

# ***Jakdi*: Haryanvi Women's Negotiations with Systematic Subordination in a Hegemonic Family Institution**

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## **Abstract**

Haryana's poor sex ratio for decades is one of the indicators of the severe patriarchy in the state. To bring about any progressive change, it is important to know how women themselves negotiate their lives in such patriarchal social structures. Folk songs sung by women are a significant unofficial source to understand this negotiation. Raymond Williams argues that no hegemonic society is absolute, and there is always an existence of traceable oppositional elements within any effective hegemony. The 'jakdi' genre of Haryanvi women's folk songs is inherently oppositional in nature because of the exclusive female space that 'jakdis' enjoy. Yet one often encounters internalisation of patriarchal ideologies by women themselves in 'jakdis'. The present paper attempts to trace this larger process of opposition and internalisation through 'jakdi' folk songs of Haryanvi women.

**Keywords:** Gender; Internalisation; Jakdi; Opposition; Patriarchal structure.

*Jakdis*, one of the genres of the folk songs of Haryanvi women, show that instead of being a neutral site of socialization, family is an institution practicing hegemonic "domination and subordination" (Williams 110). The jakdi genre holds special significance because these songs are sung in an exclusive female space where men are strictly barred. Thus, women get an opportunity to express their opinions without inhibition.

Among all the Indian states, the lowest sex ratio of Haryana for decades, is a manifestation of a lived cultural hegemony. jakdi word literally means 'to be captured', and fittingly shows how women understand and negotiate their captured state in the patriarchal family structure of Haryana.

Traditionally, jakdi has been a “neglected genre as it was considered a trivial activity that women involved themselves [in] simultaneously with their daily chores” (Saroja 16). But the systematic subordination of women in the hegemonic family institution is the most revealing in the jakdis because women let go off their bitter feelings for their various relatives, through the jakdis. The themes of jakdis involve the protagonist woman presenting her perspective about various social roles, as a daughter, wife, sister, sister-in-law, lover and so on.

The jakdis analysed in this paper to understand the social status of Haryanvi women have been selected from *Jakdi: Haryanvi Mahilaon ke Sarv Sulabh Geet*. It is an anthology of Jakdis in Haryanvi language, and these compositions have been translated here in English for the first time. The excerpts have been analysed and critically examined. The following analysis is limited to the understanding of ‘upper’ caste Haryanvi women’s jakdis (because of the occupations and concerns reflected). Since Haryanvi folk songs are mostly available in oral form, the lack of written text, especially of the ‘lower’ caste women’s jakdis, makes the access limited. The jakdi songs reflect the physical reality of the unpaid and overworked Haryanvi women co-existing with their cultural devaluation, which they often complain about in jakdis. jakdis register their negotiation with social devaluation despite being heavily overworked.

Suicide is a common trope in jakdis, especially by wives, reflecting discontent with an exploitative society, wherein absolutely nobody offers them any consolation. In one jakdi, the protagonist elaborates the entire process of making food and taking it to the fields, emphasizing upon the time and labor involved. The invisibility of her labor is conspicuous when her husband says, he won’t eat because she has mixed poison in the food. Dejected, the woman returns from the far off fields and immediately shifts to do the next task of fetching water from the far-off wells and commits suicide there. Significantly, although the woman is aware of her hard work and unfair treatment extended to her, instead of blaming her husband, she sympathizes with his expression of regret later. Haryanvi women internalize patriarchy and never blame men, as can be seen through the jakdis.

### **I Brought and Cooked Saag of Cauliflower**

I brought and cooked *saag* of cauliflower

I cooked chapattis by pressing the *belan*

I travelled to the fields adjusting it in the *tasla*

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O! eat the Chapattis I've brought *saag* too  
I shall not eat it you've brought mixing poison in it  
I came back home adjusting the chapattis in the *tasla*  
I went to fetch water with the *tokni* on my head  
I jumped into the well having strengthened my heart  
He came running when he heard of my suicide  
O! I've received great sorrow by calling the *saag* poisoned  
O! I've got great sorrow by marrying a farmer.

(*Haryanvi* 73).

In the above *jakdi*, *saag* is vegetable curry, *tasla* is a round shallow pan put on the head, and *tokni* is a deep vessel for fetching water.

