issue. Later, I had to rerecord those songs as well, which took time.

3.2.5.1. Why the Term 'Perform' Rather Than 'Sing'?

Being a significant genre of folklore, folksong has many themes and literature that is based on the lives and experiences of the people who own them. They carry memories, perceptions and imagination of the people through the unscripted oral form. Folksongs, sang on various events are an important socio-cultural part of the owner's daily life activities. Like other oral forms of folklore, folksong also involves action/ reaction of the performer and audience. Therefore, the folksongs not only consist of lyrics that are sung on occasions but they also involve body signs, gestures, facial expressions and action/reaction of the audiences. In short, folksongs are not merely vocal lyrics uttered by the singer but they also convey messages, have deeper meanings which tend to absorb the listeners and create an impression on those who truly understand them. It is not solely an activity but rather an experience and a phenomenon. Hence, in my opinion, word perform is more appropriate than singing of folksongs and I have used this term quite often throughout my dissertation.

3.2.5.2. How are Folksongs Performed?

It is of utmost significance to remind the readers that I have repeatedly used the word 'perform' for folksongs rather than the word 'sing'. As stated previously, in my opinion, when a folksong is performed, it is not solely concerned with the lyrics and the melody, rather it includes the entire physical and social setting and an experience which the folksinger creates by her voice, facial expressions, body gestures and audience's response to the performance. When these songs are performed, number of women join in and sing along with the folk singer, some criticize the lyrics, a few even fancy to make corrections. Giggles, laughter and claps all become part of the experience. Thus, in this research, I made sure not only to record the songs but also to note down the whole experience such as event, setting, gestures from the folk singers and the audience

etc. This information not only helped me greatly with the analysis but apart from that, the focus on details made this research distinct and unique in its own regard.

A typical folksong recording usually started soon after Salma and I would arrive at any of the women singer's homes. After a brief reception, which included the host asking about us, we would be offered some refreshments. Later, I would introduce my research on folk songs. Quite often, the women would divert the discussion to family talks/gossips and I would have to stop it by bringing the discussion back on track. Most of the female singers would usually take approximately ten to twenty minutes preparations time for the first song's recording. Only *dadi Sughra* took less than five minutes and her song recordings went swiftly.

Mostly the folksongs were recorded at around 10-11 am which was the most suitable time for the women since they would be free to talk or visit each other in the neighbourhood. All the folksongs were recorded in a room preferably bed cum drawing room, with women from the family and neighborhood sitting on *charpoy*²² or chairs. Some would even stand along the walls. Recording of the folk songs would take two to three hours on average, depending on the singer's memory, amount of time taken by her to overcome shyness and hesitation, time spent recalling the lyrics and proper tunes etc. Sudden interruptions, criticism from the other women and arrival of unexpected guests also accounted for the delay in estimated time. Sometimes we had to wait for hours as the woman singer would get busy with unavoidable domestic engagements. Elder women took more time recording the folksongs since most of them had health issues like coughing and shortness of breath that would affected their voice quality. In a couple of recordings, the voice quality would drop and it would become almost inaudible due to coughing or shortness of breath. In times like those, I had to stop the recordings and pause for some time before continuing again. I would start the recording again after they would recover from coughing and unstable breathing.

Before the recording would start, it was observed that the doors of the rooms would be closed. Women would make sure that their men have left the homes for their jobs since they did not want the men to hear the songs²³. In the beginning, the recordings would

²² Traditional bed

²³ But they understood that they were singing the folksongs for me and had no objection later on ²⁶ Shame, out of respect

start with a few moments of silence, nervous giggles and then a loud laughter from the singer or the audience. Although the women hesitated at the beginning, but later on, they became confident and began to enjoy the songs and the recording sessions. Similarly, women in the audience also started to enjoy the songs. They would laugh at the lyrics and occasionally cover their faces with *dupatta* in *sharam*²⁶ whenever they would hear any obscene or romantic word in the folk songs.

Women singers usually started their folk songs with humming. First, the rhythm/tune of the song was recalled and then eventually the lyrics were voiced. The women were so conditioned to this act that the narrators (who narrated the song lyrics for me to write) also had to hum the song to the tune first to recall the lyrics. It was also observed that sometimes the women from the audience would assist the singer in recalling the lyrics. A few women from the audience would also join in and utter the lyrics with the singer for correct pronunciation or tunes. Some of them would also encourage other women to perform and record the songs. It was noticed that at the beginning of the recording session, usually few women would be present. Gradually, the number of women would increase and by the end of the recordings usually ten to fifteen women from the neighborhood and family would have gathered in the room. These women would not clap at the end of the folksongs as most of the audience is expected to do, rather they would recall and suggest the correct lyrics or tunes of the songs to the woman singers.

After the folk songs were recorded, it was a common practice for women to crack jokes about the songs, reminisce about the past times when those songs were performed, usually in their childhood (since most of the women were around 50-70 years) and they would listen to them.

Moreover, as promised, the recordings of the folksongs were stored in compact discs (CD) in my system, besides the email and USB for safety purposes.

3.2.6. The Rajput Folksongs - An Overview

For the present research, eighty-four folksongs were collected from the Rajput women and a professional singer. Out of these eighty-four songs, eighty-one are wedding songs and the remaining three are jachcha/sohar (birth) songs including one lullaby.

The wedding songs were categorized into three different categories, namely: pre-sohar songs, wedding and wedding-day songs (*biyah ke geet*). This classification is based primarily upon the ceremonies in which these songs are performed. The other category of songs namely, jachcha/sohar songs are commonly performed on child birth.

For the purpose of thematic analysis, every folksong was numbered and then classified into main themes and sub-themes. These sub-themes were identified, analyzed, and interpreted accordingly.

In my humble opinion, folksongs can only be understood within a certain cultural context. Without context, the folksongs are incomplete. The setting in which these songs are performed provide an insight into the context²⁴. Due to this reason, it became imperative that I specify and categorize the folksongs based on the ceremonies in which they are performed. The transcription of folksongs along with the commentaries, observations and notes on the ceremonies may provide the cultural understanding for the scholars and non-Rajput audience. However, for the present study, I had to rely on the accounts and narrations of the local Rajput women to gain a better understanding of the traditional events and ceremonies in which these songs are performed.

It might be interesting to mention here that most of the songs, despite being performed at different ceremonies were all alike in one aspect. They all represented symbolic manifestation of the culture (Ortner, 1973) and contained overlapping cultural themes.

I also noticed that some of the folksongs I had collected for my PhD research from Bhakkar had similar themes to the folksongs collected from Wahando (town in district Gujranwala) for my M. Phil research (2013). The similarity could be accounted to the fact that all the songs were collected from the Rajput communities²⁵. Another common feature of the folksongs collected from both Bhakkar and *Wahando*²⁶ is that, in both the places, the folksongs are performed in women-only spaces.

²⁴ During my field work in Bhakkar, no wedding was held. Three baby girls were born but no ceremony was held. Therefore, I asked my participants during ICSs, interviews and recording of the folksongs to recollect on the wedding ceremonies and birth of a child before I documented and interpreted the related folksongs.

²⁵ Some songs have slight variation in the lyrics and singing tune of the song.

²⁶ I conducted field work in this village in 2013 for M. Phil studies

Folksongs are mostly performed in women-only spaces i.e. within the homes where no man can enter without the women's permission. Though, these spaces might be critical to women's autonomy but it creates an issue for researchers and scholars working on folksongs literature. The folksongs performed in 'safe spaces' are not heard or known outside those places. Folksongs as a medium communicate women's common identity and also reflect some of the common concepts of their lives. However, Dlamini (2009) in her research on *Swazi* women folksongs quotes Mkhonza (2003) who argues that women issues such as their marginalization and maltreatment in the society had always been communicated through the folksongs until now; since they choose women-only spaces.

Folksongs as a medium of communication is also non-political as they share their experiences with the audience who can relate to them (2003:54). Similarly, Brunner (1998) claims that song is an ineffective medium of communicating women's concerns because it is performed out of political arena and is non-threatening for the power holders.

On the contrary, Gunner (1995) argues that folksongs will lose their essence if performed in public. In his opinion, folksongs play a critical role in providing privacy to the women which provides them the freedom and distance from the patriarchal power, which they rightfully yearn for. It is this freedom that allows them to explore the themes present in folksongs and challenge the stereotypical images and structures of powers defining gender roles and social statuses (1995). Here, it is noteworthy to mention that the thematic analysis of the Rajput folksongs also exposed the flawed perception of western feminists about third world women²⁷ who are considered as voiceless and muted, as Gold (1997) also claims that they are neither voiceless nor submissive but protest against patriarchal hierarchies according to their circumstances by applying their local coping strategies (Radner and Lanser, 1987). Vail and White (1991) claim that song is a very powerful weapon for contesting those who are in power without fear because it possesses "poetic license' (1991:45).

²⁷ A political term used for the aggregation of the undeveloped countries after the World War I as Communist and non- Communist countries

Both the debates highlight the significance of folksongs, although in diverse ways. I argue that although the folksongs may have a marginal status for being performed in women-only spaces and out of power structures (Mkhonza, 2003; Brunner, 1998) but nevertheless, they still manage to provide women a medium of expression and a platform to challenge and contest the power structures that generally exist in all patriarchal societies. According to Foucault (1978), that where there is power, there is resistance and both cannot coexist without each other since both power and resistance are interwoven in complicated yet subtle ways.

For me, folksongs are of paramount importance; they provide a platform to women where they can share and express those sensitive topics and harsh social realities which cannot be talked about openly. For example, analyzing the Rajput culture, women cannot openly dialogue about sex, sexuality and romantic love, but through folksongs, they share their sentiments which are considered socially acceptable. The analysis and interpretation of the folksongs reveal that Rajput men and women are depicted in various roles which are socially constructed. The social construction of gender and repeated gender acts (Butler, 1999), as stated previously, assign roles and duties to both men and women accordingly. Each gender is socially expected to adjust and alter themselves to the pre-existing gender roles defined by the society. Similarly, the analysis also revealed the socially constructed roles of both men and women specifically in the context of the Rajput culture. However, the analysis of most of the folksongs conceal that Rajput characteristics depicted in the folksongs are generally hyperbolic statements, they might be based upon the ideology of pure Rajput traits but in real, these characteristics are solely a depiction of a desirable yet utopian state. The readers might benefit from an example here. In real life situations, the Rajput men and women are expected to possess certain Rajput traits of which they can be proud of and which can distinguish them from the non-Rajputs. A typical Rajput male prototype would be a fine, brave man who takes pride in his blood, retains the feudal instinct and is the most punctilious. All in all, these men are expected to be exemplary and flawless.

To conclude, I observed that folksongs as one of the genres of folklore, still exist in social life of the Rajput women living in Bhakkar. A frequent theme of these songs is gender subversion; although subtle and discreet, the women performers try to subvert the patriarchal powers and dominant masculine ideologies interwoven in their complex

cultural structure. It offers a platform for them to enforce, reinforce and transfer the patriarchal hegemonies and hierarchies from one generation to other. In simple terms, both types of transformation i.e. reinforcement of the patriarchal system and resistance against the hegemonies subtly pave their way to the next generation through folksongs. These folksongs are performed on a variety of occasions and among various social classes with varied patterns of behaviors. The prime essence of all the Rajput folksongs collected for this research study revolves around the family by presenting multifaceted images of domestic life and relationships (marital, kinship and relationship between the genders) within family members. In short, the imperceptible potential of the folksongs to bring about a drastic change cannot be denied.

3.2.7. Informal Conversation Sessions (ICSs)

Informal conversation sessions were mainly used to interact with the Rajput women to recognize and acknowledge the socio-cultural interpretations of the recorded folksongs. The study aimed to take into account the emic perspective, which was found to be lacking in many of the previous researches. These sessions encouraged women participants to talk to each other regarding folksongs and inevitably shifted the balance of power away from me and towards the research participants. However, it was not an easy task to initiate the sessions, as women would mostly like to talk about their family matters. Keeping the discussion on-track and restricted to the topic of folksongs was a hard task, however, with slight interruptions now and then, I would manage to get them back on the folksongs' discussion.

The information conversation sessions were held after the recording of the folksongs from the women singers. Five to ten women participated in each session. In these sessions, Rajput women from every age group were welcomed. This was done to ensure maximum participation, rich data and representation of every age group. To maximize the outcome, I did not merely ask questions; rather, I would play the folksongs recordings and then ask the questions related to their translation and interpretation. These session benefitted me in two ways, firstly, I was able to collect information regarding cultural interpretations of the folksongs. Secondly, it also resulted in gaining information about a few potential folksingers.

3.3. Data Collection Tools

3.3.1 Key Informants

Salma and her husband Rana Zafar were my key informants. Salma is my sister-in-law and has lived in Bhakkar for the past twenty-seven years. She is fifty-five years old, with two sons and one daughter. She is a housewife, belongs to a middle-class family and lives in an old part of the Bhakkar city. She has studied till 12th grade and was very fond of higher education but soon after a suitable match was found for her, she was married off and could not continue her studies any further.

Rana Zafar is a mature man of nearly fifty-eight years and runs his own wholesale business in the main market of the Bhakkar city. He was born in Bhakkar and belongs to Chauhan's caste of Rajput. He is the eldest of his three brothers and six sisters. His grandfather, along with his brothers and sisters migrated from Karnal (India) when Rana Zafar's father was a young boy of sixteen years. Since then, they have lived in the same *muhallah*²⁸ in Bhakkar. After their migration to Pakistan, they claimed and acquired a big land for residence as well as for cultivation. However, due to personal reasons, Rana Zafar had to sell the land and started his own business with his brothers in the wholesale market. He also took care of the family business after the death of his father. Rana Zafar lives in his ancestral home and is reluctant to move to a new place even though his children want to live in the new areas of the city. For him, there are several reasons in favor of his choice. The most prominent one being the presence of the whole neighborhood which includes his uncles and their sons who live together.

Salma and Rana Zafar have good social connections with their relatives and also with non-Rajputs families. I did not stay with them merely because of the family relation but also because I had easy access to the research participants, since most of them lived at a walking distance from their house. Fortunately for me, their amicable relationship with most of the research participants also helped me greatly. I was cordially welcomed and facilitated for the recordings and interviews as the Rajput families trusted them since they had known each other for generations. If not for them, this research would not have been possible as I would not have been able to access the Rajput families and

²⁸ neighbourhood

especially the Rajput women living in Bhakkar. Salma proved to be a great help in identifying the women participants even before I had arrived in Bhakkar. She accompanied me to the field visits, helped me in recording of the folksongs, writing of folksongs, interviews, and ICSs. Rana Zafar contacted male participants and remained with me during the interviews. He also took me in his transport which facilitated meeting those Rajput families who lived in suburbs of the city.

I had to depend on these two key informants for reaching out to the Rajput families, especially women and due to my dependency on those women, I had to wait for their availability which at times frustrated me. I dealt with the frustration by keeping myself busy with the other family women and talking to them about their traditions, customs, and domestic politics existing within their families.

3.3.2. Participant Observation

Participant observation is the hallmark and lies at the core of anthropological research. Elliott and Timulak (2005) note that participant observation excels in capturing rules and norms that are taken for granted by experienced participants or cultural insiders. These may include personal rituals and routines, which are at the risk of being missed by the researcher in conventional interviews. Since participants might consider it insignificant to bring them up during the conversations.

In contrast to the benefits of this technique, at times, participant observation may compromise the privacy of the people being researched (Gifford, 1987). Moreover, Brehm and Kassin (1993) state that the presence of the researcher may influence the behavior of the people in their environment. This phenomenon known as 'reactivity' in observational studies occurs when the participants are aware that they are being observed by the researcher. As a result, they might alter their behavior, attitude, performance and daily routines while being under observation. Consequently, this alteration might result in an observer receiving a distorted image of the reality.

To overcome the issue of reactivity in observational studies, it becomes the prime responsibility of the researcher to be careful and not to disturb the participant's life as much as possible. Knowing the phenomenon and the guidelines, I cannot truly claim that my presence did not affect the participants' routines; however, I ensured that this

factor was as much minimized as possible. I adjusted and rescheduled my activities to fit their routine tasks and free time. Additionally, I kept the timings for both the recordings of the folksongs and the interviews flexible and in accordance with the participants' availability. My insider status also supported me in getting the emic perspective as women would frequently say to me, "you are our *bhabi*²⁹, then you must know what kind of men Rajputs are and we cannot hide their traits from you".

I started visiting Rajput families for folksong recordings and interviews from the second day of my arrival in Bhakkar. Salma accompanied me on every visit. While meeting with Rajput families in their household, I generally observed the estranged relationship between daughter-in-law and mother-in-law. This judgement could be accounted to their non-verbal cues such as body gestures and tense and edgy facial expressions. However, whenever I would question them about their relationship, their statements would deny my observation. With reference to the folk songs, they criticized the lyrics of the songs describing the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law's relationship. In their opinion, the lyrics of the cultural folksongs were based on the over-exaggerated assumptions of this relationship and were rarely an honest depiction of the truth.

As the discussion progressed further, the women began to concur with the sentiments expressed through these folksongs. Few of the women also recounted and complained against the discriminatory behavior they had to face in the conjugal homes, however, they felt proud of themselves for handling those tough times. A similar approach has been discussed by Kandiyoti (1988), who explains in her research article 'Bargaining with Patriarchy' that women use different strategies and certain "rules of law" along with various coping mechanisms to assist them in their survival in a patriarchal setting. These culturally driven strategies, which she has named 'patriarchal bargains' provide a much deeper understanding of the patriarchal systems compared to the theories of the western scholars. In South Asian societies particularly, women face variety of patriarchal challenges and after identification they combat them utilizing different rules of laws and survival strategies accordingly (P: 74). During my visits to different homes, I observed gestures of mother-in-law, daughter-in-law and sister-in-law were affront even when they talked positively about each other in front of me. I also noted that a few

²⁹ Brother's wife

women participants felt uncomfortable in each other's presence. In one incident, a mother and daughter-in-law got into a heated argument while discussing the folksongs based on mother-in-law and daughter-in-law's relationships.

Listening keenly to their conversations observing their non-verbal gestures during the folksongs' interpretation sessions and talking to them informally facilitated me in understanding their everyday interaction, their relationships (both with their husbands and in-laws) and roles these women played in their daily lives. During a conversation, one of the women singers shared her experience of domestic violence when she refused to ask her parents for money to buy a motorcycle for her husband. She narrated the whole experience of how she bravely stood up for herself against her in-laws and the hostile environment at home. The strategy she used was that she made an alliance with her *devarani*³⁰ which helped her resist and retaliate against the unreasonable demand of her mother-in-law to buy a motorcycle for her husband. Both daughters-in-law schemed together, sustained pressure from their husbands and in-laws and resisted for many days but never left their homes. They stopped doing the daily domestic chores and finally, their in-laws had to take their demand back due to their steadiness and unity.

The Rajput women, who were part of the study, also talked about how the unrealistic expectations and demands of the in-laws and social and moral pressures from their parents would make their relationship with conjugal families very difficult at times and almost on the edge of collapsing. In such circumstances, women would use different coping and combating tactics such as: fighting, displaying acts of defiance, ignoring the family members, lobbying against and with other women in the house, going back to natal homes etc. as Strathern (1987) explains that new strategies and forms of consciousness do not simply come from the past experiences. Women gain and use new tactics through everyday personal experiences which can be complex and sometimes contradictory to the situation. It is no surprise that since these women had been part of negative and harsh surroundings, their own personalities shaped up to be intransigent and reactionary.

Some of the folk songs also reveal daughter-in-law or bride's reaction to the maltreatment she might receive from her in-laws. These songs describe how she will

³⁰ Husband's younger brother's wife

retaliate if they dare to misbehave with her. Songs like these may serve a purpose of intimidating or scaring the in-laws so that they might treat the bride nicely.

Interaction between women, mother-daughter and mother and daughter-in-law, was worth observing. As noticed, daughter was treated differently than the daughter-in-law. In her natal home, the daughter is exempted from some family chores, had a supportive role towards her sister-in-law (brother's wife) and remained under the scrutiny of her mother, while mother-in-law had an authority over the daughter-in-law and would direct her regarding the family relationship and daily household chores. In my opinion, the reason the daughter-in-law would not like the mother-in-law might be because she finds her too controlling.

Rajput women, as I observed are in general confident, vocal and emotionally expressive women. They work hard but are somewhat contentious as they get into squabbles about trivial matters and pick fights within the home. During the domestic fights, the women are very vocal and do not hide their true feelings for each other; however, these fights rarely escalate and usually the things get back to normal by the evening. In this way, homes may become a place where these women openly express themselves. Howsoever, their yelling must not be heard outside the homes as it would bring shame and disgrace to the men's honour and will not be tolerated by the Rajput men. Moreover, back-biting, conspiracies and forming alliances against mother-in-law, daughter-in-law and sister-in-law are common practices in a Rajput household and are part of the survival strategies which women make and break in order to pull through living in a conjugal home. Undoubtedly, feminists have rightly expounded the argument that home is a gendered space and locus of gender domination as well as a place of female exploitation by the house fellows (Spain, 1993).

Customarily, in joint family systems, there is no concept of women's personal or leisure space in homes. I visited Rajput families and observed that in a joint family system, daughters-in-law has one room which she shares with her husband and children³¹. This is the only room for which she is given the freedom to decorate or refurbish it according to her taste. The personal room is also where she spends time when she is ill. Typically,

³¹ When male children grow up, they start to sleep in deras or in mardana- men's place, where the older men of the family sleep

as observed, women spend their leisure or free time in a big courtyard along with other women relatives. Sometimes women from the neighborhood also join in their free time. Elder women dislike and do not prefer if a relative or friend of daughter-in-law visits her in her room instead of sitting in the courtyard in front of everyone.

Similar to the women, gaining a deeper understanding of the roles, relationships and interactions of the Rajput men would have been incomplete without observing them in their daily life routine. Staying in Salma's home and visiting other families for the interviews and collection of folk songs, I observed that the gender relationship in the Rajput community was strictly stereotypical. For example, in a husband-wife, motherson and sister-brother relationship, women were expected to serve and men to enjoy their services. The unceasing list of women's work and household chores would go on as she was supposed to iron the man's clothes, cook and serve the food, polish his shoes, make bathroom necessities ready for him etc. After the father, son was served by the mother in the same way and would get the same privileges as the father. The relationship between men, like father-son and between brothers seemed conventional and formal. They would mostly talk about their job or business deals and social networking among the Rajput community. The Rajput men seemed indifferent to the issues of women and their concerns. If an issue arises, the women are informed and consulted, otherwise after taking the food to home, they visit their friends at *deras*³² for spending some relaxed time. Women also keep their relationship as such and after serving food to the men, do not expect any discussion or dialogue unless there is some issue to talk about.

Observing men and women's varied relationships provided me with a fundamental background for analysis of the folksongs. Some of the relationships and themes that were discussed in the folksongs were hypothetically known to me but observing them in a natural setting unfolded various aspects. For example, I observed the relationship of a daughter-in-law with her mother-in-law is based upon dominance and control, how the elder women of the family would influence the younger ones and so on. Without observing these interactions within the family members, it would not have been easy for me to analyze the folksongs in a strict context of the Rajput culture. I cannot claim

³² Men separate place for friends and gossiping, also called mardana or Uttra by Singhji (1993)

that all my observations were in the natural setting and were not distorted by my presence. However, I tried to write them as honestly as I could, without muddling them up with my own perceptions and comments.

3.3.3. Field Notes

Field notes were taken to record the observations both during and after the field visits. These notes helped me significantly in writing precise and comprehensive details relevant to the recordings, interviews and ICSs. After the completion of the folksong recording, in-depth interviews and ICSs, I would bring out a notepad (which I used for describing the setting, audience and people gathered at the place, participants taking part in the ICSs and other family discussions) and take my field notes.

Some notes were also made during the interviews, informal talks, and folksong recordings. I would make sure to inform the participants that I am writing down a few details, however, I avoided writing the interpretation of the folksongs by the singers and interviewees in front of them because of obvious reasons: Firstly, it was difficult to listen and transcribe at the same time. Secondly, I perceived that the women participants might become conscious of my writings. Thirdly, these purpose-driven conversations would sometimes lead the discussion to topics of personal issues specifically consanguineal issues so transcription of their personal details in front of the participants could have made them upset. Nevertheless, as a silent listener (in times when the subject of discussion would drift away to personal issues) I got to apprehend the real sentiments of these women which were more often than not less evident during the formal conversations. Also sometimes these bitter conversations, would suggest a few questions that I would later ask. Quite often, I noticed that the participants would try to sidestep or dodge those questions.

During one of those conversations when I asked if the ideal Rajput men's traits as portrayed in the folksongs lyrics were true, the women had diverse responses, some women projected the positive image of Rajput men such as being religious and committed to his family, while others denied and opined that the Rajput men could be womanizers and are nonchalant as depicted in the folksongs. A few traits related to Rajput's loyalty to their friends in need and fury and aggression were accepted as such by both the genders.

3.4. Data Analysis

Data analysis is the systematic organization and synthesis of the research data (Polit and Hungler 1995:639). After collection and documentation of the folksongs, the next critical step was to identify the themes and the sub-themes. A theme as Braun and Clarke (2006) describe, is something which captures the key idea about the data in relation to the research question.

After listening to the folksongs multiple times, these songs were categorized as mentioned earlier and themes and sub-themes were derived. However, it was not an easy task to distinguish between the themes and sub-themes of the folksongs independently since most of the folksongs had overlapping themes. During the process of categorization, I preferred the women singers' thematic classification of those folksongs. After discussions with them the folksongs were classified into themes and sub-themes categories respectively. In this way, some new categories with distinct themes emerged while some categories were dissolved in sub-themes.

The present study was framed on the basis of the most relevant theoretical frameworks and approaches specifically used in the researches relevant to South Asian folksongs and in particular Rajput folksongs researches conducted in India. My data analysis on the Rajput women as well as their folksongs was mostly influenced by the works of Dr. Kirin Narayan and Dr. Lindsay Harlan³³ and a couple of other researchers such as Anne Gold and Raheja who have prominent names in this field and have worked in Rajasthan with reference to its culture, Rajput women and their folksongs.

3.4.1 Translation and Documentation of the Folksongs

The Rajput people whom I met for the recording of the folksongs, interviews and interpretations did not speak nor comprehended the English language. They speak their local *Haryanvi* language which is quite understandable for the people who know *Urdu*. The difference mostly lies in the dialect as they have special ways of pronouncing

³³ I emailed (13July, 2015) both the renowned scholars/experts on Rajput culture particularly related to the subject of Rajput folksongs, for guidance. They replied and referred some research archives and journals. For this guidance I am really grateful to both of them.

Haryanvi words. Even when they speak *Urdu*; it might be hard to understand since it is spoken in their *Haryanvi* dialect.

It is significant to remind the readers that the folksongs recorded for the study have not been taken from any video, compact disc or through internet sources. These songs are original in nature and were collected from the Rajput women who owned them. The folk songs have also been translated in English language for the non-*haryanvi* readers. The complete list of the transcribed and translated folk songs is documented in the appendix whereas couplets/stanzas of folksongs and relevant narrations from the interviews have been briefly included in the dissertation for the analysis as well as to back up the arguments.

For the translation of the folksongs, I have included some particular *haryanvi* words like “ahee”, “aree” which made these folksongs exclusive to this language. I was informed by the women singers that some words do not have meanings but are used while singing songs as they add to the rhythm. They also mentioned some preparatory words like “uhhh”, “hoon” “reee” which are uttered before the songs are performed. I have also noted particular acts like laughter, smile, eye twitching, and other body gestures in brackets []. Punctuation marks like commas (,) exclamation marks (!) and question marks (?) have also been included to help the readers to gain a better understanding of the singer’s and other people’s expressions while participating in the research. For interviews transcription, ellipsis (...) have been used to indicate where participant took time to respond and paused before giving the answers. While transcribing the text for the study. For interviewee’s narratives, I used italics style which would distinguish rest of the text from the participant’s narration. I adopted these punctuation marks to represent the spoken as well as the unspoken language of the participants.

3.4.2. Transcription of Folksongs and Interviews

Transcription is simply defined as an act of converting something to a written or printed form. Narayan (2015) mentions that oral literature when printed, involves the first step of transcription. She has also mentioned the hard work of transcribing recorded folksongs for the correct lyrics and their meanings in order to write them for the understanding of others. Similarly, for myself, the process of transcription was not

without difficulties. It proved to be quite challenging to write the folksongs as correctly as they were uttered by the female singers. After recording the folksongs, I had to listen to those recordings multiple times since some of the songs had unfamiliar words in them. Salma also helped me in the transcription of the words, in their pronunciation as well as their meanings. I spent a great deal of time understanding the meanings and their correct pronunciation before writing them on paper. In transcription, for both interviews and folksongs, I have included the interviewees' and folksongs singers' expressions such as 'false starts, hesitation, nervous laughter and silences' (wherever needed) to not lose the essence of their responses and non-verbal messages.

I also admit that it is not possible to express exactly how the participants talked and recorded the folksongs; however, I tried my best to present some flavor of the *haryanvi* language along with participants' expressions in my dissertation. Another issue that I faced while transcribing the folksongs was that few words in *haryanvi* language mentioned in those folksongs were hard to write. For example, writing *rani* (queen). It is easy to write *rani* in English but in *haryanvi*, the word makes N sound, which is not written, but quite noticeable while the singers are performing the folksongs.

As far as the interpretation of the folksongs is concerned, I would like to refer to Narayan (1993) as she has mentioned in her article "singing from the separation in Kangra", which clarifies that although women perform most of the songs collectively yet their meanings are never static and uniform, rather they are complex, multifarious and often ambiguous. Each song represents different set of images/themes that exist in connection with the collective symbolic forms and individual biases. Since women draw their interpretations and meanings selectively and strategically, their interpretation incorporates their unique experiences, memories, and aesthetic sense (Narayan, 1993).

It is noteworthy to mention here that it may happen the readers are unable to comprehend the literal meaning of these folksongs and may gain a multifaceted understanding of them. Therefore, I elucidate here that the interpretations of the folksongs presented in this research study are not the ultimate means to an end. These are merely the interpretations of the Rajput women living in Bhakkar. There might be several other explanations and interpretations of these folksongs from Rajput women living in different communities or societies. Therefore, these folksongs shall not be

taken as fixed textual sources of information as the viewpoints may differ amongst people.

3.4.3. Folksongs Recording and Constraints

Visiting the women singers' homes for folksongs recordings was at times very time exhausting and a tedious task. Rajput people are reputed for their hospitality so whenever I visited them, I witnessed their hospitality and generosity first-hand. However, at times I felt that this hospitality was misleading; when even after spending enormous amounts of time I still would not be able to get any folksongs.

A noticeable aspect was at times when I would record the folksongs, older women singers kept asking "are you sure your cell phone is recording my voice?" I concluded that the older women were more concerned about the public exposure of their voices and the folksongs. They were scared of their family men, especially their sons' reputation if they would get to know about the folksongs performances and recordings. On one occasion, Safia Bibi expressed,

It would be disastrous if my son will come to know that I have recorded songs. What would he think of his mother? In this last stage of my life, I should have been praying and fulfilling religious obligations rather than pleasing Satan (with a loud laughter) by singing songs.

I wrongly assumed that folksongs performances would not be a sensitive or emotional topic to explore; yet after encountering a few emotional situations where women after recording folk songs got sentimental and their eyes brimmed with tears, I realized that my perception was not entirely right. Corbin and Strauss (2008) highlight the importance of emotions and sentiments in analysis and state "do not overlook the expressed emotions and feelings as they are part of the context and indicate the meaning of events to persons". Akhtar Bibi shared similar sentiments:

The song reminded me of my childhood, my parents' home in India. Our big courtyard, where I spent my days with my friends and neighbors. I sang this song after fifty years or more ...last time I heard it from my aunts who are no longer in this world I felt emotional and felt like I revisited my childhood with my parents and relatives! (Holding tears in her eyes).

Korb (1993) has explained another constraint through a term 'technophobia' present in the researches where the participants are asked to record their opinions or sentiments. Korb (1993) mentions that participants may demonstrate reluctance and hesitate when the researcher use any recording device for recording their voices or activities. Jackson (1987-85) too acknowledges the fear of microphone that might create some discomfort among the participants specifically in context of folksongs recordings. Similarly, my participants also hesitated and were nervous before recording the folksongs. I did not use a tape recorder for recording the songs instead used my cell phone and assumed that since cell-phone has become a common household commodity nowadays, most of the people will be familiar with its use, which might help diminish the effects of 'technophobia'. However, recording folksongs through cell phone also made a few participants hesitant, cautious, and shy.

Recording folksongs was a tedious job as I could not anticipate the interruptions beforehand. Those unforeseen disturbances, made this job exhausting and time consuming. I had to halt the recordings whenever women would disagree on the lyrics and tunes of the folksongs. Occasionally, other household activities also caused discontinuation in folksongs recordings. Availability of electricity was a big challenge that I faced during the folksongs recordings. There was no time schedule for load shedding in Bhakkar city. Therefore, I remained cognizant all that time for keeping cell phone's battery fully charged especially before leaving for field work and recording of the folksongs.

3.4.4. Reflexivity and Positioning Myself Within the Community

Reflexivity is an abstract idea with numerous meanings. In simple words, it is concerned with researcher's opinions and preconceptions which may affect and influence the research process. Reflexivity can be described as a 'style of research that brands the researcher's personal beliefs and objectives' (Gilbert, 2008:512). Like any other researcher, it was also imperative for me to acknowledge personal opinions, attitudes and point of view which will partially control my own perception of the social world view of the Rajput families' under study. Bryman (2004:312) describes a number of characteristics which may affect the research process such as: age, gender, social background (or class) and education level of the researcher.

Below I discuss in detail only the most significant characteristics which were relevant to me and might have had an impact on the research process.

For example, my age as a mature woman, gained me credibility in the eyes of Rajput women to ask questions from them as a researcher. Women participants took my questions seriously and shared their sentiments during the performances and interpretation sessions. Elder women treated me as their daughter-in-law and narrated their life histories to me. Though I have not included those personal stories in any part of my research work, but I extracted relevant data out of their verbal accounts. Other women participants treated me as their sister-in-law and communicated issues related to their children's education, their health, family politics and issues of marital life.

Gender of a researcher also greatly impacts the research process when one talks to women and men. As a woman and part of the family, I was privileged to talk to Rajput women. It would have not been possible for even a Rajput man researcher to have access to the women participants for interviews and folksongs recordings. Similarly, I was allowed to interview Rajput men as I was part of the family and being their *bhabhi* they respected me and did not refuse my request. The status of *bhabhi* (sister-in-law) is a considered a respectable relation in Rajput culture. Some of the men interviewees also mentioned this point during their interviews. In Bhakkar, like other Rajput communities in Pakistan and India, *purdah* observance is linked up to women's social position in terms of respect and honor of the family and *purdah* observation is one of the significant traditions for judging noble families. Taking care of *purdah* and respecting Rajput's cultural traditions made my access to the Rajput families much easier than I had anticipated.

Self-disclosure is a strategy for addressing power dynamics within interview interactions. It tends to reduce the unequal flow of information (power) from one direction i.e., from the interviewer. My disclosure of emotions in matters relevant to them made them comfortable during the in-depth interviews and they demonstrated trust in me by sharing and explaining whatever they knew about the folk songs. Some women participants admitted that they confided in me related to personal matters and shared their secrets with me which they had never shared with anyone before. Quite often, I was surprised at the openness and depth of their feelings that women participants expressed in interviews and folksongs interpretations.

The education level of the researcher as Bryman (2004:312) mentions have considerable influence on the research process and thoughts of the participants. It was obvious that I had a higher education level than the participants and my participants considered me superior in education which they expressed many times during the interviews and ICSs. I was well aware of the powerful presence that I had during the interview process.

Like many other researchers, during my field work; I also became known by multiple identities such as PhD researcher, working and educated woman, a mother and sister and daughter-in-law. Thus, I kept on oscillating between my multiple identities among participants and came to agree with Reinhard (1997) who mentions that a researcher can have a number of selves – being researcher is only one of them.

Positionality is determined by where one stands in relation to ‘the other’ (Merriam and Bailey, et al, 2001: 411). Furthermore, it is described as the position occupied by the researcher in relation to the participants and his/her influence over the production of data (McCorkel and Myers, 2003 as cited in Riach, 2009: 11). My perception from the very beginning of the research was that my position as a member of the Rajput family would significantly aid me in connecting with the Rajput men and women. This perception was not entirely illogical and was based on the common knowledge and findings that people tend to connect with those who share some level of commonality (Chang, 2002). Thus, being a family member of a large Rajput community, I considered myself as an insider, however, in the eyes of the participants my status varied in different situations, below is a brief description to make my point clear:

During the interviews, I was considered an outsider, being a non-Rajput woman who was “informed” by men about the Rajput culture³⁴. Then I was a privileged woman who could ask and question the Rajput men about their culture (as mentioned earlier, it was a surprising thing for them). Women participants also considered me an outsider because of my non-Rajput status yet at the same time, this status supported me in my investigation and observance of minute details of the Rajput culture. I was able to note down trivial details which a Rajput researcher might have overlooked. My position as

³⁴ During interviews my male interviewees lectured me about Rajput culture considering me as an outsider who needs to be informed by them about their culture. That is why I have used the word informed in the text.

an outsider also provided me an advantage as women participants confided in me by sharing their emotional experiences and personal stories after the recordings of folk songs. They openly debated and criticized Rajput patriarchal culture in front of me by considering me an outsider who would not conspire to other Rajput women as I do not know the Rajput culture but merely about secrets that they shared with me.

Ethnographic research is usually influenced by the 'dominant discourses' prevailing in the society. Simply put, the most powerful or loudest voice which is the voice of the dominant people control the social world for attention and those loud voices are generally heard and considered as the representatives of the society. However, what makes this research distinguishable and unique is the focus on hearing, documenting and amplifying the unheard and subtle voices and messages, which have long been neglected, through the medium of folksongs.

There is a vital need to hear these voices and the messages they are trying to convey before they diminish altogether.

3.4.5. Photography

I fully recognize the value that photography adds to any anthropological and ethnographic research as it is considered the 'precise record of material reality'. Similarly, photography plays a notable role in anthropological and ethnographic studies as it describes a way of life of the people who are distinct and exist in a specific culture. (Collier and Collier, 1997: 10). The research under study was conducted in a conservative Rajput community where women strictly observe *purdah*. Taking pictures in general and specifically of the women was considered unacceptable and I was not given the permission to do so. Therefore, no pictures of the women participants have been included in the research except *dadi Sughra's* who allowed me to take her picture for the dissertation. Nonetheless, I have added pictures of Bhakkar city, its suburban areas, houses, streets, markets, people, and photos of some notable places. Hopefully, these photos will help paint a picture in the reader's mind and may take them to the place to where these beautiful voices and lyrics belong to.

4. HISTORY OF RAJPUTS AND THE LOCALE BHAKKAR

This chapter talks about two important components of the research study. One is the Rajput history with *Chauhan* Rajput who were the participants of the present study. The other component comprises of the brief profile of Bhakkar city and the significant social ethos of the Rajput families living in Bhakkar. The important social ethos that represent the worldview of the Rajput briefly includes family structure, marriage, kinship terms, purdah, genealogy, caste composition, matrimonial and affine relations, religion, and language. Lastly, the kinship terms used in various folksongs are incorporated for a better understanding in the background of the Rajput cultural context.

4.1. Brief History of the Rajputs

The literary meaning of the word Rajput refers to the *Sanskrit* word *Raja-Putra* which means "son of a king". The "*Raja Putra*" first showed up as the name of imperial authorities in the 11th century in *Sanskrit* texts. This name was reserved for the king's close family members and was also used for a group of high ranked men (Talbot, 2015: 99). The term "*Rajput*" isn't mentioned in early *Sanskrit* inscriptions and likewise, nobody had known about the Rajput clan before the eighth century A.D. This might demonstrate that the presence of the Rajputs in the Indian public occurred much later. Over the years, the term "*Rajput*" developed and started representing a political status, which wasn't of the highest order. The term can refer to different ranked proprietors, from the genuine child of the ruler to the most minimal positioned landlord (Chattopadhyaya, 1994). During the sixteenth to twentieth centuries, as stated by Kothiyal (2016: 8) the term Rajput came to mean a social class, framed when different tribes or Nomadic groups turned into noble landholders and became part of the ruling class. Rajputs have accepted their title as an assertion to high societal positions (Kothiyal, 2016). Between the sixteenth and twentieth century, it gained a hereditary status, fortified by genealogical basis such as blood purity. From that point forward, the Rajput status became purely hereditary, which means that it could no longer be acquired by anyone with land or military achievements.

The Rajput arrived at the peak of their social recognition in between the sixteenth to twentieth centuries because of the fall of the *Gupta* Empire. The *Huns* attacked the *Gupta* Empire in north-western India in 500AD and the *Gupta* Empire, being debilitated as the result of intrusion led to the disintegration of the local rulers. North India was left abandoned and following the disorder, a small Indian force arose after the *Guptas* in an attempt to seize control (Sen, 1991: 220). In seventh century, the Arabs stepped in the subcontinent with the new religion of Islam. They brought down many domains in the Middle East and North Africa. Towards the start of the eighth century, the Arab conquest started on the western pieces of the Indian subcontinent and reached the regions of Multan and Sindh. At that point, the Rajputs generally belonged to the Hindu and Sikh religions, but with invent of Islam, a large portion of the Rajput populace converted to the new religion after the Muslim invasion on India ³⁵ and after their interaction with the Muslim rulers (Bingley, 1996: 10). Notwithstanding, students of history propose that the Rajput came from an assortment of ethnic and geographical backgrounds. Chattopadhyaya, (1994: 60) also contends that the early middle age reports propose that the Rajput class included individuals from many castes.

In Pakistan, the Rajputs live in dispersed regions in the eastern parts of the country particularly in the Punjab and Sindh. It has developed into a caste, comprising of several patrilineal clans of the Rajput that are related with warrior hood - as they declare themselves³⁶ as the descendants of ruling class/martial race³⁷ of India. Chattopadhyaya, (1994: 59) noticed that the shared ancestry does not play a significant role in Rajput identity. However, it is the after effect of the actions of different social groups in medieval India who used the Rajput title as a practice to legitimize their newly gained political power acquired through *Khashtryan* descent status and kinship. Like AngloSaxon Knights, the Rajputs were re-conceptualized by the colonial administrators of India in the nineteenth century.

The colonial administrators ordered to compile the Rajput ancestry which served many purposes: such as settling land disputes, surveying tribes and writing historical

³⁵ Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni, Sultan Muiz-ul Din Muhammad and Qutab-ud-Din Aybak are few listed here. For a detailed account, read Handbook on Rajputs by A.H. Bingley (1991)

³⁶ My respondents also informed me most of the time

³⁷ For more detailed account read book, The martial Races of India by MacMunn George (1933) London

narratives. This later prompted the difference between "genuine" and "spurious" Rajput families (Kothiyal, 2016: 11). As narrated by Kumar (1993), there are three different lineages (*vanshas* or *vamshas*) of the Rajput families as referred to in the sacred texts; The *Puranas*, along with two antiquated Indian books, the "*Mahabharata*" and the "*Ramayana*". The three main ancestors are *Survayanchy* (the clans of the solar dynasty), *chandravanshi* (the clans of the lunar dynasty), and *Agnivanshi* (the clans of the fire dynasty). The Rajput of *Bakkar* belong to the *Chauhan* clan of the Rajput caste. These Rajput follow their lineage to the *Agnivanshy* family. Occasionally, through the lyrics in their folksongs, they attribute their short-temperament and aggressive disposition as a result of their association with the *Agnivanshi* tribe.

4.2. The Origin of the Rajputs

The Rajput origin is a highly controversial topic of research among historians. What is fascinating is that there seems to be no generally acclaimed theory regarding the Rajput origin by the historians. A few speculations have been introduced by the researchers debating the origin of the Rajputs. The most well-known perspectives on Rajput's starting points are discussed below:

4.2.1. Foreign Origin Theory

The colonial-era writers depict Rajputs as the posterity of foreign invaders. However, Cunningham (1972) linked their family histories to the *kushanas*³⁸ descent. Todd (1924 rep. 1971) narrates that the Rajput have a *Scythian* origin, he also addresses them as *huns* entering India during the fifth or sixth century. It is also worth noticing that many of the colonial writers along with Todd (1924) were huge advocates of the foreignorigin theory as an attempt to justify the British rule on India.

One more hypothesis from the history specialist Bandarkar (1910 rep. 1968) relates that before the sixteenth century the Rajput title was considered as a non-hereditary rank for the royals. By the 10th century, *Gujarat* was known as *Gurjaras* and a few researchers

³⁸ The Kushan Empire was a vast inland empire that stretched across Central and South Asia during the first to fourth AD. Read more on Kushan in book *Kushan, Kushano-Sasanian, and Kidarite Coins: A Catalogue of Coins from the American Numismatic Society* David Jongeward, Joe Cribb, Peter Donovan (Numismatist) American Numismatic Society, 2015

claimed that *gurjaras* attacked India from Afghanistan and conquered different regions of India. Segregating the invaders by ranks, it can be assumed that the upper ranked invader got the title of the Rajput considering the fact that invading was their occupation. Comparative to the Rajput, some lower ranked invaders got known as *gurjaras*, *jats* and such. The Rajputs then gradually developed as a social class that incorporated individuals from diverse different ethnicities and regions.

4.2.2. Khashtrya Theory

Indian researchers, like Ojha (1927), a Rajasthani history specialist, did not acknowledge foreign theory in regards to the Rajput origin. As indicated by Ojha (1927), the Rajput rulers of Meewer, Jaipur and Bikaner were of *Aryan* descent and direct relatives of the *Suriya* and *Chandra Vanshi* dynasty of *Khashtrya*. The word *Khashtrya* originated from the *Sanskrit* word *kṣatra* which means the protector of the land. They contended that worshipping fire was a trait inspired by *Aryan*, rather than the settlers who used to invade India. The second case that Ojha (1927) made was on the basis of Sacrifice and *Yajna*³⁹ traditions. He claimed that these practices were common in *Aryans*. Foreign invaders who later settled in India did not have such practices. Lastly, if the physical characteristics of the Rajput are compared, they carry much resemblance to *Aryans* rather than other ethnicities that entered India later on.

4.2.3. Mixed Origin Theory

Chatterjee (1992) portrays that a few Rajput are in fact genealogically related to invader races such as *huns*, *sakas*, and *kushans* while some are descendants of the *Khashtrya* clans. They had much better skills in fighting and war among the clan and over the years, they started calling themselves the Rajputs. Prior to the fifteenth century, the expression "Rajput" was related with individuals of mixed origin and was viewed as mediocre compared to the "*Kshatriya*" (Chandra, 1982:92). The term has an "element of hereditary" from the thirteenth century, as per Chattopadhyaya (1994).

³⁹ Offerings to the gods based on rites prescribed in the earliest scriptures of ancient India.

4.2.4. Agnikula Theory

This theory comes from *Priviraj Raso*, a book written by *Chanbardai*. (Sarma and Panikkar, 1975). *Priviraj Raso* discusses the mythical nature of the Rajput origin. It traces their origin back to a sacrificial fireplace in Rajasthan on *Mount Abu* Mountains. This was done to ensure the security of *Brahmins* after the mass killing of *Khashtrya* by *Parshuram*⁴⁰ since in the absence of *Khashtrya*, the *Brahmin* were left unprotected from *Parshuram*⁴¹. This led to a *Brahmin* performing *Yajna*. *Yajna* was a sacrificial ritual and after burning the holy fire, *Brahmins* would performed *Yajna* for forty days. As a result, god granted them the Rajputs for their security and protection. Four Rajput warriors were born out of the *Yajna* fire. It is believed they originated the Rajput families who are now settled throughout the subcontinent (Sarma and Panikkar, 1975).

4.3. Chauhans of Bhakkar

From a historical perspective, the name *Chauhan* is the vernacular form of the *Sanskrit* expression *Chahamana*. Many *Chauhan* believe that *Chahamana* is their precursor who was a renowned warrior yet scholars are still unsure of the exact era he was born in (Singh, 1964). As indicated by Singh (1964), origin of the *Chauhans* can be traced back to the *Ratna Pala*⁴². As indicated by the *Ratna Pala* texts, ancestors of the *Chahamanas* were brought into the world from the eye of *Indra*⁴³ (Sarma and Panikakar, 1975). While certain researchers claim that like the Rajputs, they were also foreign invaders who settled in India. Another legend portrays them as the direct descendants of the sun, moon, or the lord *Indra*. The *Chauhans* are referred as fire-born families that began as depicted in the myth of *Agni Kula*. The content of the myth has already been thoroughly discussed in the theory of the origin of Rajputs. Many researchers claim that the *AgniKula* theory/story is a prospect of verses which serve a purely poetic purpose without verifiable records or historical accuracy (Naravane, 1999:23). Only the Rajput that belong to the Chauhan clan of the Rajput will be the focal point of this study. The

⁴⁰ Myth of Parashurama. For more information, read the book, Major World Religion, from their origins to the present. Edited by Lloyd Ridgeon 2003.

⁴¹ one of the 10 avatars (incarnations) of the Hindu god Vishnu

⁴² a ruler of the Naddula Chahamana dynasty. He was son of Brahma Pala. The Pala dynasty (900-1100) are supposed to think as the ancestors of Chauhans.

⁴³ God of Gods in Hindu mythology

Chauhans of Bhakkar believe that they are related to the famous Rajput king *Prithviraj Chauhan*⁴⁴ who defeated *Mahmud Ghori*⁴⁵ in the battles of *Taraori* (1191-1192 A.D.).

The Rajputs of Bhakkar are profoundly influenced by *Prithvi Raj Chauhan*, who is not only considered their ancestor but also a symbol of pride by the Rajputs of Bhakkar due to his achievements, bravery and admirable relationship with his public. Muslim *Sufis* kept converting the *Chauhans* to Islam throughout the start of twelfth century and it continued under the British colonization era till the nineteenth century.

As a fact, there are many Rajput families living in Pakistan. Most Muslim Rajput actually still use the titles of the Rajput rulers such as *Rao*, *Rana* and *Rai* before their names and link themselves to their (Hindu) ancestors and their Rajput Empire in India. When asked about their views on the origin and history of the *Chauhan*, some research participant replied that they heard about the origin of the *Chauhan* from their ancestors as stories. Only a few of the research participants addressed the mythological origin of the Chauhan Rajput, however those too denied the mythological aspects attached to it - because of the fact that it could only be discussed in light of the Hindu mythology. Even though they denied any association of the Chauhan origin to the Hindu mythology, they still consider⁴⁶ their short tempered nature to (*agnivanchy*⁵⁰) and the warrior blood, justifying their fire origin.

The greater part of the Rajput individuals who moved from *Karnal* to Bhakkar were working class individuals. They possessed their property and the cattle in different villages throughout *Karnal*. Like all the other Rajput, Rajput families living in Bhakkar recall their ancestry to royalty, connecting themselves to historical figures such as *Prithivi Raj* and *Rana Partab Singh*. They have monitored the heritage and the genealogical terrains of their ancestors who lived in India. These records in a family history serve as an ancestral lineage, allowing better social networking. These references are crucial to them as they are required in case of any endogamous marriage

⁴⁴ The 12th-century king, Prithviraj Chauhan (1166 CE to 1192 CE) is among the most well-known of India.

⁴⁵ A general from Ghor(Afghanistan) - who invaded India History of India, in Nine Volumes: Vol. V - The Mohammedan Period as described by its own historians By Sir Henry Miers Elliot 2008 by Cosimo Inc.

⁴⁶ As after converting to Islam they cannot have such mythological belief. As Islam says all human are born from prophet Adam and his wife -Hawa not from any other thing ⁵⁰ Belonging to the fire family.

proposition or any other sort of social ties with other Rajputs clans. In any case, if a Rajput family fails to justify their lineage to Karnal (India) or any nearby region, that family remains doubtful because of their ambiguous origin. This leads to a lack of networking support from other Rajput to that family. Thus, these genealogical reference points decide if a family or its members are pure Rajputs⁴⁷ or not.

4.4. District Bhakkar – The Locale

Bhakkar is an old city rich in cultural history. During the Indus Valley Civilization, the Bakkar district used to be a forested rural locale. As indicated by the Imperial Gazetteer of India (1931: 44), a group of settlers from Dera Ismail Khan established Bakkar in the fifteenth century. Bhakkar has certain recorded locales that were thought to have been created by the Mughals. *Dilkusha Bagh* is claimed to be the domain of the Mughal time frame and is connected to Emperor Humayun, yet generally it has not been historically proven (Durrani, 1991). A few remains of the *Handera* (tomb) can also be found close to *Sheikh Rao* Bridge. It is assumed to be the cemetery of the creator of the Bhakkar City, *Bakhar Khan*. Bhakkar is situated on the left bank of the Indus River, between the *Indus* River and the *Kenab* River, and is one of the districts of the Punjab province (Pakistan). It is situated at 31 ° 37'60N 71 ° 4'0E at a height of 159 meters. The region of Bhakkar was first developed in 1981 as a result of its segregation from the district of Mianwali. The locale comprises of a riverine tract of the *Indus* River called the *Kaccha*⁴⁸ while some of it lies in the bone-dry desert plain. The vast majority of its land contains the greater "*Thal*"⁴⁹. Upon calculation, the total area of Bhakkar is 8153 km. Bhakkar has been the focal point of little provincial exercises and business activities for the surrounding, much smaller communities such as Darya Khan and Shorkot. Mostly agricultural transactions such as trading of vegetables, fruits or crops etc. make up for the most of their business activities. These supplies are gathered from far away regions and the distributed to the local towns like Daria Khan, Mianwali and Dera Ismail Khan, and so forth. Transportation administrations from Bhakkar to significant urban communities like Lahore and other nearby urban areas in Khyber

⁴⁷ Both parents are Rajput from many generations. No other caste member is connected by marriage. Participants definition of pure Rajput opinion

⁴⁸ The area which river leaves behind when changes its course

⁴⁹ The Thal area is a desert situated in Punjab, Pakistan ⁵⁴(www.Bhakkar.com.pk).

Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) have become a great source of income to the public transportation community.⁵⁴

District Bhakkar is divided into four tehsils (subdivisions), tehsil Bhakkar itself, tehsil Darya Khan, tehsil KallurKot and tehsil Mankera. All tehsils are additionally partitioned into union councils for authoritative purposes. There are no airports in the Bhakkar districts so the locals have to travel to Dera Ismail Khan, Lahore and Multan airports in order to travel through air.⁵⁰

The climate in Bhakkar is dry. It is described by its exceptionally blistering summers, followed by a very short period of rainy season leading to mildly cold winters. As indicated by the Punjab Government land statistics data (2013)⁵¹, the cultivated land in the Bhakkar district is 813 thousand hectares which is used for cash yields and palatable harvests. The forest in Bhakkar district covers 26,000 hectares where specific kinds of plants are grown. The Bhakkar district has a blistering and dry environment particularly in summer; the temperature is consistent between 45 and 50 C. Chickpea, sunflower, corn, gram, cotton and sugarcane are among the primary yields of Bhakkar. The primary fruits grown in Bhakkar district are oranges, mangoes, guavas, and dates while the vegetables are turnips, onions, tomatoes and carrots⁵². Three rivers flow alongside the Bhakkar district with Jhelum and Chenab rivers flowing on the Eastern sides of Bhakkar while the Indus River flows on the western side. About 33% of Bhakkar's land is sandy, but a small portion of that land is kept irrigated by the *Thal* canal. Rest of the cultivated land relies on rain as it does not have any other means of irrigation. Individuals who live in the *Thal* region depend vigorously on the rain for their harvests.

Raising cattle is important for the lifestyle of suburban residents of the locale. Chickens, bison, dairy cattle and goats are among the cattle raised in Bhakkar. In the wild, raising camels is another well-known occupation. As indicated by the Punjab Government Report on Annual School Census (2017-18), there are 1347 state funded schools in the Bhakkar district, and 8442 teachers work in these schools. Bhakkar has a literacy rate of 55%. The city of Bhakkar has one district headquarter hospital that takes into account

⁵⁰ (www. Bhakkar.com.pk).

⁵¹ https://bhakkar.punjab.gov.pk/district_profile

⁵² https://bhakkar.punjab.gov.pk/district_profile/ (www. Bhakkar.com.pk)

the requirements of both urban and rural population. For communication purposes, mobile phones are generally used while online cafés are likewise accessible in significant business sectors in the city of Bhakkar where youngsters head out to see movies and play internet games. A cable network with more than 100 TV channels is available to every television owner in Bhakkar which is available in almost every house. People in the city as well as rural population can enjoy the cable services.

4.5. The Social Ethos of Rajputs Living in Bhakkar

Social institutions give us a set of principles and relationship patterns that are required to work our way through the society with its respective standards. These institutions keep everything under control and the ethical standards by maintaining law and order in accordance with the social norms. There can be numerous significant social intuitions that can be examined here, yet keeping my research topic in mind, I only picked the institutions that identified with this specific study. These are discussed as followed:

4.5.1. Family

Hooks (2013) expounds on patriarchy and states that in a society, it is a perplexing system used as a means of power and control. It is a socio-political framework and one that enables men to dominate the social ladder. It allows men to assert their predominant status on women and this leads to oppression of women just so that the men can maintain their socio-political status. From a traditional point of view, the family system in Pakistan, including Bhakkar, is male centric and patriarchal as men make all the decisions. Males are the authority figures inside and outside the homes. The family lineage is also carried by its male members. Walby (1990) characterizes family as a social construct that empowers men to control women. She likewise separates patriarchy into two classifications (public and private). At the private level, it is in the house that governs the abuse and oppression of ladies. While the outer home domains like the society, government, schools, business, sanctuaries and so forth are incorporated by the public patriarchy.

The new term neo-patriarchy was instituted by Hisham Sharabi (1988) which implies a new form of unequivocal governance. Sharabi utilizes it to portray the connection between modernity and patriarchy by comparing it to the Arab world. Berendt (2010)

depicts the non-fixed condition as it rehashes the same thing; religious and social constructs help patriarchy in a social setting, slowly modifying it into neo-patriarchy. Neo-patriarchy uses women to operate yet men retain prevailing authority at the household. This new male-centric framework gives women the ability to operate in it even though men remain on the supervisory end.

Youngsters in a family assume an auxiliary role as contrasted with more established and older males of the family within a patriarchal system. Ortner (1978) discusses that the elder men in a patriarchal society assume an authoritative role over everyone in the household including the youngsters and women. Young men are likewise expected to enact and should accept the control of senior men in the family. On account of female suppression among patriarchal extended families, the women are expected to play subsequent part, remaining at home and focusing on raising children. The Rajput family system in Bhakkar is also a male-centric and patrilocal joint family system.

Kandiyoti (1988) discusses one more form of patriarchy that relates to women. It exists inside the household where elder women in the house, for example, mother-in-law or sister-in-law or other more established ladies have authority and control over other women in the house. Kandiyoti (1988) dissects women's life cycles and also affirms women live a tough life in extended patriarchal households. Frequently, it starts in the beginning phases of their wedded lives. A bride faces isolation, detachment and criticism when she arrives at a new house. Both men and women of the family attempt to suppress her. This leads to a cycle of oppression because after spending a lifetime being oppressed by the elders, women are likely to repeat and express their internalized patriarchy on younger women of the household. So whenever a mother-in-law suppresses a new bride, she is actually expressing when she faced during her time as a bride. Consequently, the rehashed pattern of mistreatment and persecution develops and it becomes apparent over time in patriarchal families. More established women live nearer to their parents. They possess authority, power and the ability to be mobile (Sathar and Qazi, 2000). In contrast, younger women are restricted and have to oblige to other social or cultural traditions that limit their opportunities and freedom. A similar story was narrated to me by *Sidiqaan Bibi*:

When I got married, it was very tough to face the life here. My (late) mother in law as long as she lived, did not let me have a good time with my husband. If she ever saw my husband and me in a good mood or smiling at each other, she would make my whole day hell by cursing me and my parents as they did not teach me good Rajput morals to behave in the conjugal home. I don't know what type of mother in law, I would be! A good one or a bad one (wiping tears from her eyes).

The husband and wife spend the early years of their married life communicating less before their elders according to the Rajput customs. Expression of love and affection between the couple is customarily discouraged in front of the other family members. As portrayed by *Kousar*, the reason for such discouragement of romantic expression is done in order to keep conjugal bond as unimportant in contrasted to connection among children and mother. Young brides constantly struggle to get their life free from the restrictions imposed by their mother-in-law (Wolf, 1972; Mernissi, 1975; Boudhiba, 1985). According to *Salma*, this continuous struggle can be interpreted through folksongs. Upon the inspection of wedding folksongs collection, it became obvious that the constraints on public display of affection make the Rajput brides in Bhakkar feel frustrated towards her in-laws, especially mother-in-law. (See songs 9, 49, 56, 73 and 87).

In the Rajput culture, the husband and the wife can only talk about their personal and family issues at night as they barely get any personal time during the day. This does not remain the case throughout their lives as they get more liberty to talk in front of their elders as they get older. None of the Rajput women I met during my research not work outside their homes. The fundamental explanation referred to by these women is the importance of *Purdah* in Rajput culture which puts great value on family value hence explaining why the Rajput men do not want their women working outside the house. Women earning for family is considered dishonorable for the Rajput men. That implies that Rajput men are expected to earn money for family as their personal and financial obligation. If they cannot earn money, they are considered useless. Since Rajput women aren't allowed to earn, that makes them entirely dependent on men and thus they become subject to men's *mardangi* (manhood). Customarily, women's responsibility is to remain at home, do household errands and deal with the family. It is fascinating to

note here that in unobtrusive manner a couple of men condemned my work as well by questioning my time management in regard to my household responsibilities. I also heard a few gendered proverbs, for example, "*aurat ki kamai main barkat nahi he*" (there is no blessing in woman earnings)". There is also a difference between men and women on how they spend their free time in the Rajput culture. Men, when free, go to their *deras*⁵³ and enjoy the company of their friends where they watch televisions and discuss local people and politics.

4.5.2. Genealogy

Ancestry is very important to Rajput men as they are very conscious about it. Each Rajput *kul* comes from a chivalrous ancestor, who left his land governed by an old male family member or conquered by an outside invader (Harlan, 1992, p: 27). The Rajput identity is constructed by some genealogical traits. For instance, Rajput men discussed the mythological aspect of their origin and passed on their various thoughts in the interview. Upon debating on the mythical origin of Rajput with Rajput men, I realized that they avoided the topic as if they were not too confident about it. Upon inquiring, they referred to their origin from fire which is actually a part of Hindu Rajput Mythology. It is worth noting that Rajputs in Bhakkar are Muslim and their beliefs about birth contradicts the Hindu mythological beliefs on birth. *Mr. Abdul Rehman* expressed:

I heard that our ancestors originated from fire. This may be treated as a reference because I cannot justify it as the mythical origin of the Rajput from fire as a Muslim. I think origin from fire is symbolic because Rajputs are shorttempered people and emotional and get angry over slight provocation (loud laughter).

For the Rajput living in villages, it is not uncommon to have their family tree with them. This record, for the most part, contains their first ancestor leading up to grandfather or father. These ancestry records are kept by *bhats*⁵⁹. In Bhakkar city, however, they are called dooms. They were the officials who kept genealogical records of Rajput families (Singhji, 1994). Their work becomes significant with regards to engagement

⁵³ A separate small house or rooms which Rajput men build for their free time with male friends. ⁵⁹ A traditional name of professional singers' social class.

propositions between Rajput families. It is significant for the two families that their kids wed in the Rajput family. As per the current circumstance in Bhakkar, the custom is vanishing as people are using phones to call and invite each other and rarely through letters. However, many families still practice the traditional way of sending Mr. Irshad (*dadi Sughra's* son) with wedding invitation cards to their relatives.

4.5.3. Marriage

Hypergamy and endogamy are practiced in Rajput marriages which means they are bound by the custom of marrying within a certain community. For instance, in case Rajput is of the *Tuni* clan, if he marries from another Rajput that implies, he has married outside his community. This marriage plan permits them to only marry inside a predetermined local, social or kinship group. Racial pride in Rajput is largely associated with the Rajput as they practice it for the very purpose of segregating themselves from the rest of the population. It is practiced so that the bloodline remains pure for the future. A Rajput marriage can also be seen as a cultural contract. It lasts until the death of the woman and even if the male is alive, the contract is broken after the death of the woman.

Women assumed a vital part in the interaction of marriage proposal. Women are a brilliant sources to collect domestic information which can play a vital role in marriage proposals. Men realize the importance of women in the whole process. It is up to women to find out if any family has a young and unmarried boy or girl. Women are also relied upon to provide insight about the on-going politics between the families or the situation of the house, their daughter will marry into. Generally, the mother discusses the marriage proposal with the boy or the girl or she simply informs them about its acceptance. Wedding preparations begin after the proposal is accepted. These preparations include buying clothes and jewelry for the bride, buying clothes for the groom and family, arranging the food on wedding day and catering to the relatives who visit as guests. Women are responsible to carry out all these tasks. In Rajput traditions, the father decides whether to accept or reject the marriage proposal for his daughter. In case if the father is not alive, the responsibility is then shifted to the elder brothers to make the final decision for their sister. Most marriages are traditionally decided at an early age because female education is not common. Both sons and daughters are

married in a chronological order. The eldest son and daughter are the first ones to get married, the sequence continues for the rest of the children.

The girls socialize and are brought up in such a way that they start anticipating their marriage as they grow up. The woman's marriage has various implications. It is the main stage in her life when she becomes the centerpiece of her entire family as she gets all the attention. She also realizes that such an event would only come once in her life so usually, she tries to make the most out of it. Costly garments and jewelry, among other things, are purchased for her future life. That is supposed to be the first and last time that she will ever be treated this way. A suitable dowry is arranged by her parents, which is a form of gift to her in-laws. Parents are likewise afraid that the in-laws might send their daughter back home if they refuse any of her demands. In case that happens, it results in the father losing his status among family, friends, and the whole society.

In the case of boys, marriage is an approach to arrive at adulthood and to take on the obligations that are anticipated from them. That anticipation occasionally, taking everything into account turns out poorly. Marrying at that young age leads to that boy behaving rather immaturely and not realizing the obligations he has to his wife. From that point forward, the girl turns into a responsibility to her mother and father-in-law because they have already made a commitment to the girl's family. Even though the boy's parents claim to take responsibility for the girl, it contributes to making her married life difficult. She must choose the option to confront her troublesome conjugal life. Divorce is traditionally considered a disgrace so she would not receive any support from her husband or even her parents in that regard.

An unmarried woman remains under the supervision of her father or elder brothers in a patriarchal society like the Rajput community. After marriage, her status under the patriarchy changes, and she goes under the dominion of her in-laws. Another challenge in her married life is to manage the patriarch — the relative, mother or sisters-in-law. Even though she is married to another home, she may still have influence in her natal home if she is the elder sister. As per the need, she can generally be associated with dynamics and politics within her natal home. The household activities and mobility of the bride are supervised by the eldest sister-in-law who monitors her *bhabi* (brother's wife i.e. sister-in-law) with the help of her mother. In case, the sister is unable to control

the situation, she blames the bride and her family for not teaching her the cultural ethos of Rajput socialization.

Rajput women receive large dowries from their parents. Dowry can be seen as a socially accepted form of bride-price⁵⁴ in a patriarchal society. After taking the dowry, women usually no longer have any claim to their father's inheritance (Agarwal, 1987; Sharma, 1980). The brothers are supposed to take care of the finances after her marriage. Sisters on the other hand, give up their claim to inheritance for their brothers. In case a sister claims her share of inheritance, she is considered selfish. This usually has long term consequences as she might end up losing the care of her brothers, ruining the relationship forever.

It is generally expected that Rajput women are not married off to the same families as their relatives, instead in order to extend and fortify connections between the Rajput, they are married off to different sub-clans. Mostly the groom is older than the bride in the Rajput traditions; however, that is not a strict rule for the Rajput. Secondly, the social status of the groom's clan is considered more than the clan of the bride while evaluating both (Singh Ji, 1994: 158). This distinction can be further seen as a fact that the Rajput women are expected to be absolutely loyal to their husbands while the husbands are not expected to do the same. Not only a woman is expected to dedicate her whole life in the service of her husband and his family, she is also expected to make sacrifices when required. The ideal and perfect wife, once she leaves her natal home, devotes her life to her husband. Once she leaves her natal home, she cannot go back as it is socially discouraged. She must dedicate her whole life to her new house. Even if her husband dies, she must live with her in-laws. Rajput widows are not allowed to remarry. This phenomenon can also be seen in Muslim Rajput families even though Islam encourages widows to remarry after a certain period of time. Divorce is also traditionally discouraged, and it is almost non-existent in the area under study (Agarwal, 1967).

⁵⁴ In some cultures, money and property given to a bride's family by the groom and his family

4.5.4. Affinal and Consanguineal Relations

In the community under research, the gender relations are hierarchical. The nature of this hierarchy exists between men and women in the society in relevance to their social status within the community. This segment talks about women's life in her natal home and the relationships she has with everyone in her family. Birth of a girl is traditionally not celebrated. When asked about any folksongs or lullabies about birth of a girl, the local women couldn't provide any information. So it can be concluded that the birth of a girl is not celebrated in contrast to the birth of a boy. People assume that the newborn is a girl if the family does not announce the birth or distribute sweets upon the birth. One of my respondents revealed to me that occasionally a girl can grow up to be a few years of age, and still the other families living afar may not know about her birth. Girls frequently begin doing chores around the house with their mother at an early age. These include figuring out how to cook, sewing and doing all the chores to assist the mother. This can be seen as sort of training from her mother in order to prepare her for the married life where she will have to do all that. It is important because if a girl fails to properly perform household chores in her conjugal home, the blame would be shifted to her mother who would be questioned for her training.

Presently, girls are getting education till their mother finds a suitable marriage proposal for them. Most of the girls complete higher school education, after which, they are married off. In the Rajput culture, it is fairly popular that girls do not get any education beyond 10th grade. That too, is only required because it accounts for the basic skills such as reading and writing. This would be helpful in helping out in her conjugal life for example helping her kids with studies. After 10th grade, no more education is given because the universities are believed to be a bad influences on the girls. The family fears that her interaction with boys may lead to her getting romantically involved with them.

Traditionally, the father-daughter relationship is very respectful and formal as the daughters are usually not so close to their fathers. Notwithstanding, the fathers are more lenient towards their daughters in contrast to the mothers. The discussions between the father and the daughter only take place when it is needed, for example, in decisions regarding the education or marriage proposals for the girl. Brothers, in comparison to

the daughters, have a far stronger relationship their fathers as the fathers consider their sons as the whole family's pride. However, as the child develops and grows older, the relationship between father and son becomes more formal. The father assumes greater authority over his sons. The discussion between them become more work oriented as domestic matters are discussed lesser than before. Over time, the mother assumes a middle role as she conveys the different matters regarding education, work and marriage etc. from son to the father. The children are relied upon to comply and respect their father and their insubordination is not tolerated.

The connection among mother and son is exceptionally unique and solid. The endurance of the conjugal relationship between a wife and her husband remains weak until the birth of a son. In this manner, her son can be seen as the savior of her marriage. The birth of the son serves to give high social status to his mother, giving her power in the household. After the marriage of her son, she is able to use that power on her daughter(s)-in-law. The sisters usually maintain a relationship of love and care throughout their lives. One Rajput tradition quite frequently followed talks about about two brothers marrying two sisters from the same family. Thusly, the two sisters have a sense of security in their new home. They support each other in domestic matters against the women in the in-law's family (Kumar, 1997).

Parents of both the bride and the groom along with almost the entire Rajput community are involved in arranging marriages so the husband-wife relationship is very strong. Weddings are coordinated so that in the midst of hardship, both families of the bride and groom will benefit socially and politically. As mentioned before, the new couple is not allowed to display affection in front of their elders. Mother-in-law and the bride share a bitter relationship and it remains a controversial topic within the family. During her research in Khalapur (India), Minturn (1993) investigated and reported some fascinating observations regarding *purdah* and its effects on interaction between Rajput women in the domestic household. As indicated by her, strict *purdah* restriction is observed for housewives with other relatives.

Rajput families could also be seen as working on the respect-avoidance custom. It is a custom in which the family state the ways in which the wives honor their husband, other family men and the older women of the household particularly their mother-in-law

(Minturn, 1993: 76). The mother-in-law uses *purdah* observation to further assert her authority as it not only prevents the bride from interacting with men outside her family but from her husband as well. This separation helps mother-in-law to use the system to her advantage.

The Rajput society in Bhakkar, as any other patriarchal society, gives submissive roles to the women. They assume a secondary status where their issues have the secondary value to the men of the family. As per *Salma*, the fights/quarrels between women of the family are considered as matters of least importance by the men of the family. Their fights are seen as catfights as men think that it is common for women to fight over 'trivial matters.' On the contrary, such fights are of utmost importance for the women who view them as part of the politics and power struggle within the family. Domestic fights additionally determine powerful figures in a household. They peer pressure others into making alliances and doing maximum work. The Rajput men deal with public issues identified with their work, business, and social interactions and networking inside the clan and so forth. By the time they come back home, women of the family have already concluded the fight or postponed it for the next day.

It is interesting to note that married women I met in Bhakkar did not have anything negative to say about the domination of men in their lives and they expressed happiness. Women are not expected to perform any tasks whatsoever outside their homes in the Rajput culture under study. Because the Rajput women consider men to understand the outside environment better than them, they do not see a problem in men making the decisions for them. In case a decision turns out poorly, the women wouldn't be considered responsible for men's activities. Johnson (1997: 271) narrates that women serve to please the male ego and constantly reassure them that they are the real men by submitting to them. Women permit men to make decisions in their lives and that adds to the male ego enormously. Subsequently, men see themselves as independent and successful, boasted by the point of view of women. From this perspective, it can also be said that women support patriarchy by keeping men under pressure. Another clarification is that women only submit to patriarchy because it aligns with their motives. The reason being such that the hierarchy applies within the household and there, women can practice authority and assume control just like men.

Susar (father-in-law) and *jeth* (husband's elder brother) are profoundly respected among the in-laws. Even though the wife is expected to treat her *susar* and *jeth* in such a way as if she does not observe *purdah* from them, yet her direct contact with them is discouraged. These formal relations can only be criticized or made fun of through the folksongs that have been discussed in detail later on. Unlike women in the household, men can go anywhere they want and whenever they want. Women and girls have restrictions on their mobility while men and boys do not. Most men are allowed to look for work in different urban communities like Multan, Lahore, and Faisalabad for supporting their families and subsequent to the working hours, they are allowed to save time for social interactions or have private free time.

4.5.5. Language

Haryanvi language is the mother tongue of Rajput families living in Bhakkar and they communicate in that language. Their elders and ancestors used this language to communicate in *Karnal*⁵⁵ before the Indian-Pakistani partition in 1947. *Haryanvi* was brought to Pakistan by the Rajput families when they migrated. As a result of their migration (*hijrat*) to Pakistan, *Haryanvi* is called *Mohajiri* (language of the immigrants). The *Haryanvi* language can be categorized with the Indo-Aryan language family and it can be traced back to the time when the *Aryans* first arrived in Northern India area. It is preserved in most of the part of *Haryana* and *Rajasthan* (Masica, 1991). *Haryanvi* is viewed as a dialect of Hindi language in the *Devanagari* writing script. However the magazines I received in Bhakkar regarding the Rajput ancestry and literature were written in *Urdu* language script. The folksongs I have gathered in Bhakkar use Urdu words in verses. However when performed, the dialect can be identified with *Haryanvi* accent. However, some *Haryanvi* words in the verse of folksongs were hard to write in the Urdu language as they are performed in the folksong⁵⁶. Elders in the Rajput community use *Haryanvi* to speak within the household. The younger Rajput do not prefer the *Haryanvi* language and avoid speaking it in home, in public or with friends as a young Rajput girl expressed:

⁵⁵ State of Haryana, India

⁵⁶ This has been discussed in the methodology chapter in detail.

I avoid speaking Haryanvi with my friends in college. In Bhakkar, if you speak Haryanvi with people, they think you are an illiterate, uncivilized person and belong to an inferior social class. That is why the younger generation does not speak Haryanvi. I only speak Haryanvi with my Rajput friends when we meet in family functions or at home.

The survival of *Haryanvi folksongs* is endangered because of the taboos associated with it. *Dadi* explained it as:

Rajput youth feel shame for their own language. They play movie songs at weddings. In a way they are right, they do not understand many words of this (Haryanvi) language especially when old women sing folksongs.

Casual conversations with Rajput families also raised some concerns. They were worried about the Rajput youth not communicating in their mother tongue. If things continue like this, they are afraid that the language might go extinct along with the folksongs.

4.5.6. Purdah Observation

Purdah plays an important role in the lives of both Muslim and Hindu women as it is a central part of their social system. Papanek (1973) communicates the importance of *Purdah* as "curtain" with regards to South Asia particularly in India and Pakistan and refers to a framework that expects women to comply with the high standards of female modesty. In Rajput culture, the reason for *purdah* is to avoid any contact among the women and men outside the family and, also with certain male members of the family. *Purdah* consists of a set of avoidance rules that permits the women from interacting with the relatives of her husband. According to Papanek (1973: 302), Muslim women start practicing *purdah* as they hit puberty while the Hindu women don't start until after their marriage. Due to the influence of both culture and religion, the Rajput women of Bhakkar start practicing *purdah* after puberty as well as marriage. It was claimed that the Rajput women observe *purdah* in order to distinguish themselves from the women of other castes. However, upon visiting the local market with *Salma*, I realized there were very few women in the market and almost all of them were observing *Purdah*. These women in the market – most of who were shopping for groceries etc. were all observing *purdah* with a *burqa* or *chadar*. It was quite contrary to the previous claim

made by Rajput women that *purdah* is only observed by them. As per Papanek (1973), *burqa* is distinguished with two different instruments of seclusion as it works. One being the actual avoidance of interaction between men and women and second one is covering the face and body of women. It distances men and women socially (Jacobson, 1978) from each other. Not only this, *purdah* could be seen as an enclosed space for women- a kind of portable shelter, which symbolizes the notion of shelter. The big black shawl covers woman's face and body and serves the same purpose as *burqa*.

In the Rajput culture, *purdah* observation also accounts for certain male family members along with all the non-family men. For instance, Vatuk (1969) talked about the *purdah* observation before the husband's elders and alongside family friends who are 'fictive kin's'⁵⁷. The younger brothers of the husband do not require the women to observe *purdah*. Because of the *purdah* system, family men, for example, *susar*, *jeth* and other male family members of the husband regularly reported their presence with a cough or called a kid's name prior to entering the home. Sometimes the kids would run home and announce the arrival of a male to *Zanana*⁵⁸ (Minturn, 1993: 74). Even though it is not practiced in Bhakkar these days, "*Ghoonghat kadhna*⁵⁹" was a kind of *purdah* observed by Rajput women in old times.

Even though the traditional *Ghoonghat kadhna* is not followed by the young brides these days, still, out of respect, they avoid direct contact with male members like *jeth* and *susar*. In a Rajput household, *purdah* also symbolizes respect or traditionally called, *haya*⁶⁰, *laaj*⁶⁷ from the elder members of the family. Minturn (1993: 7) says that *purdah* is an act of respect- avoidance and it helps in controlling traditional relationships. Observing *purdah* with members of their husband's families is due to respect which makes it a deference status custom. *Purdah* also decreases the chances of harassment and stalking from male members towards females because of the lack of contact between them. *Purdah* additionally confines the wife's integration into the family and

⁵⁷ Fictive kinship is a term used by anthropologists and ethnographers to describe forms of kinship or social ties that are based on neither consanguineal (blood ties) nor affinal (by marriage) ties in contrast to true kinship ties. (Collins English dictionary <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/submission/18696/fictive+kinship>).

⁵⁸ Women quarters/space only.

⁵⁹ Covering face in a big shawl from men in respect or resistance against their stalking

⁶⁰ Shame out of respect and modesty. It may be a situation referred to as the blushing of cheeks with a sense of shame, confusion, or modesty. ⁶⁷ Same as above

limits their contact with her husband. (Minturn, 1993: 74). This also helps in strengthening the relationship between mother and son as the husband-wife relationship is weakened.

Due to the prevalence of religious beliefs, *purdah* is seen as a noble activity and the women under study think of it as protection from stalking, whether its strangers or distant relatives. However, these women celebrate ceremonies like weddings and other events without *purdah* so even close family men aren't allowed to visit these ceremonies. Even though the literature talks about how *purdah* limits the women's mobility and freedom, these women tell a whole different story. They see it as protection from stalking and harassment. The essence of their conversation is as under:

It is not a matter of fear of traveling alone, it is more customary to accompany a male member while going out of the household as it is a matter of honor and protection of women provided by her family men. It would bring a bad impression of the family that one's daughter or a wife is travelling alone.

Interestingly, another type of *purdah* was observed in Bhakkar. The "*purdah* of voice" expects women to talk in a low tone so that the non-families member can't hear their voice. While in markets or any other public place like transport etc., women are encouraged to speak less. Covering your face isn't required for this *purdah*.

4.5.7. Religion

Muslims make up for 99% of the population living in Bhakkar while Christians are only 1%, making them a minority.⁶¹ Islam structures one of the main components in Rajput culture. Different sects like *Brelvi*⁶², *Deobandi*⁶³, *Ahle-tashh*⁶⁴ and *Ahle-hadith*⁶⁵ are part of Islam. People of Bhakkar follow these sects. The Rajput families under research

⁶¹ *Annual Police Plan Report, 2002*

⁶² Indian and Pakistani school of Muslim thought with over 200 million followers. The Dar-al-uloom was founded in 1904 by the QadiriSūfi master, Imām Ahmad Reza (d. 1921) at Brelvi the concise oxford dictionary of world religion John Bowker, 2000, oxford university press.

⁶³ Deobandi is Sunni with Hanafi) Islam, the name derives from an area Deoband in India, where the school DarulUloom Deoband is situated.

⁶⁴ It is the second-largest branch Sunni sect. After Muhammad, they take their religious guidance from His family (Ahl al-Bayt) or his descendants. Specially bloodline through his daughter Fatima Zahra and cousin Ali who alongside Muhammad's grandsons comprise the Ahl al-Bayt.

⁶⁵ Ahl-e Hadith, meaning the people of hadith, consider the Quran and authentic hadith to be the only authority in the Islamic creed.

are from the *Brelvi* sect and additionally, they are religious and conservative. One of the factors that impacted my journey for the assortment and recording of folksongs was the strict religious approach of those families. My participants refused to acknowledge the existence of the Rajput folksongs especially the Rajput men straight up denied the fact that Rajput owned folksongs. *Khalil-ur-Rahman*⁶⁶ expressed:

I do not think Rajput women sing folksongs as it is considered a sinful act in Islam. Besides, it is the profession of the people who belong to a lower social class- dooms. On weddings, people prefer to give money to poor people instead of spending it on singing and dancing. I think giving money to poor is better than spending it on a sinful act.

According to *Rana Zafar*, vast majority of people in Bhakkar city give money to the *madrasas*⁷⁴ on occasions like marriage, death or birth of children as there are numerous *madrasas* in the city. He additionally told me that the dooms have been the caretakers and a part of the Rajput culture for years. As of now, there have been many changes in the Rajput social framework. This is the reason dooms are not invited on occasions to sing or dance anymore. A large portion of the male and female members of Rajput have expressed that music isn't permitted in the Islamic religion and that is the reason they don't sing any sort of melodies. However, the religious perspective (music is haram⁶⁷) that was spread by Rajput men was of secondary importance. So, after I promised them anonymity, they agreed to record the songs for me. *Safia Bibi* narrates:

It (singing songs) is considered shameful for Rajput women's dignity and nobility. In the past, dooms were called for singing and dancing on Rajput weddings and household women were not allowed to sing. Presently, few old women know folksongs, but they do not sing folksongs. Women who belong to noble families are not allowed to sing.

⁶⁶ Later he became one of the participants of research 74
Religious schools

⁶⁷ Read for clarification about Islam and music: Music the Views of RûzbahânBaqlî, the Patron Saint of Shiraz by Seyyed Hossein Nasr Source: Studies in Comparative Religion, Vol. 10, No. 1. (Winter, 1976).
© World Wisdom, Inc. www.studiesincomparativereligion.com.
THE SCIENCE OF MUSIC IN ISLAM Institute for the History Arabic-Islamic Science at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University, THE SCIENCE OF MUSIC IN ISLAM Comprehensive Series:

Here are a couple of statements from my casual discussions with the women who sang folksongs for the research. These female singers also voiced their opinion on the gradual disappearance of folksongs and they identified some factors. Some of these factors they identified were the lack of interest from the younger generation, the perception about music in Islam along with the upper-class Rajput women degrading singing as lower class profession that led to the gradual decrease in performing the folksongs. *Kousar*, recorded six folksongs for the research study and expresses her opinion as under:

I occasionally sing folksongs at weddings as my mother knows some songs. Singing and listening to folksongs in our language is fun and full of festivity. I recently sang folksongs on my cousin's marriage. My husband does not like folksongs singing. Nevertheless, folksongs are vanishing because nobody likes to hear or sing them. Even we sometimes think that they are worthy enough to remember. Our grandmothers must have known them, she used to sing in women-only places and most of them have died. Moreover, these folksongs are out of context for the present situation. They reflect the past when the situation was different from the present except saas⁶⁸ and bahu⁶⁹ relations which is still the same (with big laughter). Our new generation does not understand the lyrics and meanings of the folksongs and cannot relate to these songs. Moreover, nobody likes to hear folksongs from old women as well (with a smile).

From the above discussion, it is clear that the religion and the social hierarchy of the Rajput are the absolute and most significant elements that have led to the demise of folksongs in Bhakkar. The internet is also a contributing factor which has made the youth more interested in contemporary music. The *Haryanvi* folksongs do not appeal to them compared to the contemporary compositions available on the internet.

4.5.8. Education

The under-research Rajput families still carry a very traditional mindset regarding education and one of the participants said “*a Rajput who takes a pen in his hand, will never ride a horse again.*” This reflects how the Rajput ancestors perceived education. Albeit the change of circumstances, there is still a lack of enthusiasm regarding

⁶⁸ Mother-in-law

⁶⁹ Daughter-in-law

education from the Rajput people. This can be explained by the fact that young Rajput men don't prefer education because they believe doing a job would frail their ego and pride. That is why they prefer to take over their agricultural land or set up a business so they can be their own boss. Nonetheless, it was assessed that it would be better for the boys to get at least secondary education regardless of their future fields.

Rajput girls in Bhakkar – in contrast with boys – are keen on getting education despite the restrictions by *purdah* that is a social as well as a religious commitment (Jososhi, 1995: 192). Rajput families used to restrict their girls from going out from the house in the past. This was done to preserve family honor and early marriages. However, the situation has changed now as girls are allowed to go to schools, colleges and sometimes even to universities but under strict *purdah*.

4.5.9. Lifestyle

The Rajput spend more on luxury items than their domestic needs which gives the impression that their lifestyle is lavish. In a casual discussion, one of the participants referenced that Rajput are often called '*Raj-phoot*'⁷⁰ which implies that a person is showoff, spending large sum of money on flattery. When I was conducting the interviews and recording folksongs, I noticed that guestrooms were usually in good shape in contrast to other parts of the house like kitchen, courtroom and other rooms which were in depleted state. I assume that the expenses are more driven towards things like cars, phones, guestroom furniture and dowry etc. as these things show their status in the society. The domestic needs come in later.

A large portion of the men I have seen spend their cash on their style of dress, lavish food and inviting family members and companions. According to *Rana Zafar*, Rajput ancestors had *darbars*⁷¹ where the common folk could get money and food. Moreover, Rajput *rajas* used to arrange great gatherings for others and such demeanor still exist in today's Rajput men. These Rajput attempt to recreate the lifestyle of their ancestors as an attempt to keep their pride and royal identity alive. A few folksongs additionally

⁷⁰ Mr. Khalil-ur-Rehman used this word for Rajputs

⁷¹ Royal courts

provide some insight on their lifestyle by mentioning *havelis*⁷² gardens, and places (see songs no. 45, 47, 5, 67, 68 and 79).

4.5.10. Leisure Time Activities

Generally, Rajput men and women spend their recreational time differently. It may include talking or watching TV programs with friends. Recently, it also includes spending time on internet. Men usually spend most of their time outside their homes. They gather with their friends on *deras* and discuss local and national politics. Even though the elders can't restrict the youth from spending time on smartphones, they do not generally encourage the use of social media or internet.

Rajput women usually spend time inside their house due to *pardah* restrictions. Most Rajput families like to remain close with family members in the same *mohalla*⁷³ so they can interact with them. I noticed that a portion of the houses in *mohalla* have little windows and entryways inside the houses where women can enter different houses without passing through the main doors. These little entrances not only allow mobility for women around their relatives' houses but they are also utilized to trade food or domestic items without *pardah* restriction. Women spend their free time visiting their relatives using these doors.

4.6. Kinship Terms

Folksongs also reflect upon kinship terms and is divided into two types, 'terms of addresses and 'terms of reference'. Both types are used for natal and conjugal family members. In terms of address, the kins are called upon whereas in terms of reference identifies the relationship vis-à-vis the addresser. The terms expressed in folksongs depict the status attached with roles and obligations of a relative. They do it by sending subtle cultural messages. These messages are identified with the social and financial status of the paternal or maternal family member (Singhji, 1994). The kinship terms portrayed underneath are gathered from female singers with their own cultural

⁷² Big houses

⁷³ Neighbourhood

explanation. In addition, only those kinship terms are gathered and deciphered here that were recognized in the folksongs are discussed below:

Ascendant (Male)

Father		Aba
Father's father	Paternal grandfather	Dada
Mother's father	Maternal grandfather	Nana
Mother's mother	Maternal grandmother	Nani
Father's brother (elder)	Paternal uncle	Taya /Tao
Father's brother (younger)	Paternal uncle	Chacha
Mother's brother	Maternal uncle	Mama /Mamu

The term used for father is *aba*. The term *aba* is also viewed as a symbol of power and authority in the family. If the father is not alive, his status is transferred to his eldest brother. He assumes all the power, respect and the ability to settle on decisions about property and family matters. He is called *tao* or *taya ji*. *Taya's* status is solid in light of the fact that the element of primogeniture that offers power to the eldest brother (*taya*). In terms of authority, rest of the brothers have less authority than their eldest brother. However in Bhakkar, elder people usually get called *taya* out of respect.

Ascendant (Female)

Mother	Mother	Amman
Mother's mother	Maternal grandmother	Nani
Father's mother	Paternal grandmother	Dadi
Father's sister	Paternal aunt	Phoopi /Boowa
Mother's sister	Maternal aunt	Masi /Khala

In this classification of kin, father's sister gets higher status than the mother's sister. This is because the sister has a lower status than the brother. This explains why the mother's sister would have lower status than brother's sister. This can be culturally explained by the fact that the sister of the brother has same blood with her brother's children while the mother's sister does not. In this way, the closeness of the blood relationship makes the *phoopi's* status higher than the *khala*.

Collateral (Male)

Brother		Bhai
Father's brother (elder)		Bhai

Father's brother son	Paternal uncle's son (cousin)	Bhai
Mother's brother son	Maternal uncle's son (cousin)	Maserey Bhai

The word *bhai* is practically used for all the male relatives. The age distinction decides how *bhai* in different relations may be called. If the addresser is younger than the brother, he will add *bhai* to the name like *Zafar Bhai*, *Nasir bhai* etc. However, if the addresser is older than the brother, he will simply call him by his name. This can be used for brother as well as the sons of father's brother (paternal cousins). The same conditions are also applied for maternal cousins.

In the Rajput culture, paternal cousins such as sons of father's brother are viewed as brothers as they share a similar bloodline. Generally, marriages with them are not allowed (Harlan, 1992). This also implies that father's brother's sons have the status of brothers after real brothers. However, the sons of mother's sister don't share the similar bloodline. So even though it is not preferred among the Rajput, they are still marriageable.

Collateral (Female)

Sister		Behen
Father's brother' daughter	Paternal uncle's daughter (cousin)	Behen
Mother' s sister' daughter	Maternal uncle's daughter(cousin)	Maseri / Behen

The kinship term *bahen* is a counterpart of *bhai*. Likewise, relation depends on the age of the addresser. The sister will addressed as *baji* if the addresser is male and younger than her for example *baji Nusrat*, *baji Salma* etc. The same conditions apply to the female addressers. If the addresser is older, only the name is used.

Descendent (Male)

Son		Beta /chora
Brother son	Nephew	Bhatrija
Daughter son	Grandson	Nawasa
Sister' son	Nephew	Baranja

The set of kin referenced above are the terms of reference other than beta that is referred as such in the conversation. The brother's son is chosen over the *bharanja* (sister's son). *Bhatrija* (brother' son) is treated as the real son. While sister's son is viewed as from another family as he doesn't have the similar blood. Real son or young boy can be called *chora*.

Descendent (Female)

Daughter		Beti
Brother's daughter	Niece	Bharanji
Son's daughter	Granddaughter	Potee
Daughter's daughter	Grand daughter	Nawasi

The same terms of reference and address prevail in this set of kins.

Affinal Relations (Male)

Wife's brother	Brother-in-law	Sala
Wife's sister's husband	Brother-in-law	Sandoo
Sister's husband	Brother-in-law	Behnoi/Parona
Wife's father	Father-in-law	Susar
Husband's father	Father-in-law	Susar
Husband's brother (elder)	Brother-in-law	Jeth
Husband's brother (younger)	Brother-in-law	Devar
Husband's sister husband	Brother-in-law	Nandoi
Daughter's husband	Son-in-law	Jamai
Mother's sister' husband	Maternal uncle	Mosar
Father's sister' husband	Paternal uncle	Phoopa

The above kin terms are fundamentally terms of address. Aside from the wife's brother, different terms can be used by both genders and identify with the relationship. The women do not refer to the new real names of her husband's father and elder brothers rather she will call them *susar* and *jeth*. However sometimes she can refer to her husband's younger brother with his name but only if she puts a *bhai* after it. A husband addresses with his wife's family members by adding *bhai*, except for her father. Out of respect, the wife's father is referred to as *chacha* (his father's brother). Thusly, *susar* is a term of reference and not a term of address. In certain families in Bakkar, the father-in-law is likewise addressed as *phoopa* in respect. Nonetheless, in folksongs, the term used is *susar*.

When studied in a dominant hypergamous attitude – prevalent among the Rajput – the terms of reference become more interesting. The husband's sister husband and daughter's husband both share a high status. Whenever they visit their in-laws, the inlaws are expected to serve. In the Rajput culture, daughters and sisters are viewed as visitors in their natal homes after marriage. Another perspective is that if *jamai* and *phoopa* are treated with care in their in-law's homes, they will treat their daughters and sister better.

Affinal Relations (Female)

Father's brother's wife (younger)	Paternal aunt	Chachi
Father's brother's wife (elder)	Paternal aunt	Tayee
Mother's brother's wife	Maternal aunt	Mami
Wife's sister	Sister-in-law	Sali
Husband's sister	Sister-in-law	Nand
Husband's younger brother's wife	Sister-in-law	Devarani
Husband's elder brother's wife	Sister-in-law	Jethani
Husband's mother	Mother-in-law	Saas
Wife's mother	Mother-in-law	Saas

The above mentioned set of terms, particularly relative names is referred by adding *bhabi* or *baji*. These are additionally referred in folksongs in relevance to the authority and power they possess. Out of respect, the husband's or wife's mother is sometimes addressed as *mami* or *tayee*.

5. PRE-WEDDING SONGS

This chapter includes discussion and analysis of pre-wedding Rajput folksongs performed on the ceremonies *Butna* and *Henna*. Both the ceremonies are celebrated before the wedding day. Moreover, the chapter also offers commentaries on both these ceremonies (the way ceremonies are held) and thematic interpretation of the folksongs in the backdrop of the Rajput culture⁷⁴.

5.1. *Butna* Ceremony and the Cultural Symbolism

The *Butna* ceremony marks the beginning of the wedding festivities. The ceremony generally takes place over the span of three days. *Butna* ceremony for a bride is a rite of invisibility, not only from her own family and relatives but also from the evil and supernatural forces that might try to harm her by casting evil spells. Similarly, the ceremony has symbolic representation for the groom as well. The function of the *butna* ceremony for the groom denotes the internal purification and cleansing process as an individual who is going to change his social status as a man i.e. from single to married. A small amount of *butna* is considered sufficient for the symbolic purification. Unlike the bride, the groom is not required to rub his entire body and face with the *butna*. It signifies that the symbolic purification of women is more essential and customary than the men. Simply put, it shall be the woman who must shed down her impurities and cleanse herself of the adulteration before she is allowed to enter a new home and a relationship.

The anthropological studies attempt to explicate the woman's seclusion and invisibility during the *butna* ceremony in a ritualistic way; as part of preparing her for disconnection from her natal family. She is getting ready for her new home after passing through culturally acceptable rituals to acquire the both the social and religious status of a wife. This kind of status transformation is best explained as a liminal condition which Van Gennep (1960) terms as a 'rite of passage'. The rite of passage comprises of three subsequent stages: The first stage is the 'separation stage' in which the woman distances

⁷⁴ All the following chapters will tow the similar pattern of commentaries on ceremonies the way they are executed along with folksongs lyrics and their interpretations in Rajput cultural context

herself from her kins and relatives to develop emotional detachment, while still sharing the physical space with them. The second stage is known as 'liminality'. As the word denotes, it is a transitional phase where a woman has left her old roles and identity behind but has not yet fully undertaken the new role. The third stage is called 'incorporated', in which she gains the status of a wife and a new identity. Similarly, Turner (1960) has expounded on the theory of 'rite of passage' and has explained it as a set of symbolic behaviors that signify the individual's detachment from an earlier stage of his life in a particular social or cultural setting (P: 94). In conclusion, the fundamental purpose of the *butna* function is to prepare the girl both emotionally and psychologically for leaving her natal home.

The *butna* ceremony ⁷⁵ is also called *teal* ⁷⁶ *haldi* ceremony. Turmeric is the major ingredient in the *butna* paste which is locally called *haldi*. During the *butna* days, the bride has to remain secluded from her family especially from her male relatives. However, her female friends, mother or sister can meet her. It is considered customary for her to cover her face in *ghoonghat*⁷⁷ with a big *dupatta*⁷⁸ so that no one can see her face. Rajput women participants explained four cultural aspects of the ceremony, which have been explained below:

Firstly, in the Rajput culture, a woman is expected to show signs of respect and *laaj*⁸⁷ and avoid meeting her father and brothers (other close male relatives too) as she is going to have intimate relations with a man (husband). Since sex is considered to be a shameful and taboo activity, therefore a girl has to hide herself from the male members of the family out of shame and respect.

Secondly, it is a cultural belief that if a girl keeps herself covered with her *ghoonghat* for some days and does not show her face to anyone before the wedding day, she will look more attractive on the day of the wedding.

⁷⁵ I refer to this ceremony as Butna ceremony in my dissertation as majority of women named it as such but a few women also informed me that it is called *teal haldi* ceremony too. So, I have mention that name as well

⁷⁶ Oil

⁷⁷ Veil

⁷⁸ Big shawl, which women in Pakistan and India use in their routine dress code shalwar kameez ⁸⁷ Shame out of respect.

Thirdly, the symbolic aspect of the ceremony gives an unconscious message to the bride that she is no longer a free girl and her movement is restricted. It might be termed as a kind of ‘formal training’ given to her for her conjugal home; where she will have to take permission from her husband and his elders for going outside the home and would also have to observe *purdah* from the male relatives of her husband’s family. Therefore, she must learn to obey and abide by the norms of a new home (Durrani and Khan, 2014).

Butna ceremony has a specific significance and relevance to the Rajput culture. Almost nothing in the ceremony is accidental or casual, rather deep symbolic messages lie at the core of each gesture and task performed at the ceremony, for example, the yellow-colored clothes, the *haldi* paste and the marigold flowers all convey a special meaning. In short, the *Butna* ceremony is a manifestation of many cultural symbols (most of them mere persistence of Hindu beliefs and practices), considered as cultural traditions. The symbolic nature of yellow color and lyrics of the folksongs convey special messages to both the bride and groom to prepare them for their new roles as husband and wife. The yellow color dominates and distinguishes the *Butna* ceremony. The attending women may wear any shade of yellow or at least a yellow *dupatta* for the ceremony, however it is customary for the bride to wear yellow clothes with decorated yellow *dupatta* and marigold flower jewelry for the ceremony.

The marigold flower locally called as *gainda* has special significance in numerous old mythologies. For example, in early Christian mythology, marigold is associated with the sun because of its vibrant yellowish-golden color and was called “the herb of the sun” which represents passion and creativity. In Hindu mythology ⁷⁹, the marigold flower symbolizes auspiciousness, and its saffron or orange-yellow color signifies renunciation, a victory of good over evil and surrender to the divine (Neeraj et al, 1984).

In the Rajput culture, *Butna* ceremony is considered a means of spiritual purification for the bride, she is purified from the impurities and gets ready for her new roles and

⁷⁹ The influence can be observed in the Pakistani society as well

responsibilities as a wife. In strictly cultural terms, it is assumed that the ceremony will help the bride shed off the impurities from her previous life as an ordinary girl.

The yellow color symbolizes purity, youth, hope and positive anticipation for the future. The *Butna* or the turmeric paste of yellow color when rubbed on the face and body of the bride denotes the cleansing of the bride from physical and spiritual impurities. *Dadi Sughra* interprets *Butna* ceremony as:

It is thought that when the bride's face and body is covered with butna, vile and unholy forces cannot cast evil spells on her. By applying butna she becomes unrecognizable to the evil. Besides, butna not only makes her skin glow but also serves as a mask that may save her from evil eyes.

A significant difference can be observed in the rites of invisibility for the bride and the groom. The groom is not asked to be invisible like the bride in his home. His mobility within the house is also not limited, however, he is forbidden to travel to long distances for his physical safety. In a similar way to the bride, after attending the *Butna* ceremony and passing through the rite of passage, his social status is considered to be changed from a single individual to a responsible married man.

5.1.1. The Context and the Setting: A Peek into the *Butna* Ceremony

In the Rajput culture, the *Butna* ceremony is separately held in both the bride and the groom's houses on the same day. In the past, the ceremony was fancy and elaborate and would usually last for many days (sometimes even for as long as a week). All the relatives from near or far were invited to the bride and groom's homes a few days earlier to attend the ceremony. Traditionally, a *nain*⁸⁰ was assigned the task of communicating the invitation personally to the women of the neighbourhood and the family. Moreover, the services of *nai*⁸¹ were acquired for delivering the invitations to the families living in far-off areas. The

⁸⁰ Barber's wife

⁸¹ Barber

traditional *sada*⁸² was sent to the bride's friends and neighbours for informal get-togethers mostly held in the evenings or at night.

Nowadays, formal invitation to the Rajput weddings is sent out as printed invitation cards sent through the posts or by phone. Presently, the relatives who live far away usually only attend the main wedding day ceremony and do not come to stay for weeks as it used to happen in the past. However, the friends of the bride, the relatives who live nearby and the neighbours get together informally and arrange a *utna* ceremony. However, there are specific constraints to the present day *Butna* ceremony. It is arranged such that the attending women have free time to participate, and their household tasks may not get disturbed. Nonetheless, as soon as the women, along with their children and young girls arrive at the bride's home, the ambience of the place turns festive and cheerful. It gets loud and roars of laughter fill the air when the ceremony begins. *Doomni* is also invited to perform folksongs and dance on this occasion. She usually brings her musical instrument along with her; the most popular *dholak*⁸³ or *thaal* (a big metal plate), available in almost every home is used as a common musical instrument for performing the folksongs. Usually, the *Butna* ceremony is held two days before the wedding day.

The majority of the participants in the function would wear yellow color dresses including the bride and the groom. The bride-to-be would wear ordinary clothes with yellow color *dupatta* presented to her by her parents, with lots of shiny embellishments such as sequins. The dress is specially designed for the ceremony. *Kousar* explained that the *dupatta* given as a present from the parents symbolizes the fact that the bride still belongs to her natal family and not to the in-laws.

Butna is an exclusively women-only ceremony and men are not allowed to enter because of the *pardah* observation. Men have to take permission from the elder women if they want to enter. *Butna*, literally refers to the paste which is applied to the bride's face and the whole body. This paste is prepared with turmeric powder and flour which is mixed in jasmine oil. When the paste takes the form of a liquid cake batter, it is placed on a metal plate. The

⁸² A formal invitation to the wedding ceremonies

⁸³ Percussion instrument

paste is decorated with marigold and rose petals and small candles are lit on the corners of the big plate which is locally known as *thaal*. The bride's friends along with an older woman relative prepare several *butna* plates for the guests too but the most decorated one is selected for the bride.

As soon as the ceremony starts, the friends of the bride bring her to the center of the room. She is covered in a big, decorated *dupatta*, wearing marigold flower jewellery and sits on a *choki*⁸⁴ or a chair, decorated with buntings and marigold flowers. In the olden days in Bhakkar, it was a common practice for the bride to sit on a mat for the ceremony. This action symbolically defines the status of the bride in her conjugal home as sitting on the mat or on the floor, teaches her to learn humbleness, obedience, and compliance. When the bride-to-be is about to arrive in the room, women rush to surround her, and the room becomes noisy and deafening as everybody wants to get a closer look. The blessings are also exchanged between the bride's mother and the rest of the women's relatives. The *doomni* also offers blessings to the bride and performs *Butna* folksongs. At times, *doomni* also begins to dance and women start giving her money as *vail*⁸⁵ for her dance and the folksong singing. The family women listen and clap to the songs.

The *butna* plate along with the perfume oil (placed in a separate plate) is set in front of the bride. It is customary for the elder women of the family to be asked to apply some *butna* paste on the bride's face and the perfume oil in her hair. They also give her sweets to eat. This activity continues and women take turns to perform the rituals according to the age and status of the female relatives. In Rajput culture, married women have a higher social status compared to the unmarried women (despite the age). Therefore, the bride's unmarried friends get their turn at the end. Similarly, women relatives from the paternal side like *phoopo*⁹⁵, *tai*⁸⁶ and *chachi*⁸⁷ are preferred over maternal relatives like *mami*⁸⁸ and

⁸⁴ In old times a decorated chair without arms was used for this purpose and that time this particular activity was called *choki bithana*

⁸⁵ Money as a reward given to a *doomni* as alms. It is considered a good omen on happy occasions such as wedding ⁹⁵ Father's sister

⁸⁶ Father's elder brother wife

⁸⁷ Father's younger brother's wife

⁸⁸ Mother's brother's wife

*khala*⁸⁹. This preference for the paternal relatives over the maternal ones also depicts the lower status of women in a patriarchal society such as Bhakkar.

After the ceremony is completed, the bride's friends take her back to her room. At night, they would rub the paste onto her body and apply a generous amount of perfume oil to her hair. The purpose being such that even though the bride-to-be might look untidy and messy for a couple of days, but the paste and oil will give her a wedding day glow-up. It is believed that the *butna* mixture (turmeric and corn flour with jasmine oil) would give her face and body a glow and shine. It is also assumed that due to smooth and glossy skin, her husband would be attracted to her and she may be able to seduce him. The *butna* paste *may* be applied to the bride daily, but the ceremony is held for one day.

Besides her friends applying *butna*, the bride also enjoys good food and plenty of rest during these days. This practice is very unlikely since in normal routine, the girl would not be able to take rest at her parent's home because of the assigned domestic chores.

