

I. SRIVASTAVA

*Bennebroek, The Netherlands*

## Woman as Portrayed in Women's Folk Songs of North India

### **Abstract**

This article is based on an empirical study of women's folk songs of North India. Songs concern female deities, ceremonial of birth and weddings, seasons and festivals, and daily chores. It is a critical analysis of the folk songs that deal with women's common wishes, unexpressed emotions, unfulfilled desires, hopes, disappointments, and their reactions to their social environment. The portrait of woman as depicted in these songs is often at variance with the conventional stereotype of an obedient, acquiescent, and conformist woman that is conjured up in one's mind. This article highlights the very important safety-valve function of these folk songs in which women are afforded an opportunity to express their bottled-up feelings and their longings in a socially acceptable form. The data of this article have been collected in India as well as Holland.

**Key words:** Women, Indian — Folk songs — Rites of passage  
Safety-valve function

**T**HIS article portrays women as described in the women's folk songs of North India. Women's folk songs of India chiefly describe the household environment and the domestic rituals connected with the rites of passage, festivals, and ceremonies. Nevertheless, there are also songs that, instead of focusing on the domestic rituals, deal with women's common wishes, their unexpressed emotions, unfulfilled desires, hopes, and disappointments, and their reactions to their social environment. Even though there is no description of the domestic rituals pertaining to a particular ceremony or festival in these songs, they are, nevertheless, sung on these occasions and festivals. No ceremony, festival, or ritual in India is complete without women's songs. They are also sung while women do such household chores as milling grain, churning curd, or working in the fields.

Related work on North Indian folk songs has been done by many writers. These authors have dealt with folk songs from various angles, but none have discussed them specifically from the woman's point of view, a viewpoint that is the main focus of this paper. MISHRA (1959) has, admittedly, touched upon women's conditions, but only briefly, and has left many aspects related to women's emotions untouched. WADE (1971) emphasized only the wedding songs. CHAUHAN (1972) and SRIVASTAVA (1982), on the other hand, have studied folk songs only in an anthropological and cultural context. KULDEEP (1972) and UPADHYAYA (1978) have given only a general view of folk songs and have not dealt with them from the woman's point of view. HENRY (1976) mentions the names of a few types of women's songs, but he does not give any texts or discuss women's feelings as expressed in these songs. JAIN's work (1980) is almost exclusively centered on *caiti* songs, which are mostly composed by men, even though the text usually describes women's feelings and predicaments. TEWARI (1974, 1988) has given some folk songs of women, but he focuses mainly upon those that describe domestic rituals and traditions. AVASTHI (1985) gives a good variety of women's folk songs, but his contribution remains

restricted to anthology. SINGH (1983) has made a comprehensive study of *avadhi* folk songs, and TRIPATHI (1962) has done the same for *bhojpuri* songs, but they have not studied them from the specific standpoint of women. How a woman is portrayed in women's folk songs and what desires, wishes, and aspirations she cherishes, what frustrations and injustices she suffers, is a subject that has received till now little or no attention in the literature. The present paper attempts to fill this gap.

This article is based on a study of folk songs sung by Hindu women of all castes in North India. These songs are in the *avadhi*, *bhojpuri*, or *khariboli* dialects of Hindi. My study is restricted to those folk songs that depict women's wishes, feelings, emotions, unfulfilled desires, and reactions. Folk songs that describe only rituals, festivals, or ceremonies without touching upon the wishes and feelings of women have been excluded. Born in India and having lived there several years, I have had the privilege of attending many ritual ceremonies and social occasions. An interest in music early in life helped me to take a mental note of women's folk songs and of the rituals associated with different occasions. I went on collecting material in North India in the cities of Allahabad, Kanpur, Lakhimpur, Lucknow, Patna, and Varanasi, and in the village of Ikauna in Baharaich District in Uttar Pradesh.

The rituals and ceremonies are not as elaborate in the cities as in the villages, but the tradition of women's singing as an integral part of these rituals and ceremonies is still as strong in the cities as in the villages. A women's get-together or soiree is organized on all important social occasions, and the women from the neighborhood as well as family and friends get together, sing, dance, and create an atmosphere of bonhomie. Such a collective gathering is called *bulāwā* or *bulauā* in Hindi. The word *bulāwā* means a call or an invitation. Traditionally a barber's wife (*nāun* or *nāin*) was assigned the task of conveying the invitation personally to the women of the neighborhood, but nowadays, except for villages and small cities, it is usually done by means of a printed invitation card sent through the post. The event is referred to as a "ladies' sangit," which is one of several programs connected with a particular rite of passage or social event.

The *bulāwā* is normally arranged for an afternoon so that the women can come easily without upsetting their usual household work. Young children and babies accompany their mothers and the atmosphere is very informal. The musical instruments to accompany the singing are usually a *ḍholak* (percussion instrument) and *manjīrā* (a kind of cymbal), occasionally with a harmonium and *ghungharū* (small bells worn

round the ankles while dancing). The songs sung in villages generally have a richer variety in verbal content, a longer text, but simpler melodies, while the songs sung in cities usually have less variety, a shorter text, but more complex melodies.

It is not a tradition to mention a composer's name in a folk song. Sometimes, however, singers choose to insert the names of well-known poets, such as Sur or Tulsi, to secure respectability for their songs. Since a composer's name is not mentioned, the folk songs are not looked upon as fixed texts composed by a particular person a certain way. Whoever sings, feels free to make changes in the text according to her mood or to suit the occasion. Because the songs are passed on orally from one generation to the next, it is impossible to determine the original words or the place where the song was first composed. Occasionally the same song can be heard at several places in several dialects, with or without minor variations in the text. The songs I collected in the village of Ikauna (see Appendix, songs 9, 10, and 11) should be called *avadhi* songs since Baharaich District is an *avadhi*-speaking area. The same songs are mentioned by SRIVASTAVA (1982, 80) as *bhojpuri* songs. Therefore, any categorization of the songs on the basis of dialect or region has no value. Women's folk songs, particularly those describing women's emotions, can, however, be divided into four categories depending on the occasions they are meant for, and that is how I shall treat them.

1. Songs of the female deities
2. Ceremonial songs related to birth and wedding ceremonies
3. Seasonal and festive songs
4. Songs connected with chores

#### SONGS OF FEMALE DEITIES

Songs sung in praise of female deities are called *devī ke gīt* and are more popular among the women than those in praise of male deities. A goddess, being a female, can understand women's problems more sympathetically than a male deity can. The songs are in homage to a female deity, rather than to preach the principles of any religion or describe any faith. In these songs women express their wishes in the hope that these will be granted by the goddess, and with that their lives would be fulfilled. These songs are sung on all auspicious occasions before any other songs.

One of the popular songs (no. 1) describes a woman supplicating the goddess in the temple to grant her several brothers and one sister, several brothers-in-law (i.e., brothers of her husband) and one sister-in-law (i.e., a sister of her husband), several sons and one daughter.

At the end she asks for red and green bangles and for the part of her hair to be full of vermilion. Wearing colorful bangles and using vermilion on the part of the hair are marks of being married, and only women whose husbands are alive can be thus adorned.

Wishes for the good of society (no. 2), such as sight to the blind, a healthy body to the leper, wealth to the poor, and a child to a childless woman, also form the content of some *devī ke gīt*. Some songs are in worshipful praise to the goddess of smallpox (no. 3).

In *devī ke gīt* women's commonly expressed desire is to have many male members in the family. This reflects Hindu society, which is largely a patriarchal society in which the family name is carried only by the sons. It is also a general belief among Hindus that only sons can liberate the souls of the dead family members. Besides this, men are predominantly the bread winners while women are predominantly housekeepers. If there are more male members in the family, the financial security of the females (in an extended family system) is ensured. Another commonly expressed desire is the longevity of the husband. It is because in Hindu society a woman's life is so much tied up with her husband that she has hardly any place in society without him. Remarriage, by and large, is not accepted. As a result, widowhood is looked upon as a curse. Widows are expected to lead simple, austere lives, wearing only white or plain clothes; they are not expected to put on any makeup or wear ornaments such as colorful bangles or vermilion on the part of their hair. They are expected to live spartan lives till they die and pay no attention to their physical appearance or comforts. They are often ostracized and looked upon as inauspicious and harbingers of widowhood to other women. They are, therefore, shunned or discreetly avoided at auspicious occasions. Understandably, this leads them to look upon the prospect of their widowhood with dread.

A goddess in *devī ke gīt* is addressed by the epithets of Parvati. In every one of her incarnations Parvati has, through great austerity, won Shiv as her consort and is blessed never to be a widow. She is, therefore, worshipped by every woman—young or old, married or unmarried or widow. An unmarried girl worships her in order to get a suitable husband, a married woman worships her in order to ensure the longevity of her husband so that she may not be cursed to die as a widow, and a widow worships her so that she may not have to suffer widowhood again in her next life.

#### CEREMONIAL SONGS

Every ceremony in India has songs suited to the occasion. The cere-

monial songs in which women have expressed themselves most, are those connected with births and weddings.

*Songs related to birth*

The songs that describe either a pregnant woman or the rites and rituals connected with the birth of a child are called *sohar* or *sariyā*. These are sung at different ceremonies following the birth of a child, such as those of the sixth day (*chaṭī*), the tenth day (*daṣṭaun*), or the twelfth day (*barahān* or *barahīn*). These are also sung at the birth anniversaries of Ram and Krishn, which are celebrated by Hindus with great gusto and devotion. During the ceremonies connected with these anniversary festivals, it is common to sing *sohar*. The word *sohar* comes from the Hindi word *saur* or *saurī*, meaning "a chamber where a child is delivered." UPADHYAYA (1978, 5), however, traces the origin of this word from the words *śobhan* and *sughar*, meaning "beautiful." Since these words do not bear any connection whatsoever with the child, childbirth, or a pregnant woman, it is highly improbable that the word *sohar* developed from the words *śobhan* or *sughar*.