In another *jakdi*, an overworked woman asks her husband for money to go to her natal home, and enquires about the directions. The denial of agency to women is reflected in her neither having any money despite her hard work, nor knowing the way to her own parental house. She's lost on the way and commits suicide, reflecting that there was practically nothing left for her anywhere in the world. When everyone cries at the news of her death, she blames everybody, manifesting her awareness of the web of institutionalized patriarchy in the family structure, which actually pushed her to commit suicide. She blames her mother for marrying her young, which allowed her to be exploited by everyone. She blames her father for marrying her into an evil family. She blames her 'saas' (mother-in-law) who had sent her to the fields with empty stomach. She blames her husband who had said he'd rather marry a rich constable's daughter. She argues that their lamentation is worthless because all of them pushed her to suicide.

### **Sister! the Fields were very Deep**

Sister, the fields were very deep and I was sent to plough them  
Leaving the plough my husband came and I sat next to him  
O husband! give me the fare and tell me the way to my village  
Get lost *whore*, you're not a sub-inspector's daughter  
I walked fifty *kos* sister, I couldn't find the way to my village  
I covered my face tightly and threw my life in the well  
My mother cries at my maternal house, o my daughter is murdered

Why you crying o mother, you sent me here as an ignorant little child  
My father sitting near her cries, o my daughter is murdered  
Why you crying o father, you married me off in an unfortunate house  
My *saas* cries, o why didn't you come back home  
Why you crying my *saas*, you sent me out with hungry stomach  
Sister my *devar* and *jeth* take out my body and o my husband cries inconsolably  
Why are you crying o mad husband! do marry a sub inspector's daughter now.  
(Haryanvi 76).

Here, *kos* is a measure of distance approximately three thousand metres, *saas* is mother in law, *devar* is younger brother in law, *jeth* is elder brother in law.

Domestic violence meted out to women, reflecting their devaluation despite being the most diligent worker in the household, is a recurring theme in the *jakdis*. One protagonist carries food to the fields and works throughout the day, bundling 200 bunches of sugarcane. But on returning home, she's meted with 200 heavy stick blows executed by her husband, with no sane reason.

### Green suit

Green suit, my black braids and fully developed breasts  
I have to take the *haali's* food to the fields today  
Two hundred *poole* I tied, some *joon* still remained  
I came home having tied them all, o the jealous one picked up the *laathi*  
Two hundred *laathis* I received, some shoe-beating remained  
Having beaten to his satisfaction, he asked where I was hurt  
Putting fire in the vessel, he started soothing my aches.  
Pockets had green handkerchief, he started wiping my tears.  
(Haryanvi 74)

Here, *haali* is farmer, *poole* is tied bunches of harvested crop, *joon* is untied harvest and *laathi* is a large stick.

Her social devaluation results in her repetitive mistreatment with every-

one's attempt to scold and physically overpower her, even if she works for her in-laws the whole time. However, jakdis voicing the women's perspectives, often show them in an authoritative position resisting patriarchal norms. Thus, in one jakdi, the speaker complains to her husband of how, when she cuts wheat, her father-in-law complains that she's not cutting it properly and destroying the fodder; when she makes chapattis her mother-in-law grumbles that she's making them too thick and destroying the flour; when she milks the buffalo her 'jeth' (elder brother-in-law) complains that she is destroying the buffalo; when she washes clothes her 'devar' (younger brother-in-law) complains that she is destroying the clothes; when she fetches water her 'nanad' (sister-in-law) complains that she walks too slowly. Unfortunately, her husband also keeps complaining about her and asks her to commit suicide. Thus, a married woman's life is very difficult as every relative not only exploits her labor but also criticizes her. Yet, the woman resists her exploitation and takes it as a challenge. Thus, she asserts her agency by arguing that she'll continue grinding pulses on their chests and won't be bothered by their constant complaints.

### I will grind pulses on your chest

I cut wheat, o dear, my *susra* fights too much with me  
 You cut it too high and destroy the fodder  
 I cook *rotis*, o dear, my *saas* fights too much with me  
 You make them too thick and destroy the flour  
 I fetch water, o dear, my *nanad* fights daily  
 You walk too slow and destroy the *panghat*  
 I milk the buffaloes, o dear, my *jetha* fights daily  
 You do it too easy and destroy the buffalo  
 I wash the clothes, o dear, my *devar* fights too much with me  
 You don't clean properly and destroy the pants  
 I walk in the porch, o dear, my *fauji* fights too much with me  
 Go jump in the well, you're destroying my life  
 I won't jump, o my father will be defamed  
 I will stay here only, o, I would grind pulses on your chest.

