

## **WOMEN EMANCIPATION IN RAJASTHANI FOLKLORE: A STUDY OF THE FOLKLORES OF GANGUAR**

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Folklore is a part of culture and history. It has its roots in our ancestral history. It is a traditional heritage which is passed from one generation to another orally. Time has changed and it is observed that folklores are also getting documented. In this paper we would like to explore the wishes, desires and hope of Rajasthani women exhibited in the folklores related to Gangaur festival.

Gangaur is a famous festival celebrated by young maiden and married women for longevity of their groom. It is celebrated for sixteen days and each day they sing folklores related to plucking grass to offering water. By these folklores they emancipate their desire to the patriarchy. These songs are meant for expression of self. It has polite way so that the hard hitting things can be conveyed by it easily. Folklores are being used by women of Rajasthan to talk about their fancies, whims and desires.

India has a rich tradition of fair and festivals that form the fulcrum of the cultural life of the people. Rajasthan is known as the land of colours. Its culture is very rich in terms of festivity and celebration. Holi, Dussera, Diwali, Teej and Gangaur are most widely celebrated festivals here. Folk tales and folklores are very important part of these festivals. Without folk songs and folklores these celebrations are incomplete. These folk songs and folklores are based on oral traditions and anecdotes. These legends and anecdotes cast a spell on the folk mind leading to the faith and worship. It is a treasure of our culture. Folklore consists of legends, music, oral history, proverbs, jokes, popular belief, fairy tales, stories, talks and customs included in the tradition of a culture, subculture or group. It also includes the set of practices through which those expressive genres are shared.

Teej and Gangaur are very famous fairs of Rajasthan and celebrated with zest and fun. These festivals are rendered colourful and enjoyed by men, women and children. In Jaipur and entire Rajasthan it is celebrated with enthusiasm. The royal procession is carried out in wall city of Jaipur that is known as *Gangur Ke Savari*. It is witness by public and tourist from all over the globe. The Garasias, a hill tribe like the Bhils and Meena, celebrate the Gangaur festivals with community dancing. The Garva is a pleasant dance of Gangaur in which only women take part. Gangaur is an eighteen day festival. It starts with subsequent day of Holi. It is celebrated at the end of winter and the onset of spring season. Specifically during Gangaur, a procession takes place. Under this procession soldiers mounted on horses, royal insignia, musical instruments such as *Nagaras* followed by the *Thakur* seated on the royal elephant with a band of security

guard on horses. This caravan generally starts from the town and concludes at the *Gangaur Kuan*, a Well, designated as such in almost all the towns of Rajasthan.

As farewell is given to Holi-The festival of Colours, Gangaur is welcomed by Rajasthani women with typical mewari songs like “*poojan do Gangaur bhan warm han epoojan do Gangaur*”(Subhash:308).

The festival is dedicated to the goddess of abundance; Gauri (Parvati). It is female centric festival, where all the festivities and poojas are conducted by women. Women keep fast and puja of goddess Gauri, decked out, beautifully clothed idol of goddess is the centerpiece on an elaborate procession. In the word Gangaur , “Gan” is the synonym for Lord Shiva whereas “Gaur” stands for Gauri or goddess Parvati. These lores are a way to pray goddess Gauri. The festival is celebrated by womenfolk with great enthusiasm and devotion for Gauri, the consort of Lord Shiva. While married women worship Gauri, the embodiment of perfection and conjugal love for the success of their married life, unmarried women worship the Goddess for being blessed with good husband. Gangaur Festival also celebrates monsoon, harvest and marital fidelity. A.G.Gold in his article titled “Outspoken Women: Representations of Female Voices in a Rajasthani Folklore Community” writes, “the festival of Gangaur—mythically a celebration of divine marriage bonds. At Gangaur virgin girls pray for a handsome, long-lived husband and married women yearn for their absent spouses. The husband must be persuaded to come home bringing gifts for his bride” (111).

Rajasthan is famous for its driest and arid land and when it comes to sheer colour and exuberance. At the time of Gangaur, Rajasthan looks best in all its colours. The first song is very interesting where the girls have to go to the garden and collect grass to offer the goddess. So they take the permission of the gardener before step into the garden. And request him to open the door.

