CHAPTER 4

MANIFESTATION OF MASCULINITY AND FEMININITY IN FESTIVALS

The ritual behaviour concerning festivals, fasts and exchange of gifts (cloths, cash and food items) provide some of the significant indicators of ideas related to masculinity and femininity in a culture.

Jaipur city has a culture of its own which cuts-across the boundaries of caste and class. This is reflected in the celebration of festivals and the customs of exchanging gifts during festival. Rajmata Gayatri Devi² writes:

"There were established times when Jai (Maharaja Man Singh) was both a ruler and one of Jaipur's people. These were the festivals, the colourful pageants which Jai would lead, and which all the

1. Here exchange does not mean mutual reciprocity. The emphasis is that any individual may not receive from the person to whom he gave. Levi Strauss explains the development of such integrative cultural ties through the social networks which generalized exchanges create. For details, see P. Ekeh 1974.

town people and many of the villagers from the surrounding country would participate. Some were great religious feast-days, other formal state occasions. Jai and this nobles wore their finest jewels, their brocade jackets, their grand turbans, and their ceremonial swords. The women of the noble families dressed in their colourful Rajasthani costumes and their traditional jewels. There were parades and processions through the city streets and celebrations and feasting inside the palaces. On such occasions the women would hold their own festivities in the zenana, quite separately from the men, but Jai himself always left his nobles and ministers and joined us there for part of the day. As these festivals upheld in their age-old manner, we might well have been back in the eighteenth century, in the reign of the great Maharaja Jai Singh II, who built the modern city of Jaipur and who was famous for the splendour of his court and his wisdom in government."

Since Jaipur city does not have any feminine or masculine ideals, to follow, from its historical past, the focus on festivals become all the more important. It rather have ideals either derived from the caste ethos or are taken from the classical texts and many of the ideals are the mythical figures. Not like Udaipur city (in Rajasthan) which has an imposing Rajput culture coloured with its heroic past. The culture of Jaipur city seems to be more Brahmanic and religion-oriented, but at the same time it is not a pilgrimage
However, festivals are very important aspect of life in the city of Jaipur. There are references suggesting that Jaipur is the city where each day is a festive day i.e. "nityotsavshali" as here used to be "nine festivals in seven days". Sir Gopinath Purohit prepared a calendar of fairs and festivals celebrated in Jaipur city. Accordingly, Basant Panchmi, Bhanu Saptmi, Mahashivratri, Davaat-pujan, Holi, Sheetlasthami, Gangaur, Ramnavmi, Ganga saptmi, Ashadhi Dushera, Guru purnima, Nag panchami, Teej, Raksha Bandhan, Kajali Teej or Badi Teej, Janmaasthami, Goganavmi, Maharaja's Birthday, Jalzhulni akadashi, Dushera, Shalak, Sharad purnima, Diwali, Annakoot and Makar sankranti were the main festivals celebrated by the Royal family as well as by the public. Apart from these there are few more festivals and fasts widely observed by the people of Jaipur, according to the field work data, they are Bhai-duj, Karvac-houth, Sheelasthmi etc.

The list of festivals seems to be endless even if we exclude festivals of other religious groups, e.g., Jains. Some of these festivals are characteristically Jaipuri and are helpful in understanding what is masculine and feminine in the culture of Jaipur city.

This chapter explores a few festivals like Gangaur, Teej and Makar Sankranti as notions of masculinity and femininity are most strikingly evident in these festivals. Moreover, they are celebrated by Brahmins, Rajputs and Banias in similar manner.

I. GANGAUR

Gangaur is celebrated, every year, in the month of March-April and according to the Hindu calendar on the third day of Chaitra (Chaitsudi teej). It is a festival of 18 days which begins from the following day of Holi till the third day of chitra i.e. Gangaur. For 18 days girls and married women worship Gangaur, i.e., Goddess Parvati/Gauri
for a good husband and life long marital bliss.

The myth behind the festival is that after a long period of austerity and meditation Goddess Parvati's wishes were fulfilled with the arrival of her husband Shiva (Isar) to escort her home. Similarly, the unmarried girls pray to Gauri for a good husband and the married ones ask for long life for their husbands. They request the Goddess that like her prayers culminated in the union with god Shiva likewise she should fulfill their wishes regarding a good husband and a life long matrimony. There is a complex of songs and procedure of performing puja which consist of 18 days of worship.

