

Concealment and Declaration in Selected Kangra and Haryanvi Folk Songs

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Received: 08 June 2026; Received in revised form: 05 July 2026; Accepted: 12 July 2026; Available online: 18 July 2026 Keywords— cultural studies, Haryanvi folklore, Kangra folksong, women's oral tradition, new historicism, gender and lamentation. ©2026 The Author(s). Published by International Journal of English Language, Education and Literature Studies (IJEEL). This is an open access article under the CC BY license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).	<i>Women's folk songs in northern India have long carried experiences, desire, grief, and dissent that the dominant literary and religious discourse excludes, transmitted orally rather than written down. This paper compares two such songs: a Kangra Pahari song of concealed desire from Himachal Pradesh, and a Haryanvi alaahna, or lamentation, of grief. While scholars have studied North Indian women's folksong extensively, few have compared Himalayan and Haryanvi traditions directly, and Haryanvi folksong in particular remains under-studied. This paper addresses that gap through a Cultural Studies reading grounded in New Historicism, Raymond Williams's Cultural Materialism, and Stuart Hall's theory of encoding and representation. Using close textual and comparative analysis, it argues that the Kangra song manages desire through metaphor and double encoding, while the Haryanvi lamentation licenses grief through direct address sanctioned by ritual mourning. The comparison shows that folk song is not a single, uniform tradition but a range of regionally distinct strategies through which women's suppressed emotional lives survive within patriarchal culture.</i>

I. INTRODUCTION

Oral tradition has never been simply a repository of inherited stories; it is, as Richard Bauman insists, a form of situated communicative practice in which meaning is produced anew in each performance, an emergent quality of performance itself rather than a fixed textual residue (Bauman 44). This distinction matters for any reading of women's folk song in northern India, where the song is inseparable from the occasion, the grinding stone, the wedding chamber, the deathbed vigil, that calls it into being. Jan Vansina's foundational work on oral tradition as historical testimony similarly insists that orally

transmitted material is not a degraded version of a written original but a distinct mode of preserving social knowledge across generations, one whose reliability and meaning must be assessed on its own terms (Vansina 27-29). What both scholars share is a refusal to treat orality as literature's poor relation; the folk song is instead a technology of memory, sustained by repetition, performance, and the intimate transmission of women teaching other women what may otherwise not be said aloud.

The stakes of this transmission become sharper when the content being carried is itself socially proscribed. A.K. Ramanujan, surveying the vast and

heterogeneous field of Indian oral literature, observed that India possesses not one folklore but a proliferating multiplicity of counter-systems, genres that exist in critical relation to the sanctioned literary and religious canon, often carrying precisely the material, female desire, female anger, female grief – that classical and devotional literature suppresses or idealizes (Ramanujan, “Toward a Counter-System” 33–35). Women’s folk song, in this account, is less a naive expressive outlet than a deliberate cultural counter-archive: a space in which experience unauthorised by dominant discourse nonetheless finds durable form. This is also, crucially, a question of cultural memory in Jan Assmann’s sense, the process by which a group stabilises and transmits self-images and formative experiences across generations through symbolically condensed forms (Assmann 126–128). The peacock that cries on a distant Himalayan hillside and the widow’s unanswered plea to God on the Haryanvi plains are both, in this light, mnemonic devices: compressed vehicles carrying forward an emotional history that written and institutional archives were never built to hold.

To situate the folk song within Cultural Studies discourse, rather than to define folklore in the abstract, is to ask what ideological work a given song performs within a specific field of social relations. Raymond Williams’s insistence that culture must be understood as a whole way of life rather than a set of isolated aesthetic artefacts reframes the folk song as social practice: it is produced by, and reproduces, particular relations of gender, labour, and kinship (Williams, *Long Revolution* 57). Stuart Hall extends this by arguing that meaning is never transparently given but is actively constructed through codes of representation that are themselves sites of struggle. Meaning, Hall writes, does not inhere in things; it is constructed through the systems of representation available to a culture at a given historical moment (Hall, *Representation* 5). Read together, Williams and Hall license a mode of reading in which the folk song’s formal choices, its metaphors, its silences, and its permitted directness are treated not as decorative inheritance but as ideological labour, performed under specific and traceable historical constraints.

