



Popular Perceptions of Masculinity in Rural North Indian Oral Traditions

In the oral tradition of rural north India, especially the Haryana region, hegemonic masculinity emerges as an ideological construct in the structure of patriarchy firmly located in materiality. This creates and consolidates male power over various categories of people and highlights several hierarchies of masculinities, caste, class, and gender, including those between males and females as well as those between males and males. The oral tradition, which includes folktales, myths, folk songs, popular sayings, and proverbs, enjoys a common currency of social interaction among a wide range of social groups. Together these have been evaluated to provide valuable insights into how masculinities are perceived, lived, or practiced at the local level, and molded or remolded in response to the socioeconomic shifts that are taking place. However, in this region there is also a contrary imaging of masculinity that demolishes all that is regarded as the hallmark of hegemonic masculinity. Registered in women's folk songs, this imaging is considered a threat to male power, authority, and what is perceived to be "masculine." All attempts by upper caste males to censor these songs or replace them have been unsuccessful, thereby highlighting the ongoing contradiction and contest around the concept of masculinity itself.

KEYWORDS: caste relations—folk genres—gender—honor—masculinity—oral tradition

IN RURAL north India, particularly in the Haryana region, the historical and contemporary oral tradition brings to light an ideologically constructed, hegemonic masculinity. Rooted in the patriarchy's focus on materiality as a source of masculinity, this tradition creates and consolidates male power over various categories of people. Several hierarchies in masculinities emerge from this: hierarchies of caste, class, and gender, including hierarchies among males and those between males and females. Collected during my fieldwork and extensive interviews, the oral tradition includes folktales, myths, folk songs, popular sayings, and proverbs.¹ All these enjoy a common currency of social interaction among a wide range of social groups. Together, these pieces of the oral tradition reveal how masculinities are perceived, lived, or practiced at the local level, and molded or remolded in response to current socio-economic shifts. Complicating this picture is a contrary imaging of masculinity that exists in this region. Oral tradition shows this imaging to be emanating from women. Women's folk songs present images that directly contradict those hailed by masculinity, thus challenging and contesting them. By underlining women's transgressions (sexual, caste, and class), these songs attack the hegemonic masculinity² as well as the culturally dominant ideal of gender practice, and are thus perceived as threats to male authority. They have greatly contributed to upper caste male anxieties and this has resulted in increasing attempts to censor or replace these songs. Despite several attempts, women have successfully defied this control, thereby underlining an ongoing contradiction and contest around the concept of masculinity itself.

I have been studying Haryanavi society for close to three decades and continue to remain involved in understanding its dynamics. I have written on various aspects of this region's colonial past and its postcolonial and contemporary present.³ A great deal of my understanding for this study has been built and achieved through continuing interaction over this long period of time. For the present work, I have drawn upon a combination of field notes, personal experience, interviews, and conversations that I have been having with individuals and groups of men and women, both together and separately. In these interactions, all attempts concentrated upon obtaining the viewpoints of different categories of people across region, caste, class, and age groups.

In conducting fieldwork I have been greatly assisted by the fact of having my family's roots in this region, my own familiarity with its language and culture,

and my not being entirely a stranger to many of them. For example, in the conversational sessions where no fixed format was followed, I repeatedly found that those men and women who were willing to talk did so with an astonishing amount of candor and sincerity. My growing senior status has also enabled me to gain a greater measure of freedom of movement, expression, opinion, and confidence enjoyed by only senior women in rural north India.

IN RELATION TO WOMEN

Masculinity in rural areas is in a very large way perceived and professed in relation to women—in their supposed inferiority and subordination to men. One of the most popular rural cultural beliefs among males maintains that *lugāī ādmī kī jūttī ho sai* (“woman is no better than a man’s shoe”) and that she is inferior to a man in morality, knowledge, and wisdom. In fact, a piece of frequent advice given to males by males and senior females is “*lugāī ne sir par nā dharā karen*” (“a woman should not be given any importance”) and “*lugāī kī akall te kām nā cālai*” (“a woman’s advice should not be heeded”). As an inferior she is considered unfit to offer advice to a man, and men are instructed not to accept a woman’s decision as their own. The giving of advice is equated with superiority as well as the wielding of power and authority, all of which reside with the man. There are several local sayings and proverbs that are frequently cited by men and voiced in various public gatherings in order to underline this attitude. Some of these assert the following:

*naukar settī mattā upāve, ghar tiriya ke cāle sikh
kah ghāghā jī, tīn cutiyā, gāon gorve bove ikh.*

Those who consult servants, those who are guided by women,
Those who sow sugarcane near the village are idiots, says Ghaghaji (a mythical sage).

This only evokes the traditional advice given to men:

tiriya tujh se jo kabe, mūl nā tu voh mān
Don’t accept a woman’s advice, whatever it may be.

or

tiriya man par jo caleñ, voh nar hai nirjñān
Only a brainless man follows a woman’s advice. (FALLON 1886, 171)

A more popular proverb similar in meaning and very frequently cited nowadays is this:

aurat kī salāh par jo cāle voh cūtiyā
The one who acts according to a woman’s advice is a fool. (FALLON 1886, 22)

A cultural system based upon such “truisms” is naturally going to laugh at the reversal of these hallowed “universal values.” A man who gives in to a woman’s advice is considered to be a *cūtiyā*, a term of abuse that literally means a man with

a vagina instead of a penis. Such a man is therefore considered to be like a woman: a weakling and a coward or a fool. Giving in to a woman is a sure way to lead to *aurat kā rāj* (woman's rule). This impression is enough to damn a house forever. The members of any such household are openly derided in conversation. In fact, the local male opinion maintains that

*jis ghar main auraton kī caltī hai us main ristā bhī nahīn karte haiñ
kabteñ haiñ ki us main mard kī mūñch nahīn hotī*

In the house where the woman dominates, [nobody] marries into it.

It is said that in that [household] the man has no mustache (that is, is not a man at all).

In fact, in certain cases, even when the private reality is different, the public posture of a man's dominance is culturally observed. For example, this "ideal" power equation is maintained and easily recognizable in public male-female behavior. It can be seen when a man walks three paces ahead of the woman; the latter, conforming to the "submissive woman" stereotype, not only walks behind her man but also carries the heavier load. This scene can be observed anywhere in rural India.⁴

This public show of masculine dominance also molds and restricts a man's behavior. For example, a husband who takes his wife's side in a quarrel against his mother is dubbed "henpecked." Significantly, it is women as wives who must relate to their husbands in submissive ways for their husbands to be considered masculine. The senior female of the household, especially the mother-in-law, dominates the family hierarchy. A tense relationship between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law is thus symbolized by the veiled *bahu* (daughter-in-law) and unveiled mother-in-law. Apart from maintaining and asserting her own dominance, the mother-in-law is most effective in channeling the institution of patriarchy in the household, including her sons' dominance over their wives and children.⁵ A central tension for men is indeed their torn allegiance between their mothers and wives. Despite the fact that wives are absolutely crucial not only for reproduction but also for production, they lose out to the mother (and sister) because the slightest hint of allegiance of a husband to his wife affects his masculinity negatively. Males are unequivocal about stating "*māñ to māñ sai, lugāī to āve jāve sai*" ("mothers are mothers, wives may come and go"). It is significant that when masculinity is defined in relation to women, the local words used are *lugāī* or *aurat*; both these words are used not only for a woman but also for a wife.

Similarly, a husband is blamed and declared weak if his wife is seen to be assertive. In 1930s colonial Punjab (which included the present-day Haryana region), if a woman took up what was considered the exclusive calling or profession of a man, it was her husband or the other family males who were considered weak. For example, regarding a woman who took to moneylending in Lahore in the 1930s, the rural male opinion was that her husband was weak (*Darling Papers* 1930–1931, 78). A woman who works no longer evokes such prejudice nor is her husband still declared "weak." In many instances an educated woman with a job is preferred in

marriage. Her subservient position to men, however, remains intact both in private and public life. Indeed, culturally valued authority resides with the man; both the woman who “usurps” it and the man who allows her to do so are ridiculed and condemned. An extremely popular joke repeated all over Haryana that insists women hold the decision-making power and exercise their influence over men is considered amusing precisely because it is not the case.⁶ A variation goes as follows:

A man sitting in a group of men asked all those who acted according to the wishes of their wives to raise their hands. All but one raised their hands. Everyone wanted to know how this man resisted his wife’s dictates. The odd man replied that he indeed did what his wife told him to do. When asked as to why he did not raise his hand he said, “Let me go and ask my wife whether I should raise my hand or not.”

This joke never fails to evoke uproarious laughter among men. It ridicules even the thought that such a thing could ever happen. However, it is likely that this may indeed be true in some cases. This was evident when leading questions evoked sheepish laughter among some of the men. Women also (confidentially) pointed out some of the families where the *bahus* ruled the roost. Nevertheless, the universal refrain among the men was paraphrased something like the following:

is kā to savāl hī nā uṭhtā

lugāī to dabā ke hī rākhī jā sai, wo cābe paḍhī-likhī ho yā kamāñou ho yā nā ho

This question [of the wife’s domination] does not even arise.

A wife is under full control whether she is educated or earning or not earning.

Similarly, an interesting study regarding the effects of Hindi cinema on rural audiences in northern India revealed that there was “spontaneous laughter among men when any male characters were shown to be dominated by female characters in the film.”⁷ Another popular tale, very often narrated in men’s gatherings, is similarly revealing:

A buffalo was accustomed to being milked by the wife of its Jat owner (or any other upper caste). Once, this Jatni, much to the discomfort of her husband, went off to the river Gunga for her ritual observances. In her absence the Jat had to take over the milking of the buffalo. To hoodwink the buffalo, he would wear his wife’s clothes to perform this job everyday. One day the buffalo sighted a male of her own species while being milked by the masquerading Jat and, snapping the rope with which she was tied, ran towards the fields. The Jat also ran behind her. People started to laugh on sighting a man with a mustache running in a *ghāgari* (long skirt). The Jat turned around and said, “Why do you laugh? In a hurry I forgot to change my clothes; had I changed, my buffalo would have run away.”

