



Tears That Sing: The Transmission of Affect in Haryanvi *Vidaai* Folk Songs

Ms. Anu

Research Scholar,

Department of English and Cultural Studies,

Panjab University, Chandigarh.

raoanu1995@gmail.com

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Abstract:

This paper uses Affect Theory to analyse the significance of the oral tradition of Haryanvi *vidaai* folk songs, contending that these performances function as powerful affective economies rather than just passive ceremonial scripts. In contrast to traditional symbolic readings, this study explores the ritual as an active site of somatic and relational transmission, where grief functions as a concrete biological force. By utilising Silvan Tomkins' theory of pre-conscious intensity and Teresa Brennan's concept of contagious affect, the research examines how the physical trauma of a daughter's departure spreads throughout the kinship network. Furthermore, it illustrates how common domestic objects become saturated with the sticky emotional residue of girlhood and how the patriarchal regulation of collective grief sustains female subjugation by incorporating Sara Ahmed's concept of affective economics with Lauren Berlant's cruel optimism. Through narrative analysis of collected fieldwork songs, this study ultimately reveals the *vidaai* as a complex structure of feelings where the female body simultaneously endures patriarchal rupture and subtly displays resistance.

Keywords: Folklore, Haryanvi Folk Songs, Affect Theory, Ritual Lamentation, Feminist ethnography, Transmission of Affect and Hidden Transcript.

Introduction:

Although many cultures celebrate marriage as a joyful rite of passage, the bride's departure from her natal household is marked by ritualised sadness. In Haryana, this emotional culmination is expressed through *vidaai* folk songs, which transform a personal farewell into a collective grieving performance. Beyond merely accompanying the bride's departure, these songs preserve the emotional realities of kinship, belonging and separation embedded within the oral tradition. Since William Thoms coined the term folklore in 1846, scholars have debated its definition and scope. As Alan Dundes notes, "The term 'folk' can refer to any group of people whatsoever who share at least one common factor. It does not matter what the linking factor is—it could be a common occupation, language, or religion—but what is important is that a group formed for whatever reason will have some traditions which it calls its own" (2).

Folklore serves as a cultural mirror, reflecting the ideals, concerns, goals and real-life experiences of the communities that create it. Women have historically been vital custodians of oral culture within this expressive tradition. Since the early 20th century, scholarship has recognised women as singers, ceremonial performers and transmitters of oral tradition, as noted by Rosan A. Jordan and F.A. de Caro (515). They also cite Alexander F. Chamberlain's groundbreaking study on women's role in oral culture, demonstrating how women's songs serve as vital archives for comprehending gendered experiences within traditional societies.

In Haryana, folk music forms the nucleus of the region's non-material culture. Passed down orally across generations, these songs thereby preserve the collective memory, values, and emotional experiences integral to community life. They accompany seasonal festivals, agricultural work, religious rites, and life-cycle ceremonies, reflecting the broader social structure and cultural worldview. The role of folk songs is much more than mere entertainment; these songs also serve as cultural records that help communities maintain their historical ties.

Folk songs are an important part of the broader field of folklore studies as they serve as cultural stories that help pass down customs, feelings and social beliefs from one generation to another. Rosan A. Jordan and F.A. de Caro's identification of ritual lamentation as a global, cross-cultural rite associated with female experience provides a robust framework for studying its function as a form of folklore. They observe that lamentation is often linked to women's expressive traditions. While women in nations like Greece and Ireland traditionally lament during funerary ceremonies, cultures such as India, Finland, and historically, China, practice "tuning in" and lamenting at the moment of a woman's marriage. As they noted, this event often signifies the greatest emotional rupture, terminating a woman's intimacy with her family and removing her from her childhood environment (511). Emotional suffering, uncertainty and transitional social experience provide a means to shift personal grief into a broader cultural context through the use of songs. *Vidaai* folk songs hold a special place in the expressive and socially meaningful realm of the vast and varied Haryanvi folk tradition. Sung when the bride departs from her maternal home upon marriage, these songs convey many complex emotions of sadness, longing, helplessness, anxiety and emotional vulnerability. The *vidaai* ceremony is performed at the end of all wedding rituals, including the *Pheras* and *Kanyadaan*, where the father legally transfers the daughter to her marital home. This act represents the bride's final exit from her natal home and her entry into her husband's household. The emotion and celebration associated with this ceremony mask a deeper sociological reality associated with existing within the patriarchal kinship system. In this system, women are viewed as temporary members of their family, destined to be married off at the end of it.

