Echoes of Defiance: Subversive Language, Ritualised Transgression and Place-Making in Mirzapur's Kajarī Folksongs

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CHAPTER 7 - CONCLUSION

This concluding chapter reiterates the primary research questions and objectives of this thesis. After that, this chapter summarises the significant findings of every chapter. It will discuss the limitations that I have encountered during data collection and the entire research. Moreover, this section briefly mentions respondents' suggestions to safeguard the tradition of women's folksongs and their concerns, which will address the issues raised in this study, including its limitations and direction for future research.

This study focuses on the rural women's festival, ritual, and folksong *Kajarī* in the specific context of the Mirzapur region. It explores how rural women, otherwise denied autonomy and bold voices in the controlled environment of rural settings, created their performative and liminal places and performed subversive and defiant activities through songs, acts, and dance. Moreover, this study highlighted that innovative and non-normative language helps them challenge the dominant masculine ideas. Ultimately, this research addressed an essential question of how women's traditional places and singing culture have been adopted and changed over time, rendering them voiceless and muted as the monetary gain and fame are accrued by the privileged caste groups of male/female performers.

The title of this research study is 'Echoes of Defiance: Subversive Language, Ritualised Transgression and Place-Making in Mirzapur's *Kajarī* Folksongs.' The first chapter discusses the concept of folklore, the impetus to explore the issues and concerns in the *Kajarī* folksongs and the objectives and methodology of this thesis. The Bhojpuri language encompasses various folksongs, depending on geography, occasions, and festive rituals. Similarly, the *Kajarī* folksong is associated with Eastern Uttar Pradesh and some parts of Bihar, where people speak the Bhojpuri language. In Bhojpuri, people use the word *Geet* for the folksongs, which express the

multifaceted aspects of ordinary folk. These cultural expressions provide entertainment and present a picture that contradicts and reinforces gender norms. However, this study is concerned with the voices of contradiction and defiance. Women's hopes and aspirations are sometimes overshadowed by societal norms and often overlooked in academic literature and popular media. Consequently, the marginalisation of women goes unnoticed. Therefore, this research has contributed new insights into a marginalised segment of society that has historically been constrained. This study primarily analyses the folk culture, rituals, and folk music of rural women in the Mirzapur region, the birthplace of *Kajarī* folksongs. Additionally, it uses the data collected through phone interviews with Bihar's performers. The present study highlighted women's emotions and issues manifested through folksongs, such as spirituality, playful banter, humorous instances, and funny digressions. On the contrary, women's voices of resistance can be found in different singing sessions, specifically on the night of the *Ratjagā* and *Kajarī* festivals. These recordings reinterpreted the traditional gender norms and patriarchal values from a woman's perspective. We used primary and secondary data for this research, as very few scholars attempted to collect primary data from women. To understand this folk culture in its entirety, data collected from the male singers and stage performers did not suffice. Therefore, women's songs and their responses are placed at the centre of this study, as well as their contexts. Photographs and recordings of the performance are taken to revisit those recordings during the analysis phase. Mainly, data is collected in the form of *Kajarī* songs and women/men's understanding of these songs through in-person and phone interviews. This study also uses secondary data such as books, research articles, YouTube videos, theses, and magazines. A single theoretical model is insufficient to understand the complex interplay of rural women's performance, power, and politics; therefore, I selected a methodological framework based on the focus and research

questions. The study needs rigorous first-hand data to understand the multifaceted voices of unlettered women manifested in their oral culture; therefore, it used ethnographic and feminist methodologies, which aim to capture women's experiences and alternate realities that they create through the world of music. Moreover, theoretical frameworks are used in separate chapters to provide a solid grounding for the arguments. This study relied on secondary sources, including books, theses, papers, magazines, and online content. A thorough review of online articles was conducted to explore concepts related to feminism, women's ritualised empowerment, and the status of women in India. Subsequently, these documents were methodically indexed, categorised, organised, and analysed in the relevant chapters. The chapter details the types of *Kajarī* festivals celebrated in the region, their significance for the women in Mirzapur, and other customary practices associated with their powerful and subversive undertones.