During the *Butna* ceremony, women of the family crack sexual jokes about the marital relationship. The jokes and the folksongs prepare her for the new relationship with unknown people. During the pre-wedding ceremonies, the girl becomes and remains the center of attraction and attention. Almost all the relatives expressively show their care and affection towards her as she will be leaving them for her conjugal home forever. Therefore, *butna* ceremony and its folksongs also emphasize the care and love shown to the bride in her natal home.

After the *Butna* ceremony is over, the bride and the groom, even if they live in the same vicinity, are supposedly constrained from meeting each other. In the past, it was a farfetched idea. In the present days, it is also nearly impossible or difficult for a girl to go outside her home. However, as informed by the participants, due to the accessibility and increasingly common use of cellphones, the bride and groom may talk to each other secretly.

⁸⁹ Mother's sister

While the festivities go on in the bride's home, another *Butna* ceremony is also taking place in the groom's house. Similar to the *Butna* function at the bride's house, female relatives and neighbours are invited to participate in the ritual at the groom's house. However, here, *Butna* ceremony remains shorter and comparatively less cheerful. Usually, the groom wears a flower garland made of roses or marigold and puts a decorated yellow *dupatta* on his shoulders which is considered a good omen for his married life. His flower garland and yellow *dupatta* makes him distinguishable from the rest of the people attending the ceremony and is believed to cast away evil forces without harming his married life.

During the ceremony, groom sits on a chair which is decorated with flowers and colorful bunting. I was informed that the groom is never asked to sit on the mat or the floor due to his superior status and prestige in the household and social hierarchy. Women of his family (mother, sisters, maternal and paternal aunts) take turns to apply a small amount of *butna* on his palm on which a green leaf is already placed. Sometimes his sisters may apply some paste on his face, but it is not customary.

In a few Rajput families, small amount of perfume oil is applied on the groom's hair and *surma*⁹⁰ in his eyes but this tradition is not practiced any more as young boys dislike it. The mother of the groom and other relatives give him sweets for eating while performing the ritual. He is also not allowed to wear new clothes and asked not to shave his beard till the *barat* day.⁹¹ While this ritual is being performed, the *doomni* sings songs for the groom. A point to notice here is that there are no specific *Butna* songs for grooms so sometimes on the insistence of the female relatives, the *doomni* performs a few *sehra* songs. Women enjoy the joyful ambience by clapping. In reward, the *vail*⁹² is given to the *doomni* along with clothes and sweets.

⁹⁰ Kohl

⁹¹ Wedding day

⁹² Money given as reward to the poor or *doomni* for singing folksongs.

5.2. Themes in the *Butna* Folksongs

I collected eight *Butna* songs in all (songs 1-8). *Dadi Sughra* recorded six songs while the remaining two were recorded by the Rajput women. Five out of the eight *Butna* folksongs are for the bride, two are for the groom and one song is performed for both bride and groom. However, all the folksongs are sung by *doomni* during the *Butna* ceremony. Occasionally, the women of the family join in as well. The themes found in the *Butna* folksongs are as under:

Table 3. (Pre-wedding event) *Butna* ceremony and thematic folksongs

Main Ceremony	Themes
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Butna Ceremony</i> (One to three days Event – Eight Folksongs)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Thanksgiving Songs for Allah and His Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) 2. Expressive and Bold Bride 3. Subtle Messages Regarding Sexual Liaison

5.2.1. Songs of Praise and Gratitude to the God

I observed that the Rajputs living in Bhakkar are fairly religious people; especially the men who show resistance against the singing and performances of folksongs in their families and consider it a sinful activity. It was informed by the women participants that they would have to take permission from the men for holding the *Butna*. The ceremony in a family would only be possible if the men would approve. By now, it must be clear to the readers that the *Butna* is a simple ceremony held at home with family and neighborhood women attending the function. After taking permission from the men, women ask *doomni* to begin performing gratitude songs, addressed to Allah⁹³ and His Prophet. A reason the ceremony starts with the religious songs might be that this helps subside the male resistance. These

⁹³ Muslim name of address to God

praising songs further paves the way for other themes. As Scott (1990) explains that praising and gratitude songs are ‘public transcripts’ that does not challenge, offend, or contest the male hegemony in a society. During the *Butna* ceremony, these songs are sometimes repeated over and over again until midnight (men are mostly asleep by then). The other folksongs, named as ‘hidden transcript’ by Scott (1990) are performed later during the night as they may be related to the ‘critique of power spoken behind the back of the dominant’ (Scott, 1990).

The song performed by *Dadi Sughra* articulated:

Choki manga wae bagh main Allah rey Allah (song no. 1)
Khil rahe charoon taraf phool Allah rey Allah

Translation

Bring choki in the garden (with the name of Allah)
The flowers are blooming on all sides of the garden

The song talks about a utopian (imaginary and indefinitely remote) place, *bagh*⁹⁴, which metaphorically represents a desire for good life for both bride and groom. The *choki* of the bride or groom represents their home, is decorated with flowers and they are in the garden. The flowers are in full bloom, it is peace everywhere and the blessings from Allah and His Prophet⁹⁵ are being showered upon the bride and groom. Here, the flowers represent purity, love and beauty. The phrase ‘in full bloom’ symbolically points to the never-ending divine love between the bride and groom.

It is also prayed that the bride and groom may not face any difficulties in their lives and this world may become as peaceful and calming for them as a garden. The simplicity of the song is that it points out that even the ordinary needs like water, *bira*⁹⁶, tea and dress etc. shall only be asked from Allah as He is the Almighty and has the sole power to grant anything and everything to His people. The spiritual message behind the song is that the

⁹⁴ Garden

⁹⁵ Prophet Mohammad peace be upon him

⁹⁶ A small amount of opium powder enclosed in beetle leaf was served to men in affluent Rajput families for enjoyment

bride and groom, who are going to start a new life and may face difficulties, should always ask the Almighty for everything. Their goal should be to ask and seek blessings from Allah and His Prophet. The gratitude songs not only praise Allah and His supremacy (to please Him) but also to ask the Almighty to grant peace and happiness in the lives of the newlywed. Kousar narrates:

It is always good that we begin with praises and gratitude songs. These songs express blessings for the bride and groom for their future life. Moreover, our men would not feel bad about the songs and allow us to perform them at the wedding events.

Dadi also shared her outlook on these songs. She was of the opinion that these gratitude folksongs may be a replacement of the *Hindu* thanksgiving folksongs performed by them to appease *their* gods and goddesses. The lyrics of these folksongs may have been altered after the Rajputs converted to Islam from Hinduism.

In another *Butna* song, bride expresses her fears and apprehensions about moving to the in law's home and seeks blessings from Allah (God). The folksong narrates as:

<i>Jungle main aikli ka dera</i>	<i>main wari Allah</i>	(song.no.2)
<i>Chore maa neend kese awaa</i>	<i>main wari Allah</i>	

Translation

<i>I am living alone in the jungle</i>	<i>praises to Allah (Allah will take care of me)</i>
<i>How can I sleep alone in the jungle</i>	<i>praises to Allah (Allah will take care of me)</i>

The song metaphorically describes the true feelings of the bride. She views the in law's home as the woods, where the bride feels lonely and scared. She asks for the blessings of Allah to help her stay strong and cope with the fearful elements that she might have to face as the time passes. The cultural interpretation of the song expounds that the in-law's house is symbolically referred to as a jungle which is a treacherous place to live in. The bride is being told that there she may encounter different people with diverse lifestyles. It also warns the bride of men who may allure her and conjugal women who will be mischievous and may try to harm her. So in such circumstances which she might face at her in laws,

she must seek blessings and help from Allah and only He Who (Allah) will make her life easy and happy there.

5.2.2. Expressive and Bold Bride

Besides gratitude and praise, few *Butna* songs express romantic and sexual desires of the bride and groom which otherwise are hard to vent out. The lyrics from such a song is as under:

Aa jao rey mera banra aa yu rey

(song.no.3)

Ahey... main bulaya ikla dukla

haye... baje gaje layla ya

Translation

Come on (friends) my groom has arrived

I asked him to come alone but he brought (wedding) band with him

This *Butna* song portrays a bold and daring bride-to-be, who invites the groom to meet her secretly before the wedding day. In this song, the bride-to-be asks her groom to meet her alone but he brings wedding band and relatives with him. Therefore, the bride makes fun of him that he does not have the courage and confidence to meet her alone and mocks him for his cowardice however, the deeper theme that lies therein is that she is subtly instigating the groom for a secret meeting before marriage to enjoy some romantic time in privacy.

In traditional Rajput culture where couples live in extended family system, they find little to no time together⁹⁷. The new bride remains under the watchful eyes of her mother or sister-in-law and spends her time serving and meeting the guests. Therefore, the desire of the young bride for spending time with her husband remains unfulfilled and she ends up feeling exasperated and embittered at the unfair treatment.

In the Rajput culture, the girl, before her marriage, would generally serve all the family members, work with her mother and performs other household chores supposedly without

⁹⁷ The opinion is based on the women's interviews, in which they discussed their marital life experiences.

protesting or complaining. In this way, she is trained for her conjugal home where she has to work for her husband and his family with humility and humbleness. However, the *Butna* songs, shed light on the reverse reality of the Rajput girl. This expression is unlikely of Rajput culture, which a prototype of patriarchy, expects women be obedient and forbids discussion about taboos such as sexual desires or romanticism. If a woman fails to comply with this gender stereotype model, her aberrant behavior is stigmatized and she is labelled as rebellious and deviant woman, who might bring shame to the honor of the family.

In another *Butna song*, the bride also complains about the joint family system where newlywed couples are given less time together.

Soken ka kehna na mano, tum baher kharey rehyoo (song.no.4)

Hamari rum jhol main baja delwa yo

Translation

Don't listen to the co-wife, you stand outside (do not meet your family women)

Put some music in my lap, listen to me only

The bride addresses her groom and says that he must only listen to her, rather than the cowife and other women of his family. She also asks him to meet her in different places for spending romantic time together. In the song, the girl could also be found provoking the man for sexual intimacy so they can have offspring together. Nevertheless, this song again refers to the recurrent theme: the brief time a bride gets to spend with her groom in an extended family setup. Going away from home to spend time together has been repeatedly mentioned in many Rajput folksongs. The Rajput bride comprehends that in traditional Rajput culture, newlywed couples find very limited time together that is why she desperately asks him for spending romantic time away from home. However, this desire is merely expressed through the *Butna* folksongs. In reality, it is hard for a new bride to express her sentiments in such a leisurely manner.

Another expression of the bold bride has also been reflected in a *Butna* song. The song talks of an authoritative girl who commands her husband to fulfill her wishes. The song goes like:

O liyaya qyoon nahen resham ki chunri

(song.no. 5)

Arey mery taye se resham ki chunri

Aery wo senoo mian samjhawe banara

Arey wo samjhe na banerey ki banri

Wo ab jhaghri rey banerey ki baneri

Translation

Why did not you bring my decorated silk shawl

My elder uncle wished to give me

The groom in a concealed way is trying to make his bride understand

But the bride of the groom does not understand anything

She is about to fight with him

In this song, the bride talks to her husband authoritatively and asks him to bring daily wears and jewelry items from her natal relatives. She behaves stubbornly and does not seem to understand the groom's position. He does not want her to talk about such things in front of his mother and sister and asks her to be silent, but the bride keeps on asking about the items which her relatives had sent for her. The last line explains how the groom foresees an approaching fight. Yet the reality of the Rajput households states otherwise; a wife is never allowed to talk to her husband in an authoritative voice especially in front of the in-laws. According to the Rajput women participants, it may be more appropriate to term it as 'wishful thinking', since men living in joint family systems usually listen to their mothers and sisters whereby leaving the wives with no choice but to distrust the other women and remain skeptical about them.

For a change, here I discuss one of the *Butna* song performed for the groom by his bride which subtly humiliates him for being a miser and his reluctance to spend money on their wedding. The song expresses:

Ye chaaj⁹⁸ bhare moti ye bhabi teri manga

(song.no.6)

Main kiya bhejoon banrey topi ki banai

Main jaan gae banrey teri chaturai

⁹⁸ A big container in which wheat or rice is separated /cleaned from dust and pebbles

Translation

Your sister-in-law is asking for a container full of pearls

Tell me groom, how much (pearls) should I give her for cap making?

I know you are over clever! (Do not want to spend your money)

Through the song, the bride tries to abash her groom for being a miser who does not want to pay for the expenses of their wedding. The bride embarrasses him for trying to get out of not paying his dues and behaving as an over clever man. As a result, the bride's relatives have to pay up to the different maids who are making traditional items for the groom. As the groom is reluctant to spend his money, they ridicule him and pay their servants in dishes full of pearls to show off their wealth. This song depicts how weddings become an opportunity for parents to show off their wealth. Furthermore, the carelessness of men is tolerated and never questioned, while the bride's relatives are bound to oblige to the groom's party.

5.2.3. Subtle Messages of Sexual Liaison

Butna folksongs also communicate obscure references to 'illicit' relationship, which generally is considered a deviation from Rajput social norms. It may be assumed that this kind of expression may solely be a reaction to unfulfilled marital and romantic desires of the newly married couples living in joint family systems. A song narrates:

Jub ree jawani meri taloon pe otre

(song.no 8)

Mali ka larka harami, abhi tou meri nae rey jawan

Gande ka fool asmani, abhi tou meri nae re jawani

Translation

When a youthful girl (like me) goes to the garden

Gardener's boy is very alluring, and I just got my full youthfulness

Marigold flower has come from the sky, I just got my full youthfulness

In the song, the girl boasts of her youthfulness and beauty and expresses her desires explicitly. The lyrics of the song repeatedly refers to the men belonging to lower social caste who try to allure her when she goes to different places like wells, roads, palaces, and

gardens. In this song, the referred symbols are manifested in various cultural traditions. The Rajput girl knows that there is no possibility of meeting a man inside her home as it is guarded. Therefore, the young girl talks about embarking on a precarious journey (which might put her own self and her family's honor in jeopardy) and about going to potentially 'dangerous places' that come in public domain and are occupied by men, since these are the only places where she can meet strangers (men). Although, comprehending the situation very well, the girl still believes that these places are where she might meet the man of her dreams and start a romantic relationship with. The most interesting aspect of this song is that despite her own ill-intentions, the girl does not fail to curse the men for luring and tempting her; when in actuality, she is the one trying to seduce them through her youthfulness and beauty. The girl due to her perpetually unfulfilled sexual and romantic desires, faces an emotional dilemma. She wants to show respect to her traditions and customs while at the same time, wishes to meet men and have a relationship with them. Keeping the social reality in mind, she cannot voice such emotions openly but through the medium of folksongs, expresses her antithetical emotions.

During the interpretation sessions, I received varying contradictory responses from the women. A few believed that the alteration in the lyrics might have resulted in the addition of obscene words. They were shocked and found it hard to believe that a Rajput woman might have expressed her sentiments in such a manner. The other group of women supported the lyrics and opined that women are humans too, just like men and are allowed to feel such emotions. *Raeesa Begum* vocalized her opinion and said:

I do not state that Rajput women are so innocent that they don't think of any other man in their imagination. But she has no chance of thinking about going on this adventure as her movement outside the home and within the home is strictly observed. So, it becomes hard for her to meet her lover.

It was observed that the desire for illicit relationship of Rajput women with low social class men has been a common subject matter of many folksongs. In olden times, due to the royal lifestyle of the Rajput families, many servants like washerman, gardener, tailor and sweeper used to work in the homes of the Rajput families. Since traditionally, the Rajput

women were not allowed to go outside their homes, they had communications with the servants within the homes. The servants were allowed to come to the premises of the house and had access to the Rajput women by maintaining the social distance (*purdah*). Singhji (1993) does not negate the possibility of relations between Rajput women with their servants and claims that Rajput women may have had warm feelings for the home servants. There was a time when Rajput landlords used to take opium and other drugs. This practice might have resulted in them ignoring their wives and a greater possibility that the Rajput women, might have developed romantic links with the servants. Along these lines, it may be reasonable to presume that such practices became part of the Rajput history, thus following their way into the traditional folksongs.

As stated previously, in numerous folksongs collected for the current study, the relations of the Rajput women with their servants is vocally expressed and romanticized. In the background of their history, one can conclude that it must have suited the Rajputs to have sexual liaisons with servants/maids compared to the women/men belonging to the higher social status. Firstly, because these men and women were easy to contact and accessible whereas secondly, the men and women belonging to the lower social class may not have been strong enough to stand against their masters (Singhji, 1993). Simply put, the Rajput masters or mistresses did not perceive them as a threat to their social reputation.

The other most significant aspect reflected in the song is the expressed sexual desire of the Rajput women which is not considered culturally acceptable thus, symbolism have played a crucial role in the expression of these songs. For example, symbols of *gainda* (marigold) flower denotes fertility and has been frequently used rather than directly communicating sexual activity. Sex is a taboo and hardly allowed to express openly especially by the Rajput women. Nonetheless, in the song mentioned above, the girl is seducing men through her youth and beauty. Minturn and Kapoor (1993) present an interesting analogy between the 19th century America and Europe and the Rajput culture, with both restricting the sexual expression of women. According to Minturn and Kapoor (1993) it was often believed about the middle class women that one with no/less sexual desires is considered to be honorable and respectful. Compared to the lower social class women who were assumed to have a

high sex drive. The same tradition also acknowledges that men have more and stronger sex drive than women. Therefore, the nobility of women was the detrimental factor for family honour, which put the women under pressure to control their sexual desires.

Similarly, since the Rajput considered themselves among the noble clans, the family honour was associated to women's sexuality. Rajput cultural ethos have been markedly influenced by Hindu beliefs which warns about the power of sexual prowess of women named as *shakti*⁹⁹ and stresses the need to control the sexual expression of women. This psychic sexual power (*shakti*) is exclusive to upper or upper-middle-class Rajput women, thereby putting them under the pressure of guarding their behavior and attitude which should not disgrace them or their family. Moreover, this might be a strong reason for the compulsion of observing the *purdah* tradition. *Kousar* expresses her opinion about the interpretation of this song as:

I never realized that these folksongs had such indecent language and meaning (laughing). That is why women avoid singing them in front of men. It is an exaggeration of women's emotions. No Rajput woman dares to have such unethical desires! Maybe some women have them, but I don't know any woman who may express this.

In another song, the groom also conveys hidden messages of sexual nature to the bride's female relatives as the song narrates:

Bana ree mera butna manga badan manga sath (song.no 7)

Bana ree mera butna manga nayan managa sath

Translation

My groom asks for badan along with butna

My groom asks for the barber's wife along with butna

The song reflects upon the romantic sentiments of groom towards the bride's female relatives. The bride boasts off her groom's strong sexual power and mischievously speaks about how her husband needs her female relatives along with the bride. Here, it might be

⁹⁹ Power

needed to mention that a strong sexual drive is one of the traits of the Rajput manhood and can be expressed openly. A man also does not have to face negative social sanctions if he wishes to have or has more than one sexual partner.

These kind of dissenting strategies, mentioned above, can be a form of “feminist coding” (Radner & Lanser, 1987), “a hidden transcript” (Scott, 1991) or “veiled sentiments” (AbuLughod, 1986) which women may learn and use through folksongs. In a way, she is ridiculing and challenging the ethos of an ideal Rajput woman who is expected to control her sexual desires for the honor of her family. She also challenges the family honor to the extent where she begins to take notice of the ill-intentions of the lower-class men. The cultural interpretation of these songs identify some serious contestation against the prevailing patriarchal hegemony of the Rajputs. The subtle rebelliousness from a young woman is visible in the songs, where she wants to have freedom like the men of the family who are far more independent in their mobility and fulfillment of their desires.

In another *butna* song, which seemed to me to be fairly contemporary as it was being tuned on a movie song, an imaginary situation is portrayed where a girl goes to college. Song 9 narrates:

Ker ke do chotiyān pehan ker sariyan mujh ko collage mein jana ghazab ho gaya

Larke kehne lage khana khale lijijye mujhe luqma uthana ghazab ho gaya

Translation

Tying two hair beads and wearing sari became horrible when I went to college

The boys ask me to eat food (with them) but it became horrible for me to eat

The song talks about a girl who goes to college and meets her male friends who make different offers and show their interest in having a romantic relationship with her. This girl is unlike the typical Rajput girl and presents herself as being modern and fashionable who wants to have friendship with them but due to her social and cultural traditions has to stop herself.

The song portrays a different social reality, contrary to the Rajput life style and traditions. For example, the common dress code for Rajput women living in Bhakkar is *shalwar*

kameez but the young girl wears a *sari*¹⁰⁰ which is not only unique, but is also considered a fashionable dress. Once again, another one of the Rajput traditional song offers a conflicting view of the social reality and Rajput traditions. The symbolic manifestation in the form of food and bed refer to a friendship with sexual benefits.

Conclusion

In conclusion, almost all the *Butna* folksongs serve as a significant vehicle for both men and women to openly express their instinctive sexual desires. The settings where these folksongs are performed can also be seen as crucial stepping stones for developing and creating subversive spaces for women. These songs are marked with hidden sexual innuendoes and quite often serve to challenge the patriarchal hegemonies. The women through the songs ridicule, contest, challenge and even portray their 'wishful thinking' which otherwise would not have been possible in the Rajput culture. These songs allow us to take a peek in the hidden, unspoken realm which is more often than not violently hushed or quietened.

5.3. The *Henna* Ceremony

The *Henna* ceremony usually lasts for a single day and follows the *Butna* ceremony. *Henna* is an *Arabic* word¹⁰¹, which is locally known as *mehndi*. The ceremony is also sometimes referred to as *Mehndi*. *Henna* is a dried powder from which the *henna* paste is made¹⁰². The purpose of holding the ceremony is to beautify and prepare the bride for the climax i.e. the wedding day.

Various patterns and different shades of *henna* have symbolic cultural interpretations which signify the change in social status of a man and woman. In its original form, henna looks like an olive-colored dried powder which represents maiden fertility. When mixed with water (semen) it gives deep green color also symbolizing fertility and Mother Nature

¹⁰⁰ A women's garment which is unstitched and long drape of varying length of different colors and designs which mostly subcontinent women wear on occasions and/or as daily wear.

¹⁰¹ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/henna>

¹⁰² an Old World tropical shrub or small tree (*Lawsonia inermis*) of the loosestrife family (Lythraceae) with clusters of fragrant white flowers (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/henna>)

(nurturing). After its application on hands and feet, it leaves a reddish-orange color which refers to life (blood and childbirth). This transformation from one phase to another represented through the different shades of *henna*, corresponds to the bride's status, as Upadhyaya (1957) explains that this ritual supports the young bride in emotional and psychological disassociation from her natal home, her kin and the familiar homely environment. This is part of a gradual process which leads her to change her status from a girl to a wife and later a mother.

The bride's visibility on the *Henna* ceremony is still restricted like *Butna* days. She is asked to remain in her room and keep herself covered with a big *dupatta taking ghonghat*¹⁰³. However, the bride does not stay alone in her room. It is a customary tradition for the mother, sister or friend to accompany her. It is also assumed that the bride is vulnerable to mental and physical exhaustion during the pre-wedding days due to the stress of new life, thus the evil forces may take advantage of this and try to harm her. The other way to keep her away from the evil eyes is that she must wear very ordinary clothes till her wedding day so that the evil eye might not spot her. It is commonly believed among the locals that the red patches on the skin after removing *henna* paste protects the bride by becoming unrecognizable to the evil eye (Durrani and Khan, 2014). The dark reddish color of *henna* on hands and feet symbolizes the color of happy married life for the bride.

The liminal phase as endorsed by Turner (1969) explains the traits of a person undergoing the rites of passage. Covering herself with a big *dupatta* and hiding her face is an expression of invisibility from her kin. This is a part of the liminal stage as defined by Turner (1969) wherein the bride becomes symbolically "invisible" and loses her present social status. This might be viewed as a metamorphosis stage. Although, she has lost her former status as 'father's daughter' but still have not gain a new status (wife) of 'some man (husband). During the series of wedding rituals, the former status of being an unmarried girl is erased. She becomes a person who undergoes the rite of passage in a confused state and learns the appropriate rules and behaviors intensively from elder authoritative people.

¹⁰³ A veil is a piece of thin soft cloth that women sometimes wear over their heads and which is also used to cover their face. <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/hindi-english>

5.3.1. The Context and the Setting: A Peek into the *Henna* Ceremony

The ceremony showcases submissiveness of bride as she sits on the chair or a *choki*,¹⁰⁴ while keeping her head down. The *henna* ritual begins; elderly and married women are invited by the bride's mother for putting henna on the bride's palm. A big green leaf mostly from a pipal tree¹⁰⁵ is placed on the bride's palm and henna paste is put on it. *Henna* paste is prepared by the bride's friends in big plates, and often the plates are decorated with marigold flowers, rose petal and *gota*¹⁰⁶. Candles are added and lit on the corners of the *henna* plates (*thaals*) to make them look attractive and brighter as the ceremony takes place at night. Lights and colorful bunting make the event more attractive and cheerful. The paste is the mixture of dry *henna* leaves with simple or rose water (Durrani and Khan, 2014).

Similar to the *Butna*, Elder women are called first called to begin the *Henna* ceremony. Next, married women who have higher social status as compared to the unmarried girls are called for the application of *henna* on the bride's palms. The women take turns to perform the ritual and as soon as the elderly and married women are called for putting *henna* on the bride's hand, *doomni* begins to perform the folksongs. In a few of the folksongs (9 and 10), names of the women relatives of the bride are called upon and they come up to perform the *henna* ritual. Unmarried girls or bride's friends are asked to come in last and apply *henna* on the bride's palms. Customarily, the bride is expected to dress up in green clothes or wear a green *dupatta* at the time of the ritual. The green color stands for fertility which signifies fruitfulness (children). Traditionally in Rajputs, bride's green dress or *dupatta* is provided by her mother's side. After putting *henna* on the bride's palm by the women relatives and friends, sweets are given to the bride for eating and also distributed among families as a good omen for her happy married life.

Henna ritual generally starts in the evening and is celebrated till late at night. The lighting of candles on the *henna* ceremony symbolically represents the brightness in the bride's

¹⁰⁴ A kind of short stool or bench

¹⁰⁵ *Ficus religiosa* is a native tree of Indian subcontinent. It is considered sacred in three religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. It is considered sacred in Hindu and Jain and often meditate as they think that Gautama Buddha is believed to have attained enlightenment under this tree .

¹⁰⁶ Golden or silver lace

married life. The bride-to-be is taken to the room in ordinary clothes and sits on a decorated *choki* which has been specially prepared for her. However, in the olden days, the situation used to be quite different as *Akhtar Bibi* expressed:

In the olden days, sometimes the bride would be asked to sit on the mat or a rug during the henna ceremony. The cultural explanation of this act was that the bride shall learn to be humble and obedient in her in-law's home and may keep her expectations low because the privileges and freedom she has in her natal home will not be available in her conjugal home.

It is also reflected through the bride's gestures that she is expected to stay quiet during the ceremony and comply with the rituals. She shall not smile or uncover her face in front of the relatives and neighbours. She may seem completely docile and almost indifferent to the rituals going on around her. *Salma* shared her opinion as:

It is culturally expected from a bride that she should remain quiet, submissive, and docile when the henna ritual is going on. She should not show emotions, especially of joy. Because it means she is happy to leave her parents for a man whom she doesn't know. However, time has changed, now the bride is not much submissive and also shows her joy on her marriage, which elderly women do not like. They consider it rude and against the Rajput norms and traditions.

Raheja and Gold (1996) argue that the inferior women status in patriarchal cultures may have its roots in their traditional folk songs through which the patriarchal trap of humiliation and intimidation of women is exposed by portraying them in a state of complete subordination and obedience (Raheja and Gold, 1996). After the ceremony ends, the bride's friends take away the green leaf along with the ceremonial *henna* on it. This used *henna* is not thrown, rather buried in the land as it is considered sacred for the wedded life of the newly married couple. Afterwards, the bride's friends decorate her hands and feet with intricate patterns of *henna*. The women's relatives are also presented *henna* so that they may decorate their hands if they would wish to. The *henna* applying ritual continues for a few hours and later it is allowed to get dried. As it dries, it changes color and turns darker and reddens. Here, I would like to mention a very interesting belief quite popular among

the local Rajput people, which states that if the color of the *henna* gets dark red on the bride's hands; she will get a good mother-in-law. Therefore, when the *henna* is washed, everybody looks enthusiastic to see the bride's hands to predict the treatment she will get from her mother-in-law. Women relatives crack jokes about her future mother-in-law and marital life which adds to everybody's enjoyment.

It is significant to mention here that the submissive posture and docile behaviour is culturally expected from the bride, but not from the groom throughout the wedding days. The groom has no restriction whatsoever and enjoys with his friends as much as possible. It is commonly believed that he will never see the days of freedom again, since as soon as his social status will change, he will have to transform into a mature, responsible adult therefore he should enjoy these days to the fullest. Similar to the *Butna* ceremony, the *Henna* function is also held at both the bride and the groom's homes. However, the function held at the bride's home is more elaborate and festive in mood.

In the groom's home, as soon as the ceremony starts, the groom enters a room or a veranda with his brother or friends. His close relatives like his aunts and female cousins gather around his chair or *choki* for performing the ceremony. The *Henna* ceremony at the groom's house is also an exclusively women only ceremony. Like the bride, the groom too wears ordinary clothes but puts a red *dupatta* on his shoulders and flower garlands around his neck¹⁰⁷. He sits on a decorated *choki* and a green leaf is placed on his palm. His aunts and married sisters/cousins put a small bit of *henna* on his palm and give him sweets to eat as both practices are considered auspicious omens for his married life. This ceremony also starts in the evening and may continue late at night because of the folksongs performances however, the rituals remains brief compared to the bride's *henna* function.

Traditionally, unlike the bride, the groom's mobility is not restricted; rather he is encouraged to enjoy with his friends. The groom is allowed to leave the ceremony once the rituals are completed. Relatives and friends are served with food. During the ceremony,

¹⁰⁷ Unlike bride, the groom wears a red *dupatta* which is symbolic for sexual life and happiness through married life.

some *sehra* songs are performed on relatives' insistence which make them emotional and occasionally one can witness sobbing scenes during the ceremony from the mother or the other elder women of the family. The environment turns nostalgic as some elderly women would begin to reminisce about the day when the groom was born, making the ritual more emotional for the groom's mother and other close relatives. These emotional scenes represent the overwhelming happiness of having a son and his marriage.

5.4. Themes in *Henna (Suhag)* Folksongs

I recorded five *henna* folksongs in total. Three from *Dadi Sughra* (songs. 9, 10, 11) and the remaining two from *Kousar* (12 and 13). *Dadi Sughra* explained to me that the *Henna* songs that are performed from the bride side are also known as *suhag* songs. In the Indo-Pakistan cultural context, the word *suhag* is a metaphor for husband. The *suhag* songs mostly denote emotions of joy and blessings for a happy married life of bride and groom (Singh, 2011). In context of the *Punjabi suhag* songs, Singh (2011) argues that there are three core sets of relationships. Similar to the core sets defined by Singh (2011), three sets of relationships are also found in Rajput *suhag* folksongs which are the paternal relatives, the maternal relatives, and the in-laws to whom these folksongs are addressed.

Table 4. Henna ceremony and folksongs (Pre-wedding event)

<i>Henna / Mehndi</i> ceremony	Themes
<i>Suhag</i> Folksongs (One day Event – Five Folksongs)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Dynamics of the Maternal Family 2. Reinforcement of Patriarchal Ideology 3. Romantic Expression Conflicting with Social Norms 4. Tradition of Arranged Marriage in Rajput Culture 5. Depiction of Rajput Men

Most of these songs present the romantic ideologies heavily influenced by the culture that does not approve of them or allows freedom of expression. Rather the culture demonstrates monotony and an adequately persistent lifestyle (Singh, 2011).

In *suhag* songs, the bride (in her friend's voice) wishes to visit a fantasy land where all her dreams might come true, but this is deemed impossible because of the sociocultural barriers. As Singh (2011) mentions that the inner feelings of an individual collide with the normative forms of the social customs (Singh, 2011). Therefore, *suhag* songs express the bride's deep sentiments and emotional attachment to her natal home. As the *henna* or *suhag* songs are performed one day before the wedding day, they also express romantic sentiments that a bride may have for her groom. Below are some major themes discussed in detail, found in the *henna* or *suhag* folksongs:

5.4.1. The Dynamics of the Maternal Family

All five of the *Suhag* folksongs collected for the research were analyzed and found to have the most recurring theme discussing the relationship of the bride with her family, maternal relatives and natal home.

One of the folksong is an interesting dialogue between the bride and groom right before their wedding whereas the rest of the four songs are performed by the bride's friends. Singh (2011) states that the *suhag* songs primarily talk about the relationship of the bride with her maternal relatives especially her uncles, aunts, and grandparents. In the Rajput culture, the maternal relatives of the bride or groom play a significant role in fulfilling the social obligations in terms of material gifts and monetary support provided to the sister/daughter. That explains why the maternal relatives are often mentioned in the *suhag* songs. Maternal relatives of the bride express their sentiments, warmth, affection and well wishes for her newly married life. Besides, the maternal relatives also support the bride financially (Singh, 2011). A crucial point to be remembered here is that the preference towards the maternal relatives does not make the paternal ones any less significant. They are also respected and considered an important part of the family. For example, in the *suhag* song below, the

doomni addresses the bride's paternal relatives for *Henna* ceremony and insists that they come up and apply *henna* on the bride's palm. The song narrates:

Mehndi teal fulail lagao

(song.no.10)

Aaj hey badhawa banu laadli ke ghar gao lao

Bhayoon ki laadli ke ghar gao lao Aaj

he badhawa banu laadli ke ghar aoo

Translation:

Apply henna and oil (on bride's hand and feet)

Today is the invitation from the darling bride go to her house

She is a darling of her brothers

The same lyrics are repeated in the song for the maternal relatives like *mami*¹⁰⁸, *khala*¹⁰⁹, *khaloo*¹¹⁰, *nani*¹¹¹ and *nana*¹¹². When the names of the female relatives are called upon by the *doomni*, they come and take part in the *henna* ritual, as explained earlier.

5.4.2. Reinforcement of Patriarchal Ideology

The word *suhag* metaphorically means husband and getting married to a suitable man is considered as the most accomplished milestone in a girl's life. Therefore, on *Henna* ceremony, *suhag* songs are performed to communicate the importance of marriage and the profound significance of being married. The song narrates:

*Tera tou suhag laado, Moti jari maang*¹¹³

(song.no.11)

Amman ki piyari laado ka suhag, Moti bhari maang

Translation

O, darling! Your suhag is, your pearl engraved maang,

¹⁰⁸ Maternal uncle' wife

¹⁰⁹ Mother's sister

¹¹⁰ Mother's sister' husband

¹¹¹ Mother's mother

¹¹² Mother's father

¹¹³ Sectioning of the hair on head from the middle in such a way that it is divided into two (or sometimes more) equal parts.

Mother's darling your suhag is a pearl engraved maang

The song uses figurative language to tell the bride that she is a really fortunate girl to have a husband who is as precious as a pearl. The analogy used here signifies that the bride's husband is one in a million kind of person and a man of exquisite taste and extraordinary traits. The bride is lucky to have him and should always be grateful for this blessing. Themes like such not only aim to develop gratefulness for a happy marriage but rather to strengthen the patriarchal ideologies; according to which, the husband is depicted as a god and the girl should be compliant to all his demands. Furthermore, these ideologies aim to promote and reinforce the patriarchal philosophy, wherein a woman is made to feel intimidated by the man because of his charisma (as the man being referred in the song as hair engraved with pearls) or personality traits and never asking for favors. Moreover, the song also describes the love for the bride by repeatedly mentioning how much the bride is loved by her family (both maternal and paternal) and is given the nickname of *laado*¹¹⁴ by them.

The interpretation of the song seems to be profoundly influenced by the Hindu culture in which the married women put small amounts of red powder, *sandoor*, along the parting of their hair, implying marriage. If the husband dies, a woman is not allowed to use *sandoor* anymore. Therefore, the presence of *sandoor* is a symbol of matrimony and a woman's undying love and devotion towards her spouse.

Another major purpose that *suhag* songs aim to serve is the reinforcement of social norms and ideologies pertaining to marriage. In Rajput culture, before a woman leaves her home to go to her husband's, she must acknowledge and remember that for a married woman, her husband should be the most important person and her life should solely revolve around him. Singh (2011) states that *suhag* folksongs may at times seem like constant laments that describe the powerlessness of women. *Akhtar Bibi* agreed to this cultural belief and expressed:

A woman's life is strongly linked to her husband even if he lives far from his wife.

There is a hope that he will come back someday. But a widow has no life. In Rajputs,

¹¹⁴ Spoiled child (darling).

she would never remarry and would spend her whole life being dependent on her parents or in-laws, living a miserable life.

As discussed previously, these songs reinforce the traditional patriarchal ideology that believes in men's superiority and women subordination in Rajput culture.

5.4.3. Romantic Expression Conflicting with Social Norms

What distinguishes the third song from the other two (and many more in fact) is here the groom is trying to convey a message to the bride. In this song, the groom wants to talk to his bride directly and expresses his romantic feelings towards her. The song narrates as:

Dervaje pey bol sunaya, Buno meri main terey karan ayaa (song.no.12)
Ghoonghat kholo, mukh sey bolo
Keyserya rang laya, Buno meri main terey karan ayaa

Translation

I am singing from your doorstep my bride I came here only for you
Take off your veil for me and talk to me I brought saffron color for you
My bride, I came here only for you

In the folksong, the groom asks his bride to let her enter the home and show her face by taking away her *ghoonghat*. He repeatedly insists that he came for her and wants to talk to her. In this *suhag* song, the groom directly talks to her bride which is unlikely to happen in Rajput culture. *Akhtar Bibi* shares her opinion:

These songs are full of fake emotions and deceive both bride and groom. Both expect a romantic relationship in their future lives but that never happens in reality. Rajputs' social norms are very strict and revolve around family, not couples.

The song is performed by *doomni* along with bride's friends and the feelings of groom are expressed. It could be referred to as a form of demagoguery, where the friends and the singer try to tell the bride exactly what she wants to hear, even though it might be untrue. The most reasonable explanation for such an act might be that since the bride is going to leave her natal home forever, the singer and the friends want to make her cheerful by looking at the bright side of things.

The context of the song also informs that the reunion of the bride and groom is just a day away and the groom is beside himself with excitement. In the next part of the song, he also talks about his permission for expressing his affectionate feelings for the bride. Singh (2011) claims that the ritual-based folksongs, such as *suhag* songs, represent a subtle conflict between an individual's desire versus family and society and its other various institutions. Similarly, bride and groom face and battle the dilemmas referring to their desires and societal norms. The song expresses the romantic sentiments of the groom for his bride which otherwise would not have been possible to express explicitly.

It is noteworthy to mention that there are certain key symbols referred in this folksong which through interpretation might benefit in a deeper understanding of the Rajput culture. For example, *ghoonghat*-veil, which a groom wants to take away from his bride's face has been referred in the song. The *ghoonghat* has a symbolic interpretation in different situations. In one situation, *ghoonghat* or veiling of the women is used to imply the social distance from men (Jacobson, 1978). It defines obligatory subservience of the wife towards her husband and his kinsmen. However, particularly in this folksong, *ghoonghat* functions in two ways, one to evoke sexual and erotic desires (Harlan, 1992) whereas the taking of off *ghoonghat* symbolically refers to the beginning of an intimate relationship between bride and groom.

The other symbolic metaphor is *keserya* or *saffron* color which is referred in the folksong. The color has a deep historical significant in the Rajput culture. Russell (1968:427) explains the relevance of *keserya* color and claim that in Rajput cultural ethos, this colour is symbol of sacrifice, unconditional love and commitment. In olden times, the colour was associated with Rajput warriors who would die for a cause while fighting on the battlefield whereas Rajput women used to wear *keserya* colored *sari* when they would commit sati¹¹⁵ or *jouhar*¹¹⁶. Dressed up in *keserya* colored ceremonial dress at weddings is a sign of an honorable and deep social bond between husband and wife. A groom bringing this color

¹¹⁵ A former practice in India whereby a widow threw herself on to her husband's funeral pyre.

¹¹⁶ Jauhar, sometimes spelled Jowhar or Juhar, is the act of mass self-immolation by women in parts of the Indian subcontinent, to avoid capture, enslavement and rape by foreign invaders, when facing defeat during a w

for his bride symbolizes his commitment to marriage. Besides the historical significance of the colour, it also symbolizes the color of sun and fire, both having tremendous power and energy and representing eternal life. Moreover, the yellow color denotes fertility, purity and courage in Rajput culture. *Dadi* briefly talked about the myth of *keserya bana*¹¹⁷ who sacrificed his life for the honour of the Rajput clan.

5.4.4. Tradition of Arranged Marriage in Rajput Culture

It was informed by the participants that arranged marriages are the most common practice in the Rajput families living in Bhakkar. They were sure that no love marriage had previously occurred in their families. Similarly, wedding songs also reinforce the Rajput tradition of arranged marriage system. For example, the folksongs (10 and 11) repeatedly narrate that the bride is the darling of her family and every relative must attend her wedding and she must take their blessings on her wedding day. In the song, the word *laado* is used for the darling daughter as she accepts her parents' choice of her life partner without objecting. Therefore, the *suhag* songs exemplify the importance of arranged marriage system. Through these songs, the idea is reinforced in the mind of both boy and girl to curtail and disapprove the process of courtship.

5.4.5. Depiction of the Rajput Men

In three *suhag* folksongs, men are depicted as having various relationships with the bride. In two of the three *suhag* songs (10 & 11), men are addressed as father, brother, paternal and maternal relatives who are an emblem of love and affection for the bride, as supposedly they protect her and support her financially. The *suhag* songs also narrate her subordination and dependence on family men in her life, being disguised as an expression of love.

Besides bride's expression of love for her natal kins, groom is depicted as a committed person who is eager to meet his bride but within the constraints of the social norms. The link of *keserya* (saffron color and clothes) to the Rajput social ethos has been discussed earlier.

¹¹⁷ The saffron-clad warriors who preferred death to dishonour.

It is interesting to note here (as described by *dadi* and the other female participants) that a Rajput groom is viewed as a prototype of the traditional Rajput warrior; a warrior who is brave, fearless and successfully comes back from the battlefield like a hero. This perception of the Rajput warrior, who may turn out to be *keserya balma* is inspired by the famous Rajput love story *Dhola–Maro*¹¹⁸. The story narrates of a lover who is addressed by her beloved as *keserya balma (saffron colored lover)* to come and meet her in Rajasthan. So, in one of the *suhag* songs, the groom refers himself as a romantic warrior who is committed to taking her bride from her parents' home and his excitement is overwhelming.

5.4.6. Satire Songs

The last two folksongs performed on *Henna Day* are called satire songs¹¹⁹. These songs aim to mock and ridicule the bridegroom. One of them is as under:

Bana rey terey dada ki kidher haveli (song.no.13)

Bana rey main tou dhondtee chali aayee

Bana rey terey dada ki lag ree kochehri

Bana rey main sharam main marti aayee

Translation

Groom, where is your grandfather's big residence

Groom, I was looking for it

Groom, your grandfather was under trial (in courts)

I was so ashamed after watching him there

Bride mocks her groom that his grandfather is under trial in courts for his fraudulent activities regarding their big houses (havelis), which the groom used to boast about. After seeing the grandfather in court, the bride is embarrassed and feels ashamed. Through the satire song, groom's grandfather, elder and younger uncles are mocked for claiming big

¹¹⁸ Folk love story of Rajasthan for more detail read https://www.academia.edu/21068575/The_Dhola-Maru_in_Rajasthani_Folk_Theatre

¹¹⁹ The Satirical Song: Text versus Context, Donald Ward, Western Folklore, Vol. 36, No. 4. Western States Folklore Society.

houses (havelis) and other properties against their names. Mocking of groom's family through folksongs is part of the celebrations during the wedding days.

Another song performed on the *Henna* ceremony is based on a Pakistani movie song and makes fun of groom as he is fooled by his in-laws. The song narrates:

Ye ada ye naaz ye andaaz aapka (song.no. 14)

Dhere dhere shadi ka bahana bun gaya

Saas aati rahi tohfey lati rahi

Mere bhayia ko patti perdhatey rahey

Mera bhola bhala bhayia dewana bun gaya

Translation

Because of your flirting outlook

Gradually the chances of getting married (of my brother) increased

Mother-in-law used to come and gave many gifts to my innocent brother

She poisoned my innocent brother (with her talks)

My innocent brother became desperate to get married

This song is performed from the groom's side and tells about a groom who is fooled and bribed by his in-laws through expensive gifts and edible items to marry their daughter.

However, this is the only song in which the bride's family is mocked by the groom's relatives, while the rest of the songs portray otherwise.

Conclusion

For the Rajputs, *Henna* ceremony is a time of festivities and merriment, yet at the same time, a feeling of gloominess, nostalgia and melancholy prevails in the homes of both bride and groom, credited to the fact that the bride is going to leave her natal home forever and the groom has grown up from being his mother's child to a man with huge responsibilities on his shoulder. The *henna* or more commonly known as the *suhag* folksongs, talk about many different themes, some of them being a true depiction of the Rajput culture in Bhakkar while the others merely an over exaggerated distortion of the facts. However, whatever it may be, these songs serve as a medium and vehicle for both men and women to communicate their unspeakable desires and challenge the conservative societal norms

and customs. Besides, these songs are not merely narrations, in strict sense of the term, but rather an articulation of the imagined and fantasized experiences and a utopic state.

6. THE WEDDING DAY FOLKSONGS (BASED ON AFFINAL RELATIONS)

Introduction

The chapter discusses the in-depth thematic findings of wedding day folksongs based on affinal relations. On the wedding day, locally known by the Rajput people as *biyah ka din*, a separate set of folksongs called *sehra* songs are also performed exclusively for the bridegroom. The chapter constitutes of both the husband-wife thematic songs and *sehra* songs, the narratives of the participants, decoding of the wedding event along with the commentaries on the ceremonies and performances of the folksongs on the wedding day.

6.1. The Wedding Day

Rajputs have their own impressive set of traditions and series of rituals when it comes to weddings. Also, it might not be entirely wrong to assert that Rajputs are one of the clans who still follow their Royal traditions and thus their weddings are an elaborate affair, steeped in symbolism. Wedding day comes after the *Henna* ceremony and is understood as the climax of all the earlier events. Since family has a great significance in the Rajput culture therefore weddings are considered as an integral part which ensures the perfect alliance of two matching individuals. It is a one-day event, commonly referred by the locals as *barat* and an emotionally charged one as well, with the groom and his family arriving at the bride's home to take her.

Traditionally, the departure of the bride would take place from her natal home as it was considered prestigious and honorable for both herself and her family. Paradigm shift, however, has resulted in some affluent Rajput families arranging the reception and departure of the bride from wedding banquets. Nonetheless, there is still a large majority who prefer traditional departure of bride from her natal home. When the departure is arranged from home, it places a huge obligation on the bride's family to ensure that the ceremony goes smoothly. The family would also be responsible for all the preparations

including the reception of the *barat*, food and departure of the bride. It is a matter of uttermost significance for the bride's family to serve the best and a diverse meal to the guests; not only as a display of their gracious, hospitable nature but rather because their reputation is at stake.

In Rajput culture, the maternal uncle has a distinct social obligation towards his sister and her children and generally maternal uncles and aunts generously contribute through money and expensive gifts on the wedding of their nieces and nephews. As previously mentioned, the reputation of the bride's family depends greatly on the feedback that they would receive from the groom's relatives regarding the reception. It raises a question to the *barat*'s honor if treated any differently. Reasonable to assume, both parties seem to be at risk of their honor and respect as relatives from both the sides keep a critical eye and scrutinize the food arrangements and the reception of *barat*¹²⁰.

6.1.1. The Rituals and Customs

Gill (1998) explains that the wedding day could be viewed as a test of hospitality for both the bride and the groom's families. It reflects the families' social position within the community, the future relationship and the happiness of the bride, which is supposedly dependent on this ceremony.

In the bride's home, the *barat* day begins at the break of day, with the *mama*¹²¹ presenting a heavy amount of money, sweets and clothes to her sister (bride's mother) as good *shagoon*¹²² for his niece's life and prosperous future. If the bride's mother does not have a real brother, then her cousin brother(s) would perform this ritual and in obligation will give money to her cousin sister for the ritual. After this ritual, the bride takes a bath and gets ready to wear the special bridal dress; the ritual known as *patra utaarna*¹²³. This ritual symbolizes and signifies the purification of bride (both physically and spiritually) in

¹²⁰ Participants based opinion

¹²¹ Maternal uncle

¹²² Omen

¹²³ Literally meaning getting down from a high place

preparation for her married life. After a few hours of preparation, the bride gets ready and is then taken to a separate room where she awaits for the *barat*.

After the *barat* arrives, the bride would be brought to the stage in the center of the room and sits on the sofa while keeping her face covered with an intricately decorated *dupatta*. Following the tradition, the Rajput bride in Bhakkar wears a red *shalwar kameez and duppata* with beautiful designs made of silver and golden threads and engraved pearls. Although, the traditional color of the bridal dress is red but in the present times, people choose many different colors of their choice.

Dowry system is still very much prevalent in the Rajput societies and is considered a matter of honor and prestige. Conventionally, Rajputs give large amount of dowries to their daughters which at times may seem to have exceeded the economic status of the girl's family. As narrated by the female participants, dowry usually consists of clothes for the bride, jewelry, furniture, utensils, electronic gadgets and other items of daily use that a girl may need in her new home. Occasionally, grooms also demand a car or a motorcycle as part of the dowry, which have to be provided by the bride's parents as it becomes a matter of honor for them. However, these kind of demands are negotiated well before the time of *nikah* (the religious contract) and arrival of *barat*, to avoid any unpleasant incident on the day of wedding.

Customarily, in the Rajput families, the wedding dress and the jewelry which the bride wears on the wedding day, is given to her by her parents. It is assumed that since she is still their daughter, she must wear her parents' dress and jewelry. Clothes are also presented to the groom's parents, sisters, brothers, sisters-in-law, brothers-in-law and other close relatives. At times, some affluent Rajput families also present clothes or distribute money amongst the maids who work in the groom's house.

6.1.2. The Scene

The bride after getting dressed up in her bridal dress comes to the stage with her friends. As the bride approaches the stage, the ambience turns loud and noisy. People in the room rush to catch a glimpse of the bride and she becomes the centre of attraction and attention

for everyone gathered around her. The bride's *mami*¹²⁴ or *phoophi*¹²⁵ start the ritual by giving money to the bride's mother and soon after, other guest women begin to give the money to the bride which is called *salami*. While the ritual is going on, the folksongs for the wedding day begin. *Doomni* and the bride's friends perform many songs. Since Rajput women are not allowed to dance hence the *doomni* dance on the beat of *dholak* or *thaal* on the various folksongs while the rest of the women spectate, clap and cheer on the performance.

6.1.3. Getting Ready for the *Barat*

Unlike the pre-wedding functions, the groom's house is also a place of hustle and bustle on the wedding day. The house buzzes with excitement and activities as the relatives from the paternal and maternal side gather in the home and greet each other on the happy occasion. Men stay occupied with the arrangement of *barat*, which is the main activity of the wedding day from the groom's side. Rajput women traditionally do not accompany the *barat*; the groom's mother, sister and other female relatives stay at home and wait for the bride. While waiting, *doomni* is asked to sing folksongs and the women enjoy themselves. They are also expected to make preparations for the reception of the bride once she comes back.

Before the *barat* departs for the bride's home, the main ceremony of '*sehra bandi*'¹²⁶ at groom's home takes place. This ritual is considered an integral part of the wedding day for both the groom and his relatives. The groom dresses up in a traditional white *shalwar kameez* and traditional footwear *khussa*¹²⁷. His father (or if the father is not alive, his elder brother) wraps up a *sehra*¹²⁸ on his head. The *sehra* is made up of flower garlands, pearls and shiny decorations which hang down and cover the groom's face. Besides *sehra*, the groom may also wear flower and money garlands given to him by his relatives and friends especially for this occasion. Afterwards, he takes blessings from his mother, sisters and other close relatives. It becomes an emotional and touching event as his mother starts

¹²⁴ Maternal aunt –mother's brother's wife

¹²⁵ Paternal aunt- father's sister

¹²⁶ A ritual in *sehra* is wrapped on groom head on weddings

¹²⁷ Traditional footwear

¹²⁸ Flower-decked veil

sobbing out of love and happiness. Money is distributed among the poor and *doomni* as a good omen. During the ritual of *sehra bandi*, *sehra* songs are performed which sometimes create emotional and sentimental situation for the close relatives of the groom.

After *sehra bandi*, the *barat* is ready and proceeds towards the bride's home. A decorated car with flowers and colorful buntings is prepared by the groom's friends. For the rest of the family, men and friends of the groom, buses and cars are arranged. In earlier times, people in *barat* would go on horses or on foot to the bride's home as there were no other alternatives means of transport available. But now, for the *barat*, cars, buses and other transports are hired by the groom's family.

Occasionally, partially as a matter of prestige and honor for the bride and groom families and partially as a means to flaunt their wealth and economic status, *barat* is arranged on cars and buses.

The Rajput families who still follow the customs of a traditional *barat*, decorate a horse for the groom¹²⁹ (the interpretation mentioned in the pre-wedding chapter). The flamboyance does not just end here and before the *barat* leaves for the bride's home, gunshots are fired, and the sky lights up with colourful, dazzling fireworks. All these actions signify the departure of *barat* from the groom's home. In a similar manner, gunshots are also fired, and firework show is displayed when the *barat* reaches the bride's home to let everyone know about the arrival. Couple of groom's friends, out of joy and excitement, would dance in the *barat* near the bride's home.

