



Performing Paradigms of Modern Rajput Masculinities Men's Songs to Rao Gopal Singh of Kharwa

This article examines the biography of Rao Gopal Singh (r. 1872–1939), Ṭhākur of Kharwa (now in the Indian state of Rajasthan), through the lens of songs men sing in his honor. The subject of women's songs honoring Rajput heroes martyred centuries ago is a concern of recent scholarship. However, in focusing solely on women's songs, scholars have elided the question of whether a complementary men's tradition exists and, if so, how their songs differ in thematic content, language, and performance from that of women. Also dissimilar to the narratives of Rajput heroes that scholars have so far examined, Rao Gopal Singh's story is rooted in the colonial era; he was a nationalist whose struggle to liberate India from the British inspired his involvement in violent acts of rebellion.

KEYWORDS: gender—song—Rajasthan—colonialism—hero

You are the lion and the jewel of India;
You are the great desert warrior;
You are the *krāntikārī pūjārī* (priest of revolution);
You are a bullock cart filled with gifts.
Oh! Of which of your great deeds shall we sing?

THESE LINES contain some of the many sobriquets used by the men of Kharwa, a village in the north Indian state of Rajasthan, to refer to Ṭhākūr Rao Gopal Singh (r. 1872–1939) in the *kirtīs* (devotional songs) they sing in his honor. The title “Ṭhākūr” denotes a landed aristocrat, comparable to a lord or duke, who is an elite member of the Rajput *jatī* (community), which is a regional subdivision of the larger Kṣatryā martial and ruling group in the Hindu caste system.¹

The people of Kharwa, and particularly its male Rajputs, honor Gopal Singh as a nationalist hero and *svatantrā senānī* (freedom fighter).² Every spring on his death anniversary the residents of Kharwa and nearby villages gather at a *melā* (celebration or fair) to commemorate their former Ṭhakūr, honor his extraordinary life, and celebrate his accomplishments—keeping his people alive during famines, and struggling alongside other notable freedom fighters to liberate India from the British Raj. The *melā*, which is the town’s largest public event after the Hindu holiday of Diwali, begins with a parade originating at Gopal Singh’s former residence, the Kharwa fort, then proceeds to his *chatrī* (cenotaph), and concludes at his memorial statue in Kharwa’s town square.³ Along the processional route male and female villagers perform songs of praise to him. However, although united through the shared space and purpose of honoring Gopal Singh, these two gendered groups of singers are divided by the actual songs that they sing. The semantic and thematic content, language, and performance context of each group’s songs are markedly different, and these differences are informed by gender, class, and *jatī*.

This article examines the memorialization of Rao Gopal Singh through the lens of the laudatory songs the people of Kharwa sing in his honor at his *melā*. I analyze these songs against the backdrops of traditional Rajput *dharm* (caste obligations) that contemporary male Rajputs consider Gopal Singh to embody, and the early twentieth century events that shaped Gopal Singh’s political career and continued fame. While I analyze one women’s song for comparison, my focus is on the men’s songs, a genre scholars have largely overlooked in previous studies of

the relationships between gender and performance in Rajasthan. I question how both the male singers' gender and Gopal Singh's status as a modern, historical, colonial-era Rajput hero inform the thematic content and language of his songs. The overwhelming majority of Kharwa's male singers are, like the protagonist of the songs, Rajputs, and therefore members of the elite northwest Indian Hindu aristocratic community. Significantly, after Independence in 1947 when India also became a democracy, the Rajputs were divested of their previously exclusive communal privileges, such as rulership and defense of their land and subjects. Therefore, in addition to gender, I consider the relevance of *jatī* and collective nostalgia in Gopal Singh's continued memorialization and in the thematic content of his songs. Finally, I also question how Gopal Singh's memory informs the Kharwa Rajput males' own contemporary communal identity.

I conducted the research for this article in spring 2006 during Gopal Singh's *melā* and the weeks immediately before and after. During this time I interviewed and recorded Gopal Singh's commemorative songs performed by over fifty Kharwa residents, including both men and women of the Rajput, Brahman, Baniya (merchant), and Nāī (barber) communities.

GENDER, SONG, AND COMMEMORATION:
LOCATING GOPAL SINGH IN THE TRADITION OF RAJPUT HEROES

Unusual within the tradition of Rajasthani heroic songs, the men's songs to Gopal Singh are clearly located in specific historical moments. Prominent topoi in their songs include Gopal Singh's bravery, his fulfillment of his *dharm* to his subjects as their ruler, and his political career as a revolutionary. The era in which Gopal Singh lived (late-nineteenth to early-twentieth centuries) was characterized by widespread social and political change throughout South Asia. The male singers of Kharwa locate Gopal Singh within this specific era, and include historical and political issues such as empire and the *swadeshī* (independence) movement that was gaining popularity throughout northern India.

