

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL REFLECTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter explores the approaches, methods, and tools employed to collect and analyse the experiences and significance of rituals and folksongs among rural women in the Mirzapur region. It explains how combining the constructivist paradigm, the ethnographic analytical approach, and the thematic analysis method enabled me to locate my research and address the questions raised in this thesis. This study uses a case study method to analyse the complexities of oral tradition, rituals and culture of subtle resistance in the specific region of Mirzapur district. Moreover, this method is used to avoid sweeping generalisations and accept the study's limitations as this folksong is sung in other parts of the state. Still, the culture of singing and celebration slightly differs from the singing tradition practised in these regions, making it a unique and potential area to study. The constructivist approach influenced my initial interactions and data collection, and the ethnographic method allowed me to capture rich, detailed accounts of participants' rituals and performative culture in festive contexts by using in-depth interviews, participant observation and immersion in their socio-cultural milieu. Moreover, thematic analysis helped me observe the patterns and organise them to identify the key themes which address the research objectives. The following section outlines the theoretical frameworks that closely align with the study's analysis, offering a foundational scaffolding while not entirely dictating its approach.

2.1 Theoretical Reflections

This ethnographic study does not base its analysis or primary investigation on any singular theoretical framework, as the researcher located the rural women's folksongs and rituals in the

socio-cultural context of the Mirzapur region. However, suppose readers seek to understand the theoretical underpinnings that align closely with this research. In that case, the lenses of Performance Studies, Place-Making Theory, and Intersectionality provide the most relevant perspectives. These theoretical approaches offer critical insights into the performative dimensions of human behaviour, the socio-spatial dynamics of place, and the intersecting structures of identity and power. While these theories do not dictate the study's analytical trajectory, they function as interpretative tools illuminating key ethnographic insights, enabling a more comprehensive understanding of the cultural practices and power dynamics at play.

2.2 Performance Studies

Performance Studies, an interdisciplinary behaviour merging at the intersection of anthropology, theatre, and cultural studies, provides a critical lens for analysing human actions, rituals, and everyday interactions as performative acts (Schechner, 2002). The discipline expands beyond traditional theatre to examine performance in a broad spectrum of social, cultural, and political contexts, making it a valuable framework for understanding embodied practices and identity formation. Richard Schechner (1985) conceptualises performance as twice-behaved behaviour, emphasising that performances are not spontaneous but rather rehearsed and reiterated actions within social structures. This perspective aligns with Erving Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical approach, where social life is understood as a series of performances shaped by roles, scripts, and audience expectations. In this regard, everyday life can be examined as a performative enactment wherein individuals negotiate identities through structured and improvised performances.

Judith Butler (1990) extends performance to identity construction, particularly in gender studies, arguing that gender is not an inherent trait but a continuous performative act. This

performativity, she asserts, is socially regulated through repetition and citation of norms, thus reinforcing or disrupting cultural expectations. Butler's theory significantly contributes to Performance Studies by highlighting the political dimensions of performative acts and their potential to challenge hegemonic structures. In addition to its application in identity studies, Performance Studies investigates the transformative power of ritual and embodiment. Victor Turner (1982) identifies performance as a liminal space where social norms can be subverted, creating opportunities for reflection and change. His concept of *communitas*, a temporary, unstructured social state experienced during rituals, illustrates how performance fosters collective identity and social cohesion.

Furthermore, Diana Taylor (2003) introduces the idea of the archive and the repertoire, differentiating between textual, historical records (the archive) and embodied, non-textual practices (the repertoire). Her work underscores the significance of performance in transmitting cultural memory and knowledge outside of written discourse, making it particularly relevant in ethnographic and oral traditions. By employing Performance Studies as a theoretical framework, this research engages with the performative dimensions of human behaviour, identity negotiation, and cultural transmission. The interdisciplinary nature of this field allows for an in-depth exploration of how performance functions as a site of resistance, social critique, and meaning-making.

2.3 Place-Making Theory

Place-making theory examines the process of shaping meaningful and socially constructed spaces, emphasising the relationship between people, culture, and the environment (Cresswell, 2004). Place-making, rooted in human geography, anthropology, and urban studies, involves the

transformation of physical spaces into places of significance through lived experiences, narratives, and collective memory (Tuan, 1977). Yi-Fu Tuan (1977) introduces the concept of toponophilia, highlighting the emotional bonds people develop with specific places. His work underlines place-making's experiential and affective dimensions, illustrating how spaces acquire meaning through personal and communal interactions. Similarly, Edward Relph (1976) critiques the phenomenon of placelessness, where globalisation and homogenisation erode the uniqueness of local places, diminishing their cultural and social significance. Jane Jacobs (1961) contributes to place-making theory by emphasising the role of community engagement in urban development. Her advocacy for bottom-up urban planning highlights the necessity of local participation in fostering vibrant, people-centred spaces. The work of Dolores Hayden (1995) further explores the intersection of place-making and cultural memory, demonstrating how collective histories and narratives shape urban landscapes.

2.3.1 Place-Making in Ritualistic and Festive Contexts

Place-making in ritualistic and festive contexts involves the transformation of spaces into sites of cultural significance through performative acts, ceremonies, and celebrations. Rituals and festivals serve as critical media for inscribing meaning into space, reinforcing collective identities, and reaffirming social structures (Turner, 1982). Through repeated enactments, these events contribute to the lived experience of place, turning ordinary spaces into sacred or communal landmarks. Henri Lefebvre's (1991) concept of the production of space underscores how spatial structures shape and are shaped by social practices, providing a theoretical foundation for understanding place-making as a performative process. Festivals serve as liminal spaces where normative social hierarchies can be temporarily restructured, fostering a sense of unity and shared belonging (Turner, 1982). Amelia Jones (1997) extends this perspective by

exploring the role of embodied performance in shaping spatial narratives, suggesting that festive events generate ephemeral yet impactful meanings that contribute to a place's historical and cultural memory. Similarly, Setha Low (2000) discusses the significance of embodied space in urban and ritualistic settings, emphasising the multisensory and interactive aspects of place-making during festive gatherings.

Michel de Certeau (1984) highlights how rituals and festivals are spatial practices that contest, negotiate, and redefine urban and rural landscapes. His theory of tactics and strategies in spatial engagement explains how local communities assert agency through ritualistic place-making, reclaiming public spaces for cultural expression and social cohesion. By integrating ritualistic and festive contexts into place-making theory, this research examines how embodied performances, celebrations, and communal rituals inscribe meaning onto space, creating dynamic, socially significant places. The interdisciplinary approach of Performance Studies and Place-Making offers an insightful lens to understand how cultural heritage, identity, and collective memory are reinforced through spatial practices.

2.4 Intersectionality Theory

Intersectionality, first conceptualised by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), provides a critical framework for understanding how multiple social identities, such as race, gender, class, and sexuality, intersect to produce unique experiences of oppression and privilege. Crenshaw's work highlights the limitations of single-axis analyses, emphasising that individuals experience discrimination and social structures differently depending on their intersecting identities. Patricia Hill Collins (2000) extends this perspective in her work on Black feminist thought, arguing that systems of oppression are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. She introduces the concept of

the matrix of domination to explain how race, class, gender, and other social categories create complex and context-dependent power relations.

In ethnographic research, intersectionality is crucial for analysing how overlapping social identities shape cultural performances, rituals, and place-making practices. Nira Yuval-Davis (2006) highlights how belonging and spatial politics are deeply intertwined with intersectional experiences as marginalised groups negotiate their identities within historically contested spaces. Additionally, Bell Hooks (1992) explores the role of intersectionality in cultural expression, particularly in performance and artistic practices. Her work underscores how marginalised communities utilise performance and spatial engagement as acts of resistance and self-definition. By integrating intersectionality into Performance Studies and Place-Making, this research examines how embodied performances, cultural memory, and spatial practices shape social identities. The intersectional approach allows a deeper understanding of power, agency, and belonging within ritualistic, festive, and everyday contexts.

By engaging with Performance Studies, Place-Making Theory, and Intersectionality, this study examines how rural women use *Kajari* folksongs and rituals to carve out autonomous performative spaces within patriarchal rural settings. The performative enactment of these folksongs enables women to navigate and challenge social hierarchies through strategic improvisations in language, humour, laughter, and social critique of patriarchal values. The theatrical dimensions of their performances, including role reversals, cross-dressing, embodied gestures, rhythmic clapping, and symbolic language, serve as powerful tools of resistance and self-expression. Through the folk and symbolic language embedded in these performances, women assert their agency and reclaim spaces traditionally dominated by rigid gender norms. Furthermore, the study explores the dynamics of gender, caste, and class in shaping the

appropriation of rural women's folksongs, traditional spaces, and emotions, revealing how these intersecting structures often render them voiceless. This research, therefore, positions *Kajari* folksongs and rituals as critical sites where marginalised women articulate their lived realities, subvert social constraints, and reimagine alternative possibilities of belonging and autonomy.

2.5 Research Paradigm: Constructivist and Interpretive Approach

This study adopted the paradigm of constructivism and Interpretivism to study the folksongs of rural women, enabling deep exploration of how these songs are collectively created, shared and reinterpreted within their culturally specific settings. This paradigm views knowledge and meaning as socially constructed. It allows the research to focus on how rural women actively shape and transmit the cultural and emotional significance embedded in their folksongs. By emphasising the interactive and evolving nature of cultural expression, a constructivist approach helps the researcher understand how these women's songs reflect shared values, collective memory, and communal identity while adapting to changing social circumstances. Similarly, interpretivism emphasises understanding the subjective meanings and interpretations that individuals or groups ascribe to their experiences. This perspective asserts that knowledge about rural women's folksongs is gained by engaging deeply with the women themselves, seeking to understand their perspectives, emotions, and social realities as they are expressed through song.