6.1.4. Arrival of *Barat* at the Bride's Home

When the *barat* procession reaches the bride's home, all the male relatives of the bride receive the groom and his family near their home; in olden times however, the *barat* was received from the outskirts of the village as a means of paying homage to the groom's family.

¹²⁹ Safia Bibi's opinion

After the *Nikah*¹³⁰ ceremony, the groom comes in the women's section where the bride is sitting (the bride sits with the women because of the strict *purdah* culture in the Rajput society), few close relatives of the groom may also come along with him. The bride and groom then sit together for a few rituals that are related to gifts presentation to the groom from the bride's relatives. In olden times, the groom would not come to the women's space due to the strict *purdah* observation.

Before the departure of the *barat* with the bride, delectable food is served to the attending guests. The expectations are very high as the bride's relatives are expected to serve the groom's relatives in the best way possible. It could be assumed that meticulous attention is paid while preparing the food.

After the meal, the *barat* gets ready for the departure, locally called as *rukhsati*¹³¹. The environment turns gloomy and sentimental as the bride bids farewell to her natal home. The bride while hugging her mother, father and other relatives begins to sob. Her father and brothers also get emotional and occasionally their eyes would fill with tears. Many women make this event more depressing by describing various local proverbs and conversing about mother–daughter and father–daughter love bonds. Raeesa Begum shared:

It is hard to send your daughter off to others! Mother feels that she has placed a stone in place of her heart as she sends off her daughter. As the bride departs, her mother begins to think of her daughter's life with her in-laws which will never be easy like (the one) in her natal home.

It may be reasonably right to assume that the scene created on the departure of the bride from her natal home contradicts the popular understanding that daughters are an economic burden for the family. It is clearly visible that they are loved by their parents, siblings and other close relatives. According to the comments by the participants, the daughter's departure from her home turns the whole ambience gloomy.

Raheja (1995) explains the irony in a simple way as “crying when she's born and crying when she goes away” (P: 19).

¹³⁰ Religious Muslim contract of marriage

¹³¹ Traditional departure of the bride from her natal home to the groom's home

6.1.5. Arrival of *Barat* at the Groom's Home

When the *barat* comes back with the bride, groom's mother, sisters and other women relatives who have been anxiously waiting at home, rush to receive the bride. The bride and groom sit together in a decorated room, and it is the time when folksongs along with a few rituals are performed for both the bride and the groom. A fair amount of money is given to the *doomni* and other house servants as alms and also as a token of happiness from the groom's family.

6.2. Thematic Classification of the Wedding Day Folksongs

The thematic classification of the folksongs performed on the wedding day is of two major types: One type constitutes the general wedding songs and the second type comprise of *sehra* songs which are performed specifically for the groom on the wedding day. For the present research, twenty-seven songs that come under the domain of wedding day songs have been compiled. Seventeen are based on husband-wife relationship while ten are *sehra* songs; performed for the groom during the special ceremony called *sehra bandi*.

The most prominent theme in wedding folksongs is the husband-wife relationship and in these seventeen songs, this theme is referred directly; in the rest of the songs however, husband-wife relationship theme overlaps with other main themes related to conjugal and natal family members. The theme associating to husband-wife relationship has seven subthemes which have been discussed below:

Table 5. Barat Day ceremony and husband-wife folksongs with themes

Wedding day	Theme: Husband -Wife folksongs
	Subthemes
1- Husband-Wife Relations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Absent Husband-Left Alone Wife 2. Plight of the Desperate Wife 3. Despondency from Patriarchal Norms and Traditions 4. Doubts in Husband-Wife Relations 5. Violent and Abusive Husband
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Jealousy Towards Co-wife and Other Women 7. Humiliating the Husband

I find it noteworthy to mention here that for me, one of the most integral reasons for studying folksongs is to discover the subtle messages and hidden themes expressed and communicated through them. These themes, though subtle in nature, can also have a profound impact on the ones who truly comprehend them. Moreover, folksongs convey a significant amount of socio-cultural information regarding the group who claims their ownership. The uniqueness of the Rajputs, their rich cultural heritage and the bemusing variety of their folksongs have all added to the rewarding aspect of the research.

6.2.1. Husband-Wife Thematic Wedding Songs

I assume that before we move on to the interpretation of the chosen folksongs, it might greatly benefit the readers to understand the husband-wife relationship within the context of Rajput culture. If we closely view the gendered discourse of wifehood among the Rajputs living in Bhakkar, it is socially expected from a young girl (who would be a future wife) to internalize the Rajput traditional values, customs and norms that subtly support the patriarchal ideologies. She is trained by her mother or elder sister to serve her father and brothers keeping in mind the way she has to take care of her husband and affinal relatives. In a male dominated society like that of Rajputs, the wife seems to have more duties and limited rights in contrast to her husband who has more rights than duties. On the

contrary, the expectations from the wife remains high and unrealistic as she is expected to be a *pativrata* who would forfeit her life for her husband and family if required.

Traditionally, the relationship between husband and wife in day to day interaction is based on husband's superiority and respect which is considered an important feature of the Rajput culture. In the context of North Indian cultural scenario (also similar to Rajputs ethos in Bhakkar), Gold (1997) talks about the societal expectations which govern the husband and wife relationship. The husband and wife public encounters are unheard of, they are restrained from each other and are expected to display the prescribed attitudes of shame and modesty (especially wives). On the other hand, men are expected to show formality, stylized act of detachment and demonstrative authority within their public/family sphere (P: 106). Owing to the respect for elder affine, it is customary in Rajputs that a new wife should not talk to her husband when they are around. As absurd as it might sound, in Bhakkar, the same pattern of social expectations has been followed up until now. *Salma* shared her experience of getting married in a joint family system:

When I got married twenty-three years ago, it was customary to tell the wife that she should not talk to her husband in front of the in-laws. When my husband would come home for lunch, my mother-in-law or elder nanad (sister-in-law) would serve him food. At that time, I was again busy in the kitchen till he finished his lunch. We used to see each other only at night. Now time has changed, my (Salma's) devranies are not like me, they talk to their husbands in the presence of a mother-in-law who is now old and do not have as much controlling power as she used to have when I got married. However, still elders dislike wife-husband informal talk in front of them.

Observing the relationship between husband and wife, it is quite evident that public displays of affection between spouses are highly discouraged. The reason not only being an abbreviated social norm but it is also locally believed that if husband and wife give priority to their mutual love, they might fail to offer their loyalty towards the rest of the family; since the wife is expected to serve the whole family of her husband and not just him.

In Rajputs of Bhakkar, it seems to appear that a woman's identity as a wife is defined in strictly functional terms. How can she serve, bring happiness and satisfaction to her husband? And how much can she sacrifice for her husband and his family? As Ochs and Taylor (2001:432) argue, "all social identities, including gender identities are constructed through actions and demeanors". In most of the sociological perspective the wife's identity is basically constructed in functional terms. Butler (1991) and Sauntson (2008) argue that "gender is something we 'do' and not what we 'are.'" The standard of a prototype wife has been so deeply entrenched in the Rajput culture that girls, from a very young age, are taught and trained accordingly. If by any means a girl does not fit the image of a typical Rajput wife, she is secluded and may not achieve the status of a 'fully-qualified wife'. Keeping in mind the Rajput cultural context, one can say that 'a wife is not what defines her as a wife. Her first and foremost duty as a wife is to satisfy her husband's needs and fulfills her obligation towards him'. Nevertheless, as expected, this prototype model also makes husband-wife relationships asymmetrical. The wife is expected to undertake all the responsibilities from preparing food for the whole family to performing almost all the other household chores.

The form of asymmetrical, non-reciprocal relationship in Rajput families between husband-wife is strongly reflected in the folksongs sung on wedding day. In the collection, majority of the wedding songs are not typical, romantic love songs and whilst cogitating, I realized that most of the songs follow a same pattern of thinking and are based on the real life situations. A situation that is not completely untrue but rather shows a true picture of the joint family system in Rajput families. *Kousar* concurred with this argument and expressed:

There is no romance in arranged marriages. After one week of marriage the new bride ends up in the kitchen! That is why you can find romantic love songs with an imagined lover and not with a husband. The desire of a woman to be romantically loved by her lover remains in her heart and is expressed through some of the folksongs.

A fair rationale to explain the behavior has been put forward by Uberoi (2006), who claims that the romantic love between husband and wife is not encouraged as it might pose a

possible threat to the responsibility and unity. Thus, in the joint family system linear relations such as siblings and parents are preferred over the conjugal ones (P: 30). Raheja (1994) also points out that the relationship between the newlyweds is under strict scrutiny by the in-laws and any signs of developing intimacy are suppressed instantaneously in the name of solidarity (for the husband towards his kins), which is assumed to be compromised if the wife gains his affection and loyalty (P: 28). The most commonest course of action to curb the young bride's desire to spend good time with her husband or communicate with him are restricted by the affine relations by limiting their (husband and wife) mobility and time spent together.

Here, I find it extremely crucial to mention an aspect of domestic politics that might be somewhat responsible for governing the relationship between husband and wife in a Rajput family. Although, not typical to the culture itself and may have deep roots emerging from the long history of Rajputs living in joint family system; this issue is of significant value and should be looked into. As mentioned recurringly, Rajputs form part of a collectivist society. They prefer and tend to live with their elders in joint families rather than living alone as a nuclear one. Moreover, the domesticity of a Rajput household is paved in such a way that the mother-in-law feels in charge of maintaining the *order* within the home. In her strong desire to maintain such *order* (which in simple words, might be termed as an attempt to control and practice dominance) ends up sabotaging the rights of the newlywed bride. Also, her power and status, as the mother of a son is such that she cannot be questioned or disagreed with. Eventually, the feelings of deprivation, frustration resulting from unbalanced relationships and exploitation may give rise to family politics. Men (usually the son) are dragged into it by the mother-in-law as she might be fearful, apprehensive and jealous of the new bride whom she sees as a threat to her status and power. Not only the actions of the newlywed couple are jealously monitored but conscious efforts are also made to strengthen the bond between mother and son by engaging him in family politics so that he may spend more time with his kins than with the wife. For example, in a Rajput household, it is expected from a married son to greet and meet his mother first and listen to the narrative of her mother regarding the daily routine, before he goes to his wife. Sometimes, as part of their strategy to survive in the conjugal homes, as

discussed in the previous chapters, the women form alliances within the homes and stand up against the affinal relatives. The alliances might act as a form of rebellion against the absurd norms and function as engines to let off steam; however, these women have a greater risk of losing as well.

After understanding and elucidating the Rajput culture, I can safely argue that the wedding songs portray an image of the Rajput society that is fundamentally true. An image based on conflict of interests and domestic politics within the households.

Below are the discussed themes that have been categorized with assistance from the participants.

6.2.1.1. Absent Husband – Left Alone Wife

Kolff (1990) talks of ‘separation’ and considers it the most important topic with special reference to Indian folklore genres (P: 74). The Hindi literature also expresses the wife’s feelings of abandonment in various genres¹³². The theme regarding absent husbands have been an epitome source to reveal women's emotions and sentiments attached to it. The recurring themes of separation discussed in the folksongs have also allowed the wife to talk to her husband even when they are miles apart.

The song narrated below vividly express the sentiments and apprehensions of a left alone wife and is written as a form of dialogue between husband and wife.

Bewee: *Piya tum to chale o perdes dekheye mere noke chappel bhejiye (song.no.15)*

Shohar: *Chappel bhej tou doon ga zaroor o gori.*

kamre main burr ker pehniye ga zaroor.

Translation

Wife: My dear you went to another place, please do send curved shoes for me.

Husband: I will send you shoes dear one!

but do wear them in your room (not outside).

¹³² The Indo-Aryan Languages, By Colin P. Masica, (1991). Department of South Asian Languages and civilization, University of Chicago, Cambridge University Press, NewYork, USA.

The folksong depicts a typical joint family home where a wife is left alone by her husband who has gone to another city for work. She expresses her sorrow and declares her protest against the husband for leaving her behind with the in-laws. Since she cannot get her husband's love and affection that she so desires, she tries to compensate them with material things and asks her husband for a pair of shoes and edibles. He tells her that he will send her whatever she has asked for, but she should hide them from his sister and mother who may not approve the idea of him sending gifts to his wife.

Undoubtedly, similar to any culture, the separation from husband turns the life of a girl upside down. His absence haunts her and creates chaos in her life. Usually, she can be seen blaming her in-laws for sending him away to meet their economic demands. She herself never wanted to send her husband away as she is intelligent enough to acknowledge that the distance might create problems in their marriage. She also recognizes and apprehends that once her husband leaves the home, the power dynamics of relationships between her and the in-laws would also change. She would be treated as a worthless woman whose sole duty would be to appease the in-laws by managing the daily household chores. She would not be allowed to visit her natal home and with nobody on her side or to support her, she would be entirely dependent on the mercy of the in-laws.

Narayan (1997) in her article talks about *Kangra*¹³³ women regarding *pakharu*¹³⁴, a folksong which describes the stories of the women whose husbands are not with them. It further explains that in the past when the husband would leave his home his arrival would be uncertain. The apprehensive wife would vent out by singing folksongs, as a way of reminiscing about the past with her husband. If the husband is not around, she would use various strategies that may work as her survival at the in-law's home. One of which is, to compensate for the separation, she will demand different material items from her husband. This strategy also works as she believes that her constant interruptions would remind her husband of her existence.

¹³³ Dr. Kirin's research is on Rajput women in Kangra (UP, India).

¹³⁴ A special husband-wife folksong sung in Kangra region (Rajasthan, India).

Gold's (1997) analysis of women folksongs in Rajasthan informs that women in folksongs when longing for intimacy with their husbands often blend this very desire with the demands of gifts for herself. The gifts in the form of adornment or edibles etc. convey the concealed messages of most intimate love and prove to her that he is a devoted husband (P:52). Raheja (1997) also claims that since the Rajput women in Rajasthan speak boldly, they articulate their demands well including love and gifts but above all ask for the physical presence of their husbands.

The same dialogic discussion for material gifts can be vividly narrated in song 14 & 15. Gold (1997) claims that the communication between husband and wife in folklore and in oral traditions should be viewed as a direct message. Their communication range from material demands to personal criticism, 'veiled invitations to sexual intimacy' (P: 106) and 'severe threats' (Wadley, 1994). Singh (2011) makes an interesting comparison between the demands of a wife and husband in a song when they are separated. According to her, men and women's demands and expectations vary greatly from each other. In one song (7) the groom asks for bride's sister and sister-in-law along with the bride. In contrast, the women besides using sexual innuendos to subtly convey her messages, also demand for material items (Singh, 2011).

These themes, although widespread in folksong, highlights a dissonance with real life; where the expression of love and care from a husband in the form of gifts for her wife seldom if ever happens in the Rajput culture. And if it does, the receiving of gifts and boasting off also challenges the conjugal women's power. In the context of the folksong, *Kousar* shared her opinion as under:

When a husband goes away and leaves her wife with his parents, the only link between the husband and wife remains through the material demands from her. She cannot stop him from going away because his parents want to send him. Her demands for material objects from her husband is to some extent satisfy herself as a wife and her natal relatives.

Folksongs (16 and 17) also go along the lines of husband-wife separation. However, it would be interesting to note here that no matter the time span of separation, whether it is

years or just a few nights, a woman always doubts her husband's fidelity and remains apprehensive. Song no.16 and 17 will be further discussed under theme no. 4.

Here, it might be significant to talk about patriarchal bargains and negotiations. As the name indicates, these are termed as strategies or coping mechanisms that help women survive under oppressive conditions. These bargains should not be underestimated as they provide an outlet for women to voice their resistance in the face of oppression (Kandiyoti, 1988). As discussed by Kandiyoti (1988), patriarchal bargains not only provide the women with agency to articulate their protest and challenge authorities but these also form an integral part of a social system as they help the women identify and exercise their autonomy. The songs above could be seen as a form of patriarchal bargain. Wife asking her husband for presents and material things is her way of exercising her autonomy. Moreover, since she blames the man to some extent for leaving her alone with the in-laws, which is both physically and emotionally exhausting for her, she tries to bargain with the husband and compensate her by fulfilling her wishes for material gifts and edibles. Additionally, the form of patriarchal bargain discussed in the song may have another aspect to it. The wife when asking her husband for gifts may also show her defiance and resistance to the oppressive in-laws by indirectly challenging them and showing them her position and status in the eyes of her husband.

Referring to the complaints about the separations, it would not be rightful to state that this is part of a woman's nature, rather when her husband comes back home and presents her with gifts, she becomes happy and satisfied and praises her husband's choice. Folksong (23) gives a detail account of different items that her husband brought for her and the lyrics of the song narrate:

Kala gaya ree lumbe sheher maa

(song.no.23)

Wahan se liyaya kali kajar ka halwa

Translation

Kala¹³⁵ went to a distant city

¹³⁵ Name of husband

He brought black carrot halwa¹³⁶ (for me)

The song communicates the feelings of a wife whose husband has returned back home and has brought black carrot's sweet dish for her. In the song, the wife keeps on counting names of the items her husband brought for him like black shirts, a traditional dress *ghaghri*¹³⁷, a *shawl* and pair of shoes.

As mentioned earlier, the desire of eating together or bringing food for the wife has sexual connotations for the married couples. Besides sweet dishes like *halwa*¹³⁸ and *laddo* mentioned in the folksong, are a symbolic representation of a happy time since in the Rajput culture these sweets are distributed on happy occasions. In this particular folksong however, the union of husband and wife after a long wait is the happy occasion. Therefore, cultural interpretation for the demand of sweet items signifies the sexual desires of a wife. The song also mentions a few more cultural symbols such as black shirt and shawl in its lyrics. The symbols of shirt and shawl are referred to as wraps in the folkloric literature and have their own significance in interpretation. Generally speaking, wraps, veils and clothes represent women's modesty and humility. According to Papanek and Minault (1982) wraps sometimes neutralize women's sexuality and serve dual function: Firstly, they not only protect women from the stalking men but also subtly enhance and reveal women's charms. In Rajput cultural context the symbol of black shirt referred in the songs serve the purpose of attracting the husband.

6.2.1.2. Plight of the Desperate Wife

The searing emotions of a wife whose husband is about to leave home for work are articulated well through the folksongs, the desperate wife tries to stop him as the song narrates:

Mera tikka dhara re us aaley maa

(song.no.18)

Meri aa nandree pakraa de na

¹³⁶ A kind of sweet dish made from carrots

¹³⁷ Multi Layered short skirt

¹³⁸ Sweet balls made up of flour, oil and chopped nuts or dry fruits

Tera veera phere hey joota ohrey noon

Meri aa nandree sumjha de na

Translation

My tikka¹³⁹ is in a small place within a wall

My sister-in-law (please) give it to me

Your brother is about to wear shoes to go far away

My sister-in-law (please) make him understand not to leave me here

The song discusses a hypothetical situation. The wife is anxious and fearful as her husband is about to depart to another city/country for work. The wife desperately asks her nanad (sister-in-law) to find and hand over her jewelry from different places in home and request her for stopping her brother (husband) from going away. The lyrics of the folksong repeatedly mention different jewelry items and stopping requests from her nanad (sister-in-law).

Here, the wife is clever enough to comprehend that once her husband would go, he would not come back soon. She will be left alone with her in-laws with whom she does not have good terms. Therefore, perceiving the situation as unfavorable, the wife starts to panic and tries to stop her husband from going away in any case.

The above-mentioned folksong is performed on the wedding day. Apparently, it does not serve much purpose other than providing entertainment, yet aptly, it subtly teaches the girl skills that might come in handy for her future at the in-laws. The first and foremost is that she tries to seduce her husband with her beauty and charm by wearing jewellery. Secondly, the folksong visibly reflects how the protagonist exploits the situation by forming alliances with the affine relatives such as sister-in-law, whom she asks to bring her jewellery and avert the decision of her brother's departure. She is well aware of the fact that in the Rajput family system, sister-brother bond is based on love and respect and is valued more than a husband-wife relationship, thus she uses the knowledge to her advantage by referring to the sister-in-law for help. Requesting to bring the jewelry from her sister-in-law is another tactic, she knows that her mother-in-law keeps it but due to the risk of direct confrontation

¹³⁹ A jewelry item worn by women on forehead

with her mother-in-law who may refuse her straight forwardly, she asks the sister-in-law to carry out this task. In this way, she also tries to exploit the daughter – mother relations for her own benefit. Keeping the Rajput cultural background in mind, this song also imitates the status of wife at her in-law's home, which is lower than the rest of the family and besides patriarchal hegemony she is also a victim of authoritative and controlling mother-in-law.

Narayan (1997) also discusses a similar situation with *Kangra* women¹⁴⁰ about husband-wife relationship. In *pakheru* song, the married women try to persuade their departing husbands to stay with them in spring season which is considered as the season of happiness and joy. Flowers of different kinds metaphorically symbolize sexuality in Kangra's cultural context. The comparison between these two folksongs reveal that Rajput women of *Kangra* and Bhakkar undergo same situations and the difference lies merely in their reaction to it.

The situation through the song highlights that the women of Bhakkar exploit it and take every step necessary to stop their husbands, in contrast, however, the *Kangra* woman do not use any specific strategies and were unable to exploit the affine relationships and express their grief at the departure of their husbands. The similarity between the Rajput women of different areas may be their innate desire for their husbands to stay with them. Both the protagonists of these two very different songs also understand the meaning of an absent husband and try to stop him with their feminine charm and sexuality.

6.2.1.3. Despondency from Patriarchal Norms and Traditions

The passion for visiting places outside home is a strong symbolic expression of Rajput girl and represent her disapproval against the patriarchal traditions which restrict her physical and emotional freedom. The same unfulfilled desire is expressed through a song that narrates:

Pohenchi geri na sone ki na chandi ki ha ye rattan jarri, koe de deve rey (song.no.19)

¹⁴⁰ Kirin Narayan: Singing from Separation: Women's Voices in and about Kangra Folksongs in *Oral Tradition*, 12/1 (1997): 23-53.

*Dil merey maa easi awa sair baghan ki karoon
Le chalo bagaan main mujh ko malaan bana ne ke liyey
Rey maaree pohenchi geri na sone ki na chandi ki ha ye rattan jarri
Koe de deve rey koe dedeve rey rattan jarri*

Translation

I lost my pohenchi¹⁴¹ it is not of gold or silver, it was pearl-curved, somebody should bring it to me

I wish I may stroll in the garden

Take me to garden so that I become a lady gardener there

I lost my pohinchi it is not of gold or silver; it was pearl -curved

Somebody should bring it to me

The song communicates that the wife is extremely keen to go out to places that are familiar to her such as wells, gardens, roads and palaces. She pretends that her precious pearl-engraved hand jewelry is lost somewhere, so that she might be allowed to go outside and search for it. Her desperation can be felt by how she is willing to compromise her noble title for the sake of freedom and wishes to be a gardener's wife. Kakar (1989) explained the unfulfilled wishes within the context of joint family system in India, where women had to face similar restrictions and their fantasies (like the one discussed above) would keep them going and haunt them for as long as they would live.

Within the cultural context of Rajputs, the places the wife wishes to go symbolically implies her yearning for freedom of choice in her life. It could also be viewed as a manifestation of deeply rooted desire to subvert the patriarchal organization in the society. Moreover, she contests against the formal relations between husband and wife and wishes to become a lower social class man's wife who will have more freedom of interaction with each other. Simply put, this song highlights the hopelessness of a woman from the Rajput cultural norms which restrict husband-wife interaction. (Raheja and Gold, 1996).

In another similar folksong, the wife expresses her wish and longing for liberty. In this folksong, like the one mentioned above, she reckons that she can only be happy if she

¹⁴¹ A jewelry item worn by women on hand.

would be free and would not belong to an aristocratic family like that of Rajputs. The song narrates as:

Raja merey bagh main raaj ley ker ayoo (song.no. 20)

Malan to thaari main banogi o raja marey

Anarkali khil ree o raja marey

Anarkali khil ree o raja marey

Translation

O my king come to my garden as a king

I will be your lady gardener o my king

Pomegranate buds are blooming in the garden o my king

Pomegranate buds are blooming in the garden o my king

In the folksong, besides wishing for freedom, another common theme can also be seen; the wife tries to seduce her husband and invites her in the garden where they can meet freely as she will be her lady gardener (belong to lower social cast).

Various cultural symbols are referred in the songs which mostly imply to sexual relations. For example, simile of pomegranate buds signifies fertility and garden a happy married life in Rajput cultural context. It also pertains that happiness is possible only outside the home (joint family system) where husband and wife can spend some time together and freely interact. These factors all add to the ubiquity of the song, however an aspect makes this song unique. The song talks about the Hindu mythological characters *Ram*¹⁴², his wife *Sita*¹⁴³ and their troubled married life. *Ram* was exiled for twelve years and separated from his wife *Sita*. Therefore, the metaphoric reference of twelve years reveal that married life is tough and at times separation is inevitable. They also bore children (son *Badshah*¹⁴⁴ and a daughter, *Kalawati*¹⁴⁵) like *Sita* and *Ram* after twelve years because of separation. The wife blames the separation as a result of belonging to the aristocratic/upper social class where they have to follow traditions and norms. She claims that it would have been better

¹⁴² The most popular Hindu deity

¹⁴³ God and goddesses in Hindu mythology

¹⁴⁴ Fictitious name of a son

¹⁴⁵ Fictitious name of a daughter

if she would have been from a lower social stratum and would have more freedom of choice to spend some time together. Through the song, Rajput woman ridicules the aristocracy/noble class such as that of Rajputs for their patriarchal customs and norms, which govern the society.

6.2.1.4. Doubts in Husband-Wife Relations

As must be understood by now, the husband-wife interaction in real life is scrutinized and jealously monitored by the in-laws, all in the name of family values. After the husband's departure from home, the situation exacerbates and starts to go downhill. The communication becomes much more limited, and doubts and uncertainties start to evolve. The wedding folksongs reflect such sentiments from wife's perspective which are discussed below:

Song no 16 reflects the emotion of a desperate bride who curses her husband for leaving her alone on the wedding night. The song narrates as under:

Raja kahan gae they Raja kahaan gae they mara khullya para gharbaar (song.no.16)
Raat Raja kahaan gae they mere khulla pare gharbaar
Doob kiyon na maar gae they mare yaree numer nadaan

Translation:

Where have you gone my king? my whole household is open for you
Where were you gone my king for the whole night? my whole household is open for you
I curse on you (you may drown into water) I am very young (you do not pay attention to me)

Absence of her husband on the wedding night fills her heart with doubts and makes her bitter. She keeps awaiting the entire night in hope that her husband might come back. Although she wants to believe his excuse of not coming home for the entire night as he went to repair her jewelry, her heart does not deem it believable, and she doubts his fidelity. She boasts off her youth and charm but realizes they are of no good as her husband leaves her alone on the wedding night.

Contradictory to the popular belief, the interpretation of the song prove to be significant as it asserts that the Rajput women are not a shy clan. They do not hide their inner sentiments or suppress them, rather opt to protest, challenge and contest. These folksongs also serve as a means to open a window of reality for the bride. The innuendoes subtly alarm the bride about separation from her husband and its repercussions as mentioned above: the doubts may take root in their relationship and her youth (reproductive age) will be wasted. Accordingly, she is advised to cope with such situation by monitoring his outdoor activities. Cursing also helps her vent out her anxieties.

Here, I find it noteworthy to help the readers understand the perspective of women's agency in patriarchal settings. Quite often, it is wrongly assumed that women surviving in oppressive environments are ignorant and not well aware of their rights, however that might be entirely wrong. Mahmood (2005) defines agency as an extremely dynamic and powerful force that can redefine and subvert norms. Limited literature and preconceived notions regarding the subject have led the western feminists to believe that women living in patriarchal settings lack agency, however at times we fail to notice that the folksongs are a direct means to communicate agency. Abu- Lughod (1990) has explained it that since the women are observed as 'accepting, accommodating, ignoring, resisting, or protesting—sometimes all at the same time' we often get the wrong message, but in reality, women are well aware of their internal power. Despite its hidden existence, transference of certain ambiguous messages from one generation to another, understanding those messages, bargaining and negotiating, showing defiance and resistance can all be viewed as part of women's agency. Broadly speaking, most of these songs describe women's agency in some hidden form; the unacknowledged contribution of women and their innate desires and wishes etc. However, it would not be entirely wrong to say that these women rarely find opportunities to exercise their agency, which they are well aware of. Another dimension of women's agency is that they are considered a threat to the social order, which very well explains why the Rajput men dislike folksongs and try to channel, control and redirect the women's agency by banning the folksongs, all in the name of religion.

It is an improbable debate that the style of addressing a husband in folksongs is similar to real life. A Rajput wife cannot speak to her husband for the intimate relations so explicitly,

instead uses symbolic manifestations that are known in socio-cultural context. Harlan (1991) claims that the sexual expression from a Rajput wife may be taken as her duty towards her husband and she must pursue her husband (P: 57) in order to safeguard her marital life.

On similar lines, the song 17 narrates:

Biwi: Mian likhoon chitti pe chitti, tharee gori ka haal behaal, thari kiya marji

Shouhar: Main bhejoon tujhey nou lakhaa teri kia marji?

*Biwi: Maren howe mara sundar naar dosari, Aag lugyoo noulakha haraan ki jori Maryoo
o sundar naar bichriyo jori.*

Translation

Wife: I am writing letters to you again and again and getting tired of my situation, what are your intentions?

Husband: I will be sending you a nine layered necklace; do you want it?

Wife: I wish the other girl may die, may the necklace fall in fire, may that beautiful girl die and you both get separated forever.

The wedding song narrates a situation where husband has gone away for work and his wife writes him multiple letters but does not hear back. Eventually, the husband replies and promises to send her expensive necklace, she refuses his gifts and doubts her husband's faithfulness towards her and curses him and his girlfriend. The next song is in dialogic form between husband and wife and talks about the misunderstandings that may have arisen due to their long separation. The song is as under:

Shohar: Aankoon main terey surma perya yo ke chala sey (song.no.21)

*Biwi: Surma to manneyoon paya mere ankhan dhukkan sey
Khool de na paat darwaja ke doodh lelai sey*

Shohar: Daantoon pey terey missi lagree yo ke chala sey

Biwi: Missi to manney yoon lag ree merey dantan dhukkan sey

Translation

Husband: Why do you put kohl in your eyes, is this a trick? (to seduce me)

Wife: I put kohl in my eyes as they are hurting

Open the door my darling as I bring milk for you

Husban: Why your teeth are so shining behind your red lips Wife:

I put lipstick as my teeth are having pain

The song portrays a storyline in which a husband comes back home after a long time. His wife, out of excitement for meeting him beautifies herself and wears make up. However, her husband doubts her fidelity and asks some teasing questions. Wife cunningly replies to his questions and tries to seduce him.

Viewing the song in the backdrop of the Rajput culture, the ideal model of a *pativrata* wife remains deeply entrenched in the minds of the Rajput husbands. They strongly believe that the wife must remain faithful to her husband at any cost; whether he is physically present or away from home. Husband due to his superior social status is also entitled to express his reservations about wife's character especially when he is away from home. Traditionally, like any other patriarchal society, it is the duty of the Rajput women to take care of her husband and the family's honor by controlling her sexual desires. On the other hand, Rajput traditions grant men relaxation and freedom for sexuality if they wish to avail.

Sadiqaan Bibi expresses her views about this belief as such:

This song is an exaggeration of husband wife relationship and is narrating a story of an imagined situation of husband- wife in a humorous way. No Rajput wife can think of infidelity. Even at the slightest doubt of infidelity, death is certain. So, no Rajput woman dares think about betraying her husband. That is why a wife whose husband is not around is expected to wear ordinary clothes, less jewelry and no makeup at all. There are many male family members at home. A small negligence can create misunderstandings between husband and wife.

As per the Rajput customs, a wife in the absence of her husband is discouraged to beautify herself or wear nice clothes since it is commonly believed that a wife should look good and beautiful only when her husband is around. Inability to follow this norm may result in mistrust and suspicion. One of the participants informs that adultery of woman is unforgivable in Rajput culture. She compares it with a Hindu mythical event when Ram

comes after his twelve years of exile and doubts the moral character of the goddess *Sita*. *Sita* then had to prove her innocence by walking barefoot on fire.

The participant makes a very valid point that if *Sita*, being a goddess was asked by *Ram* to prove her innocence then how could an ordinary man spare his wife by not doubting her moral character after being away for a long time.

6.2.1.5. Violent and Abusive Husband

Against the backdrop of subcontinent's history and culture, Chopra (2006) claims that affirmation of aggressiveness is considered an integral part of the masculine identity (P: 33). Traditionally, during the socialization, a Rajput boy, from a very young age is taught and train to be tough and suppress his sentimental side i.e. public display of emotions is highly disregarded. Quite often than not, the folksongs talk about this aggressive and violent nature as reflected below:

Saas merey peesni ko mota batawa nuttni (song no.24)
Agar uthbhi gaya magar chorta nahin
Chahe maar chahe chor main tou darti nahin
Jabaan barah barhti nahin

Translation

My shrewd mother-in-law says that I grind wheat thickly,
Once he gets up, he would not spare me (from beating)
Whether you hit me or not, I am not afraid of you
I would not stop my tongue from cursing her (mother-in-law)

This song portrays the sentiments of a wife towards her mother-in-law and sheds light on their estranged relationship. The wife is well aware of the fact that her affinal relatives would complain to her husband about her not grinding the wheat properly (which might as well just be an excuse). As a reaction, their complaint would instigate her husband and he will beat her. She also warns her in laws that no matter what strategy they might use to hush her or quieten her down, she would still communicate her protest by abusing and cursing them. The wife also knows her husband's violent nature. While describing her

husband's short temperament, the wife also describes him as a strong and physically tough man who has strength to be violent. In one of the songs (42), the father-in-law and other conjugal family men beat daughter-in-law, when they hear the sound of her *payal*¹⁴⁶. In olden times, violence and beating was considered as the ultimate solution to the domestic fights as it was not only socially acceptable but also a public display of masculinity. To conclude, the song portrays the bleak reality of the Rajput household extremely well.

In light of the perspective on domestic politics within Rajput household discussed earlier, it is no shock that most of the wives criticize the man's mother or sister for dragging him into the family politics by complaining¹⁴⁷. The song also signals the same warning to the newlywed bride about the domestic politics and fights and warns her of the adverse consequences in form of physical beating and tough situations if she is unable to fit in the expected role (Dlamini, 2009). Family violence is not a new phenomenon in the history of mankind but quite often mysterious and misunderstood as it occurs within the privacy of the home (Kour and Garg, 2008). A reason for violence as Harlan (1992) opines is that violent people are not punished or condemned rather rewarded by socially sanctioned approvals and the occurrence of violence is depicted as exciting and justifiable.

There is another song in which a violent husband beats his wife. The song narrates:

Gaya tha ree bahen ke deas maa (song.no.25)
Ghara liya ree kahar ka danda
Mara ree kamar ke beech maa
Main loat gayee beech beggar maa

Translation

He went to (his) sister's home
He brought a colorful rod form there (for beating me)
He hit me in my back
I rolled down (from pain) in the big courtyard

¹⁴⁶ A foot jewelry which makes tingling sound

¹⁴⁷ Gist of talk with the women participants

In the song, the wife describes a hypothetical situation in which the husband went to his sister's house and returns with a rod to beat her. She is hurt and rolls over from pain in the huge courtyard. The song depicts power relations between husband and wife in familial space. The word courtyard might have a significant meaning here and implies that the wife gets the beating not in the room but in front of the entire family, it also further informs that no one from the in-laws stops her husband rather they stand as spectators and watch (lack of empathy and indifferent attitude). The cultural interpretation of the song, as women participants revealed can be explained as that women in conjugal family conspire against the daughter-in-law and create misunderstandings between husband and wife. Women participants were of the opinion that mother-in-law tries her best to keep the new bride under her control so that she may not become a threat to her power and authority within the family. The biggest fear as participants described is 'taking away' of her son by his wife. Mother-in-law remains apprehensive and insecure and keeps the daughter-in-law busy with household chores to minimize her interaction with her husband. She also tries to create misunderstandings between husband and wife.

I find it interesting to mention here that the woman singer who recorded the folksong found it humorous and entertaining and laughed along with the audience at the lyrics of the songs and made fun of the woman who was beaten by her husband. I concluded that a reason for such a bizarre reaction might be that these women were desensitized to such acts which led them to accept these as socio-cultural norms.

Participants also told that in the past, wife beating was prevalent in some families but now it is not much heard of. On the other hand, women did not record any objection of wife beating, rather they laughed at the wife who is hit by the husband in the folksong as it was a normal phenomenon of married life. I questioned the female participants after recording the song and got mixed opinions. Some agreed that the husband has the right to beat her and there should be no compromise on family honor. Others expressed that a husband should also listen to his wife and give her an opportunity to speak for herself. However, as the song narrates, a Rajput male prototype did not give any chance to his wife to explain side of the story.

Out of curiosity, I inquired from the women participants about their own statuses as nanad, bahen (sister) and bhabi in their respective family politics. I assumed it might be interesting to understand their perspective because from what I observed as sisters, the expectations from their brothers are high and do not like interference in brother-sister love bond. On the contrary, when they are someone's sister in law (bhabi) they would want their husband to listen to them and would not like the sister to interfere in husband-wife relationship. Expecting affection from brothers is considered a right of sisters and they always yearn for their love and respect. Drawing on their opinions, it seems that all these social positions of kinship are antagonistic to each other in terms of relationship. Women manage and exploit these relations for their own good and provide favors by changing their positions and forming alliances. The domestic fights occur when these relationships are challenged and contested. However, the silver lining is that albeit these women fight and contest they also negotiate and set personal boundaries and space for others. *Salma* commented:

Rajput women are not passive. We as women know our limits in fighting within laws. That means that the fights do not go beyond household. Through fights we get to know each other's temperaments and capacity to fight back. We also get to know how much one can tolerate and bear. For example, if I would have not fought with them, they would have created lots of misunderstanding between me and my husband. Now they know what type of person I am and they would think twice before fighting with me.

On a similar theme, another folksong highlights the issue of domestic fights between women, which eventually ends in violence and beating of the wife.

Sadey wehrey imli di chaan

(song.no.26)

Buna ji meno teri soun

Translation

In our courtyard there is deep shade of tamarind tree

My groom lord, I swear upon you

There was a bangles vendor whom I called (for bangles)

The song narrates an incident of wife battering where a wife asks her husband to buy her bangles from a street vendor, but her mother and sister-in-law blame her for having an extramarital affair with him. This instigates her husband who becomes angry and resentful, thereby breaking all her bangles with a rod and beating her. Thus, it could be assumed that in Rajput households the conspiracies of affinal relatives never cease and slight provocation leads to violence and beating. In the end of the song, the wife asks the address of her natal home as she feels that she cannot live in her conjugal home anymore. This also gives an impression that Rajput women, despite their extreme levels of tolerance, also cannot bear false accusations and slander. Kousar commented in this way:

Husband mostly listens to and believes his mother and sister's stories and ignores his wife's opinion even when he thinks his wife is correct. Many fights within family occur due to mother and sister- in -law conspiracies. Husband-wife relations remain tense due to their interferences in a couple's married life. This is a reality which is portrayed in this folksong.

The song has few cultural symbols which are significant to explain; for example, the tamarind tree, locally known as *imli* tree, is symbolically used to describe that married life can be tough and may have its own highs and lows. In adverse conditions therefore, the wife must endure and put up with whatever the situation might be. In context of the Hindu mythology, this tree provided shelter to *Ram* and *Sita* in bad weather during their exile of twelve years (Wendt, 1995). Both *Ram* and *Sita* faced tough times together under the dense shadow of this tree that represented the struggles of their married life. Similarly, song (27) advises the Rajput bride to be very cautious and vigilant in her conjugal home and not to provide any reason or opportunity to her in-laws for conspiring against her. Furthermore, the song conveys and warns the bride that any form of trivial negligence from her side can ruin her married life. Therefore, the survival of marital relations lies on her shoulders as she is expected to take care of the husband's honor and also appease his family.

Occasionally, like physical violence, a Rajput wife may also experience abusive behavior from her husband as depicted in song mentioned below:

Main tou bagoon gayee thee khoya tha mera kangana

(song.no. 27)

*Ay sahelī dhoond do na mera gangana
Sune ga gali dey ga mera ranjhana*

Translation

*I went to stroll in the garden, I lost my bracelet there
My dear friend, search for my bracelet
My (lover) husband will abuse me (for this)*

The song narrates an incidence where a bride/wife goes outside and loses her bracelet. She is distressed and asks her friend for help. Her reason for distress is his husband questioning and abusing her for losing the bracelet. The Rajput norms allow restricted mobility to married women and as a daughter-in-law her independence due to *purdah* is even more limited. The song narrates about a married woman who is bored of the daily grind and seems forlorn and miserable. Her situation seems bleak, and she wants to enjoy some freedom. The song has deep cultural interpretation with symbolic manifestations such as loss of jewelry items like earrings, nose pins or bracelet signifies extra-marital affairs of a wife. That explains why the wife is scared out of her wits and desperate to find it; since she has lost a jewelry item, her husband might doubt her fidelity. Therefore, this type of song warns the bride to safeguard her virginity (Jassal, 2012) and remain careful of the family honor.

6.2.1.6. Jealousy Towards Co-Wife and Other Women

Existence of ‘another woman’ or ‘co-wife’ is also a recurring theme in folksongs performed on wedding day, which symbolizes that a wife may have sexual competition and may have to fight to get her husband’s attention (Harlan, 1992). This phenomenon is also known as the hypothetical sexual/conjugal betrayal within the paradigm of folksongs. The doubts and mistrust often can be attributed to the separation between husband and wife. Husband’s long stay in another city and miscommunication puts his wife in a socially awkward position where her relatives gossip about her husband not being faithful to her. She may feel the pressure and as per her nature, does not demand gifts from him, instead she suspects and starts to doubt his fidelity. In the end of the song, she curses both and wishes death for

the girl. It is notable that the theme of separation has been covered under the main theme and now the same folksong (16) is reanalyzed under the present theme.

The nonchalant, carefree nature of Rajput husband as *Kousar* termed it, makes their wives suspicious and distrustful of him. The same theme being part of song 16 and 17 as well. In song 16, when the husband does not come home on the wedding night and she waits for him. She also rejects his excuse of repairing her jewelry and curses him. She doubts him and believes that she must be busy with another woman. Song 17, also discusses the same theme. The wife rejects her husband's present of a precious necklace at the suspicion of a co-wife. In the last couplets of the song, she shows her fury and rage and makes a wish for the necklace to burn into fire. She also curses the other girl's death.

The readers must be reminded here that songs like these do not portray the real picture of the Rajput society. The offensive language used in the song is not typical of the Rajput woman since such a bold and threatening expression may be socially sanctioned and perceived as a challenge in a patriarchal setting.

The same theme is voiced in another folksong with less threatening expression. The song narrates:

Main dive jalaey saree raat, (song.no.28)
Main batiyaan jalaen saree raat
Main ande tou pouch loon gee
Ve kithey guzaree saree raat
Wo derda yoon boleree
Main kanty gharay saaree raat

Translation

I lit the earthen oil lamp the whole night
I lit up the lights the whole night
I will ask from him as soon he arrives
Where were you the whole night?
He will frightfully reply to me
Whole night I repaired your earrings

The song expresses the sentiments of a waiting wife who awaits her husband and set light to the lamps the whole night. Her confrontation and the husband's frightful reply could be seen as an attempt to establish her authority. Gold (1997) explains that in women's fantasy, they always want to portray themselves as being powerful and authoritative so that their husband may carry out their commands (P: 104). Moreover, it may be reasonably assumed that this song reveals the wishful thinking of the Rajput wife to dominate her husband. As previously mentioned, the husband-wife relationship among Rajputs is asymmetrical with the man having the controlling power and the wife being the subordinate. It is an improbable thought that a wife would actually question or confront her husband in such a direct way. These situations are strictly hypothetical and may serve the purpose to provide entertainment and fulfill her fantasy wishes. In simple words, songs portray a reverse reality that can only be seen through them. Through the cultural interpretations, lightening lamps is metaphoric and Narayan (1997) interprets that gentle and steady glow of the lamp symbolizes marital intimacy (P: 35).

6.2.1.7. Humiliating the Husband

In wedding folksongs, husband occupies the central position to whom the songs are addressed. He is not only admired by the bride/wife but is also humiliated in numerous ways. Occasionally, the bride also expresses her extreme disappointment from her husband. The song below expresses her sentiments as:

Jesi main thee rasili esa sayyan na mila

(song.no. 29)

Jesa tikka ghara esey bindi na ghari

Translation

The way I was romantic my husband lord is not

The way tikka was engraved, bindi¹⁴⁸ was not

The song depicts the emotions of a wife who compares her husband's personality with herself and finds out that there is nothing in common. The fact that her husband is not like her disappoints her and makes her sad. The wife compares her inner and outer beauty,

¹⁴⁸ Small headwear like tikka

social upbringing and feelings to that of her husband's. She gives examples that they are different in many ways, for example, she calls herself a fairy, a banana flower, expensive jewelry item and a civilized person who lives in a big city whereas the husband is labeled as a black stout man, a cactus skinned human and a man that belongs to a small city with little exposure, indirectly referring to him as being narrow minded and conventional.

The disappointment she encounters may be attributed to many reasons. For instance, she may expect that her husband might support her in any argument with the in-laws, instead he chooses to take his kin's side. It might be hard for him as well that albeit his wife being right, he has to stand with his mother and sisters due to the moral and societal pressure.

Moreover, sometimes on his family's provocation, he teases his wife's natal relatives. His disagreeable and unfriendly attitude towards his wife, makes her unhappy and angry. Once these habits start to govern the routine, marital life is damaged and turns chaotic. Under these circumstance, she starts to think that her marriage might be a mismatch and she deserved someone better. However, the interpretation of the song also has deep cultural meanings attached. Similar to Rajput men, Rajput women also have high self-esteem and respect. The sense of pride is part of her personality and when her husband rejects and disappoint her, instead of becoming sad and depressing, she voices her anger by humiliating him.

In another wedding song the same theme is reflected. A disenchanted bride expresses her sentiments, which are performed by the *doomni* as such:

Aaj mara raja beekey hey, Koi ley lo (song.no.30)

Pehley tou raja rupiye mein thaa bikta

Haye jiya jaal gayaa , Athenni main ley lo

Translation

Today I am selling my husband lord, anybody can buy him

Previously he was sold in one rupee

Now my heart is burning, so, buy him in half a rupee

The cynical and satirical aspect of the song is clearly visible and does not need much interpretation. The song expresses the sentiments of a wife who is thoroughly disappointed

by her husband's attitude. In retaliation, she mocks and (hypothetically) wants to sell him. She ridicules him by putting the lowest price on him and eventually ends up selling him for free. A female singer describes that the offensive sentiments like this can only be expressed through folksong and not in daily life communication. *Raeesa Begum* commented:

Women have to bear with all kinds of behaviors from their husbands. Yes, she gets disappointed by his insensitive nature but there is no other option left for a wife. In our culture, she cannot take a divorce or remarry another man. However, through folksongs we collectively share our experiences and humiliate our husbands in funny ways such that it vents out our anger and annoyance against them.

In real life, a wife may be constrained and feels fearful of the social sanctions, however these folksongs provide her a medium to fully express herself and take her revenge by humiliating the husband. Humiliating the husband through folksongs could also be viewed as the most pragmatic approach for survival of these Rajput women, in situations where nothing else can be done. Moreover, such songs, also communicate diverse messages to the bride from her elders and makes her apprehensive of the disappointment in the marriage beforehand. However, as the cultural norms state, the bride has to live with her husband even if she may feel disappointed. There can be many differences amongst them, but one should not leave her affine home. Rather, she should prepare herself both psychologically and emotionally for the life ahead. The interpretation of the song portrays a conjugal home in which the protagonist (wife) is extremely disappointed from her husband.

Noteworthy to mention here is the way this particular song was relished by the women while recording; the most likely reason being the relevance of the song to their real lives. I concluded that at some point in their lives all those women had experienced the feeling of disappointment in their marriage and could relate to the song.

One of the women participants expressed that the dissatisfaction of a wife may be due to many reasons; first and foremost being the emotional and physical support that she might expect from her husband but never gets it. Secondly, his attitude towards the wife's relatives may leave her disheartened as he may not allow her to visit her natal home when

she wants or misses her family. Contrary to this, the husband expects the wife to be humble and compromising to his relatives and try her best to adjust in his family. This conflict of interests and demands may cause misunderstandings and confusion in the marital relationship.

In the next song, a Rajput wife mocks her husband who might portray himself as having heroic qualities just like his warrior ancestors and may appear dauntless and gallant but acts like a total cowardice in a situation when bandits loot their home:

Meri saas ke panch puttar do devar do jeth (song.no.31)

Merey karam main kalia¹⁴⁹ likhya thaa

Wo bhi gaya perdes

Translation

My mother-in-law has five sons two (are my) younger brothers-in-law and two elder bothers-in-law

Kalia was in my fate (as a husband), he too went to another city

The song informs about the incident through a wife's point of view, in which she narrates it to an elderly woman relative whom she calls *bebey*. She starts her story by commenting on her misfortune, despite her mother-in-law having five sons she got stuck with the *kalia*, that too turned became even more unfortunate as her husband went to another city and came back after twelve years. When he came back home, her overly jealous mother-in-law made their sleeping arrangement in an open courtyard to restraint marital intimacy. On the same night, thieves enter their house and takes her *ghaghara* and *kalia*'s trousers. She fought bravely with the dacoits but *kalia* showed cowardness and ran away. In the end, she makes fun of her husband's beating by dacoits and his sobbing all night. The song is typically humorous in nature and amused the women greatly during the recording session as I observed that every woman in the room was laughing and enjoying it. They also passed comments on their husbands about their behaviours and their relationship with them.

¹⁴⁹ Husband's name of the story-teller's wife

One of the most significant manhood trait in the Rajput culture is bravery and valor, one on which the Rajput men are believed to never compromise. If viewed in this respect, mocking a Rajput man's bravery can hardly be socially acceptable. But on the other hand, the recurring theme in the folksongs explain that the women chose this specific characteristic to mock and make fun of the man. It could be seen as their version of 'hit, where it hurts the most'. Moreover, she also degrades her mother-in-law for giving birth to a coward Rajput man and that his son is not manly enough to protect his wife and honor. This mockery can be seen as an extreme form of vent of the wife's anger and disappointment towards her husband and other affinal relatives. Additionally, the women also boasts off her own bravery and courage as she knows how to cope with tough situations. Women interpreters also narrated a few famous stories of the Rajput women who preferred death over life for being dishonored by the non-Rajput men and scarified themselves¹⁵⁰. Usually, this wedding song is performed when the *barat* arrives at the bride's home. The *doomni* performs the song and the bride's female relatives make fun of the groom who has just arrived. Bride's relatives tease the groom and his guests. The whole environment becomes festive and cheerful as everyone acknowledges that is not a social reality but rather merely a distortion of facts to provide entertainment and amusement.

6.2.2. Powerful Women of the Conjugal Family

Table 6. Barat Day ceremony and folksongs (related to the conjugal family) with themes

Main Theme	Subthemes
1- Powerful Women of the Conjugal Family	1- Domestic Violence in Conjugal Home 2- Humiliating the Hegemony 3- Exploitation and Manipulation of Relationships 4- Stubbornness of Nand (Sister-in-law) 5- Acts of Espionage on Nand (Sister-in-law) 6- Challenging the Incompetent Mother-in-law

¹⁵⁰ The most famous one is *Rani Padmavati* as many participants of the research repeatedly mentioned her name.

	7- The Strategic Mother-in-law: Divide and Rule
--	---

The folk wedding songs collected for this research study under the major theme as mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship express the sentiments of daughter-in-law towards her mother-in-law. In most of the folksongs, the daughter-in-law is depicted as the protagonist who challenges and confronts the authority of her mother-in-law. Moreover, it is not only the power holding mother-in-law who confronts the new bride but there are other dominant and authoritative women in the family from whom she faces resistance.

Nanad (husband's sister) and *jethani* (husband's elder brother's wife) also make attempts to assert their authority over the new bride when she arrives in her conjugal home. Therefore, the wife has to deal with all these women along with the hostile environment.

Before discussing the folksongs related to this theme, it will be appropriate to understand the relationship of mother-in-law and daughter-in-law in the backdrop of the Rajput culture. In the Rajput culture, as explained by the women participants, the relationship between the daughter-in-law and mother-in-law along with other wives of her husband's brothers become tough and sometimes results in various kinds of domestic fights. The relations between the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law (bride) remains the most inconsistent and turbulent compared to the rest of the relations. Fischer (1983) describes the relationship dynamics as a 'watchful relationship'. While Shih and Pyke (2010) understand and views this relationship as 'inherently conflictual' in nature.

The status and role of the bride as a daughter-in-law takes a new shape when she enters her conjugal home. It is interesting to mention here that most of the folk songs performed on the wedding present a picture where her husband is physically absent and owing to his

absence her in-laws change their attitudes towards her. She not only copes with her husband's separation but also deals with the aggressive and hostile behaviour of her inlaws.

The participants of the research under study provided me with detailed accounts of their personal lives, based on their own experiences with their respective mothers-in-law. The crux of the discussion suggests that the competition between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law is due to their dependent positions in the household, which also gives rise to domestic politics. The wife shares attention and love of her husband that creates uneasiness for the mother-in-law and a tug of war starts, to gain power and authority. Owing to the inexorable nature of the mother-in-law (since she had been treated the same way in her conjugal home) dialogue is not an option. This power politics leads to the conflict between the women who claim loyalty, love, attention and a sympathies of the same man. The mother being apprehensive of losing her position as the most prominent figure of the household, tries to sabotage the bride's right by limiting her contact with the husband.

Wife, on the other hand, demands her husband's affection and intimacy as they are a newlywed couple. Thus, it becomes integral for the survival of both the groups of women within the home to develop a strong bond with the same man.

