



Cultural Anxiety and Ethical Selfhood in Contemporary Haryanvi Ragni Traditions

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary Haryanvi ragni traditions continue to function as important repositories of cultural memory, ethical reflection, and vernacular social consciousness within North Indian folk culture. The present study critically examines selected ragnis from *Avikavani Haryanvi Ragni Sangrah* by Anand Kumar Ashodhiya in order to explore the interrelationship between cultural anxiety, ethical selfhood, social reconstruction, domestic negotiation, and changing perceptions of modernity in contemporary rural Haryana. The analysis focuses particularly on the ragnis “बात पते की,” “समझ,” “नवनिर्माण,” “आपस की बात,” and “कॉलेज आळी,” situating them within the broader traditions of Haryanvi Saang, oral performance culture, and Pingal-based folk poetics. Methodologically, the study adopts an interdisciplinary qualitative framework integrating textual analysis, oral tradition studies, performance theory, cultural semiotics, and Pingal prosodic examination. The interpretative approach draws upon the theoretical insights of scholars such as A.K. Ramanujan, Richard Bauman, Ruth Finnegan, Stuart Blackburn, and Kapila Vatsyayan to contextualize Haryanvi ragni as a living oral-literary tradition rather than merely a performative folk genre. The study argues that these compositions collectively construct a vernacular ethical discourse that critiques substance abuse, cultural vulgarization, domestic fragmentation, superficial modernity, and moral instability while simultaneously advocating self-discipline, cultural

continuity, and social reconciliation. The article further demonstrates that Pingal prosody, refrain structures, cadence patterns, and oral-musical rhythm function not only as aesthetic devices but also as carriers of emotional intensity, collective memory, and social persuasion. The study highlights the literary, performative, and sociological significance of contemporary Haryanvi ragni within Indian folk humanities.

Background Study and Source Context

The present study examines selected compositions from *Avikavani Haryanvi Ragni Sangrah: Sanskritik Chetna, Samajik Pratirodh aur Bhakti ki Lokgatha* (Ashodhiya, 2025), a contemporary collection that engages with Haryanvi ragni as both literary expression and socio-cultural commentary. The text is significant within emerging Haryanvi literary discourse because it attempts not only to preserve oral traditions but also to reinterpret them in relation to changing rural realities in Haryana.

Haryanvi ragni and Saang traditions have historically functioned as participatory oral forms rooted in agrarian life, kinship structures, public performance, and community ethics. Performed in village chaupal spaces, fairs, and local recital gatherings, ragni traditions have served as vehicles for entertainment, moral reflection, historical memory, and social negotiation. Unlike highly textual literary systems, these traditions depend upon oral circulation, performative immediacy, rhythmic memorability, and audience participation.

The present study focuses specifically on five ragnis “बात पते की,” “समझ,” “नवनिर्माण,” “आपस की बात,” and “कॉलेज आळी,” These compositions were selected because they collectively represent major thematic concerns recurring throughout the collection: cultural anxiety, ethical selfhood, social reconstruction, domestic tension, and negotiated modernity. Together, they provide a representative framework for examining how contemporary Haryanvi ragni responds to rapid social transition, media influence, weakening agrarian collectivism, commercialization of folk performance, and changing behavioural norms.

Recent scholarly discussions on Haryanvi folk literature have increasingly moved beyond archival preservation toward analytical engagement with Pingal prosody, oral aesthetics, and vernacular sociology. In this context, the published works of Anand Kumar Ashodhiya on Haryanvi Pingal, Saang-style ragni traditions, and folk-cultural interpretation contribute to an emerging body of research



attempting to connect oral traditions with contemporary academic literary discourse. His earlier studies on *Heer–Ranjha*, *Adharajan*, and *Kissa Bhagat Puranmal* particularly foreground the relationship between folk poetics, prosodic structure, cultural consciousness, and social commentary within Haryanvi oral literature.

The selected compositions therefore provide an appropriate corpus for examining how contemporary ragni traditions continue to function simultaneously as oral literature, ethical discourse, performative expression, and cultural documentation within present-day Haryana.