There are several ways of looking at this tale. Here, I just want to emphasize a few points in relation to my argument on masculinity. Frequently cited among males, this story is considered hilarious because it underlines the perceived weakness

and effeminacy of the man, particularly because he is from among the Jats—a caste group popularly perceived and flaunted as being masculine. The animal husbandry work in this region lies almost completely in the hands of women, although men control its management. Milking and other animal husbandry work, being associated with women, are not considered praiseworthy activities for a man to undertake as they do not enhance his status but rather pull it down. The tale shows the woman to be dominant in this relationship because she disregards her husband and the work at home and willfully goes off to the river for her ritual observances. Men laugh at the sorry plight of the Jat who stands wholly effeminized not only by being reduced to performing his wife’s work but also by being one who thoroughly demeans his “manly” position by literally getting into a woman’s *ghāghari*. Finally, those hearing this tale are delighted by the utter foolishness of this hapless husband and his inability to understand his own predicament; he fails to comprehend the reason he is in that “ridiculous” and “unmanly” position at all.

A woman’s advice, if acted upon, is understood to be unavoidably anomalous as well as disruptive to what is considered a “logical” male world and his masculinity. How, then, is he to deal with it? Local opinion states that any woman who even slightly asserts herself and voices an opinion rather than meekly accepting male advice or (in effect) his “orders,” must be dealt with using ridicule, denigration, and finally violence. Confronting such a challenge, the men quoted an oft-repeated proverb that goes as follows: “*nāṅgī būci samte ūñcī*” (“a shameless [lit. naked] woman is always superior as you cannot shame her any further”). The one remedy recommended for an argumentative female is “*bhawikne do*,” literally meaning “let [her] bark” or, in other words, “allow her to have her say.” (Implicit is this: “But do not listen.”) The more popularly advocated response is “*rāñḍ ke māṛ!*” (“Beat the whore!”).

In fact, at one time, the beating of a wife was considered such a normal activity for a man that no valid reason or cause was really needed to justify it. Because men wished to appear masculine, violence upon women almost achieved the status of a routine. This was so much the case that popular stories abound regarding this practice. An eighty-four-year-old man remembering a story from his childhood narrated the following story, leading to much merriment among the male onlookers:

A Jat (or a member of any other upper caste group) was always beating up his wife on the most frivolous of excuses. For example, he beat her for the fact that she had not cooked well or given adequate fodder to the cow, and so on. The wife grew up to be more and more careful and soon he ran out of excuses. Still wanting to beat her up, he started to harness the oxen backwards, toward the plough, to get a comment out of her. The wife, however, said, “*jut jā bhāī joken terā dhanī jutāve*” (“Get harnessed, you oxen, as your master wishes”). Till late in the evening he could find no excuse. As the night approached, he asked his wife to put his cot on the roof as it was summer time. Once it was on the roof he asked, “*ākās mein voh safed rāhī ke sai?*” (“What is that Milky Way in the sky?”) The wife replied, “*yo to bhūtān kī rāhī sai*” (“That is the ghost way”). The man said, “*tañēñ bhūtān kī rāhī nīce merī carpai ḍāl dī, aur bhūt mere upar par gayā*

to?” (“[You] have put my cot under the ghost way. So suppose a ghost was to fall on me, then?”). With that, he started to beat her up soundly.

Although violence continues to be tolerated and considered normal in this region, the chronic wife beating summed up in the phrase “*uṭhte lāt, baiṭhte ghuṅsā*” (“When up he kicks her; when sitting he hits her”) is no longer tolerated.⁸ In terms of statistics, Haryana rates relatively low in the category of inflicting spousal violence calculated for all the states of India. According to the statistics provided by the National Family Health Survey of 2005–2006, 27 percent of all married women in Haryana experience physical, emotional, and sexual violence.⁹ The use of violence, an essential part of rural culture, remains very much an intrinsic component of masculinity and goes with its other attribute: a strong physicality.

CONSTITUENTS OF MASCULINITY: PHYSICAL PROWESS AND VIOLENCE

In the local popular culture, there is enormous emphasis placed on men possessing strong physical stature. The celebratory muscular description of an “ideal” male is commonly portrayed in various Swang (or Sang) and Nautanki folk dramas of northern and western India. In the performance of these dramatic genres, much of the dialogue is sung in verses called *rāginīs* (HANSEN 1992; VATUK and VATUK 1979), which often highlight and glorify the physical attributes of the male hero, usually as follows:¹⁰

moṭe naiṅ, cauṛa māthā, lāmbī gardan gol terī
teraiṅ ke nisān māre, bhūjā haiṅ sudaṅ terī
cebre kī golāī jaise candramā sī khilī huī
dānton kī batīsi jaise sandhi ker ke milī huī
śeron jaisī cāl jaise mand-mand ḍhali huī
maiṅ kaī bār boluṅ ek bār bole tu, manne duḅkh sai baṛī bhārī

Big eyes, broad forehead, elongated round neck,

Strong arms bear the scars of wars.

Moon-like face,

Pearl-like teeth,

Like a lion he walks with powerful strides,

But is frugal with his speech.

The crucial part of a man’s attractiveness lies in his physical strength. In this region’s rural milieu, it is this strength that enables him to exercise control over his land, which is central to his existence. In addition to its economic worth, the possession of land has value as power, both social and political. Apart from land, this possession and control includes animals, women, and other fellow men, especially from among the lower caste groups. A common refrain in the northern region has been “*zar, zamīn, zan, jhagḍe kī jar haiṅ*,” (“gold, land, and women are the root of all quarrels”) and masculinity lies in keeping them safe and under tight control. Any assertion to the contrary would be difficult to believe in a region that advocates the following:

zamīn joī zor kī
*zor ghaṭī hor kī.*¹¹

Land and wife can only be held by force.

When force fails they pass into other hands.

Possession and control of land, money, and women are associated with *izzat* (honor), which is essentially *male* honor. For this honor, a strong body and physical strength, expressed in local terms as *musal bargā* (physically strong like a pestle/pounder) is considered necessary to command, control, and possess his land, money, and women. If a male needs to inflict violence to safeguard these “possessions” or his honor, it is not only accepted, it is valorized. Applauding violence, it is proudly maintained that “*mār āge bhūt nācce*” (“after beating, even a ghost dances”; that is, “thrashing straightens out even the most wicked”). Historically, this ideology of violence was useful in this region as it faced frequent foreign invasions. Indeed, one may well agree with the suggestion that it is violence and the need to counter this violence in this region that underlies the deep-rooted preference for male progeny at the cost of females (OLDENBURG 1992). In the colonial period, the strong physicality, the code of masculine honor, and the propensity to violence of the men of this region was handy for the British Indian army officials, who used it for their own purposes (CHOWDHRY 2013). They applauded violence in relation to the “superior martial castes” and proclaimed it as basic to their “fighting nature.”

In other words, in this region, masculinity and power wielding, firmly associated with physical strength, is essentially wedded to violence.¹² There are innumerable local sayings that illustrate this belief. The justification for all of this is that “might is right,” and that “might” is with the strong, not the weak. A few selected proverbs regarding this are cited below:

gorā jis kā gorā

The strong hold/own the land.

jis ki lāṭhī us kī bhainīs

Might is right. [lit. Whoever’s staff, his buffaloes]

ṭhādhe ke sir pe kaī rāh

The mighty chart a different route/the mighty wear the crown.

ṭhādhe ki bīr sab kī dādi

hīne kī bīr sab kī bhābhī

Strong man’s wife commands respect.

Weak man’s wife is familiar to all.

kasāī ke māl nai ke kāṭṛā khā sakai sai

A butcher can hardly be harmed by those he can butcher.

jis kā koṛā us kā ghoṛā

Whoever’s whip, his horse [that is, might is right].

ṭhādhā māre to rovan de nā

khāṭ khosayā sovan de nā

The violence of the strong leaves the victim nowhere.

He can neither complain nor mourn.

Against the strong male, the weak or “simpleton” male, as he is generally called, stands condemned and looked down upon:

sādhe ke muñh kuttā cāṭe

A simpleton gets licked by all.

bheṭ to mūñḍnā hī sai

The weak are always exploitable.

An important facet of violence is to be aggressive and to strike before you are struck, or to preempt other men’s violence and not allow him to overpower or dominate you. These proverbs in fact underline the notion that other males should be afraid of you, which entails the control and domination of others as well as the disallowing of all transgressions.

Considering beating to be intrinsic to their sense of masculinity, men opine, “*voh mard hī kyā jo māre nā?*” (“What kind of a man is he who does not hit?”). The observation equates violence with masculinity, suggesting it is masculine to be violent and natural for a man to be violent. An important characteristic of power is the way in which it becomes natural, normal, unquestioned, and unacknowledged. Clearly, this masculinity views violence as one of the instruments of power by which hierarchies of all kinds—of caste, community, and gender, including those between males and females, as well as between males and males—are perpetuated in society.

Another defining characteristic of masculinity in terms of violence has been the concept of revenge. Failure to uphold one’s honor is looked down upon. It has to be avenged, and the use of violence to uphold it is fully justified. The widespread “honor killings”¹³ in this region have been in no small way reinforced by this code of masculinity being sanctified in popular culture. Consequently, men who are seen as being recalcitrant in defending their “honor” through violence in the face of those who defile it are condemned as effeminate. A popular saying is “*curiyāñ pahānī huī haiñ*” (“[he] is wearing bangles”), which is to say that such men are “women” and not “men.”

The Dalits (low caste groups formerly known as Harijans or Untouchables) who are not able to protect their women from the landowning castes are considered to have no honor to speak of and are not considered men at all by the upper caste men. However, the long history of violent conflict between the dominant caste groups and the Dalits (CHOWDHRY 1984, 61–99; 2009), which has only increased with time and in response to other socioeconomic changes, belies this assertion of the upper castes. The lower caste groups have shown themselves to be as honor bound and status conscious as the higher caste groups, the former showing a wider acceptance of the concept of masculinity and its association with honor.¹⁴ Recent research has pointed out that the majority of employed Dalits consider themselves

equal to any other caste group (PAIS 1990). This is especially true of the upwardly mobile sections of the Dalits, as will become clear.

