

# Dogri Folk-Songs : A Study of Gender Discrimination

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## Abstract

The paper will study the music of the Duggar Folk songs and the importance of music in the Dogra life. Music plays an important role in human life and people feel refresh when they listen music. Culture plays an important role in human life and folk songs are also the part of the culture. Folk songs of Duggar are a rich store of folk culture and thought. No study of a society is considered complete without a reference to the position of a woman in it. The Duggar is world famous not only for the matchless bravery, boldness and valour of its historical and uninterrupted cultural flow exposed in the firm of the folklores, rituals, customs, lifestyle, folk arts, folk dances and folk literature transmitted orally from one generation to another. It also talks about the position of a woman in a society which reflects the culture level, mental refinement and the standard of its civilization. This paper is based on a folk songs sung by Dogra women of the Duggar community of Jammu and Kashmir.

The study will be done on the feminist perspective, that highlights how the folk songs show stereotype picture of Dogri women in these rich folk melodies and depict honest wife, helping her husband by discharging multiple of domestic and commercial duties; and at the same time we find in her the feminine infirmity which prompts her to satisfy the sensual lust of her paramour. Songs on various occasions are sung by the females and numbers of songs are related to the females which expose women's wishes, feelings, emotions, desires, reactions etc.

Keywords : Folksongs, Feminism, Duggar, Rituals, Customs, Folklores, Valour, Patriarchy

## Introduction

Culture plays an important role in human life. The word Culture indicates language, life, rituals, style, and religion of the people living in different regions of the world. Culture leads to all-round development of an individual and builds different identity of a person. Dogra is one the community of the Jammu and Kashmir. Dogra people are also known as Pahari and people who speak Dogri are also known as Dogras. Dogri culture has its own place in Jammu and Kashmir region. Dogra Culture is a secular culture of various tribes and castes, which can change the shape with the passage of time. Dogras are belonging to the hilly and the plain areas of J & K. Dogras live in a simple living –simple food and simple dress.

The part of India, which is inhabited by the Dogras and where allied dialects are spoken, is called Duggar land. There is a controversy among the scholars regarding the derivation of the word 'Duggar'. Some are of the opinion that the "Country round the two lakes –Mansar and Saroinsar is called Duggar i.e. the country of two hollows, "whereas some hold the view that Duggar is the corrupted from a Sanskrit word 'Dwigarta' i.e. the area enclosed by the two rivers – the Ravi and the Chenab. The term Duggar, derived from the two 'Dogra' words 'Duggah' means 'deep' (adjective) and 'Duggehr' means 'made deep' (verbal noun) appears to be more relevant, for explaining the Dogras.

Villagers believe that the Dogra land comprised of high peaks and deep valleys, as such the name 'Duggar' describing the land and its people, take its derivative from the deep valleys (depressions) called 'Duggah' – deep in local dialect. The change of the word 'Duggah' into 'Duggehr' and then into Duggar is almost the same as the change of the month 'Muggehr' into 'Muggar' – the eighth month of the Bikrami year. It is interesting to note that 'Duggehr' in some dialects in Jammu region suggests depressions or pits, and the people inhabiting these low-lands or pit like localities may be called Duggars or Dogras. This view is supported by certain observations made by the Scholars to identify the word 'Duggar' as common in dialects, for example 'Duggehr' in Pangasta( a village situated in Tehsil Billawar), 'Dodi-Duggehr' in Akhnoor, 'Duggehd' in Sumarta (land of Sumantaks). The Duggar area consists of the middle Himalayas, Siwaliks and plains of Jammu regions, excluding the areas from which Kashmiris, Gaddis, Khasa and Siraji etc. have migrated and in course of time influenced local dialects and the people. The people of these terrains are the backward and the traditions of a common culture, and unique set of values.

The people of the mountains are comparatively simple, hospitable and freedom loving. Living in the lap of nature, they are generally contented. The people of the plain are less simple and less straight forward and more worldly wise and clever and their pattern of living is influenced by the neighbouring Panjabi way of life. People of kandi are the best lot of Duggar. They are conservative, hard working, self respecting, and ready to die for the honour of their women and for the sake of their caste and country, and prepare to break rather than bend. This area, isolated for long periods from the political cross – currents of the plains, and abounding in the beauty of nature, has inspired folk – singers and has great schools of Indian painting viz. "Basohli, Poonch and Jammu."

