

THE FOLK SONGS RELATED TO THE WORSHIP OF GODDESS SANJHI¹

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Abstract

In India, the festive season – the season of worship, prosperity, and happiness involves the celebration of festivals devoted to several female Goddesses, like the Durga Puja, which is renowned throughout the world. Apart from this festival from Bengal, there are numerous lesser-known folk festivals, which are observed throughout the country during this time. ‘Sanjhi’, which is celebrated in Haryana, is one of them. This article explores the tradition of worship of Goddess Sanjhi and documents a few of the folk songs that are sung by females to appease her. The research for this article has been undertaken in the Rohtak and Jhajjar districts of Haryana.

Keywords: Goddess Sanjhi, folk songs, worship, intangible source.

Sanjhi is an effigy of the mother goddess and is worshipped by unmarried girls in Haryana. The beautiful form is prepared in the latter half of the Asauj month in *Shukla Paksha*, i.e., late September or early October. The girls believe that by worshipping Sanjhi they will get a good husband. In this tradition, the concept of prayer of Parvati to acquire Siva as her husband is also present. Some scholars relate it to the concept of Ram Vijaya and others to the worship of Durga. In the epicentre of this tradition is a woman, and it is revered. The young girls from the villages worship decorate and adore it as their mother and seek from her, a beautiful and prosperous future.

Sanjhi is made in cow dung and is decorated with coloured terracotta stars and typical terracotta jewellery from the state.² Apart from these, artificial pearls, mirrors, and shells, other shiny materials, which are easily available in the area, are used to embellish her. The star-studded colourful collage is fixed on the wall of a dwelling, facing south. In some places, the image of Sanjhi is also painted on the walls. The art of Sanjhi making may not be sophisticated, but it has a unique native expression and flavour of the region.

Along with the effigy of Sanjhi, two other images are made. One is of ‘Khoda’, and the other is of ‘Dhunda’. Dhunda is deliberately made fat, ugly and disproportionate so that Sanjhi’s beauty can be easily exaggerated. This innovation also helped to add humour and wit to the songs by making comments about Dhunda’s ugliness. At some places, ‘Doom’ and ‘Doomni’ are also made along with the image of Sanjhi. These are the bohemians from Haryana who earn their bread by dancing. It is believed that they had come along with Sanjhi from her mother’s home.



Fig. 1. Goddess Sanjhi worshipped in Jassia Village (Rohtak District) by a group of young girls and their mothers. Photograph by the author.

Sanjhi is also given its due importance in the folk songs from the state, where she is often asked about her needs and the girls promise to appease her by offering presents. This worship is held every evening for nine days in front of the image of Sanjhi. During these evenings, the girls lit the lamps before the effigy, feed her with milk-cream and sweets, and worship her (Fig. 1). The folk songs are in the Haryanvi dialect and these are sung to her. In them, Sanjhi is either considered as a maiden and is treated like a village girl or she is considered a form of Durga and is worshipped as a divine being. Some of the folk songs associated with the worship of Goddess Sanjhi are as follows:

SONG 1³

Sanjha Mai, Sanjha Mai khol kivadi,

Bahr khadi se, bahr khadi se dhokan aali,

Ke mange se, ke mange se dhokan aali?

Chidi-chidakle, bira mange, chandrawal si bhabhi,

Khuli akhiyan ta bhatija mange, yahe mansha puri, aen!

Mother Sanjhi, Mother Sanjhi [please] open the door,

Standing outside, standing outside are your worshippers,

What are [they] seeking, what are the worshippers seeking?

[We] seek birds-chicks, brothers, a sister-in-law like Chandrawal,⁴

[We] seek nephews with open eyes,⁵ fulfil this desire, dear!