Regional identity compounds this picture. The Kangra hill tradition of Himachal Pradesh and the Haryanvi plains tradition of Haryana are not interchangeable

instances of a generic “North Indian” women’s folk culture; each is shaped by distinct histories of settlement, agrarian economy, caste structure, and, crucially for this essay, distinct conventions governing which emotions women are permitted to express, in which genres, and before which audiences. Benedict Anderson’s account of regional and national belonging as a form of imagined community, sustained by shared symbolic and linguistic practice rather than by direct acquaintance among all members, offers a useful, if originally nation-focused, vocabulary for understanding how a dialect-bound song tradition like Kangra’s or Haryana’s comes to function as a marker of communal identity distinct from the political and literary mainstream of Hindi (Anderson 6–7). Kirin Narayan’s ethnographic work on Kangra confirms this regional specificity in granular detail, documenting how the local dialect, kangri bol, mixes with Punjabi, Hindi, and Urdu in ways that encode the district’s layered colonial and post-colonial history even as its women’s songs carry an intensely private emotional cargo (Narayan, “Singing from Separation” 26–28).

This essay places one Kangra Pahari song and one Haryanvi lamentation song into sustained comparative conversation, reading both through a Cultural Studies framework that combines Williams’s cultural materialism, Hall’s theory of encoding and representation, and the New Historicist premise, associated above all with Stephen Greenblatt, that no text stands outside the historical field of power that produces its very possibility of utterance. The argument that follows is not that these songs merely reflect patriarchal conditions, but that they actively negotiate those conditions, circulating, in Greenblatt’s terms, as part of a broader traffic in social energy between artistic form and the constraints of the social world that produces it (Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations* 1–6). What distinguishes the two songs is not the presence or absence of ideological constraint; both operate under patriarchal regimes of permitted speech, but the specific strategy each regional tradition has developed for managing that constraint: concealment in one case, ritually sanctioned declaration in the other.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholarship on North Indian women's folk song has developed substantially since the 1980s, though unevenly across regions. Kirin Narayan's body of work on Kangra remains the most sustained regional study relevant to this essay. In "Birds on a Branch: Girlfriends and Wedding Songs in Kangra," Narayan demonstrates that Kangra wedding songs encode female bonding and ambivalence about marital transition through genres that are performed collectively among women and rarely heard by men (Narayan, "Birds on a Branch" 49-52). Her later essay "Singing from Separation: Women's Voices in and about Kangra Folksongs" extends this analysis to songs of longing and separation, arguing that Kangra women's songs constitute a form of oral literary criticism through which singers comment reflexively on the emotional conditions of their own lives (Narayan, "Singing from Separation" 24-31). Narayan's full-length study *Everyday Creativity: Singing Goddesses in the Himalayan Foothills* extends this ethnography further, arguing that Kangra women experience song-making itself as a source of accomplishment and well-being even when the content sung concerns hardship, longing, or loss, a finding that supports this essay's reading of the peacock song as an act of managed rather than merely suppressed expression (Narayan, *Everyday Creativity* 12-18). This scholarship establishes, with ethnographic specificity, that Kangra song culture operates through indirection, genre convention, and collective female authorship, precisely the qualities this essay identifies in its Kangra Pahari text.

For the broader North Indian plains, Gloria Goodwin Raheja and Ann Grodzins Gold's *Listen to the Heron's Words: Reimagining Gender and Kinship in North India* remains a foundational text. Raheja and Gold argue that women's songs performed at weddings, in agricultural labour, and during ritual mourning frequently articulate a critical perspective on patrilocal marriage and kinship obligation that is unavailable to women in ordinary discursive speech, such that song becomes a discourse of its own running counter to officially sanctioned kinship ideology (Raheja and Gold 20-24). Smita Tewari Jassal's *Unearthing Gender: Folksongs of North India* builds on this tradition, reading Bhojpuri-region women's songs as sites where labour, desire, and dissent are

encoded through agricultural and domestic imagery, and arguing that folk song functions as women's primary vehicle for social commentary precisely because its ritual and generic framing renders that commentary permissible (Jassal 6-12). Earlier comparative work by I. Srivastava on the portrayal of women in North Indian folk song similarly catalogues recurring images of suffering, endurance, and thwarted desire across regional song traditions, providing a broader typological context for the two songs examined here (Srivastava).