Physically, Dalits, with comparatively shorter, darker, and more delicate builds, are considered far inferior. At a certain level, the Dalits have internalized their own alleged physical “deficiency.” For instance, a Dalit male who is tall, of light complexion, and has a strong muscular build is often complimented by the other Dalits for being “*jāṭon bargā chorā*” (“just like a Jat”). The Jat males, on the other hand, staunchly deny any masculine merit to the strong physical build and bodily strength that may be possessed by some of the Dalits, for this would acknowledge a sense of power among the latter. One means of accomplishing this is to narrate a popular story that deliberately denigrates all such masculine aspirations. The story depicts a situation in which a *zamīndār* (landlord), deeply perturbed by the impertinent behavior of one of his young low-caste agricultural laborers, hauls up the laborer’s father. To the *zamīndār*’s angry complaints, the father replies, “Sir, his impudence is because he is one of you. If he were one of us he would not have behaved so.”

The sexual exploitation of the low-caste women who provide agricultural labor to the Jats and other landowning caste groups is a well-known fact.¹⁵ Sexual exploitation of Dalit women suggests that their men cannot protect them. By emphasizing the inability of the lower caste men to protect their women, the story therefore underlines the extent of their emasculation. Clearly, caste hierarchies determine even the value accredited to the well-acknowledged masculine attributes like bodily strength and strong physicality.

MASCULINE HIERARCHIES: THE CASTE FACTOR

In rural masculinities, members of low caste groups form a significant category of their own. As subordinate men they become casualties of hegemonic masculinity, with caste emerging as an integral part of the dynamic between masculinities. However, the Dalits, though totally marginalized, are not necessarily a part of the other marginalized groups (lower sections) that are drawn from among the upper castes. The latter claim to share the masculine attributes of their higher class members, particularly in relation to the lower castes. Clearly, caste determines social evaluation and equivalence between different caste groups, creating its own masculine hierarchy. This is especially true between a dominant caste, like that of the Jats, and the Dalits, who were earlier known as the *achut* (untouchable) and are now designated as Scheduled Castes by the British. It is important to note that instead of the now current word *dalit*, meaning the downtrodden, the term generally used for the lower castes in this region continues to be Chuhre-Chamar (caste names of scavengers and tanner/leather workers, respectively). They are openly referred to not only by their caste names but also the often-abusive words *nīchī jāṭi* (low caste), *nīche log* (low-grade people or plebian), or *kamīn* (uncouth, crude, or vulgar). These terms emphasize the low-caste identification of the Dalits and express subjective meanings.

This region is also replete with a large number of proverbs, folktales, and jokes about the lower caste groups; these are very often cited even in the general conver-

sations of dominant caste males to demonstrate how the masculinity of the lower castes is perceived by them. One particular joke regarding a Chamar (or any other equivalent lower caste variable) expresses this pointedly:

A policeman came to call a Chamar to the local police station. The Chamar, on seeing the policeman approach his house, wore his Chamaran's clothes, hid behind the door, and told the policeman that the Chamar was not at home. Unfortunately for him the policeman saw his mustache and thundered "*tumbhāre mūñch kaise jāmi?*" ("How have you grown a mustache?") The Chamar replied, "*hajur darte ke jāam gayi*" ("Sir, it grew out of fear").

This joke has close parallels with the one about the Jat mentioned earlier. In both, the Jat and the Chamar are found in a *ghāghari*; however, the connotations for the two are entirely different. The Jat in the female attire is shown to be dominated by his wife and hence idiotic and effeminate. The Chamars, on the other hand, along with other low castes, are well known to wear female clothes and perform what the British officials had termed "rude" and "obscene" dances during marriages and on other occasions (CROOKE 1978, 8; MARRIOTT 1975). Even now, the male populace of this region vouches for the low caste male youth, costumed in womanly attire, being part of the ribald revelers and dancers during the Holi celebrations (festival of colors in the month of March) and being rewarded for it by the landowning caste men.¹⁶ For the Chamar, therefore, the focus is not so much on his effeminization, as he (unlike the Jat) is considered effeminate to begin with. The emphasis is rather on his "pretentiousness"; he is pretending to be a man by sporting a mustache in imitation of the higher caste men. The keeping of a mustache is traditionally associated with masculinity in this region. References to this came up repeatedly during my fieldwork and are reflected in this article as well. The above joke shows the Chamar's mustache to be a spurious claim to manhood.

The Chamar emerges not only as pretentious but also as highly fearful of a "real man." Fear is associated with inferiors, low castes, and women and not with high castes and masculinity. The policeman, signifying the "real man" recruited almost invariably from the dominant castes, symbolizes the towering self-image of the dominant caste male members, their masculinity, power and authority, alertness, and the fact that they cannot be deceived. Through this joke, the Chamar (and through him the lower castes) stand denigrated, ridiculed as inferior, effeminate, foolish (as he expected to be believed) and, above all, pretentious and fearful. It is this pretense and fear that makes the Chamar contemptible and reduces him to the position of his caste's women, who stand at the bottom of the general category of all women. Even in portraying inferiority, there is clearly an implied hierarchy maintained not only for men but also for women. The hierarchy maintained for women of different caste groups casts its own reflection on the masculinity of their men.

Postcolonial India witnessed large-scale changes that have resulted in certain shifts in the equation of power between the upper castes and the Dalits; this also affects their conceptions and perceptions of masculinity. The introduction of democracy, capitalist development (especially in agriculture), a policy of

reservations, education, and the acquisition of different skills, urbanization, and the migration and movement of Dalits into new vocations differing from the traditional ones has introduced mobility and stratification within their caste. As I have already analyzed these factors at great length elsewhere (CHOWDHRY 2009), I shall draw upon that analysis to argue that as a result of these changes, the earlier predominant internal feature of the Dalits' possessing similar skills and having somewhat similar income levels has changed. The Dalits have tended to concentrate on upward mobility and success through nontraditional jobs not necessarily associated with their caste occupation. As a result they have come to be far more internally differentiated than they were in the past. Although it is true that even in the colonial period there were differential categories among them, these categories were not so marked as they are now. The Dalit castes that were formerly on the receiving end of patronage from the upper castes have found that their position has been partially changed by these processes. In the shifting of material, legal, and ideological bases, some of the given patterns of relationships between individuals and caste groups have changed and weakened due to the introduction of new, parallel, and alternative structures of relationships. This has considerably impacted perceptions of the masculinity of different caste groups. This change has left the upper caste males feeling palpably insecure in relation to the Dalit males and has led to an oft-quoted sentiment, unthinkable earlier, which states the following:

pahale mahāri naukariyān le līn īb choriyān leñ sain.

First they take our jobs, and now our girls.

Issues of employment and marriage are exceedingly sensitive and volatile in this state and are observed to be particularly threatening to upper caste masculinity; these have led to mounting tension between the upper castes and the Dalits. In a situation where there are more than nine *lakh* (that is, 900,000) unemployed people in Haryana, the competition for government jobs, even the petty ones, with their secure income, is intense.¹⁷ The posts reserved for the Dalits are blamed for limiting jobs for others.

Along with this, the reality of increasing cases of Dalit and non-Dalit elopement and marriage represent a high point in the ongoing conflicting relationships between the two classifications. These are viewed as forms of Dalit assertion. The fear of such associations has assumed urgency because of the extremely tight marriage market, which, even when taken apart from other factors, has resulted in a large number of men remaining unmarried in Haryana. These bachelors frequently overlap with the unemployed as the unemployed find it difficult to get married, causing them a great deal of anxiety. The overlap between the unemployed and unmarried men is especially noticeable among the lower sections of the upper caste groups, who are pitted in competition against the upwardly mobile Dalits. In such a situation, the fear and threat from a Dalit assumes exaggerated proportions. Resentment is apparent among the young upper caste males of Rohtak district, who consider it a direct challenge and attack on their masculinity. They angrily

state, “*yeh choriyān Chūhre-Chamāron ke sāth bhāg rahīn haiñ, ham ke mar gaye*” (“These girls are running away with scavengers and tanners as if we don’t exist”).

In such associations, the upper caste men consider their caste’s women to be willing partners because the popular male opinion cutting across various sections of rural society believes in the “inherent lustful nature” of all women. Explaining this, the upper caste men cited an oft-repeated proverb: “*kalak kuttiyā, māh bilāi, cait mein cīriyā, sadā lugāi*” (“A bitch is in heat in October, a cat in January, a bird in April, a woman always”). Significantly, the lustful agency given to the dominant caste woman has the effect of denying the “sexual conquest” of a woman by a (Dalit) man, a conventional sign of masculine identity. It takes the virility, sexuality, and masculinity away from the lower caste man (ANANDHI and KRISHNAN 2002). However, since the higher castes can hardly blame their own women openly, the onus of such associations is put down to the Dalits’ “arrogance” in coveting and “luring our girls.” In order to shrug off this accusation, the Dalits end up seemingly agreeing with their own lack of masculinity by maintaining “*koī mard nahīn bhagā saktā, aurat hī bhagāti hai*” (“It is always a woman who initiates an elopement; no man can do it”). The implication here is that no Dalit man can dare ask an upper caste girl to elope.

On the other hand, the sexual liaison of a dominant caste man with a lower caste woman establishes his masculinity and virility. However, the same cannot be said of his serious intent to marry her, which is evident in many such elopement cases. This intent introduces a kind of weakness contingent upon the question of morality and ethics not necessarily associated with masculinity or virility. Underlining the exclusively sexual aspect of their relations, a Jat boy crudely stated, “Who wants to marry a *churhī*? We only have intercourse with them.” The much-coveted macho qualities of the upper castes stand above considerations of morality and ethics in relation to the women of lower caste groups.