The constructivist paradigm is a qualitative approach derived from Mannheim's works and works such as Berger and Luckmann's (1967) *The Social Construction of Reality* and Lincoln and Guba's (1985) *Naturalistic Inquiry*. In social constructivism, researchers seek to understand the world and derive subjective meanings from their experiences (Creswell, 2007, p. 8). It posits that knowledge and reality are not objective or fixed but are actively constructed

through social interactions and individual experiences. Individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences in a particular context. Here, the research aims to rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation being studied. This approach challenges positivist views, suggesting that truth is not universal but rather subjective and context-dependent, created through dialogue and engagement within specific social environments (Crotty, 1998). Thus, it provides a lens through which to understand how rural women actively construct meaning from their engagements in rituals, folksongs, and performances. As a result, constructivist research often involves close interaction with participants to understand how they construct and negotiate meanings in real-world contexts, allowing the researcher to gain insights into individual and shared perspectives within a community (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Focusing on how rural women attribute meaning to their different rituals, folk symbols, and cultural practices, the researcher aims to uncover how these folk songs contribute to their oppositional identity and cultural belonging in a ritualised context. Constructivism also underlines the diverse nature of human experiences, recognising the fluidity and plurality of interpretations within socio-cultural contexts. This paradigmatic stance allows us to explore how performers perceive and interpret their folksongs, emphasising their emotional responses, personal reflections, and cultural affiliations. The Interpretivist lens prioritises participant observation, interviews, and immersion in the community, allowing them to access the nuanced ways women articulate their identities, struggles, and values through music. Through participant observation, interviews, and other immersive methods, the constructivist paradigm examines how these folksongs function as living traditions sustained by community interaction and the women's shared experiences and interpretations.

The integrated approaches used in this research place a strong ethical focus on honouring participants’ voices and cultural backgrounds at every stage of the research process. We adhere to core principles of informed consent, confidentiality, and cultural sensitivity, ensuring that the findings genuinely reflect the perspectives of rural women and men. By involving rural women as active contributors to the construction of knowledge, the scholar aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the oral tradition’s cultural importance and social dynamics. Table 2.1 briefly describes the field details, data collection process and respondents.

Table 2.1

| Category | Details |
|-----------------------|---|
| Analytical Framework | Ethnography and Ethnolinguistics – A qualitative research approach emphasising immersive fieldwork, lived experiences, and interpretative analysis of oral traditions, performances, and ritual practices. |
| Fieldwork Location | Rural and urban regions in Mirzapur district, Uttar Pradesh, India |
| Fieldwork Duration | From 2021 to 2024 |
| Research Participants | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rural women singers Trained female performers in Rural areas-0 - <i>Akhādā</i> performers Trained female performers in Urban area-15 - Folk practitioners Trained male performers in Rural area-10 - Community elders Trained male performers in Urban area-25 |
| Sample Size | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 60 <i>Kajarī</i> folksongs documented - 50 respondents were interviewed: 35 rural women and 15 men |
| Sampling Method | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Purposive Sampling: To identify key informants - Snowball Sampling: To reach additional participants through community networks |

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Data Collection Methods | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participant Observation: Attending and documenting performances and rituals - In-depth Interviews: Engaging with singers and practitioners - Focus Group Discussions: Exploring collective narratives and experiences - Audio-Visual Documentation: Recording performances and ceremonies for analysis |
| Primary Research Focus | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Oral Traditions: Women’s role in sustaining and transmitting <i>Kajari</i> folksongs - Performance Strategies: Theatrical and ritualistic elements in performances - Socio-Cultural Transformations: Impact of Modernisation, globalisation, and caste-gender Dynamics on <i>Kajari</i> Traditions |
| Key Ethnographic Events | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Kajari</i> festival and its ritual practices - <i>Ratjagā</i> performances - Ritualistic acts such as soil collection, barley planting, and ceremonial immersion |
| Ethical Considerations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Obtained informed consent from all participants - Ensured anonymity and confidentiality in data reporting - Maintained cultural sensitivity in representation and analysis |
| Challenges Encountered | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Language Barriers: Variations in dialects and translation challenges - Accessibility Issues: Difficulty in reaching remote research sites - Social Constraints: Gender norms limiting women’s participation in research activities |

2.6 Analytical Approach: Ethnography

Guided by the constructivist and interpretivism paradigms, the study adopted an ethnographic analytical approach to study rural women’s folksongs. Using an ethnographic framework is significant as it allows the researcher to comprehend the context-specific social realities created by rural women’s communal gathering and collective efforts through their cultural expression on festive occasions. Moreover, to understand this social reality, the ethnographic framework

enabled me to immerse myself in the field by living with them, observing their daily and ritualised behaviour, and recording their singing sessions and rituals.

2.7 Ethnography and Ethnolinguistic

The interpretivist lens prioritises participant observation, interviews, and immersion in the community, allowing them to access the nuanced ways women articulate their identities, struggles, and values through music. Through participant observation, interviews, and other immersive methods, the constructivist paradigm shows how these folksongs function as living traditions sustained by community interaction and the women's shared experiences and interpretations. The choice of ethnography and ethnolinguistics as frameworks for analysing rural women's singing tradition and language used in folksongs is driven by their capacity to capture the complexity of oral traditions with diverse voices and interpretations. These narratives often confront dominant patriarchal ideologies that suppress women while occasionally exposing the ways women may be complicit in reinforcing their subjugation. Ethnography provides an opportunity for in-depth observation of rural women's everyday lives, highlighting the embedded power dynamics, labour divisions, and gender-based inequalities. The ethnolinguistics approach enables the researcher to uncover subtle forms of resistance woven into these singing traditions and the symbolic empowerment expressed through the communal, festive rituals surrounding these performances.

The concept of ethnography has long been debated among social scientists and anthropologists, reflecting its evolving and multifaceted nature. Even in the 1970s, Hymes (1977) acknowledged the complexity of defining ethnography, describing it as an elusive and

complicated question. Despite this ambiguity, scholars have attempted to delineate its core principles, providing a more structured understanding of the ethnographic approach.

Mitchell (2007) characterises ethnography as a broad term encompassing various forms of long-term qualitative research that employ a triangulation of methods. He notes that the term, derived from its Greek roots, literally means writing culture. Similarly, Hobbs (2006) describes ethnography as a research method within both sociological and anthropological traditions, consisting of a combination of methodologies that prioritise personal engagement as key to understanding a particular culture or social setting. Brewer (2003) offers a more detailed perspective, defining ethnography as studying people in naturally occurring settings through methods that capture their social meanings and everyday activities. He emphasises the researcher's direct participation in the field to systematically collect data while refraining from imposing external interpretations. Brewer (2005) reiterates this view, stressing that ethnography focuses on studying individuals in their natural environments, aiming to document their lived experiences without superimposing meaning from an external perspective.

A synthesis of these definitions highlights several fundamental features of ethnographic research. First, ethnography typically involves extended data collection periods, allowing researchers to observe social life as it unfolds naturally. Second, it employs participant observation, in-depth interviews, and engagement with various forms of qualitative data to develop a comprehensive understanding of the studied community. Third, it captures real-life interactions and the social meanings individuals attribute to their experiences, emphasising an emic perspective and understanding phenomena from the participants' viewpoint. Lastly, ethnography embodies a holistic approach, acknowledging the interconnectedness of cultural practices, social structures, and individual agency.

Beyond its theoretical underpinnings, ethnography has practical applications across various disciplines. It remains a foundational methodology for studying cultural groups and indigenous communities in anthropology. In sociology, ethnographic studies have provided valuable insights into social institutions, urban life, and marginalised communities. Furthermore, applied ethnography has gained traction in fields such as education, healthcare, and business research, where understanding human behaviour in context is crucial for policy-making and intervention strategies (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994). In contemporary research, digital ethnography has emerged to study online interactions and virtual communities, expanding the methodological scope of traditional ethnographic inquiry (Pink et al., 2016).

Ultimately, ethnography is not merely a methodological approach but a way of seeing and interpreting social life. By immersing themselves in participants' lived experiences, ethnographers seek to uncover the meanings, practices, and dynamics that shape human interactions. This analytical framework underscores the enduring relevance of ethnography as a tool for understanding complex social realities in both traditional and contemporary contexts. Similarly, the ethnolinguistic approach is used to understand the strategies employed in these folksongs.

Ethnolinguistics, a branch of linguistic anthropology, examines the dynamic relationship between language, culture, and worldview, emphasising how linguistic practices reflect, sustain, and sometimes contest cultural norms (Duranti, 2011; Foley, 2001; Salzmann, 2016). It posits that language is not merely a communication system but a repository of cultural meanings, social structures, and historical consciousness (Whorf, 2012; Lucy, 1992). In this thesis, ethnolinguistics is employed with ethnographic methods to explore the language practices embedded in *Kajarī* singing sessions among rural women in the Mirzapur region of Uttar

Pradesh, India. Ethnography, as a methodology emphasising participant observation and cultural immersion, allows for a nuanced understanding of the socio-ritual settings in which *Kajarī* performances occur (Geertz, 2008; Hymes, 1977), while ethnolinguistics sharpens the analytical focus on how specific linguistic forms, such as metaphors, figurative speech, narrative structures, and code-switching, encode cultural knowledge and social critique.