Beyond region-specific ethnography, the theoretical study of Indian folklore as a field of cultural contestation owes much to A.K. Ramanujan and to the collection *Another Harmony: New Essays on the Folklore of India*, co-edited by Stuart Blackburn and Ramanujan, which argues collectively that Indian folk genres cannot be read as a unified national tradition but must be understood as a plurality of regionally and socially specific systems in dialogue and tension with dominant Sanskrit and literary culture (Blackburn and Ramanujan 1-5). Ramanujan's essay "Toward a Counter-System: Women's Tales," published in *Gender, Genre, and Power in South Asian Expressive Traditions*, makes the gendered dimension of this contestation explicit, arguing that women's oral genres across South Asia routinely function as counter-discourses to patriarchal and Brahminical norms embedded in classical literature (Ramanujan, "Toward a Counter-System" 33-37). This body of scholarship collectively establishes the theoretical premise on which the present essay builds: that folk song is ideologically active, regionally differentiated, and gendered in its very mode of transmission.

III. RESEARCH GAP

What this scholarship has not yet undertaken is a sustained comparative reading of Himalayan hill song and Haryanvi plains song as two distinct strategic responses to a shared condition of patriarchal constraint. Existing studies are overwhelmingly regionally bounded: Narayan's work remains focused on Kangra, Raheja and Gold on Rajasthan and the central plains, Jassal on the Bhojpuri-speaking east. Haryana itself remains comparatively under-studied within this literature, where it appears it is typically

folded into generalised accounts of “North Indian” women’s song rather than treated as a tradition with its own genre conventions, dialect, and history of ritual practice. This absence is analytically significant, since Haryana’s well-documented history of severe patriarchal regulation, including stringent codes of female seclusion and mobility, makes its women’s expressive genres, and in particular the *alaahna* or lamentation song, a critical test case for understanding how ritual licence operates as a distinct alternative to metaphoric concealment. No existing study places a Kangra song and a Haryanvi lamentation in direct comparative reading using a shared Cultural Studies apparatus. This essay contributes precisely that comparison, and in doing so proposes concealment and declaration as two poles of a broader typology of strategies by which regional oral traditions manage women’s emotional expression under patriarchy.

IV. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study is organised around three questions. First, how does each song encode content, female desire in the Kangra case, female grief in the Haryanvi case, that dominant social norms render difficult to express directly? Second, what specific historical and material conditions of production, transmission, and performance make each song’s formal strategy possible and necessary? Third, what does a comparative reading of these two strategies reveal about the range of ideological work that regional folk song performs across northern India, and about the limits of treating “women’s folk song” as a single undifferentiated category?

V. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To provide a theoretically grounded close reading of both songs using Williams’s cultural materialism, Hall’s theory of representation, and New Historicist method.
- To situate each song within its regional historical and ritual context.
- To develop a comparative argument establishing concealment and ritually sanctioned declaration as two distinct, historically produced strategies of female expressive survival within patriarchal oral culture.

VI. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study contributes to Cultural Studies and Folklore Studies by extending the comparative method to an under-examined regional pairing, and by demonstrating that theoretical frameworks developed within British and American Cultural Studies, Williams’s residual culture, Hall’s encoding/decoding, can be productively adapted to South Asian oral material without flattening its regional specificity. For Comparative Literature, the essay models a method for reading oral, non-canonical texts alongside one another with the same interpretive rigour typically reserved for written literary texts. For Haryanvi cultural scholarship specifically, the essay begins to address a documented scarcity of sustained literary-critical attention to the region’s women’s oral genres.

VII. METHODOLOGY

7.1. Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative, interpretive Cultural Studies methodology combining close textual analysis with a comparative literary method. Rather than pursuing quantitative or corpus-linguistic analysis, the essay treats each song as a densely coded cultural text whose full significance emerges only through sustained interpretive reading informed by historical and performance context, in keeping with Cultural Studies’ foundational refusal to treat meaning as self-evident on a text’s surface (Hall, Representation 5). Close reading, rather than aggregation across a large corpus, is appropriate to material whose significance is carried by dense, historically specific imagery, the peacock, the cage, the moon, the unanswered prayer, each of which requires the kind of sustained, single-text attention that Williams’s materialist method and Hall’s model of encoding and decoding both presuppose. Comparative literary analysis is used to place the two songs in dialogue without collapsing their regional and generic differences, following the precedent set by comparative folklore scholarship such as Blackburn and Ramanujan’s *Another Harmony*, which reads Indian oral genres relationally rather than in isolation.