According to Brennan, the word "affect", which is derived from the Latin *affectus*, has historically been used interchangeably with concepts like desire, passion, and emotion. Although the precise meanings and scholarly classification of these terms have varied, the underlying range of human emotions they describe has remained generally constant; for

example, the meaning of "passion" narrowed considerably by the late nineteenth century (3). A crucial framework for analysing these persistent emotional currents is provided by affect theory. Instead of viewing emotion solely as an internal psychological state, it emphasises the relational and embodied dimensions of emotion.

According to Silvan Tomkins, emotions such as agony and sorrow function as pre-conscious reactions, physically expressed through cries, vocal changes, facial expressions, and tensions before being understood cognitively. Conversely, Teresa Brennan argues that sentiments are not fixed within an individual but circulate across bodies. Emotions travel through social processes, thus contributing to social experiences and relationships. Building upon this idea, Sara Ahmed shows that emotions accumulate around specific bodies, spaces and objects, where their physical representation through social practices constitutes emotional memory.

Examples of Haryanvi *vidaai* songs show that grief can also be treated as a collective emotion rather than an individual one. Various elements such as weeping, voice, gestures, dwelling places, and objects are used for expressing emotional grief across family relationships. Ultimately, the field results demonstrate that *vidaai* folk songs preserve and demonstrate the emotions of this family practice through ritual performance.

This paper addresses this gap by examining folk songs through the lens of Affect Theory. This research doesn't merely analyse lyrics and their interpretation, but rather shows how the grieving process circulates among the various individuals involved in the ritual, moving from one group to another. Using primary fieldwork, this study will re-analyse Haryanvi *vidaai* folk songs, not simply as melancholic lyrics, but as an active mechanism for the transfer of emotions.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology:

The research utilises an interdisciplinary approach incorporating Affect Theory, folk culture studies, feminist anthropology, and narrative methods. Rather than viewing the *vidaai* songs as symbols of marriage, this research considers them as performances through which sadness is collectively shared, experienced, and remembered. A central framework applied in this study is Teresa Brennan's concept of affect transmission, which shows how feeling is a relational process that spreads between bodies. In the context of *vidaai*, sadness is not only produced by the bride's departure, but also by the reactions of the parents, relatives, and community members taking part in this ritual. Furthermore, Silvan Tomkins' work explains how emotions are expressed somatically. Tomkins posits that emotions such as distress, anguish, and happiness are pre-cognitive responses that become evident in crying, facial expressions, speech, and body movement.

It bears mentioning that although the theories of Tomkins and Brennan are utilised in conjunction here, they approach these physiological and vocal behaviours differently. Brennan's theory on the transmission of feelings is distinctly physiological; she is interested in how the biological and hormonal state of one body may affect that of another specifically, how one body's grief across a relational distance. By comparing these two theories, we can understand how the physical manifestation of grief in one individual can seamlessly induce a corresponding grief in an observer.

Sara Ahmed's theoretical framework of affective economies expand this analysis by demonstrating how emotions become attached to bodies, locations, and physical objects through specific social practices. Indeed, in Haryanvi *vidaai* songs, the empty yard, deserted dolls, palanquin, mango tree, and house entrance become not only tangible sites but also affective locations that hold recollections of childhood, belonging, and dislocation. Moreover,

Ahmed's notion of affective economies does not stop at the emotional accumulation allegedly attached to the objects and spaces and suggests that emotions have a political function—they connect several human bodies to the collective while distancing others from it, thereby contributing, in a manner, to the formation of social boundaries. Viewed in the light of the above, this indicates that the emotion of sadness experienced during the *vidaai* is not merely an indication of the bride experiencing the loss but performs the duty of securing the natal family as a discrete unit in the very moment of leaving it.