Literature Review

The study of Indian oral traditions has developed through interdisciplinary contributions from folklore studies, anthropology, literary criticism, and performance theory. A.K. Ramanujan's understanding of Indian oral narratives as context-sensitive and plural provides an important framework for interpreting regional folk traditions as dynamic cultural systems rather than fixed textual entities. His emphasis on multiple tellings is particularly relevant to Haryanvi ragni traditions, where performance context and oral delivery substantially shape meaning.

Richard Bauman's performance-centered approach shifted attention from the literary text alone toward the communicative event of oral expression. This perspective is useful for understanding Haryanvi Saang and ragni traditions, in which rhythm, tonal modulation, repetition, audience interaction, and performative emphasis contribute significantly to interpretation. Ruth Finnegan likewise demonstrated that oral poetry possesses formal complexity and aesthetic discipline despite often being marginalized within text-dominated literary scholarship.

Studies by Stuart Blackburn and Kapila Vatsyayan further established that Indian oral performance traditions preserve regional memory, collective identity, and performative aesthetics through interconnected systems of narration, music, gesture, and rhythm. Their work helps situate Haryanvi ragni within a broader continuum of Indian folk dramaturgy and oral-poetic performance.

Within Hindi literary criticism, Hazari Prasad Dwivedi emphasized the importance of लोकधर्मी साहित्य in preserving civilizational continuity, while Ramchandra Shukla acknowledged the formative role of folk consciousness in regional literary traditions. Vidyanivas Mishra's writings on folk language and rural semiotics remain particularly relevant for interpreting vernacular literature as a carrier of lived cultural



philosophy. Nagendra's observations regarding Indian poetics and aesthetic structure also assist in understanding *rasa*, cadence, and symbolic layering within folk compositions.

Existing scholarship on Haryanvi literature, however, has largely concentrated on historical Saang performers, linguistic identity, or musical performance traditions. Detailed interdisciplinary analyses combining Pingal prosody, oral performance, vernacular ethics, and socio-cultural interpretation remain relatively limited.

In this emerging field, the published research works of Anand Kumar Ashodhiya represent a developing attempt to academically systematize Haryanvi ragni traditions through Pingal-oriented literary analysis. His studies on *Heer-Ranjha*, *Adharajan*, and *Kissa Bhagat Puranmal* explore the relationship between oral performance, prosodic design, folk aesthetics, and social consciousness within contemporary Haryanvi literary culture. These works contribute toward framing Haryanvi ragni not merely as performative entertainment but as a structured oral-literary tradition possessing analytical and cultural significance.

The present study builds upon this emerging research space by examining selected contemporary ragnis through an integrated framework combining literary interpretation, oral-performance analysis, and Pingal prosody. The primary research gap addressed here concerns the limited scholarly attention given to contemporary Haryanvi ragni as a simultaneous site of ethical discourse, cultural negotiation, and oral-poetic structure.

Research Methodology

The present study adopts a qualitative and interdisciplinary research methodology combining textual criticism, oral tradition studies, performance theory, cultural semiotics, and Pingal-based prosodic analysis in order to examine selected ragnis from *Avikavani Haryanvi Ragni Sangrah* (Ashodhiya, 2025). The research is designed as a focused literary-cultural analysis of five representative ragnis—“बात पते की,” “समझ,” “नवनिर्माण,” “आपस की बात,” and “कॉलेज आळी,”—selected on the basis of their thematic engagement with ethical discourse, cultural transition, domestic negotiation, and changing perceptions of modernity within contemporary rural Haryana.

Since the primary corpus consists of the author's own published ragni compositions, the study adopts a self-reflexive literary-critical approach grounded in textual and prosodic analysis. Interpretative claims are therefore limited to the selected corpus and are framed within established frameworks of oral-literary



criticism and performance studies. The present study remains limited to textual, performative, and prosodic interpretation of published ragni compositions and does not include ethnographic audience analysis or formal musicological documentation.

The primary source material consists of the original Haryanvi ragni texts published in the collection along with associated authorial notes and Pingal-oriented explanatory observations. The study treats these compositions as oral-performative literary units rather than merely written poetic texts. Secondary sources include scholarly works related to folklore studies, Indian oral traditions, performance theory, vernacular literary criticism, folk aesthetics, rural sociology, feminist interpretation, and Indian poetics.