VIII. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This essay is conducted within Cultural Studies as its overarching framework: the premise, running through the discipline since its founding at the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, that no cultural artefact, however humble, oral, or regionally confined, can be read in isolation from the relations of power that produce and circulate it. Within that broad commitment, the reading developed here rests on a single foundational premise supplied by New Historicism, from which two complementary analytical methods, Raymond Williams's Cultural Materialism and Stuart Hall's theory of encoding, decoding, and representation, are then derived and applied directly to the two songs.

New Historicism, most influentially articulated by Stephen Greenblatt, supplies this foundation. Greenblatt's claim that literary texts are inseparable from the circulation of social energy that produces and is produced by them insists that a text's form cannot be read as an aesthetically autonomous choice but must be understood as an outcome of the historically specific power relations within which it was composed and performed (Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations* 1–6). Applied to folk song rather than to Renaissance drama, this premise directs the entire analysis that follows toward a single governing question: what historical conditions of gender regulation, caste structure, and ritual convention make a given song's formal strategy, metaphoric concealment in the Kangra case, licensed lamentation in the Haryanvi case, not simply possible but necessary. It is this New Historicist premise, rather than any additional theorist, that authorises and organises the two analytical methods below.

The first method is Williams's Cultural Materialism, developed most fully in *Marxism and Literature*. Williams's distinction between dominant, residual, and emergent cultural forms allows this essay to identify both songs as residual: cultural practices formed in an earlier social order that nonetheless remain active elements of present consciousness and practice rather than merely surviving as historical relics (Williams, *Marxism and Literature* 122). Williams is useful here precisely because he refuses to treat popular or oral forms as aesthetically inferior to institutionally sanctioned literature; his framework insists that meaning is produced through material

practice— who sings, where, and for whom, making the performance context of each song analytically indispensable rather than incidental.

The second method is Stuart Hall's theory of encoding and decoding, first developed in "Encoding/Decoding" and elaborated in the edited volume *Representation*. Hall argues that a cultural message is encoded by its producers according to available codes and then decoded by its audience, with the encoding and decoding positions not necessarily symmetrical. Audiences outside the code's originating context may read only a message's literal surface while its connotative depth remains legible only to insiders (Hall, "Encoding/Decoding" 131–133). This model is indispensable for the Kangra song, whose entire strategy depends on a surface meaning available to any listener and a deeper meaning legible only to women who share the song's social conditions of production. Hall's account of representation as a site of ideological struggle further clarifies how the specific images each song deploys, the peacock, the cage, the moon, the face, the back, the unanswered prayer, are not neutral illustrations but contested sites where meaning about gender and power is actively produced. Read together and historicized throughout by the New Historicist premise above, Williams and Hall supply the two lenses through which the close analysis of both songs is conducted in the section that follows.

IX. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

9.1. The Kangra Pahari Song: Metaphor as Ideological Containment

The song is reproduced here in its full working translation, prepared for this study, to ground the reading that follows in the text's own sequence of images and exchanges:

"Mother asks her daughter, 'Tell me, my child, why have you become so thin and weak?' The peacock calling from the distant hill, O mother, has taken away my sleep. Call the hunter, call the marksman — let this peacock be killed. No, mother, do not kill it; keep it in a cage instead. Where do the moon and stars disappear, O mother? Where do the supports of the heart go? The moon and stars do not truly disappear, my daughter; they only hide, just as the heart's beloved remains hidden within."

The Kangra song stages a dialogue between mother and daughter in which the daughter's wasting body, she has grown thin and weak, becomes legible only through the mediating figure of a peacock whose distant cry has stolen her sleep. Read through Hall's model, the song operates on two simultaneous levels of code: a denotative surface (a girl cannot sleep because of birdsong) and a connotative depth (a woman is consumed by desire for an unnamed man) that becomes available only to listeners who share the song's social world (Hall, "Encoding/Decoding" 132). The peacock is not an arbitrary image. As Narayan's ethnographic work on Kangra confirms, the region's women's songs draw on a shared, densely conventionalised repertoire of natural imagery, birds, seasons, and rivers, through which emotional states considered too dangerous to name directly are nonetheless communicated within a community of female listeners fluent in the code (Narayan, "Singing from Separation" 30–33). The bird's association with the monsoon and with erotic longing throughout North Indian literary and folk convention means that its deployment here is best understood not as poetic ornament but, in Williams's terms, as a residual cultural form doing precisely the ideological work that direct speech could not: it allows desire to circulate under the cover of pastoral innocence.