(*Haryanvi* 166)

Here, *susra* is father in law, *saas* is mother in law, *nanad* is sister in law, *panghat* is the place for drawing water from the wells, *jetha* is elder broth-

er in law, devar is younger brother in law and fauji is an armyman.

The condition of 'upper' caste women, whose husbands migrate for work, is even more deplorable. Haryana has a "deep rooted tradition of men seeking work outside the agrarian sector" (Chowdhry 175). The wives of these men take over all sorts of work at home. Along with their complaints of loneliness, the jakdis register grievances pertaining to a woman's devaluation at the hands of her in-laws, despite her incessant work in the marital house.

In one jakdi, the woman speaker complains of her incessant work: she is made to grind cereals during the day by her 'saas' (mother in law), and to cut fodder during night by her 'jeth' (elder brother in law) (*Haryanvi* 110). In another jakdi, her devaluation is seen when 'jeth' and 'devar' (younger brother in law) buy sarees for their wives, and when she also asks for it from her 'saas', the latter poisons her (*Haryanvi* 154). Another woman protagonist gets beaten by her 'jeth' and 'jethani', in the absence of her husband (*Haryanvi* 160). Another one gets thrown out of her own house by her 'saas' (*Haryanvi* 171).

These are not merely selective fictional themes in jakdis, but they represent an invariably hierarchical relationship of a married Haryanvi woman with her in-laws. The division of land, as explained above, and the overall poverty of agrarian families, result in economic compulsion of forced living within the hierarchical joint family set-up. In one jakdi, the husband asks his wife to get separated, but the wife is aware that it will imply impossible amount of investment to establish a separate house. Their meager income of 2.5 thousands wouldn't make it possible (*Haryanvi* 111). Even when she is scolded and abused by her in-laws despite her hard work, the couple is bound to remain within the joint family. Thus, in one jakdi, a migrated husband asks his wife to adjust with her abuse for fourteen more years, as establishing a separate house would not be possible (*Haryanvi* 180).

A married woman's in-laws, especially her mother-in-law, do not want her to be loved by her husband. This is because, patriarchy creates an intense hierarchy even amongst the women of the house. The mother-in-law specifically controls the daughter-in-law of the house. Women exercise power, only by influencing men's decisions, through their social role as a wife, mother, sister or daughter. Thus, they keep striving to win the favor of men of the house, leading to each other's social devaluation. It may be said that the 'systematic' devaluation of women, by women themselves,

makes it impossible for them to mobilize a group identity against their common exploitation under patriarchy.

A woman in an intensely patriarchal society gets “really accepted in the family only when she produces a son” (Chowdhry 266). As a consequence, the authority of women is seriously harmed if her son starts favoring the wife. Thus, in one *jakdi*, a wife complains for not being given food by her mother in law. When the husband favors his wife and promises to bring sweets, the mother-in-law warns him of not ‘spoiling’ his wife. When he scolds her back, it implies that the mother-in-law’s authority has begun to diminish and is being replaced by that of the wife.

### The *bohiya* is put in the *Almirah*

Ae my husband came for the vacations, a motor came to fetch me  
 Ae I went to my *susra*'s house, my *saasad* came to welcome me  
 Ae I pressed her feet dedicatedly, she didn't bless me  
 Ae I did *roti* and *saag*, did it hungry stomach  
 Ae my *saas* came from outside, she put the *bohiya* in the *almirah*  
 O unfortunate one! why did you fetch me, she doesn't give me *roti* to eat  
 Re don't cry *Silochna* wife, would bring *pede* for you to eat  
 Ae his mother cried from below, don't spoil the *bahu*, son  
 Re you get lost unfortunate, I'll get you thrown out of the village  
 Re son don't talk so, I suffered a lot to give you birth  
 Re you ate *goond-jamaan*, you enjoyed to give me birth.  
 (*Haryanvi* 158).