Many caste groups and communities are involved in inter-caste and intra-caste marriages and elopements; these are associations that defy customary norms as well as caste and cultural practices and thus have no social acceptance. However, as there has been no statistical study done, this increase can hardly be measured as it was in the case of Nepal where the rise in “love marriages” was quantified (AHEARN 2001). Nevertheless, alongside local perceptions and media coverage of this increase, I have been a personal witness to it over the years. Despite a variety of caste groups being involved in such associations, it is in regard to the Dalit and non-Dalit linkup that the need, felt by the upper castes, to assert their masculinity is most pronounced in Haryana. In all cases the general phrase used by upper caste males is “*Chorī ne mūñch kaṭvā dī*” (“the girl has dishonored me”; lit. “divested me of my mustache” or masculinity). This is a severe indictment of the runaway girl as the man’s “castration” is attributed to her. The resultant masculine assertion of honor leads upper caste men to inflict violence on the perpetrators of this “crime.” This violence is especially marked in the case of Dalits. Not infrequently, the feeling of castration among the upper caste men and their injured masculinity is avenged in the physical castration and mutilation of the sexual organs of the

lower caste man or woman involved, followed by death and the destruction and expulsion of Dalit families and even whole communities from the village.

MARD AND MARDĀŅĠĪ: SEXUAL PROWESS, MALE AND FEMALE

There are two words in Hindi and in the regional dialect that are locally used to describe masculinity. One is *mard* and the other is *mardāñgī*. The former is associated with power and used for a man who has status, land, purchasing ability, influence, and control, and is held in esteem. *Mardāñgī* on the other hand is generally associated with virility and sexual prowess.¹⁸ For a man, procreation or having children is the universal proof of his sexual prowess. This proof, however, lies well within marriage and not outside it.¹⁹ As locally put, *mardāñgī* is not about “sowing one’s seed” widely but about sowing it in the legitimate field. In fact, it is not only women but also men who are expected to marry and reproduce for economic, social, and lineage purposes.

Therefore, marriage and begetting children is associated with *mardāñgī* in popular perception. When asked to elaborate, a forty-year-old man commented that *nā-mardāñgī* (lack of masculinity) is like climbing a long pole but being unable to pee there. Explaining this he recounted a popular tale:

Once a king, enamored of a female acrobat, gifted away his kingdom to her. This was greatly resented by his men. In order to overcome this, the woman threw a challenge to the men, promising to return the kingdom if any man could defeat her in her craft. One man accepted her challenge. Both of them climbed their respective long poles. Once on top of the pole, the man peed all over. The woman could not emulate this feat and had to hand back the kingdom.

Apart from various connotations of this tale, my informant was emphasizing the use of a man’s organ in productive ways to establish his manhood and superiority. In other words, a man must justify his being a man. A man’s unmarried status denies him the opportunity to be fruitfully productive, thus depriving him of his masculinity. At the same time, even after marriage, a man is still not fully considered a man until he has sired offspring, especially a son (this is true of women and femininity as well). One well-known proverb states, “*beṭā huā jab jāniye, jīb potā khele bār*” (“You can claim to have a son only when the grandson plays in your doorway”). Popularly used by both men and women, this is a folk saying that holds true not only for women but also for men. A prolonged unmarried status puts a question mark around a man’s masculinity and manhood.

If a man is married but is without a child, it is certainly touted as the fault of the woman or her barrenness rather than the man’s inability. A barren woman is considered highly inauspicious. In fact the word *bāñjh* (barren) is used as an abusive term, and generally a man is almost never considered infertile. Yet there is some amount of ambiguity in fixing the cultural responsibility of men in cases of childlessness. In local understanding, procreation is conceived in terms of the male seed germinating the female earth or field. This ideology of the seed and the earth,

going back to ancient times, forms a part of the literate tradition as well as a part of customary law and popular consciousness (DUBE 1986). According to this, the blood that flows in a child's veins comes from the father's seed and gives a child (particularly a male child) its identity as belonging to the father's lineage. The male semen is perceived to create while the woman is seen as the passive recipient. In other words, if the field is weak, it will not yield, whatever the strength or virility of the seed. However, the reverse stands to be true as well, for if the seed is weak, then the field, however fertile, will not yield.

Such an ideology logically could—and does—hold the man responsible for begetting children or even determining the sex of the child.²⁰ But the rural populace does not usually accept this reasoning, for they generally prefer to lay the blame on the “field” (that is, on women). On the other hand, the reality that both rural and urban males are well known to flock to sex clinics that promise them progeny, especially male progeny, must also be acknowledged (SRIVASTAVA 2004). This puts the onus on men, even though publicly it may well be the woman who is held responsible.

In the past—especially in this region that perennially has a deficit of females²¹—the anxiety to claim *mardāṅgī* status may well have provided an additional reason for the flexibility adopted by males of dominant caste groups to observe inter-caste marriages. Such marriages included marrying women from the lower castes, especially in their secondary alliances.²² Jats were particularly noted for marrying women from the lower castes such as the Nai, Tarkhan, Mali, Jogi, Jhemar, and Chamars. However, in cases such as these, a faint pretense was kept that the girl was of his caste, and an equally faint acceptance followed. This general feeling of the upper caste groups was summed up in the following proverb:

beṭā lāyegā chamārī

voh bhī bahu kabalāyegi hamārī

If my son should marry a low caste woman,
She would still be called my daughter-in-law.

(FALLON 1886, 37)

This proverb is hardly used nowadays, but when used, it is done so in a tongue-in-cheek manner, as will become clear. In the colonial period, despite a creeping rigidity against inter-caste marriages, the proverb was still greatly in use (CHOWDHRY 2007a). However, the fact that the children of such marriages were ridiculed as *churhi ke* (children of low caste Chuhra) or *chamārōṅ ke* (children of low caste Chamar) also exists. Such expressions cast aspersions on the *mardāṅgī* of a man who was unable to procure for himself a “caste woman” to further his caste lineage. Also, the use of such epithets points to a process of cultural reproduction that negatively brands children born of such marriages. Such children, especially males, were considered somewhat inferior to others and when grown up, were still considered not “man” enough. This was amply confirmed by British officials who considered the “mixing” of martial castes with inferior castes to be detrimental to the physicality, caliber, and fighting spirit of the recruits in the British Indian Army. Given to applauding the “magnificent physique” of the so-called superior agriculturist castes

in agrarian and military professions, they bemoaned its biological “deterioration” because of this practice (DARLING 1978, 51).

In view of the continuing paucity of women in this region, even after independence, and the importance accorded to marriage and reproduction for achieving *mardāṅgī*, a very large number of males who have not been able to get married in Haryana are seen as possessing distinctly subordinate masculinity. The available figures show that 36.24 percent of men 15 to 44 years old (the so-called reproductive or marriageable age) are unmarried in the whole of Haryana.²³ In some districts like Rohtak, the percentage of unmarried males in this age range is as high as 44 percent.²⁴

The prolonged unmarried status of men brings their masculinity and manhood into question. Both unmarried young men and those well past their youth are considered immature, like boys. They are not fully men or, in other words, are *nā-mard*. For boys, it is just a stage to be overcome, but for men of marriageable age to be considered sexually inadequate and/or immature is a sexual insult and an abuse. This desexualization also challenges a man’s bravery and courage (MARSH and CAMPBELL 1982, 145–46).

The demands of *mardāṅgī* faced by the growing numbers of single men in Haryana, apart from reasons of socioeconomic necessity, are often answered by bringing in (in actual terms, purchasing) women of other caste groups from different regions of India.²⁵ In the local opinion, however, such associations and liaisons, born out of necessity, do not necessarily enhance the man’s marital and social status or boost his masculinity. They do, however, fulfill the other physical and labor requirements of the “owner.” Such men are not held to be on par with men who marry within their caste. The legal status of such marriages is also suspect (CHOWDHRY 2007a, 298–301). These men suffer a devalued masculinity for having to establish an association with a woman of uncertain origin and caste. Because of this, such associations are sharpening hierarchies within dominant masculinities by adding to subordinate masculinities.

Apart from the importance accorded to procreation within marriage for a man as a hallmark of *mardāṅgī*, *mardāṅgī*’s connotation of sexual prowess has another important, but not as well known aspect. Men in rural areas also perceive *mardāṅgī* in terms of their capacity to satisfy their own wives sexually.²⁶ This emanates out of the contradictory fact that the concept of sex for procreation, or one type of sexuality capable of reproduction without pleasure, has never been distinguished clearly from sexual activity solely for pleasure in rural India. Other sexualities, especially male sexualities like homosexuality and bestiality that are based upon the concept of pleasure, are also widespread and tolerated.

In the rural areas, homosexuality is generally considered an intrinsic part of the natural progression of a boy in his life cycle. It is also considered to be temporary, having a brief life span that comes to an end with marriage. Consequently, when men do not marry or their marriage is deferred beyond boyhood (perhaps indefinitely), they continue to be seen, as stated earlier, as boys and condemned for the unspoken but implied prolongation of same-sex activity.

It is worth noting that although homosexuality is not considered odd or unnatural in rural areas, it is certainly considered unproductive and hence contemptible.²⁷ This apparent contradiction underlines not only sex for procreation as mandatory for both females and males but also reflects negatively on homosexuality and adds to the hierarchy maintained in masculinity (CHOWDHRY 2011).

FEMALE SEXUALITY AND MALE INSECURITIES

The male non-procreative and pleasure-seeking sexuality also has its counterpart in female sexuality.²⁸ The widespread acceptance of this concept among the females has generated a great deal of insecurity among men regarding their *mardāṅgī*. Importantly, women's songs/dances openly celebrate sexuality—a sexuality not necessarily connected with procreation, although procreation forms a very significant part of it. It is also pleasurable for its own sake and exhibits shades of homoeroticism that Katherine Hansen speaks about in relation to the all-male Nautanki (HANSEN 1998, 291–300). Similarly in Haryana, its all-female counterpart in Khoriya *lūr* (all-women's songs/dance/drama/skit performances) links not only the two main female performers (one who impersonates a male) but also the other female participants and female spectators as well.²⁹

The lustful image of rural women emerges most strongly from the women's songs that I collected during my various forays into this region to do my fieldwork. These songs are largely drawn from the landowning, dominant class/caste women (a number of them Jat by caste) and offer a comment on the class/caste configuration that exists today. High-caste women of Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh popularly sing songs similar to the ones I have selected here as well (RAHEJA and GOLD 1996; JASSAL 2012). It is likely that such songs are the common property of women of upper-caste groups in the entire northern belt of rural India.

