

# Expression of *Jouissance* in Folklore of Rajasthan

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**Abstract-** Rajasthan is famous for its rich culture and diverse traditions. The folklore of Rajasthan is unique and distinguishes it from other states of India. The songs are joyously sung at festivals like Gangaur and Teej. They are not only a source of entertainment but also a medium for women to express their needs. They share a unified feeling of dissatisfaction from their marriage bond. With their husbands gone away for jobs, women involve themselves with illicit lovers. Lacan's theory of *Jouissance* is reflected in their songs when they jubilantly sing about their bedroom relations in front of everyone. The psychological and sociological conditions of the village women are demonstrated with Lacan's concept of the 'small other' and the 'big other'. The way village women boldly display their internal desires breaks the preconceived image that we had created.

**Index Terms-** Rajasthani Folklore, Jacques Lacan, *Jouissance*, the Big other and the Small other.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Folklore has been a vital area for researchers. It consists of varied areas such as oral literature, material culture, performing arts etc. Folklore tries to express the hidden and explicit desires of 'folk.' As Yuri M. Sokolov rightly states, "Folklore is the echo of the past, but at the same time, it is the powerful voice of the present." (*Lok Varta Vigyan 1*) Folklore provides a clear understanding of life. It does not have any artificiality which may be found in any form of literature. Ved Prakash Vatuk mentions, "Folklore to me has been a path, a search, a pilgrimage--- to understand myself and my roots and to be close to those people who have shaped my life." (*Lok Varta Vigyan 2*)

Elite literature expresses the various aspects of human life through several genres such as poetry, drama, and non-fiction writings. But many inarticulate voices are generally not given adequate space in elite literature. As Alexander Haggerty Krappé says, "Folklore is to reconstruct a spiritual history of MAN, not as exemplified by the outstanding works of poets and thinkers, but as represented by the more or less inarticulate voices of the folk." (*Lok Varta Vigyan 40*)

Therefore, voices of collective unconsciousness are explicitly expressed in folklore.

Rajasthan is renowned for its rich narratives. The region is stereotyped for women to don a veil, cook for their husbands and bear children. But what happens inside the veil is unknown. The type of celebrations they enjoy and the lore they sing reflect the mindset of women. They are veiled but not caged.

Sigmund Freud was the first person who talked about the unconscious and its role in human behaviour. Freud proposed that there are three levels of consciousness. (Walinga 2014) The first is the unconscious mind that exists outside the horizon of our cognizance all the time. The second is the preconscious mind that includes all knowledge that we are unaware of but can be collected. The third is the conscious mind that is our current state of awareness. The unconscious level operates the Id. The preconscious level operates the Superego. The conscious and preconscious levels operate our Ego. Many feminists have objected to Freud's analysis of femininity and have accused him of treating females as inferior. Critics believed that all the theories of Freud revolve around either a symbol of a penis or vagina. Freud claimed to be objective, but his outlook as a male shadowed his argument that he mistook prejudice for science.

Jacques Lacan (1901- 1981) is a disciple of Sigmund Freud, and just like Freud, Lacan's theories are also difficult to decipher. Lacan writes in the same way as Freud. As a structuralist, linguist, literary critic and psychoanalyst, he developed and formalized ideas that Sigmund Freud had worked on from 1893 to 1938. Lacan was a man of charisma, the lover of many women and a man of great courage and words.

Lacan provided a clear distinction between wish, need, demand and desire. A 'wish' is something that we consciously want, for example, a mansion or a world tour. A 'need' is physiological, such as water, food or motherly love. A 'demand' is an endless appeal for things that are impossible to fulfil, for example, an expensive mobile phone or a Ford. A 'desire' is unconscious and can sometimes be fulfilled, for example, a peace treaty among all the nations of the world or buying a Jaguar. According to Lacan, "Desire is always desire for another's desire" which

means that a person's desire is always connected to other people's desire. People must discover their desires.

Lacan's theory of the 'big other/object' and the 'small other/object' also plays a crucial role in the history of psychoanalysis. The 'small other', is not an other but the reflection of our own (ego). When the 'small other' lacks something, it causes or starts desire. "There is something necessary about the cause that has the effect of desire." (Hill 82). The 'small other' seems to be the same, but its relation with everyone is subjective and imaginary. It is the demand or desire of the other, as taken up by the subject. We make others aware of our desires through our gazes and the sound of our signifiers. The 'big other' is others' ideas or signifiers but at the level of logic and meaning. Here, language is the most primary source of expression of desire and is symbolic. It determines our understanding of ourselves that we take from outside. Here, we do not have internal knowledge of who we are. The self-image comes from others, specifically from our local and family culture. The 'big other' maintains the fiction of our existence. Our minds have been censored by the ideal and, we try to make them free from all the constraints.