Here, *bohiya* is a chappati container, *susra* is father in law, *saasad* is mother in law, *roti* is chappati, *saag* is vegetable curry, *pede* is a sweet, *bahu* is daughter in law and *goond jamaan* is a sweet.

In another *jakdi*, the speaker notes how her mother-in-law ‘instigated’ her son and so he beat her (*Haryanvi* 101). By reinforcing the son’s authority over his wife, the mother-in-law channelizes the household patriarchy through herself.

Since women are instrumental for managing men’s property by ensuring a legitimate heir through marriage, they are rendered worthless if they do not beget a son. It renders a common theme of mistreatment in many *jakdis*, such as a woman gets turned out of her marital house when she fails

to beget a son. It reflects how patriarchal families make way for arranging another woman as an alternative and potential instrument for bearing the male heir. The woman's explicit complaint about her expulsion from the house for her inability to beget a son, reflects her own awareness of a woman's devaluation in a patriarchal society.

**O gori, you have neither son nor daughter**

Please make roti, *Re gori*, I have an important work

What's so important, O *raja*, what's lost

You have neither a son, *Re gori*, nor daughter

In Delhi, *Re gori*, there are beautiful girls

To bring a beautiful girl, *Re Gori*, is important

She would conceive, *Re Gori*, a boy or a girl

Leave leave, *Re Gori*, this palace and bungalow

Here will come, *Re Gori*, another *Gori*

Leave, leave, *Re Gori*, these sheets and beds

On them would sleep, *Re gori*, a beautiful girl

Open, open, *Re Gori*, the chain and necklace

These will be worn, *Re Gori*, by a beautiful girl

Remove, remove, *Re Gori*, the gown and veil

These will be worn, *Re Gori*, by a beautiful girl

O god, *Re your play* is unique

For one son, I have become homeless

If, O god, I get a daughter

My share in this town will remain.

(*Haryanvi* 149).

Here, *gori* stands for the wife, *raja* is referred to the husband.

One crucial reason of Haryanvi women's social devaluation is their economic dependence on men. Thus, as seen above in a *jakdi*, women have to ask for money from their husbands even for going to their natal homes. It shows how, despite her overwork, Haryanvi women have no economic agency. Also, many *jakdis* show that it is a usual routine for women to work for long hours, with no food provided by their superior 'saas' (mother in law).



For instance, one woman works for the whole day, yet her 'saas' compares her to a 'worth less over fed ox', if she asks for fresh milk (*Haryanvi* 175). Similarly, when a daughter-in-law asks her 'saas' for the wheat chapattis instead of the chapattis made of local coarser and cheaper millet grain, the 'saas' refuses and insults her father (*Haryanvi* 184). This low entitlement of women explains why "nearly two-thirds of pregnant women from even well to do homes" are malnourished in the richest region of the green revolution (Chowdhry 239).

Although some jakdis do show a retaliation or subversion from the usually subordinate daughter-in-law, yet these jakdis are mostly humorous. Humour in these jakdis defuses their challenge to patriarchy. The cultural and ideological reality of a woman's social subordination ensures that an authoritative woman in a family and her husband are 'ridiculed and condemned' by the society, and this ideology is usually internalized by the couple too (Chowdhry 257). In one jakdi, a stronger woman, who tied her over indulgent husband to the bed laughs with her friends indicating that she "had her husband in control". The husband also advises his friends never to marry a strong woman.

### **My Husband is in My Fists**

My *sasu* is very hard working, Ae she wakes up at midnight  
 One day I too woke up, Ae he held my hand  
 It's too early yet, Re it's just midnight yet  
 I left tying his feet on *patya*, Ae both hands to the *sirhana*  
 I left tying his ears to the *bahai*, Ae his mouth with a handkerchief  
 I came jumping down, Ae I did all the chores  
 My *sasu* calls loudly, Re come down my dear son  
 I laughed from the *ghunghat*, Ae he came with the tied *khaat*  
 He cried sitting with boys, Re never marry a strong woman  
 I laughed sitting with girls, Ae my husband is in my fists.  
 (*Haryanvi* 136).

Here, *sasu* is mother in law, *patya* is the end of a cot, *sirhana* is the head of a cot, *bahai* is the long side of the cot, *ghunghat* is veil and *khaat* is cot.