Kajarī songs, traditionally associated with the monsoon season, are sites of aesthetic expression and subtle socio-political negotiation. The women's use of language during these sessions often involves improvisation, playful repartee, and coded metaphors that provide space for what Scott (1990) terms "hidden transcripts", expressions of dissent veiled in everyday cultural practices. Through examining metaphorical frameworks, lexical choices, syntactic variation, and speech acts within these performances, the study explores how gendered language practices become vehicles for articulating experiences of marginalisation, desire, resistance, and solidarity. The linguistic strategies employed, such as irony, double meanings, and improvisational wit, reflect individual creativity and a collective consciousness regarding gendered hierarchies and restrictions.

Moreover, the research engages with broader theoretical debates around gendered language (Cameron, 1998), illustrating how women subtly use culturally sanctioned forms like folk singing to challenge normative discourses of femininity and subordination. As Gal (1991) argues, language use among women often becomes a site where power dynamics are negotiated rather than reproduced. In the case of Mirzapur's *Kajarī* singers, the localised, context-bound nature of these performances allows for both the reinforcement of traditional values and the imaginative contestation of those structures. Thus, by combining ethnography's attentiveness to cultural context with ethnolinguistics' focus on the nuances of language, the study offers a

layered understanding of how rural women's folk practices embody resilience, creativity, and socio-political agency.

In conclusion, combining ethnography and ethnolinguistics offers a robust and complementary framework for exploring the cultural and linguistic dimensions of *Kajarī* singing among rural women in the Mirzapur region. Ethnography provides the necessary depth to understand the ritualistic, emotional, and social contexts in which these performances occur, capturing the lived experiences and cultural meanings woven into each singing session. On the other hand, ethnolinguistics brings attention to the nuanced ways language operates as a site of cultural expression, social negotiation, and subtle resistance. Through this integrated approach, it becomes evident that *Kajarī* songs are far more than seasonal or aesthetic expressions; they serve as linguistically rich, socially charged performances through which women voice personal desires, collective concerns, and critiques of societal power structures. By closely examining both the content and form of these songs and the settings in which they are performed, the study reveals the deep interconnections between language, culture, gender, and power. Ultimately, this approach highlights the resilience and creativity embedded in rural women's expressive traditions and underscores the enduring potential of vernacular art forms to sustain social memory, offer critique, and inspire transformation.

2.8 Types of Data Collected

This study uses both primary and secondary data to comprehensively understand rural women's *Kajarī* festival along with their singing tradition, ritual practices and cultural significance tied to these rituals. However, the primary focus of this study is to collect the raw experiences of women living in the Mirzapur region and their perceptions of festivals and oral performative

traditions. I conducted a regional pilot study, collected interviews of rural women and men, and analysed available texts, field notes, and fieldwork.

This study mainly included in-depth interviews with rural women and men still performing in their natural context and settings, along with professional singers, scholars, and instrument players. Open-ended questions allow the respondents to speak freely, illuminating the lived experiences and the world created or imagined by rural women in their performative setting. In contrast, men's narratives shed light on the changes and challenges they face while performing professionally. It further hints at men's appropriation and adoption of rural women's folk genres. To support the primary data, we referred to textual evidence mainly documented by people from the same region. It provides a solid ground to understand the origin and historical development of the folk tradition and its current status in the Mirzapur district. This arrangement helped contextualise the study in broader debates of oral tradition, gender identity and the culture of subtle resistance.

The data was collected over three years, from 2021 to 2023, as the performance is associated with a month of *Sāvana* yearly. Therefore, I visited the field every year to record their performance as they usually do not want to communicate after this month. Joyce Burkhalter Flueckiger (1996), while studying the performances of Chhattisgarh, stated that women considered it a bad song to perform or speak about their performance out of context and setting. However, after my multiple visits, I could interview them even after or before the *Sāvana* month. In different phases, I conducted extensive interviews for more than two months in the different regions of Mirzapur. This enabled us to understand the socio-cultural system of the villages and women's place in them, and helped me build rapport with them. Moreover, this immersive approach helped me observe and analyse rural women's identity and their adherence

to societal norms in daily life, making it feasible to compare their transformed selves during rituals, singing, and performances. Collecting data in different villages helped us understand the diversity and slight modifications in women's performance practices by women in different areas, which we will discuss in this thesis. My phased data collection across the rural and urban settings made us understand the changes, variations, and approaches to women's performance in urban and rural contexts. It made it comparable to rural women and professional male singing traditions that usually existed in urban spaces. In brief, the data collection approach combined a pilot study, in-depth qualitative interviews, textual analysis, and immersion in the field to better understand the *Kajari* festival, the significance of the rituals and performative tradition in the contemporary scenario.

2.9 Data Collection Method

Qualitative research methods are adopted to collect the women's folksongs, their perception of them and the purpose of performing the rituals and songs. I conducted in-depth interviews with participants to record their views on their oral tradition, festivity, and the hidden meaning of songs during their performances. They enable a nuanced examination of people's viewpoints and reveal the meanings ingrained in their experiences and beliefs. To improve the research tools and methodology, I carried out pilot studies in 2021 in the Gaura and Bandhawa villages in Mirzapur. It helped me identify the potential villages for the fieldwork and respondents, familiarise myself with the regional variety of the Bhojpuri dialect, and potential challenges during the data collection process. Before beginning extensive fieldwork, I modified methods based on the knowledge gathered from the pilot investigations.

Kvale (1996) defined qualitative interview research as gaining insight into the phenomenon of the world being studied from the respondents' subjective perspective to understand the process through which meaning is constructed. Similarly, qualitative questioning is the most appropriate tool for understanding the world of ritual practices, rural women's performative selves, and oral tradition. I approached them with openness and flexibility to collect their unfiltered and uninfluenced narratives and contrary self-imaginings. I played the role of a naive observer, trying to understand the setting, geography, and associated legends, and a researcher, on the other hand, exploring the symbolic meaning and subtle nuances reflected in their folksongs. This exploration helped me understand the history of folksongs through the collection of myths, legends, and narratives from men, as well as repressed deviant voices and sometimes conformist attitudes of women.

I primarily employed semi-structured interviews, which offered a balance of both structure and flexibility. I used an interview guide to cover key topics such as ritual practices and their significance, personal beliefs, community dynamics, and interpretation of *Kajarī* singing and performance while allowing space for spontaneous exploration based on participants' responses and insights. This dynamic approach helped generate new knowledge and provided a deeper understanding of the cultural significance of the rituals, folk music and women's perceptions. The data collection process unfolded in several stages and on different occasions and festivals to ensure a thorough understanding. I began with pilot studies to refine the interview protocols and ensure their relevance within the specific cultural context of the *Kajarī* festival. Following this, I conducted extensive fieldwork at various sites between 2021 and 2023, where the ritual was practised and songs were performed, spending time in the community for

observation and interaction. This ethnographic approach enriched my understanding of how *Kajarī* songs are performed and interpreted across the Mirzapur region.

Throughout the data collection process, ethical considerations were of utmost importance. I obtained informed consent orally, as most of them were illiterate or semi-literate. I ensured confidentiality and anonymity when requested; however, they have readily consented to use their names and interview experts. My approach was guided by a deep respect for cultural norms and a sensitivity to women's perspectives, which shaped my interactions and the interpretation of their stories. Using a qualitative interviewing framework, we explored the rich layers of meaning embedded in the folksongs sung by women in rural Mirzapur. Through semi-structured interviews and ethnographic engagement with the community, this study aims to offer a nuanced portrayal of these songs' role in the lives of rural women and their cultural significance in the region.

2.10 Positionality of the Researcher

Merriam et al. (2001) explain that positionality involves recognising our position relative to 'the other' and understanding how factors such as education, class, gender and ethnicity shape our insider/outsider status and the data collection process. While an insider may have a deeper understanding of the community, there is always the potential for biased representation. Conversely, an outsider's limited familiarity with the community can lead to clearer insights, as they may explore issues in greater depth, questioning aspects that an insider might assume to understand already (Couture et al., 2012). The question of positionality becomes of utmost importance while exploring rural women's folk rituals and singing traditions, as I have a male outsider status with urban affiliation. As a result, I faced many challenges while communicating

with them; however, due to repeated visits and multiple interview sessions, I made them comfortable sharing their songs and experiences.

For this study, the researcher identified himself as a native outsider. This term captures the researcher's position as someone who shares a common geographical and cultural background with participants (making him native) but differs in gender and possibly other socio-cultural aspects (making him an outsider) (Narayan, 1993). A native outsider belongs to the same broad cultural or national context as the community being studied but does not fully share the participants' lived experiences due to differences in specific identity markers, such as gender, class, or rural/urban affiliation. This term is used in ethnography to denote the nuanced, in-between status of a researcher who must balance an insider's cultural understanding with the sensitivity required of an outsider, as gender and social expectations may influence both data collection and the interpretation of cultural practices. Initially, they were hesitant, and my presence created a sense of suspicion in their minds. However, due to my familiarity with the culture of festivals and folk culture, I overcame this problem. Although I belong to a broader Hindu culture and deeply understand the religious importance of the *Kajarī* festival and rituals, I approached this research from an academic and somewhat external perspective due to my male and urban affiliation. This dual identity enabled me to immerse myself in the community and build trust while preserving the objectivity essential for rigorous academic inquiry. My familiarity with Hindu rituals and customs provided an insider's view on many aspects of the *Kajarī* festival and folksongs, helping to establish a natural rapport with participants, who often valued my sincere commitment to documenting and understanding their practices and beliefs. At the same time, my role as a researcher required me to continuously navigate my position, working to balance empathy with critical analysis.