Gopal Singh is portrayed quite differently in the women's songs. As demonstrated through comparison to an example of a Rajasthani women's song honoring an anonymous premodern hero, the Kharwa women's songs portray him as an archetypical Rajput hero. As is common in Rajasthani women's songs about Rajput heroes, their songs highlight Gopal Singh's divine status and handsome physical appearance, are largely ahistorical, and are silent on the subject of empire. What both the men and women's songs share in content is their reference to the hero's Rajput lineage and continued fame.

Among others, RAHEJA and GOLD (1984), CAUGHRAN (1998),⁴ GOLD and GUJAR (2002),⁵ and FLUECKIGER (2006) assign agency and voice and suggest that women and subaltern groups in South Asia empower themselves beyond normative (elite and or discursive male) constructions of class and gender through oral narratives, rituals, and songs. Their work demonstrates that resistance to—as well as critiques of—the dominant social, political, or gendered groups take many and

often nuanced forms. Additionally, these scholars demonstrate that paradigms of resistance are frequently performed through oral or expressive genres. The songs and the groups of singers examined in this article are representative of a very different social milieu: the singers are men, predominantly Rajputs, who sing in praise of a male hero who was a member of their own aristocratic warrior community.

While writings on Rajput heroes are plentiful, scholarship has overlooked heroes from the modern period, focusing instead on heroes of the distant past (for example HARLAN 2002 and 2003). Gopal Singh's life story, songs, and his ongoing commemoration are therefore significant within the wider context of Rajasthani studies in that they bring to light a modern Rajput hero, dedicated in his opposition to the Raj, who brought the *swadeshī* movement into Rajasthan.

The female singers who participate in Gopal Singh's *melā* and perform his songs are from the middle and lower classes, and as they are overwhelmingly non-literate, recite the songs from memory. None of their songs are written. In small Rajasthani towns, which tend to be sexually and socially segregated, women from the upper classes, especially Brahmins and Rajputs, are not typically a presence in public spaces or at events such as *melās*. Accordingly, Kharwa's upper caste women do not generally sing or memorize Gopal Singh's songs. However, the Takurani (*ṭhakur's* wife) of Kharwa presides over Gopal Singh's commemorative services within the fort's *zenānā* (exclusively female quarters) on his death anniversary. While the males who participate in the public procession are from a range of middle and upper social classes, the overwhelming majority of them are Rajputs. The men typically do not recite their songs from memory—they do not need to as their songs are printed in pamphlets that are widely available at the *melā*.

In addition to the thematic content of the songs and performance contexts, what also appears to be gender specific are the understandings of Gopal Singh's posthumous identity—precisely who or what the people of Kharwa honor at the *melā*. While several of my female informants referred to Gopal Singh as a *devtā* (deity), men tended to highlight his more secular, albeit still extraordinary qualities that are associated with his heroism and bravery, and refer to him in terms that highlight these aspects of his character. Thus, in their songs and conversation the men tended to refer to Gopal Singh in secular terms such as *vīr* (hero), *svatantrā senānī*, *desh bhakt* (patriot), or *krāntikāri* (revolutionary). Both the men and women were versed in the series of miracles attributed to Gopal Singh during his life and after his death. However, women tended to associate such miracles with Gopal Singh's perceived divine status, whereas men attributed them to Gopal Singh's Rajput caste.

Several scholars have analyzed Rajasthani women's songs, both religious and secular, which are written, composed, and performed by laywomen who are non-professional singers from a range of social classes (BARUCHA 2003, 156–81; GOLD 1994; HARLAN 1992, 1995, 2002, 2003). For example, in her work on gender in the Rajput community, Harlan explores the paradigms of martial male heroes and Rajput women's roles as worshippers and singers of songs that praise posthumously

deified male heroes. Harlan sums up the gendered differences between the subjects and singers of these songs:

Songs express what women want and suggest how men who have sacrificed themselves can be put to good use as providers and guardians of the good life, with its abundance of progeny, provision for material needs, satisfaction of sensual longings and manifestation as social order. (HARLAN 2003, 28)

Among others, SMITH (1991) and GOLD and GUJAR (1992) analyze male bards' performances of heroic epics. However, the substantial corpus of scholarly literature on Rajasthani songs elides the voice of the lay, nonprofessional male singer. In light of the textual silence on the subject, can it be concluded then that this group of Rajasthanis does not traditionally sing laudatory songs to heroes? Is it an exclusively female prerogative? It is beyond the scope of this article to consider the wider tradition of men's heroic songs in Rajasthan, if one does indeed exist. Suffice it to say for now that it certainly appears that a tradition of men's songs is far less prominent than of women's songs. It is noteworthy therefore that there is a well-established tradition in Kharwa of males singing songs to Gopal Singh.

