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I.D.E.A.S.
OFFICE of
INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

हरियाणा की आवाज़

HARYANA KI AWAAZ

Volume III Issue IV

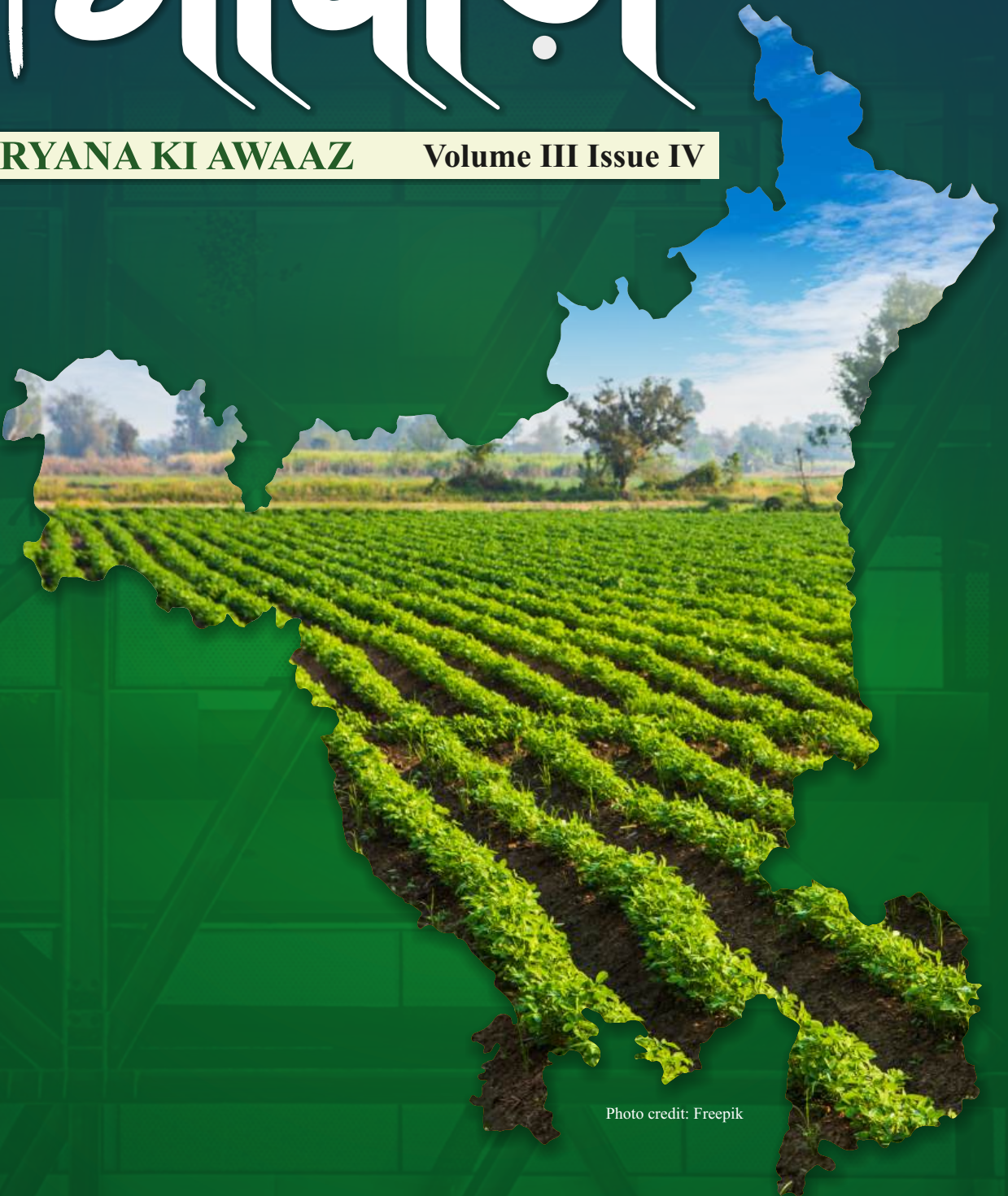


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Acknowledgment

We would like to acknowledge and extend our appreciation to our guest contributors: Kumkum Jairam, Dr Ahfaz Khan and Puneet Singh Singhal for their contribution to the creation, design, and presentation of this Issue. Their efforts and attention to detail have played a key role in its finalisation.