During the interview sessions, I was aware of the power dynamics inherent in my position as a male affiliated with the academic world, which faded away after my multiple visits. However, it became prominent when I had to ask questions, and they became conscious before speaking anything. However, longer conversations made them comfortable sharing their thoughts with confidence and an assertive voice. Once they were comfortable, they compared the villagers with me as a single category of men, not in a real sense, which helped me understand the type of surveillance or patriarchal control they lived in. It enabled me to compare with the patriarchal norms present in both our society and theirs, reminding me of the shared struggles and societal expectations faced by women. Moreover, it is evident during mixed group interviews that men either outrightly reject their knowledge or take it as a trivial art form. For instance, while discussing the culture of *nakkal*, Jata Shankar Sharma said, '*This is all Nataunki. There is nothing in it*' (J. S. Maurya, Personal communication, 12 August 2023). Power dynamics became apparent throughout my research. Female and unlettered participants engaged openly, whereas male and educated respondents and professional stage singers were more reserved, viewing us through their past experiences with authority figures or outsiders. Another problem arising from my positionality as a male resulted in women withholding or hesitating while singing or explaining the double meaning of songs with sexual undertones, further pointing towards the potential danger of misrepresentation or misinterpretation. However, I made them comfortable by listening to their usual problems and having long conversations with them, which helped me build a trust and comfort zone so that they could share their views on sexual matters. We remained consistently aware of the potential for misrepresentation or misunderstanding, particularly when conducting interviews in other languages. Accurately and authentically

representing participants' voices demanded careful attention to detail and a strong commitment to precision in translation and interpretation.

In conclusion, my positionality as a native outsider forced me to balance my insider and outsider identities, which helped me assimilate with the community and maintain an academic and professional distance. My cultural background and male identity influenced the data collection process, while power dynamics shaped how I engaged with participants. By recognising these complexities and trying to faithfully represent the voices and experiences of rural women, I sought to provide a nuanced and respectful understanding of *Kajari* folksongs within the broader context of rural women's festivals and cultural practices.

2.11 Tools for Data Collection

This study uses various tools used in ethnographic studies to collect multifaceted emotions reflected in rural women's folksongs, such as face-to-face interviews in the form of recording their performance and singing sessions and gathering women's subjective understanding of their oral tradition with participant observation and taking field notes during the performance and interviews.

In-depth, face-to-face interviews were conducted to build rapport, as it was challenging for the researcher to have a male native status and gather detailed insights into participants' personal stories and experiences. This approach enabled a deeper understanding of their perspectives, allowing for immediate clarification of answers and the observation of non-verbal cues. Moreover, recording their performance and interview allowed me to record their non-verbal communication, such as hand gestures, body movements and facial expressions. The interviews provided rich data that complemented broader cultural and social themes explored in the

semi-structured interviews. Participant observation involved immersing ourselves in the communities and actively engaging in their daily routines of singing sessions, rituals, performances and performative tradition. This method allowed us to observe oral tradition, rituals, interactions, cultural settings, and their immediate surroundings. Detailed field notes were taken to document my observations and reflections, adding important context to the interview data and emphasising the participants' daily experiences and how they can be contrasted with their performative selves. The ethnographic approach offered a comprehensive understanding of the communities' cultural practices through long-term engagement, trust-building, and collecting descriptive data about their way of life. Ethnography helped situate the tradition of cultural expression within the wider socio-cultural context, offering a thorough perspective on the communities' traditions and social dynamics. By combining face-to-face interviews, participant observation, and ethnographic methods, we adopted a well-rounded strategy to study the cultural practices surrounding rural women's *Kajari* folksongs, rituals and customary practices associated with the *Kajari*. This multi-method approach ensured a rich and nuanced qualitative data collection, enhancing the analysis and conclusions.

This research aims to understand the current status of women's folksongs and how they have evolved. Therefore, two different interview protocols were designed to have a nuanced understanding of the folksong's origin stakeholders (women) and professional/stage performers (both men and women). The interview protocol formulated for rural women consists of questions about their personal and cultural details to understand the structure of the society, power division, and women's place in society. Specific questions about *Kajari* folksongs included experiences and memories of the festival and their source of learning these songs, the significance of ritual performance and folksongs in personal and community life, and broader questions about the

purpose of indulging in such practices. As mentioned earlier, rural women are the originators of this culture. Still, due to their educational background, rigid social structure, and limited exposure to the outer world, their theoretical knowledge regarding the origin, history, and current status of folksongs in the urban spaces of the Mirzapur region is limited. Therefore, the interview protocol designed for stage singers focuses on the questions of origin and associated narratives, historical developments, and changes observed in rural women's singing style and way of singing. Moreover, they were asked questions about the current state of the art in the Mirzapur district and how it has reached the women's courtyard and the professional stages.

2.11.1 Interview Protocols for Rural Women

I start the interview with the question of demographic details such as name, age, their native place and what they do. During the long conversations, I also learned about their personal lives and details about their family members. These questions helped me understand the respondents' background, their social status and how it affects their knowledge and influence while performing.

I inquired about the festival, during the celebration and performance, along with the ritual and how they perceived the entire festival. It helped me understand the significance of such traditional spaces and occasions as a site for them to display their alternative selves, usually repressed due to complex and rigid societal structures.

I asked questions about the preparatory activities before the main event and how and why they perform the rituals of *jaraī bonā* and *gāṃva goṭhanā*, along with their meaning for them. This included understanding the special arrangements and unique practices they followed. I also asked about the number of days the festival was observed and their fasting duration to

understand the extent of their commitment. Clarifying the significance of *Kajarī* songs in the celebration provided insight into their cultural perspective.

To understand the unique culture of *Kajarī* folksongs and the originating place of this folk genre, I asked them questions related to the association of goddess *Vindhyācala* and this performative genre. It allowed me to differentiate the culture of the *Kajarī* singing tradition in Mirzapur and other regions of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. It further helped me locate the singing tradition in the geographical and socio-cultural milieu of the Mirzapur region.

I discussed their ritualistic practices before their singing session and their symbolic significance. Additionally, questions related to the night of *Ratjagā*, performative tradition and their private performative place, *caughat*, were asked. These questions enabled me to understand the religious and festive significance of providing a platform for rural women's muffled voices and oppositional understanding. I asked them about the context and time of various singing traditions in the Mirzapur region.

I asked questions related to both deviant and conformist voices reflected in their songs to understand the culture of subtle resistance and alternative self-imaginings of rural women. As mentioned earlier, I inquired whether they performed in groups or alone to understand the group dynamic and community sense while performing a folksong.

To conclude the interview, I asked questions about their motive for indulging in singing and dancing during festivals, along with the changes they experienced in performing rituals, their singing pattern and musical instruments. How do they perceive the culture of singing? As a part of culture or profession? This protocol, designed for rural women, provided me with a comprehensive understanding of the respondents' singing and ritualistic practices related to the

Kajarī festival and folksongs, as well as the significant festival's personal and cultural dimensions.

2.11.2 Interview Protocols for Male Professional/Stage Singers

I designed a different interview protocol by assuming the stage/professional singers' educational background, public engagement, mobility of the participants, and places in the urban localities. It allowed me to explore the myths and legends associated with the folksong's origin and its historical development. It also helped me explore the dynamic nature of folksongs and the general changes impacting the folksong. Having a conversation with them unearths the different types of politics and concerns.

Another set of questions was asked of these stage performers about the differences between stage/professional singers' singing traditions, who the originators of this singing tradition were, and how they adopted the folksongs of women. These questions were asked to understand the commodification and appropriation of women's folksongs. This inquiry further helped me understand the politics of naming, caste, and gender, which affect women's singing traditions. I asked particular questions related to the changing dynamics of women's songs, such as the change of natural setting, musical instruments, and the nature of the audience. Moreover, most stage singers belong to the *akhāḍā* tradition in urban space. Therefore, I inquired about their particular *akhāḍā* style of singing, the complex way of composing *Kajarī* songs and the current status of the *akhāḍā* singing tradition.

To pursue the question of the present state of the *Kajarī* folksong, I asked questions related to the role of government-run organisations working for the endangered art forms for this specific folksong, which helped me understand how women's background, social status and

movements became a hindrance to getting benefits from such organisations. It also hinted at the inequalities prevalent in the rural areas. Thus, the interview protocol prepared for stage performers uncovers the changing nature of folksongs, various branches of *Kajarī* singing in the district, and politics involved on the local level. For stage singer, questions of performative context became important as their professional attitude compelled them to perform out of context, which is considered ‘bad’ in folk cultures.

I recorded rural women’s and men’s performances mostly in natural settings and sometimes in created environments. I used an audio recorder to record their songs, lyrics, and perceptions of them and a digital camera to capture their live pictures and videos. Their performance length spanned from ten minutes to all night. Similarly, their interview lengths varied, with some lasting six minutes for participants who were hesitant or found responding challenging, while others extended up to a hundred minutes for those who provided detailed answers. The most in-depth interviews were selected with song lyrics and non-verbal gestures through material sampling for analysis. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants’ consent. Most of the performances were recorded at *caughat* or on the stages, but the interviews took place in various locations, such as participants’ homes or kitchens and open spaces. For men, I conducted interviews in common areas, such as near ghats and shops. Background noise from interviews held in open spaces or by roads created transcription challenges and required extra time.