“Badi wala badi khol badi ke Kiwadi khol Choriya aayi Dhoobn.”(Subhash: 304) So in this manner they have to ask before plucking the grass for offering to goddess Gangaur . Societal duties are divided like who will do the ritual of *Mayra* in the wedding of the sister’s children and who will give her *Chunar*. It is fixed and the sister also ask for the same in a song “ *Maay Millawe Mahro Isardas Beer/Chunri Udave Maro Kaniraam Beer*”( Subhash: 305)

So this highlights that the responsibilities of the brothers are already distributed by the society and by this folklore they are giving it a sanction. Sisters are frankly informing their brothers about their expectations also.

*The song of Gangur is very rhythmic.*

*“rani puje raj ne*

*Mein make suhaag ne, Rani ko raj ghatu jaye*

*Mahko suhag badtu jaye* ” (Subhash: 309)

It is clearly hinted that she is expecting longevity of her husband that is why she is participating in this festival and on the other hand she is jealous of the Queen and ask to decrease his empire. Hanja is word used for husband. Women are confined to home and so in this conversational folklore she is asking her husband to remain at home and not to go out. She praises her husband and ask her to remain at home. The husband also praises her call her “mirgyanayani” and makes excuse that his friends are waiting outside and he will come back soon. *yahi rahwo hiwde ka jiwde yahi rahwo ji* ( Subhash:311)

A.G. Gold in the article writes,

In rural North India relations between husband and wife are publicly restrained by prescribed attitudes of shame and modesty for the woman and a less formally enjoined but nonetheless stylized act of detachment or demonstrative authority for men. Women, especially young wives, affect postures of modesty that include silence or extreme reticence in speech, lowered eyes, and covered face. If a woman speaks to her husband at all, she may employ one or more modes of self-effacement: turning her head away, whispering, speaking obliquely in the third person, or pointedly addressing someone else in the room with a message intended for him (106).

In one the folklores the sisters are singing and asking for “uth (Camle) chadyu Jija implies that would brother-in-law should belong to well off family. “*Mada puthna buha*” implies that the daughter in law should be from cultured background and should know the tradition of Rajasthan. Veena Das seems to propose something delicately equivalent about folklore in her chapter on “Femininity and Orientations to the Body” she explains, “Women seem to live their lives on the double register of law and language which emphasises their roles as wives, and poetry and metalanguage which emphasises their roles as standing outside of language and law. . .”(201)

In one of the song “Chotu se Talai pana phula chai”, *Ja main rowa nahai/Ai rowa bai nahaga surajmal ji awega jhabar jhola lawega*”(Subhash: 305).

It is clearly hinted that they are asking for new clothes from the groom. It is expected that the husband should bring new clothes and ornaments for her. Women very beautifully ask for clothes and ornaments by this folklore. This folklore became a medium to express their desire to wear new clothes and get some ornaments. A.G. Gold writes,

Yet both male and female folklore traditions portray women addressing their husbands in ways that are nothing if not bold, forthright, direct. The communications they thus brazenly deliver may range from material demands to personal criticism, and may include thinly veiled invitations to sexual intimacy and severe threats.(106).

One more famous folklore is, “*Uchu chawru chuktu/Gur pujnta u kahta sayab yeh Jodi ibchal rakho ji/Yeh Jodi ibchal rakho ji mehre chudle ru/Such suhagji.*” (Subhash:311). In this folklore the desire to give the blessing to the couple that they enjoy all the happiness and mirth. The suhag that is the life of the husband is one the prominent thing for the married women. Through this folklore she asks goddess to give longevity and good and blissful life. The festival concluded by submerging the idol of Gangaur in nearby well. Even much folklore is sing by the women to bid adieu to Goddess with this hope that it will come next year too. “*Teej tyohara baori /Le dubi gangaur*”

The season of festivals in Rajasthan ends with the festival of gangaur and it begins with Teej after a gap of long period between the two festivals. After the festival of gangaur the effigies of gangaur are submerged into ponds or lakes. The effigies of Gangaur and Teej are worshipped during both the festivals. In the end the effigies of Gangaur are immersed into ponds or lakes as per the availability with all the religious rituals. So the lines of a lore quoted above are sung by the women on the occasion of both the festivals gangaur and teej. One (Gangaur) says farewell and the other one (Teej) welcomes the season of festivals. A.G. Gold beautifully writes,

All of this might be taken to confirm the suggestion that folklore opens up (imagined) private spaces, where beloved women do freely speak”(107). Folklore is inherited in our culture that we celebrate every small or big occasion, precisely if we talk about Rajasthan then fairs and festivals are very important part of our lives .It can not deterred the women to talk about herself and desire. Singing folklore is a way a medium through which she raises her voice in the public arena. Folklores give them right to talk about their self and their expectations from the patriarchy.

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