On the wedding day hostile and unkind expressions reflected in the wedding folk songs from the bride's side may puzzle the non-Rajput audience but not the bride herself, as she has seen the same treatment towards her own bhabhi (brother's wife) from her mother-inlaw. Hence, it could be reasonably assumed that the wedding day songs do not distress her as she gets ready to face the conjugal life.

Traditionally, in Rajput culture, the arrival of a bride brings happiness to the new family, but at the same time becomes a threat to the female affine because of their bonding to their sons and brothers. Bride also finds it difficult to adjust with the new family as the in-laws give her little to no space. Instead, they become critical to her dressing style, cooking, cleaning and interaction with guests which is unsympathetically judged by her in-laws.

Bride's interaction with her husband is also continuously monitored and controlled by keeping her busy with the household chores. The purpose for limited interaction between husband and wife suits the authority of mother and sisters-in-law which ensures their accustomed bond with son and brothers stays the same. It has been believed that the mother-son relations are among the most affected ones by the arrival of the bride (Das, 1998). Therefore, the mother-in-law tries her best to alienate her son from his wife's influence and charms. It is assumed that if the love bond between husband-wife strengthens, it will be a major threat to the mother-son ties. All these factors compound the bride's misery and make the environment hostile and belligerent.

Raeesa Begum comments on mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship:

This relationship is really tough. Bahu¹⁵¹ remains under the critical eye and control of mother-in-law and other elder women of the affine. Saas¹⁵² criticizes her, limits her visits to her natal home, complains against her to her husband and keeps her busy in daily household chores so that she doesn't have time to talk to others especially to her parents. Oh God, it is really tough to survive with the in laws.

It is understood that in a Rajput household, the mother-in-law is the gatekeeper of the family, more importantly, she is in charge of shaping the bride according to the family's norms and beliefs. She also becomes the protector of her daughter-in-law's dowry, especially her jewelry and other expensive items (Wasim, 2008). She also tries to portray her as not being responsible enough to take care of her own items (Winnicott, 1987).

The literature on mother-in-law/daughter-in-law relationship is often portrayed as dismissive and antipathetic; with an emphasis on conflict and tension between the women who are a crucial part of the family system (Shih and Pyke, 2010). In a similar way, Bourdieu (1998) discusses the relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law with reference to the power dynamics and recognizes the rigidity and rivalry between them.

¹⁵¹ Daughter-in-law

¹⁵² Mother-in-law

He named, mother-in-law as a personified representation of "male domination" within the family. Literature is full of examples of mother-in-law portrayed as a cruel and unkind woman who tortures young brides and makes their lives miserable (Raheja and Gold, 1994). Similarly, many of the folksongs explain the apprehensions of the young brides at the time of marriage. Owing to the expected treatment and attitudes the bride may receive from her mother-in-law; she expresses her invasive sentiments towards her.

This major theme discussed above has been further classified into 7 sub-themes which shed light on the diverse experiences and reactions of the bride expressed through folksongs. Folksongs also talk about the role of other influential women which includes *nanad* (husband's sister) *devrani* (husband's younger brother's wife) and *jethani* (husband's elder brother's wife) in a conjugal home.

6.2.2.1. Domestic Violence in Conjugal Home

As stated previously, the relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law remains estranged and thus, the folksongs reflect the role of mother-in-law and other conjugal women as conspirators who attempt to exploit the domestic relations and circumstances by forming alliances and complaining against the daughter-in-law to her husband or other men of the family, which in severe cases may lead to physical reprimands¹⁵³. Most of these fights are verbal in nature and can also be termed as emotional discourses. These discourses serve the purpose of displaying resistance, defiance and anger and establishing one's boundaries.

In this song, the protagonist (daughter-in-law) faces violence from the male family members. Father-in-law and his sons beat her. The song narrates:

Nee mera bheej gaya sabaj rumaal wa kiyoon ronodi (song.no. 43)

Meri payal ki par gaye jhankar main nou tardi

Main tou heri bagar ke beech sussra gajbi

Translation

My green handkerchief is wet because I cried

¹⁵³ See songs 24, 25, 26 and 27

I was walking proudly as my payal's¹⁵⁴ sound was heard (in home)

I was thrown into the big courtyard by my angry father-in-law

As the song articulates, the daughter-in-law was wearing *payal*¹⁵⁵ (a trinket that makes sound) and the sound was heard by the bride's *susar*¹⁵⁶, *jeth* and *devar*. The sound proved to be a trigger and they started to beat her after dragging her in the courtyard. She explains the reason her green handkerchief was wet because she had been crying. The female participants were of the view that it is the job of a mother-in-law to aware the new bride regarding the Rajput norms and traditions which are part of the house. But she consciously does not communicate those norms, which later ended up with the daughter-in-law getting in trouble with the male members of the family.

Evidence from the Rajput culture suggests that there are certain rules for daughters-in-law to abide by. She is expected to be a subordinate and must show respect to the male members of the conjugal home. It is inconceivable that the daughter-in-law should do something that could be perceived as disrespectful or shows disregard to the elder males. In olden times, Rajput women would observe *pardah* from her *susar* and *jeth* and would avoid direct interaction with them as a form of respect¹⁵⁷. In the absence of her husband, she is expected to be even more cautious of these norms and Rajput cultural etiquettes. Rajput wives are expected to dress simply and avoid wearing anything which might attract the other males of the house. With respect to the above-mentioned folksong, the daughter-in-law wears a *payal* with its chiming sound and walks freely without regarding the male elders and Rajput tradition and thus end up getting beaten.

The song also depicts the attitudes of antipathy from the other women of the family. Their indifferent stance clearly shows that none of them try to intervene or save her from getting beaten. This incident also displays the short-temperament of Rajput men who may get furious on a display of minor misconduct that goes against their patriarchal traditions. The

¹⁵⁴ Foot jewelry, anklet

¹⁵⁵ A foot jewelry, anklet

¹⁵⁶ Father-in-law

¹⁵⁷ My husband's elder brother's wife used to cover her face while talking to her father-in-law.

beating of daughter-in-law also shows their attitude towards women. Women participants informed that this kind of incidents may have happened in past, but presently, such incidences are rare and they hardly hear about them. Fortunately for them, the women are living in a better position than they were in the past.

The song below presents a slight variation of the same theme. In this song, the daughter-in-law is facing another violent incidence from her in-laws but she too reacts:

Jo mere mathey pey tikka hota

(song.no. 42)

Chaar ghari alryoon se larti

Kis ney merey mari kamar main kamchi

Tujh ko rey dihka doon ree jail wali kherki

Translation

If there had been a tikka on my forehead

*I would have played with the beads of my tikka for a while Who
hit me in the back with a long stick?*

I will show you the jail's window (will send you to prison)

The song expresses the story of a daughter-in-law who gets beaten by her in-laws with a stick. She posits that it is all because of her poor family background and if she were from a rich family, the situation would have been very different. However, this time around, she does not sit still and threatens her in-laws by sending them to prison. The song also tells that she has been beaten by many people and cannot clearly recall who beat her. In social reality, such sentiments cannot be expressed in offensive language. Nonetheless, folksongs provide a vehicle of explicit expression which is also approved by the Rajput people.

Raeesa Begum commented:

Physical fights very rarely happen in Bhakkar now and especially beating of daughter in-law by her elder males is not possible. Men usually do not indulge in women's fights which happen on and off in the homes. They view it as routine matter of daily life.

The song also advises the bride to be submissive and careful at her in-law's house. Moreover, she has to follow their household norms and adapt to them. In one of the folksongs, offensive feelings of daughter-in-law towards her conjugal women are articulated in this way:

Laagaya santarey ka perdh mara jia laney noo

(song.no.44)

Chor gaya sandhi si amman marey sung larney ko

Translation

You planted an orange tree to make me happy

You left your fat cow like mother for fighting with me

The literal meanings of this song narrates that the daughter-in-law is deeply affected by her departure from the natal home. Her husband tries to make her feel better and symbolically plants a fruit tree for her. These efforts are acknowledged by the wife but paradoxically, she feels happy at her husband's efforts and is distressed at the same time too. She complains that because of his quarrelsome mother and sister, she may not stay happy for very long.

The symbolic interpretation of the song communicates that the planting of a fruit tree (an orange tree, with reference to the mentioned song) in home symbolizes her pregnancy and in her pregnancy, the husband wants his wife to stay happy at all times. However, the wife does not feel the same and complains about his mother and sister-in law that they fight with her all the time and make derogatory remarks about them. This theme is quite a common phenomenon in Rajput folksongs and women are satirically addressed and body shamed in numerous songs (see songs 24, 49, 51, 57). In contrast to the Rajput cultural norms, women's agency can be clearly seen in the folksongs. *Safia Bibi* expresses her opinion about above-mentioned song as:

There is no comparison between natal home and affine house. A woman faces a very tough time with her in-laws especially at the beginning of her marital life. In the absence of her husband, she may be treated harshly; but keeps her anger and annoyance inside her. The fights between daughter in law and the rest of the affine

may become a routine matter. There are some folk songs that express the anger and aggressive behavior of daughters-in-law towards her in-laws.

The folk wedding songs also reflect this particular sentiment. The ingeniousness of folksongs can be seen in the way as they convey discreet messages to the bride to be cautious of her mother-in-law as she will definitely try to disrupt her married life by causing misunderstandings and doubts in the mind of her husband. Thus, the unconscious fear of mother-in-law in the mind of the bride can be seen as a perpetual cycle. Despite that being the case, the wife still finds courage and prepares herself for the daily encounters and contests the authority of the mother-in-law for her husband's attention, love, and authority within the home. It could be assumed that the Rajput culture only acknowledges the woman who fits in rightly with the stereotype, i.e. a docile and submissive bride. Whereas, a Rajput bride as depicted in folksong, does not remain silent, docile or depressed as she anticipates the circumstances, rather she seems to be expressive and reactionary on the treatment she gets from the affinal women.

Experiencing the rigidities of the joint family system is a huge challenge which a daughter-in-law faces. The song below portrays a situation in which daughter-in-law reacts as:

Main niyari hoon gee banrey (song.no. 45)¹⁵⁸
Teri maa larey gi banerey
Qanchi sey jeep kooter deyon gee banerey

Translation

I will live separately (from the in-laws) my prince
Your mother will fight with me
I will cut her tongue with a pair of scissors

The wife (daughter-in-law) says to her husband that she wants to have a separate household because his mother fights with her constantly. The wife also warns her husband that she

¹⁵⁸ The same song was also collected for my M.Phil. Research from Wahando (Gujranwala, Punjab, Pakistan in 2011-2013. My M.Phil. Research was also about wedding folksongs of Rajput community living in this area.

will cut his mother's tongue with pair of scissors if she does not stop fighting with her. The cutting of the tongue with scissors symbolizes that she will forcefully silent them if they would not stop. Women participants expressed that the song tells an exaggerated situation which is far from reality, as no daughter-in-law can say such word to her in-laws. The daughter-in-law is demanding for a separate home as a threat to her in-laws in hope that they might start treating her well. In this song, daughter-in-law repeatedly addresses other female affine and humiliates them. She demands a separate home for herself due to the adverse treatment in a traditional joint family. Kakar (1989) within the perspective of South Asia observes that the unfulfilled longing of a wife for intimacy and affection turns into frustration which gets deeply infused in the women's lives. The wife gets disappointed and starts to fascinate about a happily married life which the joint and the extended family system does not allow them to have and thus, throughout her lives the unfulfilled desires haunt her (P: 22).

As the readers might have understood by now that choosing to live in a nuclear family in a traditional Rajput culture is not considered a justifiable or even an acceptable option. Almost all the Rajput families, I met during my fieldwork, belong to a joint family system. However, the song expresses the desire of a young wife who wants to live in a separate home without the disturbance of her in-laws. In reality if this option is discussed within a family, the strongest reaction may come from the husband's parents. Additionally, the sons may face extreme social backlash from their relatives for leaving their parents alone in old age. If a son wishes for a separate residence unless it is needed, he is not only condemned but also faces serious social criticism for leaving his parents for his wife. In the Rajput culture, the daughter-in-law has a lower status as compared to the mother and sister-in-law (husband's sister) within the household. In short, this imbalanced dynamic of power and status creates many domestic conflicts among women of the same household.

In another song, the daughter-in-law again displays a hostile reaction towards her affine. The song lyrics voice as:

Saas teree putri

(song.no. 46)

meray tikkey ka lagay ree haath
Jara si ghum khaa gaye ree
nahin tou doon ree rispata

Translation

Mother-in-law your daughter touching my tikka
I just spared her (because of you) otherwise
I would have slapped her

The daughter-in-law warns her mother-in-law that she should stop her daughter from stealing her jewelry items. She found her doing that but spared her out of respect for the mother-in-law. Otherwise, she would have slapped her on her face.

It is obvious from the folksongs discussed (42, 43, 45 and 46) that women affine give tough time to the daughter-in-law and in reaction to their harsh treatment, she uses various strategies to survive within her household; sometimes she warns them and other times may threaten them. The hypothetical fights, however, represent in folksongs portray a reverse social reality (as participants like to call them) within the sociocultural context of Rajput life. Albeit, verbal domestic fights are a common phenomenon that end in the evenings, as both groups of the affine women realize that they have to live together and there is no other alternative for them at the end of the day.

Rajput women can be assumed to be one of the most misunderstood and distinctive group of women. They tend to be vocal, contest challenges, form alliances, give threats and try to assert their authority over each other by using various strategies. They also know how to react and defend themselves in volatile situations, yet these same women hold each other up, listen to each other's stories and stick together when they feel the need to do so.

6.2.2.2. Humiliating the Hegemony

As a result of the undesirable behavior that a daughter-in-law faces at her in-law's house, sometimes she may imply different strategies to humiliate and disgrace them. The song below conveys her sentiments like this:

Saaser ko baech doon gee susra ko baech doon gee (song.no. 47)

*Lakhoon ki beach doongee main jaan,
O pakorey¹⁵⁹ waley
Tere pakorey majedaar o pakorey waley*

Translation

*I will sell my mother-in-law and father-in-law
I will sell my precious life too
O pakora vendor
Your pakoras are very tasty, o pakora vendor*

The daughter-in-law humiliates her in-laws (*saas, susar, jethani and jeth* etc.) by selling them in exchange for something as cheap and worthless as a food item (pakora). The satire in the song is very explicit as she compliments the vendor for his cheap, yet delectable food; which she has bought after selling her affinal relatives. This symbolic communication may also have other meanings as discussed later on.

The wife also contests her in law's family honor in many ways as a means of her emotional catharsis. Firstly, she shares the concealed household story of her ill-treatment, which is making her think about committing suicide. Secondly, she challenges the honor of the family by meeting and talking to the vendor (as she refers directly to him) and as per the Rajput norms, it is considered unacceptable for a woman to talk directly to a non-family man. This could also be viewed as clear challenge to the obligatory custom of *purdah*, may it be *purdah* of voice (as Rajput women referred to occasionally) or the *purdah* of face. Apart from being a means of emotional catharsis, these factors can also be seen as a string of provocative challenges.

Undoubtedly, domestic politics is assumed to be at the very core of a typical Rajput household. The politics (usually governed by women) tend to aggravate the already existing inherent tensions between the women of the household, with each group aiming to receive her own benefits. With the arrival of the new bride, the domestic politics take a new shape and form. The *Jethani*¹⁶⁰ wants to make alliance with her against the *saas* and

¹⁵⁹ A street food in Pakistan made from chickpea power (mixed in water), vegetables and then fried in oil. It is considered a cheap and affordable food item for many people.

¹⁶⁰ Husband's elder brother's wife

nanads or vice versa. In case of a deceased mother-in-law, the *jethani* usually enjoys the complete power and authority within the household. The new bride may seem like a potential threat to her supremacy or authority and therefore the *jethani* may tries to exploit and manipulate situations to get what she wants, however the bride may be well aware of her *jethani*'s intentions and tries to retaliate. In the song below, the new daughter-in-law tries to challenge the *jethani*'s authority by seducing her husband (*jeth*) as the song narrates:

Jethani rani bethey hooye hey larey sey (song.no. 48)

Dil mil gaya jeth barey sey

Susta sa pani saban ki tikya

Jeth ji naha lo merey kahey sey

Translation

Queen sister-in-law is about to fight with me

My brother-in-law is in love with me

(Here is) lukewarm water and bath soap

I am requesting your brother-in-law, take a bath please

The song articulates the wit and foresight of the new daughter-in-law as she tells the *jethani* (sister -in-law) that her husband is in love with her (the new bride). After such provocative claims, the *jethani* fights back with the daughter-in-law. She too, however is a tough nut to crack and boasts off her relations with her *jeth* by explaining how he takes her orders and listens to him for something as trivial as taking a bath. As the song proceeds, she continues to seduce her *jeth* and expects a fight from her *jethani* (sister-in-law). In reality, the relationship with the husband's elder brother is respectful similar to the one with father-inlaw. On wedding-day, however, such folksongs are performed for entertainment purpose in women only spaces but may contain symbolic metaphors too; such songs inform the new bride to be conscious of the clever conjugal women who may give her a tough time. By exploiting a respectable relation, the song also warns the conjugal women that the new daughter-in-law can be a threat to their alliance and that she must be treated respectfully.

In another similar song, the bride complains against *jethani*'s influence and authority in the household. The song goes like:

*jara nabz mori dekh lo chalti hey ke band,
hakim ji kaha daal pulka khana
Main to khaah aae hakim ji aaloo gobhi band,
Main to ho gaye Hakim ji, aagey tey bhi tang*

(song.no. 49)

Translation

*Check my pulse, is it running or not?
Hakim¹⁶¹ asked me to eat daal and chapati
But hakim Ji, I ate cabbage and potatoes,
I have become more irritated than before*

In the song above, the daughter-in-law (bride) narrates a fictitious incident of being ill. She went to the hakim and told him that she feels so weak and doubts if her pulse is even working. The local doctor asks her to eat simple foods like pulses and roti¹⁶². But she complains that she has eaten cabbage and potatoes and her illness has prolonged due to the inappropriate diet that was being cooked in her home. This song also quotes one of the daily life incidents because of the estranged relationship between *jethani* and the new daughter-in-law. The song reveals that the *jethani* enjoys her control in the kitchen and does not give preference to the daughter-in-law's illness. It may be interesting to mention here that pretending to be sick or going to the hakim may also be a strategy of escape from the domestic fights, which the new daughter-in-law implies. *Hakim* here symbolically infers a personal catharsis for the daughter-in-law who wants someone to listen to the stories of her miserable life. Therefore, she goes to the *hakim* with whom she not only shares her illness but also complains against her jethan's controlling and authoritative nature, about how she has no concern for her whatsoever. Here it is also critical to notice that it is against the Rajput cultural norms that household family talks are discussed with outsiders, whereas the new daughter-in law goes against their traditions, which might be deemed socially unacceptable.

¹⁶¹ Traditional physicians who uses local herbals medicines for curing people

¹⁶² A round traditional flat bread popular in India –Pakistan, made from wheat flour
See song 47 also

6.2.2.3. Exploitation and Manipulation of Relationships

The relationship between *devar*¹⁶³ and *bhabi* (brother's wife) seems to be informal as compared to the other male relatives like *jeth* and *susar*. Sometimes, *bhabi* influences her *devar* so much that she interferes with her choice of wife as well. The following songs express such sentiments:

Ayesa supna aaya devarya , (song.no. 50)
Tanne biyah kerwaya oo
Sachi sach bata dey deverya,
Kisi bavaerya laya oo

Translation

*I saw a dream oo brother-in-law, you
got married!
Tell me the truth brother-in-law, how
is your young wife?*

The song narrates *bhabi*'s talk with her *devar* as she says that she had a dream in which she saw that he got married to a girl. She tries to interrogate slyly and inquiries about how the girl looks like? Later, she criticizes his choice of girl that she is not beautiful or attractive. She has an ordinary nose, small eyes and a narrow mouth. The *bhabi* makes fun of her eyes, nose, and mouth. All in all, she adds that his choice of girl is unattractive and too simple.

Living in a tough situation and under the constant surveillance of influential affine women, the new daughter-in-law learns tactics and strategies for building alliances within the household. One way of doing is by keeping brotherly relations with her husband's younger brother. This relation between *bhabi* and *devar* is based on mutual respect and reverence. Moreover, the relation is not merely limited to controlling the man but rather the *bhabi* tries to assert her authority over the bride of the younger brother. Thus the *bhabi* not only controls her *devar* but indirectly his wife (*devarani*) too.

¹⁶³ Husband's younger brother

One of the participants shared that bhabhi to form strong alliances within her home, to establish her domain and to assert her power and authority over someone, exploits and manipulates relationships. Occasionally, she wishes to marry her sister with her *devar* and tries to convince her in-laws as well. Sometimes, it suits both the parties as they know each other. Secondly there are less chances of fights between two brothers and sisters as compared to new women. In the song above, bhabhi through her influence on her *devar* tries to make fun of his choice so that he may rethink his decision and marry the bhabhi's sister, as she is much more beautiful and attractive.

Traditionally, it had been a preferred practice in Rajput culture for two sisters to get married to two brothers in the same family. In this way, both the sisters dominate the in-laws and rest of the women in the family due to their alliance. This tradition is still practiced in many Rajput families in Bhakkar. The motive behind this practice is usually the property which the two sisters may own. Hence, resulting as a win-win situation for both the parties since it is expected that the brothers will take care of each other and can hold the land together. Moreover, there will be less possibility that brothers will fight over land sharing. This strategy may support *bhabhi* as she wants to maintain her authority and control within the household and to do so, she would prefer a girl whom she can influence and control.

6.2.2.4. Stubbornness of Nand (Sister-in-law)

The daughter-in-law may encounter another powerful antagonist in the conjugal home, her *nanad* (husband's sister), who from time to time gets opportunities to exercise her substantial authority in the natal home. This sister-in-law enjoys and shares more power and authority over the wives of her brothers, with her mother to support her. She retains her authority in her natal home through frequent visits, engaging her brothers to fulfill financial demands and social obligations of her in-laws as *Akhtar Bibi* commented:

The eldest sister-in-law has her authority even in the presence of her mother. She keeps a close eye on her brother's wife and doesn't let her bhabhi enjoy any freedom in her affine home. She manipulates her through her husband which creates tension among her brother and his wife.

Usually, *bhabhi-nand* clashes can be considered as a common phenomenon in eastern cultures, which continue throughout the life, as they both want to get attention from the same man in a family. Due to the fact that the brother and sister share a deep bond of love, it becomes necessary for the wife to appease the *nand*, if she wants to please her husband. Not only this, pleasing the *nand* is also a crucial factor while living in a conjugal family, as the daughter-in-law might need her help and support later on, since the *nand* has much more power within the home than she has.

When a nephew (brother's son) is born, the tension between *nand* and *bhabhi* is suspended and diverted since the *nand* becomes happy because of the birth of her nephew. Due to the auspicious event, *nanad* also demands expensive gift from her *bhabhi*. The song below expresses the sentiments of *bhabhi* as:

Nanandiya mangey heroon jari, (song.no.51)
Saab jewaroon main mera tikka bharee
Wo bhi nanandiya ko dey do,
Nanandiya lyti nahin

Translation

Sister-in-law is demanding diamond jewelry; my tikka is the most expensive item in my jewelry
Give it to my sister-in-law, Sister-in-law does not want this one
Wake up! Sister-in-law's brother, Sister-in-law is demanding diamond jewelry

The song narrates a situation where a *bhabhi* is convincing her sister-in-law to take her most priced jewelry items as a gift on her nephew's birth. However, the *nand* is reluctant and obstinate and does not agree to take her items as a gift. She wants much more expensive and valuable gold gifts. Thus, the *bhabhi* asks her brother (her husband) to convince his sister to accept the gift that she has selected for her. But her *nanad* is persistent and wants only to take her diamond-engraved necklace which the *bhabhi* does not want to give. As the song proceeds, *bhabhi* tries to give multiple jewelry choices to her *nanad*, but she refuses them all and stubbornly demands for the most expensive diamond-engraved necklace. The song subtly conveys to the bride that the *nanad* might be a troublemaker and a stubborn

person in her conjugal home. But to cope with this situation she has to take support from her husband. Through her husband's support she cannot only exploit the brother-sister bond but she will also be able to get out clearly without having to face the consequences of direct confrontation. She believes that if her husband would insist his sister to take the gift, she would accept it and would not say no to him. On the other hand, this folksong conveys a strategy to the bride regarding how she should exploit relationships in her in-law's home. These songs also inform her of prevailing politics within the homes and strategies to use once she experiences them; long before she has been a part of them. Thus folksongs act as teaching guides that provide information to the young girls regarding serious issues like that of domestic politics and survival strategies.

6.2.2.5. Acts of Espionage on Nand (Sister-in-law)

As the Rajput culture communicates, domestic politics are a very common phenomenon in the Rajput household. Though covert in nature, wedding folksongs, apart from serving many varied functions, also tell and teach the new bride about these politics and the different strategies she should use to survive, establish her domain and exercise her authority within the household. The song below tells about a strategist daughter in law who keeps secrets of her nanad (sister-in-law):

Bagoon na jaaye meree nandri ree, (song.no.53)
Baghoon ka mali bara gujbi ree
Talon na jaaye meree nandri ree,
Talon ka mali bara gujbi ree

Translation

Don't go to the garden my sister-in-law,
The gardener is a bastard man
Don't go to ponds my sister-in-law, Waterman
is a bastard man

The song above narrates how the bride (daughter-in-law) forbids her nanad (sister in-law) to go to the garden as the gardener is a vagabond. Similarly, in the next couplets, she also forbids her to go to pond due to the same reason. The song keeps on taking the names of

the places which are locally known as the meeting places for lovers. Meeting in such places provide bright chances for girls and boys to indulge in socially unacceptable acquaintances and as a result develop unacceptable relationships. Chopra (2006) explains that in the rural (Indian) Punjab context, streets or roads are open-ended spaces where young men may engage in naughty and devilish activities (P: 17).

It is evident from the literature that folksong are not only performed for fun and entertainment but they also convey subtle social ideas for their owners which may contain wisdom, insight and tactics which can help them in various critical life situations. In this particular folksong, couple of strategies are disclosed for the bride to ease her survival in the conjugal home. These strategies include direct confrontation as well as indirect and discreet ways to never miss an opportunity to find the weakness of the in-laws so she can later exploit them for her own good. Therefore, it is expected from the bride (daughter-in-law) to be vigilant and keep a watchful eye on the incidences happening at her in-law's house.

For example, as the above song indicates, that the daughter-in-law is spying on her sister-in-law, an unmarried *nand*, who may have a love affair with someone. In this case, the bride looks for the opportunity and keeps eyes on her sister-in-law's suspicious activities. She tries to warn her about her illicit activities and is very explicit in communicating that she is fully aware of what the *nand* is up-to. It might also be a way of telling her sister-in-law that she is not safe outside and should be careful. In this way, she may blackmail her and humiliate her family members.

6.2.2.6. Challenging the Incompetent Mother-in-law

In the backdrop of Rajput culture, mother-in-law is viewed as a person with high conflict personality. Her constant criticism and unkindness towards her daughters-in-law makes her an undesirable person to be with. Because of the mother-in-law's hostile attitude, the daughter-in-law is in search for opportunities to react and mock her mother-in-law as the song below narrates:

Aree aree saas thara chalan ree bora,

(song.no. 52)

Tenney beta bana ker beegara rey siayyan
Taar bijli sey patley humary siayyan,
Kithey been bajey kithey bansurya

Translation

Mother- in-law you are not (someone) of good character,
You have spoiled your son
He is as thin as electric wire,
There is no comparison between been¹⁶⁴ and flute

The daughter-in-law instigates her mother-in-law and mocks her for the poor upbringing of her son. She blames her mother-in law that her son is weak like a wire and compares him with thin musical instruments. She also blames other affine women for neglecting the health of her husband. Here, she also subtly conveys and ridicules her husband that he does not look ‘manly’ due to his poor health and physique. In South Asian context, women are defined by their ability to bear children and then expected to take care of their overall development (Abraham, 2000) if she fails to do so, she is then socially accused of being an incompetent and unskilled mother.

The type of folksong disused above is called *gali* or insult songs which are performed at weddings to provide entertainment as well as to humiliate the conjugal relatives (Harlan, 1992). Harlan states it as a type of folksong in which the groom’s side is insulted by the bride’s relatives merely for the sake of fun and entertainment. The groom’s side is also blamed for their hypothetical immoral sexual behavior like adultery and incest. Immorality is considered an insult for anybody, but it has even more serious implications for the Rajputs. Since people in the Rajput community who commit adultery are considered inferior and are disrespected by others. However, people tolerate the *gali* songs on auspicious functions such as wedding and birth of children. Otherwise such allegations may not be publicly tolerated. *Gali* songs also refer to verbal abuses which quite often include curses and insults. Jacobson (1982) reports that such type of song provides a relief from the formality and hostility that exists between the tense relationships such as that of mother-in-law or sister-in-law (P: 101). These songs could also be defined as strategies

¹⁶⁴ Locally made flute, usually snake charmers keep them for snake dancing

through which the manifestation of hierarchy is made visible and other power figures are challenged and contested.

6.2.2.7. The Strategic Mother-in-law: Divide and Rule

Most of the Rajput folksongs portray the mother-in-law as an antagonist who is very strategic but also plays safe (as she does not want to lose her son). She is also one of the most active members of the domestic politics and does not miss a chance to seize the opportunity to develop misunderstandings or promote chaos in her daughter-in-law's life.

In the song below, she favors the second wife over his son's first wife. The song narrates:

O aaj karo koye laj paj bharo na koi singyaar (song.no.54)

Keley jesi goobh rey banva chamba jesi door manwa

Translation

Do not start useless arguments; today, wear lots of make up and get ready

Be like a banana bud and a champa¹⁶⁵ flower

This folksong refers to a story in which a mother-in-law consciously makes an effort to turn her son's two wives against each other by preferring one over another. She asks both the wives to wear makeup and decorate themselves with flowers as their husband is coming back tonight. The mother-in-law and her daughter first gives the first wife a broken oil lamp with foul smelling oil in it when she goes to her husband room. Her husband did not like the smell and asks her to sleep near his feet on the bed. The next morning when they ask from their first daughter-in-law about her meeting with the husband, she tells them that her husband did not mate with her. The next night, same procedure is repeated with the second wife but they give an unbroken oil lamp with perfumed oil when she goes to meet her husband. The second wife tells them that her husband was happy with her and they mated. The song illustrates the domination of the mother-in-law over the wives of her son. By using her strategy of divide and rule, mother-in-law favors the second wife in order to humiliate and anguish his first wife. She also gives his son's favorite stuff to his second wife while deceiving his first wife so that he may not like her.

¹⁶⁵ Plumeria flower

The advice this song gives to the young brides is if they want to pass a happy life with their husband, they have to keep the mother-in-law happy by accepting her superiority and submitting to her. Otherwise, she can make their lives tough. The best option she uses is to make both of them (both the wives) jealous of each other so that they may not be able to unite or challenge her authority and domination in the household.

6.2.3. Women in Stereotypical Roles

Table 7. Wedding Day folksongs – Biyah kay Geet (Wedding Day Event)

Main Theme	Subthemes
1. Reinforcement of Gendered Stereotypes (specifically relevant to women)	1- Self-stereotyping 2- Humiliation and Body Shaming of Woman as a Wife 3- The Treacherous Wife

Without a doubt, the Rajputs have a rich cultural heritage. They regard themselves as sons and daughters of the warriors having the same personality characteristics as their ancestors. Their ethos include an intense love and pride in their ancestry. Albeit being conservative, Rajputs have followed the same traditional culture for years and take extreme pride in it. Here, it might benefit the readers to get a clear picture of how gender is defined within the Rajput culture.

The Rajput culture is highly segregated in terms of gender roles and division of labor which is quite discernible in their daily life activities as Rajput men and women. Women roles and duties are well-defined and restricted within the household compared to men, who are defined as being merely responsible for the work outside the home. Usually, gender roles are profoundly linked to the expectations of the society they thrive in. (Williams, 1995) and are created on the basis of stereotypes about gender that is the over simplified understanding and perception of being male and female.

Not only through literature (oral or written), the gender stereotypes are also reflected through commonly used traditional proverbs, which portray the social psyche of that particular community. In Rajput culture the common proverb which is frequently used to

refer to women is “*Auraat ki aqal gitaa mian howa*” (women’s wisdom is in their ankle) means women are not capable of taking wise decisions. This proverb may be one of the most significant examples for understanding gender stereotypes. This proverb and many more tend to overshadow the women’s abilities and capacity and make others judge them through the culturally defined roles. The common feature of every Rajput woman role demands that she has to sacrifice her desires and wishes for her family members.

It would be interesting to mention here that most of the women, whom I interviewed, did not complain about their dependence on men and the stereotypical gender roles that they perform. Few women wished to work outside so that they may contribute to household finances. During my informal talks with the Rajput women, some of them fancied my financial and social independent status, but on the contrary, few also commented on my family life where I have to struggle and manage family and work at the same time. Their socialization is such that they do not hesitate to accept the pre-defined division of labor. The women and men gender roles in folksongs also imitate the same social reality.

In some folksongs performed on the wedding day, women's stereotypical roles are reflected which are thematically discussed as under.

6.2.3.1. Self-stereotyping

A young Rajput girl is socialized from an early age and made to think in such a way that her major aim in life is to become a good wife and an efficient daughter-in-law. With the reinforcement of stereotypical roles, during the early socialization, a Rajput girl adapts to the domestic roles early in life, as defined by the culture. The self-stereotyping is another familiar phenomenon that shapes her gender roles as she continuously formulates and reformulates them in every sphere of her life. Self-stereotyping can be defined as a social process which occurs when the stereotyped group describe themselves using the widely believed stereotypical traits. The wedding day folksongs also reflect a woman’s stereotypical role in the household as this song narrates:

Le de oontani mune dhaar kardhni away ji

(song.no.55)

Ik tanbey ka bertain ho mune dhaar karni away ji

Merey susaar ji ley de oontani mune dhaar kardni awye ji

Translation

Buy a she-camel for me I know how to milk her

Bring one copper container I know how to milk her

My father-in-law buy a she-camel for me I know how to milk her

As the song portrays, the daughter-in-law informs her father-in-law that she knows all there is to know about milking animals and thus he (the father-in-law) should bring a she-camel for her. She also asks for a big copper container as she will need that to milk the she-cow.

Generally speaking, the song discloses a household situation where a daughter-in-law asks her father-in-law (*susar*) to buy a she-camel as she knows how to milk it. Seemingly, a very straightforward and uncomplicated situation, yet with profound symbolic meaning depicting the self-stereotyping of Rajput women. As defined by the Rajput customs, division of labor is by no means fair or symmetrical, however the women seem to have adapted well to their roles and work within the household and take pride in it. They have fitted so well in their stereotypical roles that this is how they tend to define themselves. The folksong talks about a woman in stereotypical role as a housewife (daughter-in-law) who must spend her time doing household chores. Moreover, this daughter-in-law through her own self-serotyping has accepted her culturally defined role as the household worker. Not just this, but she also takes pride in the fact that she fits so well with the culturally defined role. The song can be viewed from another perspective as well; it not only portrays women in stereotypical roles but men too as they are considered to be the breadwinners of the family and daughter-in-law asks only a man for money. In reality, most of the women under study told me that they ask their men if they require money. This song also communicates that in a joint family system, father-in-law or the eldest brother manages the household expenditures and their permission is required in case of purchases.

6.2.3.2. Humiliation and Body Shaming of Woman as a Wife

The expectations from a Rajput wife are generally very high but on the wedding day, the image of the wife is mocked in many different ways. Her personal appearance becomes a major criterion for her selection as a wife as the folksong mentioned below expresses:

Aree aree chori Bagarki thari aqal kithi khori sey

(song.no.58)

Karam bhutey un mardan key jin ki joro patli sey

Taej hawa main maa udgaye sey

Pakram pakri ho rahe sey

Translation

O girl from Bangar¹⁶⁶ where is your wisdom?

*Unlucky are those men who have a thin wife Strong
wind blew his wife away!*

Now everyone is trying to hold his wife!

A girl from the *Bangar* village is addressed in the song and she seems to be interrogated about why she was so clueless while choosing wives for the Rajput men (why didn't she choose wisely?). In the entire song, the village girl is referred for her bad selection of women for the Rajput man. The women are rejected based on different reasons such as their complexion, height, weight etc. and are body shamed. Throughout the song, the stereotypical image of women and cultural standards of beauty are displayed and women who are short-heighted, thin and dark-skinned are mocked and rejected by the people. However, the husband is not criticized and teased for his physical appearances or body shamed in any way.

The folksong conveys that the acceptance of a woman as a wife from her in-laws is a hard task. She would still be criticized for something even if she has a desirable complexion. Therefore, in Rajput culture, she must prepare herself for the inevitable criticism that might come her way. Culturally, the black complexion of a woman is considered undesirable when a marriage proposal is sorted out. The mother and sisters of the man try to select a girl with fair complexion. The point to notice here is that the pressure of being perfect rests only on women and not on men as no standards have been defined to judge the beauty of the men. The image of a wife with fair complexion is reinforced in the Rajput culture and

¹⁶⁶ A small village in the Rajasthan state in India

presently many girls try facial creams that lighten the skin and tones the face to a white color.

6.2.3.3. The Treacherous Wife

The below mentioned folksong narrates a story about a woman who cheats on her husband:

Sava gez kapra lila garkey

(song.no. 60)

Wohi mera lila rang dey

Sava gez kapra jab ragoon aaj raho sari raat

Subha tarka ho gaya lila garkey

Translation

Give me ¼ blue cloth o cloth-dyer

I need my same blue color cloth-dyer

When I dye ¼ piece of cloth tonight be here with me

O cloth –dyer, it has been early morning now

Now give me the same blue cloth

In this song, a Rajput woman asks her lover, who is a cloth-dyer, for a blue piece of cloth (dupatta). After spending a night with him, on her way back to home, her *devar* sees her and interrogates her suspiciously. She does not answer her *devar's* questions and as a response starts to mock him for his wife's lower social status and the birth of daughter who did not survive.

The story is interesting and reveals Hindu mythological characters with many symbolic expressions. In fact, this could be the only folksong that has a backdrop of Hindu Rajput culture. In Hindu mythology, the blue color represents divinity, spirituality and loyalty. Most of the representations of *krishna*¹⁶⁷ are depicted in blue color. The piece of blue colored cloth therefore symbolizes the sacredness of relationship which she seems to have lost due to her infidelity. She however claims that she is faithful to her husband and gives birth to a *Krishna* like son. But as her *devar* is alleging her, his wife cannot bear a sacred

¹⁶⁷ A Hindu god

child as she belongs to a lower clan of Rajputs. So, she bears a daughter instead who dies later on and both remain childless.

The other folksong also narrates a story with Hindu context and narrates:

Ragbir mara dhokey main

(song.no.61)

saarey mein ziker chala ho gaa

Chaley cut ghoonghat gani main naar

terey paeroon ki pati hen

Translation

Ragbir died by deception as everybody knows

By a shrewd ghoonghat

Taking a fire like woman

With a foot jewelry in her foot

The folksong tells about an unfaithful woman who plans and kills her lover-Ragbir with help from her brother. The song also displays murder scene of Ragbir who is poisoned by both the sister and the brother. Ragbir faces a very painful, excruciating death because of the poison. The message that the song communicates is that women should remain in their men's control otherwise they may go astray. If a woman is allowed to go outside her home, she may commit crime like infidelity, murders etc. The song also portray and reinforce a vile image of women, as they are wicked by nature and may try to deceive men with their alluring looks and mannerism.

In this son, the *ghoonghat* of the unfaithful wife has been referred to in an interesting way. Generally, *ghoonghat* is a veil which is used to maintain social distance (Jacobson, 1975) from non-family men. However, same *ghoonghat* can also be referred to as a piece of cloth which can provoke sexual desires in men. It is notable to mention here that Rajput women under study sympathized with the victim Ragbir and cursed the unfaithful woman. Since it is the woman who is held accountable for her behaviors and family's honor (Saeed, 2007). Traditionally, men are not held socially responsible for their deeds and if they do act against sanctioned social norms, they are sometimes forgiven (Songs 6, 8 and 13).

6.2.4. Masculinity as Defined by the Rajputs

Table 8. Wedding Day folksongs – Biyah kay Geet (Wedding Day Event)

Main Theme	Subthemes
1- Masculinity as Defined by the Rajputs	1- Portrayal of Rajput Men in Conjugal and Natal Relationships 2- Violence – An Attribute of the Rajput Man
	3- Promiscuousness Among Rajput Men 4- Physical and Cultural Traits 5- A Man with Royal Wistfulness

Masculinity (also called manhood or manliness) can be defined as a set of attributes, behaviors, and roles which are associated with boys and men (Constance, 2018). Masculinity means the qualities that are considered to be typical of men¹⁶⁸. Additionally, Masculinity is usually defined and professed in relation to women who are supposed to be inferior and subordinate to men.

The socio-cultural context of Bhakkar defines a Rajput man as '*mard*', meaning a 'masculine man', contradictory to the word '*naar*', which means a 'feminine woman'. Both *naar* and *mard* have their own set of stereotypical qualities and socio-cultural expectations. In Bhakkar, there have been various deeply embedded cultural beliefs, transferred successfully from one generation to another. A common example being, "*Lugai marad ki jutti baraber sai*" means a worth of a woman is equal to the man's shoes. This proverb explicitly conveys that a woman is inferior to man in knowledge as well as in morality.

Another proverb also discussed before, perceives women as "*janani ki aqal kitte main howe*" (women have low IQ and wisdom). The interpretation of the misogynistic proverb implies that women have poor wisdom or lack of judgement so their opinion or values are insignificant as they are unable to rationalize or comprehend logically. Simply put, she is unfit to offer any advice of significance and therefore must be instructed and commanded by the man. Such cultural ideas also support the notion that the power and authority reside

¹⁶⁸ <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/masculinity>

with men and not women. There is another proverb that says “*Janani ki eeshaarey pey jo chala wo chutia*”¹⁶⁹ means that the (man) who acts according to the woman’s advice is imprudent. The cultural system so deeply entrenched with discriminatory attributes may produce hegemonic men who deny the most universal values of equality between genders.

The public show of male dominance can also be seen in daily routine. I observed it multiple times that during the family fights, if a husband takes his wife’s side, he is dubbed as “*runmureed*” (slave to his wife) or called “*janani ke thalley laga howa hey*” (he is so foolish that his wife dominates him). Rajput men do not tolerate such titles and as men participants explain it could be a tough situation for a man when his mother and wife fight. He has to take his mother’s side. Firstly, due to social pressure that may tag him as ‘*run mureed*’ and secondly, if his mother gets angry with him, then the whole community will curse him for annoying his mother.

It has been stated earlier that mother-in-law usually dominates the household and family hierarchy. Also instructing her sons to dominate their families¹⁷⁰. In this way, patriarchy is reinforced not only by men, but women also become a contributing factor in replicating the patriarchal norms within the household.

Safia Bibi, expressed her opinion as a mother-in-law:

Why should a man listen to his woman (wife)? Am I dead? I took care of my son for twenty-eight years; He should listen to me as I am experienced, old and his mother. My daughter-in-law is a stranger to this house unless she spends 15 or 20 years here. If my son starts to listen to her, his life will be devastated as she is not wise enough and may give him stupid advices. I forbid him to listen to her.

This public display of masculinity, as the local proverbs state, may constitute of the physical prowess and violence in Rajput culture. However, it must be understood that the

¹⁶⁹ A verbal abuse which literally means a man with vagina and not with penis. Man with woman’s attributes is considered weak and emotional.

¹⁷⁰ For similar observation, Read Patel Tulsi (1987) work in Rajasthan. ‘Women work and their status: Dialects of subordination and assertion in Social Action 37:126-149.

mentioned factors are not the sole aspect of masculinity. There might be certain other elements that may define the masculinity of a Rajput man. The local culture reflected through the collected folksongs places an enormous emphasis on some attributes of the Rajput men. In light of the collected folksongs, the men's imagery was analyzed and further categorized into sub-themes. Since masculinity is not an isolated idea and cannot be discussed without its reference to women, therefore along with the Rajput man's physical and social attributes, their personality traits, the different roles they perform within a Rajput household and their relationships have been discussed.

6.2.4.1. Portrayal of Rajput Men in Conjugal and Natal Relationships

Rajput men in both natal and conjugal relationships are portrayed differently. This could be explained in terms of the different expectations of conduct as Rajput men serve multiple obligations, face diverse situations and have different kinds of relatives to cope with. In varied folk songs, they are expected to act according to their cultural roles and status all while safeguarding the Rajput traditions. For example, as a father-in-law (*susar*) a Rajput man is portrayed as a short-tempered man who has the right to beat his daughter-in-law on slight violation of the Rajput norms and traditions (song no.42). He is considered as an authoritative person who earns and manages the household money. If anybody needs anything, he must take the father-in-law's approval (song no.54). In short, Rajput father-in-law is portrayed in the folksongs as an authoritative and hot-tempered person who along with his family doesn't treat his daughter-in-law with respect or tolerance. *Sadiqaan Bibi* commented:

All the folksongs exaggerate the father-in-law's image. In reality he is highly respected. In Rajput tradition, a daughter-in-law hardly talks to him because of her respect for him and he is just a fatherly figure to her. The folksongs present him as a monster just for the sake of fun and entertainment.

As the folksongs portray, *jeth* is the second most authoritative male figure of the household after the *susar* (father-in-law), however he can be seduced in order to break the influence of his wife and falls to such a trap very easily (song no. 48). Moreover, sometimes his son flirts with his aunt in the absence of his uncle who has gone to other place for earnings

(song no.78) *Jeth* is also depicted in songs as another typical Rajput men who is supposedly fond of courtesans, is nonchalant and does not care much about his waiting wife (song no.69). The image of *jeth* as a Rajput man, is presented in a tarnishing and disturbing way. *Jeth* has influence on his family and cannot be neglected as he is bossy and dominates most of the household decisions related to making and management of money and marriage proposals. However, his moral character as informed by the respondents is unreal. He is highly respected by his younger brothers and their wives. In the absence of a father-in-law, he becomes the father to his brothers and sisters.

As the folksongs illustrate, husband's younger brother (*devar*) is of a manipulative yet friendly nature, who is exploited and controlled by his *bhabhi*. *Devar* in most of the cases does not hold an authoritative position in the joint family system. *Devar's* image in the folksongs is portrayed as a naughty person who also has friendly ties with his brother's wife. However, he is watchful and observes the activities of his brother's wife in his absence. He spies her *bhabhi* (brother's wife) when she comes home late at night and questions her (song no.59). Due to his closeness with his *bhabhi*, she may manipulate him for the selection of his bride (song no.49). Another song also depicts him as a snake charmer who may cast a spell on his *bhabhi* which may result in an illicit relationship. Their physical closeness may result in indecent relations in the absence of her husband. However, most of the song portray him as a morally sound person who at times may lose control of his sexual drive (song no.81). He is also the only person who dresses-up like his absent brother to enticing the brother's wife (song no.79).

6.2.4.2. Violence – An Attribute of the Rajput Man

The perception of *mard* that relates to physical strength leads to a man's control over his land, resources, animals and woman. He must protect his belongings and safeguard them as this is his test and proof of him being a *mard*. Since these men are supposedly the ancestors of brave Rajput warriors, they are expected to develop and are socialized since their childhood in such a way as to assist the development of similar personality traits to those of their ancestors such as aggression, bravery, honesty, determination and resilience. Possession and control of land including women are associated with *izzat* (honor) that must

be safeguarded, controlled and commanded by any means. In simple words, the masculinity of a Rajput man is associated with physical strength which inevitably leads to violence as a man must resort to it as a public display of his masculinity. In weddings folksongs, most of the Rajput men's aggressive attribute is reflected in their relations with their family women i.e. wife and daughter-in-law. As a husband, he physically hurts his wife on slight provocation from his mother or sister (see songs no.24 and 45) or when she misplaces her precious bracelet in a garden (song no.25) and also as a *susar* or *jeth* (husband's elder brother) if her foot jewelry makes a twinkling sound (song no.42).

There are certain traits that are associated with Rajput men. Public display of emotions undermines manhood (Schroch and Scwable, 2009). However, show of anger signifies the strength (Schroch and Schwalbe, 2009) of maleness and supports the Rajput prototype image¹⁷¹ (Ojha, 1927). They are socialized and brought up in a manner that they are provocative and react adversely on slight annoyance. Thus, it could be reasonably assumed that their socialization supports their tendency for aggressiveness. A young Rajput man would be encouraged to exhibit aggressive behavior outside the home and have a hottemper within the home. A participant informed me that the short- temperament is a kind of social pressure which ought to be marinated by some Rajput men in order to display their Rajput identity within their social circles. Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph (1984) claim about that Rajput have "valor without regard to consequences" (P: 4). Hitchcock (1959:76) calls them "an imprudent martial race", who cherish the images of themselves as rulers and warriors and thinks of these as their "birth right and natural endowment". I observed that in their real life, it is obvious that a Rajput does not need to live like a warrior at all times, however the behavior of *khashterya* shows itself when the family has conflicts or clashes with other people. Simply put, combativeness and belligerent nature have become part of their personality. This anger and violent nature have been part of some of the folksongs and reflected in the form of domestic violence (songs 24, 25, 26 and 27), as violent male in-laws (song.42), and a brutal husband. For example, in *sehra* song (38), the Rajput groom is symbolically referred to as a warrior who conquers his honor (bride) from her home.

¹⁷¹ More detail in the next chapter

Historically, in the past there was an emphasis on fighting skills, bravery and sacrifice because society at that time faced frequent threats from different empires. Gradually, these qualities symbolically attached themselves to the Rajput heritage and have shaped the character of a contemporary Rajput male.

In Rajput culture as prevalent in Bhakkar, it is crucial for man to portray his picture as “angry young man” while growing up. The boy spends most of his time with male members of the family like father or grandfather who train him about dealing with other people in a ‘manly way’ and such behaviors are encouraged by the older male relatives (Messerschmidt, 2000).

Raeesa Begum expressed:

From the beginning, the boys are socialized to be tough and strong. They are trained to hide their soft emotions like crying and display sensitivity to others. They are expected to spend most of their time with their father or other male family elders, visit deras and meet their kinsmen. They are criticized and sometimes humiliated by their elders if they show soft emotions publicly.

Rajput man’s exposure to other members of the extended families is monitored by the elder men as they train him on how to take the world on his own. As he grows, his relationship with his mother also becomes limited so that he may not learn or develop an emotive personality. This is compensated by the attention he gets from the older males of the family such as father, grandfather etc. With male elders, he learns to bravely face the world with all its realities. He also understands the pervasiveness of bullying which he may confront with his valor, aggression, and violence (Philips, 2007). Therefore ‘womanly traits’ may not exist in his nature and he is not allowed to display or let his soft sentiments come to the surface.

6.2.4.3. Promiscuousness Among Rajput Men

Ruiter and Shefer (1998) conducted interviews on women and men’s sexuality and recorded the respondent’s views. Their views are in some way similar to my respondent’s comments about the promiscuous nature of the Rajput men. For instance, the participants

under study were of the opinion that ‘men are focused on sex’, ‘need more sex’, ‘are always ready to have sex’ and the most common one being the ‘have a strong sexual drive’.

The importance of discussing this trait here is to help the readers gain a better understanding of the Rajput men, since more often than not, this theme has found its way to the Rajput folksongs.

In this wedding folksong, the wife portrays her husband as:

Jeth gaya Dilli¹⁷² dever gaya Bombay¹⁷³ (song no 70)
Sayyaan gaey ree bady lambey safar pey
Jeth laya randi dever laya nutni
Sayyan laye ree sarey bara baras ki
Phag gae randi uthal gaey nutni
Maaja dey gee rey sarey bara baras ki

Translation

(Elder) brother-in-law went to Delhi (India) and the (younger) brother-in-law went to Bombay (India)

Husband lord went to a very faraway place

Elder brother-in-law brought a prostitute and the younger brother-in-law brought a singer

Husband lord brought twelve and a half years old girl

The prostitute ran away and the singer departed

Only the twelve and half year old girl will give (sexual) pleasure (to my husband)

In the folksong, the wife talks about her husband, *dever* and *jeth* who went to other cities (New Delhi, India) for earnings. They sent home presents, edibles and dresses to their wives. She appreciates her husband's choice of gifts but criticizes the other gifts from her *jeth* and *devar*. When they came back home, all of them brought courtesans for themselves. The wife did not condemn her husband and other men of the family for bringing courtesans, but instead she boasts off her husband's sexual prowess who brought an under aged girl to have sex with. However, the rest of the women ran away and the men were unable to spend

¹⁷² New Delhi –Indian capital city

¹⁷³ Now called as Mumbai, Indian city

time with them and only the twelve year old girl remained to satisfy her husband. The folksong teaches the wife to tolerate every behavior of her husband even if that means accepting a prostitute for a while, but in any case, she must not leave her conjugal home. The Rajput woman should know and understand that her status as a Rajput wife would remain intact and the other women (courtesans) would never be able to get the same status as her, being the Rajput wife who has social acceptance as a daughter-in-law by her inlaws.

Due to the widely prevalent attitude of social tolerance towards men's extra-marital affairs, it is expressed by the wife and in way communicated to her that she should accept it as a norm for a Rajput man. This ideology is also endured and reinforced through the wedding folksongs. The cultural explanation for this adulterous behavior being reasoned to as their strong sex drive and their long separation from the wives due to the economic responsibility on them. *Akhtar Bibi* expressed her opinion as such:

In some Rajput families, due to the arranged marriages, sometimes women are much older than their husbands¹⁷⁴ so, it happens sometimes that men go for other women while having a wife at home. Some men are adulterous by nature, they know that their wives would not take divorce and will tolerate their adulterous behavior at any cost. Husband can have good time for few days, but after then he comes back to his wife.