The analytical procedure was conducted in four stages. First, close textual reading was employed to identify recurring themes, symbolic structures, ethical motifs, and socio-cultural references within the selected ragnis. Second, a performance-oriented analysis examined refrain structures, repetition patterns, tonal shifts, oral cadence, and dialogic sequencing in order to understand how meaning is reinforced through performative recitation. Third, a Pingal prosodic examination was undertaken to analyse mātrā distribution, yati placement, guru-laghu sequencing, rhythmic balance, and refrain architecture. Fourth, an interpretative comparative framework was applied to situate the selected compositions within broader traditions of North Indian folk performance and vernacular ethical discourse.

The study further incorporates limited feminist and sociological readings, particularly in relation to representations of gender roles, domestic tension, behavioural expectations, and cultural anxiety in transitional rural society. However, the article does not attempt ethnographic fieldwork, audience-response surveys, or musical notation analysis. Its primary focus remains literary-performance interpretation grounded in textual and prosodic examination.

Methodologically, the research is therefore delimited to the literary, performative, and prosodic dimensions of selected contemporary Haryanvi ragnis and does not claim to represent the entirety of Haryanvi folk traditions. The objective is to demonstrate how contemporary ragni functions simultaneously as oral literature, ethical commentary, performative discourse, and cultural memory within the evolving socio-cultural landscape of Haryana.

Narrative and Literary Analysis

The selected ragnis collectively portray contemporary Haryana as a society negotiating cultural transition, ethical uncertainty, and changing social identities. Unlike purely entertainment-oriented folk



compositions, these texts repeatedly foreground themes of social anxiety, moral introspection, and cultural continuity.

“*बात पते की*,” presents a critique of cultural decline and social instability. The lines “हरियाणे की सभ्यता पै, या काळी स्याही फिरगी / संस्कृति भी घटती घटती, तळै जमीं पै गिरगी” (Ashodhiya, 2025, “*बात पते की*,” stanza 1) employ imagery of spreading darkness and collapse to symbolize moral deterioration and weakening social structures. References to intoxication, aggression, and abandoned education further reinforce concerns regarding the erosion of rural ethical frameworks. Similarly, the expression “भरी जवानी माटी कर दी” (“*बात पते की*,” stanza 3) transforms youthful decline into a metaphor for wasted social potential.

In contrast, “*समझ*” emphasizes ethical restraint and disciplined identity. The refrain “धुर दिन का शरीफ सूँ, पर माणस बोदा कोन्या” (Ashodhiya, 2025, “*समझ*” refrain) functions as a declaration of moral steadiness within a socially unstable environment. The composition critiques vulgarized performative culture through lines such as “जात पात अश्लील कविता फीम अर लाडू लिखी ना / बदमाशी के थोथे किस्से, गन गोळी पिस्टल सिक्खी ना” (“*समझ*,” stanza 2). Rather than glorifying aggression, the ragni constructs an alternative ethical model grounded in restraint, social responsibility, and guru-centered cultural discipline.

“*नवनिर्माण*” extends this ethical framework toward cultural reconstruction. The metaphor “ठहरया पाणी गाधळा होज्या” (Ashodhiya, 2025, “*नवनिर्माण*,” stanza 1) critiques stagnation while advocating creative renewal within folk traditions. References to figures such as *Pandit Lakhmichand*, *Mangeram*, and *Guru Paleram* position the composition within an ongoing lineage of oral-cultural transmission. At the same time, lines criticizing commercially motivated performance practices reveal anxiety regarding the commodification of folk traditions.

Domestic and relational tensions emerge prominently in “*आपस की बात*.” The recurring line “वो सिड़ा फिरै सै चौधर में म्हारा घर तुड़वावैगा” (Ashodhiya, 2025, “*आपस की बात*,” refrain) dramatizes the destabilizing effect of external interference within family relationships. The composition presents domestic



fragmentation not merely as personal conflict but as a socially mediated condition shaped by kinship pressure and performative authority structures. Yet the ragni ultimately gestures toward reconciliation rather than rupture.