In the second chapter, we defined the concept of liminality and place-making used in different domains and their application to study women's rituals and cultural practices. Two theoretical concepts are fused to explain women's act of place-making or their performance in a liminal place. Place-making is the process by which community people give a site meaning and value through various sociocultural practices and tactics. Place and community have a closely entwined relationship in which each strengthens the other's identity. The common ideals, beliefs, and interpersonal relationships are frequently reflected in the landscape. Furthermore, religion, customs, and the surrounding environment are crucial for establishing the ideal setting for place-making. Rural women's performative place was analysed from the perspective of liminality. Rites of passage are linked to liminality, the term used to characterise a period of transition during which people or groups move between defined states of existence. It encapsulates what it is like to stand on the cusp of two distinct societal positions or life stages.

Detaching from the prior status or social role is necessary for this initial phase. It signifies the end of a known situation or position. People are in a state of limbo and uncertainty throughout this transitional phase; they are neither in their previous nor new state. There is a lot of ambiguity and change at this time. Reintegrating into society with a new position or role is the last stage. After the shift, people leave the liminal period with a changed identity or social standing.

After that, we focused on the question of whether women need liminal/private performative places in even rural settings or not. Another line of inquiry was why they required such spaces, where it was stated that recent outrage regarding the *Padmavat* movie (Directed by Sanjay Leela Bhansali), the Supreme Court's verdict regarding the women and girls' entry into the Sabarimala temple brought forward the issue of women's autonomy and their reclaiming of their private spaces. Additionally, women's movement is controlled and monitored in rural context as compared to the urban spaces, which deny them public platforms from where they could raise their muffled voices, grievances, and hatreds; therefore, creating their own liminal space or the act of place-making became an essential phenomenon for them. Religious and ceremonial aspects provide a suitable environment for making traditional and liminal places and liberated selves during the festivities. In Mirzapur, festivals like *Kajarī, nāga-pañcamī,* and *Ratjagā* provide an environment outside the patriarchal control and dominant rules. On the night of *Ratjagā* (night vigil) (women celebrate the night on the birth date of goddess *Vindhyavāsinī*), women's songs find a frank expression of their bottled-up emotions.

However, this chapter only focused on the devotional/spiritual folksongs they sang at the beginning of their performance. They call these devotional songs *devī pacarā.* The ritual songs known as *devī* songs are commonly called *pacarā*. These traditional songs are performed to honour and welcome the goddesses before any significant Bhojpuri ceremony and are sung in

both upper-caste and lower-caste households. Women sing these devotional songs in the Mirzapur region to evoke the goddess and worship the performative place, *caughaṭ*. They worshipped the performance place by offering grains and devotional songs. They also utilised several strategies to ensure the freedom and non-punitive circumstances of the place, e.g., the complete absence of men inside the performative place, hysterical laughter, and impromptu and funny digressions.

The third chapter mainly focused on the songs and interviews collected on the night of *Ratjagā* over three years (2021-2023) from two villages, namely Shivpur and the adjacent area, Madguda. Bawdy humour, subversive dialogues, and contrary viewpoints to the hegemonic ideas characterise these songs. This is the liminal ecstatic phase where all the subversive acts of established norms, abusive language, mockery of men and masculine traits, and cross-dressing are performed. The performative atmosphere allowed rural women to transgress spatial-temporal boundaries by performing outside their homely confines throughout the night. The entire village was treated as a playground or performative place. They encircled the village, which is known as *gām̐va goṭhanā*, as they believed that their act of creating this inside versus outside dichotomy wards off the evil and restricts it outside the village's confines. Another unsettling feature of these songs is the theme of mockery and challenging the idea of masculinity and masculine traits. Even the officials and administration were the target of these women. These women defy the patriarchal norm that limits them to subservient and meek roles by performing these rituals, frequently at unusual times and outside of their household realms.

Cross-dressing during these celebrations is an additional act of rebellion that gives individuals a fleeting but powerful agency to express their wants and break gender conventions. These women use the *Kajarī* songs to create a space of meaning that analyses and redefines their

structural limits. However, closely analysed recordings emphasised the conformist and stereotypical image of Indian women. Therefore, it contrasts with instances of compliance, such as when women engage in fasting practices, perform their household chores, and yearn for physical intimacy, highlighting the normative roles that women play in society. The festival's liminal area is a forum for discussions about dominant values and highlights the nuanced nature of gendered performances in rural settings.

This fourth chapter adopts ethnolinguistics as a key analytical tool alongside ethnography to investigate the *Kajarī* singing practices of rural women in Mirzapur. Ethnolinguistics, emphasising how language reflects and shapes cultural realities, allows a nuanced exploration of the songs' linguistic forms, social functions, and embedded meanings. Through participant observation, recorded performances, and informal interviews, the research collected a corpus of *Kajarī* songs, which were then analysed for recurring themes, linguistic strategies, and symbolic expressions. The chapter analysed the stances of women's improvisation and innovations, linguistic tropes in their folksongs, and non-verbal communicative strategies. The central argument of this chapter was how unlettered rural women's folk speech reflected in their oral tradition (*Kajarī* songs) differs from their everyday speech, which is characterised by the perceived weakness of feminine speech.