In the songs, the child is commonly addressed as *Nandalal*, *Kṛṣṇ(a)*, *Kānhā*, or *Kanhāī* (the epithets of Krishn), and sometimes as Ram. In some songs the child is addressed as *babuā* ("of gentle birth") or *lālan* ("darling"). The lying-in woman is often referred to as *jaccā* (from the Urdu word *zaccā*, meaning "lying-in woman"), *Yāsodā* (mother of Krishn), or *Kausalyā* (mother of Ram). A mother is depicted as bringing up her child with tender loving care. She is portrayed in one song (no. 4) as willing to sacrifice everything, even the company of her husband, for the sake of her child.

There is hardly any *sohar* that describes the birth of a female child (see TEWARI 1988, 260). Even the likelihood of a female birth threatens the status of a woman. One of the songs (no. 5) gives a very true account of such a situation. This song is also mentioned by TEWARI (1974, 66, 225) and SINGH (1983, 41). It portrays a pregnant woman nearing her term. She is carrying cow-dung in her hand and asks her mother-in-law which room she should clean for her delivery. Even before her mother-in-law can answer, her husband's sister says that, since her *bhābhī* (brother's wife), as it appears, is going to give birth to a daughter, she does not deserve a room and so should be directed to clean the barn for her delivery. Just then the woman's husband appears. He requests his mother that, as his wife is very young and delicate, she be provided, for her lying-in period, with the room where elephants are painted on the walls. At dawn the woman gives birth to a son. When the husband's sister learns of this, she starts dancing

and shows her exuberant joy at the birth of a nephew. She also begs her brother's wife to give her a bracelet as a gift on this occasion. In the text of the song given by Tewari (TEWARI 1974, 66, 225 and 1988, 266), the daughter-in-law retorts, "O *nanada*, your taunts that I should go to the barn are still hurting me. Your father didn't have those bracelets made for me, nor did your brother purchase them. My parents gave them to me and I will not give them to you."

Although it is not common to sing a *sohar* at the birth of a female child, occasionally one is. This happens particularly if the birth of the female child is after a long-awaited delivery or after many male children. In progressive families, however, *sohar* are sung even at the birth of a girl. Since there are no exclusive *sohar* for girls, the same songs that are sung at the birth of a boy are sung for the girls. Sometimes the word for a boy in the song is replaced by a word for a girl to make it suitable for the occasion.

*Sohar* have a large variety of subject matter. A woman in one *sohar* (no. 6) is depicted as a contented and obedient wife who wants to please her in-laws. At the birth of her son she requests her husband to invite all the relatives on his side and give them the customary gifts (*neg*) for performing the rituals connected with the birth of her baby boy. In contrast, in another *sohar* (no. 7) a woman shows her resentment towards her in-laws by asking her husband to keep them away from her son so that their comments may not have an evil effect on her son. In still another *sohar* (no. 8), a woman calls into question the tradition according to which a child is named after his father even though it is the mother who bears the pain of childbirth. The woman first asks this question to her mother-in-law and then, one by one, to all the female relatives on her husband's side. Every one of them reiterates that the tradition of calling a child after his father is absolutely just and should be perpetuated. Dissatisfied with their answers, she puts the same question to her husband. Her husband, who is depicted in the song as a very understanding and caring person, admits that the child should be called after both parents and not after the father alone. This song is also mentioned by KULDEEP (1972, 77), although the text differs a little.

In one *sohar* (no. 9), a barren woman narrates her grief over how her mother-in-law and husband's sister rebuke her and how her husband, who married her when she was very young, turns her out of the house. No one is willing to help her for fear that the helper will also become barren by contact with her. Even her mother rejects her. Not only human beings, but also animals reject her out of the same fear. Eventually, in despair she goes to the holy river Ganges with the idea

of committing suicide by drowning herself in the river. The Ganges (personified and referred to as Mother Ganges) consoles her after hearing her sad story and advises her to worship the Sun God with *til* (sesame seeds) and *cāval* (rice), in order to get a child. The woman follows the instructions of the Ganges and is soon blessed with a son. In gratitude she goes back to the Ganges with a *cunari* (piece of cloth worn by married women for covering the forehead and the upper part of the body) and coconut to worship the holy river.

Barrenness, like widowhood, is looked upon in Hindu society as a contagious disease. A barren woman is thought to be inauspicious and a harbinger of bad luck and barrenness to other women. She is castigated and disgraced. Although in one *sohar* (AVASTHI 1985, 256) a childless father is also portrayed as an unlucky omen, in reality it is the woman who is blamed and disgraced for not being able to bear a child. This kind of social treatment of a childless woman is more prevalent in the villages than in the cities. The place of a barren woman is very low. She has hardly any say in the household affairs.

One *sohar* (no. 10) describes the pitiable condition of Sita, who has been abandoned by Ram and banished to the woods. She is pregnant and nearing her term. In the dense forest of war-trumpet trees, Sita wails as she wonders who would light the fire and bring the thorn of the *bél* tree at the time of her delivery. Hearing her lamentation, the goddess of the forest comes out and consoles her. She tells Sita that she (the goddess) would light the fire and bring the thorn of the *bél* tree, and that she would stay awake the whole night. At dawn Sita gives birth to twins. She sends a messenger (*nāī*) to Ayodhya and asks him to deliver the good news of the birth of her sons to her in-laws. But she especially instructs him not to inform Ram, whom she refers to as sinful (*pāpī*) and unrighteous (*adharmī*). This song is also mentioned by TEWARI (1988, 262), although the text differs a little.

One *sohar* (no. 11) is a poignant reflection on Sita's personality. Ram decides to perform *yajña* (the fire ritual) and wonders how he will be able to do it without Sita. Without her the world seems very empty to him. He requests his royal priest, Vasishth, to go personally and implore Sita to return. He knows that Sita will not come back if he or anyone else from his family would ask her to come. He therefore assigns this task to Vasishth, who goes to the forest along with Ram's younger brother. When Sita sees Vasishth coming, she asks her female friends to bring water of the sacred river *jamunā* and camphor in a golden dish in order to wash his feet and welcome him. Vasishth asks Sita why she left the kingdom of Avadh and forgot her husband Ram. Sita explains to the guru that it was Ram who, on the night of the rainy

season when it was raining hard, had abandoned her. She declines to return to Ayodhya and says she would rather burn herself to ashes than go back to her husband. But since she does not want to disobey Guru Vasishth, she agrees, as a gesture, to walk five steps in the direction of Ayodhya, after which she returns to her hut.

*Songs related to a wedding*

The wedding songs in general are called *vivāh ke gīt*. There are two types of wedding songs: those that are sung at the bride's house, and those that are sung at the bridegroom's house. The former are called *kanyā pakś ke gīt*, the latter, *var pakś ke gīt*. *Kanyā pakś ke gīt* describe a girl in the role of a daughter, her parental relatives, and things that happen at her parent's house. *Var pakś ke gīt* describe the groom, his would-be bride, his relatives, and the wedding rituals performed at his house.

The wedding songs sung at the girl's house describe a girl's birth, childhood, and adolescence, as well as her mother's feelings towards her. Some songs describe a mother's tender and loving feelings for a daughter, while others depict the daughter as a source of misery. The young girl in the songs is usually addressed as *bannī*, *lāḍo* ("beloved"), and Sita. Sita is considered in Hindu culture to be a model of perfection both as a daughter and as a daughter-in-law. Ram's family is thought to be the ideal family a girl could wish to emulate, and Ram is not only worshipped but also commonly portrayed as an ideal husband.

The women in one wedding song (no. 12) exhort one another to sing the song for the good luck of Sita. The mother woefully asks herself how she will bear the pain of separation from the daughter whom she has brought up with tender and loving care. She reminisces how she used to feed her daughter with fresh milk and grapes. She is now sad because her daughter is going away to another family, and she worries who will now take care of her daughter. Had she known before how painful this separation would be, she would have eaten the poisonous seeds of *dhatūrā* (the thorn apple) in order to kill herself, or would have had an abortion done to avoid this pain.

Another wedding song (no. 13) describes a daughter as a source of misery. The mother is portrayed as remembering how her miseries began from the very day she became pregnant with her daughter. From the beginning she started feeling sick. When her daughter was born, the night became as dark as the night of the rainy season. When her mother-in-law and sister-in-law heard of the birth of a girl, they did not even light a lamp. Her husband also became disappointed. Despite all this, the mother kept consoling herself with the thought that,

even if the family was unhappy at the time, they would be reconciled and happy later because through the daughter they would be afforded the opportunity of performing the rite of giving her away in marriage. At the time of her daughter's wedding, the bridegroom's family demands nine hundred thousand rupees' worth of dowry. The mother feels extremely wretched. She throws all the utensils of the house on the ground in order to sell them and raise the money demanded. She wishes that even her worst enemy would not have a daughter. At the end she says that, had she known during her pregnancy that it was a girl in her womb, she would have drunk a concoction made from the spiciest chilies in order to get the fetus aborted, and could thus have saved herself and her family so much misery.

It is not always, however, that the birth of a girl is depicted as an unhappy event. In a wedding song cited by SINGH (1983, 402), the father of a girl is portrayed as feeling fortunate to have had a daughter. He is depicted in the song as praying to the Sun God to give him more daughters so that he can welcome his sons-in-law along with their fathers more often.

One wedding song (no. 14) depicts an adolescent girl who feels free to express her views about her future husband before her grandfather, father, and other elder relatives. She asks her grandfather, father, and all the uncles one by one not to look for a dark-complexioned husband for her. They in turn all explain to her that the complexion is not as important as other qualities. They point out that they themselves are dark while their wives are fair. They cite the example of Krishn, who was matchless in qualities even though he was dark. They all try to convince her that her concern about complexion is misguided.

In the wedding songs, the adolescent girls are seldom portrayed as docile, submissive, or passive. On the contrary, they are bold, daring, and fearless. In real life, however, girls have hardly any say in their own marriages. The head of the family looks for a match for the girl and she accepts the boy as her husband without any objection.