Three additional factors make Rao Gopal Singh and his songs unique within the Rajasthani context. First, as HARLAN notes, the overwhelming majority of narratives in heroic songs are understood to be historical (2002, 118–19). They are set in the premodern era against the backdrop of Muslim/Rajput relations. The “villains” in these narratives are usually cattle rustlers (often, though not exclusively, Muslim). The Rajput is bound by the dictates of his *dharm* to protect his and his subjects' cattle. It is during his fight with the cattle raiders that the Rajput warrior is typically martyred and consequently posthumously deified for his self-sacrifice (HARLAN 2002; 2003, 42–50).⁶ While historical, the examples Harlan offers and the songs I have heard are all set in the distant past. While the inclusion of dates is not part of the songs' narrative tradition, a rough estimate of somewhere between the thirteenth- and early-nineteenth centuries may be assigned to these narratives.⁷ In contrast to the majority of Rajput heroic songs, songs to Rao Gopal Singh, a modern Rajput hero of the early-twentieth century, are located in this very specific historic moment. His songs offer clear historical references, including mention of figures and events, which imbue them with a recognizable temporal framework that is absent from most heroic songs.

Second, whereas the hero's foes in most songs are cattle rustlers, Gopal Singh's struggle is on the national stage. He fights the British Raj for Indian independence. Gopal Singh's modern enemies further locate his narrative in a precise historical moment and, as will be examined, associate his struggle with that of the nation, rather than simply his home village.

Finally, Gopal Singh was not martyred in his struggle. The heroes of HARLAN's examples sacrifice themselves for their culture, religion, land, and *kul devī* (clan goddesses) (2002, 19–27). As my Rajput and non-Rajput informants as well as scholarly literature all testify, death (in particular, an exceptionally violent one, and preferably in the bloom of youth) is an essential criterion for heroes in traditional

Rajput heroic narratives. By contrast, Gopal Singh did not die in battle and lived to be sixty-seven years old, although he did continually sacrifice for the cause of nationalism throughout his life.

THE LIFE AND MEMORIALIZATION OF A NATIONALIST RAJPUT HERO

Before turning to the songs themselves, brief mention should be made of Kharwa and Rao Gopal Singh's life, the events of which inform the content of his songs. The desert town of Kharwa was granted as a *jagīr* (principality) to Ṭhākur Rao Sakat Singh in 1594 for his loyalty to the Marwar court at Jodhpur (SINGH 1998, 18). Until Independence, Kharwa remained under the jurisdiction of Marwar and was administered by Sakat Singh's ancestors who inherited the title and prerogatives of Ṭhākur. Located on the border of the Thar Desert in western Rajasthan, Marwar has unpredictable rainfall and throughout its history the region has been subjected to severe famines. Many have highlighted the heavy death toll due to famines in Rajasthan during the colonial period as a failure of the Raj administration, which fueled the unpopularity of British rule.

The year of Gopal Singh's birth, 1872, saw a particularly harsh drought, which was followed by a plague of locusts. Gopal Singh's father, Ṭhākur Rao Madho Singh, is eulogized in songs and *dōhās*⁸ for opening the fort's storehouse and sharing the family's personal food supplies with his subjects in times of famine. Particularly highlighted by my male informants was the fact that although Gopal Singh was born against a backdrop of such arduous conditions, his father nevertheless maintained the tradition of gifting his subjects with a lavish meal on the auspicious occasion of the birth of his first son and heir. Gopal Singh himself is remembered for similarly supporting his subjects in times of famine. For this, both Ṭhākurs are honorably referred to as *annadātā* ("providers of grain"), an epithet denoting an ideal ruler.

While independence movements took root in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Bengal in the mid-nineteenth century, political consciousness and the nationalist movement was slower to reach Rajasthan (the first quarter of the twentieth century) and never achieved the widespread public support there that it did in many other areas of north India (HOOJA 2006, 950). Several Indian rulers, including Mahārājās Madhav Rao Scindia of Gwalior, Ganga Singh of Bikaner, and the Regent of Marwar, Sir Pratap, supported the nationalist movement while concomitantly allying with the British, and Gandhi promoted a program of nonviolent resistance against the Raj. In contrast, Gopal Singh adopted a markedly different strategy of violent defiance against his colonial overlords.

Shortly after becoming the Rao of Kharwa, Gopal Singh dedicated himself to bringing the nationalist movement to rural western Rajasthan. To this end, he forged alliances with figures involved in the movement from within Rajasthan and beyond, including freedom fighters such as Ras Bihari Bose of Bengal, and brought them to speak to nonliterate villagers (SINGH 1998, III–12). Gopal Singh's struggle

for Indian independence ultimately led him beyond Marwar to Delhi where he attended the *darbārs* (court assemblies, in this case of the Raj) of 1903 and 1914. This is in marked contrast to most Rajput heroes, whose actions are confined to a much smaller geographical region—the hero’s homeland that he is duty bound to protect.