Lauren Berlant's concept of cruel optimism further illuminates the emotional architecture of the *vidaai*. For Berlant, cruel optimism can be defined as an attachment to a certain object that prevents the individual from flourishing. Marriage in this context functions similarly; in childhood, it is portrayed to the girl as the destination of achieved womanhood—a socially approved “good life.” However, the condition for entering the marriage is losing her family name, childhood friends, and identity. The bride's demand that her parents not cry because “this is the custom of the world” may be interpreted through Berlant's theory as more than mere resignation; rather, it is the work of retaining an optimistic attachment to an institution that brings her suffering instead. This is the “cruelty” defined by Berlant.

The research utilises James C. Scott's idea of hidden transcript to examine the instances where women's songs indirectly challenge patriarchal ideology. While the key emotional experience conveyed through the *vidaai* songs is sadness, sporadic irony and humour indicate implicit resistance in the song tradition. Such moments imply that the songs express not only sadness but also the underlying structures that generate these emotions. Methodologically, the research relies on the qualitative ethnographic studies carried out in Haryana. The primary data consists of *vidaai* folk songs collected through oral performances by women singers and transcribed from Haryanvi and translated into English by the researcher. The feminist ethnographic approach in the fieldwork views women as vital bearers of oral traditions and prioritises their

perspectives regarding cultural knowledge. The songs' analysis employs narrative analysis to identify patterns and recurring themes. Finally, the translation of the songs aims to retain their vividness and creativity, enabling readers to comprehend their cultural importance.

The Transmission of Affect Across Kinship Networks:

The emotional impact of Haryanvi *vidaai* folk songs is not restricted to the bride's grief. Rather, it flows through the entire kinship network, affecting not only the bride but also the father, mother, siblings, and peers, all of whom participate in the emotional experience of *vidaai*. In a way, *vidaai* is a shared experience in which grief flows from victim to victim through various bodies. This is what Brennan means when she argues that transmission of affect originates in the social sphere but has biological and physical consequences (3).

These affects do not merely arise from within a single person; rather, the "emotions or affects of one person, and the enhancing or depressing energies these affects entail, can enter into another" (Brennan 3). The songs reveal that the bride's departure transforms the emotional landscape of the entire family because, as Brennan notes, "Trauma, very directly, is linked to the transmission of affect" (47), infiltrating both the psyches and the bodies of the kin left behind. The songs repeatedly foreground the father's grief, disrupting the common assumption that emotional expression belongs primarily to women. One lament opens with a striking image:

The house is desolate; the courtyard is desolate too,

The beloved daughter departs, abandoning her father's home.

Her father weeps inside the house;

Her mother and sister are sorrowful (*Ghar bhi soona, aangan bhi soona; laado chali pita ghar tyag/Ghar mein to uske babul roven, ma-bahan udaas*).

The thematic progression of the song is noteworthy. The narrative starts with a deserted domestic setting and later moves to the emotional reactions of each family member. Following the father's lamentation, the mother's suffering demonstrates that pain is shared across a familial network rather than merely between isolated individuals. The empty home is thus intrinsically linked to the emotional state of its residents. The sadness of the leaving daughter spreads like an affective contagion, altering the mood in the house. This circulation becomes even more visible in another *vidaai* song where the bride addresses her brother:

Oh brother, go once to the outer courtyard and console my father;

He has wept until his eyes are swollen, knowing his daughter departs at dawn.

Oh brother, go once to the inner rooms and console my mother;

She has wept until her eyes are swollen, knowing her daughter departs at dawn

(Ae beera ek bai gheraan mein jaiye, babul ki dheer bandhayiye, re une ro-ro sooja lai aankh, beti tai meri tadke digar jaagi/Ae beera ek bai saala mein jaiye, maayad ki dheer bandhayiye; re une ro-ro sooja lai aankh, beti tai meri tadke digar jaagi).

The brother acts as an emotional mediator in this scenario. He moves between the Haryanvi houses' genderised spaces such as the outer court, which symbolises the male domain, while the inner house denotes female space—bringing consolation from a bereaved parent to another. The imagery of swollen eyes reinforces this sorrow by physically expressing the emotion. Tomkins's theory of affect provides insight into this idea. Tomkins defines affects as "a set of muscular and glandular responses in the face and elsewhere in the body" (135).