Shaped entirely by women, these songs blatantly mock the dominant social and behavioral norms of their society by articulating an alternative viewpoint. This is not to say that women do not share and submit to the dominant patriarchal ideology. They do. These contrary articulations can be seen to work at the level of perception, idealization, and fantasy, which more often than not act as a cathartic space. Yet, women's songs in Haryana cannot be understood merely at the level of transgressive desire or the make-believe removal of hierarchies that only act to reaffirm those same hierarchies and restore social order. For example, in rural Kerala reversal of such hierarchies can actually be seen in the rampant inter-caste and intra-caste flirtations, explored by OSELLA and OSELLA (1998). These, however, do not end up in sexual partnership. In Haryana, such breaches go far beyond the Kerala example, showing such reversals in caste, class, and gender hierarchies to be increasingly located in the runaway cases of elopement and marriage, especially in the context of the changed socioeconomic situation in Haryana. Consequently, from the male point of view, these songs are threatening, particularly because women are likely to assume or seek to assume direct agency by giving shape to these articulations. The inevitable conflict due to a world view where

different and contradictory beliefs and desires coexist brings to the fore the interface between ideology and practice. The subversive nature of these songs results in societal attempts to curb and control, which often inflicts direct violence on the protagonists.

Social anthropologists who have written about women's songs have emphasized discourse and language to indicate the subversive nature of these songs and the challenge they pose to the dominant discourse (RAHEJA and GOLD 1996; VATUK 1979; JASSAL 2012). Set essentially within the family, this discourse makes no attempt to contextualize these songs in their wider social milieu, nor does it relate them to the changing political economy. My attempt is to go beyond the familial to explore areas of caste and class to see how far the subversive nature of these songs finds its echo in actual transgressive behavior of women in caste/gender relationships. Such an exploration seeks to highlight the shifting constructions of masculinities in the oral tradition of north India.

Women's songs, as I analyze elsewhere, accept the lustful nature of females as natural, for they promote the initiation of sexual encounters and the seeking of fulfillment (CHOWDHRY 2001). The following account draws upon this analysis to focus on the nuanced impact it has on the concept and practice of masculinity. These songs portray a desire for sexual satisfaction and are sung on festive or other special occasions like weddings, births, and other life cycle and ritual occasions. They may also be performed while doing chores like going to fetch water from the village well, grinding grains, making cow dung cakes, or applying cow dung mixed with mud to the floors and walls of homes in an act of purification. Women collectively author such songs, and women perform them exclusively for themselves and other women. Occupying an almost autonomous space outside the male presence, most of them are not to be heard or viewed by men. However, these songs are often sung at men and in close proximity to them. Furthermore, the men have full knowledge of these songs, having been brought up hearing them from their childhood. Yet the lurking presence of men on the periphery is not obvious or acknowledged by either men or women. This ambiguity in relation to male presence, or rather absence, opens out the exclusivity of a private space into a more public one. This private-public space allows a full and frank expression of women's desires and I would venture to suggest perhaps affords them greater pleasure.

In women's songs the significant image (apart from the *devar* or younger brother-in-law) is that of the "outcaste" lover. She covets those on the extreme periphery of society: the ascetic, artisans and craftsmen, and folk singers and performers. These categories of castes and professions occur repeatedly in the songs. Significantly, the coveted lovers belonging to the marginalized caste groups, especially the lower castes, are visualized in the songs as highly virile. This virility, denied to the dominant caste men of their own caste groups, casts devastating aspersions on their *mardāngī*.

In coveting lovers from among groups in the margins of society, certain important characteristics are emphasized, and not all of them are caste groups. First,

they are all specialists in their field, known to have mastered a certain craft or art, whether of stitching clothes, printing clothes, making and selling bangles, making pottery or iron tools, carpentry, or oil extracting. Second, these crafts are crafts with which women's activities and needs are closely associated, making contact with these craftsmen possible or necessary. Furthermore, these men fulfill professional needs that cannot be easily fulfilled by anyone else; thus, these men cannot be substituted for other men such as their husbands or other kinsmen for example. Third, in this region many of these caste groups are known to alternate the practice of their craft with the rendering of agricultural labor during peak seasons. For others it remains a means to supplement their earnings. Their dual economic activity increases their opportunities to interact with high caste women. This interaction can take place at home, in the market, and at their common workplace in the fields. This last space is crucial, as the landowning caste women in this region work in their fields, their class status notwithstanding (CHOWDHRY 1993).

The fields allow these women close physical proximity with other farm hands, particularly in the absence of their migratory or urban-linked husbands. In the opinion of men and some women, this proximity makes for the "vulnerability" of high caste women to low caste men. Such apprehensions perhaps emanate out of the sexual abuse of low caste women by high caste men. This abuse extends from liaison and sexual exploitation to rape, all of which is essentially born out of the work situation and power differential under which low caste women work as agricultural laborers.

From the multitude of popular folk songs exclusive to women, I shall give just three examples illustrative of what I have been saying. The first song given below is closely identified with the season of Phalgun (March) and the Holi festival but is also popularly sung by daughters on their visit to their natal home. It shows the singer coveting a *modhā* (ascetic). Interestingly, this song and all the other songs cited are sung from the point of view of a married woman and not from that of an unmarried one. Yet married women alone do not sing these songs; these are group songs where all, the married and unmarried, young and old, join together while singing. The song goes as follows:

mān dhākanī le ke main āgī nai gāī
ye mān bābā ne dhūnā ramayā, merī māī
ye mān akek man mein merī isī isī āī
man ho luñ modhēn ke sāth merī māī.

I went out in search of a flame, oh my mother!
 The *sādhū* [ascetic] contemplated by the fire, oh my mother!
 He set my heart aflame, oh my mother!
 I want to run off with him, oh my mother!

Modhā may be substituted with "ascetic" in the verse quoted above. The characterization of the ascetic as a lover of women goes back to its importance as a motif associated with Hindu and Sufi saintly traditions.

Indeed the dominant popular religion of this region operates through the shrines that are shared by both Hindus and Muslims (JOSEPH 1911, 60–62). Patronized

mostly by women of various class/caste groups, the majority of these shrines have been known to grant boons to their devotees, especially women. Many of these shrines have been in charge of *faqīrs* (Muslim mendicants) or *sādhus* (Hindu mendicants) who, in the colonial period, were generally considered by the officials to be “men of low castes” having “no definite creed or rules of life” (IBBETSON 1981, 226). This may not be necessarily true. The ascetic order, unlike orthodox Brahminism with its strict exclusivism, is essentially inclusive regarding who can be admitted to the faithful; their followers cut across caste groups and include the Brahmins. The hierarchical system of local caste groups with membership predestined by birth stands abrogated for their followers, making them casteless (UBEROI 1996). A person who cannot be slotted in the caste hierarchy is considered to be outside society and its norms. Such men may attract reverence and obedience, but being renunciants and having renounced productive labor, they live on the margins of society. Since they are materially poor, the local male populace of high caste men perceives them negatively.

As *faqīrs/sādhus*/holymen, they are believed to have the power to remove the barrenness of childless women. The region is replete with their stories of magically curing the barrenness of women. Known to practice continence, they are considered more virile than the others. This in a way acknowledges the impotence of the husband or his class/caste men and underlines the virility and potency of men occupying the margins but for whom many women would remain barren.

The search for this virility came to include the members of other low caste groups who were socially despised, exploited, and denigrated in this region. Showing an open preference and desire for low caste men, the song given below has a peasant woman willing to leave all her comforts for an outcaste *sāpera* (a snake charmer, replaceable with any other low caste name) in order to get physical satisfaction. The song takes the form of a conversation between a *sāpera* and a woman. Essentially a dancing song identified with the month of Phalgun and Holi, it involves two women as major participants, with others joining the singing. It retains its popularity among women on any occasion for revelry and fun. It goes as follows:

sapele bīn bajā de ho cālūṅgī tere sāth
mahalān meīn rahane vālī re tanne jhoṅparī lāge udās
jhoṅparī meīn gujar karuṅgī re, ho cālūṅgī tere sāth
bhajane khāne ālī re tanne ṭukre lāgeṅ udās
ṭukroṅ meīn gujar karuṅgī re, ho cālūṅgī tere sāth
dūdhān kī pīn ālī re, tanne rābarī lāge udās
rābarī meīn gujar karuṅgī re, ho cālūṅgī tere sāth
palaṅgā pae son ālī re, tanne gūdar lāge udās
gūdar meīn gujar karuṅgī re, ho cālūṅgī tere sāth
sapele bīn bajā de ho cālūṅgī tere sāth

Play the lute, oh snake charmer, I'll come along with you.

You dwell in a palace, how will you stay in my thatched hut?

I'll make do with your thatched hut, beloved, I'll come along with you.

You are used to fine dishes, how will you eat my dry crusts?

I'll make do with your dry crusts, beloved, I'll come along with you.
 You are used to drinking milk, how will you live on my plain gruel?
 I'll make do with your plain gruel, beloved, I'll come along with you.
 You are used to a fine bed, how will you sleep on my old rags?
 I'll make do with your old rags, beloved, I'll come along with you.
 Play the lute, oh snake charmer, I'll come along with you.