Contrary to the commonly held image of veiled and subdued women in public and private spheres, these songs and expressions offer a window into their dynamic and resistant subcultures. The chapter highlights how women's folk speech, filled with symbols and metaphors drawn from their surroundings, allows them to articulate their inner experiences. This contradicts the prevailing view that women's linguistic behaviour is a mere reflection of societal stigmas, which often label such expressions as markers of non-conformity or deviance. By focusing on assertive

and abusive language during the performance, the chapter explores how these expressions challenged the women's submissive and normative everyday speech. *Kajarī* songs, with their range of themes from harsh commentary to culturally specific symbols, provide an alternative portrayal of rural women. Through suggestive language and bold expressions, these songs challenge patriarchal norms and the notion of women as merely domestic and irrational beings. They assert female subjectivity and confront gender stereotypes, highlighting folklore's role in challenging and reinforcing gender expectations. Additionally, folk speech perpetuates stereotypes about women being limited to domestic roles; the use of humour and laughter in these genres offers a critical lens for understanding women's agency. This raises important questions about humour's role in expanding the comprehension of women's voices and their resistance to traditional constraints.

The penultimate chapter characterised the idiom of how this research came to the circle, as it started with the issues of how women had a liminal phase or created an entirely female-occupied place in a traditional setting of festivals and rituals. It helped them indulge in norm-defying activities through their folksong *Kajarī* and folk speech already discussed in the previous sections. This chapter examines how upper-caste male performers in Mirzapur and Bihar have adapted and transformed *Kajarī*, a traditional folksong initially created by women. While *Kajarī* is a powerful outlet for women to articulate their personal experiences and societal challenges, it also functions in pedagogical and political realms beyond mere entertainment. Women use this medium to contest gender norms and envision themselves as assertive social actors during performances.

However, dominant caste groups, including Brahmins, Thakurs, and Srivastav, began to modify *Kajarī* to suit contemporary tastes, a trend that upward-moving caste groups like the

Yadav, Sharma, and Maurya later adopted. Rani Singh, a graduate in music and actress, has criticised this appropriation, noting that upper-caste men often marginalise women's participation in these cultural practices. Singh observed that while women from lower castes, such as the Dhangar/Dhankar (shepherds), Yadav, and Nishad, continue to perform *Kajarī*, upper-caste women are largely excluded from these activities. This appropriation of *Kajarī* by men from upward-moving castes represents a strategy to control and reframe the genre's rebellious and emotional character. These men have transformed *Kajarī* into a more refined and aesthetically pleasing art form, but this shift has had detrimental effects on the original women's genre. The commercialisation and appropriation of *Kajarī* by these male performers have not only led to economic and identity-related losses for the women but have also deprived them of their traditional role in this performative space. Government efforts that often overlook authentic practitioners exacerbate the unequal distribution of resources and recognition between the original female performers and those who profit from the modified versions.

Removing the performative context from *Kajarī* has compromised its connection to women's experiences. Male-authored versions of the song often reflect idealised images of women based on male expectations, which diverge from the original intent and essence of the folk tradition. This appropriation undermines the genre's original purpose and adversely affects the women involved. Moreover, the patriarchal and caste-based social structures further constrain women's visibility and participation in professional settings. Many rural women avoid performing publicly due to adherence to social norms, family honour, and self-censorship. The commodification of *Kajarī* by music producers, driven by profit motives, exemplifies what Avinash Pandey (a folk singer from Bihar) describes as *'bazarikaran*,' or marketisation, which is distorting the authenticity and originality of the *Kajarī* songs. This study highlights how the

intersection of gender, caste, and class influences the production, distribution, and appropriation of women's cultural expressions, pushing rural women and their authentic cultural contributions to the periphery. The research is limited by the inability to conduct in-person interviews in Bihar, relying instead on phone interviews, which may have constrained the depth of insight obtained.