The jakdis also reflect the impact of urbanization on the Haryanvi women, with respect to their 'systematic' inferiority at home. Urbanization is generally associated with education. Representing a common pattern in a number of jakdis, a boy woos a college girl by proposing her to bring

city products like radios and urban fabrics. Despite the rural practice of veiling, he promises her to keep abreast with him just like modern urban partners. But significantly, when he comes to the age of marriage, he argues that romantic relationship and marriage are two different matters, and to establish a successful household one must not marry an educated urban girl (*Haryanvi* 58). Moreover, one may notice the underlying endorsement to the prevalent patriarchal ideas as the abandonment of the girl in the above *jakdi* is not countered by the speaker. In fact, there's hardly any expression of sympathy for the maltreated young girl, which indicates that the women singers themselves believe the same. Apparently, an educated urban girl threatens the absolute authority of men, especially with regard to the female inheritance laws of 1956. Also, this is one of the many instances wherein women are seen complicit in their own larger subordination.

Indeed, in many *jakdis*, an educated urban girl does effectively resist exploitation from in-laws. For instance, a woman describes her more liberated dressing sense of wearing a silk saree, which fashionably doesn't allow her to veil properly. Similarly, when she visits her husband to deliver food in the fields, he scolds her and asks her to stay quiet. But she responds angrily and leaves immediately for her college, whereas the husband couldn't do anything except staring. When she returns from college, her mother-in-law is seen 'instigating' her son stating that the 'bahu' is a witch. The son attempts to beat his wife with a stick', but she again resists. Her assertion finally leaves her husband just staring helplessly.

### ***Ae haali is left staring***

The silk *saree* slips from the head, wayward hair partition, *sindoor* in hair

I took *roti* to the fields, eat o husband I have to go home

Put them down, sit down, don't sneer I have to plough

I dumped the container, broke the *earthen pot*, started on the college's way, *Ae haali* was left staring

At evening I came back home, the mother was teaching the son, Re she's not a *bahu* she's trouble

He picked the *lathi*, advanced to hit, I stared bitterly, the *haali* was left staring.

(*Haryanvi* 109).

Here, *haali* is farmer, *sindoor* is vermilion, *saree* is a draped dress, *roti* is *chappati*, *bahu* is daughter in law and *lathi* is a big stick.

However, things are not so simple because Haryanvi women remain socially inferior with respect to men, even though they are academically and financially better off. They may have access to many urban professions yet are not given due respect. Reflecting this social situation, the protagonist of a *jakdi* earning Rs. 500 a month as a college lecturer, remains inferior to her husband who earns Rs.150 as a truck driver. Her 'saas' wakes her up early in the morning to grind cereals and even disrespects her family. The woman explicitly complains against the discrimination, she faces. It implies that educated women do understand their oppression and vocalize the same. Such vocalization itself is a form of resistance against patriarchal oppression.

### **You fight the moment I come**

I came as a newlywed with my dowry, my *saas* was drying the *peesna*

*Ae bahu*, you must wake up early to grind the *peesna*

*Ri saasad*, I don't know how to even move the *chakki*

*Ae bahu*, why didn't bring servants, your father is so rich!

*Ri saasad*, I would have brought four servants, your son is really backward

*Ri* I teach girls in college, your son drives a truck

*Ri*, I earn five hundred a month, your son earns one hundred fifty

*Ri*, he comes four days a week, you shower him with affections

*Ri*, I come once a week, you fight the moment I come.

(*Haryanvi* 155).

Here, *saas* and *saasad* mean mother in law, *peesna* means to grind, *bahu* is daughter in law and *chakki* is a machine to grind cereals.

Another crucial interlinked aspect of a woman's systematic devaluation in the patriarchal family network is her physical exploitation at her marital home, reinforced by her devaluation in the natal home.

This devaluation at her natal home is centrally controlled by her own *bhabhi* (brother's wife). Just like a mother-in-law specifically puts her daughter-in-law down at her marital house, similarly, another woman is in charge of subordinating the daughter of the house. Haryanvi patriarchy is crucially perpetrated by the women themselves, who are made to subdue each other, while trying to be closest to the actually powerful men.