He also came up with the concept of *Jouissance*. *Jouissance* is a special kind of sexual satisfaction or excitement for women. It is a French word for 'coming' as in orgasm. People often take pleasure in all forms of activities that has nothing to do with sexual intercourse. He believes that the symbol of phallus denotes privilege and superiority, irrespective of gender. Both men and women can be phallic in different ways. The function of the phallus indicates the structure that governs the relationship between the sexes. Phallus represents power and the absence of it represents castration. For example, if the business of a woman is growing, she is phallic, but if her business falls, she is castrated. Masculine sexuality is phallic, while feminine sexuality is both phallic and non-phallic or 'feminine'. To understand feminine sexuality better, Lacan proposes the concept of mystic, which talks about the female *jouissance* with God with an example of Saint Theresa. There is no proper definition of non-phallic *jouissance*. Lacan's formula of sexuality insists on the conclusion that men and women are incompatible because men and women are not on the same level. They can have phallic relation together but, that is different from the relationship between phallic (limited and observable) and feminine *jouissance* (limitless and unbounded). Women complain that men are only interested in their looks, whereas men complain that women demand too much commitment in a relationship. However, in reality, men want love and respect, and women need to fulfil their sexual desires.

## II. UNVEILING DESIRES IN RAJASTHANI FOLKLORE

With the changes in customs, the songs of the women of Rajasthan are not as compliant as they were before. In recent years, their songs are more explicit in their approach, and the women behind the veil are commanding and

demanding in their needs. They openly ask what they lack, thrusting aside the listeners. The occasion decides what type of songs are needed to be performed, hence they become the context of their songs. The women dominate the festivities, singing about their desires, sexuality, illicit lovers and feminine *jouissance*.

Gangaur is a colourful festival that is celebrated in Rajasthan to worship Gana-Gaur (Lord Shiva and Goddess Parwati), the divine couple. Both married and unmarried women actively participate in the celebration of the festival. Married women pray for their spouses' long-life and prosperity, while maidens ask for charming husbands.

*Bring a pendant for my forehead, O my stranger-spouse  
Please stay right here, sir,  
Stay here, foreign gorgeous man, stay right here, sir,  
Stay here, fair woman's gorgeous man, stay right here,  
sir!* [1] (Gold, 1977)

The wives are complaining about their husbands' absence from home and the lack of attention they give. Since it is about the divine bond of marriage, married women need their husbands to return home from their jobs, asking them to bring materialistic commodities.

*I will feed you milk sweets at Gangaur, O my good spouse,  
Please stay right here, sir, . . . etc.  
Bring bracelets for my ankles, O my stranger-spouse,  
Please stay right here, sir, . . . etc.  
I'll meet you in the bridal chamber at Gangaur,  
O my stranger-spouse  
Please stay right here, sir...Etc.* [2] (Gold, 1977)

The wives are enticing their husbands with sweets and intimacy in exchange for gifts like bracelets, pendants and anklets. The women sing the songs in groups showing their similar share of demands. The song starts with asking for exotic things from their spouses, moves to allurements and ends with a reunion in the bridal chamber.

Teej is another festival like Gangaur where women summon their husbands to stay with them throughout the day. The voices of women here are more authoritative, calling for their husbands back home from the middle of their work.

*Whether your work's in Kishan Garh or Mukan Garh,  
husband-lord,  
Having heard [of] Tij, come home.  
Your job is beloved to you, husband-lord,  
Lord, you are beloved to me.*

*Whether your job's in Kishan Garh, or Mukan Garh,  
husband-lord,  
Having heard Tij, come home!*

*Leave your job at once, husband-lord,  
For the festival of Tij has come.*

*Whether your job's in Kishan Garh or Mukan Garh,  
husband-lord,*

*Having heard Tij, come home!* [3] (Gold, 1977)

We see the assertiveness in the voices of the women in asking their spouses to return home at once with no urgency exempted. On the day of Teej, the married women fast for the well-being and long life of their husbands. They don't eat or drink anything on this day till the moon rises. They can only eat "satu" (food from their natal family) from their husbands' hands to break the fast. Women speak more coherently with their husbands. This tale is from fasting 'vrat katha' (fasting tales).