One does not learn to cry in grief, Tomkins notes, "any more than one learns to feel pain or to gasp for air" (135). The parents' weeping is a manifestation of innate affect programs triggered by the trauma of separation. Because "distress-anguish is a fundamental human affect

primarily because of the ubiquity of human suffering and the consequent universality of the cry of distress" (Tomkins 291), the tears shed by both parents are not merely symbolic representations of sadness, but raw, biological reflexes communicated through the body itself. The songs further extend this network of affect beyond parents to siblings and companions. The bride's departure is repeatedly experienced as a collective loss rather than an individual transition. One song laments:

The groom has arrived at our home

To take my companion away.

As my companion departs,

My eyes well up with tears (*Mhaare ghara aare ri bateu, saathan ka lanihaar, saathan chaal padi ri, mere dab-dab bhar aaye nain*).

This piece differs from the typical formal wedding narratives, which emphasise the bond between parents and the bride. Conversely, this song highlights the importance of female friendship. For instance, the companion's tears illustrate Brennan's assertion that "contagion is a manifestation of simple affective transmission" (47). This phenomenon occurs during a "mimetic state of identification in which one begins to act like the other" (Brennan 47) and involves subconscious imitation of people's states and emotions by those nearby. As a result, the sadness of the bride's departure fills not only her blood relatives but also the neighbours and women present there at the singing. The affective network expands further through the songs' portrayal of grandparents and extended family members. The bride is remembered as having been nurtured with extraordinary care:

Grandmother raised her like the pupil of her eye

Grandfather cast her out like a fish torn from the water

Aunt raised her like a precious pitcher of ghee

Uncle cast her out like a fish torn from the water (Daadi ne aise paala, jaise nain ki putaliya; daada ne aise nikaala, jaise jal ki machhuliya/ taai ne aise paala, jaise ghee ki gagariya re; taau ne aise nikaala, jaise jal ki machhuliya).

These metaphors reveal a deep emotional conflict stemming from years of loving care. The image of a bride being likened to a “pupil of the eye” denotes warm concern and the notion of the bride being “like a fish thrown out of the water” represents the cruelty and violence of making someone a stranger in another life.

Significantly, the bride herself participates in this circulation of affect by attempting to console those who grieve for her:

Do not weep, my father, for this is the custom of the world.

Do not weep, my innocent mother, for this is the custom of the world.

This is how it has always been in the world (*Mat roven babul mere, duniya ka yohe se byouhaar; mat roven maan meri bawli, duniya ka yohe se byouhaar/yohe se jagat mein hoti aave*).

This sentence shows an emotional shift. Even though the bride is the one leaving her home, she comforts others. Her words do not deny sorrow but rather contain it in the socially acceptable way of custom. She tries to use a borrowed social script ("the custom of the world") to ease the overwhelming physical sensations that make her family cry. However, since suffering and crying are “inherited genetically,” they do not stop the tears. Thus, while she tries to legitimise her leaving, the need to repeat these comforting phrases shows that the natural force of sorrow exceeds the potential of the social practice.

The songs discussed show that the ritual of *vidaai* is felt as a community event rather than as an individual emotion. All family members (fathers, mothers, siblings, grandparents) and the bride herself become the members of the emotional community.

The Affective Geography of Separation: Space, Objects, and Displacement:

The *vidaai* songs gathered during the field research consistently portray sorrow through the locations and material things that constitute the bride's everyday life. The house, courtyard, wall niches, mango tree, palanquin, and toys appear to be not just physical places but sites that hold memories of belonging and contribute to the experience of separation. The songs suggest that the bride's departure is not only about moving from one house to another; it is moving away from the material world that has defined her identity her childhood. Therefore, feelings can be regarded as not only a part of a human body but as a part of domestic space and ordinary objects as well. The most recurring image throughout the corpus is that of the empty house. One song begins:

“The house is desolate; the courtyard is desolate too,

The beloved daughter departs, abandoning her father's home”.(*Ghar bhi soona, aangan bhi soona; laado chali pita ghar tyaag*).

Another song echoes the same sentiment:

“Today my courtyard is desolate; my daughter is but a guest” (*Aaj aangan mera soona, beti to meri paahuniya*).