In 1911, as the *swadeshī* movement gained popularity throughout northern India and Gopal Singh became increasingly involved in the resistance movement in Marwar, he conspired with Joravar Singh and Keshvar Singh, members of the bardic Chārān community from Kotah, to assassinate Viceroy Lord Hardinge at the Delhi Darbār. As the viceregal procession approached the Red Fort, the three detonated a bomb in Old Delhi’s busiest intersection, Chandni Chowk.⁹ Despite the fact that the plot failed (Lord Hardinge suffered only minor injuries, although other members of his retinue were killed) Gopal Singh and his two cohorts are honored for their bravery (SINGH 1998, 119).

Gopal Singh fled Delhi with his coconspirators and found refuge at Ajmer, some twenty miles from Kharwa. By the early twentieth century, Ajmer had become a major center of anti-Raj activity, where fugitive freedom fighters like Gopal Singh and others from across India, such as Bhagat Singh, found safe havens with the like-minded with whom they could continue their struggle.¹⁰ From Ajmer, Gopal Singh worked with revolutionary groups across the subcontinent and organized an armed attack on the British scheduled for the following year. However, British intelligence intercepted the plot and Gopal Singh and his cohorts were arrested and imprisoned at Todgarh jail where he was held until 1920 (HOOJA 2006, 1122). During his imprisonment Gopal Singh escaped on several occasions, which my informants in Kharwa attributed to miracles, divine intervention, and proof of his extraordinary character.

During Gopal Singh’s imprisonment, Kharwa was administered by the British Court of Wards. Upon his release from jail, Gopal Singh recommenced his revolutionary activities in Ajmer. Realizing that his popularity and influence throughout Marwar had grown to such an extent that imprisoning or executing the Thākur would only make him a martyr and foment anti-Raj sentiment, the British presented him with an ultimatum: abdicate, or your son will not inherit the throne after your death and Kharwa will be ceded to the crown (SINGH 1998, 142). Faced with the threat of losing Kharwa, which his ancestors had governed for nearly five centuries, Gopal Singh abdicated the throne to his eldest son, Ganpat Singh, in 1931. Textual sources and oral narratives are silent on the subject of Gopal Singh’s life after his abdication, mentioning only that he remained at Kharwa Fort until his death in 1939 (SINGH 1998, 142). Of course lack of information on his activities does not necessarily prove that Gopal Singh definitively retired from political life after 1931, but only that, if he did continue his revolutionary activities, they were highly clandestine.

In addition to Gopal Singh’s acts of bravery and steadfast dedication to the cause of Indian independence, both male and female informants in Kharwa also highlighted his piety and lifelong devotion to his *kul devā* (clan patron deity)

Krishna in his form of Chattarbhuji. Both male and female villagers informed me that Gopal Singh was frequently granted *darshan* (divine vision) of Chattarbhuji in the fort's temple. Although he prayed in private, servants frequently heard two voices from the closed temple.

Despite his adamant denials of his divinity, many villagers, particularly women, worshipped Gopal Singh during his lifetime and several of Kharwa's women continue to worship him today. However, it is difficult to determine if Gopal Singh's worship may be understood as a cult and if so, how does it fit into the wider phenomenon of Rajput hero cults? Ursula Sharma has defined the term "cult" in the Hindu context as:

A complex of religious activity directed towards a common object of reverence ... members of a cult are united by the fact that they all worship the same object, rather than by the fact that they all hold the same views or dogmas ... membership is seldom exclusive; it is generally possible to participate in more than one at a time and most Hindus do so, although they may have their preferences and favorites. (SHARMA 1974, 137)

The worship of Gopal Singh fits Sharma's definitions of a cult and has shared characteristics with the cults of other Rajput heroes, such as Baba Ramdev, Pabuji, and Gogaji. It is centered on a single individual and has at its heart Gopal Singh's mytho-historical biography. Similar to cults of other Rajput heroes, Gopal Singh's worshippers credit him with curing physical afflictions such as illnesses, blindness, fevers, and snakebites. However, whereas the cults of more widely known deified Rajput heroes extend throughout Rajasthan, and often into neighboring states, Gopal Singh's worship is far more localized. Not only are these other heroes worshipped in local temples and home shrines throughout the region; annual *melās* are held at their main temples, drawing thousands of pilgrims from many miles away. Gopal Singh is worshipped only within the vicinity of Kharwa. Within the village, his *chattrī* has become the physical locus of his cult after his death and it is there that women seeking to access him go in search of healing and other boons. It is these characteristics in particular—his performance of miracles, the piety he exhibited during his lifetime, and his communication with the divine—that appear to have evinced the perception of Gopal Singh's divine status among his small group of female worshippers. How Gopal Singh's worship diverges most significantly from those of other popular Rajput heroes and scholarly definitions of a cult is that its membership appears to be gendered. Again, my only interview subjects who referred to Gopal Singh as a deity and who worshipped (as opposed to honored or remembered) him, were women. Males who attend his *melā* were specific that they honor him and conceive of him in more secularized terms as a hero.