7.1 Specific Observation and Contribution of the Study

This thesis contributes significantly to understanding gender dynamics and women's agency within the context of rural oral traditions in India. This thesis explored the question of ideological subversion, autonomy, and women's agency reflected in the oral tradition. Moreover, it challenged traditional gender roles and displayed the potential to present an alternative model of the prototypical models of Sati, Sita, and Mahalakshmi. However, a few songs also conform to the norms prescribed in rural Indian settings. For unlettered rural women, this oral tradition functioned as a window through which they could reinterpret a new self, different from their usual selves. Thus, the exploration of oral traditions of both males and females yields surprising results as they have possibilities of multiple interpretations, making them a rich source of knowledge. The results of this study provide new insights into the field of rural women's oral tradition, gender construction, and the significance of folk speech about the culture of the *Kajarī* festival and folksongs in the Mirzapur district. The study demonstrates how these traditions offer rural women a controlled platform to assert their voice and agency despite their socio-cultural constraints by subverting masculine norms and questioning power structures. These findings suggest that oral traditions serve as cultural heritage and dynamic tools for gendered expression and negotiation in rural communities.

7.2 Limitations

The study has a few limitations, which the researchers have overcome over time. This section briefly details those difficulties usually associated with the question of the short duration of the performance and the hesitant nature of famous/stage performers in urban spaces.

This study tried to explain how the festival starts from the *nāga-pañcamī* and ends on the *Kajarī* festival, but women used to sing these songs from the beginning of the *Sāvana* month and end on *baunī duāsa*. *baunī duāsa* is an occasion where a widow dips in the holy river *Ganga*. This ritual is associated with another legend that takes us back to the genre's origin, associated with *Kajarī,* the daughter of the king of the Kantit region. As mentioned in the Introduction section of the thesis, *Kajarī's* painful rendition after her husband's death transformed into a creative and artistic folksong, *Kajarī.* This story is associated with the legend of *Kajarī,* who took a dip in the same river to end her life after getting separated from his husband. The same tradition has been followed by widows in this region, and a fair was held at the same place where the river creates a confluence, which is known as (*baunī duās kā melā)* fair of *baunī duāsa.*

However, this singing tradition is almost on the verge of extinction. Chamela Devi used the word *Uṭhāna* while displaying her anxiety about the disappearance of rituals and singing associated with the *Kajarī* festival. Women's singing culture is now limited to the village confines, and it is performed briefly, starting from the *nāga-pañcamī* and ending during the *Kajarī* festival. Therefore, the main limitation of this study is that women now sing and perform these songs only for a few days and resume the performance the following year. Therefore, this phenomenon poses a challenge to collect data during that short period and follow up on the discussion in the next years. After one year, the researcher must visit the field for any queries or doubts, mostly during their performance. I encountered another difficulty while collecting the

data from the renowned stage singers and national/international level singers in urban spaces, as they were aware of data collection, their contribution, and the question of acknowledgement. Scholars and experts were reluctant to share their views and opinions regarding the folksongs as they believed that research scholars did not acknowledge their contributions and names while writing their theses. Ajita Srivastav, who received the Padma Shri award in 2022 from the Government of India for her contribution to the field of arts, especially for popularising *Kajarī* folksongs, said, *'Arjun Das Kesari [pioneer in this field] forbade me to send the scholar for the interviews as they do not acknowledge our contributions'* (A. Srivastav, Personal communication, 26 July 2022), which is precisely not accurate as I have gone through two theses on *Kajarī* kept in the library of the Bhojpuri department of Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, (India) where their names were mentioned as key contributors. Since these performers were unaware of this, they were uncomfortable sharing their ideas easily. She further said that artists are hungry for names only, which can be contrasted with Jata Shankar Sharma's statement, *'We are artists, and we only need the audience's appreciation and clapping'* (J. S. Sharma, Personal communication, 14 July 2023). These two opinions display two contrastive worldviews related to cultural expression. On the one hand, artists/performers living in urban spaces who do not belong to the originators of the folksong need broader fame in the academic and artistic world. In contrast, one living near the singing community demands fame in the guise of appreciation. This point was validated during an interview in that these known stage singers performed on national and international platforms, but they do not possess the knowledge of folksongs in the real sense. I was interviewing Savita Srivastava (changed name) as she, too, gave a new height to this folksong. She readily and politely accepted her lack of theoretical knowledge about *Kajarī* songs. She said, *'Although I performed on the national and*

international stages, I do not know much about the genre. I can call a local singer, Ramkisun, who will tell you about Kajarī' (U. Srivastav, Personal communication, 22 July 2022). On the other hand, the originators (rural women) demand nothing except showing their anxiety towards the cultural loss of rituals, festivals, and folksongs, which are not only the storehouse of their Indigenous knowledge but a platform for their collective outlet. Women/men in rural areas initially hesitated to sing and share their knowledge about the folksong because they were facing the camera for the first time and were unaware of the research, data collection, and academia.