The repeated appearance of the house and courtyard is significant. The songs of departure do not just articulate the daughter's leaving; they also explain what this departure means in terms of emptiness. The absence of the daughter is felt through the metamorphosis of the domestic space. Here, Sara Ahmed's theory of affective economies provides a valuable lens. Ahmed

points out that “affect does not reside within an object or a sign, but is an effect of the circulation between objects and signs (accumulation of affective value over time)” (120). The courtyard, which has traditionally functioned as the centre of domestic life for families in rural Haryana, has become “sticky” with the memories of the daughter’s time in this place, as it has served as a setting for her childhood games, daily routines, and family activities. As those spatial memories circulate, Ahmed points out that “the more affective they become, and the more they seem to ‘possess’ affect” (121). The moment she leaves, the physical courtyard fills with affect and is thus experienced through memory. The songs also map the bride’s departure through a series of interconnected spatial thresholds. One lament traces the movement of the bridal procession:

“From beneath the terrace, the bridal palanquin sets forth.

From beneath the mango tree, the doli has departed”(*Kothe ke neeche se nikli hai paalkiya; aam neeche se nikla hai dola*).

The images not only illustrate the way the procession travels. The garden terrace, the mango tree, and the doli become symbolic barriers in the process of separation. Ahmed observes that "when there is anxiety, it tends to stick to objects" and "is more of a way of relating to objects, instead of being produced by the way an object relates to us" (125). Similarly, the procession accumulates increasing anxiety as it navigates through these points. This movement reflects the slow spread of grief among family members.

The songs further preserve childhood through domestic objects that remain behind after the bride’s departure. One song asks:

“Why don’t you play with your clay dolls, beloved daughter?

Why don’t you embrace your childhood companions, beloved daughter?” (*Khel kyuna le Laado maati ki gudiya; mil kyuna na le laado sang ki saheliyan?*).

Another deepens this image:

O daughter, in every niche and corner, your dolls are left behind,

As you leave behind your father's land.

O daughter, in every niche and corner, your dolls are left behind,

As you leave behind the company of sisters (*aale-diwale laado gudiya hai chodhi, chodha babul ka desh/aale-diwale laado gudiya hai chodhi, chodha bahana ka sath ri*)

Clay dolls are more than toys that children play with; they are no less than the first connections through which the bride experiences emotions. Sara Ahmed argues that feelings become part of objects "when there is an oblivion about how they come to acquire these feelings due to different histories of production (work and working time), and circulation or exchange" (121). The dolls have a story connected to the bride's childhood, rendering them holders of her childhood activities (play, time, and female company). In addition, since "emotion and sensation cannot be easily separated" (Ahmed 6), clay dolls and niches (*aale*) used to keep them become holders of memories of the bride.

This sense of emotional continuity appears poignantly in another exchange:

"I have forgotten my doll, father, in your wall niche (*main toh gudiya bhuli oh, babul tere aalhe main*)

My granddaughter is playing with it now; daughter, go to your own home." (*Mahri poti khele hai eh, dhiyadh ghar ja aapne*).

The dialogue reflects the gradual transition through generations while highlighting the unchanging nature of parting. Although the doll remains in the native home, the daughter is no longer regarded as belonging there. The father's response reveals another child in the world of

feelings belonging to his daughter. Different songs use images from nature to represent the agony of the separation. The bride mournfully sings:

“My cuckoo of the forest, leaving the forest, where have you gone?” (*Meri ban khand ki koyal, ban khand chhod kahaan chali?*)

Elsewhere she is compared to a fish torn from the water. These comparisons illustrate that belonging is closely linked to location, steering away from traditional marriage as a happy celebration and exposing the traumatic uprooting from one’s surroundings. The description of the daughter as a “guest” adds to the fragility of relationships with space and emphasises the traumatic implications of gendered marriage.

“My courtyard is empty; my daughter is just a guest” (*Aaj aangan mera soona; beti to meri paahuniya*)

The term *pāhuniya* (guest) conveys a central dilemma of the patriarchal kinship system. Lauren Berlant’s concept of cruel optimism explains this paradox perfectly. As Berlant puts it, the desire for something is “a collection of promises that we hope will be fulfilled by someone or something” (23). For a Haryanvi woman, marriage is seen as a collection of promises, as the best way to achieve the desired “good life.”

What makes the *vidaai* exceptionally cruel is that achieving this mandated social promise demands a toxic spatial uprooting—transforming the daughter into a temporary visitor within the very home that nurtured her. Yet, the bride endures this systemic violence because, as Berlant notes, “whatever the content of the attachment is, the continuity of its form provides something of the continuity of the subject’s sense of what it means to keep on living on and to look forward to being in the world” (24).