Having outlined the key events of Gopal Singh's life, which are addressed in his songs and the different ways in which he is regarded (hero or god) by the two gendered groups of singers, it is pertinent now to turn to the songs themselves. As most of the songs are too long to include in total here, I offer them in abridged

form, omitting in particular the repetition of verses, a common feature of Rajasthani songs. Instead, I present verses that refer to the salient concerns of this article: how gender, historical setting, and politics inform the thematic content and language of Gopal Singh's songs.

A WOMEN'S SONG¹¹

The following song is sung by women at Gopal Singh's *melā* and was later recited to me by a group of middle-aged and older lower caste women in the fort's Chattarbhuja temple. The women referred to the song as a *bhajan*, which is a type of devotional hymn. As with all of the women's songs it was performed in the local variant of Marwari.¹²

Mahārāj, the world has come to Kharva to have *darśan* with you,
 Oh, Madho Singh's son
 The world has come to have *darśan* with you, oh, Mahārāj!
 We are filled with such joy having *darśan* with you at your wondrous *chatrī*,

 Oh, Madho Singh's son
 There are many ways to tie the *sāfā*, but the Rathore way is the best,¹³
 Oh, Madho Singh's son
 Oh, Mahārāj, you used to wear only the finest Multahni prints,¹⁴
 Oh, son of Chundawat Rānī¹⁵
 There are oh so many *jātīs*, but the Rathores are the best,
 Oh exalted Rathore!
 Oh, Madho Singh's son
 There are oh so many villages, but Kharva is the best of all,
 Oh, Madho Singh's son

This group of female singers does not sing *about* Gopal Singh, but *to* him. To this extent, he is never actually named. Rather, he is addressed by this group of women who, as members of the middle and lower classes would be considered socially inferior to a Rajput and a Ṭhākur, in the second person honorific (*āp*). As part of his praise, the singers highlight Gopal Singh's illustrious lineage—he is a Rathore Rajput, which, they hasten to add, is the most superior clan. He is referred to as the son of Madho Singh of Kharva, which serves to irrefutably identify the song's subject, while circumventing the issue of addressing him directly by name.

Significantly, this *bhajan* also provides Gopal Singh's mother's identity. Married Rajput women are seldom referred to by their first names by non-family members—which would be far too familiar—but by the names of their natal clans, often with the suffix *rānī* (queen). Thus, Gopal Singh's mother is referred to as Chundawat Rānī, as she is of the Chundawat family, a sub-clan of the Sisodias of Mewar.¹⁶ The Chundawat Rajputs enjoy an honorable reputation among members of the Rajput community for being particularly brave. As a corollary, in drawing attention to his mother's lineage, the song alludes to Gopal Singh's possession of this essential Rajput character trait, which he acquired through his mother.

Gopal Singh is presented in the song as a handsome and well-dressed hero. The *bhajan* proclaims that the Rathores' turbans are the most fashionable and that our hero's is of the coveted block-printed soft cotton from Multan. Other *bhajans* and *dōbhās* describe and praise Gopal Singh's twisted mustache at length, which is so handsome on his warrior's face.¹⁷ HARLAN has noted that women's songs typically stress the hero's well-groomed, dashing appearance, and offer richly detailed descriptions of his costume (2003, 173–74).

The *bhajan*'s inclusion of the title "Maharaj" at its beginning to address Gopal Singh, and its use of the term *darśan* could be interpreted in both secular and sacred terms, which infuses the song with layered meanings and intentional ambiguity. Rajasthanis refer to both saints and aristocrats, including local/national rulers, who are celebrated for their largess as "Maharaj." In referring to him by this epithet the song thus concomitantly references both Gopal Singh's renowned piety and his eminent generosity to his subjects. *Darśan* refers to the reciprocal gaze between devotee and divine in the form of the deity's image in a temple, and between subject and ruler. Throughout Indian history, rulers have exploited the concept of *darśan*, displaying themselves to their subjects as a means of promoting their innate divinity and legitimate rule.¹⁸ Similarly, the *bhajan* here alludes concomitantly to Gopal Singh's status as a (minor) ruler as well as a *devtā*. Significantly, as the *bhajan* details, after Gopal Singh's death the people of Kharwa come not to the fort to have *darśan* with him, but also to his *chatrī*.