“कॉलेज आळी” addresses changing perceptions of modernity through satire and observational commentary. References to dress, language, mobility, and consumer culture reflect rural responses to urbanized behavioural patterns. Expressions such as “ऊँचें सेंडल” and “नॉलेज आळी” (Ashodhiya, 2025, “कॉलेज आळी,” stanza 2) symbolically connect education and urban aspiration with changing identity formation. However, the composition should not be reduced to a simplistic rejection of modern femininity; rather, it reflects broader anxieties surrounding cultural transition and shifting social expectations.

Collectively, these ragnis construct a vernacular discourse concerned with ethical balance, cultural continuity, domestic negotiation, and negotiated modernity within contemporary rural Haryana.

Pingal and Prosodic Analysis

The selected ragnis collectively demonstrate that contemporary Haryanvi folk composition continues to preserve a highly sophisticated oral-prosodic architecture rooted in the indigenous Pingal tradition, even when articulated through seemingly spontaneous conversational diction. Beneath their accessible linguistic surface operates a disciplined system of metrical engineering, tonal calibration, refrain symmetry, and performative cadence that aligns closely with the oral-musical dynamics of Saang performance traditions. The prosodic structures embedded within these compositions do not function merely as decorative poetic devices; rather, they constitute the primary acoustic framework through which ethical persuasion, collective memory, dramatic intensity, and social consciousness become orally transmissible within the folk sphere.

The ragni “बात पते की” is structured within a flexible *Lavani-Mishrit Samamatrik* folk meter whose cadence is specifically optimized for declamatory oral delivery. The composition sustains an approximate recurrence of twenty-eight to thirty *mātrās* per *Charan*, thereby preserving rhythmic stability while simultaneously allowing tonal elasticity during live performance. A mathematically controlled yati generally emerges around the sixteenth *mātrā*, after which the line descends into a compressed twelve-to-fourteen-*mātrā* terminal segment. This descending cadence produces a marked rhetorical impact. For



instance, in the line “हरियाणे की सभ्यता पै, या काळी स्याही फिरगी,” the internal pause preceding “या काळी स्याही फिरगी” creates a dramatic tonal suspension that amplifies the emotional perception of civilizational decline. The recurring terminal rhyme structures such as “फिरगी,” “गिरगी,” “मरगी,” “डरगी,” and “कतरगी” establish a sustained *Antya-Anupras* continuity that acoustically reinforces the thematic atmosphere of social collapse and moral anxiety. The refrain architecture further intensifies mnemonic retention by enabling collective audience anticipation during oral recital, thereby transforming performance into participatory rhythmic experience.

The ragni “समझ” reveals a comparatively firmer and more disciplined rhythmic gait associated with ethical proclamation and social self-definition. The composition operates through a *Chaubola*-oriented *Samamatrik* structure in which guru-laghu sequencing remains remarkably balanced across the verse progression. Each line maintains approximately twenty-six to twenty-eight *mātrās*, while the yati placement near the fourteenth or sixteenth *mātrā* generates a marching oral cadence resembling didactic Saang recitation. The refrain “धुर दिन का शरीफ सूँ, पर माणस बोदा कोन्या” functions simultaneously as tonal anchor, ethical assertion, and acoustic stabilizer. The repeated terminal deployment of “कोन्या” produces a hardened sonic closure reflective of the composition’s uncompromising moral posture. Internal phonetic compression in lines such as “जात पात अश्लील कविता फीम अर लाडू लिकखी ना” generates dense alliterative layering through clustered consonantal repetition, thereby increasing oral-musical propulsion and dramatic sharpness. Here, the prosodic structure itself becomes an embodiment of ethical resistance, where rhythm mirrors the rigidity of moral conviction.