Another folk song regarding a *naṭ* (acrobat) brings certain dimensions even more clearly to the forefront. The song, also a dancing song like the previous one, is enacted as a dialogue between two sisters-in-law, a *bhābhī* and *nanad*:

naṭ ko khele bālūre rate hāth
karulā kānā gokhḍu jī rāj
dekho bāi jī naṭkā ko rūp
tharā bīrā se do til āglo ī rāj
jāo bhābhī naṭkā kī sāth
mhārā bīrā ne prañādayān dūsrā jī rāj
prañāo bāi jī do-e-cār
hum sarīkhi kāl nā mileñ
mhārā bīrā catur sujān
tum sarīkhi ghaḍ le kāṭh kī jī rāj
ghaḍ lo bāi jī do cār
le nā mukhaṛe na bole kayā kāṭh kī jī rāj

The acrobat is performing,
 With sand glistening in his hands
 His earrings twinkle in the sun.
 Look sister-in-law, how handsome he is,
 Much more alluring than your brother.
 Go sister-in-law with the acrobat,
 We'll find another wife for my brother.
 Wives you may get two or four,
 But none like me I am sure.
 My brother is a clever man,
 In wood he can carve one like you.
 Let him carve two or four,
 It can neither speak nor make love.

In Haryana such songs sung by dominant caste women also come close to the bawdy, sexual, highly erotic songs and dances performed by the low-caste men who, as mentioned earlier, masquerade as women in an exaggerated manner during the festival of Holi and make lewd demands of their high-caste male patrons to get money. In fact, women of low-caste groups are also well known for singing sexually explicit songs in this region. Although I was not able to fully document this, I am sufficiently aware of the similarity between the “lustfulness” of the songs sung by women of both dominant as well as low caste groups, with one significant difference—the songs of the latter do not identify their lovers. Ann Grodzins

Gold, who has documented the songs sung by low caste women of the Potter caste in Rajasthan, speaks of the “lewdness” of their songs that celebrate an explicitly extra-martial eroticism (GOLD 1996). Yet, there is silence on the caste identity of these lovers. Despite the close similarity of these songs sung by women, whether of the high or low caste groups, this silence makes a poignant comment on the imposition of caste/class structures in the rural areas.

Such songs, and there are many, ridicule the macho pretensions of high caste men with their implicit claims to physical strength and virility by applauding the virility of a low caste male, traditionally despised as an inferior man. Such articulations of women attack the self-image of the upper caste male as strong, virile, and sexually potent, shattered not by his kinsmen or same-caste men but by an inferior, who is denigrated and ridiculed by them. It may be emphasized that apart from attacking upper caste masculinity, the songs advocate an autonomous woman with overt sexual needs and underline her sexual transgression also as a transgression of caste and class boundaries.

Women’s songs have the effect of challenging masculine power and breaching and eroding male authority, which hinges on control of women and their sexuality. The greatest objection men, especially as husbands, have to women’s songs emanates from this implicit erosion of their authority as males and the casting of aspersions on, to put it colloquially, their *mardāṅgī*. What *mardāṅgī* are they left with if the wife starts to covet not only another man but also one from an inferior, lower caste? As mentioned earlier, these apprehensions are not without foundation as the increasing number of upper-caste females running away with Dalits indicates.

MALE ATTEMPTS AT CONTROLLING AND CLEANSING

The casting of such aspersions has been one of the reasons why these songs have been declared *aślīl gīt* or *behudā gān* (indecent or obscene songs), not only by reformists but also by the upwardly mobile groups among the higher castes concerned with their self-image in the process of upward mobility and social acceptability. Even in the colonial period the concept of masculinity was undergoing a vast change. Being firmly associated with the emergence of martial Hinduism in the 1920s, masculinity assumed a more aggressive and physically oriented form (GUPTA 1998). This redefinition greatly strengthened the hands of the dominant landowning martial castes of this region to mount their protest against women’s songs that ridiculed their masculinity. The redefinition of Hindu identity also reinforced the non-Hindu as the “Other.” In fact, in neighboring Uttar Pradesh, the everyday interaction of Hindu women with low-caste Muslim men came under severe scrutiny and even violent attack from Hindu reformists and populists. This pressure, as Charu Gupta argues, was more toward emphasizing Hindu-Muslim identities rather than caste identities (GUPTA 2000). In Haryana, the existing evidence does suggest the prioritizing of caste identities. This emphasis, however, in no way excludes the possibility of reiterating community identities, which were

sharpening, as I argue elsewhere, even in this region (CHOWDHRY 1996). Significantly, the lower caste groups mentioned above in the women's songs were overlapping groups regarding their religious adherence to Hinduism or Islam. Clearly, the complex connotations of women's songs were behind the determined attack of the reformers in targeting them in a more determined way.

In Bengal, from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, there were highly successful, concerted efforts among high-caste men to denigrate and suppress the sensuous and bawdy songs and poems popular among low caste social groups (BANERJEE 1989). These "corrupting" and "indecent" songs were considered unworthy of the new Hindu woman shaped under the influence of nationalist sentiments and colonial education. In the north, the popularity of Arya Samaj among the dominant caste groups assured an acceptance and observance of a similar viewpoint even in those rural pockets of this region, which were at odds with this emphasis.

In the Punjab-Haryana region the Arya Samaj led attacks on various customs considered immoral and indecent. They condemned the singing of these "indecent songs" on ceremonial or festive occasions, along with other forms of behavior, as sins against their puritanical code.³⁰ Attempts were also made to replace such traditional songs with their own purified versions. The Arya Samaj sought to purify the festival of Holi, since they considered it to be extremely vulgar, but found it impossible to abolish, due to its popular appeal among the masses. These attempts at replacing traditional songs and cleansing Holi met with no success. Some caste *sabhās* (societies) in northern India were also active in attempts to abolish the singing of "indecent songs." As early as 1894 the *Sanadhya Jatiya Sabha* of Agra had passed a resolution stating that "women should not sing indecent songs at weddings."³¹ This could hardly be implemented. In Haryana, caste Panchayats (village councils) were also known to have taken up the subject, but they failed due to the impracticability of enforcing it.³²

In the contemporary period, such efforts have been renewed afresh. The insecurities generated in the wake of changes in the political economy of Haryana stem from a highly adverse female-to-male sex ratio, the inability of vast numbers of men to find a bride (with many of them settling for a highly dubious cross-regional and inter-caste alliance), along with the reality of an increasing number of cases of the elopement or marriage of high-caste girls, not infrequently with Dalit boys. This has given fresh life to the demands of the reformists and upwardly mobile groups among the higher castes. Various attempts at urbanizing culture by sharpening class divisions to bring the "rural backwaters" into conformity with the male, middle-class, upper-caste norms that are rapidly shaping a modern public culture and a new morality have meant a renewal of curbing such efforts through the caste and *got* (patrilineal clan) Panchayats.

These efforts were not successful in the past and they have failed now. The failure of all these attempts shows the limited class nature of the opposition and the wider support this sub-culture has enjoyed and continues to enjoy both among women of different categories and lower caste men. Whereas in Bengal and Maharashtra such songs and dances termed "vulgar" could be successfully banned by

the reformists, because these were performed only by low caste women and men (BANERJEE 1989; REGE 1995), this could not be done in Haryana, despite the same objections, because they are performed by all caste women, dominant and subordinate, high and low.

Rural women of all castes, classes, and age groups in Haryana have simply ignored the caste Panchayats dictates. It may be noted that it was the *bhadralok mahilā* (middle-class women) who actively supported their *bhadralok* elite reformers in curbing these songs in Bengal (BANERJEE 1989). But in Haryana, the older women lead in ignoring all such dictates by actively exercising their agency to retain this space for the creative expression of female sexuality. Significantly, for the older women, the patriarchal hold is much less strict in this region. For example, one can observe a distinct weakening of the observance of *ghunghat* (the wearing of a veil or headscarf), which the older women observe much less frequently and before fewer people in the village. To this may be added the smoking of *hukkī* (a smaller variant of *hukkā*, a water pipe for smoking tobacco) by older women.

Ethnographic evidence suggests that as women age and reach menopause they seem to get bolder and become much less restrained, using the hitherto taboo language of the men, often indulging in jokes, sexual banter, or so-called obscene comments, with men listening indulgently and amusedly (APTE 1985, 79–81). This kind of behavior is commonly observed in Haryana. All of these have the effect of rupturing hierarchy. It is not easy for men to control older unveiled women who frequently and openly use sexual innuendoes and teasing and laugh at them and their masculinity. All this speaks for a hierarchy in the family unit itself, with older women, especially the mother-in-law, firmly in control of the younger women and enjoying much more personal freedom themselves. Having direct and close contact with the decision makers, the older women seem to wield some influence and informal power. They perceive such songs as a source of enjoyment and, in fact, a form of empowerment, which they firmly refuse to deny themselves and other women by succumbing to the male control mechanism. Moreover, the collective voice of these songs acts as a shield against individual punishment and vindictiveness. In fact, this collectiveness has been an important factor in the failure of the male attempts at banning such songs.

Yet some upper caste educated women, mostly urban, sharing perhaps the self-estimation of their male counterparts, either feign ignorance of these “indecent songs” or refrain from singing them, implying acceptance of the charge of indecency, to which they are unwilling to stoop. The appropriation and re-modulation of these songs by the male composers of popular film and folk songs and the well-known acceptance of them by women has further contributed to this negative attitude.³³ However, most rural women of different castes and classes justify the retention of their traditional songs as part of their *dehātī* (rural) culture, which they would not like to give up. This is one of the interesting instances when women have appropriated the male logic of keeping the *dehātī* culture alive in order to justify retention of this space for themselves.³⁴ Women evoke the privacy of this space to retain it, and they condemn a public gaze directed towards spheres and spaces that are essentially private and autonomous.

Women's popular culture continues to present images that are in direct contradiction to the ones hailed by masculine gender. This is one sphere where the assertion of masculinity has failed; no amount of violence, bullying, moralizing, or Panchayat censorship has been able to settle this challenge of the contrary imaging of masculinity. This contrary image is subversive of the patriarchal order and caste; it mocks and ridicules the acclaimed attributes of masculinity. Masculinity in this region certainly emerges in the popular perception as natural and normal, but also as questioned and subverted by important segments of rural society, underlining its shifting possibilities.

NOTES

* I wish to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their incisive comments on an earlier version of this article.

1. British ethnographers and administrators in the late nineteenth century documented a significant amount of Indian oral tradition. Some of it has survived in the postcolonial period. More recent attempts by the Haryana government to record folk traditions, as well as the attempts of certain Hindi literati and folklorists, have resulted in a vast published collection born out of their fieldwork. This shows the contemporary widespread popularity and usage of folkloric tradition. I have taken care to refer to the colonial records in cases where current proverbs and other oral genres can be traced to that period.