I now offer a *bhajan* sung by Rajasthani women to an anonymous Rajput hero (*jhunjharjī*)¹⁹ to make explicit how the Kharwa women's song to Gopal Singh conforms to established gendered styles in its language, concerns, and description of the subject.

Jhunjharjī, you wear a fine turban.
 On the turban a lovely ornament is attached.
 You wear a very fine pearl ornament.
 Over the pearl lovely clusters of *lalas* (glass pendants) are attached.
 You wear a very fine necklace.
Jhunjharjī, over the necklace a fine ornament is attached.
Jhunjharjī, you wear a very fine bracelet.
 To the bracelet a lovely watch is attached.
Jhunjharjī, you sit on a very fine horse.
Jhunjharjī, on the horse is seated a very fine rider [that is, you].
Jhunjharjī, you wear fine shoes,
 And your feet are stained with henna. (HARLAN 2003, 173)

PERFORMING PARADIGMS OF RAJPUT
 MASCULINITY: FEMININE CONSTRUCTIONS

The most striking parallel between Gopal Singh's *bhajan* and the one to the anonymous *jhunjharjī* is the conflation of their heroic martial status with

that of a handsome, well-dressed man. What is the common thread between the seemingly disparate events, emotions, and qualities of love, and a wedding versus violence and death on the battlefield? As Harlan notes, the trope of the warrior bridegroom is in fact common to Rajasthani heroic songs. A frequent occurrence in the narratives of such songs is the interruption of the hero's wedding by an urgent call to arms. He is duty-bound to reclaim stolen cattle. In these scenarios the warrior, who is dressed and ready for the ceremony and has no time to change clothes, is inevitably slain on the battlefield. He consequently dies a bachelor, in the bloom of youth, and made all the more handsome for his wedding attire as the women's songs, such as the one to the anonymous *jhunjharjī*, stress (HARLAN 2003, 173–74). He was about to be married, but has been martyred instead. Thus, the Rajput martyr shares the bridegroom's iconography; both wear the *kesariya* (saffron colored) wedding turban, both ride horses, they are both young and brandish swords.²⁰ This point of the intersection between the ornamented Rajput bridegroom and Gopal Singh the heroic warrior will be considered again below, in relation to a men's song.

The significant point that arises through the comparison of these two women's songs is that, despite the fact that Gopal Singh's and the *jhunjharjī*'s heroic narratives are separated perhaps by centuries, the women of Khawra still employ tropes common to more traditional Rajput heroes' songs: the handsome, well-dressed hero and allusions to their longing for him. In Gopal Singh's *bhajan* the sentiment of longing is expressed through the line: "The world has come to have *darśan* with you, oh, Mahārāj!" They come to his *chatrī* to have an audience with their late Ṭhākur. However, the longing expressed in the *jhunjharjī*'s *bhajan* is more overtly sexualized in its exclusive focus on the young hero's attractive appearance and bridegroom attire, and the implicit understanding of the events that would have followed the marriage, had he not been martyred.

The themes that Rajasthani women highlight in their heroic songs—the hero's appearance, his clothing and adornments, style, status, and commanding presence—provide insight into what qualities this group of singers privilege in an archetypal hero. These concerns are informed by normative gender politics. Warfare and politics were exclusively masculine Rajput domains in premodern Rajasthan. Within the *purdah* system that was in place before Independence, Rajasthani women were denied access to these arenas and were confined to the *zenāna*.²¹ Although gender and class restrictions have officially relaxed in rural Rajasthan, as mentioned above, today in practice relatively few women engage in politics or defense, and homes remain largely run by women. It is therefore not surprising that women singers typically privilege the above aspects of the hero's character. They focus on domestic issues, with which they have direct experience, rather than on the hero's bravery or social charisma. Sequestered within the *zenāna*, the women of Kharwa who lived during Gopal Singh's lifetime would not have seen him deliver his speeches or his attack on the viceregal parade. Likewise, contemporary rural Rajasthani women are less likely than men to witness political events, such as rallies. What rural Rajasthani women would have been familiar with in the early twentieth century, and

are likely to remain so today, is the appearance of a male family member or bridegroom who enters into their domestic sphere. It is not difficult to imagine that on such occasions the women would scrutinize each aspect of the male visitor's appearance and perhaps compare him to their own husbands.