Although Mirzapur is a known citadel of *Kajarī* folksongs, the songs are sung by rural women in neighbouring districts, namely Ghazipur, Banaras, Jaunpur regions, and some parts of Bihar, especially the Bhojpur region. This thesis briefly discussed the culture of singing and festivals in Bihar and Varanasi districts. The same songs might be performed with slight variations in these regions, which this research could not capture as it focused on the singing tradition of *Kajarī* in the socio-cultural milieu of the Mirzapur region. However, this study follows the case study methodology, focusing on a specific region, where the findings are applied to that area's unique cultural and social dynamics. This can restrict the generalisation of the results to other areas within the district or broader rural contexts.

Another significant limitation of this study is the lack of systematically collected statistical or demographic data pertaining to *Kajarī* performers in the Mirzapur district, particularly in terms of caste, class, gender, and rural-urban distribution. While qualitative fieldwork, comprising interviews and event observations, strongly indicates a trend of appropriation and professionalisation of the *Kajarī* tradition by privileged caste-class men and women from urban Mirzapur, the absence of quantifiable datasets constrains the ability to generalise this pattern beyond the studied cases.

For instance, although local narratives and participant observation revealed that historically there were seven active *Kajarī akhāḍā*s, none of them bore the names of female Gurus or singers. The participation of women in these spaces was marginal, and rural women were virtually absent, both in terms of formal training and stage representation. The very scarcity of female performers within institutional platforms, as registered groups or individual performers, highlights gendered exclusions; however, these exclusions cannot be numerically substantiated due to a lack of official records or documentation.

This absence of quantitative data does not invalidate the findings; rather, it reveals a larger structural issue, namely, the historical neglect of rural women's contributions within cultural record-keeping and performance archiving. Thus, while the claims in this study are grounded in ethnographic richness and pattern recognition, future research could benefit from integrating quantitative methods, if relevant data becomes accessible.

7.3 Future Directions for the Research

Various areas can be taken up as potential topics to work on in the future, which this study could not cover in this thesis. However, this research hinted at some aspects of probable areas, such as laughter and jokes, which can be seen as an extension of women's verbal strategies, allowing researchers to explore a relevant question posed by Smita Tewari Jassal. She asked, 'Do laughter, play, jokes, and humor-themes associated with the *kajlı* genre in particular help us to arrive at a more nuanced understanding of women's agency (Jassal, 2012, p. 75)?'

Folksongs nationwide attract scholars to treat them as source material for investigating caste, gender, and power discourse. However, in the future, scholars can explore the scope of language and linguistic tropes/devices used in this genre to examine how different linguistic

devices are used in songs to perpetuate or challenge caste and gender, further hinting at the broader questions of language, gender and power. It can explore the adaptability of the oral tradition through innovative and improvisational additions as the folk genre undergoes many changes and incorporates countless expressions.

Another issue that future researchers can address is the appropriation of folksongs in Bollywood films without acknowledging the original contributors. This issue was raised by a few respondents, such as Jata Shankar Sharma, Poonam Mishra, and Priyadarshini Mishra. They pointed out how famous directors from the Bollywood Industry have taken permission to use the tunes of *Kajarī* songs. Still, they later denied any form of acknowledgement to the original practitioners or the folk music itself, again a form of cultural appropriation, denying their self-identity and erasing artistic expressions. This phenomenon of cultural appropriation is discussed in the last chapter, but it is limited to the local appropriators in the region and performers of the same folksongs. Therefore, the adoption of these tunes by the Bhojpuri and Bollywood industries and broader issues of appropriation of intellectual properties can be addressed in future studies.

7.4 Views of Policy-Makers to Preserve Disappearing Traditions

Based on a careful analysis of women's singing traditions, this study wants to suggest a few things that can help preserve and protect the dying tradition of folksongs in a mechanised and modernised context. In the rural contexts of the Mirzapur region, women's folk song *Kajarī* and rural women are now overlooked in the performative and academic world. Therefore, it became of prime importance to focus on these critical issues.