2. The concept of hegemonic masculinity is defined as "the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" and is extensively popular in the study of men and masculinities; see CONNELL (1995, 77). For an elaboration and critique of the same, see also COLES (2009).

3. For some of my published work used and cited in this article, see CHOWDHRY 1984; 1993; 1996; 1999; 2007a; 2007b; 2009; 2011; 2012a; 2012b; and 2013.

4. This is a familiar and observable form of behavior all over rural India; see, for example, WHITE and WHITE (1982, 138).

5. For a similar observation on Rajasthan, see PATEL (1987).

6. For the role of women in the decision-making process, see CHOWDHRY (1999).

7. The film was *Do Rāste* (Two roads), a Hindi feature film dealing with the rural-urban theme. The investigating team recorded the reaction of audiences in the village of Morena in Agra district, Uttar Pradesh; see PFLEIDERER and LUTZE (1985, 56).

8. This level of mindless violence, as I have argued elsewhere, has certainly diminished in this region; see CHOWDHRY (2012a).

9. However, Haryana is much lower in the category of inflicting spousal violence calculated for all the states of India. It holds the twelfth position in ascending order; the lowest is Himachal Pradesh with 6 percent and the dubious "top honors" in this category go to states like Bihar with 59 percent and to Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh with 46 percent each; see the INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR POPULATION SCIENCES (2008, 25–26).

10. The most popular Sangs like that of Puran Bhagat, Raja Harishchandra, Chandergupt, Tara Chand, Chap Singh, Nal Damyanti, Phool Singh, Jayani Chor, and Ranvir in Padmavat all have similar passages hailing the strong "masculine" beauty and strength of the hero; see VATSA (1991, 148).

11. See MACONACHIE (1870, 280). This proverb is from Kangra, but according to the author, it revealed "a universal sentiment" of Punjab-Haryana.

12. The British specially picked up those proverbs and local sayings that underlined this “manly” quality of violence for official collection and publication and celebrated it in their recruitment policy. In a region where a man’s manliness was established by the number of murder cases he faced, the colonial army and police with means of violence at their command legitimized it with state recognition and prestige; see the collection of local sayings and proverbs collected by MACONACHIE (1870) and FALLON (1886).

13. See CHOWDHRY (2007a; 2012b). For a comprehensive survey highlighting activist and practice-oriented academic perspectives from different countries of Europe, the Middle East, Latin America, and South Asia and involving different religious communities, see WELCHMAN and HOSSAIN (2005); GUPTA, AWASTHI, and CHICKERUR (2012); HUSSAIN (1997); JAFRI (2008); JASAM (2001); and SHAH (1997).

14. Instances of Dalit aggression have started to surface. In July 2003 a much-talked-about case occurred in the village of Jooan, located in Sonapat district. Dalits killed a Jat boy who was known to sexually harass Dalit girls. The Dalits maintained that they had a right to “protect the honor” of their women. In retaliation, the Jats burnt down the houses of Dalits in the village.

15. Although not many of such cases are made public, this remains a well-known fact in rural areas of northern India. Both men and women from across classes and castes vouch for this. Rampant sexual exploitation is largely born out of the work situation and power relations between Dalits and the high-caste, land-owning strata of society. In this connection it is significant to note that the extreme left Marxist-Leninist groups in Bihar have successfully used the exploitation of their women by the higher-caste landowning class of men as a strategy for mobilization; see PEOPLES UNION FOR DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS (1992).

16. My observations relate to the celebration of this festival in the village of Chhara in Jhajjar district.

17. Unemployment figures (including non-literate, semi-literate, graduates, and above, including those technically qualified), registered with the unemployment exchanges in Haryana, had more than doubled in less than twenty years, from 591,423 in 1990–1991, to 922,820 in 2008, a staggering rise of 156.03 percent. Unemployment figures in terms of caste are unfortunately not available. See DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND STATISTICAL ANALYSIS, HARYANA (2010, 702–703).

18. In his film *Father, Son, and the Holy War* (1995), Anand Patwardhan links the sexual anxieties of Indian males with their conceptions of *maidāngī* (virility).

19. For a direct connection between masculinity and marriage, see CHOWDHRY (2011).

20. Some women have started to question why, even after two marriages, all that the wives produced were female children, not the much-coveted male children. They ask, “Whose responsibility is it?”

21. The sex ratio of females per thousand males in Haryana from 1881–1951 was as follows: 1881–1885: 866; 1886–1890: 868; 1891–1895: 898; 1896–1900: 914; 1901: 867; 1911: 835; 1921: 844; 1931: 844; 1941: 869; 1951: 871 (figures for 1881–1900 are for the undivided Punjab; see *Census of India* [1931, 152]; figures for 1901–1951 taken from *Census of India* [1991, 76]). These low figures for male-female sex ratios have continued to this day. The 2011 census figures had 877 females per 1000 males. See *Census of India, Haryana* (2011). The activists in Haryana observe that in some villages it is as low as 500–550.

22. Inter-caste marriages for women of this region, already under severe strain in the colonial period (CHOWDHRY 2007a), are now firmly bracketed in the socially prohibited category, with traditional caste Panchayat keeping a very tight vigil on them.

23. Legally, the minimum age of marriage for men is twenty-one years old. However, locally, the marriage age is highly flexible. For men it is calculated from what is considered to be the reproductive age, which is put at fifteen years old. The census figures show that a total

of 143,897 males in the age group 15 to 44 years old out of a population of 3,970,390 males were unmarried (*Census of India, Haryana, 1991, 22–23*).

24. In Rohtak, out of a total male population of 977,075 in the 15 to 44 age group, 547,922 were unmarried (*Census of India, Haryana, 1991, 22–23*).

25. According to Ravinder Kaur, such women are treated as “foreign” women. And as to their origins, their social and economic status is ambiguous; it is measured differently. The nonlocal status of the woman, according to Kaur, impacts the local standing of the family much less than if the woman had been a local; see KAUR (2004).

26. A fieldwork study in rural Rajasthan similarly observes that women in rural areas are considered to be sexually voracious, unable to be satisfied even by four to five men. A man who is able to satisfy and control a woman from going to other men is considered “masculine”; see the report by KUMAR, GUPTA, and ABRAHAM (2002).

27. Certain blatantly condemnatory utterances against homosexuality, generally heard and found to be prevalent in the urban milieu, have also started to be echoed in rural and semi-urban areas of this region. The rising awareness of HIV in urban centers and its perceived relationship with homosexuality may well have contributed to these utterances.

28. Unlike male homosexual relationships, lesbian relationships are outright condemned by both men and women. They are even punished. Certain instances of lesbian girls from the village running away to get married and the violent punishment that followed are spoken of in hushed whispers in the villages. This aspect, however, needs to be further researched.

29. Like the all-male Nautanki performances with homoerotic valence, Haryana also has its female counterpart. There are women’s songs/dance/drama/skit performances called *lūr*, which are treated as a “private space” for women. On the occasion of marriage, rural Haryana (as also other parts of north India) has the customary practice of an all-male *barāt* (bridegroom’s party) setting off to the bride’s house for the wedding. On such occasions, women have the exclusive preserve of the home space to enact the entire sequence of *khoriyā* at night while the men are away. In *khoriyā*, a word significantly derived from *kholnā* (to open, or to expose), women go through a mock circuit of courtship, marriage, consummation of marriage, and childbirth. A mature married woman generally takes up the role of the bride to initiate the younger woman—with the older woman masquerading as a shy bridegroom—into sexual pleasures accompanied by appropriate and explicit songs. The bride is shown to be interested in knowing whether her husband is sexually virile. *Khoriyā* plays out the social anxieties that exist among women in rural areas around the proper consummation of marriage and fertility that sociologists like DAS (1976) have discussed; for details, see CHOWDHRY (2001).

30. Arya Samaj reformers also sought to ban excessive mourning, public bathing, liquor, and meat eating as well (JONES 1976, 94–95).

31. See *Sanadhaya Jatiya Sabha* (1894), report of the second annual meeting at Agra. Such resolutions are now known to be common occurrences.

32. Personal interview with Khem Lal Rathi, an Arya Samaj follower, New Delhi, 24 May 1986.

33. In her study of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, JASSAL (2012, 222–50) shows how the current appropriation of women’s songs by men for commercial purposes in the form of recorded cassettes and other media reflects a male representation of women whose sexuality must be bound. Women are portrayed as libidinous and potentially unfaithful, a portrayal that is then used to justify their control. These songs reinforce the assumption that women’s sexuality, if left unchecked, will wreak havoc with the normative structure of patriarchy. For a similar opinion see also RAHEJA and GOLD (1996, 189–93).

34. By emphasizing the local or *dehātī* culture, that is, a shared sense of purpose, traditions, values, language, and way of life, the village communities of dominant and upper-caste males in this region have been able to maintain social and political control over others, like

the lower castes, and so on. Existence of a political entity or community depends on the maintenance of this idea of a shared culture. All of it goes toward the mobilization of group identities.