2.12 Sampling-Method

Sampling in research refers to selecting a subset of individuals, cases, or elements from a larger population to gain insights into the broader group (Bernard, 2017). In ethnographic research, the

focus is not on achieving statistical representativeness but instead on selecting participants whose experiences, perspectives, and cultural contexts can provide deep insights into a particular phenomenon (Flick, 2018). This sampling approach allows researchers to observe and document the unique ways individuals interact within their communities, providing data that is rich in context. The sampling technique is divided into two types: Probability and Non-Probability sampling. Non-probability sampling is a method in which individuals are selected from the population without using random selection, meaning each member does not have an equal or known chance of being included in the sample (Bryman, 2016). This technique is often used in qualitative research, especially when researchers explore specific characteristics or phenomena in depth rather than generalise findings to a larger population (Etikan et al., 2016). Non-probability sampling methods are particularly useful in exploratory research, case studies, and ethnography, where understanding context and participant perspectives is prioritised over statistical representation (Bernard, 2017). Since non-probability sampling does not rely on random selection, researchers can select participants who are easily accessible, knowledgeable, or meet specific inclusion criteria related to the research objectives (Guest et al., 2013).

Snowball sampling, a non-probability sampling technique, is also known as chain-referral sampling, in which initial participants refer others from their networks to participate in the study, effectively creating a snowball effect as the sample grows (Noy, 2008). This technique is particularly useful in ethnographic research when studying hard-to-reach or marginalised groups, as it allows researchers to access participants through trusted social connections (Bernard, 2017). Snowball sampling begins with a small group of participants who meet specific criteria and are then asked to refer to others they know with similar experiences. This sampling method leverages the natural social networks of participants, making it valuable for gaining entry into

closed or sensitive communities, such as criminal networks, underground economies, or stigmatised social groups (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981). While snowball sampling may introduce biases since it depends on participants' social circles, it provides critical insights into networked groups. It can reveal relationships and social dynamics that would be difficult to access otherwise (Madden, 2017).

For this ethnographic and ethnolinguistic work, I selected the sampling method to gain an in-depth understanding of women's folksongs, their ritualistic practices and daily experiences outside the performative space. In the beginning, I approached my relatives in Gaura village (Mirzapur) and recorded their performances, and with their help, I met and recorded the performances of other villagers. I followed the same process during my fieldwork, starting in 2021 and concluding in 2023. This method proved beneficial for the researcher as approaching women as male outsiders emerged as a challenge for me; therefore, snowball sampling bridged this gap by allowing me to build trust and gain access to women performers through established connections. However, this approach has limitations, as I noticed while communicating with men (stage/professional singers) in urban spaces. They referred not to the knowledgeable person but to their acquaintances who barely knew anything about the singing culture or performance. The motive behind suggesting such names is to get recorded and named as participants in this research. Nonetheless, this was not universally the case; many participants did refer me to highly skilled individuals with deep insight into the art, whose contributions enriched the research. While snowball sampling facilitated access, its reliance on referrals sometimes introduced uneven quality in participant expertise, underscoring a critical trade-off between accessibility and the depth of insight in ethnographic research.

2.13 Inclusion Criteria

This study followed specific criteria while selecting the respondents during the fieldwork:

1. The study focuses on rural women's folksongs, but both male and female performers are included. Women are custodians of the tradition within a cultural context, while some men perform *Kajarī* professionally on stage.
2. For women, this includes active participation in or knowledge of the community-based, ritualistic aspects of *Kajarī*. For men, this consists of the professional performance of *Kajarī* songs, particularly if they have expertise in traditional forms or knowledge of the cultural origins of the songs.
3. Only those participants who willingly articulate their experiences and perceptions are included.

2.14 Exclusion Criteria

1. Women residing in urban areas who do not participate in *Kajarī* songs and rituals in their original form or cultural context would be excluded, as the focus is on rural traditions.
2. Girls below the age of eighteen years are excluded from the study as they lack the proper understanding of rituals and singing traditions.

These steps taken while selecting the sampling methods highlight the need for a strategic and deliberate approach in qualitative research, ensuring it aligns with the unique goals and requirements of the study.

As mentioned earlier in this section, this study followed a case study design to understand the complex relationship of rural women's oral tradition, their subtle subversive practices and

traditional liminal spaces in Mirzapur's socio-cultural milieu. However, I briefly conducted the interviews in Ghazipur and Varanasi. In the following section, I will briefly describe the socio-cultural aspect of Mirzapur in general and the fieldwork villages in particular. The data was collected through folksongs and interviews with more than 60 *Kajarī* folksongs and responses from 50 participants through individual and group interviews. This selection process ensured that the sample reflected a wide range of communities and perspectives, including rural women, stage/professional singers, instrumentalists, academicians and active participants on social media platforms, mainly YouTube. Each interviewee provided valuable insights, deepening my understanding of how the folksongs are still performed, the festival is celebrated and perceived across various regions, especially considering the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, as two years' fieldwork was carried out under the threat of COVID-19, forcing me not to meet prominent singers and academicians.

2.15 Fieldwork Villages

I mentioned in the previous section that mainly the fieldwork is based in the different areas of Mirzapur district, namely Gaura, Danti Bandhwa, Shivpur, Madguda and various regions of the urban spaces of Mirzapur city, such as Awas Vikas colony, Badli Ghat, Teliaganj, Chauk Vasliganj, and Pakka Ghat. In this section, I will briefly describe a few vital field sites.

Initially, I wanted to collect folksongs from the book collections and treat them as cultural texts; however, I decided to explore the field and collect primary data to unearth the multifaceted issues reflected in women's songs. Additionally, I received recommendations to explore places associated with the myths and other narratives related to the festival and origin of folksongs. This led me to explore Mirzapur and plan visits to *Vindhyācala* temple and Kantit.

However, multiple visits were required as rural women performed *Kajarī* songs only during the *Sāvana* month. This has been reduced and limited to the thirteen-day performance, commencing on *nāga-pañcamī* and concluding on the *Kajarī* festival.

Data collection began with these suggestions in mind. I spent a few days in Gaura village, the starting point of my investigation. Although my uncle's mother still accompanied me, finding participants for interviews or singing was difficult. Many rural women were timid and hesitant to sing before me, but perhaps they became conscious. However, middle-aged and older women agreed to sing and share their thoughts on their oral traditions and their perceptions about songs.

Many mistakenly perceived me as a media personnel, asking questions like '*Are you from the media or some news channel? What is the purpose of recording women's folksongs? Where do you upload these recordings?*' These women mainly hailed from rural areas and were uneasy about sharing their stories in their local dialects. Nevertheless, I could establish rapport by conversing in their preferred dialect, mainly Bhojpuri.

2.15.1 Gaura

I selected Gaura Bisen to start my fieldwork as this uncle (*Fufa*) lives in this village. This allowed me to familiarise myself with the local dialect and rural women's singing culture. Gaura is a small village in the Mirzapur district (U.P.). It is located 15km east of the district headquarters, Mirzapur. Gaura Bisen is a small hamlet with approximately 450 people and a primary school. Most people are engaged in agricultural work and speak the Bhojpuri dialect, referred to as Mirzapuri-Boli (regional variety). Most of the people belong to the Maurya caste. Gaura Raja, Danti, Bandhwa, and Maholiya are close to Gaura Bisen. The Lok Sabha Constituency of this village is the Mirzapur parliamentary constituency.

I reached this place on September 5th, 2021 and told my relatives about the purpose of my visit. Since the family has no female members except the grandmother, they tried asking other people about female performers because they did not know about them. Gradually, I learned about those women who performed or at least learned how to sing. I talked with them and explained the work. Initially, they hesitated to sing before me, but finally, they agreed to sing. I have conducted interviews with 12 respondents in this village, mostly women. There were only two men, and some could not sing because of their busy schedules. They sang both in groups and alone. The setting was primarily natural as I recorded the performances in an open space, courtyard, kitchens, rooms or next to agricultural fields. Usually, women wore sarees and men dressed in shirts and pants, sometimes even without shirts. I recorded their performances at night because that is their leisure time after preparing and serving the meal, reinforcing the conventional gender norms. The age of respondents ranged from 30 to 90 years. Most of them were illiterate or just knew how to read and write, but they had a vast repository of songs. I visited these villages multiple times during my field visits, collecting the data in different phases.

2.15.2 Mirzapur City

I conducted fieldwork in various parts of the urban area of Mirzapur, and discussing each of them is not possible; therefore, a comprehensive description of Mirzapur's urban space is provided in this section. Mirzapur consists of two words, Mirza and pur, which means 'The place of the King'. The place is confluent with cities, towns, and villages and is surrounded by the Vindhyan range. The region is famous for its carpet industry and cultural richness. It is the home of Goddess *Vindhyācala*, Kali Khoh and Ashtabhuj temple. The East India Company named this place Mirzapur. According to the 2011 census, the population of Mirzapur is 233691, and the literacy rate is 78.25%. I have visited many places in Mirzapur, e.g., Wasley Ganj, Dankinganj,

Badli Ghat, Pakka Ghat or Pakka Pokhara, Awas Vikas Colony and Rambagh. I met with different stage performers, instrument players, regional singers, skilled musicians, and singers of the *akhādā* tradition. I have conducted interviews with almost 20 people within two weeks. Eleven of them were female singers, and nine were male. Most performers crossed 50 years of age, but some were under 40. I tried to meet with every *akhādā* singer to trace the present condition of these singers and their respective *akhādās*.