The wedding ceremony is performed at the bride's house. When the male members of the house are gone with the bridegroom to the bride's house for the wedding ceremony, the women keep an all-night vigil to safeguard the security of the house. During this vigil they perform a variety of skits and play-act. This is called *nakaṭā* or *khoriā*. The word *nakaṭā* is a corrupted form of the word *nāṭak* (meaning "drama"). The origin of the word *khoriā* is not known. In *nakaṭā* one woman plays the bride and another the bridegroom. They imitate the wedding rituals. They sing, dance, and express their emotions freely. All inhibitions and taboos are let loose at this time. No won-

der that sex is also another subject that is talked about frequently and without the usual restraint. The women in the *nakaṭā* songs are usually portrayed as poking fun at their husbands and close relatives of their husbands, such as father, mother, brothers, sisters, brothers-in-law, and sisters-in-law. A woman in one song (no. 15) describes how her husband repeatedly falls prey to the charm of the female domestic servants and how each time he suffers embarrassment and humiliation at the hands of their husbands.

In another *nakaṭā* song (no. 16) a woman tells about the pitiable position of her husband in comparison to his sister in his own house. It is always his sister who gets the best things and respect in the family, while her husband is treated shoddily. In everyday life it is the man who gets the best things and the most respect, but in this song he is treated worse than anyone. A wife in India always walks a few steps behind her husband, but in this song it is the husband who walks behind his wife. In real life it is the man who gets the best food, but in this song he gets nothing to eat and is portrayed as licking the *donā* (a bowl made from a leaf).

Another *nakaṭā* song (no. 17) portrays a woman who is bold, daring, and fearless and does not let her husband overpower her. She does everything different from what her husband does. She praises herself and belittles her husband. Another *nakaṭā* song (no. 18) depicts a woman who blushing describes her first encounter with her husband.

The miseries and sufferings caused women by mismatched marriages are also described in *nakaṭā* songs. In one song (no. 19) a girl is married to a child who cannot understand her pain and the anguish of her unfulfilled longings. She watches him playing with *gullī* (the game of tipcat). As she tries to do the chores, he comes running and wants her to carry him in her lap. He treats her as a mother. Another song (no. 20) describes a young girl whose husband is very old. She was so young at her wedding that she was carried in the lap by relatives in order to perform the wedding rituals. Her husband is not only old but also suffers from chronic cough, and is so jealous that if he finds her talking to someone, he calls her a prostitute. The girl confides that she is fed up with her husband but she does not want to go either to her parents or to her in-laws. She says that she will go to Vikramajit, who would make her life fruitful. (No more is said in the song about Vikramajit, who could be a friend, or somebody whom she could trust.)

#### SEASONAL OR FESTIVE SONGS

There are festivals in India for every season, and for every festival

there is a song. Songs such as *holī*, *caitī*, *bārāmāsā*, *kajarī*, and *sāvan* all fall in this category. *Holī*, *caitī*, and *bārāmāsā* do not contain anything specific with respect to the feelings and aspirations of women. These, therefore, have not been included in this article. The seasonal songs in which women have expressed their feelings most are *kajarī* and *sāvan*, and we shall turn to these next.

The rainy season is one of the favorite seasons of Hindu women and is held to evoke many romantic as well as nostalgic feelings. This period falls between two basic crops; one crop is ready, the other is yet to be sown. At this time of year the farmers go to the cities or other places to take up jobs to earn their living. The women are left alone. Their loneliness is often depicted in *kajarī* and *sāvan* songs. The sweet smell of earth after the rain reminds a Hindu girl of her mother grinding fresh henna leaves and out of that paste making beautiful patterns on their palms. The fresh shower of rain brings a new life in every living being. Even the familiar sounds of that season evoke nostalgic feeling. The croaks of the frogs, the chirping of the birds, and the calls of the peacocks, all of these are described in *kajarī* and *sāvan* songs. There are a number of festivals in the rainy season, such as *hariyālī tīj* or *guḍiyān*, *nāg-pancamī*, and *rakṣābandhan*. During these festivals a married girl is customarily invited by her parents to their home. Among Hindus it is held that, once a girl is married, she belongs to her husband's family and she is not supposed to visit her parental home unless invited. Usually a brother comes to take her to her parental house. If by chance the parents are poor and are not able to invite her (because of the considerable costs involved), the girl is depicted in the songs as staying back at her in-laws' house and woefully pining for her parents, brothers, and sisters.

The *kajarī* are especially sung in eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Both *kajarī* and *sāvan* usually describe images and events related to the rain, such as the dark clouds, the drizzle of the rain, the lightning, the croaking of the frogs, and *gopī* dancing with Krishna in the light shower. Women's wistful and nostalgic feelings for their parental home as well as romantic feelings are evoked, and they are shown as pining either for their parents or for their husbands during the periods of their absence. The difference between the *kajarī* and *sāvan* songs lies in the meter and the melodies. *Kajarī* generally have the words *are* or *hare rāmā* in the beginning of every line and *re hārī* at the end of every couplet. *Sāvan* songs generally have the word *sāvan* in the text and *are sāvriyā* at the end of every line or couplet. There are, however, exceptions to the rule: there are songs that neither use these words nor describe the rainy season, yet they are conventionally sung in the rainy

season and are called *sāvan* songs.

A woman in one *kajarī* song (no. 21) describes her loneliness in the absence of her husband in the month of *sāvan* (a month of the rainy season). This song is also mentioned by SINGH (1983, 94). The woman is depicted as missing her husband, who has gone out and has not returned even though the month of *sāvan* is about to end. The drizzle, the soft breeze, and the lightning make her husband's absence more unbearable and cause her to feel very sad.

A *sāvan* song (no. 22) portrays a woman who does not like the shower of the rainy season, because her father did not send her brother to fetch her. She reminisces nostalgically that the swings must have been set up in her parents' courtyard and all her friends must be swinging. She repeatedly asks herself why her father did not invite her in *sāvan* and why he had to marry her off so far.

The *sāvan* songs are sometimes composed in a dialogue form. The dialogue can be between husband and wife or between two women, one of them being the *bhābhī* (brother's wife) and the other a *nanad* (husband's sister). One *sāvan* song (no. 23) describes a married girl, a *nanad*, who comes from a distant village to visit her brother and his family. Her brother does not know about her visit and is out of the house at the time of her arrival. When she reaches her brother's house and knocks at the door, her *bhābhī* at first ignores her knocking, but after the *nanad*'s repeated requests she grudgingly opens the door. When the *nanad* requests her *bhābhī* to lend her a sari, the *bhābhī* taunts her by saying "O *bībī*, has your brother brought any sari or *cunarī*? From where should I produce the saris?" The *nanad*, who up to this point has silently tolerated all the humiliation, reacts sharply and says, "O *bhābhī*, my brother has indeed brought sari and *cunarī*, but probably you have not seen them at your parental home." Realizing that she is not welcome, the *nanad* decides to return to her own house without seeing her brother. On her way back she runs into her brother on his way home. He asks her where she is coming from and where she is going to. The girl tells him how his wife did not welcome her, and that she is therefore going back to her village. The brother feels very unhappy. He implores his sister to return to his house and promises her he will punish his wife by sending her away to her parents or turning her out of the house. The girl is overwhelmed with her brother's loving gesture and pleads with him not to do any such thing, since it is only his wife who will bear him children to carry on the name of their father.

SONGS CONNECTED WITH CHORES (*ŚRAM GĪT*)

*Śram gīt* are sung when women mill grain, churn milk, or do their usual chores together with other women. The texts of these songs are mostly long, melancholic, and touching. They deal with women's sad experiences in connection with their daily lives as well as their pensive reflections on the drudgery and gloom in their lives. In one song (no. 24) a girl sees her brother coming with her husband and asks her mother-in-law what she may cook for her brother. The mother-in-law disdainfully tells her to cook rotten wild rice and wild vegetables. The girl is hurt, since there is also fine rice in the house. At dinner, when her brother sees her miserable condition, he is filled with sorrow and tears roll down his cheeks. The girl asks him the reason for his sadness. The brother replies that it is her miserable condition that makes him cry. On hearing this she implores her brother not to tell anyone about her grief. She is more concerned about her parents' and sister's happiness than hers. The girl further implores her brother not to carry the bundle of her grief and pain with him but to consign it to the midstream of the river on his way back home.

The family members are often referred to in the above-mentioned song through words that denote relationships in a rather contorted way. A woman refers to her husband as *nanad's* brother. A brother is often referred to as mother's dear one or brave one (*bīran* or *bīr*, meaning "brave"). Referring to a husband by his relationship to his sister or brother reveals the close family ties of Hindu society. This song epitomizes how a married girl thinks and reacts. In Hindu society the father arranges the marriage of his children. The girl in this situation could easily blame her father for having arranged her marriage into a family that is so unsympathetic. Instead of blaming her father, though, she implores her brother to refrain from mentioning her sorrow to him.

## CONCLUSION

The songs of women discussed above give a variegated picture of Hindu women. They do not depict only a conventional stereotype of a Hindu woman, they also portray her as ebullient and capable of expressing her emotions freely and with abandon. The songs tell us about her longings and wishes, her frustrations, and the predicaments that accompany different facets of her life. The songs lay bare her status in Hindu society. Some describe her as submissive and acquiescent, others depict her as bold, daring and rebellious. Some show us that girls are unwelcome and can only bring unhappiness to the family, while others describe how tenderly and with what loving care they are brought up.

In these folk songs, we also see the contradiction between the way a daughter is so dearly loved that her going away can be heartrending, while, on the other side, once she gets married she cannot visit her parents without a proper invitation.

The conventional stereotype of a Hindu woman portrays her as credulous, gullible, and superstitious, as a person who looks upon the miseries of life, disease, and death as stemming from the wrath of gods and goddesses. She is deemed to be pious and godfearing. This stereotype of the Hindu woman finds its confirmation in the folk songs, but also its refutation, for on occasion the Hindu woman appears as a nonconformist who is disdainful of social constraints, as someone who is prepared to challenge the established authority of social norms and customs, and is willing to forcefully articulate the injustices and inequities to which she is subjected. While she can be docile, she can be tough and indomitable as well.