In “नवनिर्माण,” the prosodic architecture adopts a more expansive and reflective tonal movement suitable for commemorative and philosophical narration. The composition follows a Geet-Shaili-inflected *Samamatrik* structure characterized by elongated cadence cycles and gradual tonal descent. The *Charans* generally fluctuate between twenty-eight and thirty *mātrās* while maintaining balanced rhythmic continuity necessary for reflective oral performance. The line “ठहरया पाणी गाधळा होज्या, ना सोचो नाके लावण की” demonstrates a carefully distributed yati after the philosophical proposition, allowing contemplative pause before the concluding moral reflection. The recurring rhyme structures “लावण की,”



“इतरावण की,” and “बणावण की” create cyclical acoustic continuity suggestive of regeneration and social reconstruction. Equally significant is the tonal slowing that accompanies references to folk-cultural figures such as “लखमीचन्द,” “माँगेराम,” and “राजकिशन.” During oral recital, these names acquire ceremonial resonance through deliberate cadence reduction, thereby transforming the act of recitation into a performative archive of cultural remembrance. The prosodic modulation therefore functions simultaneously as rhythm and memorialization.

The ragni “आपस की बात” demonstrates one of the clearest examples of conversational Saang-oriented metrical engineering within the selected corpus. The composition operates through a disciplined *Lavani-Mishrit Chaubola* framework specifically designed to simulate the urgency of domestic dialogue and interpersonal confrontation. Each verse line sustains approximately twenty-six to twenty-eight *mātrās*, producing accelerated rhythmic pacing suitable for dramatic oral exchange. The yati is mathematically positioned near the sixteenth *mātrā* before descending into a compressed rhyming tail segment of approximately twelve *mātrās*. In the line “उस मूरख नै समझाले वो कति, नाश करावैगा,” the pause preceding “नाश करावैगा” intensifies the emotional warning encoded within the utterance. The recurring terminal suffixes “करावैगा,” “तुड़वावैगा,” “बिठावैगा,” and “भिड़ावैगा” generate a powerful *Antya-Anupras* resonance that sustains acoustic continuity across the composition while simultaneously reinforcing the atmosphere of impending familial rupture. Internal rhyme clusters such as “अंघाई,” “सिपाही,” “तवाई,” and “करड़ाई,” along with “राजी,” “पाजी,” “काजी,” and “बाजी,” produce dense rhythmic compression and rapid oral propulsion. The line “तूँ मेर तै राजी, में तेर तै राजी” exhibits symmetrical sonic balancing that momentarily stabilizes the emotional environment before the succeeding tonal acceleration reintroduces tension. The prosodic architecture therefore directly encodes the instability of domestic conflict within the rhythmic body of the composition itself.

The ragni “कॉलेज आळी” introduces a comparatively lighter but structurally sophisticated satirical cadence associated with performative folk humour and social parody. The composition is structured within an adaptive *Geet-Shaili Samamatrik* meter in which dynamic repetition and performative elasticity are prioritized for theatrical delivery. The *Charans* consistently maintain approximately twenty-six to twenty-eight *mātrās* while incorporating rhythmic duplication patterns that facilitate oral-musical



momentum. The *yati* generally emerges near the fourteenth or sixteenth *mātrā*, allowing the performer to create comic suspension before landing on the refrain-based terminal closure. In the line “बदल्या इसा जमाना इब ये, कॉलेज आळी होगी,” the pause preceding “कॉलेज आळी होगी” generates tonal anticipation that heightens satirical effect. The recurring feminine rhyme suffixes “आळी होगी,” “काळी होगी,” “नाँलेज आळी होगी,” “नखरे आळी होगी,” and “ट्रैफिक आळी होगी” establish a highly memorable refrain architecture optimized for communal oral participation. Internal lexical pairings such as “मैक्सी-टैक्सी” and “सॉरी-नाँलेज” create phonetic hybridity within the metrical framework itself, thereby dramatizing the cultural collision between agrarian simplicity and urban modernity through sound structure. Repetition patterns in lines such as “ना बोलण का, ढंग आवै था, ना बिलकुल भी, जान था” reveal conscious rhythmic engineering designed specifically for interactive Saang recitation. The performative cadence oscillates between humour and critique, allowing the oral structure to embody the cultural tension that the composition thematically interrogates.