As mentioned in the penultimate chapter, multiple governmental setups are working to safeguard various cultural art forms in the *Purvanchal* region. Rural women were both anxious and displayed their indifference to the shrinking folksong tradition, but they did not suggest any practical solution to safeguard this tradition, except saying that the best way to continue this tradition is to make the young generation learn this art, which does not seem possible due to the indifference and disinterest in this dying tradition. However, officials and stage performers suggested some things to continue this tradition. I asked questions about the *Kajarī* folksong's future to Atul Dwivedi, head of U.P. *Lok Evam Janjati Sanskriti Sansthan*, an autonomous Department of Culture (Lucknow). He said, *'These are our live art forms. The best way to preserve them is to provide them with a stage. We are trying to include people from remote areas. The New Education Policy (2020) also included the local heroes'* (A. Dwivedi, Phone interview, 31 August 2024). While raising the issue of educating people about these art forms, he explained in detail how the teaching drive of *Kajarī* songs is going on in the schools in the Mirzapur region. Many renowned singers, such as Urmila Srivastava and Sufiya Shaila, are teaching young school girls about the *Kajarī* songs. It explains that the teaching and awareness drive can be implemented in educational institutions to make the youth aware of this rich tradition. Jata Shankar Sharma discussed a similar idea proposed by the administration. He said:

> We were assigned the role of teachers and instructed to go to the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) to teach the students about folk music. Everything was planned, but we did not hear anything from the administration after that. Everything went into scrap (J. S. Sharma, Personal communication, 14 August 2022).

Therefore, classroom teaching and workshops can revive this dying tradition, which should be implemented appropriately and included in the curriculum syllabus.

A conversation with Atul Dwivedi highlighted the importance of an inclusive approach to reviving rural women's oral tradition. He admitted that most of the original tunes are lost, and stage performers only sang a few popular tunes as they were unaware of multiple tunes, which can be drawn from the women's extensive singing sessions. Therefore, including rural women and their registration after proper training in these government-run organisations is essential to carry forward the legacy of women's cultural expression. Jata Shankar Sharma tried to form a women's group consisting of rural women after their training according to the perceived standard of the audience. Advocate for programs that empower women from marginalised communities. This could include funding their cultural activities, providing platforms for their voices, and supporting initiatives that help them gain recognition and economic benefits from their artistic expressions. He mentioned the New Education Policy 2020 and claimed that local heroes/legends are included. It is noted that local artists of regional genres must get that respect and reach out to schools and colleges to teach these art forms. He further suggested that academicians must explore it and that the discourse of oral tradition must be included in academia.

Documentation and digitalisation are other media through which these oral expressions of Indigenous communities can be preserved. However, he also stated that since these are live art forms, their performance and continuation of cultural expressions are necessary, as we cannot keep them in the way archaic items are kept in a museum.

7.5 Final Thought and Broader Implications

As the exploration of women's folk culture indicated, the resisting and defiant voices of common folk, as other folksongs of North India, can be studied from the same lens, highlighting the intricacies and complexities of oral tradition and its functionality in this technological and

fast-moving world. However, the folk genres are in a deplorable condition in the present. Specifically, if I talk about the *Kajarī* genre, irrespective of whether it is performed by male or female singers, the singing tradition is on the verge of extinction. The entire Mirzapur region resonated with *Kajarī* folksongs in the past, but nowadays, women rarely perform in the villages. Mangra Devi said, *'The inclusion of modern trends and festivals ruined the significance of singing traditions, such as the entry of Rakhi (sacred thread tied on the wrist of brothers by sisters with a promise to protect their sisters), which destroyed the culture of jaraī'* (M. Devi, Personal communication, 13 August 2022). Since folksongs are associated with a particular month, festival, or occasion, modification or addition of new changes negatively affected the local tradition.

Moreover, the recordings and digitalisation of folksongs on social media platforms such as YouTube and Facebook have made folksongs freeze in time and grammar, further reducing the possibility of dynamicity and adaptability. The same songs sung with regional variations are now served in a set grammatical pattern and with fixed lyrics, excluding the natural context and purpose they used to serve initially. The time has come to include these cultural texts in the academic domain, further strengthening and protecting these art forms. As Habib (1974) rightly stated:

> A serious and conscious effort must now be made to rejuvenate traditions of art and cult where they are dwindling and reinforce and develop them where they remain integrally related to the community's life. It must flow from a deep-rooted feeling that if the folk arts of India really represent the genuine fabric of the tapestry of Indian culture, then rehabilitating and strengthening them will perhaps help the process of evolution of new

and viable contemporary forms in theatre, distinctively Indian and yet suitable as vehicles of communication in a technological age (35).