Culture of Dogras includes a wide range of folk lores, rituals, customs, traditions etc. Folk songs are also the part of Dogra culture and it plays an important in the Dogra culture. Folk songs of Dogras give an insight of Dogri culture, social set up, beliefs and response to historical change. The folk songs of Dogra consists of experiences like material to mystical, depressing to joyful, from birth to death, and they serve as a preservation of rich heritage of Dogra culture. These songs focusing on the domestic rituals and ceremonies that deals with the gender stereotypes associated with the idea of femininity. The paper aims to present the women's folk songs in Dogri culture as an expression of their perception, desires, and feelings in a socially acceptable form. The oral tradition of the Dogri folk songs includes a wide range of styles, influences and social practices. These songs have the ability to engage people with the richness of the culture in an emotional way. This form of connection between the folk representing and folk songs that particular language can be analyzed as:

“Folksongs not only help in understanding the socio-cultural and religious life of the community but also human psychology and the adaptability of an individual to his/her culturally constituted world.”

A large diversity of songs like Geetru, karkan, Bhakhan, Pakhaan, Murkiyaan and some other folk songs are available in the Dogra culture. There is a variation in dialects, tunes and rhythms but the contents of these songs are same. They are sung in a rhythmic manner with different- different kind of musical instruments in Jammu & Kashmir. Their lyrics are simple and wisdom in their nature is based on honesty and sincerity that are the tunes of Dogri folk songs. Childbirth, weeding, festivals, satsang, joking relations, love theme, separation, costumes, farming, cultural awakening, historical events, fasting-feasting, and so on are the main occasions of singing these songs. The females can sing these songs and pass them from one generation to another through their performances. “Dominant forms of subjectivity (or identity) are maintained, not through physical restraint or coercion, but through self-surveillance and self-correction to social norms”.(p 12) In this way they can spread the contents of the folksongs (lokgeet) across the community without any deliberate efforts. Through gender inequality this normative control ensures the spread of the idea of emphasized femininity in a more effective way. These songs tend to be stereotypical image denied to independent choices.

Much of the work has been done on the North Indian folk songs by many writers, who have dealt with folk songs from various perspectives, but none of them has taken women as a talking point, which is the

main theme in the paper. Mishra has only tingled upon women's conditions in brief, leaving most of the important issues untouched. Kuldeep and Upadhyaya have given only a customary view of folk songs and have not worked on them from the woman's perspective. Chauhan and Srivasatava, on the other hand, have dealt with the folk songs from a socio-cultural context. Whereas, Wade stressed only on the wedding songs. Henry talks about a few types of women's songs, but does not give any folk texts or discussions on women's stance as expressed in their songs. Another category is the Caiti songs, which are generally composed by men, although the text usually expresses women's feelings and dilemmas. Tewari has listed few folk songs of women, but he primarily focuses upon those which portray domestic customs and rituals. Avasthi though gives a good array of women's folk songs, but his assistance remains constrained to anthology. Tripathi has done the equivalent for Bhojpuri songs, but they have not dealt with them from the explicit viewpoint of women and Sing has made an inclusive study of Avadhi folk songs. Women's lives in rural north India using the Dogri folk songs as a logical framework are investigate by Jassal, an anthrologist. She considers of songs as unrestrained vehicles, cultural assests, as "existing cultural codes of approved behaviour and norms". (p 8). Singh and Gill provided examples of various types of folk songs, that are unfolding their genres, presented a sample of lifecycle songs and unfolding their genres; but they did not take in hand the theme of women representation in particular. What needs, desires, and aspirations she apprizes, what aggravation and discrimination she undergoes, how a woman is portrayed in folk songs, is a matter that has attained till date very little attention has paid in the literature.

### Analysis

Reviewing all the Folk songs, the main categories that have emerged and are dealt with in this paper are folk songs based on the themes of gender discrimination, stances from before marriage and after marriage, and songs of separation: soldier's (foji) wife struggle in the society. Women's folk songs, particularly those describing women's emotions, can, however, be describing into three categories depending on the occasions they can meant for, and that is how they shall be treated in the paper: Gender discrimination in Marriage and Separation.