After conducting the interviews in the urban spaces of Mirzapur District, I have charted out my observations and comments in the form of a comparison between the performers of the village and city areas.

Respondents in urban areas were comparatively more aware of the stories, myths, and legends associated with this genre. They have a vast collection of songs, although they are preserved in written form. Moreover, they knew about the stories and tales behind this genre's origin. This genre is associated with the goddess *Vindhyācala*, and her temple was not more than 10 km away from this place. Perhaps this could be the reason for their awareness. On the other hand, people in the villages learned songs through oral transmission, so they learned many songs but did not know much about the genre's origin and development. This is not the case with everyone when describing the types of songs, different types of composition, etc. Most singers maintained a diary where they wrote the songs because they were stage singers and could not remember many songs. Other reasons could be their professional attitude towards folksongs and the fact that the performance of various folk genres is in demand. They performed on the stage, so they needed a large group of performers and instrument players to perform, and money was also involved in that, but not with every performer.

With the help of my key informant's follower here, I got a chance to meet a performer (Mr Devi Prasad Maurya) who shared his knowledge about *Kajarī akhādā*. He said, *'There were seven famous akhādās which were there in Mirzapur. Akhādās follow the Guru-shishya tradition. Moreover, the culture of singing Kajarī songs is four hundred years old'* (D. P. Maurya, Personal Communication, 02 July 2022). He showed me a slip mentioning the reward that his grandfather received in the singing competition. According to him, the *Guru* taught them how to sing, and they also composed their own *Kajarī* songs. It was the rule of this tradition that nobody from one *akhādā* could sing the songs of other *akhādās*. I met both male and female singers who belonged to different *akhādās*. Hence, there was no discrimination based on gender, caste, or creed because I also interviewed Muslim performers who belonged to *akhādās*. However, very few female performers were trained in *akhādās*, which highlights the gender inequality or rigid patriarchal structure of the society. These singers knew about the minute details of this genre and memorised many songs, which they recalled effortlessly during the interviews. Most importantly, they had preserved the documents and pieces in a diary, magazines, and books. Their way of singing is different from the singing of village women. They are trained in the Dangal *Kajarī* or competition.

Participants in urban spaces raised their complaints against the researchers' unethical practices. According to them, researchers and song collectors came and collected the data, but never acknowledged their contribution. They never mentioned their names anywhere in their studies. Due to this ethical problem, I did not get the chance to communicate with many renowned scholars in this field. A famous singer and Padma Shri awardee, Ajeeta Srivastav, said, *'She had sent many scholars to Arjun Das Kesari (a learned Scholar and writer of the book Kajarī Mirzapur Sarnam). However, she did not want to send anyone now because he*

complained that scholars collected data from him and left without giving him due credit and acknowledgement' (A. Srivastava, Personal Communication, 05 September 2022). Therefore, I hesitated to ask her about Arjun Das Keshari's address. Ajeeta Srivastava and Arjun Das Kesari willingly helped the scholars, but they were disappointed with the scholars' unprofessional attitude. The issue of research ethics bothered me throughout the fieldwork. Contrarily, in the fieldwork villages, common folk and rural women rarely ask for the acknowledgement of their contributions or for their names to be included. Perhaps these women or men were rarely interviewed and were unaware of their contributions. However, they were happy to share their songs, thoughts, and experiences. They were elated when I asked permission to use their songs and photos in my research.

2.15.3 Shivpur and Madguda

Shivpur and Madguda are the adjacent villages, two kilometres from the *Vindhyācala* temple. The most vibrant performative tradition of *Kajarī* folksong was observed in these two villages, ranging from the performance of *Ratjagā*, *gāṃva goṭhanā*, and *nakkals* and procession on the *Kajarī* festival and play-like performance on the festival of *Tīj*. Both villages are situated on the banks of the river Ganga and are mainly populated by the *Mallah* caste. The *Mallah* caste is a community whose livelihood is based on the river, which leaves them landless. People from these villages used to go to Bangladesh on boats to export red sandstone, the Mirzapur district's speciality. But after independence, the network of roads and other means of transport left them jobless. They fish, sporadically farm on the sandbar in summer, work on daily wages or migrate to earn their livelihood.

In the Mallah caste-dominated villages of Shivpur and Madguda, women bear the heavy burden of domestic duties while simultaneously working in the fields, a task often seen as an extension of their household responsibilities. Despite women's significant role in agricultural labour and home management, their contributions are undervalued mainly economically and socially. In these villages, the Mallah people traditionally relied on local Thakur (landowners from the dominant caste) for land leases to farm the fertile sandbars, offering an alternative livelihood. However, farming in this environment is unpredictable and seasonal, leading many women to run small businesses, such as local shops, to support their families. The deeply entrenched patriarchal norms in the region restrict women's mobility, limiting their ability to pursue work outside the home and further reinforcing their reliance on domestic and local economic activities.

The social structure in these villages is deeply patriarchal, with strict norms dictating women's behaviour, language, and expressions. Women's roles are confined to domestic spaces, and rigid societal expectations often silence their voices. However, despite these restrictions, women in these communities use traditional expressive art forms, such as *Kajarī* folksongs and *nakkals*, to address social inequalities, gender-based resentment, and personal struggles. Through their performances, women elevate their personas, presenting an alternative self that challenges the norms imposed upon them. In these moments of artistic expression, they momentarily escape the constraints of their everyday lives, disregarding the potential punitive consequences for voicing their resistance.

2.15.4 Ghazipur

Initially, Ghazipur was not part of this study, but I made a small field trip to meet Dr. Ram Narayan Tiwari, a professor and folksong collector. However, this short trip became an important part of the thesis as it allowed me to gather information from the stage singers who belonged to Bihar. Ghazipur, located in the eastern part of Uttar Pradesh, India, has significant socio-cultural and historical importance. Situated along the banks of the Ganges River, it has long been an important centre for trade, culture, and religion. Ghazipur is known for its rich heritage, which includes a blend of Hindu and Muslim influences, and it has been a pivotal area in the development of North Indian culture.

Culturally, Ghazipur is renowned for its traditional crafts, including zari work (metal thread embroidery) and pottery, and has a rich tradition of Bhojpuri folk music, poetry, and literature. It also plays a significant role in the region's agricultural economy, producing potatoes, mangoes, and other crops. Today, Ghazipur remains an important centre for Bhojpuri culture, with its folk music, festivals, and customs reflecting the deep-rooted cultural identity of its people. The region contributes to Uttar Pradesh and India's broader socio-cultural and political landscape.

Professor Tiwari organised a conference, 'Trajectories of Folk Literature and Culture: Indian Perspectives', where I got an opportunity to meet the semi-classical stage performers of Bihar. I conducted interviews with them during the conference, but later, I conducted phone interviews with the emerging YouTubers and singers singing women's songs on these platforms. These phone interviews bring out the issues of appropriation of women's oral tradition, their

emotions and traditional spaces. It also emphasised the problems of the commodification of art and the use of oral expressions as a saleable art.

2.16 Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis methods systematically interpret non-numerical data, such as text, images, or audio, to identify patterns, themes, and meanings that provide insights into human experiences and social phenomena (Patton, 2015). Standard methods include thematic analysis, which organises data by identifying recurring themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006); content analysis, which involves categorising textual data to interpret the frequency and context of words or phrases (Krippendorff, 2018); and grounded theory, which emphasises building theoretical insights directly from the data itself (Charmaz, 2006). These methods are flexible and adaptable to various research settings, enabling researchers to explore complex social and psychological constructs in depth (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).

In ethnographic research, thematic analysis is a qualitative method used to identify, analyse, and interpret patterns or themes within cultural data. Thematic analysis is a qualitative method used to identify, analyse systematically, and report patterns or themes within a dataset. This approach enables researchers to organise and interpret data by highlighting recurring ideas, making it particularly valuable for uncovering shared meanings and insights within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The thematic analysis's flexibility allows for both descriptive and interpretive analyses across diverse contexts, from psychology to social and cultural research, and it is adaptable to various theoretical frameworks (Nowell et al., 2017). The method typically involves a series of steps, including familiarisation with the data, generating initial codes, and

iteratively refining themes, resulting in a structured narrative that conveys essential findings grounded in participants' perspectives (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).

The six-step thematic analysis method, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), provides a structured approach for interpreting qualitative data by identifying and analysing patterns, or themes, across a dataset. The first step, familiarisation, involves reading and re-reading women's songs and their responses while considering the context to gain a deep understanding of the context and content. I processed and organised the data and used this to immerse myself in the collected information. This initial engagement aimed to develop a holistic understanding of the data, allowing the researcher to discern broader themes and the general tone conveyed by participants. Next, in generating initial codes, the researcher systematically identifies significant features of the data, assigning labels (codes) to the transcriptions to capture recurring aspects of interest. Coding is locating and labelling text or image passages related to particular themes or categories. The initial codes, which captured the vocabulary and expressions of the participants, were created straight from their interviews. According to Rallis and Rossman (2012), codes are usually based on the real language participants speak, known as *in vivo* terms. We could find recurrent themes and patterns by dividing the data into relevant categories. Codes were created directly from their language. These original codes were further improved and categorised into more comprehensive groups through ongoing interaction with the data.