During these 18 days, starting from the very next day after Holi, we see groups of young girls and married women, bejewelled and dressed in colorful brocaded clothes, moving in the streets of Jaipur city, singing and carrying pots of water topped with grass and flowers. On the final day the royal Gangaur from the zenana apartments of the city palace is also taken out in a procession (sawari) for two consecu-
five days. And on these two days the main markets of the city remain closed, in a way everyone in the city gets involved in the festivities of Gangaur - men, women, children, government and the erstwhile royal family. The men in their respective roles as brothers or fathers go out and buy ghevar (sweets) and send/carry it to their sisters' daughters' and nieces' sasural.

The ex-Maharaja either watches the procession from the palace or joins the sawari with his aids on the decorated elephant carrying the royal insignia. After the sawari durbar is held in the Chandra Mahal and nazar are presented and after that on the choice of the Maharaja. The music and dancing at this event are either songs of heroism and romance favored by the Rajputs.

Joan L. Erdman mentions the Gangaur festival as celebrated in the zenana of the city palace with reference to performing artists of the erstwhile Gunijankhana. She

5. See the photographs in Chapter 6.
Gangaur primarily requesting her to fulfill their wishes; washing of the puja place; watering the puja place where wheat germs are sowed on the very first day of the puja after cleaning the place with cow-dung and soil and installing the Gangaur idol; placing 16 dots (bindi) of henna (mehndi), vermillion (roli) and kohl (kajal) on the wall. Since the songs are repeated sixteen times during a puja session a dot is placed on the wall after each round of the puja song. In the end, water is offered to one Sun. There are songs for each performing action starting with the collecting of grass to the offering of water to the Sun.

On the final day, i.e., Gangaur, 'Gangaur' is carried out of the house (where it was installed 17 days back) while singing the parting (bidai) songs. The women take the Gangaur to a nearby well or Talkatora lake for its visarjan (placing) in the water. It is a farewell to Goddess Parvati with Lords Shiva or Isar, i.e., "Gangaur ko vida karna". The idea is that now Parvati is leaving her parental home and going with her husband Shiva. This is how the common people of Jaipur city celebrate Gangaur. There are other
customs connected with the festival such as exchange of gifts, ujarna and a havan if required.

A havan (sacrificial fire) is needed if any of the wheat germs, sowed on the first day of the puja, turn yellow or some other kind of deformity is detected in the growth of the germs, as this is considered inauspicious and unlucky. To avert the inauspiciousness a Brahmin is usually called to perform a havan.

Ujarna involves sending eatables like puri-halwa to eight houses; presenting an odhni or a sari-set and some money to one's mother-in-law after touching her feet. Throwing a feast to eight girls and distributing gifts or some cash to Brahmin girls as a dakshina are part of ujarna and particularly made by the newly wed bride or once a lifetime. It is widely observed and many of the respondent women consider it an important event/ceremony.

Gifts are also distributed on the occasion of Gangaur.
It is through the economics of exchanging gifts that men get involved in the festival. Sweets (ghevar) are sent to one's daughter's and sister's sasural with some cash and clothes for the daughter/sister and her mother-in-law. During the first year of marriage the mother-in-law also gives a sari-set (bais) to her new daughter-in-law. Normally, one distributes a cloth piece for a blouse and some money with it to one's elder female in-laws particularly to sas, bhabhi and nand.

In place of elaborating on the songs the women sing during the puja, here I would like to give a brief account of the content of the songs.  

The puja begins with the collecting of grass (doob) from gardens. In the garden women sing "O gardener, open the gates, girls have come to collect the doob (grass)." The gardener asks the girls "whose daughter/grand daughter you are?" Then the girls introduce themselves as "I am (so

9. My mother, Rita Vyas wrote down the main Gangaur songs for me in the Jaipuri dialect.
and so's) daughter, sister, grand daughter or wife". In the first song the young girls and married women mainly introduce themselves with reference to their relationship with the male members of their family. Like -

"...Isardās jī rī bētī chā, Brahma dās jī rī pōtī chā...."

After returning from the garden women start the puja, at home and ask the goddess Gauri, indirectly, for a good husband and eternal marital status.

"...Māngā sadā sūhaagan jījī...."

Here the goddess Parvati/Gangaur is not treated as a Devi or with awe instead she is treated as a family member. She is addressed as jījī which means elder sister in Rajasthani.

Next, while washing the puja space, especially the patta, the women ask for the well being of their brothers as their sisterly duty or affection.
"Pātō dhōi pātō dhō bīrā kī behan pātā dhō... mahāro bīrō bhadtō jāye...."