Women's folk songs are a kind of safety valve meant to provide an outlet for women through which they can express their bottled-up resentment against the social order. From their earliest years, Hindu girls are taught to be respectful and obedient to their husbands and their relatives. In contrast to this, we often hear in the folk songs strongly derogatory and accusatory words against these same relatives, who in real life would be treated with great respect. Normally a daughter-in-law does not dare argue with her mother-in-law or sister-in-law, but in the folk songs these rules of normal conduct can be set aside with impunity. Anything, however unacceptable it may be in real life, finds an acceptable outlet in the folk songs. It is through folk songs that women give vent to their passions, their frustrations, their anger, and their love. It is through them that they voice their grievances and show their hurt. The folk songs provide beautiful vignettes through which we can look into the complex phenomenon we call culture. Folk songs, particularly women's folk songs, are a rich source for understanding the place of women in Hindu society.

APPENDIX  
SONGS OF FEMALE DEITIES

## Song No. 1

māngūn varadāna devī ke mandira ke bhītara.  
 māngūn main pānca sāta bhaiyye so pānca sāta bhaiyye,  
 behaniyā eka devī ke mandira ke bhītara.  
 māngūn main devarā jeṭhā so devarā jeṭhā,  
 nanaduiyā eka devī ke mandira ke bhītara.  
 māngūn main pānca sāta bālaka so pānca sāta bālaka,  
 aura kanyā eka devī ke mandira ke bhītara.  
 māngūn main lāla harī cuṛiyān so lāla hari cuṛiyān,  
 sendurā bhara mānga devī ke mandira ke bhītara.

## Song No. 2

candanā kaṭherevālī kaṭherevālī,  
 devī ke duāre eka andharā pukāre,  
 deo nayana ghara jāye, kaṭherevālī  
 devī ke duāre ek koṛhiyā pukāre,  
 deo kāyā ghara jāye, kaṭherevālī  
 devī ke duāre ek nirdhana pukāre,  
 deo māyā ghara jāye, kaṭherevālī  
 devī ke duāre ek bānjhana pukāre,  
 deo bālaka ghara jāye, kaṭherevālī

## Song No. 3

śītalā mahārānī kī jai jai bolo,  
 gaiyā ka dūdha maiyā kaise caṛhāūn,  
 bachare ne diyo hai juṭhārī, kī jai jai bolo.

bagiyā ke phūla maiyā kaise caṛhāūn,  
 bhanvarana ne diyo hai juṭhārī, kī jai jai bolo.

mevā mithāi maiyā kaise caṛhāūn,  
 balakana ne diyo hai juṭhārī, kī jai jai bolo.

CEREMONIAL SONGS: BIRTH

## Song No. 4

janamau ai lalanā janamau mohin dukhiyā ghare,  
 ho more lalanā ujarī nagariyā basāvau hamain juṛavāvau.  
 maiyā ṭuṭahe palangiyā valarābu ṭukari goharāibu ṭukari ho,

## FREE TRANSLATION OF WOMEN'S FOLK SONGS

## Song No. 1

I ask for a boon in the temple of goddess.  
 I ask for five or seven brothers, just five or seven brothers,  
 and one sister, in the temple of goddess.  
 I ask for several *devar* and *jeth*, just *devar* and *jeth*,  
 and one *nanaduiyā* [husband's younger sister], in the temple of goddess.  
 I ask for five or seven sons, just five or seven sons,  
 and one daughter, in the temple of goddess.  
 I ask for red and green bangles, just red and green bangles,  
 and *māng* [the part of the hair] full of *sindūr* [vermilion] in the temple  
 of goddess.

## Song No. 2

*kaṭherevālī?* *Candanā* [name of the goddess].  
 At the doorstep of the goddess *Candanā*, a blind man is calling.  
 O goddess, please grant him sight so he may go home happy.  
 At the doorstep of the goddess, a leper is calling.  
 O goddess, please grant him a healthy body so he may go home happy.  
 At the doorstep of the goddess, a poor man is calling.  
 O goddess, please grant him wealth so he may go home happy.  
 At the doorstep of the goddess, a barren woman is calling.  
 O goddess, please grant her a child so she may go home happy.

## Song No. 3

Sing praises to the goddess *Śitalā*<sup>8</sup>.  
 How should I offer you, O mother, the cow's milk?  
 The calf has drunk from it [and it is not worthy anymore to be used as your  
 offering]. Sing praises to the goddess.  
 How should I offer you, O mother, the flowers of the garden?  
 The blackbees have sucked the nectar from the flowers [and they are not  
 worthy anymore to be used as your offering]. Sing praises to the god-  
 dess.  
 How should I offer you, O mother, the dry fruits and sweets?  
 The children have eaten from it [and they are not worthy anymore to be  
 used as your offering]. Sing praises to the goddess.

## Song No. 4

Mother: "O dear child, take birth in my mirthless home.  
 O my son, make my deserted home lively and make me happy."  
 Child: "O mother, [if I take birth in your house] I shall have to

main nahin aihaun tumhari nagariyā nahin tumhare ghare ho.  
 beṭā ratuli palangiyā valaraibai babuā goharaibai babuā re,  
 ho babuā morī nagariyā basāvau hamai juṛavāvau hiridaya juṛavāvau re.  
 choṛi daibe mangiyā kai senhur nayana bhari kājara re,  
 ho more lalanā choṛi daibai hari kai sejariyā tumhi pai cita laibai re.

## Song No. 5

eka hāthe lihīn bahurī gobara ta eka hāthe paniyā ho,  
 O morī sāsū kavana kā lipi obariyā ja tuma batalāvai ho.

sāsū ta bolai nā pāin nanada uṭhi bolai ho,  
 bhaujī ta biṭiyā biyaihain batāvā ghara bhusavala ho.

bahire se āvai sira sāheba ta maiyā se araja karain,  
 O morī maiyā tiriya alapa sukuvārī batāva gaja obariyā ho.

hota bihāna pau phaṭata horila janama lihe ho,  
 sakhi laṭi chori nācain nanadiyā kanganavā bhaujī laibai ho.

## Song No. 6

sabako bulānā mere sājanā āj nandalālā hue  
 sāsū jo āven caruā caṛhāyen, jo kuch vo māngen de ḍālanā,

nanadī jo āven satiyā dharāyen, jo kuch vo māngen de ḍālanā,

jiṭhānī jo āven pīpal pisāyen, jo kuch vo māngen de ḍālanā,

devar jo āven bansī bajāyen, jo kuch vo māngen de ḍālanā.

## Song No. 7

gulāba aisā phūla hamen rāma diyo lalanā,  
 sāsū jo āyen dūra dūra rakhanā, nazara laga jāya morā sundara sā lalanā.

nanadī jo āyen dūra dūra rakhanā, nazara laga jāya morā sundara sā lalanā.

jiṭhānī jo āyen dūra dūra rakhanā, nazara laga jāya morā sundara sā lalanā.

- sleep on a tattered bed and you will call me [pejoratively] *Tukari* [a small basket].  
 I, therefore, shall not take birth in your house nor come near to your town.”
- Mother: “O son, I shall make you sleep on a colorful bed and endearingly call you *babuā* [“of respectable birth”].  
 O my dear child, make my town lively and give joy to my heart [I am willing to make any sacrifices for you].  
 For your sake, I shall leave decorating the part of my hair with vermilion and my eyes with *kājal* [black paste].  
 O my dear child, I am even willing to leave my husband's bed for your sake and shall look after you wholeheartedly.”

## Song No. 5

- Bahū*: A *bahū* is carrying cow dung in one hand and water in another.  
 “O my mother-in-law, please tell me, which room should I clean?”
- Nanad*: Before the mother-in-law could answer, *nanad* quips.  
 “Since *bhaujī* is going to give birth to a daughter, she should be directed to clean the barn.”
- Husband: Just then comes *bahū*'s husband and requests his mother.  
 “O my mother, my wife is very delicate, please direct her to the room in which elephants are painted on the wall.”  
 At dawn, the daughter-in-law delivers a son.  
 On hearing it, O friend, the *nanad*, with her hanging locks of hair, starts dancing, and she pleads, “O *bhaujī*, give me a bracelet as gift on this happy occasion.”

## Song No. 6

- O my *sājan*, please invite everyone at the birth of my son *Nandalāl*.  
 When my mother-in-law comes and prepares *caruā* [a herbal drink for a lying-in woman], give her anything she wants.  
 When my *nanad* comes and makes a *satiyā* [good luck sign drawn on the wall], give her anything she wants.  
 When my *jīthānī* comes and grinds *pīpālī* [long pepper], give her anything she wants.  
 When my *devar* comes and plays the flute, give him anything he wants.

## Song No. 7

- God has given us a son who is like a rose.  
 When my mother-in-law comes, keep her away [from my son], so that her comments may not have an evil influence on my child's health.  
 When my *nanad* comes, keep her away [from my son], so that her comments may not have an evil influence on my child's health.  
 When my *jīthānī* comes, keep her away [from my son], so that her comments may not have an evil influence on my child's health.

Song No. 8

dard hamane uṭhāye sainyā ke lāla kaise kahāye,

āo merī sāsū palanga caṛhi baiṭho,

isakā nyāya karāo sainyā ke lāla kaise kahāye.

cāhe bahu raho cāhe calī jāo,  
lāla lallā ke kahāye tumhāre lāla kaise kahāye.

āo merī jiṭhānī palanga caṛhi baiṭho,

isakā nyāya karāo sainyā ke lāla kaise kahāye.

cāhe bahu raho cāhe calī jāo,  
lāla devara ke kahāye tumhāre lāla kaise kahāye.

āo merī nanadī palanga caṛhi baiṭho,

isakā nyāya karāo sainyā ke lāla kaise kahāye.

cāhe bhābhī raho cāhe calī jāo,  
lāla bhaiyā ke kahāye tumhāre lāla kaise kahāye.