The theme of a taunting 'bhabhi' (sister in law) is a recurring one in many

jakdis. For instance, a migrating husband tells his wife not to go to her natal home as it'll be more oppressive there, even harder from her marital home. Her sister-in-law will taunt her and she'll have to work in the fields with her brother. She'll have to live there in constant fear and with a submissive demeanor (*Haryanvi* 86).

This ubiquitous devaluation of a woman, be it at her marital or at natal house, seems to have a deeper materialistic equation working underneath. The devaluation of a woman at her natal home ensures that she doesn't stay there for too long, and consequently doesn't ask for any land rights, reserved exclusively for men. Also, one can appropriate women's labor exclusively for the interest of patriarchy, only when women are kept in inferior position.

Along with the physical constraint of practising village exogamy, women are "ideologically and culturally socialized to accept [their] exclusion from property matters since

Birth" (Chowdhry 261). One such important ideological factor ensuring patriarchal dominance in Haryana is the socio-cultural configuration of brother-sister bond of love. The labor exploitation and the 'systematic' social devaluation of a woman at her natal and marital home, must be seen with regard to the social and emotional importance of a brother in a woman's life. Apparently, brother's love ideally compensates all the discrimination against the girl child.

In a popular jakdi celebrating brother-sister love, the girl initially complains of her discrimination against her brother: Despite being born of the same womb, they had different fates. Whereas the brother's birth was an occasion of celebration in the family, her birth was labeled as a misfortune. When her brother started studying, she had to take care of her younger siblings. Whereas the brother wore clean and washed clothes, she clad in tattered clothes, used to collect cow dung. While the family bought *ghee* (*fresh butter*) for the boy exclusively, her low 'entitlement' got her stale buttermilk.

But the internalization of patriarchal ideas by the girl ensures effective hegemony. Thus, when the loving brother says he was pained by her sufferings and he would help to graduate her, the same sister who was initially complaining of her discrimination, responds that she just wishes that he should talk to her nicely when she leaves for her marital home and visit frequently to bring her back from her marital house.

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**Bir Hum**

Bir, we're born from the mother  
 Re, we lied in one body, our fates are very different  
 Bir, you were made to sit and study  
 Ae Re, I took care of the younger children, day in and day out, our fates  
 are very different  
 Bir, you wear white clothes  
 Re, your *kurta* is expensive, you get soap to wash it  
 Bir, I collect *gobar*  
 Ae Re, my *kurta* is torn and tattered, there's no time to wash it  
 Bir, they weigh *ghee* separately for you  
 Re, you scold the whole family, Bir your scolding is borne by all  
 Bir, I get stale food  
 He Re, sour buttermilk to drink, have to bear everybody's scolding  
 Sister, Ae don't feel so inferior  
 Ae my whole body is burnt, the blood has become water  
 Sister Ae, I'll support your studies  
 I'll bring the books and make you a graduate Ae  
 Bir, I only wish this much  
 He Re, treat me well when I leave and come sooner to fetch me.  
 (*Haryanvi* 32).

Here, bir means brother, kurta is shirt and gobar is dung cake,

Many jakdis reveal that the cursing such as "May your brothers and nephews die!", is considered to be the most offensive for a woman (*Haryanvi* 112, 157, 168). A brother is so important for a woman that one jakdi evinces a mother-in-law's dislike for her newlywed 'bahu', only because she had no brother (*Haryanvi* 185).

The goodwill of a brother is important to a woman because he is the person, who supposedly resolves all the conflicts of a woman with her in-laws. As seen in most of the jakdis, marriage is commonly understood to be a relationship in which trouble is expected. In this scenario, a brother is a real protector of a woman, even against her husband.

However, the jakdis reveal devaluation of a woman at her natal home, not just from her 'bhabí' (sister in law) as exemplified above, but also from her brother. In fact, when the 'bhabí' taunts the girl, she effectively serves the interest of patriarchy, which functions through positing women against each other. Thus, in one jakdi, when a sister asks for suit on the auspicious occasion of her nephew's birth, the brother silently leaves the house, and the 'bhabí' actually taunts the girl by blaming her to destroy her brother's house and take a share in land as well. Having been insulted in her own house, the woman commits suicide. The internalization of patriarchal norms is reflected from the fact that a woman's asking for land rights is insulting in Haryana, even for the women.