**To,
Redefining and Reclaiming the Story of Haryana**



Dr. Prachy Hooda

Curator

There is always a stereotypical understanding of Haryana: rustic, rural (read: *dehati*), highly patriarchal and violent towards women. This had led to a very one-sided, homogenous representation of the region and its people, that lacks not just the nuances and complexities of its socio-cultural fabric, but a complete lack of interest and engagement by various stakeholders, in varied capacities (including mass media and academia alike), to acknowledge the depths of and differences in people's lived experiences.

My own experiences in “progressive” university spaces made me first-hand realise the “casual” stereotyping that those coming from the region face, mostly in the form of “jokes” (which aren't humorous) and even passing remarks like “*You don't look Haryanvi*” or that “*You don't speak like Haryanvis*”. This is also partly affected by the caricature-ish depiction of Haryanvis in Bollywood, where actors try to speak a language that is nowhere close to the different dialects spoken in Haryana. In this vast pool of poor projection of what is commonly considered Haryanvi (only by those who are not from the region), recent work by a few actors, social media content creators as well as young academics feels like a breath of fresh air, precisely because it consciously aims to challenge these stereotypes and carve out a space for grassroots voices.

In this backdrop, this monthly issue *Haryana Ki Awaaz* is a small step to counter this over-simplistic view of the region and its people by providing a platform to the people of Haryana, from all walks of life, to share their stories and lived experiences. It is aimed to project them as the active agents that they have always been but have never been given enough acknowledgement for. Each issue will focus on different facets of the socio-cultural fabric of Haryana as well as its diverse social groups.

I am thankful to the Office of Interdisciplinary Studies (IDEAS) at O.P. Jindal Global University (JGU) for its support in conceptualising this initiative.



The case of Dada Chhulaye – the Protector of village Kabirpur



Volume III – Haryanvi Religiosity

Issue IV – The Story of Sanjhi: A Disappearing Rural Festival

The festival of Sanjhi represents a significant vernacular tradition that combined domestic ritual, folk creativity, and the collective participation of women. Celebrated during Navratri, Sanjhi is much more than a devotional practice for the residents of rural Haryana and rural Delhi. It is a community-based art form that reflected the social, emotional, and symbolic world of rural women. Its simplicity is rooted in readily available natural materials like cow dung, clay limestone, natural colours, and locally grown food grains. It emphasizes on shared participation makes it one of the most accessible expressions of the feminine in North India. Once an integral part of the region's rural culture, the festival of Sanjhi, is now looking for its old patrons.