āo mere rājā palanga caṛhi baiṭho,

isakā nyāya karāo tumhāre lāla kaise kahāye.  
āo merī rānī palanga caṛhi baiṭho,  
lāla dono ke kahāye hamāre lāla kaise kahāye.

Song No. 9

are sāsū kahāin morī bajhīniyā nanada birajābāsina re,

more rāmā jīnakā main bāre se biyāhī vai ghara se nikārain re.

are sejiyā kai ruṭhlī tiriya, jangala bīca ṭhārhī re,  
more rāmā jangala se nikarau baghīniya, hamai khāi letiu re.  
jangala te nikalīn baghīniyā vai dukha sukha pūchāi re,  
morī tiriya kavana sankāṭa tore jiyarā jangala calī āyau re.  
sāsū kahāin morī bajhīniyā nanada birajābāsina re,  
more rāmā jīnakā main bāre se biyāhī vai ghara se nikārain re,

baghinī hamakā jo tuma khāi letiu bipatiyā se chūṭita re.

are lauṭī tu jāvau mori tiriya, tumahi nahi khābai re,

## Song No. 8

- Bahū:* "It is I who bore the pain of the childbirth, why should the child be called after my husband?  
O my mother-in-law, sit down on the couch and please give me your judgement.  
Tell me how just it is for my child to be called after my husband."
- Sās:* "O my daughter-in-law, whether you stay or go away, but the child should be called after my son and not after you."
- Bahū:* "O my *jīṭhānī*, sit down on the couch and please give me your judgement.  
Tell me how just it is for my child to be called after my husband."
- Jīṭhānī:* "O my sister-in-law, whether you stay or go away, but the child should be called after my brother-in-law and not after you."
- Bahū:* "O my *nanad*, sit down on the couch and please give me your judgement.  
Tell me how just it is for my child to be called after my husband."
- Nanad:* "O my *bhābhī*, whether you stay or go away, but the child should be called after my brother and not after you."
- Bahū:* "O my dear husband, sit down on the couch and please give me your judgement.  
Tell me how just it is for my child to be called after you."
- Husband: "O my dear wife, sit down on the couch.  
The child should be called after both of us and not just after me."

## Song No. 9

- Woman: "My *sās* calls me *bānjhin* [barren] and my *nanad* calls me *brijāvāsīn*.<sup>9</sup>  
And the man whom I am married to since my childhood, has turned me out of the house."  
Rejected by her husband, the woman turns to the forest.
- Woman: "O lioness, please come out of the forest and eat me up."  
The lioness comes out of the forest and asks her welfare.
- Lioness: "O my lady, tell me what grief drove you to the forest."
- Woman: "My *sās* calls me *bānjhin* and my *nanad* calls me *brijāvāsīn*.  
And the man whom I am married to since my childhood, has turned me out of the house.  
O lioness, please eat me up and give me deliverance from this grief."
- Lioness: "O my lady, please go back home. I cannot eat you up."

morī tiriyā tohakā jo hama khāi lebai bajhiniyā hoi jāiba re,  
are jangala kai ruṭhalī tiriyā bimauṭe laga ṭhārhiu re,  
are bimavaṭa se nikarau naginiyā hamahin ḍasi letiu re.

are bimavaṭa se nikarīn naginiyā vai dukha sukha pūchaī re,  
morī tiriyā kavana sankāṭa tore jiyarā bimauṭe lage ṭhārhiu re.

sāsū kahāin morī bānjhina nanada birajābāsina re,  
are rāmā jinakā main bāre se biyāhī vai ghara se nikārain re,

nāgina hamakā jo tuma ḍasi letiu bipati se hama chuṭati re.

are lauṭi tu jāvau morī tiriyā lauṭi ghara jāyeu re,  
morī tiriyā tohokā jau ham ḍasi lebai, bānjhina hoi jābai re.  
bimavaṭa se ruṭhalī tiriyā naihara ḍyorhī ṭhārhi bhai re,

more rāmā nikarau tuma maiyā re papīniya hamaye rakhi letiu re.

mahala se nikarī vai maiyā are dukha sukha pūchaī re,  
morī biyaṭi kavana sankāṭa tore jiyarā naihara calī āeu re.

sāsu kahāin morī bānjhina nanada birijābāsina re,  
morī maiyā jinakā tu bāre se biyāyehū vai ghara se nikārain re.

are lauṭi tu jāo morī biyaṭi lauṭi ghare jāyau re,  
morī beṭi tohokā jau hama rākhi lebai bānjhiniyā hoi jābai,  
patohiyā bānjhina hoihain, mora gaiyā bānjhina huiyain,  
bhainsiyā bānjhina hoihain, kukuriyā bānjhina hoihain re.  
are naihara kai ruṭhalī tiriyā gangā tīre ṭhārhi bhai re,

gangā maiyā eka re lahara hamakā detiu buḍana hama āyana re.

are dharatī se nikarī hain gangā are dukha sukha pūchanhī re,

morī tiriyā kavana sankāṭa tore jiyarā buḍana calī āyeu re.  
are sāsu kahāin morī bānjhina nanada birijābāsina re,  
morī gangā jinakā main bāre se biyāhī vai ghara se nikārain re.

are lauṭi tu jāo morī raniyā lauṭi ghara jāyehū re,  
morī tiriyā hathavā ka leo tila cāura are sūruja manāvau re.

hathavā ka leahīn tila cāura are sūruja manāvain re,

are tiriyā āṭha re māsa nau lāge ta horila jalama līnha re.

- If I do so, I shall become barren myself.”  
Disappointed by the lioness, she goes to the poisonous snake.
- Woman: “O female snake, please come out of your hole and bite me with your poison.”
- The snake comes out of its hole and asks her welfare.
- Snake: “O my lady, tell me about your grief. What drove you to me?”
- Woman: “My *sās* calls me *bānjhin* and my *nanad* calls me *brijāvāsīn*. And the man whom I am married to since my childhood, has turned me out of the house.  
O female snake, please bite me and give me deliverance from this grief.”
- Snake: “O my lady, please go back home. I cannot bite you. If I do so, I shall become barren myself.”  
Disappointed by the female snake, she goes to her parents’ house.
- Woman: “O mother, please come out and give me, a sinner, a shelter in your house.”
- Mother comes out and asks her welfare.
- Mother: “O my daughter, tell me, what grief has brought you to your parental home?”
- Woman: “My *sās* calls me *bānjhin* and my *nanad* calls me *brijāvāsīn*. O mother, the man whom you married me to when I was young has turned me out of the house.”
- Mother: “O my dear daughter, please go back to your home. If I give you shelter, I shall become barren myself. My daughter-in-law and my cow will become barren. My female buffalo and my bitch will also become barren.”  
Disappointed by her mother, she goes to the bank of the river *Gangā*.
- Woman: “O Ganges, I have come to drown myself. Please give me shelter in your waves.”  
Hearing that, the mother *Gangā* takes on a body and comes out of the earth.
- Gangā*: “O dear child, what grief has brought you here?”
- Woman: “My *sās* calls me *bānjhin* and my *nanad* calls me *brijāvāsīn*. O mother Ganges, my husband, whom I am married to since my childhood, has turned me out of the house.”
- Gangā*: “O my dear daughter, go home.  
Take *til* [sesame seeds] and *cāval* [rice] in your hands and invoke the Sun God and you will soon bear a child.”  
The woman goes back home and invokes the Sun God by worshipping him with sesame seeds and rice.  
At the end of the eighth month and at the beginning of the ninth, the woman gives birth to a son.

more rāmā bāje lāge ānanda badhauvā uṭhana lāge sohara re.  
 ek hāthe līnhī cundariyā dusare hāthe narivara re,  
 gangā maiyā eka re lahara hamakā detiu pūjana hama āyana re.

Song No. 10

chapakī chiuliyā gahira bana, patavana jhālārī re,  
 more rāmā tāhī tare ṭhāṛhī re sītala rānī garuhe garabha se re.

kenha more laihain agiyā belahī kera kaṅṭiyā re,  
 kenha mora jagihain ratiyā ta ratiyā suphala huihai re.  
 bana se tau nikarī banasattī sītala smujhāvain re,  
 morī sītā hama tohare laibaī agiyā belahī kera kaṅṭiyā re,

hama tore jāgaba hī ratiyān ta ratiyā suphala huihai re.  
 are hota bhuvāra lokha lāge are lau kusa jalama līna re,  
 more rāmā bājai lāge ānanda badhaiyā uṭhana lāge sohar re.  
 hakarau nagara kai nauā ta hālī begī āvau re,

more nauā racī racī pīseu haradiyā rocana pahuncāvahu re.

pahilā rocana rājā dasaratha dūsare kausilla rānī re,

more nauā tīsara rocana lachimana devarā,  
 papihavā na janahī adharmī na janahī re.

choṭa moṭa biravā re kadama kera patavana jhālārī rāma torai datūnī re,

more bhaiyyā bhahara bhahara karahīn mātha rocana kahān pāyau re.

are toharī ta raniyā sītala rānī dunau kula tārahi re,

more bhaiyyā bhaujī ke bhaye nandalāla rocana huain pāyau re.

are hathavā kai datuna bhuniyā girāī geṛuvā ḍharaka gaye re,

more rāmā talara talara cuvain ānsuvā peṭuka ānsu pochahin re.

At this news, cheerful music begins to be played and *sohar* [songs of joy at the birth of a child] are sung.

The woman, with *cunari* in one hand and coconut in another, goes to the *Gangā*.

Woman: "O mother Ganges, please give me one of your waves, as I have come here to worship you."

Song No. 10

It is a densely wooded forest of *chiuli* [*dhāk*, or war-trumpet trees].

Sītā is standing under one of the trees laden with leaves. Weary and exhausted and in an advanced stage of pregnancy, she is wailing.

Sītā: "Who will bring the fire and the thorn of a *bél* [wood apple] tree?

Who will keep awake the whole night to be by my side?"

Hearing her wailing, the goddess of the forest comes out and consoles Sītā.

Goddess: "O my darling Sītā, I shall bring the fire and the thorn of the *bél* tree.

I shall keep awake the whole night to be by your side."