The mother's offer to have the peacock killed, followed by the daughter's insistence that it be caged rather than destroyed, dramatises a negotiation over the containment rather than the elimination of desire. This negotiated outcome is significant precisely because it refuses both possibilities the dominant order would prefer, neither full suppression (the peacock killed) nor open acknowledgement (the peacock, and the beloved it stands for, freely embraced). The cage is a third position: desire preserved but disciplined. Read through Williams's account of residual culture, this negotiated outcome is not a compromise between an autonomous desiring subject and an external authority but the specific, historically produced shape that desire is permitted to take within Kangra's structure of household authority and ritual performance, a residual practice that carries an older affective life forward under the material and social terms the present order allows (Williams, *Marxism and Literature* 122). New Historicism's premise that textual form is inseparable from the

power relations of its historical moment (Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations* 1–6) clarifies why the cage, rather than any other resolution, is the form the song arrives at: it is neither silence nor confession but the negotiated middle term that Kangra's specific historical conditions of female seclusion and household authority render available. The song's closing exchange, in which the mother explains that the moon and stars do not vanish but only hide, generalises this logic into a theory of survival: what social order renders invisible persists nonetheless, concealed rather than destroyed. This is, in Williams's vocabulary, a strikingly self-aware statement of what residual culture accomplishes; the song describes its own condition of transmission, hidden from dominant institutional notice yet alive in the intimate, matrilineal space of oral performance.

9.2. The Haryanvi Lamentation: Ritual as Licensed Directness

The Haryanvi alaaahna, likewise reproduced here in its full working translation, moves through a markedly different emotional register:

"I saw your face when you came, but when you left, all I saw was your back. Do not turn away from me – my cries are heavy without you. You did not hear my call; the Divine suddenly took you away. I pleaded with God to grant me more days. The days I asked for were not given – instead, death was granted."

The Haryanvi alaaahna operates by an almost opposite formal logic. Where the Kangra song encodes, the lamentation declares: the speaker names her loss without intermediary image, addresses the departed directly in the second person, and confronts the divine order without euphemism. A New Historicist reading, however, resists treating this directness as evidence of an absence of ideological constraint. Following Greenblatt's premise that textual form is never free of the power relations that produce it, the song's bluntness must instead be read as the product of a different, equally specific historical condition: the alaaahna is a ritually sanctioned genre, and death is one of the few social occasions on which North Indian women have historically been permitted, even required, to grieve publicly, loudly, and in the first person (Raheja and Gold 22–24). Directness here is not the absence of a code but the presence of a different code: in Hall's terms, the genre of lamentation is itself the encoding, a recognizable frame that licenses the

audience to decode direct, unmediated speech as legitimate grief rather than as transgression (Hall, "Encoding/Decoding" 132-133), and this frame is available to the singer only because Haryana's historically specific regulation of female speech has, as New Historicism would predict, carved out mourning as one of its few sanctioned openings.

The song's central image, seeing the beloved's face on arrival and only his back on departure, condenses, in Hall's sense of representation as ideological staging, an entire structure of denial into a single visual reversal. Face signifies presence, recognition, and relational obligation; back signifies rupture and the withdrawal of relation. The song's final movement, in which the speaker's plea to God for more days is answered instead with death, repeats this structure of the unanswered appeal at a cosmic register, extending the pattern of denial from the domestic to the divine. Jassal's reading of Bhojpuri-region women's songs identifies a comparable pattern in which ritual genres become vehicles for articulating grievances, against husbands, in-laws, fate, and God, that would be impermissible outside the sanctioned frame (Jassal 8-10), and the Haryanvi lamentation examined here participates in precisely this broader North Indian pattern while inflecting it through the region's own history of severe restriction on women's public speech. The *alaahna*'s material context, communal performance by women gathered at a deathbed, often in call-and-response, further confirms, in Williams's materialist terms, that its ideological work is inseparable from its performance conditions: it is precisely because grief is processed collectively and ritually that its expression can be so unguarded.