Like any other modern society, 'Duggar' society is also a male dominated society. To join her husband's house women are expected to leave her birth-place after marriage. The property rights get shifted

from senior male to the next. Man therefore, always enjoys the upper position in the family or the society in order to get importance or in any clash of interests with women. Therefore, women are always dependent on men in order to get support and safety all over the life. Before, marriage as a daughter she is dependent and protected by her father and by her brothers and after marriage, she is dependent and protected by her husband. When she became mother she is protected and dependent on her sons. In homes, brothers are given more importance than sisters and having a brother in a family is considered as a social qualifier. These things are also shown in the folk songs and a huge category of songs is devoted to them.

Tennyson Princess quoted some lines to sum up the Subjection of Women by John Stuart Mill is that,

“Man for the field and Women for the health,  
Man for the sword and Women for the needle,  
Man with a head and Women with a heart,  
Man to command and women to obey.”

Societal preference of male child, which is supported by statistical data almost everywhere shows that girl's number is far less than boys primarily due to female feticide. After birth a girl or female always faces gender discrimination on every step of her life. Folk songs are not sung nowhere in the society on girls birth but on the boys birth folk songs are sung everywhere. When the son is born in the family the folksongs sung during the son birth and these folk songs are known as 'pakhaan' or 'badaiyian' and on ceremonies like ritaan and sutra of male child are celebrated or performed. The following songs are sung during the celebrations on the birth of a son in Dogra family:

Khed Khed ve neyanaya khed ve,  
apni mata di godi vich khed ve, tera  
babul bande lakh behl ve.....

(Translation: play dear baby boy; play in your mother's lap, your father distributes offerings, gifts especially to affinal realtions.....)

Kaar nand ji de baden badaiyian ji,  
kaar nand ji de, bajjan badaiyian te  
chadhan kadaaiyaan ji, kaar nand ji de.....

(Translation: Greetings enter nand ji house, greetings enter nand ji's house, greetings enter and feasts are made in nand ji's house.....)

There is hardly any folk song that is sung during the birth of a female child, except for increasing families. Since there are no exclusive songs for girls, the same songs that are sung at the birth of a boy are sung for the replacing the words for boy child with the words for girl child to make it suitable for the occasion. From the very beginning of the child birth, the gender discrimination was seen in the family or in the society. The society and the family always make difference between the girl and the boy child. When the boy child is born in the family, ever family member makes lot of happiness, they distributed sweets among the relatives and call them and celebrates a lot. But when the girl child is born in the family there is no enthusiasm or happiness seen in the family. The family feels proud when the boy child is born in the family and when the girl child is born in the family they feel disgrace or shame. These things are seen in the some parts of the remote areas in India even today. They feel burden when the girl child is born in the family.

Hillary Clinton in her speech (2016), says, "To all the little girls who are watching, never doubt that you are valuable and powerful and deserving of every chance and opportunity in the world to pursue and achieve your own dreams". In this, she says that every girl is valuable and powerful and deserves every chance and opportunity in the world to achieve their own dreams or goals. She says girls have the power to do anything according to her own wish.

Suhaag is also one of the major categories of the folksongs in Dogri. It is a type of separation or nuptial songs where societal expectations resound through the anxious and willing persona of young women rousing her family to seek her suitable match. On the other hand, the bride call "laado rani" in almost all weeding songs and where she explains her desires, feelings and emotions mainly for searching a suitable and handsome husband; asking for proper arrangement of barat that no one can say anything or dissatisfied for/about the arrangement, batnaa that are related to her special bath and facial and so forth. Before the sant Batnaa rasam is performed. The folk songs that are supporting above comments are discussed are as under:-

Buye te khadotiye tu mal mal per na toh, baagi chamba khidi reha ,tu baithi

Haar paroh, maaye ni sun meriye, mere babul nu samjha, tiyaan hoyian latt

Baberiyaan, kise nokar de latt laa.....



(Translation: O mother now you ask my turned that your daughter has now turned maiden, find some suitable match, particularly a government employee.)

John Stuart Mill in Subjection of Women he discussed the situation of the women during his times had not really improved since Wollstonecraft's day. He says, married women had no more legal status than a child. There was no career opportunity for middle class women; their only source of economic security was to find a husband.

Babul de bede harya shetoot ni maaye, do aaye jattan wale saadh maaye,

O hte mangde kanya da daan maaye, mere babul nu chithiyaan paa ne maaye,

Appe devega kanya da daan ne maaye.....