As the day dawned, Lav and Kush were born.

Joyful music began and birth songs were sung.

Sītā: "Call the *nāi* [the traditional messenger and barber] from the town and ask him to come quickly.

O *nāi*, please grind the turmeric with great care and take *rocanā* to Ayodhya.

Give the first *rocanā* to King Dasharath and the second to Queen Kaushalya.

O *nāi*, please give the third *rocanā* to *devar* Lakshaman.

Please do not say a word to the sinful and unrighteous man [Ram]."

[In Ayodhya] Under a *kadamb* tree laden with leaves, Ram is plucking a twig to clean his teeth.

Ram: [On seeing the *rocanā* on the forehead of Lakshaman] "O brother, the *rocanā* on your forehead is shining. Where did you get that?"

Lakshaman: "I have received this *rocanā* from your wife, Sītā, who is the saviour of both families [her parents' family as well as ours].

O dear brother, Sītā, my sister-in-law, has given birth to twins and this *rocanā* is from her."

On hearing this, Ram is overwhelmed with emotion. The twig falls from his hand and the water pitcher gets tilted.

A spate of tears rolls down his cheeks and he tries to wipe them with his *paṭuk* [small towel carried on the shoulders by men].

are hakarau nagara ke sondarā are hālī begī āvahu re,

are sondarā gaṛhi lāo sone ke haṛauān nauvā pahirāvau re.  
are hakarau nagara ke darajī ta hālī begī āvahu re,  
more darajī silavāhu pāncau re kapaṛavā main nauvā pahirāvahun re.

pahiri oṛhi nauā thaṛhi bhaye ohī re ajodhyā mān,

more rāmā jugu jugu bāṛhai rājā beli main nit uṭhi āvahun re.

### Song No.11

caitai kerī tithī naumī raman jagī ṭhanehi re,

bina sītala jaga sūna sītala lai āvau re,

hamare manāye nahi mānai aurau se nahi mānai re,  
guru tohare manāye sītā mānai manāye lai āvau re.  
agavā ke ghoṛavā basiṭha muni pichavā lakhana deurā re,  
rāmā herai lāge rikhī kī maṛhaiyā jahanvā sītā tapa kare re.

ṭhaṛī jharoruva sītala rānī lāmbe kesa jhurvāhīn re,

rāmā pachvā ulaṭi sītā tākain gura a more āvahi re.

are are skhiyā sahelarī jamuna jala lāvo  
tu kancana thāra lāvo re kapūra bāṭi lāvo re,  
sakhīyā guruji kai carana pakhārau ta āratī utarāu re.  
atanā akilī sītā tohare akilī buddhī agarī re,

sītā kāhe choṛya avadha kerā rāja ramana bisarāyau re.  
guru sāvana bhādauvā kerī ratiyā jhimikī dayavā barasai re,  
guru yahī bana hamakā rāma choṛain tau sapaneu nahin āvai re.

pāncai paraga guru calabai bacana nahi meṭabai re,

guru jarī kai bhasama hui jābai ajodhiyā nahi jābai re.

je yeha mangala gāvahi au gai ke sunāvai re,

rāmā dūdha pūta phala pāvahin tinahu phala pāvahin re.

- Ram: " O somebody, please call the goldsmith from the town quickly.  
 O goldsmith, please make gold *kharāūn* (slippers) for the *nāī*.  
 O somebody, please call the tailor.  
 O tailor, please stitch five garments so that I may give them to this messenger."  
 The messenger, dressed in his new garments and gold slippers, blesses Ram.
- Messenger: " May the creeper of the King's family keep flourishing till eternity and may I have occasion to bring such good news every day."

## Song No. 11

- Ram decides to perform the *yajña* [fire ritual] on the ninth day of the month *caitra*.
- Ram: " Without Sītā the world seems empty. [O Guru Vasishth,] please bring Sītā.  
 She will neither come at my request nor anyone else's.  
 But if you request her, she will agree. Please bring her."  
 The sage Vasishth sits on the horse in the front and Ram's brother, Lakshaman, on the horse behind him: thus they set out on their journey.  
 From a distance they spot the hut of the sages where Sītā is living.  
 They see Sītā, standing by the side of the hut, drying her long tresses.  
 As Sītā turns around, she sees the Guru coming.
- Sītā: " O friends, please bring the water of the river Jamuna. Please bring the gold plate and the camphor wick.  
 O friends, please hold the feet of Guru while I welcome him with *ārtī*."<sup>10</sup>
- Guru: " O Sītā, you are so wise and intelligent.  
 How could you leave the kingdom of Avadh and forget Ram? "
- Sītā: " O Guru, it was the dark night of *sāvan* and *bhādon* [months of the rainy season] and it was raining heavily.  
 It was then that Ram abandoned me in this very forest and has never since visited me, not even in dreams.  
 In order to show my respect to you and in deference to your word [of request], I shall walk five steps in the direction of Ayodhya.  
 O Guru, I would rather burn myself to ashes than ever return to Ayodhya."  
 Whosoever sings this auspicious song, or lets others hear it, shall be blessed with all three: milk, fruits, and children.

## CEREMONIAL SONGS: WEDDING

Song No. 12

gāo mana cita lāya gāo sūrata samāya sītā kā mangala gāiye.

kaune sagara khudāi hai kinane bāndhī hai pāla  
kauna kahāra pānī bhare,  
sītā baithī nahāya laḍo baithī nahāya sītā kā mangala gāiye.

daśaratha sagara khudāi hai lakśamana bāndhī hai pāla  
rāma kahāra pānī bhare,  
sītā baithī nahāya laḍo baithī nahāya sītā kā mangala gāiye.

pālī thīn beṭī pālī hain kaccā dūdha pilāya bhaiyā dākha khilāya,

āna gānva kā chokarā le jāi ratha biṭhalāya sītā kā mangala gāiye.

jo main jānatī beṭī hoengī parāi, laḍo hoengī parāi

āga dhatūrā main letī khāya,  
letī garabha girāya sītā kā mangala gāiye.

Song No. 13

jāhi dina beṭī ho toharo garabha rahile peḍurī mora ghaharāi e,

mānsa machariyā beṭī mana hi na bhāvelā peḍuri mora ghaharāi e.  
jāhi dina beṭī ho toharo janama bhaile bhaili bhadauvā ke rāta e,

sāsu nanada ghare diyano nā barilī mose svāmī rahelen risāi e.

jāhi dina beṭī ho toharo biyāha hoihai bābā ke hiradiyā juḍae e,

dhana dhan beṭī ho tohārī janama bhaile devatana lilalen basaiḍa e.

bhaile biyāha parelā sira senur nava lakha mānge daheja e,

ghara ke re bhāṇḍa ānganā dei paṭakavī sataru ke dhiyā jani hoi e.

jahu hama janatin ki dhiyā kokhi janamihain pihitin hama maraci jharāra e,

marici ke jhāre jhūre dhiyā mari jaitī chūṭī jahate garahuā santāpa e.

Song No. 14

laḍo soyen aṭāriyān tale jhūmara ūpara bāliyān,

## Song No. 12

- Women: " Sing wholeheartedly the auspicious song of Sītā, while picturing her image in your heart.  
Who got the lake dug out, who set the sail,  
and who has filled the buckets of water?  
The water with which Sītā, the darling daughter, is taking a bath? Sing the auspicious song of Sītā."
- Mother: " Dasharath got the lake dug out, Lakshaman set the sail. Ram has filled the buckets of water.  
The water with which Sītā is taking a bath. Sing the auspicious song of Sītā.  
I brought up my daughter by feeding her with fresh milk and grapes.  
A boy of another village is taking her in his chariot. Sing the auspicious song of Sītā.  
Had I known earlier that my daughter would [one day] belong to someone else,  
I would have eaten the poisonous seeds of *dhatūrā*,  
or would have had an abortion done. Sing the auspicious song of Sītā."

## Song No. 13

- Mother: O daughter, the day I became pregnant with you, I began feeling sick in my belly.  
I lost my appetite for meat and fish but I still felt sick.  
O daughter, when you were born, the night turned as dark as a night in *bhādon* [the month of the rainy season].  
My *sās* and *nanad* did not light the lamp and my husband became disappointed.  
O daughter, when you were getting married, your father was very happy.  
He thanked the gods and praised his luck that a daughter was born to him.  
At your wedding day, when you had vermilion applied to the part of your hair,<sup>11</sup> your in-laws demanded nine *lacs* [nine hundred thousand] rupees in dowry.  
I threw the utensils of the house in the courtyard and wished that even my enemy may not have a daughter.  
Had I known then that it was a girl in my womb, I would have killed the fetus by drinking a concoction made of the hottest chilies  
and would have saved myself so much misery.

## Song No. 14

The beloved daughter is sleeping in the chamber upstairs.

bābā eka kahā merā māniye sānvariya vara mata ḍhūṇḍhiye.

beṭi mata kara tū pachatāva re terī dādī gorī bābā sānvare,

gokula ke kanhaiyā sānvare bansī ke bajaiyā sānvare.  
tāu eka kahā merā māniye sānvariya vara mata ḍhūṇḍhiye.

beṭi mata kara tu pachatāva re terī tāi gorī tāu sānvare,

gokula ke kanhaiyā sānvare bansī ke bajaiyā sānvare.  
bābula eka kahā merā māniye sānvariya vara mata ḍhūṇḍhiye.

beṭi mata kara tū pachatāva re terī ammā gorī bābula sānvare,

gokula ke kanhaiyā sānvare bansī ke bajaiyā sānvare.  
cācā eka kahā merā māniye sānvariya vara mata ḍhūṇḍhiye.

beṭi mata kara tū pachatāva re terī cācī gorī cācā sānvare,

gokula ke kanhaiyā sānvare bansī ke bajaiyā sānvare.