9.3. Comparative Discussion

Placed side by side, the two songs reveal that women's folk songs in northern India are not a single expressive mode but a differentiated field of strategies, each calibrated to a specific regional configuration of genre, ritual licence, and prohibition. The Kangra song negotiates patriarchal constraint through what might be called a politics of concealment: desire survives by never fully surfacing, protected by a double code that is legible only within a female interpretive community. The Haryanvi lamentation negotiates the same underlying condition, the structural denial of authority to women's emotional speech, through a politics of ritual licence: grief survives by being fully

and publicly declared, but only within the narrow temporal and ceremonial window that mourning provides. Neither strategy should be read as freer than the other; both are, in Greenblatt's sense, historically produced negotiations rather than expressions of an underlying natural female voice waiting to be liberated (Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations* 3-5).

Regional history helps explain why these particular strategies, rather than others, developed in each location. Kangra's hill topography and its position within a shifting administrative boundary between Punjab and Himachal Pradesh produced a song culture saturated with linguistic layering and pastoral imagery drawn from an agrarian hill environment (Narayan, "Singing from Separation" 26-28), conditions well suited to a metaphoric strategy grounded in the natural world. Haryana's plains agrarian economy and its well-documented history of exceptionally stringent codes of female seclusion and mobility restriction, by contrast, appear to have concentrated permissible female emotional expression into a small number of ritually bounded genres, lamentation prominent among them, in which directness could be tolerated precisely because it was hedged by ceremonial containment. This divergence supports Williams's broader argument that residual cultural forms are not uniform survivals of an undifferentiated past but are actively reshaped by the specific material and social conditions of the regions that sustain them (Williams, *Marxism and Literature* 122).

The theoretical implication is that Hall's model of encoding and decoding must itself be regionally calibrated: the Kangra song requires an audience fluent in a shared metaphoric code to access its full meaning, while the Haryanvi lamentation requires an audience that recognises the ritual frame of mourning as the code authorising its directness. In both cases, meaning is not self-evident on the textual surface but is produced through the listener's positioned knowledge of genre and context, confirming Hall's insistence that representation is always a relational, code-dependent process rather than a transparent reflection of experience (Hall, *Representation* 5-8). Read comparatively, the two songs thus expand the available typology of women's expressive strategy within South Asian oral tradition beyond the binary

of silence versus speech, revealing instead a spectrum of negotiated positions, caging rather than killing the peacock, declaring grief only within the sanctioned time of mourning, in which women's interior lives persist by finding, in each regional context, the specific cultural form that constraint will allow.

X. CONCLUSION

This comparative reading suggests several implications beyond the two songs themselves. For Cultural Studies, the analysis demonstrates that Williams's and Hall's frameworks, developed within a British context of mass and popular culture, translate productively to oral, regional, non-print traditions, provided their application remains attentive to the specific material and ritual conditions of the culture under study rather than imported as a universal grid. For Folklore Studies, the essay reinforces an argument central to Ramanujan's and Blackburn's scholarship: that Indian folk tradition is best understood not as a single national inheritance but as a plurality of regionally specific counter-systems, each requiring its own historicized reading rather than assimilation into a generalised category of "Indian women's folk song." For Comparative Literature, the essay models the possibility of reading oral texts against one another with the same theoretical seriousness typically reserved for canonical written works, without erasing the performative and communal conditions that distinguish song from text.

Future research might extend this comparative method to other regional pairings within North India, Bhojpuri, Rajasthani, Bundeli, to test whether the concealment and declaration typology proposed here holds more broadly or requires further differentiation, and might supplement textual analysis with fresh ethnographic fieldwork on Haryanvi lamentation performance, an area where documentation remains sparse relative to Kangra and Rajasthan. What this reading has sought to establish, in the meantime, is that the peacock caged rather than killed and the plea answered with death rather than more days are not simply pathetic details of two isolated songs, but evidence of two sophisticated, historically produced technologies through which women's suppressed emotional knowledge has been carried, generation

after generation, by voices that the official archive never thought to record.

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