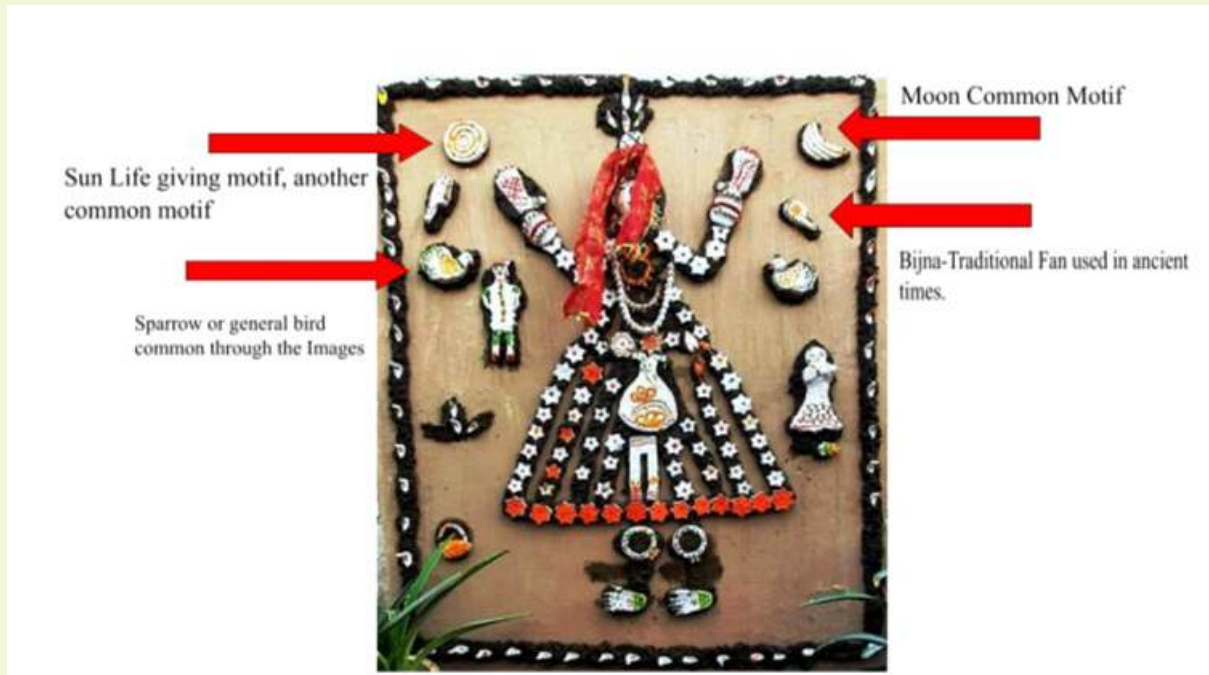
In its traditional form, the crafting of Sanjhi Mata begins on the first day of Navratri. Women and young girls prepare an image on the walls of their homes using cow dung and clay. It also includes motifs inspired by nature such as the suraj (sun), chaand (moon), sitaare (stars), and floral patterns with modest iconography. It represents a stylised female figure with a deep cultural meaning.



The goddess is perceived not only as a divine presence but also as a familiar, approachable entity. As per the local belief, the goddess reflects the everyday aspirations and anxieties of adolescent girls. This intimate relationship between devotee and deity is a characteristic feature of many women-centred folk rituals in North India. Sanjhi is a prominent example of this phenomenon in the villages of the region. Each evening during the nine days of Navratri, the ritual space around the Sanjhi image becomes a site of female gathering. Girls assemble with diyas (oil lamps) and perform geet-goyan, singing traditional folk songs addressed to the deity:

“Sanjhi Maiya, aaj aapko kya odhaayein? Aaj kya pakwaan banaayein?”

These songs are not merely musical offerings; they function as a form of dialogue, reaffirming social bonds and transmitting cultural memory. Elders often respond by giving small gifts or sweets to the participating girls, ensuring intergenerational continuity. The conclusion of the festival on Dussehra involves a distinctive farewell rite. The wall image is ceremonially removed, and only the head of Sanjhi Mata is placed inside a perforated clay pot (gharonda). With a lamp lit inside, the glowing pot is set afloat in the village pond at dusk, creating a visually evocative moment that blends devotion with ecological symbolism. Local boys, standing at the pond's edge with sticks, attempt playfully to prevent the pot from crossing over, motivated by the long-held belief that “agar gharā paar ho gaya toh apshagun hota hai.” This interaction between boys and girls adds another social dimension to what is essentially a ritual of gentle farewell.