Song No. 15

balama sūrata pe aṛe aṛe merī jān,

so merī jān meherina mānja rahī baratana

balama manjavāne lage lage merī jān,  
so merī jān itane men āya gayā meherā  
balama śaramindā hue hue merī jān,  
so merī jān mehere ne de diyā dhakkā  
balama nālī men gire gire merī jān.  
so merī jān dhobīna dhoye rahī kapare

balama dhulavāne lage lage merī jān,  
so merī jān itane me āya gayā dhobī  
balama śaramindā hue hue merī jān,  
so merī jān dhobī ne de diyā dhakkā  
balama nālī men gire gire merī jān.

Song No. 16

pyāre nandoiyā sarautā kahān bhūlī āye,  
nanad hamārī āge calen picche nanadoiyā,

unake picche main calūn mere picche sainyaṅ,

- Her *jhūmar* [an ornament worn on the head by women] has slid under her head and her earrings are on her cheeks.
- Daughter: "O my *bābā*, I beg you, please accept my one request and do not look for a dark-complexioned husband for me."
- Bābā*: "O my dear daughter, please do not worry about the complexion. Your *dādi* is fair and I am dark.  
Also, Krishn of Gokul, who played a beautiful flute, was dark."
- Daughter: "O my *tāū*, I beg you please accept my one request and do not look for a dark-complexioned husband for me."
- Tāū*: "O my dear daughter, please do not worry about the complexion. Your *tāi* is fair and I am dark.  
Also, Krishn of Gokul, who played a beautiful flute, was dark."
- Daughter: "O my father, I beg you, please accept my one request and do not look for a dark-complexioned husband for me."
- Father: "O my dear daughter, do not worry about the complexion. Look, your mother is fair and I am dark.  
Also, Krishn of Gokul, who played a beautiful flute, was dark."
- Daughter: "O my *cācā*, I beg you, please accept my one request and do not look for a dark-complexioned husband for me."
- Cācā*: "O my dear daughter, please do not worry about the complexion. Look, your *cācī* is fair and I am dark.  
Also, Krishn of Gokul, who played a beautiful flute, was dark."

## Song No. 15

O dear friend, my *balam* falls in love with every female face that he comes across.  
O dear friend, when the *maharin* [cleaning woman] was cleaning the utensils,  
my husband too started cleaning them with her.  
O dear friend, at this point came her husband  
and so my husband had to suffer humiliation.  
O dear friend, her husband shoved my husband  
and he fell down into an open drain.  
O dear friend, when the washerwoman was washing the clothes,  
my husband too started washing them with her.  
O dear friend, at this point came her husband  
and so my husband had to suffer humiliation.  
O dear friend, her husband shoved my husband  
and he fell down into an open drain.

## Song No. 16

O dear *nanadoī*, where have you left behind the betel-nut cutter?  
*My nanad* walks ahead and behind her walks her husband [my brother-in-law].  
I walk behind him and behind me walks my husband.

nanad hamārī rabaṛī khāyen peṛā nanadoiyā,

main bicārī laḍḍū khāūn donā cāṭen sainyān,

nanad hamārī motar caṛhen tāngā nanadoiyā,  
main bicārī rikṣā caṛhūn paidal calen sainyān.

Song No. 17

bana men bole koyaliyā ho rasa men bhīge jovanavā,  
hamare rājā ne boī re methī hamane boī caulaiyā,  
rājā kī methī na phūle na phāle, laharāye re caulaiyā.

hamare rājā ne pālā re kuttā, hamane pālā bilauṭā,  
rājā kī kuttā na bhaunke na bhānke, dhūma macāye bilauṭā.

hamare rājā ne kara lī ranḍī, hamane kara liye darogvā,  
rājā kī ranḍī to bole na bāle, paharā deven sipahiya.

Song No. 18

akeli ḍara rāta merī ammā,

jaba re sipahiya ne ghughṭa morā kholā hāya morā kholā,  
nayana more laṛa gaye hāya merī ammā,  
jaba re sipahiya ne kangana morā kholā hāya morā kholā,

kalaiyā morī muṛa gayī hāya merī ammā,  
jaba re sipahiya ne ghāghara morā kholā hāya morā kholā,  
jobana morā luṭa gayā hāya merī ammā.

Song No. 19

choṭā sā balamā morā ānganā men gulli khele,  
paniyān bharana gai yon kahe godī men lele,  
mārūngī rasarī kī māra vo to hansatā ḍole,

roṭī karana gai yon kahe godī men lele,  
mārūngī phulake kī māra vo to hansatā ḍole,

kapare dhuvana gai yon kahe godī men lele,  
mārūngī āncare kī māra vo to hansatā ḍole.

Song No. 20

māṭī hui gai mora javaniyā piyā puraniyā pāyo nā,  
āṭha barisa kī hamārī umariyā buṛhaū sange caṛhi laganiyā,  
byāhe mā jaba bhānvara ghūme hamakā laike kaniyān.

My *nanad* eats *rabaṛi* [thickened milk], while her husband makes do with *peṛā* [Indian sweet made out of milk].  
 And poor me, I eat *laḍḍū* [sweet made out of chickpea flour] while my husband can only get to lick the *donā* [bowl made out of leaves].  
 My *nanad* rides a car, my brother-in-law [her husband] rides a "tonga."  
 Poor me, I ride a rickshaw while my husband walks on foot.

## Song No. 17

The cuckoo bird has started singing in the forest and my youth is full of joy.  
 My husband has sown *methi* [fenugreek], I have sown *caulāi* [amaranth].  
 The *methi* sown by my husband has neither flowers nor fruit but my *caulāi* is blooming.  
 My husband has kept a dog, I have kept a male cat.  
 My husband's dog neither barks nor makes any sound while my male cat makes everything lively and cheerful.  
 My husband has kept a prostitute, I have kept a *darogā* (a police officer).  
 My husband's kept neither speaks nor smiles while the police officer has put guards to guard my house.

## Song No. 18

O my mother [cry of surprise], I get scared at night when I am alone [with my husband].  
 When my husband took the veil off my face,  
 my eyes met his eyes.  
 When my husband opened my *kangan* [red-coloured thread worn on the wrist for good luck],  
 my delicate wrist got twisted.  
 When my husband disrobed me,  
 I was robbed of my youthful innocence.

## Song No. 19

My little [child] husband is playing a game of tipcat.  
 When I go to fetch water, he asks me to carry him in my lap.  
 When I say, "I shall beat you with the rope [carried to fetch water from the well]," he keeps smiling and hanging around me.  
 When I am doing the cooking, he asks me to carry him in my lap.  
 When I say to him, "I shall beat you with the *phulakā* [hot *roti* puffed with air]," he keeps smiling and hanging around me.  
 When I go to wash clothes, he asks me to carry him in my lap.  
 When I say to him, "I shall beat you with my *āncal* [loose end of a sari used to cover the head]," he keeps smiling and hanging around me.

## Song No. 20

My youth has been done to dust as I got an old husband.  
 When I was eight years old, I got engaged to the old man.  
 At the time of doing *bhānvar* [the seven rounds of holy fire] during the wedding, I was carried away in a lap.

bāra pākigai dānta ṭapakī gai, ānkhina se bahai paniyān,

thara thara thara thara burhaū kānpain manahu dhare nimoniya.  
goṛa hatha se cala na pāvain burhaū ṭekai ṭekaniyān,  
kāhu se jo bolata dekhain hamakā kahai beḍiniyān.

naihara sasure aba na jaibe calī jāba gohiniyā,

vikaramajīta se prīta lagaibe suphala kare jinaganiyān.

#### SEASONAL OR FESTIVE SONGS

Song No. 21

hare rāmā sāvana bītala jāya balama nahin āye re hārī.  
ṭhanḍī ṭhanḍī bahai bayariyā, pavana calai puravaiyā,  
hare rāmā kauna jatana dharūn dhīra kachu nahi bhāvai re hārī.  
nanhi nanhi būnda parata hai, mora jiyā tarapāvai rāmā,  
hare rāmā nabha mā bijalī camakai, nīnda na āvai re hārī.

Song No. 22

mohe bhāve na sāvana kī phuhāra re more bīrana naihara se nāhī aile re.

phira se jhūle parenge āngana men, saba sakhiyā jhulengī hinḍola re,

more bābula kāhe bisarāyo hamen, more bīrana naihara se nāhī aile re.  
āngan barase badarā kāre, bhītara more nayanā umare,

kāhe bābula diyo paradesa hamen.

Song No. 23

uṭha uṭha bhābhī rī kivarīā to kholo,  
dūra disā kī nanadī pāhunī.

hātha kasīdā rī bībī goda bhatijā

kaise main kholūn bībī khirakī.  
rakha de kasīdā bhābhī sulāde bhatijā,  
aise to kholo bhābhī khirakī.  
uṭha uṭha bhābhī rī zarā sārī sajāde cunariyā sajāde,

dūra disā kī nanadī pāhunī.  
tere kyā bhaiyyā ne bībī sārī bisāi cunariyā bisāi,  
kahān se lāun bībī sārīyān.  
mere to bhaiyyā ne bhābhī sārī bisāi cunariyā bisāi,  
tumane na dekhī apāne bāpa ko.  
uṭha uṭha bhābhī rī zarā milanā sanjovo,  
dūra disā kī nanadī pāhunī.

His hair has become grey, his teeth have fallen, and water flows from his eyes.

He suffers from tremors and he has chronic cough.

He cannot move his hands and feet, and he walks with the support of a stick.

Yet he is so jealous that if he finds me talking to someone, he calls me a *bediniyān* [prostitute].

O my *goiyān* [female friend], I shall go neither to my parents nor to my in-laws.

I shall give my heart to Vikramajit, who will fulfill my life.

Song No. 21

O Ram, the month of *sāvan* is passing away but my husband has not come.

The soft refreshing breeze is blowing and the wind is flowing from the east.

O Ram, how should I keep my patience, as nothing is giving me comfort?

The tiny raindrops are falling and making my heart even more restless.

O Ram, there is lightning in the sky and my sleep is far away from me.

Song No. 22

The shower of the month of *sāvan* does not please me, as my brother has not come from my parents' home to fetch me.

The swings must have been put out again in my parents' courtyard, and all my friends must be swinging on them.