**Bir, get me One suit**

Bir get me one suit re

He re, get me one terracotta suit, I've become an aunt re

My bir, he didn't speak ae

Ae, he bowed his head and went out of the house ae

My *bhavaj* came from inside ae

He ri, destroy this house, make the land in your name ri

*Bhaan*, I picked up a sickle and a rope ae

Ae I started en-route to the station, the train of twelve came ae

*Bhaan*, I hit it ae

He I became four pieces, threw the dead body on the station ae

*Bhavaj* of mine was cooking *roti* ae

He my bir was feasting, the police reached his house ae

Come to the station re

He re Bimla's dead body is lying there, fetch the body re

Wife, what were you thinking re

Re on the topic of a suit, the world will curse us re.

(*Haryanvi* 35).

Here, Bir stands for brother, bhavaj is sister in law, bhaan is sister.

In another jakdi a woman asks her brother for a pink printed suit, but he deliberately says that he couldn't find it anywhere and her 'bhabí' (sister in law) also taunts her. Significantly, the girl reminds them of how she contributed to harvesting cotton and other crops, and even provided

postnatal care of her 'bhabi'. Yet, instead of being duly rewarded, she was insulted with jibes and derision. Ultimately, she ends up realizing that there is no idealistic relationship with a brother, as only one's parents support one during distress (*Haryanvi* 36).

These jakdis wherein the woman is shown disrespected at her natal home do not just evince her real relationship with her brother, contrary to a sister's expectations, but also indicate her status as a 'begar' (non-paid) worker. The occasional gifts (along with her dowry) are originally supposed to be compensation for a woman relinquishing the land rights. But actually these gifts are meager rewards for her labor at her natal home. To make things worse, the 'bhabi' ensures that even such remuneration is provided begrudgingly, and as little as possible. Ultimately, women's labor gets appropriated without any effective economic return.

The simultaneous exclusion of a woman from her natal house, and her exploitation at the marital house is reinforced by the socio-ideological belief that a girl's place is only in her in-law's house. Thus, in one jakdi that represents a common social scenario, the plight of Hariyanvi woman is articulated through a dialogue between brother and sister. It shows how, when a sister complains to her brother about her difficult married life, the brother rationalizes her stay with in-laws, instead of comforting her by confronting her in-laws. He asks her to adjust within her conditions. Additionally, while being requested by her to take her along back home, he says that their father has explicitly said 'a daughter is better off at her own home', that is her 'sasural'.

### Harsh Harsh, Re Bir, Mine

Harsh harsh, re bir, my east facing field, *bhola* east facing field

Coming and going the sun breaks your sister

Go go, ae sister mine, under the stars *bholi* under the stars

and come back in the moonlight

Harsh harsh, re bir, my *jethe's* company *bhola jethe's* company

Harsh as the *babool* thorn

Soothing soothing, ae sister mine, *jethe's* company *bholi jethe's* company

Soothing as the *babool* thorn...

Say it, say it, re bir my heart's wish *bhola* heart's wish

What my mother has said

Mother has said, re bring your sister home *bhola* bring her home  
Father has said my daughter is better off at her house  
Crack crack, Ae earth please give me shelter *bholi* give me shelter  
Where I was born, they are saying such things.  
(*Haryanvi* 50).

Here, bir is brother, *bhola* and *bholi* mean innocent, *jethe* is elder brother in law and *babool* is the thorned acacia tree.

Another 'Jakdi' shows how women are trained from their childhood for not to raise any complaint against the in-laws and always be submissive to them (*Haryanvi* 25). Thus, a girl's own parents do not want to help her even if she's exploited in her marital house.

This rampant systematic devaluation of women is not without subtle connection to her sexuality. Tulsi Patel argues that a young rural Haryanvi woman is the least powerful in the domestic group, precisely when she's at the height of her productive labour and reproductive powers (Chowdhry 254). Women's sexuality threatens patriarchy, because women are the potential introducers of new bloodline into a family, and can disturb the existing patrilineal inheritance.