Iconography of Sanjhi includes various natural celestial bodies and objects used in rural households. Objects like Bijna (hand fan) can be seen in most of the Sanjhi depictions. Today, however, the practice of Sanjhi has become increasingly rare in the rapidly urbanising landscape of Delhi and Haryana. The disappearance of cattle from household courtyards, restricted access to cow dung, and the shrinking of village spaces due to urban development have rendered the traditional modes of celebration difficult to sustain. As a result, the festival survives primarily in memory, oral narratives, and the recollections of elders who once actively participated in its preparation. Yet, despite its decline, Sanjhi remains a significant part of the region's intangible cultural heritage. Its study offers valuable insights into rural domestic rituals, women's cultural agency, and the artistic vocabulary of everyday life. Preserving the memory of Sanjhi is crucial – not merely as nostalgia, but as an acknowledgment that the cultural identity of the region is incomplete without recognising the rural traditions that shaped its historical and social fabric.

The aarti (prayer) sung during the ritual is as follows:



आरता री आरता मेरी सांझी माई आरता ,
आरता के नैन, कचाली भर आइयो
टेढ़ी टेढ़ी पगियो में, बीरा जी हमारे,
लंबे लंबे घूंघट वाली, भावज हमारी,

क्या मेरी सांझी ओढेगी, क्या मेरी सांझी पहरेगी,
सोने का सीस गुनधाएगी,
जाग सांझी जाग तेरे माथे लगे भाग,
तेरी पटियों में मांग, तेरे हाथो में सुहाग,

गोरा री गोरा सांझी का भैया गोरा
गोरी है बहुरिया, अस्सी तेरे फूल, पिचासी तेरे डंडे
श्रवण तेरी डोर, मुल्लानी तेरे पलड़े,
नौ नवरात्रे देवी के 16 कनागत पितरों के,
उठ मेरी देवी बारंबार, खड़े हुआ हम शीश झुका,

हल्दी गांठ गठीली, सबकी बहु है हठीली,
मांगे सोने का बिंदा, बिंदा मोल गया,
भाभो रूठ गयी, भैया बागों में जाइयो,
एक लोधड़ा कटाइयो, सूडा सूड़ मचाइयो,

कालबली के ऊंचे पाए, नीचे पाए
लेले बेटा गोद खिलाए,
गुरसल मंगल गाती आई,
चिड़िया चूं चूं करती आई

अऊं तेरी सांझी, मांगे गेंहू,
तू दे सपूती जौ, तेरे बेटा होंगे नौ,
नौ नोरते देवी के, सोलह कनागत पितरों के,
खोल मेरी देवी , चंदन किवाड़,
मैं आई तेरे पुजनहार,
पूज पूजन्ति क्या कुछ लाई,
भैया भतीजे सब परिवार,

Know the Contributors



Kumkum Jairam is a Research Intern and Content Lead at the Dilli Dehat Project. A literature and cinema enthusiast, she holds a Master's degree in English Literature from Dr. B. R. Ambedkar University Delhi (AUD).



Dr Ahfaz Khan is Project Associate at Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts.



Puneet Singh Singhal is the Founder/Curator of Dilli Dehat Project, a community-led archive and storytelling initiative that documents the rural histories, cultures, and lived realities of Delhi's villages.

Meet our Team



Dr. Prachy Hooda
Lead
Haryana Ki Awaaz



Ankit Dahiya
Member Associate
Haryana Ki Awaaz

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The Office of Interdisciplinary Studies (IDEAS) at O.P. Jindal Global University (JGU) serves as a university-wide platform for fostering interdisciplinary teaching, research, and community engagement across the social sciences. It brings together scholars, students, and practitioners to co-create knowledge and develop innovative responses to complex real-world challenges.

At its core, IDEAS operates as an intellectual incubator, supporting collaborative scholarship, experimental pedagogy, and research that transcends traditional disciplinary boundaries. Through its initiatives and field-based programmes, it promotes critical inquiry, applied learning, and engagement with pressing development concerns.

With a strong emphasis on interdisciplinary dialogue, global academic exchange, and community-linked research, IDEAS aims to cultivate a dynamic academic environment that connects theory with practice and advances socially relevant scholarship.