Rajasthani women's songs about Gopal Singh and other Rajput male heroes present established feminine interpretations of masculine paradigms. These paradigms, in turn, become performed as normative constructions through their *bhajans*. If, as Judith Butler claims, "...gender is an identity tenuously constructed in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*,"²² Rajasthani women's performance of their songs to Rajput heroes, along with the songs' semantic content, serve as rhetorical vehicles that establish culturally determined normative behavior for both genders. Gender norms are constructed during these performances, and therefore established. Thus, when women emphasize these masculine traits in their song performances, they are simultaneously engendering as well as reiterating gender norms, both feminine and masculine. Women perform songs that celebrate and therefore determine certain masculine qualities. As will be discussed, while the Rajput masculine paradigm of the women's songs is not contested in the men's songs, their songs nonetheless privilege and express different gendered paradigms.

MEN'S SONGS

The following songs are what the men referred to as either a *kīrtī* or *kīrtā*, a genre of song which is distinguished by a loose narrative structure and chanted rather than melodically sung. These men's songs are in a mixture of several languages: Urduized Hindi, Marwari, and Dingle. All of these *kīrtīs* are credited to Ram Gopal Khatri, are dated to the early- to mid-1950s, and are printed in pamphlets that are widely available at the Kharwa *melā*. It is unclear if Khatri, a local Baniya, penned or simply compiled these songs (Khatri's family has since moved away from the area, and his biographical information was unavailable). With this lack of information, it would be premature to assign his creative agency to these *kīrtīs*. The first *kīrtī* deals with Gopal Singh's lineage and birth.

KĪRTĪ #1²³

Oh! Let us sing of Gopal Singh jī's greatness!²⁴ He possessed all the exceptional qualities of this desert land.

He was the son of Madhao Singh jī and the master of Kharwa. Gopal Singh jī's mother was a Chundawat.

He was born in the midst of famine. The Rao of Kharwa prepared huge pots of *kichrī* and distributed it amongst the hungry. He also gave them dried fruits to celebrate Gopal Singh jī's birth.

He never allowed any of his subjects to die of hunger and spent all the Kharwa

treasure on food for the hungry. He borrowed money and even distributed feed for the animals.

Oh! We are so proud of you! No mother has ever given birth to a son such as Gopal Singh jī. We offer our praises to you. *Kamagnī Svargvāseo*.²⁵ He would hear our prayers when he sat in the *jharokhā*.²⁶

His foes trembled when they heard his roaring voice. He was a true tiger²⁷ who guarded the poor. Oh! If Gopal Singh jī were alive today, India would not be like this.

PERFORMING PARADIGMS OF RAJPUT

MASCULINITY: MASCULINE CONSTRUCTIONS

The *kīrtī* above alternatively refers to Gopal Singh and addresses him directly. When referring to him, the singers refer to Gopal Singh as *ve*, as is appropriate when speaking about a social superior. When he is addressed directly, however, it is in Hindi in the second person familiar (*tum*), indicating familiarity between the singers and the subject of the song, which would be socially appropriate for male members of Gopal Singh's own Rajput community.

As with the women's *bhajans*, the men's songs emphasize Gopal Singh's illustrious lineage. This *kīrtī* again names his father and refers to his mother as a Chundawat Rajput. His father Madho Singh's greatness is stressed through his generosity; he sustains not only his people, but also their animals in times of famine by sharing his own food with them, a philanthropic tradition his son adopts. The birth of the future Ṭhākur is observed with due celebration. According to established practice throughout royal India, the ruler feasts his subjects on the traditional foods of *kichṛī* and even costly dried fruits are not spared, despite the hard times. The highlighting of Madho Singh's largess is a foreshadowing; the song's implication is that his son too will be the possessor of such a generous spirit. Gopal Singh is referred to as a product of the desert, embodying all of its favorable qualities. This description portrays him as being tied to his homeland, a true "son of the soil."

Uncommon to the men's songs, this *kīrtī* offers intentionally ambiguous allusions to Gopal Singh's sacrality. We are told that he listened to his subject's prayers from the *jharokhā* window. In this case the *jharokhā* window may be understood as a polysemic sign that signified both authority and divine presence, depending on the listening audience. The *jharokhā*'s form was borrowed from the niches in Hindu temples that enshrine images of gods. The form and its sacred references were grafted onto Mughal and Rajput forts, and it was from their fort's *jharokhās* that Indian rulers gave *jharokhā-i darśan* (displayed themselves to their subjects), thereby uniting the two strands of the political and the sacred to promote their authority as divinely sanctioned.²⁸ The *jharokhā* of this *kīrtī* is similarly presented as a polysemic sign: Gopal Singh's political career as a Ṭhākur is referenced through the *jharokhā*'s association with the political space of the fort, while his divine status is suggested by the use of the *jharokhā* in temples. As a Ṭhākur, Gopal Singh would

have heard his subjects' petitions (prayers) and troubles, for example during times of famine, from the fort's *jharokhā*. Especially to those who regarded him as a *devtā*, the *jharokhā* would have been a particularly apt metonym. Significantly, this concept of Gopal Singh's conflated sacrality is echoed in the women's song, which also mentions having *darśan* with Gopal Singh, but at his *chatrī*.