SONG 2⁶

Aarta ae aarta sanjhi mai aarta

Aalte ke fuul, chameli dali, aarta ae aarta

Aarte ki fulle bel, aarta ae aarta

No naurte durga ke, aarta ae aarta

Das kanagat pitra ke, aarta ae aarta

Aarti, the aarti, [we perform the] aarti of Mother Sanjhi,

Flowers of aalte,⁷ [we have] put Chameli, aarti, the aarti,

The blossomed vines of aarti, aarti, the aarti,

There are nine Navaratras of Durga, aarti, the aarti,

There are ten Kanagat [Pitr paksha] of the deceased ancestors, aarti, the aarti.

SONG 3⁸

Ae bhan, me tane bujhu, sanjhi, tere ke bhai?

Ae bhan, panch pachas bhatije, nau-das bhai,

Ae bhan, kitnya ka bayah rachaya, kitnya ki sagai?

Ae bhan, novan ka bayah rachaya, dasa ki sagai,

Ae ve, hare gulabi chir bandhe, jeete se ladai.

O, sister, I am asking you, Sanjhi, how many brothers you have?

O, sister, five-fifty [fifty-five] nephews, nine-ten brothers,

O, sister, how many of their marriages being arranged, how many of their engagement?

O, sister, marriage of nine has been completed, engagement of ten,
O, they have [turbans] tied of green and pink coloured clothes, [they] win battles.

SONG 4⁹

*Chalo sanjhi, ae sanjh ghar chalo, jis ghar divla nit bala,
Ae, bal-bal re divle, jyot suvai, dal-dal tel, ja maangiya.
Ae, kayane ka divla, kayane ki baati, kayane ka tel ja maangiya? Ae,
maati ka divla, nirma ki baati, sirsam ka tel ja maangiya.*

*Chalo sanjhi, ae dasharath ram¹⁰ ghar chalo, jis ghar divla nit
bala, Ae, bal-bal re divle, jyot suvai, dal-dal tel, ja maangiya,
Ae, kayane ka divla, kayane ki baati, kayane ka tel ja maangiya?
Ae, maati ka divla, nirma ki baati, sirsam ka tel ja maangiya.*

*Chalo sanjhi, ae lakshman ghar chalo, jis ghar divla nit bala,
Ae, bal-bal re divle, jyot suvai, dal-dal tel, ja maangiya,
Ae, kayane ka divla, kayane ki baati, kayane ka tel ja maangiya?
Ae, maati ka divla, nirma ki baati, sirsam ka tel ja maangiya.*

*Chalo sanjhi, bharat ghar chalo, jis ghar divla nit bala,
Ae, bal-bal re divle, jyot suvai, dal-dal tel, ja maangiya,
Ae, kayane ka divla, kayane ki baati, kayane ka tel ja maangiya?
Ae, maati ka divla, nirma ki baati, sirsam ka tel ja maangiya.*

*Chalo sanjhi, shatrughan ghar chalo, jis ghar divla nit bala,
Ae, bal-bal re divle, jyot suvai, dal-dal tel, ja maangiya,*

Ae, kayane ka divla, kayane ki baati, kayane ka tel ja maangiya?

Ae, maati ka divla, nirma ki baati, sirsam ka tel ja maangiya.

Chalo sanjhi, devon ghar chalo, jis ghar divla nit bala,

Ae, bal-bal re divle, jyot suvai, dal-dal tel, ja maangiya,

Ae, kayane ka divla, kayane ki baati, kayane ka tel ja maangiya?

Ae, maati ka divla, nirma ki baati, sirsam ka tel ja maangiya.

Let's go Sanjhi, O! Its evening, go to the house, where the earthen lamp lightens daily,

Burn burn, O earthen lamp, flame is lighted, put the oil, go and borrow it,

O, what is the earthen lamp made of, what is the wick made of, what oil [should I] go and borrow?

O, the earthen lamp is made of clay, the wick is made of cotton, the oil is of mustard, go and borrow it.

Let's go Sanjhi, let's go to *Dasharath* Ram's house, where the earthen lamp lightens daily,

Burn burn, O earthen lamp, flame is lighted, put the oil, go and borrow it,

O, what is the earthen lamp made of, what is the wick made of, what oil [should I] go and borrow?