REFERENCES

- AHEARN, Laura M.
2001 *Invitation to Love: Literacy, Love Letters, and Social Change in Nepal*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- ANANDHI, J. Jeyaranjan, and Ranjan KRISHNAN
2002 Work, caste and competing masculinities: Notes from a Tamil village. *Economic and Political Weekly* 37: 4397–4406.
- APTE, Mahadev L.
1985 *Humor and Laughter: An Anthropological Approach*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- BANERJEE, Sumanta
1989 Marginalization of women's popular culture in nineteenth century Bengal. In *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History*, K. Sangari and S. Vaid, eds., 127–79. New Delhi: Kali for Women.
- Census of India*
1931 *Punjab, XVII, Part I, Report*. Lahore: Government of Punjab.
1991 *India Series-I, Paper 1 of 1991, Provisional Population Tables*. New Delhi: Office of the Registrar-General and Census Commissioner.
1991 *Haryana, Series 8, Part. IV-A, C Series, Socio-Cultural Tables*. New Delhi: Office of the Registrar-General and Census Commissioner.
2011 Haryana, Sex Ratio. See <http://www.mapsofindia.com/census2011/haryana-sex-ratio.html> (accessed 9 February 2014).
- CHOWDHRY, Prem
1984 *Punjab Politics: The Role of Sir Chhotu Ram*. Delhi: Vikas Publishing House.
1993 High participation, low evaluation: Women and work in rural Haryana. *Economic and Political Weekly* 28: 135–48.
1996 Contours of communalism: Religion, caste and identity in south-east Punjab. *Social Scientist* 24: 130–63.
1999 Ideology, culture and hierarchy: Determining expenditure consumption patterns in rural households. In *From Myths to Markets: Essays on Gender*, U. Chakravarti and K. Sangari, eds., 274–311. Shimla, India: Indian Institute of Advanced Study.
2001 Lustful women, elusive lovers: Identifying males as objects of female desire. *Indian Journal of Gender Studies* 8: 23–50.
2007a *Contentious Marriages, Eloping Couples: Gender, Caste, and Patriarchy in Northern India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
2007b Fluctuating fortunes of wives: Creeping rigidity in inter-caste marriages in the colonial period. *The Indian Historical Review* 34: 210–43.
2009 “First our jobs then our girls”: The dominant caste perceptions on the “rising” Dalits. *Modern Asian Studies* 43: 437–79.

- 2011 Men, marriage and sexuality in northern India. In *Intimate Others: Marriage and Sexualities in India*, Samita Sen, Ranjita Biswas, and Nandita Dhawan, eds., 241–64. Kolkata: Stree.
- 2012a Reduction of violence against women: Property ownership and employment in rural Haryana. <http://www.unwomensouthasia.org/assets/Violence-Property-Rights2.pdf> (accessed 27 January 2015).
- 2012b Redeeming honour through violence: Unravelling the concept and its application. In *The Fear That Stalks: Gender Based Violence in Public Places*, S. Pilot and L. Prabhu, eds., 197–237. New Delhi: Zubaan.
- 2013 Militarized masculinities: Shaped and reshaped in colonial south-east Punjab. *Modern Asian Studies* 47: 713–50.
- COLES, Tony
2009 Negotiating the field of masculinity: The production and reproduction of multiple dominant masculinities. *Men and Masculinities* 1: 30–44.
- CONNELL, R. W.
1995 *Masculinities*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- CROOKE, William
1978 *The Popular Religion and Folklore of Northern India*. Vol. 1. Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers. (Originally published 1893)
- DARLING, Malcolm Lyall
1978 *The Punjab Peasant in Prosperity and Debt*. Delhi: South Asia Books. (Originally published 1925)
- Darling Papers*
1930–1931 Cambridge, Box No. 11, Diary of Tours. (Originally published 1925)
- DAS, Veena
1976 Masks and faces: An essay on Punjabi kinship. *Contributions to Indian Sociology* (NS) 10: 1–30.
- DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND STATISTICAL ANALYSIS, HARYANA
2010 *Statistical Abstract, Haryana, 2008–2009*. Chandigarh, India: Department of Economic and Statistical Analysis, Haryana.
- Do Rāste* (Two roads)
1969 Directed by Raj Khosla. In Hindi. With Rajesh Khanna, Mumtaz, Balraj Sahani, Kamini Kaushal, Prem Chopra and Bindu. Production Company: Raj Khosla Films.
- DUBE, Leela
1986 Seed and earth: The symbolism of biological reproduction and sexual relations of production. In *Visibility and Power: Essays on Women in Society and Development*, L. Dube, E. Leacock, and S. Ardener, eds., 22–53. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- FALLON, S. W.
1886 *A Dictionary of Hindustani Proverbs*. Benaras, India: E.J. Lazarus and Co.
- Father, Son and the Holy War*
1995 Directed by Anand Patwardhan. Documentary film in English and Hindi. Produced by Anand Patwardhan Production Company. Mumbai.

- GOLD, Ann Grodzins
 1996 Sexuality, fertility and erotic imagination in Rajasthani women's songs. In RAHEJA and GOLD, 30–72.
- GUPTA, Charu
 1998 Articulating Hindu masculinity and femininity: “Shuddhi” and “Sangathan” movements in United Provinces in the 1920s. *Economic and Political Weekly* 33: 727–35.
 2000 Hindu women, Muslim men: Cleavages in shared spaces of everyday life, United Provinces, c. 1890–1934. *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 37: 121–49.
- GUPTE, Manisha, Ramesh AWASTHI, and Shraddha CHICKERUR
 2012 *“Honour” and Women’s Rights: South Asian Perspectives*. Pune, India: Masum Publishers.
- HANSEN, Kathryn
 1992 *Grounds for Play: The Nautanki Theatre of North India*. Delhi: Manohar Publications.
 1998 *Stri Bhumika: Female impersonators and actresses on the Parsi stage*. *Economic and Political Weekly* 33: 2291–2300.
- HUSSAIN, Neelam
 1997 Narrative appropriation of Saima: Coersion and consent in Muslim Pakistan. In HUSSAIN et al., eds., 199–259.
- HUSSAIN, Neelam, Samiya MUMTAZ, and Rubina SAIGOL, eds.
 1997 *Engendering the Nation State*. Lahore, Pakistan: Simorgh Women’s Resource and Publication Centre.
- IBBETSON, Denzil
 1981 *Punjab Castes: Races, Castes and Tribes of the People of Punjab*. New Delhi: Cosmo Publications. (Originally published 1910)
- INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR POPULATION SCIENCES
 2008 Haryana. *National Family Health Survey, India, 2005–2006*. Vol. 3, 25–26. Mumbai: International Institute for Population Sciences.
- JAFRI, Amir H.
 2008 *Honour Killing: Dilemma, Ritual, Understanding*. Karachi: Oxford University Press.
- JASAM, S.
 2001 *Honour, Shame, and Resistance*. Lahore: ASR Publications.
- JASSAL, Smita Tiwari
 2012 *Unearthing Gender: Folk Songs of North India*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- JONES, W. Kenneth
 1976 *Arya Dharma: Hindu Consciousness in Nineteenth-Century Punjab*. Delhi: Manohar Publications.
- JOSEPH, E.
 1911 *Customary Law of the Rohtak District, 1910*. Lahore: Superintendent Govt. Printing.

- KAUR, Ravinder
2004 Across-region marriages: Poverty, female migration and the sex ratio. *Economic and Political Weekly* 39: 2595–2603.
- KUMAR, Satish, S. D. GUPTA, and George ABRAHAM
2002 Masculinity and violence against women in marriage: An exploratory study in Rajasthan. In *Men, Masculinity and Domestic Violence in India: Summary Report of Four Studies*, K. Satish, S. D. Gupta, and G. Abraham, eds., 6–15. Washington, DC: International Center for Research on Women.
- MACONACHIE, James Robert
1870 *Selected Agricultural Proverbs of the Punjab*. Delhi: Imperial Medical Hall Press.
- MARRIOTT, McKim
1975 The feast of love. In *Encounters and Experience: Personal Accounts of Field Work*, A. Beteille and T. N. Madan, eds., 83–98. Delhi: Vikas Publishing House.
- MARSH, Peter, and Ann CAMPBELL, eds.
1982 *Aggression and Violence*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- OLDENBURG, Philip
1992 Sex ratio, son preference and violence in India: A research note. *Economic and Political Weekly* 27: 2657–62.
- OSELLA, Caroline, and Filippo OSELLA
1998 On flirting and friendship: Micro-politics in a hierarchal society. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 4: 189–206.
- PAIS, Richard
1990 Scheduled castes, employment and social mobility. In *Politics of Positive Discrimination*, ed. S. K. Mitra, 321–39. Bombay: Popular Prakashan.
- PATEL, Tulsi
1987 Women's work and their status: Dialectics of subordination and assertion. *Social Action* 37: 126–49.
- PEOPLES UNION FOR DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS
1992 *Bitter Harvest: The Roots of Massacres in Central Bihar*. Delhi: PUDR.
- PFLEIDERER, Beatrix, and Lothar LUTZE
1985 *The Hindi Film: Agent and Re-agent of Cultural Change*. Delhi: Manohar Publications.
- RAHEJA, Gloria Goodwin, and Ann Grodzins GOLD
1996 *Listen to the Heron's Words: Reimagining Gender and Kinship in North India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- REGE, Sharmila
1995 The hegemonic appropriation of sexuality: The case of the Lavani performers of Maharashtra. *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 29: 7.
- Sanadhaya Jatiya Sabha*
1894 *Report of the Second Annual Meeting at Agra*. Vernacular Tracts, no. IIII. London: India Office Library and Records.
- SHAH, Nafisa
1997 Role of the community in honour killings in Sindh. In HUSSAIN et al., eds., 199–259.

SRIVASTAVA, Sanjay

- 2004 The masculinity of dis-location: Commodities, the metropolis, and the sex-clinics of Delhi and Mumbai. In *South Asian Masculinities: Context of Change, Sites of Continuity*, R. Chopra, C. Ostella, and F. Ostella, eds., 175–223. New Delhi: Women Unlimited.

UBEROI, J. P. S.

- 1996 *Religion, Civil Society and the State*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

VATSA, Rajendra Swarup

- 1991 *Saṅg Samrat Paṇḍit Lakṣmī Cānd* [Folk theater of Pandit Lakshmi Chand]. Chandigarh: Haryana Academy.

VATUK, Ved Prakash, and Sylvia VATUK

- 1979 The anthropology of *Saṅg*: A north Indian folk opera. In *Studies in Indian Folk Tradition*, ed. V. P. Vatuk, 15–37. Delhi: Manohar Publications.

WELCHMAN, Lynn, and Sara HOSSAIN

- 2005 *'Honour': Crimes, Paradigms and Violence against Women*. London: Zed Books.

WHYTE, Robert O., and Pauline WHYTE

- 1982 *The Women of Rural Asia*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.