From the perspective of classical Indian aesthetics, the selected ragnis collectively traverse करुण, हास्य, वीर, शांत, and व्यंग्य rasas while maintaining remarkable performative cohesion through rhythmic modulation and tonal regulation. Emotional transitions emerge not solely through semantic content but through carefully engineered cadence shifts, pause distributions, refrain recurrences, and *guru-laghu* balancing. Similarly, *alankars* such as अनुप्रास, पुनरुक्ति, ध्वनि-सौंदर्य, and अंत्यानुप्रास arise organically from the oral-musical demands of folk recitation rather than from artificially ornamental poetic construction. The acoustic density of these compositions demonstrates that Haryanvi ragni traditions preserve an advanced vernacular prosodic system in which meter, orality, and collective performance remain inseparable.

The Pingal structures embedded within these ragnis ultimately reveal the continued vitality of North Indian oral-poetic sciences within regional folk traditions. These compositions demonstrate that Haryanvi ragni is not an unstructured folk utterance but a mathematically balanced oral-literary form governed by sophisticated principles of cadence, *yati* distribution, tonal gravity, and performative acoustics. Prosody here becomes the primary architecture of cultural transmission through which ethical discourse, communal participation, memory preservation, and social resistance acquire enduring oral permanence.



Discussion

The selected ragnis demonstrate that contemporary Haryanvi folk literature continues to function as a socially responsive oral tradition engaged with questions of morality, cultural continuity, and changing rural identity. Rather than operating solely as entertainment-oriented compositions, these ragnis articulate vernacular reflections on social instability, behavioural change, and ethical responsibility.

A major contribution of the selected texts lies in their formulation of a localized ethical discourse rooted in agrarian memory, oral pedagogy, kinship relations, and community-based cultural values. The compositions repeatedly foreground restraint, dignity, accountability, and social balance as responses to perceived moral instability.

The study also indicates that contemporary cultural anxiety in Haryana is closely connected with commercialization, media-driven performativity, changing gender expectations, and weakening collective structures. However, the selected ragnis do not simply reject modernity; instead, they distinguish between meaningful social development and superficial imitation.

Representations of women within the compositions reflect transitional rural perceptions rather than a singular ideological position. Certain passages employ satirical commentary shaped by masculine folk idiom, while others express concern regarding dignity, vulnerability, and relational instability. These tensions suggest the need for historically and culturally contextualized readings of gender within Haryanvi oral traditions rather than reductive binary interpretations.

The analysis further demonstrates that Pingal prosody remains structurally important within contemporary ragni traditions. Cadence, refrain repetition, rhythmic balance, and oral-musical patterning contribute significantly to emotional emphasis and mnemonic continuity. The continued use of such prosodic systems suggests the persistence of indigenous oral-poetic frameworks within modern vernacular performance culture.

The repeated invocation of guru lineages and earlier folk masters also indicates that Haryanvi ragni traditions continue to preserve systems of oral-cultural inheritance alongside literary expression. In this sense, ragni functions simultaneously as performance, memory archive, and ethical commentary.

Conclusion

The present study demonstrates that contemporary Haryanvi ragni traditions continue to operate as significant forms of vernacular literary and cultural expression within North Indian folk society. Through



the analysis of selected compositions from *Avikavani Haryanvi Ragni Sangrah*, the article shows that ragni remains closely connected with ethical reflection, social commentary, performative memory, and cultural negotiation.

The selected ragnis engage issues such as addiction, commercialization, domestic instability, changing behavioural norms, and cultural fragmentation while simultaneously proposing frameworks of restraint, reconciliation, and continuity. These concerns are articulated not through abstract theoretical discourse but through orally grounded literary expression shaped by rural experience and performative immediacy.

The study also establishes that Pingal-based prosodic structures remain central to the communicative effectiveness of Haryanvi ragni. Rhythm, yati distribution, refrain architecture, and oral cadence contribute directly to emotional intensity, memorability, and audience participation. Such findings reinforce the importance of examining vernacular oral literature through performance-oriented and prosodic frameworks rather than through purely text-centric literary models.

At a broader level, the article contributes to the growing academic recognition of Haryanvi ragni as a structured oral-literary tradition possessing sociological, aesthetic, and intellectual significance. The study further indicates the need for future research on audience reception, comparative folk poetics, evolving performance environments, and the relationship between oral traditions and digital cultural circulation.

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