O, the earthen lamp is made of clay, the wick is made of cotton, the oil is of mustard, go and borrow it.

Let's go Sanjhi, let's go to Lakshman's house, where the earthen lamp lightens daily,

Burn burn, O earthen lamp, flame is lighted, put the oil, go and borrow it,

O, what is the earthen lamp made of, what is the wick made of, what oil [should I] go and borrow?

O, the earthen lamp is made of clay, the wick is made of cotton, the oil is of mustard, go and borrow it.

Let's go Sanjhi, let's go to Bharat's house, where the earthen lamp lightens daily,

Burn burn, O earthen lamp, flame is lighted, put the oil, go and borrow it,

O, what is the earthen lamp made of, what is the wick made of, what oil [should I] go and borrow?

O, the earthen lamp is made of clay, the wick is made of cotton, the oil is of mustard, go and borrow it.

Let's go Sanjhi, let's go to Shatrughan's house, where the earthen lamp lightens daily,

Burn burn, O earthen lamp, flame is lighted, put the oil, go and borrow it,

O, what is the earthen lamp made of, what is the wick made of, what oil [should I] go and borrow?

O, the earthen lamp is made of clay, the wick is made of cotton, the oil is of mustard, go and borrow it.

Let's go Sanjhi, let's go to the Gods' house, where the earthen lamp lightens daily,

Burn burn, O earthen lamp, flame is lighted, put the oil, go and borrow it,

O, what is the earthen lamp made of, what is the wick made of, what oil [should I] go and borrow?

O, the earthen lamp is made of clay, the wick is made of cotton, the oil is of mustard, go and borrow it.

On the tenth day of Dussehra, Sanjhi's images from the walls are scratched and removed. The head of the Goddess is safely kept inside a perforated earthen vessel. On the wall surface where Sanjhi was stuck, a Swastik¹¹ is drawn. In the evening, in a procession, the girls burn these faces and carry these vessels on their heads to the village pond. There they float their lighted pots in the water. The young boys armed with sticks from the village eagerly wait to complete this ritual. Thereafter, they dive into the pond and immerse these pitchers in the

water with their sticks, preventing them from reaching the other end. The local people believe that if the Sanjhi's face is left to float across the pond and touch the other side, then there will be severe famine in the village. Therefore, it is not allowed to cross the pond.

The tradition of making and worshipping Sanjhi is not confined to the geographical and political boundary of Haryana.¹² Although this folk festival is declining in this north-western state, in the recent past, art connoisseurs and the Haryana Government have tried to keep this folk tradition alive.

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2. Devi Shankar Prabhakar, *Hariyana: Ek Sanskritik Adhyayan* (Delhi: Umesh Prakashan, 1967), 73–78.
3. As sung by 51-year-old Anita, in the village of Jakhoda village, Bahadurgarh, Jhajjar.
4. Chandrawal is the female protagonist of a popular eponymous Haryanvi movie 'Chandrawal' released in 1984.
5. Here the worshippers mean 'in reality' not in their dreams, when their eyes are closed.
6. As sung by 63-year-old Kamla, Rohtak town.
7. Lac-dye used by Hindu women for staining their feet red.
8. As sung by 78-year-old Rajwanti, Jahangirpur village, Jhajjar.
9. As sung by 21-year-old Sonia Parmar, in the village of Jassia, Rohtak.
10. The singers/worshippers usually insert the names of their senior male family members in a chronological order here and the subsequent references. For better understanding, Sonia has used the names of the protagonists from the *Ramayana*, who are renowned and celebrated around the world.
11. *Sathia* in the vernacular.
12. For details of the Sanjhi from Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh, see Mahendra Bhanawat, *Rajasthan Ki Sanjhya* (Udaipur: Bhartiya Lokakala Mandala, 1977) and O. C. Kurukshetra, *Pahāri Folk Art* (Bombay: D. B. Taraporevala Sons & Co. Private Ltd., 1975) respectively.