The Rajputs of Bhakkar did not like to talk on this subject as they considered it a shameful activity among the Rajput clans, which existed years ago. Presently, it is not possible for the Rajput men living in Bhakkar to have a mistress or secretly keep an extra-marital affair. The reasons as informed by *Salma* were such that, firstly it is a sin from a religious point of view and secondly it is not affordable and costly due to their economic circumstances. It becomes practically impossible to have a second wife unless a man has a genuine reason like childlessness or death of his first wife. Responsibility for two households is economically hard for a common man. If a man remarries for a genuine reason, he usually

¹⁷⁴ Exogamy is not acceptable in Rajput cultures so at times the men have to compromise about the age of the girl.

keeps his two wives in the same household. Therefore, in real life situations, the life of an ordinary Rajput man is quite different from the displayed situation in the folksongs.

At times, it may seem, that the wife herself is the reason for promoting and allowing promiscuous attitudes, as they make sexual arrangements for their husbands. Such a bizarre behaviour could be attributed to the fact that she is convinced that the Rajput men have a strong sexual drive that must be fulfilled, as depicted in the song below:

Raja kissi malan sey milna ho gaa (song.no.20)
Mere Raja ke din hen bahar ke

Malan tera kia jae gaa

Merey raja ka dil reh jae gaa

Main tou chuj aae daane annar ke

Mere raja ke din hen baahaar ke

Translation

My king! I have to meet a gardener's wife

These days are my king's youth days

Gardener's wife! you would not lose anything

My king will have some good days

I have taken some pomegranate seeds (I got pregnant)

These days are my king's youth days

In this song, the wife is linking up a woman of lower social class like a gardener's wife for a temporary sexual liaison with her husband. It would not cast the gardener's wife anything but the king husband will have good time as he is very young and sexually active. The lyrics of the song further reveal that the wife is pregnant, which is symbolically explained as eaten pomegranate seeds. In the description of the song, it seems that the wife is substantially influenced by the existing social belief that men have strong sex drive than women and cannot restrain themselves from sex for a long time. The wife knows that her husband is young and would not stop seeing women due to his strong sex drive. Realizing this assumption, she does not want him to have extra-marital relations with a woman who would be equal to her social status as she is well aware of the fact that this would create

domestic and social problems for her. Therefore, she herself takes the responsibility of finding a lower-class women for a temporary sexual liaison. In this way, she may have her surveillance as well as control over the women and also on her husband. She is also aware of the fact that lower social class women would not dare to claim inheritance from the family. Besides, these women would be easy to get away from and would not prove to be a threat to her status and family's position. Therefore, the situation presented in this folksong has a deep history to refer. Detha (2015) says the elite/royal Rajputs used to have many servants/maids for their household service. Sometimes, women of lower social class were sexually molested and exploited by their masters. Many maids in the house of the royal families were forced to have illicit relationships with the elite men of the family.

The hypersexual nature of the Rajput men is also reflected in another song as:

Aj kal key budhey saram neyoon kerdey ree (song.no.71)
Peraan tala qabja button niyoon band kerdey ree

Translation

Now a days, the old men do not have respect for any thing
They wear stylish shoes and do not close their trouser's button tightly

The song narrates that the old Rajput men may still have strong sexual urges as they give out sexual innuendoes by their way of dressing and not buttoning up their trousers properly. Generally, it is considered an extremely inappropriate activity if an old man expresses his sexual desire in such an explicit way. It is socially expected of him to engage himself in religious activities but songs like these when performed on the wedding day, convey subtle messages and ridicules old relatives of the groom for the sake of fun and entertainment.

It would also be appropriate to elucidate here that only folksongs provide an opportunity to women for gossiping and/or joking about men's erotic undertones. Wedding songs have been found to contain innumerable sexual hints to provide entertainment for the audience. Therefore, it could be assumed that sexual joking is connected to wedding rites (Fruzetti, 1982). The wedding folksongs not only make fun of groom's sexual impotency but on the other hand also makes fun of his strong sex drive.

6.2.4.4. Physical and Cultural Traits

Generally, Rajput man is depicted as a strong, healthy man with high sexual drive. For example, as a wedding song narrates:

Topi wale jawan apni topi ko sanbhal (song.no.69)
Terey panthoon¹⁷⁵ pey aaj mori jaan jaey gee
Kankeryan na maar mohey lag jaey gee
Jis ki moti kamar wo tou seh jaey gee
Meri patli kamar hey bal kha jaey gee

Translation

Young man with turban, take care of your turban
I will die for your muscular physique
Don't throw pebbles on me
A fat woman may be able bear this pain
But my smart waist will be twisted with pain

The woman in this song addresses a Rajput man to take care of his turban and muscular physique. The woman also says that he should not throw pebbles to attract her (she knows that he is around and looking for her). She is already infatuated by his well-built personality and handsome features. She also admires herself as being smart and beautiful. The woman also subtly conveys sexual signals, that since she is a delicate woman, so he has to behave like a gentleman while spending the night with her. Throughout the song, the woman/bride admires the man's physical traits (strong muscles, moustache, beady eyes, powerful gait, sexual prowess and big genitals) and cultural traits such as his dressing sense (turban and *dhoti*) and his lifestyle.

In the Rajput culture, as explained by one of the male participants, the most important part of man's attractiveness lies in his physical strength because having a strong physique implies that he will be able to control his land and his possessions including his woman.

¹⁷⁵ Muscles

Recurringly, I heard the word “*mard*”¹⁷⁶ and “*mardangi*”¹⁷⁷ in my routine conversations with Rajput men and women whether talking to them informally or conducting interviews with them. Choudhry (2015:18) defines these words in the *Haryanvi* background of East Punjab (India) and describes that *mard* is associated with power, a man who has status, land and authority and has influence on other people around. While *mardangi* refers to man’s virility, sexual prowess and his ability to procreate.

As discussed earlier, the vigor of Rajput men has been metaphorically related to his strong sexual drive and physical strength. For Rajput men to prove his sexual prowess, he has to procreate at least one son to prove his sexual competence. Such proverb in Bhakkar confirms this argument “*wo marrd bhi ka jo chora na jamein*” (if a man is unable to produce a son, he is not a man at all). Therefore, getting married and producing children (specifically son) is a proof of *mardangi* in local context. Similarly, in a *Butna* song (7) a Rajput man’s walk is admired by the girl, and she refers to his unique walking style as “*manly walk*” (walks like a masculine man). *Kousar* also remarked that only a Rajput man can walk like a true man! It is expected from a Rajput man that he must walk like a warrior who walks with vigor and a vigilant posture.

The song also talks about a few of Rajput men’s physical traits like keeping moustache and wearing a turban that has a special place in Rajput culture and is also indirectly related to men’s maleness and masculinity. Historically, as Das (1976) claims that by the 18th century, keeping mustaches and wearing turbans became a popular practice in subcontinent but wearing a certain type of turbans and having a luxuriant moustache were considered the identity of the Rajasthani lords. These moustaches reflect perceptions of sexuality and bodily physical attributes. A mustached man is considered as sexually potent and soldierly (Das, 1976). A great value and respect was attached to a Rajput's turban, i.e. his head-dress (Todd, 1971). For a Rajput man, his long mustache, high turban, etymology of name, eating habits are all part of displaying his virility (Todd, 1971). Most of the Rajput men I met

¹⁷⁶ Masculine man

¹⁷⁷ Maleness

during the field work had moustaches. The older men wear turban as a daily routine while young men tie turbans on occasion like *Eids* and on weddings.

Todd (1971) mentions that with reference to the historical perspective, the Rajputs had a tradition of eating meat and consuming opium as a part of showing their strength. They also had a custom of offering 'a cup of opium' as a welcoming gesture to their guests (Todd, 1971). As informed by a male participant that the purpose of taking *bira*¹⁷⁸ was believed to strengthen the body and was considered an integral part of the Rajput maleness. Consuming *bira* is also mentioned as a specific Rajput trait in other folksongs, for example in song no. 47, 36 and 68, taking *bira* as a habit like smoking was considered a manly and macho style.

However, Times have changed, and cigarettes have replaced *bira* in urban areas. Presently, smoking cigarettes symbolize maleness among young Rajput men. Though elders forbid the smoking in boys but they themselves smoke, resulting in their advice as not having any effect on the young Rajput men.

6.2.4.5. A Man with Royal Wistfulness

One of the major roles of the Rajput ethos is to inculcate in men a deep love for their history and culture. Through socialization at a very early age, this love is entrenched in the blood of every Rajput man. They take pride in being a Rajput and thus are highly influenced by their cultural norms and traditions. It would not be entirely wrong to assert that the Rajput men are made up of their culture and customs and it would be very hard to distinguish between the two; thus, their masculinity and the concept of maleness is also defined by how well a man fits into the Rajput cultural norms. During interviews and ICSs, I observed that the men took great pleasure in talking about their past. As one of the male participants informed that being born as a Rajput is an honor for him even if he does not do anything else. Owing to their nostalgia with their royal past, in most of the folksongs, the men are addressed as *raja*, *bana* and *banra*, which literally mean king and young prince. In almost all *sehra* songs and the other folksongs sung on wedding day, women address to the groom as *bana* (young prince) or *raja* (king) even at the times, when he has disappointed his wife

¹⁷⁸ A beer made of wheat

(song no.29). In interviews and informal talk with Rajput men, they never began their conversations without narrating their royal past when they were rulers of the Rajput kingdom in India.

Conclusion

Wedding folksongs are a clearly distinct genre in Rajput oral literature. Undoubtedly, these songs are quite significant and an integral part of the Rajput social life, being laden by cultural symbolism. They do not only share a precise picture of the wedding rituals but rather are the only genre of Rajput folksongs that discuss the roles, relationships, traits and interactions of Rajput men and women with such particularized detail that would not have been possible by any other means. Wedding folksongs aim to serve two major purposes: Firstly, they add humor and liveliness to the wedding ambience and secondly, they communicate directly to the new bride about aspects of Rajput social life, which may be concealed otherwise, such as domestic politics, strategies for survival (bargaining and negotiating, forming alliances and exploiting), understanding the characteristics of a Rajput husband and an exhaustive detail of the relationships within the conjugal home. It could be safely assumed that the wedding folksongs are the only genre to talk about the Rajput men with such meticulous detail. The socio-cultural traits, nonchalant nature, resemblance to the ancestors and most importantly the violent persona (that these men are expected to display as public façade) all make up a Rajput man.

To conclude, the wedding folksongs seem to pave the way for the bride to enter a new home with apprehensions (so that she may be cautious) and aspirations (hopes for a brighter future). Moreover, these folksongs, on some level, discuss the crucial importance of women's agency within a patriarchal setting. Since women's agency is seen as a threat to the male domination, power politics and authority; thus, it helps explain why these folksongs are not encouraged (are at the risk of extinction in the name of religion) or acknowledged as a rich cultural heritage in a patriarchal system like that of the Rajputs.

7. THE WEDDING DAY FOLKSONGS (BASED ON CONSANGUINEAL RELATIONS)

7.1. Thematic Classification

This chapter discusses the thematic findings and cultural interpretations of the wedding day folksongs based on blood relations. Wedding day songs not only symbolically mark the right of passage but also depict a very varied range of emotions; both on an individual and collective level. The celebrations being joyous, are at times bittersweet too as the daughter is going to depart from her natal home forever and is leaving for a place where she might have to face even more restrictions and constraints. This chapter also discusses *sehra* songs, sung specifically for the bridegroom. For the present research, ten *sehra* songs, eight from the *dadi* and two from Rajput women, were collected. Traditionally, *sehra* songs are performed by the professional singers during the *sehra bandi* ceremony. Marriage of a son is considered a very auspicious event in the Rajput culture, both for his parents as well as a requirement for the continuity of the family's legacy in form of a grandson. They visualize that one day this boy would get married, will have many sons and their family line will continue. It is informed by the women participants that in some families on the birth of a baby boy, *sehra* songs are also performed; supposedly to attract good fortune and luck for the baby boy. In actuality, however these are 'rites of passage' songs where the status of a man transforms from being unmarried to married.

Table 9. Wedding day *Sehra* songs

Ceremony: Wedding day	Subthemes
For the Bridegroom (<i>Sehra</i> Songs)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Praises and Blessings for the Bridegroom 2. The Royal Reminiscence 3. The Unwonted Demands of the <i>Bana</i>

The major themes in the collected *sehra* songs are discussed as under:

7.1.1. Praises and Blessings for the Bridegroom

The essence of the *sehra* songs consist of the prayers and good wishes for the groom. On the most important event of his life, he is praised by everyone in the family. His mother, father, including the paternal and maternal relatives congratulate his parents on this cheerful occasion. *Sehra bandi* also has some relevant symbolic interpretation and is considered a very fortunate and blessed ceremony. Its celebration reinforces the institution of arranged marriages and assumes that due to the blessing of parents and relatives, the groom will find peace, prosperity, and happiness in his married life. These blessings and praises are supposedly the only way to enjoy a happily married life; as opined, that if a groom fails to get these blessings (if he gets married from his choice and wish), unhappiness will haunt him forever. In the backdrop of the Rajput culture, carrying out of rituals during the wedding ceremony subtly informs the men of various emotions and divinity attached to the occasion. This explains why the *sehra* songs, unlike *butna* and henna songs, begin with the divine blessings for the groom. One of the *sehra* songs narrates the following theme:

Aaengi hooren¹⁷⁹ laengi sehra (song no.32)

Bandhe ga mera dulah raja dekhey ga zamana

Dekho rey logo nazar na alagana

Dulhan hey ye shama rani dulha hey perwana

Translation

Fairy angels will come and bring the sehra

My groom brother will wear the sehra and whole world will watch him

Please people don't put evil eyes on him

Bride is shining like a candle and the groom is circling around her like a fly (with love)

The lyrics of this *sehra* song exaggerate the sacredness of the event as the song articulates that this ritual is performed by the special blessings of divine (Allah) in which angels and fairies have come down from the heavens to participate and bless the groom. The song tells

¹⁷⁹ Fairy angels

that the fairy angles will bring the groom's *sehra* and it would bedazzle everyone. People with evil eyes must stay away as they may cast their evil spells on the groom. Bride is also metaphorically referred to as a candle and the groom to a firefly that is attracted to the light of the candle. The song also tells of many different things that the groom needs for this special day. Each one of these things are being brought by the angels and fairies, and thus contain divine blessings.

The second *sehra* song has similar exaggeration about the groom is described as such:

Michi hey dhooms sehre ki seher main kiss ki shade (song.no. 33)
Bane ke chache se keh do tamay bhateje ki shadi
Unho ne hans ker farmaya khuda ney ye din dikhlayaa

Translation

The whole city is buzzing with excitement about whose wedding it is
Tell the groom's paternal uncle that it is his nephew's wedding
He laughed and said that he thanks the God for this fortunate day

The song's lyrics are along the lines of the similar context (as the one mentioned previously) referring to the significance of the *sehra*. It tells us of a wedding, which is such an elaborate and festive event, that the whole city seems to be buzzing with excitement. Every paternal and maternal relative of the groom is excited and wants to know about the great wedding celebrations. All the relatives of the groom also thank Allah who has given them the opportunity and time to celebrate this happy occasion in their lifetime.

Another one of the *sehra* songs contains a nostalgic theme and is discussed as such:

Mehfil main ja ker un ke aba sey keh dey na (song.no. 34)
Donoon hathoon sey utha layeen sehra
Aaiyee hey ehde-jawani main ghari sehre ki
Dosto tum ko mubarik ho ghari sehre ki

Translation

Tell his father in the party
Please bring the groom's sehra with both hands carefully

In his youthfulness, he is going to be married

Congratulations to all his friends on the auspicious moment of the sehra

To highlight the sacredness of *sehra*, *doomni* asks the different relatives of the groom such as father and uncles to hold the *sehra* very carefully, with both hands, while bringing it for the groom. The phrase with 'both hands' add to strengthen the sacredness of the *sehra*, as it is something very precious and respectable that utmost care should be taken since dropping of the *sehra* from hands is considered a bad omen in the Rajput culture. The most important cultural context this *sehra* song gets from is its Rajput history. In the past, most of the young Rajputs would sacrifice their lives in wars without getting married. Therefore, when a young Rajput would get married after winning a war for his tribe, his youth and marriage would be celebrated. The discreet cultural interpretation of this *sehra* subtly mentions the myth of a groom-warrior, who is referred in the Rajput history as a celebrated warrior who preferred going to the war rather than getting married. However, after he comes back victorious, he gets married. Albeit the time has changed and there are no tribal wars going on between the Rajputs, that myth is still prevalent and celebrated through the *sehra* songs sung for the young Rajput groom. When the *sehra bandi ceremony* is being performed, the *doomni* keeps on calling every paternal and maternal relative of the groom for their participation in the ceremony which is basically giving money as good shagoon (omen) to the *doomni*. *Doomni* gets rewarded for her *sehra* songs performance.

In another *sehra* song, the *doomni* congratulates the entire family and groom on this auspicious day. *Dadi Sughra* performed:

Mere banare rokatabad¹⁸⁰ko sehra mubarik ho (song no.35)

Sohna pehen ke jora banna mehfil main wo aaya

Susraal¹⁸¹ pe jana mubarik ho salamt ho

Hamara ana mubarik ho hamara jana mubarik ho

Translation

Congratulations to my groom (who belongs to rokatabad) on this sehra day

¹⁸⁰ Maybe the name of a place but *dadi* was unsure or it could also be an imagined place to rhyme with the song.

¹⁸¹ Groom in-law's

*The groom dressed up in the best suit has come to the party
Congratulations to the groom as he going to his in-law's
Congratulations to us for coming here and everybody who has joined this party*

The *doomni* congratulates the groom's natal and well as conjugal relatives for witnessing and participating in the function of *sehra bandi*. Like the previous *sehra* song, this song also congratulates everybody who has joined in the celebrations of the day. The lyrics of the song are repeated multiple times as the *doomni* wishes to get more *vael*¹⁸² from the relatives and guests present at the *sehra* party.

Another *sehra* song talks about the groom, who is a spoiled darling of his parents and family. The *sehra* song highlights the love of his paternal and maternal relatives for him.

Amman ke tum ladley rey haryala banra (song.no. 36)
Baba jud charhaye ga barat teri heryala banra

Translation

*You are the darling of your mother, dear groom
Your father will take your barat, o fortunate groom*

This song reveals the love of the paternal and maternal relatives for the groom. The song refers to the groom as the darling of the entire family. The song further narrates that everybody will go with him for his *barat* due to their love for him. The song also keeps reminding the groom of how fortunate he is to have everyone joining and coming together to celebrate his special day. This reminder could serve as the means to reinforce the idea of an arranged marriage as the best possible way to get married.

In *sehra* song (37), mentioned below, the lyrics of the song praise the groom for his personal qualities as he is considered the most desirable bachelor. The song narrates:

Betho betho mora laal bana ki yoon sermaya rey (song.no.37)
Kisi ameer ki bati kisi raees ki beti

¹⁸² Reward for singing the *sehra* songs

Chamak giya naak ka moti chilek gaye cheelki dhoti¹⁸³

Musko musko morey laal bana mora kiyoon sermaya rey

Translation

Stay seated everyone, my precious groom is a shy young man

Any rich man or wealthy man's daughter (may aspire for him)

The shine of a nose-pin (of bride) and the movement of silky dhota (of groom) can attract each other

Smile, smile my precious groom, why are you being shy?

The song boasts off the groom's desirable personality and traits and point out that every rich and wealthy man's daughter would like to marry him. The song addresses the bride as being very lucky to have found a husband who is one in a million. Doomni also address the relatives that since the groom does not like frenzied or chaotic gatherings, everyone must stay seated (a hint towards the groom's attitude). The song also conveys a symbolic sexual message to both the groom and the bride. The beauty of the bride enhanced by her intricate jewelry items and the sexual prowess of the groom is described indirectly through the song as stated that the beauty of the bride and her nose pin's sparkle will not fail to attract the groom. The movement of the groom's *dhota*¹⁸⁴, is also mentioned as a suggestive way to disclose sexual intimacy.

The below mentioned *sehra* song is unique in respect that it talks about the sentiments of the bride. It goes like:

To toon bana rey apney dada ji ka piyara

(song.no. 38)

Banre main dadi ki piyari

Translation

Groom prince, you are the darling of your paternal grandfather

I am the darling of my paternal grandmother

¹⁸³ Unstitched cloth used as a covering for the lower part of the body. A traditional wear in rural areas of Pakistan.

¹⁸⁴ Unstitched piece of cloth which men wrap around their back and it hangs down covering their legs. It is traditional dress usually worn in rural areas and specially on functions such as wedding

The bride conveys to the groom that by no means she is less loved by her family. If the groom claims to be the darling of his grandfather, he must also keep this in mind that the bride too is the darling of her paternal grandmother. The song also discloses some romantic gestures pointed towards the groom from the bride as she calls him her 'pink rose' and also praises his physique. She points out that pure milk and yogurt has nourished him well and subtly wishes that he will be good in intimate relationship with her. She also boasts of her own beauty and says that she too is like a dry fruit: sweet, desirable and an active person for intimate relation.

To conclude, the sehra songs mentioned above began with the divine blessings for the groom and ended with praises and admirations about his physiques and sexual prowess. Furthermore, these songs indicate that sexual relations can only be allowed when they are socially sanctioned, and thus can be expressed through the folksongs without any offense to the Rajput families¹⁸⁵.

7.1.2. The Royal Reminiscence

In Rajput wedding songs, the bridegroom is addressed as *bana* and the bride as *bani* (songs 3, 6, 9, 11, 12 and many more). The word *bana* means a 'prince' or a 'young bridegroom'. Similarly, the bride is addressed as '*bani*' which means a 'young bride' or a 'young princess'. The word '*bana*' seems to be the title of a past romantic hero and conveys the hidden sexual orientation of the groom within the Rajput context (Harlan, 1992). Rajputs have a royal history, which shows itself in many aspects of their social lives. Rajput men and women are addressed with reference to their royal past in the folksongs. In almost every wedding folksong, the bride and groom are addressed as *bani* and *bana*. In some of the songs the variants of these titles are also used such as *banno*, *benri* (for bride) and *benra* (groom).

The word *bana* has a deep historical connection. Rajputs take great pride in being warriors. Traditionally, the Rajput groom used to take his sword as a part of his wedding dress in *barat*. But gradually this tradition vanished due to the contemporary lifestyle and

¹⁸⁵ Sadiqaan Bibi's comments.

disappearance of Rajput empires. However, some Rajputs families still wish to value this custom and therefore in *sehra* songs such tradition is reflected¹⁸⁶. Presently, no family in Bhakkar follows the sword tradition in *barat* but the reference of *bana*, the groom-warrior still persists that is enough to highlight the deep connection that these people share with their royal history.

Another *sehra* song highlights a Rajput tradition as:

Bana jeet laya ji susraal gulyaan

(song.no.39)

Bani teri chonki pey lug rahi anar kalyaan

Translation

Groom has conquered his in-law's places (streets)

Bride, your chair will soon be full of pomegranate buds

This *sehra* song articulates that the groom has won his in-law's house (streets) along with the bride, referring to the fact that the groom has won over the hearts of the bride and her family and is returning victorious in his conquest as he takes the bride away with him. Now, the *choki* of the bride on which she sits, will soon be full of pomegranate buds. The cultural interpretation of the song brings out many symbolic manifestations associated with the Rajputs. Reference to the red pomegranates buds (*anar kalyaan*) in the song symbolizes the fertility of the bride and groom. The absence of the Rajput women in *barat* is also a symbolic rite that can be associated with Rajputs army marching towards the battlefield. Winning the bride from her home connotes the warrior nature of the Rajputs.

7.1.3. The Unwonted Demands of *Bana*

Bana, in the Rajput folksongs also has another side to his warrior like characteristics. More often than not, he behaves like a *spoiled, rotten brat* who is the darling of his parents and the relatives alike with everyone trying to make him happy on his wedding day. Such sentiments have been reflected in this folksong as *doomni* performs the song on *sehra bandi* ritual:

¹⁸⁶ Almost all the male interviewees talked about the Rajput empires and royal courts.

Bana kawe munno chonki pasand nahe

(song.no. 40)

Bhabi tou leloon majedaar

Bana mera hesda ayaa

Translation

The groom says that he does not like the choki

He mischievously wishes to take the sister-in-law of the bride (as she is sexy)

He comes happily here (bride's home)

The song reveals that the groom is fully aware of belonging to a high social status and because of this he has turned into an obnoxious spoiled man. Also, his wedding has become the talk of the town and is being broadcasted on television and radio. He mocks his in-law's relationships (since in most of the folksongs the bride's side does not let go of any chance to humiliate the groom's family) and wishes to have a tabooed relations with the bride's sister and sister-in-law. The song portrays the groom as being critical and someone who is not so easily pleased. He also criticizes his *choki* (traditional decorated chair) and mischievously demands the bride's women relatives as wedding gifts, and says after his demands are fulfilled, he will be happy. Throughout the song, the groom repeatedly demands women relatives of the bride as a gift to his marriage; otherwise, he is not happy at this union. The song subtly expresses the hyperactive sexual demands of the groom by embarrassing the bride's family and taunting the bride that she will 'never be enough'.

Some symbolic manifestations are also referred to in the folksong such as: An English musical band on the wedding indicates that the groom belongs to a rich family. The women interviewees disclosed while interpreting the folksong, that it is merely a distortion of reality that the Rajput groom is sexually hyperactive and cannot be satisfied with one woman. This explicit expression of the groom is only voiced and tolerated through the folksongs for the sake of fun and entertainment.

In another *sehra* song, the groom acts like a naughty youngster who makes unreasonable demands from his parent's on his wedding day. The song describes a hypothetical scene when the *barat* is ready for departure and the groom puts forward his demands from his family as reflected in the song below:

Bana khara ree sarak pey rumaal mangey

(song.no. 41)

Aapney aba sey do do hazar mangey

Amman rani ka sara singhaar mangey

Translation

The young groom is on the road (ready for the barat) asking for a handkerchief

He is demanding two thousand rupees from his father

He is demanding the whole make-up box from her mother

The song depicts a scene in which the groom is standing on the road and demands two thousand rupees (Pakistani currency) and the beauty box from his mother for his bride. In this song, he repeatedly demands money for the male relatives and the beauty box from his female relatives for his bride. The interpretation of the song in Rajput cultural context tells about the joint family system which enforces the married men to live with their parents. Parents also like to enjoy authority over their sons until they get married. Father as an authoritative and financial head of the family is responsible for and manages the economic matters together with their sons. In traditional Rajput culture, the unmarried son usually gives his earnings to his parents. When he gets married his parents spend money on his marriage. In this *sehra* song, the groom is portrayed as a naughty boy who wishes to have money and trivial things from his parents. The request for money from a son to his father is a sign of their good relationship and also an expression of love from his father when he gives the money to him. *Dadi* expressed:

On wedding day, the father gives him money without asking the purpose; otherwise, the Rajput father-son relationship is formal and reserved. Wedding day is one of those days when his parents would bring anything to make him happy.

The song narrates a situation where the bridegroom is ready to lead his barat procession to the bride's home. He demands the traditional handkerchief and naughtily demands money from his male kins and makeup boxes from his female relatives. The song reinforces the stereotypical roles of men and women where men possess money and women spend their time in beautifying themselves with makeup. Viewing the situation from another perspective, it may also seem like the groom is dependent on his relatives for all his

expenditures as he belongs to the joint family system. Gold (1991:128) mentions a similar Rajput folksong which was recorded in 1980s in India and reflected the same theme (with minor changes in the lyrics) In both the folksongs, the bridegroom demands many other items like money, gifts, jewelry etc. from his women relatives before the departure of *barat*.

7.1.4. Love for the Natal Home

The love of the natal home is a significant, recurring theme in Rajput folksongs' literature, since women always desire to maintain close ties to their natal homes (Raheja and Gold, 1994, 1997). Jacobson (1975) mentions that some of the women's songs express the social and emotional distance (tension) not only between woman and man but also among their natal and conjugal relatives (P: 46). Among the Rajputs, in the past times, women were hardly allowed to visit their natal home at their own will. Frequent visits to their natal homes were greatly discouraged by the in-laws. At times, their parents would also enforce them to spend more time in their conjugal home so that they may become used to the traditions and norms of their in-laws. This would give them the space needed to help them adjust in their homes. However, Rajput women under study, presented different explanations for this practice. *Safia Bibi* told me:

It is essential for a new bride to spend maximum time in her susral¹⁸⁷. Otherwise, she would not be able to make her space in her conjugal home. If she will think about her natal home, she will not adapt her in-laws' values which will not be good for her married life.

In olden times, traditionally, the Rajput girls were married to far away villages, however exogamy was never an option. Raheja and Gold (1994) comment that the men of the natal family also keep a distance from her conjugal home. In this way, the relatives of the natal home cannot interfere in disputes that may arise at her in-laws' family. Moreover, by doing this, her natal men may not become a threat for the conjugal relatives (P: 106).

¹⁸⁷ In-laws

A point of notable mention here is that the Rajput women, despite their strong bonding with brothers and other members of the natal kin, tend to mask the details of their ill-treatment at the hands of their conjugal relatives. This could be attributed to two major reasons: Partly as a result of threat and fear that they perceive and partly because they do not want to make the natal relatives anxious or worried. This could also help explain the reason for domestic politics, since Rajput women rarely receive or rely on any outside support, they decide to take the matters into their own hands to survive the hostile environment in the conjugal home. This is done by establishing boundaries through verbal fights, forming alliances and exploiting relation with husband/brother/son or brother-inlaw to get the maximum benefits. Moreover, folksongs may be the only medium of expression that open the window into the life of a conjugal home.

The other cultural wisdom as narrated by the women participants is a custom in which bride's natal relatives avoid frequent visits to her conjugal home. She may go to attend functions if allowed by her in-laws for limited days. Her brother or any other male relative would take her to her natal home. Therefore, the new bride has to go through a long period of isolation from her natal home and relatives. It was also culturally discouraged that parents visit their daughter in her conjugal home. Usually, men like brothers or nephews visit their sisters or aunts in their conjugal home after getting an invitation from her (Raheja and Gold, 1994).

Traditionally, after the marriage of sister, brothers also do not visit their sister's house frequently. The occasional visits to the sister may also have economic reasons. Whenever a brother pays visit to his sister's home, he is culturally obliged to offer many gifts like clothes, sweets and money to his sister and her conjugal family. Sometimes he has to fulfill the sister's demands which are indirectly imposed on her by her in-laws. Hence, visit to a daughter's home may cost her parents economically, a reasonable amount of money in terms of gifts and travel expenditures. *Sidiqaan Bibi* commented:

Fifty years back, when I got married, I did not meet my parents for seven years. It was really hard for me. However, after one year of my marriage, my brother came to see me and brought lots of gifts for my in-laws and me. I did not like it as he had

to spend so much money on my in-laws who do not treat me well. I did not tell my brother about my maltreatment at the in-laws. I did not want to make my parents unhappy. I used to miss.... my natal home (... tears in eyes) so much.

The longing for her maternal and paternal relatives is evident in another folksong which expresses is as such:

Daen chali daen chali devarani noo jarda daen chali (song.no. 64)

Na liya na liya devarani ne jarda na liya

Na jayo na jayo devarani dey wehrey na jayo

Translation

I am going to give sweet rice to sister-in-law (husband's elder brother's wife)

My sister-in-law did not take the sweet rice

Don't go to the sister-in-law's home (again)

The song illustrates a situation where the bride cooks sweet rice and wishes to give it to her in-laws and the maternal grandmother. The song addresses all the conjugal women from her in-law's family but except for her grandmother, nobody accepts her sweet rice. So, she is advised by some one that she should not go to those women relatives again but to visit her grandmother who accepted the sweet rice.

The symbolic interpretation of the song talks about the difference in relationships between brides' in-laws and natal relatives, the reason why she misses longs to meet her natal relatives. Traditionally, the bride cooks sweet rice before she begins her routine cooking in her conjugal home. It is taken as a good omen for her married life. She cooks sweet rice and if her in-laws like the dish, she is passed as a good cook, otherwise she is mocked for her cooking skills in the family. But as reflected through the folksong nobody from her inlaws liked her sweet rice and returned it back. This indicates that the estranged relations between the bride and conjugal women begin as early as the bride sets foot in the house.

The interpretation of the bride cooking sweet rice may be explained in two ways: Firstly, she cooks sweet rice as she wishes to give the dish to her grandmother who may loves to eat them. Secondly, when she takes her cooked rice to her grandmother's house, she may

also meet her natal relatives there. In other words, she is desperate to meet her natal relatives and sweet rice is merely a pretext for her visit¹⁸⁸.

In the past, the scarcity of means of communication and transportation was another major issue. The women's ability to write letters was also limited. The unkind treatment from the in-laws would make them even more desperate for their natal homes. Unintentionally, they would wait for their natal relatives or any news from them. All these factors together added to their isolation from their natal homes and compounded their misery.

However, times have change and in Bhakkar women are not isolated as they used to be in the past. They have access to cell phones and better ways of transportations that have made it easier for them to meet and communicate with their parents and other relatives. However, the Rajput traditions and norms still exist and are practiced. Frequent visits to natal home are still discouraged as used to be in the past and a brother's visit to his sister's home still may costs him a lot. The material gifts may have transformed but expectations of the in-laws from the bride's natal home have remained the same or maybe even more. The tough life which the bride faces at her in-law's home does not let her forget her comparatively easy life in her natal home. Therefore, her natal home, her parents and even some of the relatives always remains in the daughter's mind and she never forgets them. Table 10. Wedding day songs (related to natal kins)

Ceremony: Wedding Day	Subthemes
Love for the Natal Home	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mother-Daughter Relationship 2. Father-Daughter Relationship 3. Brother-Sister Relationship 4. Relation of Bride with the Natal Men

7.1.4.1. Mother-Daughter Relationship

There are two folksongs that portray mother-daughter relationship in the backdrop of the Rajput culture. The content and subject matter of both the songs is diverse and varied.

¹⁸⁸ Gist of Women participants' explanations

The first song is a dialogue between a mother and a son about her daughter/his sister. The song is as under:

Maa: Mera tikka ley jawa behen ke bhat (song.no.65)

Beta: Main kesey jaoon neuda nahin mery bhat

Maa: Mera kanta ley jawa behen ke bhat

Beta: Main kesey jaoon neuda nahin mery bhat

Translation

Mother: Take my tikka and go to your sister's home

Son: How can I go there? I don't have any invitation (from her)

Mother: Take my earrings and go to your sister's home

Son: How can I go there? I don't have any invitation (from her)

This folksong portrays a mother's apprehensions for her daughter. She is anxious and worried and wants to know more about her daughter's situations in her conjugal home. She thinks of a reason to visit her and asks her son to go to her sister's home and give her some of the mother's jewelry items. The brother does not want to visit her sister without an invitation from her as it is customary in Rajput culture. However, her mother keeps on insisting that her son must visit her sister's home and give her the jewelry. Here, the reason for visiting the daughter is not merely to present her with jewelry but rather has a much deeper meaning. The mother is apprehensive and wants to know how her daughter is coping up in her new home. To do so, she insists her son to go and pay her a visit as an excuse to present her with the jewelry so that she might hear about her condition. As elaborated by the women participants, the mother in the song wants to know about her daughter's life, her health and well-being in her conjugal home. Sending jewelry as a gift for her is merely a pretext for visit.

Traditionally in Rajputs, as discussed earlier, the natal relatives do not frequently visit their daughter. It is also considered inappropriate when a brother or parents visit their daughter without an invitation. If a brother goes without an invitation or a gift to his sister's conjugal home, he is mocked by her in-laws and is made to realize that he is an unwelcome guest. The second folksong conveys a different picture of mother-daughter relationship. The song articulates:

Meree maa sabar parey ga ree

(song.no.66)

Aree muryo tera ladla jawaey

Translation

My mother! my patience will curse you

May your spoiled son-in-law die

In this couplet of song, the daughter complains to her mother about her husband's betrayal and curses him. She protests about his extra marital affair with another woman whose picture he carries along with him and has also left the home for her. The daughter complains about her husband and criticizes her parents' choice of spouse for her. She wants her mother to know and acknowledge the fact that she made a wrong choice by selecting a dishonest husband and is therefore responsible for her unhappy married life. This song also highlights the informal relationship between mother and daughter within a Rajput household, since the daughter will dare not say anything to her father. However, this song talks about a reverse reality as most of the daughters do not disobey or criticize their parent's selection. If a daughter is not happy with her husband, she surrenders to it and considers it as a will of God. Though small arguments as complains may be possible but afflicting with parents on spouse selection is generally improbable within the backdrop of the Rajput culture. There are some proverbs in Rajput culture which give solace to the daughter if she is in trouble with their husband like '*maa baba taan acha hee sochey ... per methey likha hee agey awa hey*' means parents always look good for her daughter, but whatever is in her fate, she has to face it. Another famous proverb shows uncertainty in married life as '*shadi tou koowan main lagaee chalaang hovey hey koe tubey aur koe tarey*' 'marriage is like jump into a well, some people may survive (by swimming) while others do not.

However, the daughter portrayed in this song is bold and ready to protest against the custom of arranged marriages. Within the culture of arranged marriages, the girls and boys do not know each other, and parents are responsible for selecting. Mothers may evaluate the options but the father has the final decision power. *Akhtar Bibi* commented on this issue as:

Parents always make the best choices for their children, but sometimes unfortunate mismatch happens. However, if a husband is caught in infidelity he is punished by

his relatives and girl's relatives. He is not allowed to leave his wife and they both continue to live together.

Though father has the final say about the marriage proposal for her daughter yet usually the mother has to listen to the complaints of her son-in-law from her daughter. This could be attributed to their informal relation.

7.1.5. Father-Daughter Relationship

In a father-daughter relationship, the daughter does not merely expect his love and affection but also expensive items of her choice for her marriage as the song narrates:

Baba esa bar dhondio jis ki kothee khotla ho¹⁸⁹ (song.no. 67)
Tankhawa panch sou ho
Gharri time wali ho
Meri ronaq honaq laado kheley gitiyaan¹⁹⁰

Translation

Father! look for a spouse (for me) who has a big house
Earns five hundred rupees
Wears a good wristwatch
(so) my young, carefree darling daughter can play with pebbles

The song describes the anxieties of a young daughter whose father is trying to find a suitable match for her. She also tries to influence him by articulating her expectations. She wants her father to find a rich husband for her so that he may not go to another city for earning. He must also have a huge house and an expensive wristwatch (the factors which determine a good lifestyle). In reality however, it is not only hard but nearly impossible for a daughter to express her opinions related to her future husband but through song, she may be able to communicate them.

¹⁸⁹ The same folksong was recorded for my M. Phil research from Wahando-Gujranwala.

¹⁹⁰ A popular game which is played with pebbles in rural areas. Usually, girls play it inside the homes in rural areas.

The song also identifies a significant social tradition of early marriage among the Rajputs. It could be interpreted since the girl who is getting married is portrayed as young and naive, who still likes to play with pebbles¹⁹¹. However, the element of paradox is quite visible. In one line of the song, the girl is referred to as *ronaq jhonaq*¹⁹² whereas in the very next line, she seems to be mature enough to know what she wants of her life as she demands an economically secure life and a stylish husband.

7.1.6. Brother-Sister Relationship

The brother-sister songs are called *bhat* songs as they talk about brother- sister relations. *Dadi* performed this song as:

Tou mera bun ja rey bira rey, meree maa ka rey jaya (song. 68)
Neuta doonge rey bira bhayoony ki joriyaan
Meri maa key jaye rey

Translation

You are my darling brother, o son of my mother
I will invite my twin brothers too O
my brother! son of my mother

The song expresses the sentiments of a sister who is waiting for her brother to visit her on the occasion of her daughter/son's wedding. She anticipates that he will bring a huge amount of money (as per the societal expectation) and daily utility items such as rice, *ghee* (cooking oil), clothes, utensils and shawls for her and her in-laws.

Regardless of a woman's inferior status in the conjugal home, she always values and misses her natal family. Many folksongs express her feeling of love and wait for her brother (Chaudhary, 2018). The mentioned song also hints at such an expression as she says that she will give her own things with closed hand (in small quantity and without anyone knowing) but will take anything with open hand (in large amount) and she will show off whatever she will get from her brother. She also brags about her natal relatives, which

¹⁹¹ Playing with pebble is a popular rural game *geetey*, which young girls used to play in their free time.

¹⁹² A carefree young girl who is not yet ready to take household responsibilities.

might put her brother under huge social pressure. Therefore, he has to provide maximum financial support on her children's marriages. If a brother or natal home relatives are unable to fulfill their social obligations, their daughter may be cursed by her in-laws and the social norms and traditions of her natal family will be questioned.

Apart from the love-bond they share, brother also has serious social obligations towards her sister, as discussed in many of the Rajput folksongs. For example, in a *Henna* song (9) and *bhat* song (64 and 67) brother-sister love is much more intense than that of a husband wife. The strong relation between sister and brother would begin before they get married and would share the same house. An unmarried sister serves his brother with food, washes and irons his clothes, does numerous other daily chores and takes care of her brother's needs. Traditionally, in the Rajput culture, the role of brother and sister takes a new form and is reversed once the sister gets married. Now it is time for her brother to repay her by taking care of her. He now has to fulfill many social and traditional obligations towards her sister. At any event, whether auspicious or ill-fated, it is the brother's obligation to support his sister both monetary as well as emotionally. A sister also develops high expectations from her brother. It could be because of her in-laws who keep her under constant pressure by demanding monetary items from her brother. Another one of the most important reasons for this obligation is primarily traditional. Rajput woman relinquishes her right of inheritance to her brothers thus, the brothers become obliged to fulfill the demands of their sisters.

At the wedding of his sister's children as a *mama* (maternal uncle) the brother is obliged to give a considerable amount of money and gifts to her nieces and nephews. Same goes for the maternal uncle of the groom, who brings *sehra* and a wedding dress for him. On his niece's marriage, he brings jewelry and wedding dress for his niece and a special shawl for his sister. Traditionally, in Rajput families, on different occasions like *Eids*, marriage of children or funerals, brothers or parents of the daughter-in-law are expected to spend money and bring items for their daughter as well as her in-laws as a social obligation. I was informed by the participants that the sister also boasts off her brother's wealth so that she may be treated well by her in-laws. The conjugal family also reckons that the natal family

of the girl must continue with their social obligation of giving their daughter monetary support. On the contrary, taking gifts from sisters is socially discouraged in Rajputs.

Usually, brothers avoid eating food or staying in his sister's home. If a sister gives something to her brother or for other natal relatives, she keeps it a secret from the in-laws so that they might not object.

7.1.7. Relation of Bride with the Natal Men

Natal family men in their relationship with brides are portrayed differently. The Rajput men, who are portrayed as hot-tempered and cruel as conjugal men, become loving and affectionate with her daughter in the natal home. For instance, the role of father, brother, maternal and paternal grandfather and uncles are portrayed as symbols of affection for her. Sometimes, they love her to an extent of spoiling her (songs 5, 10, 11, 31, 37, 62 and 64). Some participants say that it is because a girl (daughter) lives at her natal home for some years and then goes to her conjugal home forever, where her life will be filled with responsibilities and might not be as easy, thus her natal relatives try to give her as much affection as possible. The other reason may be that the girl herself expects care and love from her male relatives and expresses her wish to be loved by them. The third motive may be that she wants to impress her in-laws by showing them the love and care she receives from her relatives, so as a result, she may get the same care from her in-laws too.

Miscellaneous themes

Table 11. Miscellaneous themes in Wedding songs

Ceremony: Wedding day	Miscellaneous themes
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Grandmother as an Untrustworthy Kin <li>2. Boasting off Grandfather's Wealth <li>3. Envy for Non-Rajput Girls

7.1.8. Grandmother as an Untrustworthy Kin

In another folksong, women are portrayed as misers who do not want to spend their money on girls while the Rajput men are portrayed as being generous who wishes to spend money for his granddaughter. The song says:

Tera dada dewy daan (song.no.56)

dadi mana rey kara

Chal chup ho terya naar¹⁹³ laado

do din ki

Tera maroon dalla ud jaye ye chirya jaambe¹⁹⁴ki

Translation

Your grandfather is ready to marry you, but your grandmother doesn't want to see you off

O shrewd woman keep quiet, my darling is here for a couple of days

If you throw a small piece (towards her) this sparrow from jaambe will fly away

The song unveils a situation where a grandfather wants to marry off her granddaughter and wishes to spend his money on her wedding. He wants it to be a lavish, elaborate event so that everyone must know about it. However, his wife (grandmother) forbids him to spend extravagantly. The grandfather snubs and warns his wife (grandmother) by calling her a 'shrewd woman' and that he may hit her with a stone if she dares to say anything bad about her granddaughter as she is a guest in this house and will soon fly away (will get married).

The cultural interpretation of the song portrays Rajput women as a group of misers who stop their men from spend money on functions such as the wedding of a granddaughter. The Rajput women understudy explained that men are the spender and earners of money however Rajput men are showoffs and notorious for their spendthrift attitude. Spending extravagantly on wedding is the best way for the Rajput men to bragging about their money.

¹⁹³ Means woman in Hindi language

¹⁹⁴ Jamba is a village situated in Fatehpur Pundri tehsil of Kaithal district in Hariyana. Census 2011 Data.

This folksong also has some culturally figurative symbols which need to be interpreted for better understanding of the song such as, the name of the bird sparrow¹⁹⁵ is used to refer to unmarried girls who may leave their nests (natal homes) after sometime as they get married and go to their conjugal homes. Same metaphor is used for unmarried girls in a popular Punjabi folksong song “*sada chiryaan da chanba e babul aassan ud jana*” (father, we are a flock of sparrows and will fly away soon). The song reinforces the image of girls, who are considered a temporary resident in their own natal homes and after some time (when reach the marriageable age) go to their conjugal home. Traditionally in Rajputs, spending money on unmarried girl is discouraged however once she is going to leave her natal home forever, the males of the family show her their love by spending extravagant amount of money on her wedding. This might serve another purpose too (as mentioned above), Rajput men do not pass a chance to show-off their wealth and status.

The song mentioned below portrays women as unreliable individual and tells:

Dulhan: *Tum kis sang beyawan aye rey bana* (song.no. 59)

Dulha: *Main dada sang beyawan aya ree bani*

Teri dadi ka etabaar muney thora ree bani

Dulhan: *Tum jaldi biyah ker chalo rey bana*

Translation

Bride: *With whom did you come here? (for getting married to me?)*

Groom: *I came with my paternal grandfather for marrying you*

I do not trust your paternal grandmother

Bride: *Hurry up, marry me and take me with you*

The song is a dialogue between a bride and a groom and narrates that the bride questions the groom about who he has come with to get married to her. The groom responds that he came with his grandfather and few close male relatives to marry her. He also says that he does not trust her grandmother as she may renege on her promise of marrying her off to the groom. The bride, well aware of her grandmother’s intentions, does not discard the groom’s

¹⁹⁵ Kiran Narayan (1986) in her article Birds on a Branch: Girlfriends and Wedding Songs in Kangra. *Ethos*, 14(1), 47-75 where unmarried girls are referred as sparrows by the Kangra people (UP, India)

opinion but rather asks him to perform the rituals quickly so they can leave. This song reinforces the stereotypical image of Rajput women who are depicted as unreliable individuals and as renegers who do not have much regard for their promises. The folksong strengthens the view that women may not be trusted as they can break their promise at any time however men are trustworthy and know how to keep their word.

7.1.9. Boasting off Grandfather's Wealth

The song expresses the bride's sentiments for her natal relatives as such:

Merey dada ji ki unchi nechi periyaan

(song.no. 62)

Dadi bura na bol

Lado do din ki pavaneen,

Laado esee rahi jeseey morni

Laado ud gaey pankh lawa laado

do din ki pavaneen

Translation

My grandfather home has many stairs

Grandmother doesn't say harsh words (to her)

Darling (girl) is here for a couple of days

She lives with us like peahen

She will fly away (soon)

She is here (with us) for few days

The bride boasts off her grandfather's multi-story house which has many stairs. Her grandfather also asks her grandmother to speak politely with her as she is a guest in her home. She is the darling of the house and very soon will go away like a bird from here to her conjugal home.

The interpretation of the song displays a traditional Rajput home where mother, elder sisters and other female relatives are responsible for the training of young girls for conjugal home. All the female relatives and specially mothers are responsible for the girl's training

regarding the household work, submissiveness, obedience, and patience towards her in-laws. As part of the training, the elder women of the family sometimes treat her harshly on purpose so that she may be able to tolerate her in laws who may not be like her parents.

In another folksong, the bride talks about her affluent paternal relatives and boasts off their rich lifestyle. The song says:

Mere dada ji ney bagh lagwaye rassiya (song.no.63)

Iss main hari hari mong urad rssiya

Iss main biech rahi seij golabi takia

Iss main sou rahi hoor sajila rissiaya

Translation

My grandfather planted a garden my dear lover

He sowed lentils there my dear lover

There (in the garden) was a decorated bed with pink pillow

A fairy is sleeping in that (bed) my dear lover

The similar theme is expressed here with slightly different lyrics. Again, the bride wants to impress her in-laws with her rich family background so that they might not treat her badly. She says that her grandfather has gardens and crop fields where they grow many edible items. Besides, she talks about her romantic fantasies that in the garden she sleeps on a decorated bed with a pink pillow. She sleeps like a beautiful fairy and waits for her lover. The song also illustrates her emotions about her desire for a luxurious life with her lover. Thus, folksongs provide the opportunity to women through which they imagine an altered social reality for their amusement.

7.1.10. Envy for Non-Rajput Girls

This folksong again narrates a story about a girl who belongs to a Gujjar tribe¹⁹⁶ which is a non-Rajput tribe. The folksong sings:

¹⁹⁶ Gujjar is an ethnic nomadic group in India Pakistan. The girl belongs to the Gujjar tribe and is thus called Gujjri.

Jub ree wo gujjri baghoon rey aaye

(song. no.57)

Baghoon shor machaya gujjri ney

Balum liya li looka gujri ney

Translation

When gujjri came to the gardens

She made noise in the garden (out of joy)

Gujjri hid her lover

The song utters about a girl-Gujjri who moves freely among the wells, roads, and palaces with her lover in a joyful mood. Nobody from her family stops her and she happily spends time with her lover. The Rajput girl is jealous of her as Gujjri hides her lover from the rest of the girls so that they might not snatch him from her. The Rajput girl is envious of Gujjri who is having a good time with her lover. Her envy also implies that she wants to enjoy the same freedom that Gujjri does, as she has the same romantic desires. The song expresses the sentiments of an unhappy Rajput girl who thinks of herself as someone whose freedom outside home is compromised owing to her family honor and traditions.

Conclusion

The wedding songs mentioned in the chapter discuss the portrayal of Rajput man as a groom. The metaphor of a young groom prince with a royal ancestry is reflected in almost all *sehra* songs. His physical strength co-relates to his social character as a Rajput. He is depicted as a physically strong man with broad shoulders, manly walk, red lips and prominent eyes (song. 68). This prototype Rajput man is fanaticized by Rajput women, if not as a husband, then as a lover. Not only this, but these songs also state the sacredness of the most important event that marks the rite of passage for Rajput men i.e. *Sehra*.

Besides discussing the relations of groom with his family members, these wedding songs also provide comprehensive details regarding the relationship of the bride with her natal family. It might not go well with the already perceived image of the Rajput society, but the truth is that girls when they are about to get married, experience the most honest and

purest form of love and affection from the male family members (such as father, brother, grandfather etc.) which might help explain her yearning and longing to visit her natal relatives, long after she has left the home.

However, a notable point of discussion here is the discernible thinking pattern of the Rajput men and women. It has been observed and learnt that men take pride in being Rajputs and derive their gratification from knowing they are part of the warrior-clans, however the women, presumably because of the strict cultural norms, patriarchal traditions, and limited freedom, wish to be anyone but Rajputs. This theme has also been portrayed in multiple folksongs where the Rajput women envy others (especially girls belonging to lower castes and social class) and desire to be in their place.

Paradoxically, the Rajput wedding events and celebrations are bittersweet. The sorrows and apprehensions, shrouded by joy and jubilation can be fully experienced through these folksongs as the bride and groom get ready to start their new life together. It would be an understatement to presume that the Rajput folksongs paint a picture of the Rajput's social life, rather these folksongs can be seen at the core of establishing institutions and governing that social life.

8. JACHCHA SONGS / SOHAR SONGS

The present chapter analyzes the folksongs performed on the birth of a baby boy. I collected two *jachcha* (birth) folksongs and one *lori*¹⁹⁷. The *jachcha /sohar* songs were recorded by *dadi Sughra* and the *lori* was recorded by a local Rajput woman. An interesting observation here was that all of the three folksongs are performed on/for the baby boy but not for the baby girl. The folksongs also have commentaries along with the socio-cultural rituals related to them.

8.1. The Socio-Cultural Context

Similar to many other cultures, the birth of a baby is a time of great joy and celebrations for the Rajputs; however, the Rajputs differ from other cultures mainly due to their strong penchant for male child. A plethora of evidence suggests that the birth of a male child is considered the biggest achievement of a woman and an occasion worthy enough to be celebrated. On the other hand, a female baby however is considered a liability, in contrast to the male child who is believed to be a blessing.

Singhji (1993) notes that historically there is no conclusive statement about the female infanticide among Rajputs. However, the historical evidence suggests that in *Susrashtra* and *Kutch* areas, female infanticide was confined to *Jedejas Rajputs*. Due to this fact, it is very reasonable to assert that female infanticide was practiced among a few Rajput clans living in Rajasthan at the time.