The third step involves searching for themes based on the created codes, which requires organising the codes into broader, meaningful patterns that represent central ideas emerging from women's responses about festivals, rituals and folksongs. Through this process, broader themes or sub-themes start taking shape. This synthesis was done manually to preserve the complex relationships between codes, categories, and the resulting themes. The next step deals with

reviewing themes emerging from the organisations of the initial codes. Here, the researcher refines and verifies these themes by checking that they accurately reflect the dataset as a whole, potentially modifying or combining themes for clarity. The fifth step deals with defining and naming themes and involves clearly articulating the essence of each theme, giving it a label that encapsulates its core meaning. At this stage, themes are visible after merging the sub-themes into major themes. Finally, in producing the report, researchers synthesise these themes into a cohesive narrative, supported by illustrative data excerpts, that communicates the significance of each theme about the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This method offers flexibility and rigour, enabling nuanced insights into qualitative data while ensuring systematic analysis.

During the coding process, we identified themes and sought to deepen the analysis by layering these themes to create a more complex understanding. Moreover, the researcher moves in a backwards and forward direction during the entire analysis process. I interconnected the themes to form a comprehensive overview of the subject, with each chapter dedicated to discussing the emerging themes. My next step is to effectively represent these descriptions and themes, aiming to communicate the intricate insights derived from the qualitative data. I structured the thesis chapters to convey the depth and richness of the findings, systematically presenting events, detailing themes and subthemes with illustrative quotations, and weaving diverse perspectives into a unified narrative. Visual elements like figures are included to improve the clarity and depth of the findings' presentation. By outlining these steps and demonstrating their use in this research, I aim to contribute to the discourse of qualitative research methodology and further understand *Kajari* folksong within its cultural framework.

2.17 Interpretation

Interpreting qualitative research findings involves several key procedures, such as synthesising the overall findings, situating them within the existing literature, incorporating personal insights and observations, and identifying limitations and future research directions. Lincoln and Guba (1985) emphasise the importance of asking, ‘What were the lessons learned?’, a question that reflects the researcher’s understanding, informed by cultural background, personal experiences, and history. In this study, synthesising the findings involved distilling the essence of *Kajarī* folksongs and women’s ritual practices as perceived and shared by participants. I grounded this synthesis by comparing my insights with existing literature on folk traditions and women’s ritual practices in similar cultural settings, aligning the interpretations with established knowledge and identifying fresh insights from the data. Following a transformative qualitative approach, we engaged in a reflective process highlighting continuity and innovation within the *Kajarī* traditions. We applied an ethnographic framework to interpret these practices, considering implications for cultural preservation and community engagement. This approach allowed us to draw upon relevant theoretical frameworks in cultural studies, ritual studies, and anthropology, thus enhancing the academic contribution of the study. Acknowledging methodological limitations, such as the small sample size in one district (Mirzapur) and recruitment challenges, helped ensure rigour and reliability, offering transparent guidance for future researchers. The findings suggest future directions for further research to deepen the understanding of the socio-cultural dynamics within *Kajarī* folksongs and women’s rituals, address methodological constraints, and explore practical applications or policy implications.

2.18 Validity

Validation of findings is an essential component throughout the research process, particularly in detailing procedures within research proposals to ensure the reliability and credibility of results. In contrast to quantitative research, where validity concerns stability and generalizability, validity in qualitative research focuses on confirming accuracy through specific backwards steps (Gibbs, 2020). Researchers must outline the strategies they will use to ensure the accuracy and trustworthiness of their findings. In qualitative studies, validity is often understood as the accuracy of findings from the perspectives of the researchers, participants, or audience (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Terms such as trustworthiness, credibility, and authenticity are frequently used to address validity in qualitative research (Lincoln et al., 2011), underscoring its importance in ensuring rigorous research practices.

For this study, I employed certain methodological strategies to support the point of validity. Triangulation is one such tool through which the findings of an ethnographic study can be measured. I used folksongs, interviews in the form of women's perception of their singing culture, participant observation and their social lives outside this performative arena to create consistent themes throughout several sources, strengthening the validity and reliability of the interpretations. In addition to confirming that my findings were consistent, this triangulation ensured that they were firmly rooted in the diverse range of rural women's folksongs and cultural contexts related to the *Kajarī* festival.

Another essential component of my validation process has been member checking. As mentioned in the previous section about the backwards and forward process, I sought participant feedback by providing summaries of my findings, including key themes and cultural descriptors,

rather than only depending on my interpretations. Participants were allowed to confirm the precision and applicability of the interpretations based on their personal experiences through follow-up interviews and conversations. The nature of rural women's performance, performed annually, compelled me to meet them with follow-up questions after a year. Their responses further validated the findings of this study. In addition to confirming the validity of the findings, this iterative procedure promoted a cooperative approach that respected the opinions and voices of individuals actively engaged in *Kajarī* performance.

Another important feature contributing to validating the findings is the thick descriptions of the ritual and performance context, including the surroundings and the setting. I carefully described performance settings, rituals, and interactions in this research to immerse readers in the cultural context, fostering a deeper understanding of the studied phenomena. This rich narrative enhanced my analysis and added authenticity and depth to the findings, strengthening their validity. Additionally, reflexivity was crucial to the research process. As a Hindu native outsider researcher studying women's *Kajarī* folksongs, I remained conscious of my biases, backgrounds, and perspectives. By openly recognising these factors and their potential influence on the interpretations, I worked to reduce bias and improve the reliability of the conclusions. This reflexive approach emphasised the dedication to ethical research practices, ensuring my interpretations were rooted in a transparent and self-aware engagement with the cultural intricacies of *Kajarī* folksongs.

These methodological approaches were employed to ensure credible findings and to fairly represent the diverse perspectives and experiences embedded in rural women's culturally significant practices, such as singing and rituals. By following these principles, I have aimed to offer a nuanced and authentic representation that captures the essence of *Kajarī* songs and makes

a meaningful contribution to scholarly discussions on cultural practices and oral traditions. Rich, descriptive narratives were also used to immerse readers in the setting, providing a deeper understanding through vivid details and multiple viewpoints. Furthermore, reflexivity is integrated into the research process to recognise how the researchers' backgrounds, such as gender, culture, history, and socioeconomic status, shape interpretations. This self-awareness promotes transparency and strengthens the credibility of the study's conclusions.

2.19 Reliability

Qualitative reliability refers to the consistency and dependability of the data and interpretations produced in a qualitative research study. It ensures that the research findings are consistent across different contexts, times, and researchers, even when using subjective or interpretive methods. Ensuring reliability in studying *Kajarī* folksongs involves keeping thorough records of all research procedures, including data collection and analysis methods, to allow for replication by other researchers. Consistent coding techniques will be used to maintain uniformity in identifying themes and patterns across the data. Regular consultations with peers or mentors will help confirm the consistency and reliability of the data analysis and interpretation methods. We also rigorously reviewed the transcripts to correct any errors, inconsistencies, or drift in coding that may have occurred during transcription (Gibbs, 2007). This meticulous approach was essential for preserving the integrity of the data, ensuring that my interpretations accurately reflected participants' responses and observations.

To reduce the risk of code drift, I consistently compared the data with established codes and documented my coding categories through detailed memos. This practice helped me track the evolution of codes and interpretations throughout the analysis process, ensuring that coding

remained consistent and aligned with the research objectives. In our team-based research approach, we organised regular meetings to discuss and cross-check coding decisions among team members. These documented meetings facilitated collaborative interpretation and consensus-building, enhancing the reliability of the findings through collective validation of analytical insights. Furthermore, the findings combined rich, thick descriptions to vividly portray the cultural context and experiences related to *Kajarī* songs. This narrative depth enriched the interpretations and added credibility by transporting readers into the cultural milieu we studied, thereby enhancing the validity and reliability of research outcomes.

Using these research tools enabled me to enhance the validity and reliability of this research. Based on this, it can be concluded that the findings of this research are credible and consistent in different contexts and interpretations. These strategies enhanced the study's credibility for the research and the reading community to understand the cultural practices of marginalised groups and their potential in the present.

2.20 Ethical Considerations

In this research involving illiterate or semi-literate rural women, obtaining informed consent poses unique ethical challenges. Written consent is typically not feasible in such contexts, so oral consent becomes the primary means of ensuring participants' understanding and agreement to participate. Upon entering the field, I clearly and culturally sensitively explained the study's purpose, methods, potential risks, and benefits in the Bhojpuri language, ensuring that participants fully understood. To confirm their comprehension, I provided verbal clarifications and, when necessary, asked them to restate key points in their own words. Participation was requested respectfully, with individuals given the freedom to decline or withdraw at any stage

without pressure. I ensure that participants understand their right to withdraw from the study at any time without facing any negative consequences, thereby safeguarding their autonomy. This method guaranteed that all participants understood the research's purpose, role, and how their data would be utilised, in line with ethical principles of informed consent (Byrne, 2001; Darlington and Scott, 2020; Nijhawan et al., 2013). In addition to obtaining written consent for interviews, I also asked their permission to record their video and photos, ensuring participants were well-informed and at ease with the level of their involvement. Furthermore, I obtained their oral consent through audio recordings (with the participant's consent), ensuring a record of the process and that participants' voluntary participation was established.

Ethically, it is important to acknowledge the potential vulnerabilities that illiterate or semi-literate individuals may face in the research process, including power imbalances, undue influence, or misunderstanding of the consent process. I tried to minimise these risks by ensuring they were not coerced or manipulated into participating due to social pressure, especially in contexts where community leaders or family members may exert influence. Additionally, I was aware of the cultural differences in how consent is understood and given, recognising that in some communities, verbal agreements may be more significant than written ones. To address these concerns, I consider community engagement and consultation to ensure that the research aligns with local norms and that participants are fully supported in making informed, voluntary decisions. Ultimately, maintaining respect for participants' autonomy, privacy, and well-being throughout the consent process is paramount in ensuring the ethical integrity of the research.