The patriarchal control over a woman's sexuality is achieved through the mother-in-law. She performs the task by controlling her daughter-in-law's movement, dressing and demeanour, and thereby, systematically denies her independent adulthood and individuality. A woman cannot even go to meet her parents without the her mother-in-law's permission, and at the same time, unless accompanied by her brother. Thus, in one *jakdi*, a brother-less woman tries to convince her superior 'saas' (mother in law) that a stranger is her brother, and requests for permission to go home with him (*Haryanvi* 33). Another *jakdi* shows how even for routine tasks such as to go to fields or to fetch water, the 'bahu' (daughter in law) must be accompanied by her sister-in-laws (*Haryanvi* 86).

Such patriarchal control and objectification of women are used as instruments to manage property. It has chiefly increased post-independence, due to women's liberation. After the female inheritance rights enactment in 1956, women's liberty was seen as a threat to patriarchy.

Patriarchal set up in Haryana even normalizes men's predatory sexuality. Thus, in a *jakdi*, a migrating husband advises his wife to wear plain clothes and look down when men eve-tease her (*Haryanvi* 86). This rape



culture is a corollary of the society that believes in exterminating a woman in the name of 'honour', if she ever exercises her sexual choices.

In another jakdi a brother displays an unquestionable right to kill his sister when she gets pregnant before marriage. Significantly, in an effectively internalized patriarchal hegemony, even the victim hardly questions this non-democratic authority of her brother and tries submissively to explain her situation (*Haryanvi* 45). In another jakdi, when the 'jethani' (elder sister in law) reports to her 'devar' (younger brother in law) that his wife flirts while going to fetch water, the enraged husband decides to get 'justice' by killing his wife (*Haryanvi* 105).

'Honour' killings are ironic because until a century and a half ago, inter-caste alliances were a common thing in the Punjab-Haryana, both for men and women. In fact, for all judicial purposes, the dominant 'jaats' were actually 'sudras' and could always intermarry with other 'lower caste sudras'. The colonial policies of creating 'agricultural castes' and 'martial caste', reserved exclusively for the dominant 'jats', had a significant role in increasing caste hierarchies (Chowdhry 129).

The extreme rigidities of patriarchal marriage rules and the control of women, contrast with the 'love jakdis' of women. In these jakdis, mostly women themselves initiate their love affairs (mostly extra-marital), without consideration of caste and class (*Haryanvi* 17). In most of these songs, the 'upper' caste woman is seen to first advance an offer of love to a 'lower' caste 'gadariya', a bangle seller 'maniyar', and even to the 'saint beggars' (*Haryanvi* 52, 60, 64). These inter-caste love songs are a significant expression of women's resistance to patriarchal control. There are hardly any 'love jakdis' of unmarried young girls from their own perspectives. It may be because of the fact that young unmarried girls are the most rigidly controlled in Haryana. They're not expected to 'roam around' or meet other girls simply for entertainment, the way young boys are allowed to.

The belief of Haryanvi communities in village 'bhaichara' (brotherhood) leads them to consider romantic relationships within the village as incest. Whereas this supposed incest is dealt with violent 'honour' killing, an actual "incest within the family is generally buried under the carpet" (Chowdhry 356). Once married, even if the husband shares his wife with other family members, it is "not a pertinent matter of discussion" (*Haryanvi* 15). If a woman complains against sexual exploitation at home by her brother-in-laws or father-in-law, the caste khap panchayats mostly advise "the couple to ignore the instance and settle it amongst themselves" (Chowdhry 357). Thus, jakdis often register a complaint against sexual

abuse at home, and also an unwillingness on the part of otherwise authoritarian husbands to take action in such cases. In one jakdi, a woman complains against the sexual exploitation she faces from her 'devar' (younger brother in law) in her husband's absence. But her husband, surprisingly, says that it's not problematic as the 'devar' is his own brother. However, the woman in this case explicitly opposes such patriarchal norms, by saying that he should have died before giving away his wife to someone else (Haryanvi 179).

The above analysis of jakdis illustrates how Haryanvi women are 'systematically' subjected to, what Miriam Sharma and Urmila Vanjani call a "gender based internal colonization" (Chowdhry 232) It is worked out through the hegemonic institution of family, wherein both the natal and marital home get interlinked and turn into a site of oppression for a woman. She finds herself caught in the power dynamics of a highly patriarchal set up, which operates to weaken her social position and silence her voice. However, the throttled sentiments of a Haryanvi woman somehow finds an outlet in the impassioned articulation of 'jakadis'.

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