In songs of Ghangaur and Teej, we discover how much women want the presence of their husbands with them and the demands they put forth ordering them to bring things from other villages. The tone is domineering which shows that they are not ready to compromise in their calls. All the women sit together in an 'aangan' (open area) and sing festivity songs.

*Kesya* is a genre that represents the 'illicit lover' or 'red flower'. The verses celebrate humorous sexuality and range beyond husbands. *Kesya* is generally sung during the annual festival of Holi by the community women to enjoy the celebration.

*Kesya, if you want to play, then play before Holi,  
Lover, if you want to play, then play before Holi;  
Later the fierce sun beats down.* [4] (Heron, 1994)

The women are involved with their *kesya* before their husbands come home after work at dusk. They wish to have the utmost pleasure with their lovers implying sexual interaction with strangers or even a male family member other than the husbands. We comprehend how women are not satisfied sexually and are looking for pleasure from men outside the home.

#### *Kesya*

*Lover, if you want to play, play with so-and-so's wife;  
Lover, if you want to play, play with so-and-so's wife.  
Others will cost you 150 rupees.* [5] (Heron, 1994)

The women know that the *kesya* has multiple affairs, so they tell them that the other women will charge more money. Those who indulge with their lovers are looking for feminine *jouissance*. In the villages, women never have been so open about their needs and pleasures, but now they do not hesitate to speak their hearts out.

*Kesya, I brought a skirt from Agra, Lover,  
and a wrap from Sanganeer;  
Lover, through the wrap the whole body shows,  
through the veil the fair cheeks show.*

*Bite, bite the whole body,*

*Don't bite the cheeks or husband will beat you.* [6] (Heron, 1994)

We notice the shatter of the shy image of village women. The blouse and skirt are traditional attire of the women of Rajasthan. They talk about the 'wrap' (dupatta/ odhani) that was bought from the market that reveals their body. They invite the *kesya* to meet but warn him not to bite them on their face, or the husbands will know. It shows the adulterous liaison between the women and their lovers. The women sing about what is missing in their private life and what excites them to have a lover. The thrill that runs while meeting him and keeping it a secret from their husbands increases the adrenaline rush in their bodies.

*Kesya* songs are also ecocentric in their approach as some of them are akin to nature, presenting a pivotal role in sexual connotations. The bawdy songs are immoral in the urban areas, but here in the villages, they provide a sense of relaxation and enjoyment to both genders. Lacan has put forth the concept of feminine *jouissance* without knowing much about it. All village women may not have affairs, but they enjoy the communal songs because they share the same void of feminine *jouissance*. Breaking the societal notion of village women being demure and submissive, we notice that women are more vocal about their erotic pleasure. They not only talk about sexuality and eroticism but also embrace them.

*Gali* literally means 'insult' and refers to the verbal abuses humorously given to each other. Like *Kesya* songs, it also has a sexual orientation. One such example can be-

*On the cross-path grow those plants whose poison leaves  
are yellow.*

*Ram Kishan had a son, a floppy-eared fellow. he  
Take down my full water pot, small husband dear.  
Small, small what's to be done?*

*See the male wonder:*

*In nine months I'll feed a son.*

*Daughter have a lot of fun!* [7] (Heron, 1994)

This song is a celebration of childbirth. There are no hidden meanings in *Gali* but are precise with words. It asserts that it is better to have a child from another man than to be barren with your husband. The women are ready to deceive their husbands with another man's child. Giving birth to a child is the happiness that every woman wants to experience in her life.

Women explore incest relationships to satisfy their *jouissance* even in the presence of their husbands. One such example is the story of *Sit Basant*. In various cultures, there were many different versions of the tale. *Sit Basant* is a story of two brothers who are the sons of a king. The queen dies, and the king marries another woman. Being young and beautiful, she steals the heart of the widowed king. She intends to give birth to her child to inherit the throne. She

plans a conspiracy to dethrone her stepsons and leave them abandoned in a forest to die. One afternoon, when Sit and Basant were kids and playing together, the ball enters the new queen's chamber. Sit goes to retrieve the ball from his stepmother, the new queen. One version describes the scene as-

"...Sit said, "Mother! Pardon our carelessness, and please give us our ball. We'll never do such a thing again."

Hearing Sit's words, the Rani, seized by desire, came forward, and seizing both of Sit's hands and pulling them toward her bosom, said, "Please don't be so anxious! Only one ball! Both these balls are fit for your playing with! Play with them however you want." (Pritchett 1983)

The stepmother is considered a 'lascivious woman'. The new queen is attracted to her stepsons even after marrying the king. Their youth and tender age pulled the stepmother towards them. The women of this older age often get enticed by younger boys/ men, believing that they are more passionate, open to experimentation and have a similar sexual enthusiasm. If younger boys/ men get drawn to them, it makes them feel confident and wanted. Thus, boosting them up on a personal and intimate level.