Together, these songs demonstrate that *vidaai* manifests not just through tears, but also through surroundings, home construction, and day-to-day items. Ahmed’s emotional economies

elucidate how home contexts gain value through the emotions attached to them, whereas Berlant's theory of cruel optimism explains the bride's painful loss of those spaces required to exist in society.

Performing Affect: Ritual, Voice, and Gendered Negotiation:

The emotional force of the *vidaai* practice comes not only from the bride leaving the parental home but also from the group effort. The Haryanvi *vidaai* music is performed at the exact moment of the bride's exit from her place of birth, transforming subjective grief into collective suffering. Through repetitive melodic singing, group crying, hugging, and words of comfort and blessing, sadness is publicly demonstrated and shared within the community. However, the songs show that although this ritual makes separation acceptable, it also provides an opportunity for women to express their feelings about the downsides of patriarchal family values. The bride's surprising role as the comforter rather than the one being comforted is one of the corpus's most striking features. As noted earlier in the affective transmission discussion, the bride repeatedly attempts to comfort her distraught parents by telling them that her leaving is just "the custom of the world". This cross-reference illustrates the active regulation of mourning through ritual. The bride uses social custom to control the parents' deep sadness. The repeated phrase serves as a cultural script that promotes emotional acceptance and justifies her leaving. Public grief is accepted, but only momentarily; it must ultimately yield to the social structure that marriage upholds. As a result, the ritual performs a dual function: it both recognises and normalises emotional suffering as inevitable.

The ritual also prepares the bride for the expectations of her new social identity. This is evident in this song:

The father embraced around the neck;

The mother gave much counsel

Daughter, uphold the honour of the clan (*Baabul ne gale te laaya, maayad ne bhut samjhaya, beti rakhiyo kul ki laaj*).

Here, affection is immediately followed by instruction. The father's embrace expresses emotional attachment, while the mother's counsel and the injunction to uphold family honour prepare the bride for her responsibilities within her marital household. The transition from physical affection to moral advice demonstrates how ritual simultaneously expresses love and reinforces patriarchal expectations. Emotional intimacy and social discipline become inseparable aspects of the *vidaai* performance. This regulation of affect appears even more explicitly in the father's final instruction:

Beloved daughter, your father is very poor;

Live submissively in your in-laws' house (*Laado tera babul, bhut garib; sasre mh dhab ke rhiyo ri*)

On one level, the father's voice reveals concern about his own precariousness and his daughter's future. At another level, it demonstrates that the notion of patriarchy also passes through family affection. Submission is not perceived as a free choice but rather as a means to social acceptance. The father's plea underlines the strongest emotional connection between love and authority embodied in the same ritual. This serves as evidence that *vidaai* prepares a bride both for spatial relocation and for conforming with marriage-related codes of conduct.

Despite the dominant ideology, songs sometimes produce moments that can be seen as defying patriarchal power.

A humorous yet pointed *vidaai* song declares:

A watch and a ring, O boy, a bicycle we will give

O boy, we will give sixty thousand

My father has purchased you

O boy, I will keep you as a labourer (*Ghadi aur guthi, chhora, saikil devange/Chhora o, devange saath hazaar; mere pita ne mol le liya, Chhora o, rakhungi mazdoor*).

Unlike other songs of sorrow about dowry and marriage, this text utilises irony to show that marriage is inherently transactional. The singer proclaims that the groom is "bought" and thus can be treated like a worker, thus turning the social order upside down. James C. Scott's political theories are instrumental in studying the event. According to Scott, in systems of total domination, subordinates are obliged to follow a "public transcript" which he defines as "the open interaction between subordinates and those who dominate" (2). In the context of the *vidaai*, weeping, veiling, and father's request for submission make this public transcript necessary.

However, what is important is that behind this required public performance of submission lies the so-called "hidden transcript," which is "the critique of power delivered behind the back of the dominant" (xii). According to Richard A. Horsley, who elaborates on Scott's ideas, "wherever there is dominance there is opposition" (7). Since the bride cannot afford open disobedience, such discontent manifests in different cultural forms.