Further, the women sing that "I gave sweets to my brother and the brother gave me a sari (chunder), I offered the chunder to Gangaur and Gangaur gave me a husband (suh-aag) and a good fortune (bhagya).

"...Lāddū le bīrā ne dīyō, bīrō mane chūnder di, chūnder lee mein gōr oodhāi, gōr mūne sūhaag dīyō bhāg dīyō..."

In another song a difference is made between the worship of a queen and the prayers of a commoner. It says that a queen's prayers are not only for the king but also for the well being of the state/kingdom, while "we" the commonwomen worship our husband. As a result the queen's kingdom (Raj) keeps growing stronger and our husband's life keeps increasing.
"...Rāṇī pūje rāj ne meh pūjā sūhaag ne Rāṇī kō rāj tapaṭō jāye mahākō sūhaag bhadaṭō jāye...."

If we look at the content of the Gangaur songs we find that women derive their identity in relation to their male relatives as daughters, sisters and wives. The whole puja procedure conveys that getting married should be the first priority for a girl. Further such a kind of feminine ideal is accepted and supported by their menfolk.

Such a massive involvement of women, Brahmin or Rajput or Bania or of any other caste, all together during the Gangaur festival, for 18 days, shows that it is the mythical figure of Parvati which is followed and idealized as a model of femininity in the city of Jaipur.

Sometimes the mythical figure Śita¹⁰ is also considered as a model of pativrata but in Jaipur city she is not idealized. Women might admire her for her chastity and self-

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sacrifice but they do not idealize her. For them like any other women Sita has also worshipped Shiva-Parvati before her marriage to Ram. The kind of life Sita led was her individual fate and in reality no one wants to lead the kind of life Sita lived and the hardships she faced, according to the epic Ramayana. It seems that women pity her and admire her for the difficulties she faced but they do not look at her as an ideal of womanhood.

In sum up we can say that femininity in the city of Jaipur, is constructed around the ideal of pativrata, the devoted wife, who desires a happy and life long conjugality and the mythical goddess Parvati is seen as a pativrata personified.

II. TEEJ

Teej is also celebrated in commemoration of Goddess Parvati. It is essentially meant for women and young girls who ask for a blissful conjugal life. Teej is observed every year in the month of July-August, that is, Savan
Shukla tritiya according to the Hindu calendar.

The myth\textsuperscript{11} behind Teej is that on this day Parvati started her tapasya (austere devotion) to get Shiva as her husband and her wish was fulfilled on the day celebrated as Gangaur.

The highlights of Teej as celebrated in the city of Jaipur are: (1) Married daughters visit their parents' house; (2) Exchange of gifts; (3) Young unmarried girls put henna on their hands and other cosmetics in anticipation of an early marriage; (4) Teej mela (fair); (5) Teej ki sawari (procession).

Teej is celebrated throughout Rajasthan with varied customs. Moreover in Uttar Pradesh it is celebrated as a festival of dolls'. In Gujarat women keep fast on the day of Teej and after worshipping Shiv and Parvati they exchange gifts related to suhaag i.e. the items which indicates a woman's marital status. In fact in Rajasthan the month of

\textsuperscript{11} See Bennet, L. 1983:223-4 for the Nepali version of the myth related to Teej.
Savan is devoted to Lord Shiva. There is also a tradition of keeping fast on Mondays in the month of Sawan known as Sawan Somvar or Van Somvar. On these Mondays women go out in groups carrying their pack lunches to some forest or garden where, after worshipping Shiva and Parvati, they eat their food, that is how they keep the fast.

Lynn Bennet describes Teej and Rishi Panchami festivals of fasting and ritual purity among the Brahmin-Chetri women of Nepal. On Teej, women keep a strict fast to ensure the long life of their husbands and widows fast so that they may not be widows again in the next birth. "There is a well definite sense of sin attached to widowhood which is expressed at Tij. Women who have been widowed during the past year may participate in the purifying fast at Tij and the bathing which follows on Rishi Panchmi as a kind of penitence for their husband's death but they may not on either occasion participate in the auspicious worship of

Siva or the rishis that follows these austerities.\textsuperscript{14} There is also a custom of sending gift of food and clothes to one's daughter's mother-in-law during the first year after marriage.

However, in Jaipur, women do not keep fast on the day of Teej and widows are completely excluded from the festivities. And the festival is not limited to one community or to Brahmins like in Nepal in fact all the communities get involved in the festivities including the women from the erstwhile royal family.