### III. SHATTERING THE PRECONCEIVED IMAGE OF RURAL WOMEN

The 'small other/object' is the cause that ignites the desire. The songs originated because of the absence of their husbands for a prolonged period. Thus, creating a desire in their hearts to have another man besides them. The shared experience of unfulfilled sexual *jouissance* pushes them to have affairs with different men. When it is time for their husbands to come home for auspicious festivals, women demand them to return home soon, simultaneously asking them to bring worldly objects with them. Women have started opening up in their expressions and words and are not afraid of their demands.

In Rajasthan, Haryana and Madhya Pradesh, we see that women are not allowed to attend weddings; therefore, for their entertainment, they enact the events that would take place in the wedding chamber of the bride and groom. One woman plays the role of a bride, while the other woman acts as the groom. We notice the excitement of women in this act. It is the infinity mystic feminine *jouissance* that they get by enacting these roles.

The 'big other/object' is people's ideas but at the level of logic and meaning. The image that we have created in our mind for the village women has become 'the big other/object'. We had a preconceived notion that rural women are timid and shy, but their actions and songs show us the flaw in our judgement. We have come to know that women overpower men in their community. Breaking the societal norms, they would sing about their needs, wishes, demands and desires in front of everyone. They do not let the 'big other/object' of the outsiders overpower the original self.

The power of self is what makes them different from others. In the case of these women, rather than living up to the images formed by the outsiders, they are proud to create a whole new personality of themselves.

The women have two sides of images like a coin. One side portrays the image we perceive of women as weak and fearful, and the other pictures them as bold and courageous. In this situation, their wishes are so strong that they are not bothered about the 'big other/ object'. They are strong, contrary to their appearance and put forth their opinions fearlessly. The expression of inner hidden sexual desires, *kesyas* and female *jouissance* shock the males, but instead of feeling offended, they enjoy the songs with them. The folklore keeps the events lively. The need for the presence of their spouses, the desire for sexual satisfaction, contented marital life, and the demands of different things from outside the villages are what women crave. In folklore, women find a way to get away from the confined life that they have been living and find a way to set free into the world of liberty and imagination.

### APPENDIX: RAJASTHANI SONG TEXTS

[1] Mara matha na manmand lyay anjan marun  
Yani revo sa  
Yani ro pardesi chel yani revo sa  
Yani ro gori ka chel yani revo sa (Gold, 1977)

[2] Than pera khavan Ghangor mara achhya marun  
Yani revo ji...etc.  
Mara pagalyan na payal lyay mara anjan marun  
Yani revo ji...etc.  
Thana sejan malai li Ghangor mara anjan marun  
Yani revo ji...etc. (Gold, 1977)

[3] Kisan garh ho sa mukan garh chakari dhola sayaba ji  
Tij sunnyan ghar ay  
Thann to piyari lage naukari dhola saiba ji  
Mann toh piyari ligo ap  
Kisan garh ho sa mukan garh chakari dhola sayaba ji  
Tij sunnyan ghar ay!  
Phari to chorya vo thanki naukari dhola sayaba ji  
Aaya aaya tij thanvar  
Kisan garh ho sa mukan garh chakari dhola sayaba ji  
Tij sunnyan ghar ay! (Gold, 1977)

[4] Kesya khelan chha to holi pehli khel  
Beri khelan chha to holi khel ra  
Phachan to paran ra kharro thanvaro (Heron, 1994)

[5] Beri khel chha to Lado Nath ji vali na khel  
Beri khel chha to Ramlal ji vali na khel  
Oran la lage ra rapiya dodsan (Gold, 1977)

[6] Kesya, agariya ko ghaghariyo mu lay, beri,  
Syaluro mu lay Sanganer ko;  
Beri, syalura me dikha saru dil ra,  
Ghungat me dikha r agora ghalara.

Khaja khaja sagaloj dil ra  
Galara mat khaje ra parnyun marasa (Heron, 1994)

[7] Ade gele akaro re  
Jinka pila pan  
Ram Kisan ji ka choro hogyo lapara sa kan  
Mari bhari chari utaro ji chhota sa bhatar  
Chhoto chhoto kani kare re  
Dekh marad ki chot  
No minan ma lalo khaladyun  
Bethi mojoyo man (Heron, 1994)

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