2.21 Researcher's Experience in the Field

This section details the researcher's experience and insights gained from fieldwork. It describes the researcher's engagement with participants, the challenges faced by the researcher during data collection, and the overall impact of the fieldwork on the research process. By sharing these experiences, we aim to provide a transparent account of our research journey and the practical application of our chosen methodologies.

This fieldwork focused on observing rural women's *Kajarī* songs in the Mirzapur region, both at natural sites and in professional settings (Male *Kajarī* songs), providing insights into the potential of oral tradition and performative aspects of the participants. Although this fieldwork was enlightening, it also presented challenges that shaped our approach and understanding. Employing an approach of participant observation proved invaluable in this context, as it allowed me to immerse myself within the community and engage with participants more meaningfully and respectfully. It allowed me to observe their daily lives and performative self, enabling me to record the alternative worldview reflected in the performative space. It emphasises direct engagement, enabling us to understand the intricate symbolism and the layers of meaning embedded in their customary and ritualistic acts, along with their songs.

However, this immersive approach presented unique challenges in gaining trust and access to the community. My presence as a native outsider (male) induced a sense of apprehension in their minds, which became a primary cause of women's hesitation and discomfort in sharing their vast repository of songs and experiences. My male identity raised another concern about the possible intrusion of their sacred performative place and the potential misinterpretation or inappropriate portrayal of their cherished practices. Building trust requires

time, patience, genuine respect and sensitivity towards their customs and concerns. I overcame these hurdles with the help of my key respondents in different villages, such as Chamela Devi and Gopi Chauhan in Gaura, Jata Shankar Sharma and Pattar Pandey in Mirzapur city, Lalmfolksongs' Shivpur and Pappu Mallah in Madguda. Moreover, as an outsider, navigating the complexity of the performative practices without disrupting the sanctity of their cultural activities was a constant balancing act. The private nature of the *Kajari* performance, coupled with the communal aspect of the preparations, offerings and rituals, meant that any perceived negligence could harm the fragile threads of trust we had woven with the community.

The firsthand experience of the women's performance's rigorous demands, including singing and dancing, hinted at women's physical calibre and commitment to their cultural activities. This immersion brought a profound appreciation of the women's performative tradition and ritual's significance, enriching our insights and challenging our endurance and adaptability as researchers. This approach allowed us to experience and interpret the observed practices through the lens of the participants' cultural and spiritual frameworks rather than our preconceptions shaped in an entirely different environment. Here, the going-backwards approach and a constant reflexive practice became significant, where we critically examined our biases and assumptions, aiming to present the folksong and its practitioners' perspectives authentically and respectfully.

Conducting fieldwork in multiple sites associated with the stories of folksongs' origin and history in the Mirzapur region offered profound insights into cultural and religious practices, embodying the essence of tradition and culture seen through the prism of local life and communal activities. Mirzapur's rich historical and religious significance is a perfect backdrop for exploring the complex interplay of folk culture, religion, and communal practices. It allows

researchers to immerse themselves in the lived experiences of those who partake in these performative practices. Embarking on such fieldwork necessitates a nuanced understanding of the local customs and a sensitive approach towards engagement with the community. For instance, the *Vindhyācala* region emanates a profound sense of spirituality and continuity in Mirzapur.

Similarly, in Shivpur and Madguda villages, the intertwining of geographical elegance and ritual practice creates a unique scenario for researchers. The landscape, marked by the flow of the Ganges and the presence of historical sites, sets the stage for observing practices like *Mati lene jana*, *Jara bona*, and *jaraī dubonā*. These rituals' performance, timing, and accompanying beliefs offer a deep dive into the regional interpretations of broader Hindu practices. Also, the stay in the respondent's house was marked by hospitality, warmth, and a wealth of knowledge. Similarly, the urban landscapes of the Mirzapur district provide an opportunity to compare rural women's traditional *Kajarī* folksongs with those of professional stage and *akhāḍā* singing traditions.

However, fieldwork in these areas presents practical challenges, such as identifying the villages and respondents, the sensibilities around photography, recordings and note-taking during their performance and sacred sites, and the unpredictable nature of engaging with diverse participants. Researchers must tread carefully, balancing respect for their study's subjects with their investigation's thoroughness. This often means developing trust with locals and participants, which can unlock deeper stories and richer insights. Moreover, the dynamic interaction with the place and the people reshapes the researchers' perspectives, enriching their understanding and often challenging their preconceptions. These sites, throbbing with communal and individual energy, create a vivid tableau for observing how contemporary social issues

intersect with age-old traditions. Issues such as the impact of modernisation, cultural erosion, and the role of caste and class became prominent in these settings, offering a holistic view of the societal fabric.

Throughout my journey from Varanasi, Ghazipur, to the isolated areas of Mirzapur, the unexpected obstacles and shifts in plans highlighted the resilience required to navigate the intricacies of travel and research in diverse cultural settings. My interaction with the rural women, men in rural and urban spaces, and locals is an immersive learning experience about the culture of *Kajari* singing and its deep-rooted implications for social problems, religiosity, and communal beliefs. My participation and observations during this festive period offered a unique lens through which we could examine the confluence of traditional places, faith, and social dynamics. As we navigated through the bustling scenes and engaged with the local populace, our journey illuminated the challenges and practical considerations involved in fieldwork. The concerns expressed by local academicians and stage performers about the neglect of traditional art forms by governmental bodies provided critical insights into the broader socio-cultural dynamics shaping the community's life and highlighted gaps in policy-making efforts. This exploratory journey facilitated a deeper understanding of the specific rituals and cultural practices and allowed us to reflect on the broader implications of our research within these communities. By immersing ourselves in the local customs and engaging directly with the people, we gained valuable perspectives that enriched our research process. The experiences shared here provide a transparent account of our journey, emphasising the dynamic interplay between tradition, culture, and socio-economic realities in shaping communal practices and beliefs.

The researchers faced challenges when they were initially mistaken for journalists by the local populace, leading to tensions over access to information and space. Sometimes, men's and women's apprehensive attitudes towards me created a problem in the field. The situation became more complicated when the male members tried to dominate or silence the women's perception amidst the conversation, potentially viewing the researchers as rivals. They attempted to restrict their movements and interactions at the event, asserting control over the narrative. Despite these obstacles, immersing themselves in the field provided valuable insights. Women did not shy away during their performance and gave their natural performance, allowing me to record the unfiltered oral practices. This shift offered a unique perspective on the adaptability of cultural practices and the performative nature of communal activities under external influences. However, through these experiences, the researchers gained a nuanced understanding of power dynamics, negotiations of agency within cultural landscapes, and the impact of external forces on local practices and norms. This reflection aims to provide a transparent account of the fieldwork process, emphasising the practical challenges and insights gained from navigating the intersection of academic research and media coverage in a shared space.

In conclusion, studying the *Kajari* folksongs through extensive and immersive fieldwork, participant observations, interviews, and open-ended questions and interactions allowed us to capture the depth and richness of women's traditional space and cultural expression, offering a detailed perspective beyond surface-level observations. While the method brought us closer to understanding the profound ritual and communal connections fostered through the *Kajari* festival and folksongs, it also presented challenges that tested our adaptability, sensitivity, and interpretive skills as researchers. These experiences have underscored the value of an ethnographic approach in exploring complex cultural practices, highlighting its potential to

uncover deep-seated meanings and connections within communities. Our fieldwork in the selected research sites has profoundly impacted our understanding of the subject matter, enabling us to appreciate the complexity and diversity of cultural practices and their significance within the communities studied. This experience has undoubtedly contributed to the depth and breadth of our research, offering a comprehensive view of the practical application of methodologies in capturing the essence of cultural and ritual observances in contemporary society.

2.22 Notes on Translation and Transliteration

The process of translating the women's *Kajarī* folksongs and the accompanying interviews from Bhojpuri to English was carried out manually, carefully focusing on maintaining the original material's essence and cultural context. The *Kajarī* songs, which hold deep cultural significance in the Bhojpuri-speaking regions of India, often feature intricate nuances and emotional expressions tied to local customs, language, and sentiments. As such, the translation required a linguistic conversion and an understanding of the social and emotional layers embedded in the lyrics.

The manual translation aimed to preserve these layers by considering the rhythm, metaphorical richness, and traditional references embedded in the songs and the personal narratives shared in the interviews. This method allowed for greater flexibility in interpreting cultural subtleties and emotions, ensuring that the translated content was as faithful as possible to the original in meaning and tone.

I used the IAST application to transliterate the Bhojpuri terms. IAST is a widely used tool for representing Indic scripts, particularly Hindi, Bhojpuri, and other regional languages, in a Romanised form. While transliteration offers a phonetic representation of words, it cannot fully

capture the songs' regional inflexions, idiomatic expressions, or poetic quality. However, it provided a consistent method for rendering Bhojpuri terms into the Latin alphabet, facilitating easier access and comprehension for readers unfamiliar with the original script.

By combining manual translation and standardised transliteration, this work aims to offer both an authentic rendition of the *Kajarī* folksongs and interviews while also making the material accessible to a wider audience, including those who may not be familiar with the Bhojpuri language or its script.