Moreover, Vishwanth (1998) quotes Wilson (1855), who claims that female infanticide was a common practice among many clans of Rajput like *Jadeja, Jhala, Gohil, Parmar, Rajkumar* with some other castes such as *Jats, Ahirs, Lewa, Patidars* and *Kanbis* castes of North and West India. Todd (1971) also claims that female infanticide was not only practiced among the Rajputs, but also among the infamous *Chauhans (Jats)*. Further, the

¹⁹⁷ Lullaby

Rajputs living in Bhakkar informed that they had never heard of their ancestors engaging in female infanticide, yet the birth of a girl is not celebrated. *Kousar* expressed:

Who celebrates girl's birth? She is never wanted by her parents. But when she is born, she is not killed either. People are afraid of her fate as she would get married and how other people might treat her. Her fate is linked to her parent's honor. If somebody humiliates her, they humiliate her parents and family. This fears her parents when she is born.

It was also shared that sometimes a girl would grow up to be as big as three or four years old, yet some distant relatives might not even have heard of her birth. Traditionally, the news of the baby girl's birth is not communicated among relatives immediately. *Salma* says:

Nobody is happy when a girl is born (with a sarcastic laughter). No one distributes sweets, no function, nothing at all. When a woman expects and you don't get any news for a long time, this means, a girl is born (with tears in her eyes).

The Rajputs of Bhakkar though never killed their daughters, unlike a few other Rajput clans and tribes (Vishwanath, 1998) but in their long history, a birth of a girl was rarely celebrated.

The pregnant women usually take blessings from their elder women and relatives for having a baby boy. During my time in Bhakkar, I never heard a blessing for a baby girl from any elder lady as one participant claimed. The most common prayer I heard was, "May Allah make you the mother of seven sons." Thus assuming that wishing someone a baby girl was not encouraged or liked by the Rajput people. When a girl is born, the mother is comforted by her relatives by uttering words like, "Don't worry, Allah (God) will have mercy on you and bless you with a son next time", or "This baby girl will bring a brother for her next time". On the contrary, when a boy is born sweets are distributed and guests are invited to share the joy. If the baby boy has a sister(s) before, she is considered fortunate and blessed to have brought a brother after her.

The proud father of the boy also hosts parties for his men friends at *dera* and offers food and sweets to them. This gathering would provide with him an opportunity to show off his male prowess for producing a son heir to his generation. A man is not considered ‘*mard ka bacha*’ or is ‘less male’ if he only produces daughters¹⁹⁸. In *Haryanvi* terms, *mard* not only means man but generically stands for a masculine man (Kumar, 2017). Therefore, producing a son is also a sign of *mardangi* (maleness) for a man.

As soon as the news is communicated, the relatives and people from the neighbourhood all come together to congratulate the family. They bring money and gifts along with them and in return attend the party hosted by the baby boy’s family. Nowadays, distant relatives congratulate through phone calls rather than coming to greet the family. In olden times, *nai*’s services were taken and he was sent to the relatives, who could not attend the function, to distribute the good news and sweets. Furthermore, in the old days, *doomni* was called to perform joyful songs (sometimes *sehra* songs too) and dances. She would receive money, sweets, clothes and *laag*¹⁹⁹ from the family and other close relatives (baby boy’s paternal and maternal relatives) in return. Every so often in Rajput families, if the boy is born after many years or is the first born, then *doomni* would take money from all the relatives on her own demand. Payers and blessings are given to the mother, the most frequent and significant one being the prayers of having more sons. Mostly, the prayer would comprise of expressions like, “May you become the mother of a hundred sons”.

The folksongs, performed on the birth of a boy are typically known as *jachcha* or *sohar* songs. Tiwari (1988) describes the variants of the *sohar* songs, which are: *sohilo*, *sobhar* and *sohal*, all performed on the birth of a baby boy. This broad term also encompasses the songs which known as *badhai*²⁰⁰ and *mangal geet*²⁰¹ (Tiwari, 1988: 257). *Dadi Sughra* also mentions that these songs are called *sohar* and *badhaye* songs.

¹⁹⁸ Akhtar Bibi’s quote

¹⁹⁹ Token money taken on the birth of a boy

²⁰⁰ Congratulations

²⁰¹ Song of happiness

Now, since the time has changed, most of the Rajput families in Bhakkar, do not invite a *doomni* on childbirth functions. *Dadi Sughra* also informed about the cultural change in Bhakkar and expressed:

Nobody invites me on this occasion anymore. They think that singing would be a sinful activity. What about all of their daily life activities which they do in home and in Bazar? Are they all Islamic and not sinful? I am a poor old lady. This is what I can do for my earnings. How can I survive if they will not invite me for singing folksongs?

Shafiqa Begum also narrated:

Birth of the boy is celebrated but not as much as people used to in the past. Sweets are distributed, guests are invited but the significant change is that the folksongs are not performed anymore on this function. Due to the religious mindset, people prefer to give money as alms to madrasas or mosques rather than singing and dancing.

In the present times however, the birth of baby is not as elaborate of an event as it used to be in the past. Affluent Rajput men may host meal parties or occasionally dance parties as well, but in simple household, such activities are not practiced anymore. The reason being narrated by the women during the informal interview sessions is mentioned here: Undoubtedly, the economic standing of a household plays a major role in determining the celebrations of such occasions. Many Rajput families living in Bhakkar avoid holding grand parties presumably because of their limited economic resources. However, some families do celebrate the birth of the baby boy in a modest way by distributing sweets, inviting relatives for food and now and then paying meager amount as alms to the *doomni* if she is called to the event. Salma told me that on the birth of her first baby boy; her mother-in-law did not invite *doomni* for the performance yet *Dadi Sughra* came by herself and presented her gold earrings to her. Salma's mother-in-law gave *dadi* some clothes, sweets, and money as *laag*²⁰² in return for her good wishes for the baby boy. *Dadi* performed few

²⁰² Money given to the needy on the birth of a child

folksongs out of joy and because of her cordial relation with the family. Men of the family did not show resistance as they had known *dadi* for many years and were also aware of her poor background.

8.1.1. The Backdrop of the Event

The expected mother comes to her parents' home one week before the first baby's delivery date and remains there for a maximum of forty days after the birth of the baby. During this time, parents are responsible to bear the expenses for her food, medicines, and childbirth. Traditionally in Rajput culture, the birth of the first child is arranged in the girl's natal home while the other children's may take place in the conjugal home. Nevertheless, parents of the pregnant woman are supposed to send gifts or pay visits to her in-laws for childbirth even when arranged at the conjugal home. After the birth, the maternal family and relatives are expected to send gifts in the form of cash, clothes or jewelry to their daughter's in-laws.

Traditionally, during the pregnancy, it is her parent's responsibility to bring the woman to the natal home. The girl's brother or any close male relative may also perform this task. According to the Rajput traditions, she would not be allowed to go alone to her natal home and no one from her in-laws will go to leave her at the parent's home. The parents are supposed to take good care of the pregnant woman, not solely because she is their daughter, but also because in case of any misfortune, they will be held responsible since it is believed among the Rajput people that the child belongs to the paternal side.

In the past, the parturition process was held in the home, assisted by the midwife; but now, the trend has changed. *Salma* informed that wherever there is a hospital available nearby, people would prefer to go there or to clinics for the childbirth since the labour and delivery at home involves risk and people do not want to risk the life of either the mother or the child.

If a boy is born, celebrations start right away; however, in case of a girl, hardly any celebration is held. In line with the Islamic values, In Muslim families of Bhakkar, the first

ritual is the whispering of *Adhan*²⁰³ in a baby's ear. It is widely believed that it is crucial for a newly born boy to know that he is born into a Muslim family. *Adhan* is also whispered in baby girl's ear too for the same reason. Usually, an elder male of the family performs this ritual. Later, sweets are distributed among the family members and neighbors. Another tradition also practiced by some Rajput families in Bhakkar, is called *ghutti and* is given to both the baby boy and the girl. In *ghutti pilaana*²⁰⁴ tradition, the newly born licks honey given to him/her by an elder member of the family. The reason being such that the noble qualities of that elder may transfer to the newly born.

Apparently, the birth of a boy raises the status of daughter in-law, and her in-laws may come to visit her immediately. When they arrive, they are served with the best of food and gracious hospitality by the girl's family. The in-laws and other close relatives bring sweets and clothes for their daughter-in-law and her parents as a token of happiness and goodwill. On the birth of a baby girl, however, the frequency of visits and number of gifts presented from the in-laws is far less.

After spending forty days in her parents' home, the in-laws come to take the girl and their grandson. Parents send off their daughter with many gifts meant not only for her or the newborn but also include presents for her husband, the in-laws and nearly for everyone in her conjugal home. These presents may be in the form of cash, clothes, sweets and include jewelry items too, according to the economic position of the family. The unspoken pressure to follow the societal norms, is at times so powerful that the daughter's parents may end up taking loans to buy expensive gifts, beyond their means. Besides, they also give numerous toys and clothes to their newly born grandchild. Interestingly, sometimes these gifts are sufficient for the baby boy for at least a year. In Rajput community, this ritual is called *choochak*²⁰⁵. *Salma* narrates:

The maternal side of a boy gives countless gifts which are enough for his first year.

From clothes to toys, they give everything to their grandson. Additionally, parents

²⁰³ Call for prayer (namaz) of Muslim.

²⁰⁴ Drinking

²⁰⁵ A tradition which becomes a social obligation for the maternal relatives of the newly born baby in which they give lots of gift to their grandson, daughter, son-in-law and all his family.

give clothes to almost everyone in their daughter's conjugal home so that her in-laws may become happy and treat her well. If a girl is born, then she is also given clothes etc. but celebration and festivity remain far less as in case of the boy.

The *choochak* tradition is also practiced when a baby girl is born, however, the level of celebration is modest, and the woman receives merely few gifts from her in-laws. Additionally, in Rajput families, a male child is far more fortunate than his female siblings. He is well-fed, taken good care of, mothered, and spoiled, not only by the parents but the grandparents too.

In Muslim Rajput families, the circumcision ritual for baby boys is performed as early as possible as it is considered a religious obligation for Muslims. This ritual is called "*sunnat bithana*"²⁰⁶. According to the cultural belief of the local people, circumcision purifies and cleans the innocent child from unanticipated diseases and evil spirits which might harm him during the early forty days of his life. Leaving him uncircumcised may make him more vulnerable to the evil forces. In olden times, the circumcision event of the baby boy was celebrated with much merriment and joviality. The relatives were invited, and sweets were distributed among relatives and neighbors. A family *nai* would be invited for the circumcision of the child and given sweets and money for his service. Relatives would congratulate and give money to the boy's mother or grandmother as a token of happiness. The *doomni* would perform songs for the occasion and was presented with money, clothes and sweets as a reward. Presently, however, as informed by the participants, the trend has changed. It isn't considered a festive event. No ceremony is performed anymore on the day of circumcision. Moreover, Doctors are preferred instead of *nai* to perform the activity and usually within a week of the boy's birth, his father takes him to a doctor for circumcision. Sometimes, families may distribute some sweets and celebrate the occasion with their close family members. The female participants, however, did not mention any folksong or dance performances relevant to the occasion.

²⁰⁶ Male circumcision.

8.2. Themes in *Jachcha* / *Sohar* songs

The birth of a son is a joyous event in a Rajput household and songs are sung to celebrate the occasion. The themes of three *jachcha* folk songs are discussed as under:

Table 12. Birth of child folksongs – *Jachcha/Sohar* Songs

Main ceremony	Themes in <i>jachcha</i> / <i>sohar</i> songs
<p><i>Jacha/Sohar</i> Ceremony (childbirth ceremony celebrated within three days of the birth of child)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Thanksgiving to Allah (Allah Wale Gaaney) 2. Explicit Gender Discrimination 3. Elevation of Woman's Status as a Mother and Daughter-in-law 4. Expectations from Paternal and Maternal Relations on the Birth of Baby Boy 5. The Never-ending Romance with Royalty

8.2.1. Gratitude songs to Allah (*Allah Wale Gaane*)

The first most prominent theme of the *jachcha* folksong is thanksgiving to Allah on the birth of the son. The folksong narrates as:

*Allah ney laal deeye tey main pir manand aae*²⁰⁷ (song no.81)

Laal deye, Char charagh terey baldey hamesha

Panhjawan balan aay.... Allah ney laal deye

Translation

God gifted me son like pearls, that is why I am dancing (in joy) at pir's shrine

Gifted me (peals like sons, may your four lanterns always light at your shrine

I am here to light the fifth one.... Allah has gifted me sons

²⁰⁷ Similar song recorded from Wahando, Gujranwala, Punjab for M. Phil Research. ²¹⁹ Earthen oil lamp.

The song expresses that boys are a blessings from Allah because of the *pir* who requested Allah for them. This is a celebration event and that is why I am dancing at the *pir's* shrine. On *pir's* shrine, four earthen oil lamps are always ignited, I set alight to the fifth *charagh*²¹⁹ out of eternal happiness. This is because I am blessed with a son.

The folksong in its lyrics repeatedly narrates Allah's blessings upon the family by bestowing them with a baby boy. The celebration on the birth of a son also reflects the desperation of the parents to have a son. Mother's desperation is the greatest due to the threats by her husband to marry another woman if she fails to give him a son. The constant fear keeps her on edge. Moreover, her survival within her in-laws and her social standing entirely depends upon giving birth to the son of a family. The continual social pressure sometimes forces women to resort to ridiculous measures; besides payers at home or having medical treatments in hospital, the desperate women also visit shrines for *dua*²⁰⁸ and *manats*²⁰⁹ to have a son. This is called *manat manna* in the local language. The majorities of the Rajputs in Bhakkar do not believe in *pir*²²² culture or their miracles and shrines are not visited very often. But a few women told me that in their desperation to have a son, even if she is not allowed to visit a shrine by herself, she would ask her maid to visit on her behalf and promise for a *manat* and *dua*. If the woman has a son, she secretly sends money to the shrine for the poor people. The *doomni* through performing songs expresses her share of happiness in few couplets in the same song because she also wishes for getting rewards in terms of food, money, and cloths from the family of the baby boy.

8.2.2. Explicit Gender Discrimination

It seems evident that the absence of birth songs or lullabies for baby girls portray the level of gender discrimination prevalent among the Rajputs of Bhakkar. It is commonly believed that the birth of a baby girl brings 'not so joyful' time for the relatives and especially for the mother. Miller (1987) explains that the mother of a girl, after the childbirth, feels

²⁰⁸ Prayer

²⁰⁹ Promise made on the shrines that if the prayer is accepted then one will distribute cooked food / money to the poor people at the shrine. ²²² Saint

extreme disappointment since she greatly desired for a son but bore a daughter instead. Sometimes the relatives console the woman. On the other hand, the birth of a boy is seen as a blessing from Allah which gives happiness not only for his mother but also for both his paternal and maternal families. Mother of a son usually gets a caring attitude after giving birth to a boy (P: 95).

Gill (1998) also makes similar claims that man takes pride if he has (more) sons than daughters. People feel pity for a family that does not have sons (1998). Therefore, it is not only the women who suffer the deprivation of son; Rajput men also face social pressure and sometimes public humiliation. From time to time, other men may taunt him for not having a son. Men undergo grave sorrow as they think their lineage will end; by thinking that he would let down his ancestors by not bearing a son (Gupta et, at., 2003). The main reason which rationalizes the birth of the son is that sons carry on the family name and take care of their parents in old age. In contrast, daughters are taken away to work for their husband's families (Gill, 1998). This makes the girls merely an economic burden to their families.

In Pakistan, the societies are characterized as being patriarchal, patrilineal, or patrilocal. Rajput living in Bhakkar are an example of all three. Patrilineal defining the productive possessions i.e., lands etc. are possessed and passed on to other generations through males. In a patrilocal society, woman resides with or near the husband's family, where possession of land is the main asset and inherited by males of the family, dowry is given by the girl's parents on marriage in the form of large portable goods. Miller (1987) explains in detail the status of a girl in the patriarchal culture which is very similar to Rajputs living in Bhakkar. Majority of the Rajput women are dependent on men for their support and protection throughout their life. A daughter is dependent on and protected by her father and brothers, a wife by her husband and a mother by her sons. Therefore, the importance of a son is well established in the culture. In the Rajput culture, the discrimination does not merely end with the birth but rather a girl faces gender discrimination in every step of her life. (1987:95) as *Salma* expressed:

Girl child definitely face discrimination in her house. She serves her mother, father, brothers and the whole family. All her life she tries to justify her position in the family by serving them. Her brothers get preference in every part of their lives. When she gets married, she begins serving her conjugal family.

The role of a woman after marriage as expected from her is restricted to production of the children. Both boy and girl after their birth gain identity from their father. However, the son also obtains a different kind of social identity. Through this identity, he enters under the social order and in a system that gives importance to boys as they remain in the lineage. It would be interesting to mention here that in genealogical maps (family trees) the names of common women are not revealed, rather only those Rajput women are mentioned who gave birth to male heirs.

8.2.3. Elevation of Woman's Status as Mother and Daughter-in-law

The *jachcha* folksong below reflects the importance of a mother who gives birth to a son, and this improves her social status in the conjugal home.

Jachcha rani ley ley palna mol (song no.82)

Bahu rani ley ley palna mol

Yu palna tery aba ney gharaya

Translation

Queen mother buy a crib

Queen's daughters-in-law buy a crib

Your father bought this crib

The song repeatedly refers to the mother of the son as 'the queen' and asks that she should buy a crib for his son and his (maternal) grandfather has also brought a crib for his grandson. The song symbolically elucidates an important cultural manifestation; one that pressurizes that the crib for the baby boy must be bought by his maternal grandparents as it is their social obligation and as an expression of their happiness. The lyrics of the song repeatedly address the mother of the son and the daughter-in-law of the family as queen because she has given birth to a baby boy. *Dadi Sughra* responded:

Only the mother of a boy is called jachcha Rani. If a woman gives birth to a daughter, she may not be called a jachcha rani and no such song is performed for her.

In Bhakkar, the joint family system is popular where old parents stay with their sons for the rest of their lives. If any son lives in another city, the parents are asked to live with them for some months, thus every son shares the responsibility for taking care of the parents. If the sons share the same house, then the parents will reside with them for long as they live.

Interestingly, the gender discrimination is such a dominant attitude that the mothers are called or addressed by their son's names rather than their own names. For example, *Nasir²¹⁰ ki maa* (Nasir's mother) which tells everybody that she has a son whose name is Nasir. Locally, it is believed to be a prestigious social status and women take pride if they are addressed by their son's name. It elevates their social standing among the different groups of people. As Gupta and fellows (2003) discuss, a woman comes into the bargaining power vis-à-vis her mother-in-law (P: 21) when she gives birth to a son. The woman also believes that she will get a greater benefit to exercise her power and authority as her son will grow up. All in all, this non-zero-sum game also benefits the mother in the long run with the son taking care of her in old age.

8.2.4. Expectations from the Paternal and Maternal Relatives on Birth of a Baby Boy

The *jachcha* songs also inform about the expectations from maternal and paternal relatives of baby boy to present the in-laws with gifts and money (see song 83). After the birth of a boy, a party is arranged by the paternal grandparents. It is an established fact that all the relatives attending the party will bring gifts or money for the child and his family. Though, compared to the other relatives, the expectation of gifts and money from the maternal grandparents remain high. Traditionally, maternal grandparents of the child bring innumerable gifts not only for their grandson and daughter, but also for her husband, the child's paternal grandparents and the other family members. A few participants also informed that sometimes the child's maternal grandparents bring clothes for the maids of

²¹⁰ Unreal name to provide the readers with a hypothetical example.

their daughters so her in-laws may become happy with their daughter and let her take some rest as the child is young and needs constant care and attention from his mother. The expectations from the maternal grandparents and relatives continue till the marriage of the child. Parents of the daughter-in-law face the constant social pressure by the in-laws throughout her life. Traditionally in Rajput culture, usually a girl's parents are expected to bear the financial burden both before and after the marriage of their daughter. Reasonable to assume, this may be one of the many reasons that when a girl is born, Rajputs do not celebrate her birth rather they envisage the huge burden of responsibilities that has come along with the daughter's birth. A popular proverb may explain this phenomenon well. The proverb is "*beti khaye roti, beyahi khawe boti*" means the unmarried daughter only takes food from you, but the married one eats your flesh' (takes everything from the parents).

As mentioned earlier, in song 82, all the maternal male relatives of the baby boy are asked repeatedly to buy a crib for the baby. Buying a crib is not easy as it might sound and has a specific cultural interpretation to it i.e., buying a cradle symbolizes gifts and money. It is interesting to note the subtle and discreet communication of expectations by the paternal relatives. These folksongs not only convey expectations but also define the gendered stereotypical roles that each group (maternal and paternal relatives) is supposed to follow. All the male relatives of the child like *nana, dada, chacha, aba* and *taya* are the breadwinners of the family and are thus expected to provide financial support and benefits to the baby whereas the female relatives like *nani, dadi, chachi, amma* and *tayee* are expected to take care of the baby boy and his mother. Supporting this argument, Singh (2011) claims that when daughters and sisters want to share their emotions, they address their mothers and aunts and whenever material objects or financial support is needed then fathers and brothers are addressed. The folksongs portray father and brothers as a pillar of a household economy, but women/daughters are acknowledged for their provision of emotional support. An old Rajput woman commented in a sentimental way 'a girl is too faithful to her parents, and one must have a daughter so that there is someone who would mourn on their death'.

8.2.5. The Never-ending Romance with Royalty

The nostalgic aspect is visible in most of the Rajput folksongs whether they are wedding/*sehra* or *jachcha /sohar* songs. The connection of the Rajputs with their past is immortal and eternal. In the same context, a *lori* mentioned below also talks about the royal past of the Rajput. In this *lori*, the baby boy is expected to be a king like his ancestors. The *lori* is as under:

Hole hole khaley kheley nadiaey bawey sey

(song.no. 83)

Banra maara mal mal nawa agee raaj

Translation

Slowly slowly, the stream flows

My groom and his people will take bath in the stream

The cultural background of the song is such that the Rajput Empire and era was a place and time of prosperity and flourish. The Rajput people used to live near streams and grassy lands. The people of the empire were rich and lead a satisfied life as their rulers were generous and brave. The mother addresses her son that one day he will be the ruler of that empire, just like his ancestors and will have many fast horses; the people living under his rule will be happy and satisfied with him. The mother of the boy describes her wishful thinking that her son will have a beautiful and pearl engraved cup and a necklace one day.

Most of the participants were of the opinion that the *lori* is based on the internal, desired sentiments of a mother which are expressed through the song. This particular *lori*, like most of the lories performed for children are part of the socialization of the Rajput boy. Furthermore, the *lori* narrates that as the boy belongs to a Rajput clan, a martial race; he must be ready for war which can happen any time. The king must keep his army and horses ready at all times. She imagines, that in her son's rule, the empire will flourish, and everybody will be happy and successful in their lives. People will eat sweet dry fruits along with their king because of richness in the kingdom. The *lori* is a classic example of Rajputs' connection with their imperial past. The boy is socialized in the way that he belongs to a royal family and must not forget his roots. From the early childhood, he is asked to remember his roots and inculcate in him a love for his royal past.

These kind of *lories* may play an important part in the construction of Rajput manhood. The Rajput boys are treated in a way that they may become arrogant and think of themselves as a superior clan. These personality traits are reflected in the child's character as he grows into a young boy and finally becomes a man. Presently, singing *loris* to children is not a popular practice among Rajput families. Very few mothers may remember *lori* and very few sing them. Most of the young Rajput mothers do not know about it. But in olden times, mothers used to sing the *lories* to their children especially their sons.

Conclusion

To conclude, the performance of *Jacha/sohar* folksongs were a common practice in the Rajput household in the past. Now the time has changed and due to the economic factors, the childbirth is not as festive or elaborate of an event as it used to be; however, what has still followed through is the preference of a baby boy. The observations and informal interviews all made it evident that the preference for a male child cannot be credited solely to the patriarchal ideology prevalent in the Rajput culture, rather, this preference is also a deeply embedded pattern of thinking among the Rajput women. An interesting argument here is that unlike the other folksongs, the *jachcha* songs, do not aim to challenge the patriarchal hegemonies or unfair treatment by the in-laws or make the women stand up for their rights or those of their daughters, rather it seems like the women have been shaped by the social norms so much so that they have fallen prey to the trap. The culture has led them to believe that sons are in fact a better choice. Men's preference in this regard is fairly understandable and reasonable, as they see an heir in form of a male child as being a part of a patrilineal society. However, the women may have their ulterior motives. To have a son, means freedom and a greater social standing for themselves. The perceived legitimacy they gain with the birth of the son, makes her feel in control and a stronger, independent individual within the society.

9. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The present research has contributed to the genre of oral folk literature through the collection of 84 Rajput folksongs. The entire compilation exhibit themes related to gender identity, roles, relations, and gender subversion within the context of Rajput culture. The present research is a thematic analysis of Rajput folksongs, conducted in order to understand and learn more about the gendered world of Rajput people. Through this research, it has been acknowledged that the artistic verbal communication i.e., folksongs, do not merely serve as a form of vocal expression for the marginalized community-Rajput women, but also profoundly influence the social processes by formulating cultural identities and defining social roles. This study also provides evidence on how folksongs transmit stereotypical notions of construction and reproduction of patriarchal identities and asymmetrical division of roles.

Moreover, it may also be safely assumed that most of the Rajput folksongs as a form of discourse, are greatly influenced by the viewpoints of the dominant group. This dominant and powerful assemblage of people in the context of the present research study does not only include men (for example, father, brother, husband, brother-in law and father- in- law) of the family but also includes women from the conjugal family like mother-in-law and sister-in law who control, manipulate and exploit the newlywed bride for their personal gains. In this way, folksongs reflect that the power dynamics is not just in the hands of men but rather resides with whosoever has control in the household. Similar to any other form, this power is usually exercised upon the weaker members (wife and daughter-in-law) in the context of the Rajput household. Here, I might like to state that power dynamics as a term and a process must not be viewed as inherently bad or having a negative connotation. Quite often than not, power serves a useful purpose of maintaining order, defining responsibilities and creating a structure. However, in case of the Rajput families, power dynamics is strictly in the hands of the dominant members, who usually misemploy it for their own gains.

The present study has been categorised into two different parts based on the most dominant themes and on the events where these songs are performed. One part constitutes of wedding songs while the other one incorporates *jacha/sohar* (birth) songs. The thematic analysis has been based on 81 wedding songs and 3 birth songs. The analysis of the 84 folksongs in total, revealed that most of the folksongs encompass more than one theme and, in some cases, multiple overlapping themes. Hence, deeming them complex to interpret. To assist with the analysis, the folksongs was classified into major themes and further subthemes, conferring to the interpretations by the participants.

This chapter summarises the major findings and discusses arguments concluded from the ethnographic study of gender portrayal in Rajput folksongs. Here, I would like to elucidate that folksongs are a medium through which ideologies are not only produced and reproduced but also transferred from one generation to the other. This thematic research suggests that folksongs play a crucial part in social and cultural construction of gender which in turn displays gender power dynamics and assigns social status to the Rajput people. I have also justified that the methodology adopted for this research study resulted in an exhaustive analysis of the gender relations embedded in Rajput folksongs. Folksongs are not only an important genre of folklore but as this research study presents, they reflect upon the social and cultural lives of people; as in the present case, the Rajput people residing in Bhakkar.

In the second chapter, the main theoretical framework of Butler (1990) and Ortner (1973) has been reviewed. This study finds truth in Butler's theory of gender performativity which views gender as an identity, reproduced as a result of repeated acts (1990). The present study thus suggests that through the repeated performances of folksongs, with stereotypical notions and patriarchal ideology deeply embedded in them, social and cultural construction of gender is greatly influenced which as a result shapes and re-shapes the relations of Rajput men and women. The thesis also authenticates Butler's (1990) claim that gender is an identity, reproduced by patterned repeated acts (1990) as observed in the Rajput culture. The present research also utilized the Ortner's (1970) framework of Key Symbols, which laid a foundation to analyse the Rajput culture and their folksongs through the cultural symbolic expressions. These symbolic expressions were found to be deeply embedded in

folksongs and through the interviews and ICS (Informal Conversation Sessions) came to light. Without the emic perspective (chosen for the present study) the symbolism in the Rajput folksongs would not have been explored and the study would not have been able to capture the true essence of those songs. The cultural signs hidden in folksongs as symbols surfaced muted voices and expressions which otherwise would have been hard to locate and decipher.

Ortner's theory of key symbols (1970) also finds relevance to this research study by declaring that every culture exhibits a system of symbols which leads to the better understanding of culture. These symbols are usually hidden or may reveal themselves only in a particular cultural setting. This study aimed to shed light on some critical aspects of Rajput culture by analyzing their folksongs; as in Mufti's (1983) words, "folksongs open the windows in the compound of the culture." Folksongs as an integral part of the sociocultural life of the Rajputs, paint a picture of their culture using distinct artistic expressions. Through the interpretation of these songs, carried out by the Rajputs themselves, many hidden symbols came to surface that helped explain the cultural context. Additionally, it would not be wrong to claim that the Rajput wedding folksongs and birth songs, selected for the present study, are entirely context dependent and sung on the designated events. Without the relevant information, an outsider may not be able to fully comprehend these songs, thus misinterpreting them. This highlights the importance of using emic perspective while researching folksongs.

Through these folksongs, Rajput women have long criticized and ridiculed patriarchal structure such as Rajput men's personality, polygamy, estranged marital relations, domestic violence and hostile attitude and behaviour of the in-laws towards daughter-in-laws. Through these songs, brides were also warned and advised to cope with the difficult situations they might face in their conjugal homes. Thus, these folksongs serve as a medium for the Rajput women to challenge, contest and at the same time transfer traditional ideologies to the next generation. As Srivastava (1991) asserted that women songs can be interpreted as "safety -valves", which them the opportunities to express their bottled-up feelings in a socially acceptable way. Similarly, Scott (1991) was of the view that songs can become sites and spaces for alternative voice and "weapons of the weak" through

which women defy, show resistance and retaliate against the power of dominant groups. My personal experience favoured the view-point of Scott (1991) as I observed that the Rajput men, despite their dislike for folksongs and attempts to subdue them in the name of religion, did not conceive them as a real threat as Scott (1991) termed them as 'weak weaponry' of women. The 'weak' here could be explained in terms of the implicit and discreet ways that these folksongs employ to convey and communicate messages.

Moreover, these songs are performed in women only spaces, which in Rajput culture are strictly segregated from men's places. Folksongs are also termed as strategic codes which convey subtle messages for the specific women who comprehend them, and thus remain invisible for those who might cause trouble (Radner and Jordan, 1986).

In context of this research, I came across a bizarre observation; Rajput men denied the existence of folksongs in their culture and after the documentation of these folksongs, doubted and ignored the efficacy of folksongs since they belonged to the Rajput women. In patriarchal societies, like the one under study, women are in a subordinate position and are considered as harmless, insignificant, and weak weapons against the deeply rooted ideologies. However, this is wrongly assumed, and the reasons as explained below pinpoint how the men researches have distorted the real facts with subjectivity.

The literature review section comprises of four sub-sections, namely: women and folklore, women and folksongs, research on folksongs of Pakistan and lastly, compilation of folksongs in Pakistan. Previous studies relevant to gender and folklore have highlighted the issue which women scholars face during the research. Jordan and De Caro (1986) analysed the status of women in folklore studies and correctly pinpointed the dearth of folkloric research. Farrer (1975) explained that women were only consulted for those folkloric genres where men were not available, otherwise men researchers would conduct researches on women by including their own folkloric expressions and interpretations, thus distorting the data through subjectivity. Besides, in the past, only those women folklore genres would be approved of and got attention which men approved. Jordan and Kalcik (1985) have criticized the gender blindness in folklore studies as they claim that folklore studies have described women from men's perspective and folklorists were also significantly influenced by the 'man made normal data'. Kodish (1987) argued that men

folklorists represented men in folklore as heroes while women as passive, silent and submissive individuals. This view contrasted with the narratives of the women, which portrayed women's agency in patriarchal settings, and depicted women as strong, capable individuals who challenge stereotypes in their own distinct ways. To play my role as a female researcher in the field of anthropology, I considered it my utmost duty to add to the limited literature on folklore, with as much objectivity as possible. Thus, this made this research study an even more rewarding and compelling experience for me.

In India, various researches on Rajput folksongs have been conducted covering numerous socio-cultural aspects of Rajputs people living in Rajasthan area (Gold, 1995; 1996; Narayan, 1997). Previous researches (Gold, 1997; 1997) on Rajput women linked to folksongs have recognized the role of folksongs the socio-cultural lives of the Rajput women. Hence, folksongs are considered as a forum of expression for the Rajput women who otherwise remain invisible and voiceless (Narayan, 1993, 1994, 1997; Raheja, 1995; Mahabharati, 2011). Previous studies have also shown that folksongs perform many socio-cultural functions. Nonetheless, the most crucial function they perform as argued by Jassal (2012) is their role in providing a platform of expression for women (Narayan, 1997; Raheja, 1995).

Unfortunately, however, the Rajput folksongs of Pakistan has still remained an under researched area. In my humble opinion, it could be attributed to methodological reasons. The absenteeism of Rajput folksongs from the folklore literature may be due to the invisibility of Rajput women. Strict *purdah* is the salient feature of these women, which restricts their access to social gatherings and participation in groups. For the present study, I had to face similar problems. Initially, the Rajput men in Bhakkar denied the existence of Rajput folksongs. The access to Rajput women, as an outsider, was also deemed improbable for the purpose of collecting folksongs. Moreover, the Rajput men were apprehensive of my intentions, and I had to explain them the entire procedure, purpose and outcome of my research before I was allowed to meet their women. Thus, it can be reasonably stated that the dearth of researches on Pakistani Rajputs has its own authentic reasons. My position as being part of the clan and relations with the insiders helped me greatly and I somehow got the privilege to access the Rajput women. Interestingly, Rajput

men remained curious about the folksongs I recorded from the women as they had previously denied their existence altogether. Moreover, what confounded me was the fact that Rajput men are generally ethnocentric; they take great pride in their culture and ethnocentrism constitutes a major part of their socialization from a very early age. This behaviour can be clearly observed in almost every aspect of their social life, however, the bizarre behaviour of denying the existence of folksongs made me realise that there was more to the story than that. Maybe in their own hidden ways, the Rajput men are aware of the perceptible powers of those folksongs.

Few research studies on Punjabi folksongs (Hassan, 1996; Farid, 2007) reveal the sociocultural life of the Punjabi women and their life-cycle events which express their sentiments. Similarly, Khan (2012) and Samreen (2013) researched the lives of *Pushtoon* and *Balti* women respectively as reflected through their traditional folksongs. Zahoor et al., (2014) investigated the rhetorical expression of two Punjabi folksongs from the Lodhran district (South Punjab, Pakistan) and analysed the figurative, linguistical aspect of folksongs such as metaphors and similes that Punjabi people use for effective communication. Nasir and Fatimah (2017) ethnographically investigating the women's imagery in folk wedding songs, found out that the Rajput bride expresses her sentiments and expectations towards her parents and the in-laws through folksongs, which would otherwise remain unspoken. This research also signified the role of folksongs in transmitting traditional, stereotypical roles, which can be observed in their (Rajputs) daily social interactions.

Through this research, I also want to highlight the scarcity of the ethnographic researches on Pakistani folksongs. While reviewing, I did not find sufficient literature related to ethnographic researches on folksongs conducted within the cultural context of Pakistan. I can also claim that there is no research which particularly talks about the Rajput folksongs of Pakistan. There have been researches related to folksongs in Pakistan which mostly deal with the aspect of documentation. Among them, most of the researches present represent the researcher's interpretation and viewpoint rather than the emic perspective (Pervaiz, 1973; Jadoon, 1979; Bukhari, 1974; Raja, 1980; Jonejo, 1985; Islam, 1986; Lashari, 2007; Irfan, 2017; Qazalbash, 2017).

In my collection of the Rajput folksongs, wedding songs are presented in a systematic order according to the sequential days, like *Butna*, *Henna* and wedding day (*biyah ka din*). Birth songs are performed on the day when a boy is born and thus placed afterwards. The point to notice here is that there is no single folksong that may be performed on the birth of a baby girl, including the lullaby which too remains reserved for the baby boy.

Chapter 3, methodology provides a detailed overview of the different methods used for the data collection process in the present study. The methodological approach used in this study is distinctive and idiosyncratic when compared to the other similar researches. In this study, Rajput folksongs were not only documented but through intensive fieldwork, in-depth interviews and informal conversational sessions (ICS), these songs were also analysed and interpreted against the backdrop of the Rajput culture. 20 Rajput men and women were interviewed for this research study. Snowball sampling technique greatly assisted in discovering the Rajput folksongs from the common household women and one professional singer residing in Bhakkar (Punjab, Pakistan). The in-depth interviews and informal conversational sessions played a significant role in interpretation and translation of the songs also it resulted in an enriched data. The issues pertaining to the recording of folksongs, translation, interpretation and how I dealt with them is also part of the chapter.

Chapter 4 describes the brief history and origin of Rajputs. The Rajputs under study belong to the *Chauhan* clan, therefore the *Chauhan* class has also been discussed briefly. In the first section of the chapter, history of Rajputs is presented that traces back to their royal ancestry in Rajasthan²¹¹. This aspect has also been a dominant theme of many folksongs. In almost every folksong, Rajput man whether as a groom, husband, lover or a baby is addressed as *raja* which means king and the literal meaning of Rajput itself is ‘the son of a king’. In this chapter, the origin and history of the Rajputs is discussed under the umbrella of Rajput fraternity. The *Chauhans* trace their origin from one of the three theories referring to the origin of Rajputs, which have been thoroughly discussed in the chapter. The second section of the chapter describes Bhakkar city and its salient physical features, its location within Pakistan and administration division and subdivision which helps the readers get

²¹¹ <https://www.britannica.com/place/Rajasthan/History>

familiar with the locale. The most important part of this chapter talks about the social ethos of Rajputs living in Bhakkar. It informs about the various social-cultural institutions including Rajput family system, marriage, gender relations, *pardah* observation, genealogy, lifestyle, language, leisure time activities and a detailed account of various kinship terms that have reappeared in the folksongs.

The socio-cultural life of the *Chauhan* Rajputs living in Bhakkar illustrate some distinctive customs, cultural norms and traditions which might have been shaped by the migration from *Haryana* (India) to *Bhakkar* (Pakistan). The elder members of the Rajput families speak *Haryanvi* language in their homes and with other Rajputs too. It was also expressed that *Haryanvi* language is called *Mohajiri* language in Bhakkar and is considered the language of the minority groups. Moreover, the local language is also referred to as the language of the less civilized people. Explaining why the young generation of the Rajputs prefer to speak Urdu language at home and outside. It could also be explained with reference to a phenomenon termed in social anthropology as ‘cultural cringe’. This phenomenon suggests that people living in a culture tend to dissociate from it because of inferiority complex, which makes them perceive their cultural practices, values and behaviours as inferior to the values and practices of the other cultures. A serious consequence of such a complex might result in cultural alienation, where an individual abandons his culture altogether. Factors like this also highlight the crucial significance of restoring the cultural heritage which may be in any form from written literature to folksongs. A point to mention here is that the social concept of cultural cringe might only be relevant for the younger generation of Rajputs but cannot be generalised; since the older members are largely ethnocentric in nature and take great pride in their culture. It was also observed that many older participants, especially males, retained their historical identity and remembered their origin from one of the Rajput clans i.e. *Agnivanshi*, albeit their conversion to Islam.

In Bhakkar, *Saraiki* is considered the language of the majority and official language of the city. The folksongs collected for the research study also incorporate multiple words from the *Urdu* language, partly due to the lack of youth’s interest in *Haryanvi* language and partly because of the dominance of other languages such as *Urdu* and *Saraiki*. Most of the women

who recorded folksongs, excluding *Kousar*, were old which made me apprehensive about the survival of the folksongs in their original form.

Another prominent feature of the Rajput women residing in Bhakkar is the observance of strict *purdah*. It is a compulsion that before leaving the home, a Rajput woman must observe *purdah*, which has both religious and social implications. However, the observance of *purdah* limits the social activities and participation of these women. Interestingly, in a couple of folksongs, *purdah* has been used in different connotations i.e. veiling of the face and body which defines the nobility of Rajput woman. Paradoxically, the same *purdah* that is assumed to protect the woman from men also serves the purpose of seducing them.

The next chapters discuss the Rajput's socio-cultural ceremonies (wedding and birth), marking the rite of passage, and the folksongs specifically performed in these ceremonies.

With reference to the Rajput culture, the institution of marriage follows an endogamous pattern that is strictly practiced by the *Chauhans* of Bhakkar. However, marriage within paternal cousins is mostly prohibited and disliked. The folksongs, particularly the wedding songs, collected for the study seem to emulate the stereotypical gender portrayal of the Rajput men. Similar is the cultural relatedness of such stereotypical roles in the lives of the Rajput women. It was evident from the interpretations of the folksongs that a large portion of women were able to relate to the traditions and values reflected in the folksongs. For example, some women expressed their sentiments about their lives in the conjugal homes, which resembled the emotions illustrated in the folksongs. A few others also shared the memories of their parental homes which portrayed the love for their natal homes, a recurrent and dominant theme in many of the folksongs. Participant women also acknowledged the roles and statuses in their culture, as reflected in their folksongs.

Chapter 5 discusses the interpretation and analysis of the pre-wedding songs selected for the research. Since each theme and subtheme is majorly context dependent, thus before presenting the relevant interpretation of the songs, the backdrop was set and a hypothetical social setting was illustrated as a 'scene'. The descriptions were based on the narratives of singer and participants, who provided in-depth details regarding how and when these

ceremonies are held, when and how the rituals are performed etc. Such an effort was made to help a non-Rajput reader become well acquainted with the Rajput cultural traditions.

The thematic investigation of the folksongs has also been discussed within the context of multidisciplinary approaches. It is evident that the anthropological details integrated with gender perspective and folkloric studies significantly helped in analysing the folksongs in an elaborate manner. Many folksongs collected for the research also needed to be explained with reference to the Rajput's history e.g. the recurring use of words like '*raja*' or '*rani*' used to address and refer to the boy or the girl in the folksongs had to be interpreted with reference to the Rajput's royal history. Interestingly though, the Rajput elders related themselves proudly to their ancestors while the Rajput youth branded folksongs as 'outdated in existing cultural milieu'. In short, through their analysis of folksongs, it became evident how gender is portrayed and presented in line with Butler's theory of performativity (1999) and Ortner's concept of key symbols (1970).

Another significant point of mention here is the verbal manifestation used in the folksongs. By any reasonable standards, it is considered offensive which the women cannot use in day to day interaction. Nevertheless, folksongs provide a chance to release muted expressions which otherwise cannot be vented out in a socially accepted way.

Chapter 5 includes the pre-wedding songs, performed during the ceremonies of *Butna* and *Henna*. The hypothetical recreation of the two events helped in understanding the contextual relevance of the folksongs performed during these ceremonies. The thematic analysis of folksongs depicts women's social and economic dependence on men. In the songs, women were mostly presented and referred by their dependent relation to men such as daughters, sisters, mothers, wives, mothers-in-law and sisters-in-law. The unique individuality of Rajput women was a rare theme. In contrast, men were portrayed as independent protectors and providers of women, responsible for maintaining order and reinforcing the Rajput ethos within the home. They were mostly depicted in roles such as son, husband, father, brother, father-in-law and brother-in-law. The folksongs performed on the *Butna* ceremony, which is the first event of the main wedding ritual, also cover the topics of thanksgiving and prayers songs for the bride. These pre-wedding songs do not merely portray gendered roles but rather serve a critical function. It is through these songs

that the bride is prepared for her future role as a wife and daughter-in-law. Folksongs on these ceremonies also convey implicit messages of sexual nature which are generally considered taboo topics in the Rajput culture. These songs also define gender roles and responsibilities since women are mostly depicted as dealing with household activities with their social activities mostly limited to their homes and families. Some of the *Butna* and *Henna* songs also talk about women's desire for lovers and subtle wishes to go to different places beyond the walls of their homes. The bold expression of the bride through which she communicates subtle sexual messages to her groom is also a dominant theme in *Butna* songs. In short, ideas that are by no means permissible or acceptable in a Rajput culture. Hence, these notions could be viewed as distinct modes of retaliation, demanding of freedom and challenging of the traditional Rajput norms. Additionally, these could be seen as a form of catharsis for the bride who is well aware of her fate and knows that she is soon going to get entangled in a complex system of norms governed by politics, patriarchy, power and authority. Before that happens, she constructs a utopian state within herself and stays happy with her fantasized ideas. However, women with such desires are portrayed as characterless and having negative images in the folksongs.

The *Henna* ceremony folksongs, on the other hand illustrate the dynamics of the maternal family and accordingly talk about the roles and duties of the maternal relatives in the wedding of girl (niece) and boy (nephew) as now the wedding approaches nearer. Reinforcement of patriarchal ideology also becomes evident in the folksongs sung on the *Henna* ceremony. In a folksong (12) bride and groom directly address and express their sentiments for each other which is generally not acceptable in Rajput culture, however only through folksongs that expression is sanctioned, yet still the permission of parents is required for the performance of such songs. *Akhter Bibi* explained it in simpler words as 'she is still her parent's daughter and, in their home, and not yet married.' Some folksongs also articulate the conflict between Rajput social norms and individual romantic desires. These desires compel men and women to go against their traditions but due to the social pressure, fear and threat of exclusion from the group, they are unable to do so.

The crux of folksongs sung on pre-wedding ceremonies is that they prepare the bride and groom to pass through the rites of passage and accept their future roles and responsibilities as husband and wife. The level of preparedness of Rajput women seems to be more than Rajput men as she has to leave her natal home forever. As per the customs, it is required for her to be emotionally as well as psychologically ready for new changes (in-laws) so that she may adapt well and cope with the adverse situations she may have to face later on in life. On *Henna* day, *suhag* songs are also sung particularly for brides, which involve prayers for their husbands and marital life.

The wedding day folksongs, as the name indicates, may lead the readers to assume that they discuss the wedding event or aspects specifically related to wedding, however these songs have diverse themes. Majority of the folksongs collected for the study consisted of the wedding day with 5 main themes and 29 sub-themes; whereas 3 are added in the category of miscellaneous themes. These folksongs represent strictly traditional images of Rajput men and women; with their roles being clearly defined. Women are strictly responsible for household activities while men's activities are outside their homes. The patriarchal ideology reflected through folksongs is produced and reproduced in families which represent the role of the wife as serving her husband, his parents and his siblings. If failing to do so, she is not credited as a good wife or daughter-in-law. The estranged relations between husband and wife is also one of the recurring sub-themes present in these folksongs, which express the emotional state of a wife/bride. The sentimental expression of a wife or daughter-in-law shows hostility towards her in-laws owing to the treatment she receives from them. These songs also present dominant themes of gender and power subversion (by ridiculing, humiliating and threatening), humour, satire and a despondent girl who does not have much hope from her traditions or culture.

Chapter 6 puts forwards an analysis of husband-wife relationship which mostly covers the longing of wife for her husband who has gone to another city for work. A concept that emerged from this sub-theme explained how Rajput women tend to bargain and negotiate with patriarchy. These bargains are both physical and emotional in nature, sometimes seen as compensation for their love and time in the form of material objects and gifts and at

other times being emotional - as acknowledging and appreciating the husband to gain bigger benefits (such as support, protection etc.)

The chapter also include themes related to the powerful women of the conjugal family, with all of them having a distinct role to play in the household. Themes related to the bride's complaints against her in-laws, joint family system, doubts about her husband's loyalty have also been discussed in detail. All these factors are assumed to result in her frustration and may aggravate the domestic politics. Domestic politics is a common phenomenon in a Rajput household, with paradoxically women playing the roles of both troublemakers and arbitrators. These politics are attributed to fight for power, authority and above all-the same man. Women form alliances, ridicule, humiliate, show defiance and resist as part of their strategies to survive within the conjugal homes. Despite the serious nature of politics, the verbal fights among the women, however, do not last long.

Interviews from Rajput men regarding their portrayal of masculinity confirmed that they sometimes neglect their wives due to social and cultural customs while living in a joint family system. This theme has also been discussed under the heading of Rajput masculinity along with 5 sub-themes which discuss the Rajput man's physical, emotional, and sexual qualities. Through the understanding of the folksongs, it has also become evident that Rajputs share a deep love and a strong bond with their royal past. Their nostalgic link to their ancestry is reflected through the use of words like *raja* and *rani* in lyrics of these folksongs. Here it is noteworthy to mention that the masculine qualities of Rajput men are also voiced from women's mouth, which may be acknowledged as the women's desires. Interviews conducted with Rajput men disclosed that it is part of their masculinity to behave in a non-emotional way. It is expected from them to have social distance from their wife and be close to their parents and siblings. Being a father of son(s) makes them socially acceptable in Rajput families and social circles.

In contrast to chapter 6, Chapter 7 is similar as it also discusses wedding songs, however it is different from the previous chapter in the aspect that these songs debate specifically on the themes related to natal family of both the bride and the groom. *Sehra* songs constitute a portion of these wedding songs. These songs are performed exclusively for the groom;

mostly consisting of prayers and good wishes from his family and relatives. These folksongs are sung on the wedding day by professional singers (doomni). Only one *sehra* song collected for this research expressed good wishes for the bride. The subthemes of *sehra* songs include the fortune of *sehra* day, prayers for the groom and best wishes from the groom's family and friends. Through the *sehra* songs, the preferred status of a son over daughters is strengthened in Rajput families, similar to any other patriarchal society. Here it might be significant to remind the readers that Rajputs belong to a strictly patriarchal community, where the birth and wedding of a boy is celebrated much more than that of a girl's. The *sehra* songs portray the groom's royal ancestry by addressing him as a king. The bride is also labeled as being fortunate to have found a husband like him. *Sehra* songs also exhibit the hypersexual nature of the groom which defines a critical part of the Rajput masculinity.

This most significant theme of the chapter is the love of the bride for her natal home. Further categorised into sub-themes, relations of the bride with various family members has been discussed, as portrayed by the folksongs and confirmed by the participants. These songs discuss the apprehensions and worries of a mother for her daughter, who has been married and gone to her conjugal home. The songs also discuss the role of brother and fathers as the economic pillar of the Rajput household. Furthermore, the relation of the bride with natal men is also discussed. The interesting point of debate here is the diverse roles these males play in natal and conjugal settings. The same father-in-law who is a rigid and conservative man and may resort to violence to establish order and assert his authority on his daughter-in-law, seems like a totally different person when viewed as a father. His affection and love for his daughter is admirable and a song also hints at his open mindedness, as the daughter tries to tell him about his choice of groom.

As wrongly assumed by the western feminists, possibly due to the distorted reality presented to them by the male researches, women might emerge as victims and mere subjects of their cultural traditions and norms. These songs, at first glance, may also imply the same. However, the point of consideration here is the women's agency that gives a new dimension to these songs. Wedding songs (specifically) were found to be embedded with themes and aspects relevant to women's agency. Rajput women, though living in a strictly

patriarchal society and may not be formally educated, were still found to be well-aware of their rights. The strategies they used to deal with domestic politics, their plan of actions to communicate defiance and resistance against patriarchal hegemonies all form a critical part of their agency. Many of the songs also subtly convey messages to the women regarding their freedom of choice and movement.

Chapter 8 of the study deals with *jachcha/sohar* folksongs with 5 subthemes including thanksgiving for baby boy, gender discrimination and status elevation of women as mothers and daughter-in-law after giving birth to a boy. The content of these songs also explicitly discusses the roles and responsibilities of the males in the natal family, towards the new mother and her son. The reinforcement of the baby boy's royal connection in a lullaby was also a prominent theme of the *jachcha / sohar* songs.

9.1 Implications of the Study

For anthropologists, this study has fulfilled its aim of communicating that a culture is not merely a result of its material artifacts, rather it is shaped by its oral/verbal expressions. Oral/verbal traditions such as proverbs, folksongs, folktales, folk theatre and so on form a part of every culture. Folksongs as an oral/verbal expression give voice to the sentiments of marginalized groups such as women, which otherwise may remain unspoken. The lyrics of the folksongs, accompanied by the cultural values perpetuated from one generation to another²¹² also define and present the stereotypical, conventional images of gender that are set as norm and standard within a cultural setting. Thus, it could be reasonably assumed that these expressions play a crucial part in the social construction of gender and defining of gender relations within a family and on a societal level as well. This also implies that without an objective analysis and interpretation of these expressions, a culture can never be fully understood.

The findings of this study have significantly contributed to the understanding of the gender portrayal of Rajput folksongs by presenting the emic view of both the Rajput men and

²¹² Folksongs are one of the factors in Rajput culture. There may be many other factors that contribute to the social construction of gender.

women. The study has yielded findings that folksongs, through the repeated performativity of gender acts, result in transference of stereotypical ideologies from one generation to another. On the bright side however, the Rajput folksongs revealed their functional value as they provided a socially sanctioned forum for women expression as well as the symbolic meanings needed to understand a culture (Ortner, 1973).

The participants in this research study expressed their opinions during the in-depth interviews and ICS regarding their acceptance of the gendered division of labor, segregation of men and women and patriarchal hierarchy that visibly exists in a traditional Rajput culture. The findings concurred with the theoretical paradigms, thus making the study a valid approach for the researchers interested/working in the field of anthropology, gender studies and folklore studies. The findings were also found to be in line with Butler's (1990) who asserts that the repeated performative acts of gender not only enforce but also reinforce the gender imageries within the society thereby becoming a source of transmission to other generations. Such performative, repetitive acts may help explain the formulation of gender roles and relations within the Rajput community as many folksongs collected for this research, reflect the gender roles in a conventional way on the basis of which Rajput men and women are judged.

This study establishes that folksongs not only reinforce conventional images of gender, but interestingly, they also offer a forum to challenge, contest and resist the patriarchal norms. Thus, it could be asserted that folksongs perform dual cultural functions. The lyrics of many folksongs mock and sometimes ridicule the prevailing hierarchy in families. Tabooed relationships are challenged and scorned upon using the same medium of folksongs.