(Translation: The girl is praising the lush green mulberry tree in my father's courtyard, and the same moment two saints enter and ask for aims, and then the girl asks her mother to send a letter to her father asking him to come home and give the alms (do kanyadan) ).

The character of a hopeful bride is in conversations with his parents as to what type of husband she seeks. In these songs, the girl is hardly ever portrayed as pliable, meek, submissive or passive; on the contrary she is bold, daring, venturesome, and fearless. In real life, however girls have hardly anything to say in their marriage. The daughter getting married and leaving her father's home: having longing and homesick memories and emotions, the giving of pure daughters in marriage, is considered an act of charity that is the highest merit in the Indian context, and bestows honour and virtue. The following example showcases a bride's active greeting of the responsibilities and worries that come with entering the new social space of her new home.

Guddiyan pataari vich reh geiyaan, ho mera kirnu te reya wich tadke, saambh

Lo babul ji kaar apna ho tiyaan chaliyaan bagaane des ve, galiyaan babul ji

Hoyiaan pidiyan, ho tera veda te hoyia pardes ve.....

(Translation: The dolls are left behind in the basket now, along with the other toys, she is pleading her father to take care of his home now, because she is going to leave that house permanently to live at a strange place among strange people.

“Women are told from their infancy, and taught by the example of their mothers, that a little knowledge of human weakness, justly termed cunning, softness of temper, outward obedience, and a scrupulous attention to a puerile kind of propriety, will obtain for them the protection of man; and should they be beautiful, everything else is needless, for at least twenty years of their lives”. ( Wollstonecraft, 19)

In this category, we see a paradox between the way a daughter is so dearly loved and brought up that her going away can be pitiful, while, on the other hand, once she gets married she cannot visit her parents house without the permission of their in-laws or husband. The conditions in in-laws family and women's family support especially brother protect and support her in this tough time. Even in Hindu Law there is a provision to give women a fair deal in the sharing of ancestral property but there are hardly such women's cases which claim for it in Dogri. Otherwise brother protects and supports his sister and visit with gifts during festival seasons and also usher her to her natal home Maykaa. It is also believed that parents feel insecure and helpless for their daughter, if she is not happy with in-laws. However, brother's strong position does matter, and this again promotes son preference. Following local adages support this point, for example, “Jiski beti sukhi uska janam sukhi (if someone's daughter is happy, it means he has fulfilled the purpose of life); girl does not take extra diet, but you (parents) are helpless when she is unhappy/tortured at in-laws family, this is painful; girls need a care taker as a brother and so forth. A Dogri girl almost worships her brother. She feels fortunate to have him and shows an extravagant hospitality when he visits her on festive occasions. Traditionally, a sister is sent from her in-laws to her parent's home with her brother only. Frequent visits keep mutual touch between two families and subsequently in two villages and thus results inter-familial and inter-villages bonding.

Feminist critics believe that the way gender is constructed in popular culture today is wrong and degrading towards women. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell a feminist critic who believes that the way society has defined the different genders in unfair and unequal. She uses our marriage laws as a way to show this inequality by saying, “The core of these (marriage) laws is that spouses have reciprocal-not equal-rights and duties. The husband must maintain the wife and children, but the amount of support beyond subsistence is at his discretion. In return, the wife is legally required to do the domestic chores, provide martial companionship, and sexual consortium but has no claim for direct compensation for any of the services rendered.” This show how distorted the relationship between man and women is. The way Campbell



explains it is that the man is the head of the household and in charge of protecting the family while the women is supposed to take care of the house and make sure the husband is happy. This is a perfect example of gender roles being constructed with the man in charge and the woman portrayed is subordinate.

A woman is complaining her mother about her mother-in-law; since past so many years, Dogri girls are taught to be reverent and complaint to their husbands and their relatives (in-laws). In contrast to this, we can hear denouncing words against these same relatives, who in real life are treated with great respect. Generally, a daughter-in-law does not dare to argue with her mother-in-law or sister-in-law, but in the folk songs these directions of normal conduct can be set aside with liberty. A glut of anecdotes on women's weak and helpless life, the cruelty and torture she faces has been portrayed in such Dogri folksongs.