Gayatri Devi writes,

"The festival was one of particular significance in the zenana because, in the stories of Hindu mythology, Parvati had meditated for years and years in order to win Lord Shiva as husband. Accordingly, the unmarried women prayed to Parvati to endow them with a husband as good as Shiva, while the married women begged that their husbands should be granted many more years of life so that they could "always be dressed in red" - rather than the unrelieved white cloths of widows. We three maharanis were supposed to perform the ceremonies of prayers and offerings in the shrine

\footnote{14. \textit{Ibid.}:219.}
in the city palace. But on that first occasion Jai's (Mansingh) other two wives were out of the state and I was told that I must enact each part of the ceremony three times, once for First Her Highness, once for Second Her Highness, and finally once for myself. To my great relief - this was the first important formal occasion at which I presided in Jaipur - the proceedings went off without any difficulty....

After the prayers in the city Palace, the replica of the goddess was taken out of the zenana and carried in procession through the streets of the town.... Through the lacy, carved marble screen of our own pavilion, perched like his (the Maharaja) on the top of the palace wall, we could get a clear view beneath us of a spacious arena made for elephant fights, (chaugan).... This arena was being used by the townsfolk as a fair-ground.... On one side of the arena, the Jaipur cavalry gave a meticulous display of jumping and tent-pegging, while on the other a desert tribe of military ascetics performed a whirling sword dance.... The elephants were lined up, their howdahs draped with sumptuous satins and velvets; the soldiers stood in perfect ranks, their silver trappings and uniforms brilliant in the sun.

I watched enchanted for almost an hour. Then a signal was given, and reluctantly I rose with the others to be led back through the windowless passages into the zenana.... meanwhile the men, led by Jai, visited their own temple and later gathered in a pavilion in the city palace garden to enjoy their drinks and be entertained by musicians and dancers. When the image of the goddess was finally returned to the palace to be enshrined for another year, I again performed the prayer ceremony. On the first day all the palace ladies, except the widows, had worn red. On the second
day when the parties and festivities continued, we all wore green. We spent hours peering through the screed galleries overlooking the streets to see the crowds and the gaiety...."15

The idea behind quoting from the Maharani's memoirs, is that her's is the only first hand account of the activities that took/place in the zenana. Moreover it also reflects the changes and continuities not only in the royal household but also in general.

Commonly no special puja is performed on the day of Teej like Gangaur similarly none of the respondents reported any special puja or fasting on the day. In fact much importance is attached to the eve of Teej and major activities revolves around exchanging gifts. The gift items are mainly for women and are related to suhaag i.e. symbolising her marital status.

During the first year of marriage the bride is formally invited to her parents' home, there, her mother-in-law sends

a special dress for Teej usually a laheriya bais (striped motif sari or lehanga odhni); cosmetics like mehndi, bangles, bindi and sweets, fruits and dry fruits. These items\textsuperscript{16} are sent to one's daughter-in-law and also to would be daughter-in-law on sinjara i.e. a day before Teej. (Literally sinjara means dressing up and putting on the cosmetics. These gifts items are also known as `Sinjara' and even the day is named as Sinjara. The young unmarried girls celebrate sinjara by putting henna on their hands, wearing new clothes in anticipation of an early marriage). The eatables are usually distributed among the relatives. And the bride's side sends back some money, clothes and sweets (ghevar) for her mother-in-law and other female relatives. The newly married girl wears the leheriya bais on Teej and goes out to meet friends or relatives or watch Teej mela, mela or procession or for swinging. In a way she shows off that she is happily married into a good family.

\textbf{All the male respondents were of the opinion that it is a woman's festival and their responsibilities are to cooper-}

\textsuperscript{16} See the photograph in Chapter 6.
ate with the women of the family - like buying sweets, carrying gifts to their sisters' sasural as well as to their newly married sister-in-laws' home and escort the sisters back home etc.

These gift items are considered as an important indicator of the family's status and show how well their women are kept and are closely related to a man's duty. In other words, it indicates that a man's masculinity lies in taking up these domestic responsibilities and on extradomestic level, earning enough money to fulfill these responsibilities.

These activities also reflect the preoccupation of women and young girls and society's expectations from their womenfolk. It seems femininity of a woman consists in dressing up, wishing long life for her husband and finding a good husband. Womanhood means a married status and any role out of matrimony is not much appreciated.
III. MAKAR SANKRANTI

Makar Sankranti is another important festival celebrated in Jaipur city every year on the 14th of January. The main idea behind the festival is to offer items like rice, mong, sesame (til), sesame preparations and clothes to Brahmins and the poor.