The dowry song operates precisely in this covert register; it consists of "those offstage speeches, gestures, and practices that confirm, contradict, or inflect what appears in the public transcript" (Scott 4). The humour does not eliminate the reality of patriarchal marriage, but it provides a brief, socially sanctioned space in which women can articulate a subversive alternative perspective.

The dowry song is not a unique example. A second repetition in the corpus is that of the bride repeatedly asking her brother to console their parents. This too can be viewed through Scott's analytical lens, this time as a softer form of ridicule. By making her brother perform the

work of consoling their parents, the bride shifts her position from the subject of the emotional work to the one directing it. It is a minor shift in perspective, since she is, after all, the one leaving, yet temporarily confers upon her emotional power she might not ordinarily possess within patriarchal society. Together with the more overt irony present in the dowry song, these examples show that some hidden subversion is at play in the *vidaai* performance, the subversion being expressed both in the form of open ridicule and discreetly disguised redistribution of emotional work to other people in the family who traditionally do not have the right to do this.

The performative aspect of the *vidaai* goes beyond the lyrics to the community of singing. The songs are rarely sung by the bride alone; instead, mothers, grandmothers, aunts, sisters, neighbours, and women participate in the performances, collectively expressing their grief. Private emotions are transformed into collective experiences through melody, repetition, and synchronous singing. Therefore, songs do not just narrate sorrow: they facilitate its collective experience and expression. The performance becomes a medium of emotional transmission through generations and maintains emotional memory within the community.

Ultimately, the songs show that rituals are neither a simple celebration nor a passive reflection of tradition. They are performative spaces in which grief is performed, controlled by society, and sometimes negotiated through irony and humour. On the one hand, rituals are intended to impose compliance with societal expectations; but with Scott's hidden transcript technique, women therein may also question patriarchal institutions. Thus, the emotional power of *vidaai* lies in its ability to maintain the patriarchal system of kinship while acknowledging the pain it produces.

Conclusion:

The examination of Haryanvi *vidaai* folk songs shows that the bride's departure is more than a mere ceremonial practice; it is a profoundly emotional affair with manifold effects that shape connections among people, places, and persons. However, an analysis from the position of affect shows important results that would not be accessible through a symbolic or structural approach to these songs: grief in *vidaai* expresses not only the happening of loss but also generates a profound experience of loss, which is deeply engraved into places such as courtyards, dolls, and niches in walls even when the ritual itself finishes and the singing stops. The central thesis of this paper is that *vidaai* should be viewed not as a text describing departure but as a tool making departure possible.

The investigation showed that this process exhibits three key features. First, it is a process of transmission in a relational sense, whereby the ones who feel sadness in this situation are not only the bride but also other relatives such as parents, siblings, and grandparents. Second, it occurs materially and spatially, as grief anchors itself physically in the architecture of the home; it sticks to everyday spaces and objects like the courtyard, wall niches and clay dolls, transforming the natal into an archive of a severed relationship. Third, its effect is sometimes disputed and performatively controlled. Women employ hidden transcripts, like satirical dowry songs, to temporarily negotiate and disrupt these power dynamics while the ceremony primarily enforces patriarchal conformity. The ritual is simultaneously controlled and challenged through performance—the bride's use of “the custom of the world,” the father's recommendation to “live obediently,” and the upturns of dowry songs, where the hidden transcript of resistance comes to the fore albeit temporally. By positioning Teresa Brennan's idea of transmission of affect against Silvan Tomkins' theory of being affected, Sara Ahmed's theory of affective economies, Lauren Berlant's theory of cruel optimism, and James C. Scott's idea of hidden transcript, the study proposes a framework that unites those different approaches

under the pointed thesis that they perform distinct functions rather than being alternative expressions of one single thing called emotions. The moments of resistance discovered through Scott's hidden transcript, however sincere, ought not to be misinterpreted: one ironic line within a genre dominated by lamentation cannot be regarded as a violation of the kinship structures presented by *vidaai*, and this has been the main task of this research.

Future investigations may further develop this method by analysing *vidaai* practices across different linguistic areas of India, examining how migration and evolving marriage rituals affect the emotional meaning of these songs in today's Haryana, or conducting comparative studies that examine whether the same emotional patterns are present in mourning traditions outside the marriage context. This study establishes a method for treating folk songs as vehicles of emotion rather than as fixed symbols.

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