O my dear father, why have you forgotten to invite me?

The clouds are pouring rain outside in the courtyard, and inside me is pouring down the rain of tears.

O my dear father, why have you married me off so far?

Song No. 23

*Nanad*: "Get up, O *bhābhi*, please open the door.

Your *nanad*, your guest, has come from a long distance to visit you and is standing at the door."

*Bhābhi*: "O *bibi* [respected sister-in-law], my hands are busy doing embroidery and your nephew is sleeping in my lap, how can I open the door?"

*Nanad*: "Please stop embroidering and lay my nephew on the bed so you can open the window.

Get up, O *bhābhi*, please give me a sari or a *cunari* [so that I can change].

Your *nanad*, your guest, has come from a long distance."

*Bhābhi*: "O *bibi*, has your brother brought any sari or *cunari*? From where should I produce the saris?"

*Nanad*: "O *bhābhi*, my brother has indeed brought sari and *cunari*, but probably you have not seen them at your parental home.

O *bhābhi*, please get up and hug me [to say goodbye to me]. Your *nanad*, your guest, has come from a long distance."

dhotiyā na laraje rī bībī ansuvā na ḍharake,

kaise sanjovūn bībī milanā.  
uṭha uṭha ghimarā re zarā duliya sanjovo,

jahān se lāye vahān le calo.

bīca milo ri bhaiyyā māi ke jāye mere goda khilāye,

bole vo behanā kaise cali.  
teri to ghanā bhaiyyā mukha se na boli aise to āi aise cali.

kaho to behanā use desa nikālūn paradesa nikālūn,  
kaho to bhejūn ghana ke māyake.  
na use bhaiyyā tuma desa nikālo paradesa nikālo,  
na hi to bhejo ghana ke māyake.  
terī ghanā to bhaiyyā lalanā janegī nāma calego mere bāpa ko.

#### SONG CONNECTED WITH CHORES

Song No. 24

uṛata main dekhyon prema ciraiyā, uṛi kai baiṭhaī sarasaun ḍariyā ho rāma,  
āvata dekhyāun main duī re sipahiya eka gorahara eka sānvara ho rāma,  
sānvarau to haya morī nanadi kai bīrana gore morī maiyā kai dularuā ho rāma,  
maciyāhin baiṭhali sāsu baḍhaitinī, kāu sijahaūn bhaiyyā kī rasoiyā ho rāma.  
koṭhila mā hai bahurī saralī kodoiyā, khetavan cakavaḍa kā sagavā ho rāma.

koṭhila mā hain sāsū sāṭhī jhina cāura, kundavā mā mungiyā kai daliyā ho rāma,  
candana cauka purāvain morī maiyā, īngure ke būnda thariyā mājain ho rāma.

jevana baiṭhe hain sāra bahanoiyā, saravā ke cuvai ansuiyā ho rāma,

kiyā more bhaiyyā ho tiriya sudhī āi, kiyā samadhyā maiyā kai kaleuvā ho  
rāma.

nahin morī bahinī tiriya sudhī āi, nahin samadhyāun maiyā kai kaleuvā ho

- Bhābhi:* "O *bibi*, neither my *dhoti* [cotton sari] slips nor my tears roll down my eyes,  
how can I hug you [to say goodbye]?"
- Nanad:* "O *ghimar* [persons who carry a palanquin], please get up,  
make the palanquin ready.  
Take me back to the same place from where you have brought me here."  
On the way back I met my brother, whom I had carried in my lap when he was young.
- Brother: "O sister, why are you leaving already?"
- Nanad:* "O brother, I came to see you but your wife did not speak to me properly. So I am leaving."
- Brother: "O sister, if you say so, I will abandon her or I will send her to her parents' home."
- Nanad:* "O brother, do not abandon her or send her away to her parents' home.  
Your wife will bear you children who will carry the name of my father."

## Song No. 24

- Bahū:* "I see a love-bird flying and sitting on a *sarason* [mustard] plant.  
I see two warriors coming: one of them is fair and the other is dark.  
The dark one is the brother of my *nanadi* and the fair one is my mother's dear one [my brother].  
O my mother-in-law, please tell me, what special food should I cook for my brother?"
- Sās:* "O daughter-in-law, there is some putrid *kodon* [wild rice] in the *kuthala* [large vessel for storing grain] and there is *cakavad* [shrub of the rainy season] in the field [prepare this food for your brother]."
- Bahū:* "O my mother-in-law, there is also fine rice and *dāl* of *moong* [split green beans] in another vessel.  
When my mother serves food to my brother she first makes *cauk* [a pattern made on the floor as a sign of good omen] with sandal paste and she polishes his plate with *ingur* [vermilion]."  
When the two brothers-in-law [my husband and my brother] sat down to eat, tears started rolling down the cheeks of my brother.  
"O my dear brother, what made you cry? Is it the memory of your wife or are you missing the food prepared by your own mother?"
- Brother: "No, my dear sister, it is neither the memory of my wife nor

rāma,  
sonavā ta jarai bahinī sonā dukaniyā, bahinī jaraīn sasurariyā ho rāma.

ī dukha jinī kahyā bābā ke agavān, u sabhavan baiṭhi pachitaihain ho rāma,

ī dukha jinī kahyā maiyā ke agavān, vai chatiyā pīṭi mari jaihain ho rāma.

ī dukha jinī kahyā bahinī ke agavān, vai nahin tau jainhai gavanavā ho rāma,

ī dukha jinī kahyā bhaujī ke agavān, vai rasoiyā boliyā bolihain ho rāma.

ī dukha jinī kahyā gaunvā loge agavān, jhagrā karata tānā marihain ho rāma,

hamarī ī bipatī gaṭhariyā more biranā, gangā jamuna bīca choṛyā ho rāma.

the longing for my mother's food that is making me cry.  
 The thought that my sister is being consumed at her in-laws' house the same way as gold is burnt at the goldsmith's place, that is making me cry."

*Bahū:* " [O brother], please never mention this [my sorrow] before my father. He will only be filled with remorse.  
 Please do not say it, either, to my mother. She will beat her breast with anguish and repentance, and commit suicide.  
 Please do not mention it before my sister, otherwise she will refuse to go to her husband.  
 Please do not say it before *bhaujī*, otherwise she will make jeering remarks at mealtimes.  
 Please do not mention it before fellow villagers, either, for they will taunt whenever there is a quarrel.  
 O my loving brother, I beseech you to drop this bundle of my grief in the midstream of the rivers Ganges and Jamunā."

Hindi words for relatives used in the folk songs:

<i>ammā</i>	= mother
<i>behen</i> or <i>bahini</i>	= sister
<i>bahū</i>	= daughter-in-law
<i>bābā</i>	= paternal grandfather, father
<i>bābul</i>	= father
<i>bhābhi, bhaujī</i>	= elder brother's wife
<i>bālak</i>	= boy
<i>balam, harijī</i>	= husband
<i>beṭā</i>	= son
<i>bīran, bhaiyyā</i>	= brother
<i>biyaṭī</i>	= daughter
<i>cācā</i>	= father's younger brother
<i>cācī</i>	= <i>cācā</i> 's wife
<i>dādī</i>	= paternal grandmother
<i>devar</i>	= husband's younger brother
<i>jeṭh</i>	= husband's elder brother
<i>jeṭhānī</i>	= <i>jeṭh</i> 's wife
<i>kanyā</i>	= girl
<i>laḍo</i>	= beloved daughter
<i>nanad, nanadi</i>	= husband's sister
<i>nanadoī</i>	= <i>nanad</i> 's husband
<i>rājā</i>	= husband
<i>rānī</i>	= wife
<i>sājan, sāinyān</i>	= husband
<i>sās, sāsū</i>	= mother-in-law
<i>tāi</i>	= father's elder brother's wife
<i>tāū</i>	= <i>tāi</i> 's husband

#### NOTES

1. It is a convention among Hindus that at the birth of a child, and also at a wedding, certain rituals are performed by particular family members. For example, the ritual of making *caruā* (herbal water) for the lying-in woman is performed by the husband's mother, while the drawing of *satiyā* (a mystic cross drawn either on a wall or at the doorstep of the lying-in chamber, in order to invoke good luck) is done by the husband's sister. Application of *kājal* (a black paste made out of lampblack and clarified butter) to the child's eyes is also done by the husband's sister. The ritual of grinding of *pīpal* (long pepper) to be eaten by the lying-in woman is done by her husband's elder brother's wife. And the playing of a flute at the birth of the child is conventionally done by the woman's husband's younger brother. In return, all these family members are given gifts, or *neg*, by the woman.

2. It is a superstition in India that if someone makes a comment on someone's good looks or deeds, the person who is commented upon becomes sick or suffers some mishap. This is called *nazar laganā*.

3. Sita and Ram are the main characters of the epic *Rāmāyaṇa*, written by Balmiki. Sita was the daughter of Janak, the king of Mithila, and was married to Ram,

who was the son of Dashrath, the king of Ayodhya.

4. It is a convention in Hindu homes to put fire, water, and thorns of *bél* or *babūl* trees at the doorstep of the *saur* (the delivery and recovery room). Nobody is allowed to enter the *saur* without washing his or her feet and hands. It is also believed that fire, water, and the thorns protect the child and the mother from evil spirits.

5. It is held among Hindus that giving away a daughter in marriage (*kanyā dān*) is a religious act, and by performing this rite one can achieve in heaven the highest reward of a good deed.

6. Wearing colorful bangles and using vermilion on the part of the hair are the marks of being married, and only those women whose husbands are alive can do these things.

7. An adjective meaning "one who lives under or near the jack-fruit tree," which is called *katahal* or *katahar* in Hindi.

8. The word *śītalā* means "coolness." It is used for the disease of smallpox, as well as for the goddess held to be responsible for smallpox.

9. A woman who leads an ascetic life and commits herself to a life of celibacy (literally, "an inhabitant of Brij").

10. The ceremony performed in the worship of gods or to welcome someone, by moving a lighted lamp or camphor circularly round the idol or person.

11. After this ritual a girl is called married.

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