Gender stereotyping, a common feature of patriarchal societies, is considered a social norm. In gender studies, the scholars consciously look through the gender lenses in every institution existing in the society. They investigate every aspect of the culture from women's standpoint to support the women's world view. Research studies on South Asian women songs have covered numerous aspects of women lives. Feminist scholars like Gold and Raheja are considered as pioneers for their work on women songs in Indian states of Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. They critically analysed the Rajput women songs in their

social context and found out that South Asian women are submissive in their patriarchal social set (1994, 1997). Narayan (1994) particularly worked on the Rajput women's lives and songs and concluded that the interpretation of the folksingers must be included as a significant part of the analysis and findings rather than the subjective point of views by the researcher. For those in the field of gender studies, it might be easier to grasp that the Rajput folksongs reflect the importance of the context in which these folksongs are performed. There is a need to understand that these songs provide an event of communication in which women not only enjoy the social gatherings through singing of songs but also correspondingly challenge the patriarchal thought and hegemonies of powerful men and women within the society.

The critical socio-cultural functions served by the folksongs establish the implications of present research. These songs are not merely forms of expression or verbal folk traditions kept aside to be performed on certain events, but rather they serve a greater purpose of providing women with the needed agency and a vent for their suppressed emotions. Therefore, these folksongs should be researched and analysed upon, keeping in mind the perspectives of those who claim their ownership.

9.2 Recommendations for Future Research

This research has significantly contributed to the understanding of gender portrayal through folksongs, in the Rajput community living in Bhakkar. The recommendations for further researchers are as follows:

The research has only investigated a modest part of the area of study and was conducted on 10 Rajput families, based on 20 in-depth interviews (10 male and 10 female). Informal conversational sessions were also held. Most of the interpretations and explanations indicated the underpinning concepts mentioned in the theories of Butler (1990) and Ortner (1973). It is recommended to conduct a similar study on other Rajput communities living in other parts of Pakistan as the Rajput population is widely dispersed in other areas as well especially in the Punjab and Sindh province of Pakistan. A modest population of Rajputs also lives in Azad Jammu and Kashmir. It would be interesting to find out whether these

folksongs are performed on socio-cultural events or are also at the verge of extinction like the Rajput folksongs from Bhakkar. It is therefore suggested that this research study may be replicated on the areas mentioned above. It is also probable that the results from other parts of the country might yield a different picture thus beneficially adding to the scarce literature relevant to the portrayal of gender.

In Bhakkar, this research could only manage to document the women folksongs for investigation, it is recommended that the Rajput men folksongs may also be explored and documented. An inclusive research from the men's perspectives will prove to be a great scholarly contribution for the anthropological and folkloristic scholarships and may give a new dimension to the topic under study.

The readers must also understand that a culture never remains static and constantly changes with time due to the external and internal forces that have their impact on the people living in a specific community. It gradually brings change in people's socio-cultural and religious perspectives too. In this time of digital and social media, Rajputs living in Bhakkar have also been affected by the social changes happening around rapidly. Young Rajputs know more about the folksongs on CDs. Folksongs on CDs are replacing the live performances of folksongs. Hence, it is suggested that this would be an appropriate time for the collection and documentation of Rajput folksongs from the local singers found in any area of Pakistan. Otherwise, one of the most integral forms of oral heritage-folksongs may eventually fade away due to the lack of interest by the Rajput youth. A comparative research study is also recommended that may investigate the variations of lyrics in the folksongs found on CDs and those from live professional singers.

The present research was developed with special reference to the cultural aspect therefore many more future prospects might be available for the researchers interested in the area such as studying the structural and stylistic features or rhythmic features of the folksongs such as (alliterations, assonance, vocals, tonality, onomatopoeia and so on) of these folksongs. Further, this research is also deficient in analyzing rhymes, sound patterns, anaphoric features and musical styles of the folksongs as these were not the objectives of this research. However, it may be recommended that the structural components, musical

styles and models found in Rajput folksongs may also be further researched. The lives of the professional singers who sing only for Rajput families may also be ethnographically investigated as they are continuing this folk heritage. A comprehensive study is also needed to highlight the proficient contribution of these professional singers (mirasan/ mirasi) in singing folksongs, on different festivals and their role in keeping the culture of folksongs alive. These singers may be the best possible means to identify and locate the historical origins and interpretations of the repertoire of the folksongs. In short, all the factors mentioned above may prove to be promising areas of research for the interested researchers.

It is suggested that the institution of *purdah* with its socio-cultural and religious aspect affecting Rajput women may also be interrogated from different connotations. In the present research, as reflected in the folksongs, *purdah* has been discussed not just as veiling of face but as a protection from seduction of men. There is a need to explore this interesting deliberation more inclusively. Rajput culture is rich in various genres of folklore such as proverbs, folktales, myths, epics, jokes, marriage rituals and so on, it is appropriate that these cultural heritages not only be documented but also be examined and interpreted from the emic perspectives by incorporating the voices of local people whose culture is under study. The interdisciplinary perspective supports comprehensive understanding of the research conducted. Thus, the research from disciplines like anthropology, psychology, folklore, gender studies would investigate the topics within folklore more intensely and descriptively as compared to the other disciplines.

9.3 Academic Considerations for the Future

It has already been mentioned in the dissertation that with reference to Pakistan, there is a scarcity of ethnographic folklore studies based on the related fieldwork. During my literature review, I found it really hard to review the researches that are conducted on different genres of folklore in Pakistani context. Most of the research of folksongs are limited to the collection and documentation with a little to no introduction of the social and cultural background of the participants and the research area, thus, leading to the lack of extensive details and emic contextual interpretations. Therefore, it is highly recommended

that academic faculty should encourage the students of anthropology, gender studies, and sociology and folklore studies to explore different genres of folklore within their discipline's frameworks. Interdisciplinary approach must also be encouraged for added understanding of the folkloric genres that exist in different cultures or within the same culture. Faculty members should encourage the interested students to explore their family folklore where they can research any genre of folklore belonging to their own ancestral legacy. It is also recommended that there must be a course at secondary and higher secondary level for the students in which children are sensitized about the topics referring to their cultural heritage. The insensitivity of young Rajputs people explained it in terms of 'cultural cringe' which eventually leads to cultural alienation greatly cautioned me as an anthropologist interested in the folkloric genre. Same desire was voiced from the literary forum 'Folk literature heritage' in 2017 that demanded that Pashto folklore must be included in the educational curriculum in order to save the various genres of Pashto language. Folklore must be preserved to develop the awareness and sensitization among the young readers as well as for the generations to come, to the related to topics of social concerns.

Discussion

As discussed before, gender is a socio-cultural concept; unlike sex that has a purely biological connotation. No society can work without a framework that defines and establishes gender identities, roles, and relations. This is where the oral literature comes in, with folksongs constituting a significant portion of it. Folksongs, with their imperceptible way of expression, identify gender roles, identities and relations. Stereotypical norms, beliefs and attitudes that define the way genders perceive, relate, and communicate with each other are also a result of folksongs. Jassal (2012) claims that folksongs serve as an integral medium of communication for the population that might not be able to express itself otherwise. However, not limited to this, folksongs also serve many other critical socio-cultural functions. They provide subversive spaces to women to exercise their agency by humiliating, defying and resisting against the patriarchal norms. The wedding

folksongs also serve another purpose of preparing the bride and groom for their future roles and responsibilities.

The message of this research study is that rather than considering folksongs merely a source of entertainment, researchers should pay attention to their performatory and cultural aspect of expression that plays a crucial role in construction and perpetuation of dominant and stereotypical ideologies (for both men and women). Hence, it may be appropriate to sum up here that folksongs greatly contribute towards the formation and reinforcement of gender identities, gender roles/responsibilities, gender relationships, stereotypical attitudes among Rajputs living in Bhakkar.

Songs as a form of shared tradition has always allowed women to acknowledge, express and affirm their emotions. However, it has also been proven that there have been subdued attempts to silence the voices of these women, hush their desires and mute their agency in the name of religion and perceived intellectual incompetency; merely so the institution of patriarchy could be refurbished by men. As observed, this is being done by banning the female cultural expression, as transmitted and communicated through the folksongs-which suggests and hints at themes of social nature, that may be perceived as unfavourable by men. Not only this, the lack of interest of the Rajput youth in their local language and cultural heritage (specifically the folksongs) as a result of cultural cringe may also land this oral tradition on the verge of extinction. Thus, there is a dire need to save this endangered genre. The value of the present research not only lies in documenting and preserving the Rajput folksongs but also the interpretations and emic perspectives have provided a rich insight into the lives of the commonly marginalized women.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abraham, M. (1970). *Motivation and personality* (2nd ed.). Nueva York: Harper & Row, Publishers.
- Abu- Lughod, L. (1990). The romance of resistance: Tracing transformations of powerthrough Bedouin women. *American ethnologist*, 17(1), 41-55.
- Abu-Lughod, L. (1993). Islam and the gendered discourses of death. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 25(2), 187-205.
- Agarwala, S. N. (1967). Widow remarriages in some rural areas of Northern India. *Demography*, 4(1), 126-134.
- Ahmed, A. (1957). Folk Songs of East Pakistan. *Journal of the International Folk Music Council*, 9, 47-49.
- Aswad, B. C. (1989). Lila Abu-Lughod, Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986). Pp. 336. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 21(2), 278-279.
- Capila, A. (2002). *Images of women in the folk songs of Garhwal Himalayas: A participatory research* (No. 6). Concept Publishing Company.
- Bahadur, K.P. (1978). *One Hundred Rural Songs of India*. Motilal Banarsidass
- Belli, M. (2010). Performing Paradigms of Modern Rajput Masculinities. *Asian ethnology*, 69(1).
- Berendt, J. (2010). *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*. Vintage.
- Bhandarkar, D. R. (1968). *Foreign elements in the Hindu population*. Department of Ancient Indian History and Culture, University of Calcutta.
- Bingley, H.A. (1991). *Asian educational services*. New Delhi, India.

- Bourdieu, P. (1998). *La domination masculine* (2002 ed.). *Lonrai: Editions du Seuil*.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- Brehm, S., & Kassin, S.N. (1993). *Social Psychology in Culture and Society* (2nd ed.). 12(2), 276-292.
- Bryman, A. (2006). Integrating quantitative and qualitative research: how is it done?. *Qualitative research*, 6(1), 97-113.
- Bukhari, F. (1974). *Sarhad key lok Geet*. National Institute of Folk Heritage, Islamabad, Pakistan.
- Chandra, M. (1982). *The History and Culture of the Indian People, The Vedic Age*. Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. 313–314.
- Chattopadhyaya, B. (1994). *Origin of the Rajputs: The Political, Economic and Social Processes in Early Medieval Rajasthan. The Making of Early Medieval India*. Oxford University Press.
- Chaudhary, M. (2018). *Revisiting Braj Culture through Selected Braj Folk Songs*. Assonance No.18, January 2018. *A Journal of Russian & Comparative Literary Studies*. Department of Russia and Centre for Comparative Literature, University of Calicut. India.
- Chaurasia, R. S. (2002). *History of ancient India: earliest times to 1000 AD*. Atlantic Publishers & Dist.
- Chowdhry, P. (1989). Customs in a peasant economy: Women in colonial Haryana. *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History, New Delhi: Kali for Women*, 302-360.
- Chowdhry, P. (2015). Popular perceptions of masculinity in rural north Indian oral traditions. *Asian Ethnology*, 74(1), 5-36.
- Collier, J., & Collier, M. (1986). *Visual anthropology: Photography as a research method*. UNM Press.

- Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2008). *Basics of qualitative research*. 3rd edn Thousand Oaks.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2016). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Sage publications.
- Talbot, C. (2016). *The Last Hindu Emperor: Prithviraj Chauhan and the Indian Past, 1200–2000*. Cambridge University Press.
- Daley, A. (2010). Reflections on reflexivity and critical reflection as critical research practices. *Affilia*, 25(1), 68-82.
- Das, N (2016.) The folk songs sung with special reference to the folksongs exclusively sung by the Assamese women. *International Journal of Current Research*, 8(11), 41932.
- Das, V., Burghart, R., & Cantlie, A. (1985). Paradigms of body symbolism: an analysis of selected themes in Hindu culture. *Indian religion*, 7, 180-207.
- Dei, F. Gender and roles from an anthropologist's. *Myths, Heroes Gender and Identities*, 117.
- Detha, S. (2015). Life Inside the Zenani Deorhi of Rajputs During the Medieval Period. *Scholarly Research Journal for Humanity Science and English Language*. Vol. II (IX). 2192.
- Singh, D. (2018). The Image of Women in Folk Traditions of Migration. *Journal of migration Affaires*. Vol.1 (1):41-58.
- Dickson-Swift, V., James, E. L., Kippen, S., & Liamputtong, P. (2006). Blurring boundaries in qualitative health research on sensitive topics. *Qualitative health research*, 16(6), 853-871.
- Dlamini, N. (2009). Gendered power relations, sexuality and subversion in Swazi women's folk songs performed during traditional marriage rites and social gatherings. *Muziki*, 6(2), 133-144.

- Durrani, A. M. K. (1991). *History of Multan: From the Early Period to 1849 AD*. Vanguard.
- Durrani, A., & Khan, R. N. A. (2014). Women roles in weddings: ethnography of wedding rituals among Rajput in Punjab, Pakistan. *Eurasian Journal of Anthropology*, 5(1), 32-45.
- Elliott, R., & Timulak, L. (2005). Descriptive and interpretive approaches to qualitative research. *A handbook of research methods for clinical and health psychology*, 1(7), 147-159.
- Fareed, B., (2010). Tappas in Punjabi Village (An unpublished thesis of MSc in Gender and Development). Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi.
- Farrer, C. R. (1975). Introduction: Women and folklore: Images and genres. *Journal of American Folklore*, v-xv.
- Fischer, L. R. (1983). Mothers and mothers-in-law. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 187-192.
- Forcucci, S. L. (1984). *A folk song history of America: America through its songs*. Prentice Hall.
- Fortes, M. T., & Structure, S. (1949). An Ashanti Case Study. *SOCIAL STRUCTURE: STUDIES PRESENTED TO AR RAD-CLIFFE-BROWN*.
- Fries-Britt, S., & Turner, B. (2002). Uneven stories: Successful Black collegians at a Black and a White campus. *The Review of Higher Education*, 25(3), 315-330.
- Gasouka, M., & Arvanitidou, Z. (2014). The importance and necessity of folklore gender studies. Introduction to the first stages of education and the appropriate teaching models. *Journal of Research in Gender Studies*, 4(1), 1190.
- Gifford, R. (2007). *Environmental psychology: Principles and practice* (p. 372). Colville, WA: Optimal books.

- Gilbert, A., & Sliap, Y. (2009). Reflexivity in the practice of social action: From self to inter-relational reflexivity. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 39(4), 468-479.
- Gill, G. K. (1998). Female feticide as a contemporary cultural practice in the Punjab. *Dialectical anthropology*, 23(2), 203-213.
- Glaser, B. G. & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago, Aldine Pub. Co.
- Glaser, B. G., Strauss, A. L., & Strutzel, E. (1968). The discovery of grounded theory; strategies for qualitative research. *Nursing research*, 17(4), 364.
- Gold, A. G. (1996). Khyal-Changing Yearnings in Rajasthani Womens Songs.
- Gold, A. G. (1997). Outspoken women: representation of female voices in a Rajasthani folklore community.
- Gunner, L. (1995). Clashes of interest: gender, status and power in Zulu praise poetry. *Power, marginality and African oral literature*, 185-196.
- Gupta, M. D. (1987). Selective discrimination against female children in rural Punjab, India. *Population and development review*, 77-100.
- Harlan, L. (1992). *Religion and Rajput women: The ethic of protection in contemporary narratives*. Univ of California Press.
- Harlan, L. (2003). *The Goddesses' Henchmen: Gender in Indian Hero Worship*. Oxford University Press on Demand.
- Hassan, I. N. (1995). *Folk Songs Representing the Feelings of Women at Grass Roots*. Allama Iqbal Open University.
- Hook, B. (2013). Understanding Patriarchy, [imagineborders.org/pdf/zines/Understanding Patriarchy.pdf](http://imagineborders.org/pdf/zines/Understanding_Patriarchy.pdf) Retrieved on May, 22, 2014.

- Hook, B. (2013). Understanding Patriarchy, imagineborders.org/pdf/zines. *Understanding Patriarchy.pdf* Retrieved on May, 22, 2014.
- Irfan, M. (2017). *Chitral ke Lok Geet*. National Institute of Folk Heritage. Islamabad, Pakistan.
- Islam, M. (1986). *Ghoriyan: Shadi biyah ky Geet*. Islamabad, Pakistan: Lok Virsa Publication House.
- Jackson, B. (1987). *Fieldwork*. University of Illinois Press.
- Jacobson, D. (1975). Songs of social distance. *Journal of South Asian Literature*, 11(1/2), 45-59.
- Jadoon, A. (1979). *Mahiye: Lok Geet Ki Aik Qism*. Islamabad, Pakistan: Collection and translation, Lok Virsa publication House.
- Jassal, S. T. (2012). *Unearthing gender: folksongs of North India*. Duke University Press.
- Kennedy, J., & Russell, C. (2021). Hegemonic masculinity in outdoor education. *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning*, 21(2), 162-171.
- Johnson, A. G. (2005). *The gender knot: Unraveling our patriarchal legacy*. Temple University Press.
- Jonejo, A. (1985). *Sindhi lok geet*. Gawalmandi, Rawalpindi, Pakistan.
- Jordan, R. A., & De Caro, F. A. (1986). Women and the Study of Folklore. *Signs: Journal of women in culture and society*, 11(3), 500-518.
- Jordan, R. A., & Kalcik, S. J. (Eds.). (2015). *Women's folklore, women's culture*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Joshi, V. (1995). *Polygamy and purdah: Women and society among Rajputs*. Rawat Publications.

- Kakar, S. (1989). *Ecstasy*. Penguin Books India.
- Kandiyoti, D. (1988). Bargaining with patriarchy. *Gender & society*, 2(3), 274-290.
- Kaur, R., & Garg, S. (2008). Addressing domestic violence against women: An unfinished agenda. *Indian journal of community medicine: official publication of Indian Association of Preventive & Social Medicine*, 33(2), 73.
- Kazmi, S. (1985.88). *Balti lok geet*. Islamabad, Pakistan: Lok Virsa Publication House.
- Khan, A. (2012). Anthropology, Feminism, and Literature: Blurring Boundaries. *The Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 20(2), 37.
- Khan, A. W., Leap, W. L., Khattak, N. J., & Serhan, R. (2012). *Contesting Subjectivities, Negotiating Agency, and Re-defining Boundaries: The Ideological Subject Formation and Positioning of Pakhtun Women*. American University.
- Khan, Q., & Naz, A. (2012). An analysis of the language of tappa (folk song type) and its role in gender identity formation in Pakhtun society, Pakistan.
- Kodish, D. (1987). Absent gender, silent encounter. *Journal of American Folklore*, 573-578.
- Kolff, D. H. (2002). *Naukar, Rajput, and Sepoy: The Ethnohistory of the Military Labour Market of Hindustan, 1450-1850* (Vol. 43). Cambridge University Press.
- Korb, A. (2004). On Factors Affecting Folklorisric Fieldword: On the example of Estonians in Siberia. *Folklore: Electronic Journal of Folklore*, (27), 101-132.
- Kothiyal, T. (2016). *Nomadic narratives: a history of mobility and identity in the Great Indian Desert*. Cambridge University Press.
- Kousaleos, N. (1999). *Feminist Theory and Folklore*.
- Kumar, D. (2017). Jatanā: A Peasant Woman's Ballad from Haryana in North India. *Folklore*, 128(1), 57-74.

- Unnithan-Kumar, M. (1997). *Identity, gender, and poverty: New perspectives on caste and tribe in Rajasthan*. Berghahn Books.
- Lashari, F. (2007). *Saraiki lok Sehrey: Lahore, Pakistan: collection and translation*, Joint publication program. Lok Virsa, Alfaisal Publication.
- Leary, M. R., & Tangney, J. P. (2003). *Handbook of self and identity*. New York. Guilford Press. Markus, H., & Wurf, E. (1987). *The dynamic self-concept*. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 38, 299-337.
- Lynch, T., Tompkins, J. E., Van Driel, I. I., & Fritz, N. (2016). Sexy, strong, and secondary: A content analysis of female characters in video games across 31 years. *Journal of Communication*, 66(4), 564-584.
- Mahabharati, S. (2011). *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of the Music of India*.: Oxford University Press. Retrieved 26 Apr. 2022, from <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195650983.001.0001/acref-9780195650983>.
- Mahmood, Saba. (2005). *The Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Masica, C. P. (1993). *The indo-aryan languages*. Cambridge University Press.
- McCorkel, J. A., & Myers, K. (2003). What difference does difference make? Position and privilege in the field. *Qualitative sociology*, 26(2), 199-231.
- Mead, M. (1949). *Male and female: A study of the sexes in a changing world*.
- Mernissi, F. (1975). *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in a Modern Muslim Society* (Cambridge, MA: Schenkman).
- Merriam, S. B., Johnson-Bailey, J., Lee, M. Y., Kee, Y., Ntseane, G., & Muhamad, M. (2001). Power and positionality: Negotiating insider/outsider status within and across cultures. *International journal of lifelong education*, 20(5), 405-416.

- Mills, M. (1993). Feminist Theory and the Study of folklore: a Twenty-year Trajectory toward Theory. *Western Folklore*, 52(2/4), 173-192.
- Minturn, L., & Kapoor, S. (1993). *Sita's daughters: Coming out of purdah: The Rajput women of Khalapur revisited* (Vol. 10). Oxford University Press on Demand.
- Mody, P. (2008). *The intimate state: Love-marriage and the law in Delhi*. Routledge.
- Mufti, M. (1983). Punjabi Mahia. Islamabad, Pakistan: National Institute of Folk heritage.
- Naravane, M. S. (1999). *The Rajputs of Rajputana: a glimpse of medieval Rajasthan*. APH Publishing.
- Narayan, K. (1986). Birds on a branch: Girlfriends and wedding songs in Kangra. *Ethos*, 14(1), 47-75.
- Narayan, K. (1994). Vanishing Ethnographers. *American Anthropologist*, 96(4), 949-952.
- Narayan, K. (1994). Women's Songs, Women's Lives. A View From Kangra. *Manushi*, (81), 2-10.
- Narayan, K. (1995). The practice of oral literary criticism: women's songs in Kangra, India. *Journal of American Folklore*, 243-264.
- Narayan, K. (1997). Singing from separation: women's voices in and about Kangra folksongs.
- Narayan, K. (2015). The Social Life of Transcriptions: Interactions around Women's Songs in Kangra. *Oral Tradition*, 29(2).
- Nasir, M. (1987). "Baiṭhak": Exorcism in Peshawar (Pakistan). *Asian folklore studies*, 159-178.
- Nilsson, U. (1984). A SELECTION OF WOMEN'S FOLK SONGS. *Journal of South Asian Literature*, 19(1), 117-123.

- Ochs, E., & Taylor, C. (2001). *The "father knows best" dynamic in dinnertime narratives*. na.
- Ojha, G. H. (1927). *Rajputane ka itihās. (History of Rajputana)*. Ajmer: Vaidika Yantralaya.
- Ortner, S. B. (1978). The virgin and the state. *Feminist studies*, 4(3), 19-35.
- Ortner, S. B. (1973). On Key Symbols 1. *American anthropologist*, 75(5), 1338-1346.
- Ortner, S. B., & Whitehead, H. (Eds.). (1981). *Sexual meanings: The cultural construction of gender and sexuality*. CUP Archive.
- Papanek, H., & Minault, G. (Eds.). (1982). *Separate worlds: Studies of purdah in South Asia*. Delhi: Chanakya Publications.
- Papanek, H. (1973). Purdah: Separate worlds and symbolic shelter. *Comparative studies in society and history*, 15(3), 289-325.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). Two decades of developments in qualitative inquiry: A personal, experiential perspective. *Qualitative social work*, 1(3), 261-283.
- Pervaiz, A. (1973). *Bun Phulwari*. Islamabad, Pakistan: Pakistan National Council of Arts, Khursheed Printers.
- Polit, D. F., & Hungler, B. P. (1995). *Nursing research principles and methods*, 5th Edn JB Lippincott Company.
- Qazalbash, A. (2017). *Aangai*. Islamabad, Pakistan: National Institute of folk heritage.
- Qureshi, A. (1999). *Rang Punjabi De*. Lahore, Pakistan: Adabi Books House.
- Radner, J. N. (Ed.). (1993). *Feminist messages: Coding in women's folk culture*. University of Illinois Press.
- Radner, J. N., & Lanser, S. S. (1987). The feminist voice: Strategies of coding in folklore and literature. *Journal of American Folklore*, 412-425.

- Radner, J. N., & Lanser, S. S. (1987). The feminist voice: Strategies of coding in folklore and literature. *Journal of American Folklore*, 412-425.
- Raheja, G. G. (1997). Negotiated solidarities: gendered representations of disruption and desire in north Indian oral traditions and popular culture.
- Raheja, G. G. (2017). "Hear the Tale of the Famine Year": Famine Policy, Oral Traditions, and the Recalcitrant Voice of the Colonized in Nineteenth Century India. *Oral Tradition*, 31(1).
- Raheja, G. G., & Gold, A. G. (1994). *Listen to the heron's words: reimagining gender and kinship in North India*. Univ of California Press.
- Raj, S. (1980). Loriyaan. Islamabad, Pakistan: Editor Mazrul Islam. Lok Virsa publication.
- Rasul, S. (2015). Gender and power relationships in the language of proverbs: Image of a woman. *FWU Journal of Social Sciences*, 9(2), 53-62.
- Riach, K. (2009). Exploring participant-centred reflexivity in the research interview. *Sociology*, 43(2), 356-370.
- Ribbens, J. (1989, January). Interviewing-An "unnatural situation"?. In *Women's Studies International Forum* (Vol. 12, No. 6, pp. 579-592). Pergamon.
- Rosaldo, R. (1993). *Culture & truth: the remaking of social analysis: with a new introduction*. Beacon Press.
- Sahlins, M. (1976). *Culture and practical reason* University of Chicago Press. *Chicago, IL*.
- Samreen, A. (2013). Folksongs: The Real Portrayal of Baltistan's Culture. *Pakistan Journal of History and Culture*, 34(2).

- Sanauddin, N. (2015). *Proverbs and patriarchy: analysis of linguistic sexism and gender relations among the Pashtuns of Pakistan* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Glasgow).
- Sathar, Z. A., & Kazi, S. (2000). Women's autonomy in the context of rural Pakistan. *The Pakistan Development Review*, 89-110.
- Schrock, D., & Schwalbe, M. (2009). Men, masculinity, and manhood acts. *Annual review of sociology*, 35, 277-295.
- Scott, J. C. (2008). *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*. Yale university press.
- Seidman, I. (2006). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*. Teachers College Press.
- Sen, S. N. (1999). *Ancient Indian history and civilization*. New Age International.
- Sharabi, H. (1988). *Neopatriarchy: A theory of distorted change in Arab society*. Oxford University Press, USA.
- Sharma, D. (1975). *Early Chauhan Dynasties: (a Study of Chauhan Political History, Chauhan Political Institutions and Life in the Chauhan Dominions from 800 to 1316 AD)*. Motilal Banarsidass.
- Sharma, S. (2007). Domestic violence in Nepali society: Root Cause and Consequences A research report. *Kathmandu: Social Inclusion Research Fund (SRIF/SNV)*.
- Sharma, S. R. (1999). *Mughal Empire in India: A systematic study including source material* (Vol. 1). Atlantic Publishers & Dist.
- Shefer, T., & Ruiters, K. (1998). The masculine construct in heterosex. *Agenda*, 14(37), 39-45.
- Shepherd, L. J. (2006). Veiled references: Constructions of gender in the Bush administration discourse on the attacks on Afghanistan post-9/11. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 8(1), 19-41.

- Shih, K. Y., & Pyke, K. (2010). Power, resistance, and emotional economies in women's relationships with mothers-in-law in Chinese immigrant families. *Journal of Family Issues*, 31(3), 333-357.
- Singh, A. (2015). Of Women, by Men: Understanding the 'First Person Feminine' in Bhojpuri Folksongs. *Sociological Bulletin*, 64(2), 171-196.
- Singh, D. (2016). The Image of Women in Folk-Traditions of Migration. *Sociology*.
- Singh, N. (2011). Suhāg and Ghoṛā'n: Cultural Elucidation in a Female Voice. *Journal of Punjab Studies*, 18.
- Singh, R. B. (1964). *History of the Chāhamānas*. N. Kishore.
- Singhji, V. (1994). *The Rajputs of Saurashtra*. Popular Prakashan.
- Skinner, D., Holland, D., & Adhikari, G. B. (1994). The songs of Tij: A genre of critical commentary for women in Nepal. *Asian Folklore Studies*, 259-305.
- Srivastava, I. (1991). Woman as portrayed in women's folk songs of North India. *Asian Folklore Studies*, 269-310.
- Stoeltje, B. J. (1988). Introduction: feminist revisions. *Journal of folklore research*, 141-153.
- Strathern, M. (1987). An awkward relationship: The case of feminism and anthropology. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 12(2), 276-292.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research techniques* (pp. 1-312). Thousand oaks, CA: Sage publications.
- Tewari, L. G. (1988). "Sohar": Childbirth Songs of Joy. *Asian folklore studies*, 257276.
- Thapar, R. (2004). *Early India: From the Origins to AD 1300*. Berkeley.
- Tiwari, A. R. G. (1960, January). SOME GAPS IN THE HISTORY OF RAJASTHAN. In *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* (Vol. 23, pp. 181-187). Indian History Congress.

- Tod, J. (1894). *Annals and Antiquities of Rajast'han: Or the Central and Western Rajpoot States of India* (Vol. 1). SK Lahiri.
- Trawick, M. (2017). *Death, Beauty, Struggle*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Turner, V., Abrahams, R. D., & Harris, A. (2017). *The ritual process: Structure and anti-structure*. Routledge.
- Uberoi, P. (2006). *Freedom and destiny: Gender, family, and popular culture in India*. Oxford University Press.
- Upadhyaya, K. D. (1957). An introduction to Bhojpuri folksongs and ballads. *Midwest folklore*, 85-94.
- Vail, L., & White, L. (1983). Forms of resistance: songs and perceptions of power in colonial Mozambique. *The American Historical Review*, 88(4), 883-919.
- Van Gennep, A. (1960). *The Rites of Passage*. Chicago, The University of Chicago.
- Vishwanath, L. S. (1998). Efforts of colonial state to suppress female infanticide: use of sacred texts, generation of knowledge. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 1104-1112.
- Wade, B. C. (1972). Songs of traditional wedding ceremonies in North India. *Yearbook of the International Folk Music Council*, 4, 57-65.
- Walby, S. (1990). *Theorizing patriarchy*. Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackweel.
- Wasim, F. (2014). *South Asian American daughter-in-law/mother-in-law relationships, cultural values conflict, and help-seeking for domestic violence*. Oklahoma State University.
- Weinreich, P., & Saunderson, W. (Eds.). (2005). *Analysing identity: Cross-cultural, societal and clinical contexts*. Routledge.
- Wiersma, J. (1988). The press release: Symbolic communication in life history interviewing. *Journal of Personality*, 56(1), 205-238.

Wilson, J. (1855). *History of the Suppression of Infanticide in Western India Under the Government of Bombay: Including Notices of the Provinces and Tribes in which the Practice Has Prevailed*. Smith, Taylor and Company.

Winnicott, D. W. (1987). *The Child, the Family, and the Outside World* (1964).

APPENDICES

Map of Pakistan

Map of Punjab

Map of District Bhakkar (Punjab)

Questions Guide

Rajput Folksongs

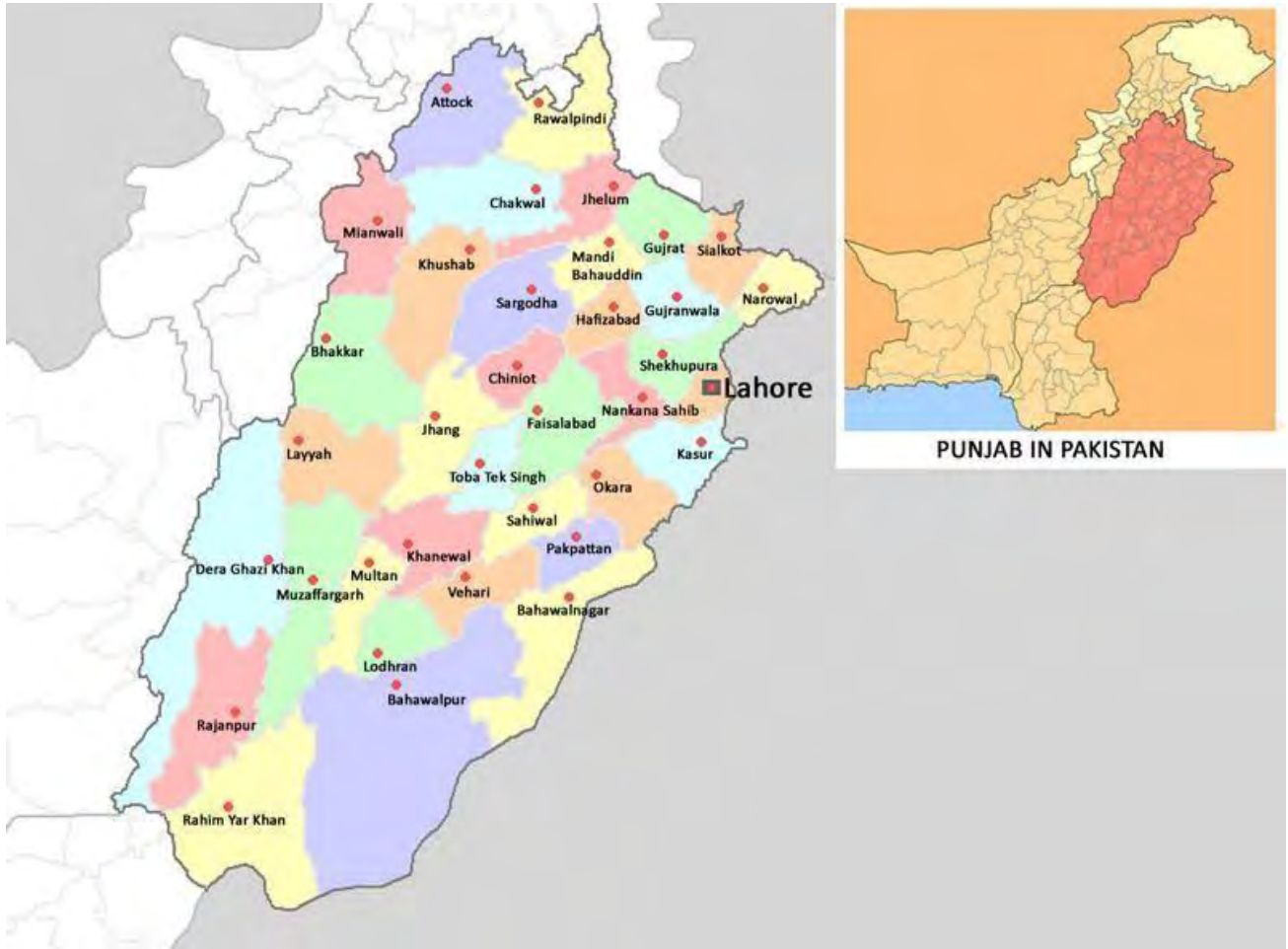
DRSML QAU

APPENDIX. NO. 1



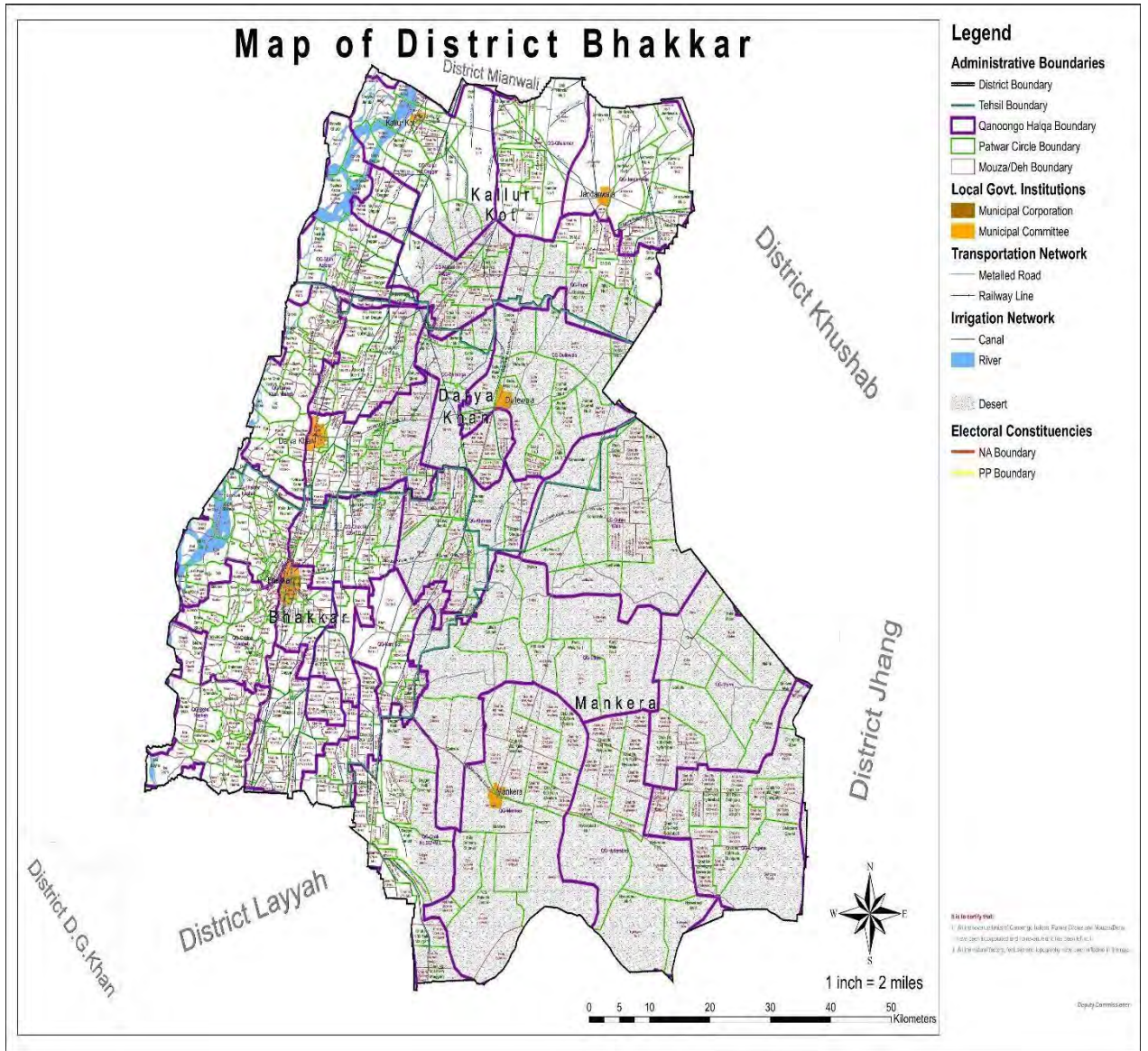
Map of Pakistan

APPENDIX. NO. 2



Map of Punjab

APPENDIX. No. 3



Map of District Bhakkar

APPENDIX. NO. 4

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Chapter No 2. METHODOLOGY Main question

1. Why do you sing (perform) folksongs?

Probing questions

- 1- Why do you hesitate to sing folksongs?
- 2- How do you feel after singing (performing) folksongs?
- 3- Are folksongs still popular (nowadays)?
- 4- Why are folksongs not liked by the younger Rajput generation?

Chapter No 4. HISTORY OF RAJPUTS AND THE RESEARCH LOCALE

Main question

1. Why do you sing (perform) a folksong?

Probing questions

1. Why do you hesitate to sing folksongs?
2. What is your feeling after singing (performing) folksongs?
3. Are folksongs still popular (nowadays)?
4. Why are folksongs not liked by the younger Rajput generation?

Chapter No 5. PRE-WEDDING FOLK SONGS (BUTNA CEREMONY)

Demographic Profiling

1. Name	
2. Date of Interview	
3. Place of Interview	
4. Event on which the folksong is sung	<i>Butna/Henna/Wedding day/Baby's birth</i>
5. The song retold by the participant as	Narrated verbally in prose/Sung by the participant
6. Who was the singer?	Household woman/Professional singer

Main questions

1. Describe the *Butna* ceremony in detail?
2. What is the significance of *Butna* ceremony in the Rajput culture?

Probing questions

1. Why do *Butna* songs begin with *Allah waley gaane* (spiritual songs)?
2. Why do *Butna* songs reflect the rebellious nature of a Rajput girl?
3. Are the Rajput girls rebellious in real life?
4. What are the ingredients of the *butna* paste?
5. What is the cultural significance of the *butna* paste?
6. Explain the symbolism behind the rituals, activities etc. in the *Butna* ceremony.
7. Why is it important for the bride and groom to apply the *butna* paste?

Chapter No 5. PRE-WEDDING SONGS (HENNA CEREMONY)

Name _____

Date of Interview _____

Place of Interview _____

Event on which the folksong is sung	<i>Butna/Henna/Wedding day/Baby's birth</i>
The song retold by the participant as	Narrated verbally in prose/Sung by the participant
Who is the singer?	Household woman/Professional singer

Main questions

1. Describe the *Henna* ceremony in detail?
2. What is the significance of *Henna* ceremony in the Rajput culture?

Probing questions

- 1- Describe the *Henna* ceremony in detail and its significance against the backdrop of the Rajput culture.
- 2- What is the purpose of *Henna* celebrations?

- 3- Why is *Henna* ceremony held? What does it symbolize?
- 4- Why is *henna* applied on the bride's hand? What does it symbolize? 5- Did *Henna* ceremony use to be different in the olden days?
- 6- What are the significant differences in the old and present day's *Henna* ceremony?
- 7- The folk songs on *Henna* day reflect a romantic relationship between husband and wife. Is it a real representation of the Rajput society?
- 8- What are the cultural expectations from the bride and groom on *Henna* day, as reflected through the songs?

Chapter No 6. WEDDING DAY SONGS (AFFINAL RELATIONS)

Name _____

Date of Interview _____

Place of Interview _____

Event on which the folksong is sung	<i>Butna/Henna/Wedding day/Baby's birth</i>
-------------------------------------	---

The song retold by the participant as	Narrated verbally in prose/Sung by the participant
---------------------------------------	--

Who is the singer?	Household woman/Professional singer
--------------------	-------------------------------------

Main questions

1. Describe the wedding day celebrations held in the bride's home.
2. Describe the wedding day celebrations in the groom's home.
3. Why are *suhag* songs performed?
4. How would you describe the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law's relationship within the context of the Rajput culture?
5. Describe the *Sehra Bandi* ceremony in detail? **Probing questions**

1. What is your opinion on the relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law in real life?
2. Is it different from what is reflected in the songs?
3. Some of the songs on mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship portray fight scenes. What is the socio-cultural background of these domestic fights?
4. Why do various themes in wedding songs express insults/humiliation of the in-laws by their daughter-in-law?

5. The folksongs talk about sisters-in-law and their hostile relationship with the newly wed bride. Explain this within the context of the Rajput culture.
6. Discuss the strategies that a daughter-in-law uses to overcome the adverse treatment subjected towards her by the in-laws (as portrayed in the folksongs).
7. Does a daughter-in-law use these strategies in real life too?
8. What is the life like in the joint family system for the Rajput couples of Bhakkar?
9. What is your opinion on the relationship between the bhabhi (daughter-in-law) and nanad (husband's wife)?
10. Is it the same as reflected in the folksongs?
11. How does the mother-in-law try to assert her authority? Is this reflected in the folksongs?
12. Why is the theme of separation quite prominent in the wedding folksongs?
13. Why does the wife show resistance for sending her husband to the other city?
14. Why does a wife/girl have an intense desire for going outside the home to places such as gardens, roads or castles?
15. What is the reason behind the doubts/mistrust in husband-wife relationship as reflected in the songs?
16. Why do these songs reflect domestic violence?
17. Why do some themes in wedding songs reflect the insecurities and doubts between husband and wife?
18. Humiliation of husband is also a dominant theme of wedding folksongs. How does this affect the husband-wife relationship in real life?
19. Discuss the preparation of *barat*. How does it start?
20. Why kind of songs are sung on the *barat* (wedding day event)?
21. When the *barat* reaches the bride's home, what rituals are performed?
22. Why and how do the women relatives lament on the bride's departure?
23. After the *barat* procession reaches the groom's home (with the bride), what type of rituals are performed?
24. After the arrival of *barat* at the groom's house, why type of folksongs are sung?
25. What are the main themes of the suhag songs?
26. Why are suhag songs expressive in a romantic sense?
27. Why is elder brother-in-law targeted for flirtation from a new bride?

27. What kind of socio-cultural relations are expected from a new bride and her husband's elder brother in Rajput culture?
28. Why is *sehra bandi* ceremony held? What is its socio-cultural significance among the Rajputs?
29. What are the main themes of *sehra bandi* songs?
30. Why do *sehra bandi* songs begin with spiritual songs (*Allah waley gaane*)?
31. As documented, all the *sehra songs* address the groom as raja (king). What is the symbolism behind it?
32. Rajput groom is portrayed as a hypersexual and an immature man. What is the reason behind it?
33. Can you describe the father and son (groom and his father) relationship as reflected in the songs and in real life?

Chapter No 7. WEDDING DAY SONGS (OTHER THAN HUSBAND-WIFE RELATIONSHIP)

Main questions

1. What is the traditional image of Rajput women that exist in the folksongs?
2. Why does the bride express her love for the natal relatives in the folksongs?
3. How is masculinity defined against the backdrop of the Rajput culture?
4. Why and how is women's sexuality reflected in the folksongs?

Probing questions

1. Some thematic songs present the comparison of natal and conjugal homes. Can you explain the reason behind it?
2. How many types of stereotypical roles of Rajput women are expressed through the folksongs?
3. Why Rajput women are portrayed as such?
4. Why Rajput girl misses her natal relatives so much as folksongs themes express?
5. Explain in detail the relationships between mother-daughter, father-son, father-daughter, brother-sister in your cultural context.
6. Are these relationships depicted the same way as they exist in real life?
7. Does the relationship between a brother and sister transform, once she gets married?
8. In folksongs, how is Rajput manhood reflected?
9. What are the necessary physical and cultural traits expected from a Rajput man?
10. Why are Rajput men portrayed as violent and aggressive?

11. Few songs depict Rajput man as being hypersexual, which is considered culturally acceptable too, what is the reason/background of this theme?
12. Explain in detail why Rajput as a community take pride in their past/royal ancestry?
13. What is the resemblance between Rajput men as portrayed in folksongs and real-life situations?
14. How a Rajput man, as a lover, is reflected through folksongs?
15. Some of the songs present Rajput woman as being asexual. Is this perception consistent with the real life?
16. Few thematic songs discuss the romantic emotions and nuptial sentiments. Does Rajput culture allow the girls to express such feelings? If yes, how and if no, why?
17. Talking about sex in Rajput culture, especially for women is a taboo subject. However, in folksongs sex is a theme which subtly express the women's desire. How would you explain this contrast?
18. The flirtation of Rajput women is expressed through folksongs. What is the reason for this theme?

Chapter No 8. JACHCHA / SOHAR SONGS

Name _____

Date of Interview _____

Place of Interview _____

Event on which the folksong is sung

Butna/Henna/Wedding day/Baby's birth

The song retold by the participant as

Narrated verbally in prose/Sung by the participant

Who is the singer?

Household woman/Professional singer

Main questions

1. Describe the socio-cultural importance of *jachcha*/sohar songs

Probing questions

1. What is the socio-cultural context of singing *jachcha* folk songs?
2. What is meant by *jachcha* rani?
3. Why *are* *jachcha* songs not sung nowadays?

4. Are there any *jachcha* songs for baby girl?
5. Why is the birth of a baby girl not celebrated in the Rajput culture?
6. Is there any *lori* for a baby girl? If not, why?
7. What is the main theme reflected in loris?
8. What are the main themes expressed in *jachcha* folksongs?

APPENDIX. NO. 5

CORRESPONDENCE VIA EMAILS

On Jul 13, 2015, at 4:08 PM, Atifa Nasir wrote:

Dear Dr. Kirin Narayan,

It would be a great honor for me to write to you this email. Let me introduce myself. I am Atifa Durrani, a PhD scholar of Anthropology from Quaid-I-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan.

I have been reading your research articles since long. Your research on Rajput women of Kangra provided me insight of this community in understanding their folksongs in their specific cultural context. I also used them as a reference material for my M.Phil. research which was on the Rajput community living in Pakistan. The specific topic of my research was *portrayal of Rajput women in folk wedding and birth songs (an ethnographic study of village Wando, Gujranwala, Punjab, Pakistan)*.

I loved this topic and after reading your research papers I got to know many things about Rajput women in relation to their culture. Though Muslim Rajput are somewhat different in their cultural context, however the songs specially the wedding songs reflected some of their ancestral linkages. Lacking the religious aspect in Muslim here in their folk songs, royalty, pride in blood and commitment at all cost still persists among Rajput people as it used to be many years ago.

For my PhD studies, I expanded my topic more in order to explore the other field i.e. Male folk songs. In my M.Phil. research, I restricted myself only to Rajput women wedding and birth folksongs but now I expanded it more by including Rajput male folk songs which are either sung by male only or sung for males by women .

The folk songs that has been documented, majority of them lack analytical analysis with cultural specific explanations. Therefore small help for the research to understand folksongs in specific way. However while reading for my M. Phil studies, I took additional information for my understanding from your articles. They helped me a lot especially in critical analysis of the folksongs in relation to their cultural context.

It would be very kind of you, if may guide me to any resources (electronic or text) that can be helpful for my own understanding as well as which I can use a reference material for my further research study.

It would be an honor for me if you guide/ refer me to other material or focal person for material on Rajput (male or female) folksongs. In Pakistan, there has been dearth of research on Rajput community. Not a single research study has done on this community.

It would be honor for me even if you reply to me. Will be waiting for your reply

Thanking you in anticipation,

Kind regards,

Atifa Nasir

Assistant Professor,
Department of Gender and Women Studies
Block no. 11, Room no. 105
Allama Iqbal Open University , H-8
Islamabad , Pakistan off.0092-051-9057842

Dear Atifa--if I may,

Thanks for your note. I'm glad to learn of your research on songs. You must be aware of Ann Grodzins Gold's work on women's songs in Rajasthan? She has many articles published in addition to her book with Gloria Raheja, "Listen to the Heron's Words". Also, Lindsay Harlan's corpus of writing. In a separate email I'll send a link to a recent issue of Oral Traditions. You might find further references in these articles and in the journal's previous issues.

All best wishes,
Kirin Narayan

On Mon, Jul 13, 2015 at 4:28 AM, Atifa Nasir wrote:

Dear Dr. Harlan,

It would be a great honor for me to write to you this email.

Let me introduce myself. I am Atifa Durrani, a PhD scholar of Anthropology from QuaidI-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan.

I have been reading your research articles since long. Your research on Rajput women in particular provided me insight of this community in understanding their folksongs in their

specific cultural context. I also used them as a reference material for my M.Phil. research which was on the Rajput community living in Pakistan. The specific topic of my research was *portrayal of Rajput women in folk wedding and birth songs (an ethnographic study of village Wando, Gujranwala, Punjab, Pakistan)*.

I loved this topic and after reading your researches either books or in articles . I got to know many things about Rajput women in relation to their culture. Though Muslim Rajput are somewhat different in their cultural context, however the songs specially the wedding songs reflected some of their ancestral linkages. Lacking the religious aspect in Muslim here in their folk songs, royalty, pride in blood and commitment at all cost still persists among Rajput people as it used to be many years ago.

For my PhD studies, I expanded my topic more in order to explore the other field i.e. Male folk songs. In my M.Phil. research, I restricted myself only to Rajput women wedding and birth folksongs but now I expanded it more by including Rajput male folk songs which are either sung by male only or sung for males by women .

It would be very kind of you, if may guide me to any resources (electronic or text) that can be helpful for my own understanding as well as which I can use a reference material for my further research study.

It would be an honor for me that if you guide/ refer me to other material or focal person for material on Rajput (male or female) identities specially Rajput men or muscularity so that i may better understand the Rajput men through songs . In Pakistan, there has been dearth of research on Rajput community. Not a single research study has done on this community.

It would be honor for me even if you reply to me. Will be waiting for your reply

Thanking you in anticipation,

Kind regards,

Atifa Nasir

Assistant Professor,

Department of Gender and Women Studies

Block no. 11, Room no. 105

Allama Iqbal Open University , H-8

Islamabad , Pakistan off.0092-051-9057842

On Tue, Jul 14, 2015 at 6:50 AM, Lindsey Harlan wrote:

Dear Atifa Nasir,

I was so pleased to learn of your interests. I have not worked on songs, men's or women's since I published my last book, *The Goddesses' Henchmen*, which has a chapter on women's songs. The bibliography has references to oral epics, sung by men from various castes, about heroes, including Rajputs. Unfortunately, it has been some time since I worked on songs, but am glad for your interest! I think that ethnomusicologists would have more to offer in terms of recent suggestions.

My very best,

Lindsey Harlan

Dear Dr. Lindsey Harlan,

Thank you so much for replying me. I am honored by your reply.

Yes. I have seen your book on the internet but I could not find it in book stores here. I will certainly look for it as I am sure it would be a grate help to me for men songs and knowing about muscultanities of Indian men specially Rajputs.

Thanks again for replying and helping me out. I hope you would not mind if I may contact you further regarding my research interest.

With my best regards,

Atifa