The giving of the gifts is not limited to poor, Brahmins and the 'lower' castes known as 'kamins'. They are also extended to daughters and other relatives. Importance is also attached to the offering of green grass to cows and to the feeding birds. All these offerings (dan) are closely associated with the idea of one's earning punya. However, kite-flying the major attraction in the city is not only limited to festival days but also indulged as a past time during winter months. Moreover, daughters' and sisters' husbands are specially invited on the day for kite-flying.

Here the focal point is the exchange of gifts and this takes place during the festival on the one hand gifts are exchanged between women relatives especially affinal ones.
One gives sesame sweets, clothes (normally a piece of cloth for a blouse) and some money to one's mother-in-law and married sisters-in-law after touching their feet. This is called kalapana or bana in the Jaipuri language.

On the other hand, if daughters and sisters (behan-beti) are married off within the city, they are usually invited for lunch along with their husbands and presented with the above-mentioned items for themselves and their mother in law; their husbands get some money as a token of respect/affection.

Apart from these festivals is Rakhi or Raksha-Bandhan. It is celebrated like anywhere in the north India - sisters tie wrist band (Rakhi) on their brothers' hand symbolizing that women are asking for protection from their brothers or it is the brothers' duty to protect their sisters. On Rakhi day women usually visit their brother's house with Rakhi, sweets and other puja items. They put a tilak on brothers' forehead and tie the band, in return the brothers give them gifts or some cash. If the brother is married Rakhi is also
tied on his wife's, son's and daughter's wrist. It reflects that a woman as a sister is demanding protection not only from her brother rather his family is also responsible towards her wellbeing.

However, it also emphasizes the strong ties between a sister's and a brother's family. Anyhow, Rakhi reinforces the idea - man as the protector and protected woman.

Furthermore, there are fasts (vrat) widely observed by the married women for the well-being of their husband, e.g., Chouths and Karva Chauth. These fasts not only indicate the preoccupation of women, the ideals they upheld, the goals society set for them but also the kind of relationship women share among themselves, particularly that of a daughter-in-law and a mother-in-law.

A book17 on the year-round fasts and festivals in colloquial Jaipuri language suggests that one should give

17. Rajgadiya, Champawati (year of publication and the name of publisher is not mentioned).
due respects to mother-in-law by touching her feet; offering her clothes (bais), cash, jewelry particularly while keeping fast, observing Ujarna and on every festival. The procedure of keeping fasts and observing festivals, in the book, end with the line "sas ka pag lag neg kar" i.e. touch the feet of mother-in-law and give her gifts according to the occasion.

Such customs not only stress on the mother-in-laws' higher status in the family but also perpetuate that how important it is to be a mother of a son. Perhaps that is why preference goes for a male child.

There is nothing wrong in inviting one's daughter, sister and occasionally exchanging these small gifts. But it makes daughter's every visit to her parental home a formal occasion. Meanwhile, the exchange of gifts is always one sided and it places a burden on her father and brothers. Since these exchanges are more religiously followed among the middle classes where resources are already scarce they help to perpetuate the idea that a girl is a life-time
burden. Moreover unmarried girls are not involved in this exchanges of gifts implying that until they are married they are not considered the full members of society - once again the implication that a woman's femininity lies in conjugality.

One argument (behind this exchange of gifts) is that since a daughter does not take her share from the father's property the gifts comprise her share of it. Somehow these gifts are not much of a help to a daughter/sister except in enhancing her family's prestige in her 'sasural'. Many a time girls are married off into much (economically) better off families but the inflow of these customary gifts remains intact. They put a strain on brothers and fathers who, on the one hand have their own families to look after and on the other hand already incurred heavy expenses in marrying off their sisters daughters in the first place.

Most of the respondents, male as well as female, were
of the opinion that these gifts are "compulsory social obligations" and many of them acknowledged that they find these gifts "very oppressive" but the custom is one that they have to follow. A major portion of the family savings are spent in buying gifts which are not limited to festivals, births (of sisters'/daughters' children, baya); marriage (niece & nephew's, bhat) but also at the time of death (in daughter's/sister's sasural) brothers and fathers are supposed to pay for the last rites.

As we can see that the men of these three communities are under tremendous pressure in their respective roles as fathers, brothers and maternal uncle. It seems that men's masculinity lies in how successfully they enact these roles.

As for women, they idealize Goddess Parvati and femininity is constructed around the ideal of pativrata, the devoted wife, who desires a happy and life long conjugality.