Mere bede diye khajoore, mein saariyaan kaliyaan todh rakhaan, meri sasu

Ne bole mande bol, mein dabbi wich paayi rakhaan, mera babul ji aawan mere

Kol, mein saare dukh kholiye dasaan.....

( Translation: The girl is addressing the date palm tree in her courtyard; I will pluck all the flowers buds and store them in a box, my mother-in-law has abused me, and I will also store those bad words in a box, when my parents will come to me, I will tell them all).

Sometimes these songs smoothens the social confrontation and discontent and ease the women in efforts to adjust herself into her sitting and fate. Many soothing and quieting songs sung at the time of leaving of a bride are significant in this situation. Women are complaining her husband about her mother-in-law: Women send message to her husband to meet without delay. Immediately he reaches and is told about her complaints and gripes, about his mother who berates and rebukes her. Subsequently, her husband feels very sorry for her but he does not promise to do anything about this. In this one woman is dominated by the other woman, woman is not understand the condition the other woman. She is taunting, suppress and dominating her, and the other woman complaining her husband about her in laws.

“.....to improve both the sexes they ought, not only in private families, but in public schools, to be educated together, If marriage be the cement of society, mankind should all be educated after the same model, or the intercourse of the sexes will never deserve the name of fellowship.....” (Wollstonecraft, ch.12)

Aaun galaaniyaan saach vo, mere baanku deya chachua, mikki vi leyi chal

Kach vo mere bankua deya chachua, sas nanaan miki jeen nyi dindiyaan,

Thande paani da kut peen nyi dindiyaan, aakhdiyaan charkha katt wo, mere

Baanku deya chachua.....

(Translation: I am telling you the truth, take me along, my mother-in-law and my sister-in-law don't let me live happily, they don't let me drink even a sip of cold water, and ask me to spin the wheel all day.....)

Separation songs are also included in the Dogra folksongs. Soldier's wife struggles in the society: Joining Army has been the most reputed occupation in Dogri culture. Most of the time the soldier's wife does not go along with him due to some obligatory circumstances; she has to struggle alone in the society. She is melancholy longing for him in his absence, seen complaining that how could I celebrate my festivals when my husband is fighting on border. She further signs that the weather is so pleasant and her husband is playing with bullets on the country's border; waiting for him is another phase that describes her aloneness and isolation. The rainy season is one of the favourite seasons of women and is believed to bring to mind many romantic and deep feelings. The light rain, the gentle breeze and the lightening make her husband's absence more intolerable and cause her to feel depressing and alone. The loss of social possess in the nonexistence of the husband is painted in the following folksong known as surma (brave).

Palla shipaaiya dogreya, rusliyaan- rusliyaan taaran tera badaa mandaa lagda,  
doo din chuttiyaan aayija suhaani rutt ambarein di.....

(Translation: My dear Dogra soldier, I really miss you, take leave and come home for two days, the weather is so pleasant.....)

In Subjection of Women by John Stuart Mill says, "It is part of the irony of life that the strongest feelings of devoted gratitude of which human nature seems to be susceptible, are called forth in human beings towards those who, having the power entirely to crush their earthly existence, voluntarily refrain from using that power".

Conclusion: The Dogri folk songs discussed a multi-coloured picture of the Dogri women. They not only represent an orthodox typecast of women but also portrays them as light-hearted and capable of expressing emotions generously and carelessly. The songs expressed longings and wishes, frustrations, and the dilemmas that go with different facades of their life. The songs lay exposed the truth of her status in the

society. Some songs describe them as passive and subservient, while others show them as valiant and rebellious. Some show that the girls are unsolicited and can only bring unhappiness to the family, while others celebrate their upbringing.

The songs of women discussed above give a dappled picture of Dogra women. They do not portray only a conformist stereotype of Dogra women; they also portray her as jovial and capable of expressing her emotions liberally and with abandon. The songs tell us about women longings and desires, their frustrations, and the predicaments that go with different facts of women's life. The songs lay uncovered their status in the Dogra society. Some describe them as obedient and submissive, others depict them as bold, audacious and rebellious. Some show us that girls are unwelcome and can only bring sorrow to the family, while others illustrate how affectionately and with what loving care they are brought up. In these folk songs, we also see the incongruity stuck between the ways a daughter is so dearly loved that their going away can be painful, while, on the other side, once women gets married they cannot visit their parents without an appropriate invitation.

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