When compared to the women's songs, songs such as this *kīrtī* confirm that Rajput masculine paradigms are gender specific. The women's *bhajans* focus on Gopal Singh's physical qualities and ornament. Conversely to the male singers, ideal Rajput masculine qualities include his physical and mental qualities that he used to fulfill his *dharm*, including the tiger-like strength that Gopal Singh used to frighten his enemies (the British) and to protect his subjects. Particularly for the Rajput male singers, whose *dharm* is protection and rulership, Gopal Singh is therefore constructed in these masculine performances not as a desirable, sexualized figure, but as an archetype they identify with and strive to embody.

The male singers' references to both Gopal Singh's Rajput lineage and the ideal Rajput qualities of bravery and physical strength he displayed also serve exclusionary, territorial, and self-aggrandizing functions, reminding non-Rajputs of the Rajput singers' perceived caste superiority and other Rajput males of what they should strive to become. Benedict Anderson argues that nationalisms, or in his terms, "imagined communal identities," are created and reiterated through performance of group songs, particularly national anthems. Not only the singing and words themselves, but the unisonance and simultaneity of the performance of nationalistic songs creates an "echoed realization of the imagined community" (ANDERSON 1983, 145). The Kharwa male Rajputs' public performances of Gopal Singh's songs similarly crystallize and reinforce their own communal ties. The men's *kīrtīs* to Gopal Singh reconfigure "traditional" notions of Rajput male *dharm*, making explicit to community members that the duties and qualities associated with their *jatī* are pertinent not only in the colonial context, but in the contemporary postcolonial context as well.

KĪRTĪ #2

Oh! Gopal Singh jī come back to us! Oh, Rao of Kharwa, we remember you.
Our whole country suffers your absence.

Oh! You great man of the desert! Your works are great. Everyone is singing
your songs of praise. You never trembled before the white people.

*Raṅbanṅka Rathore!*²⁹ The fame of your bravery spreads throughout the
world. Your name is immortal.

Kesri Singh and Joravar Singh, were two great *Cārān* warriors of Kotah, who
were beloved by Bhārat Mātā. Gopal Singh jī went with Joravar Singh to Delhi.
Raj Bihari, the great Bengali called them there.

All the great Freedom Fighters met in Delhi. Gopal Singh jī shouted "Oh,
great warriors do not fear! Kill the lord and cause your name to live forever in
the world!"³⁰

In the slavery of the white man, oh how the motherland was suffering! Free the motherland and give us peace!³¹

Gopal Singh jī said: “Our first task is to challenge them. Let the white people know our will.”

“Who should bomb the viceroy? Oh! Come forward great warrior who is born of a brave woman. Aim the bomb to kill the British lord.”

Hearing this, Joravar Singh twists his mustache, deep in thought. He said: “I am the son of a brave Cārān woman.” He accepted. *Jai Ho!*³²

Raj Bihar Bengali patted the warriors on the back and said: “We are proud of such sons of India.”

The viceroy came to the Delhi *darbār* on the back of an elephant. Gopal Singh jī gave the sign and the bomb blasted. *Ranbanḡka Rathore!*

Five whites were killed. Many were wounded and the whites shivered.

All of Gopal Singh jī’s companions were born from brave lionesses. The names of such brave freedom fighters are immortal.

Oh! India wouldn’t be in this condition if Gopal Singh jī were with us today. Gopal Singh jī lives in heaven.

He shook the throne of the white rulers. You are the lion and the jewel of India.

We remember you. Oh! Come to meet us. Years have passed since our separation.

You are the great desert warrior. You are the priest of revolution (*Krāntikārī Pūjārī*).

You are beloved in the Punjab, in Bengal and by all the great men of India.

When the British heard Gopal Singh jī’s name, they were jolted awake. Through their cunning, they caught him and threw him in jail. But, he escaped.

You are a bullock cart filled with gifts. Oh! Of which of your great deeds shall we sing?

GOPAL SINGH AS BHĀRAT MATĀ’S “MILITANT MATRIOT”

Kīrtī #2 alternates between a narrative of the Delhi *darbār* bombing incident and plaintive, eulogistic entreaties to Gopal Singh to return and alleviate his people’s suffering caused by his separation from them. These two topoi are juxtaposed and interwoven in the song’s text. The former is historical and highly political. The latter, which is presented in almost lovesick terms, is a trope more common to the *bhakti* tradition of devotional songs, which similarly critique and/or resist dominant ideologies in the construction of heterodox alternatives. Another prominent trope in this song is the nation as mother. The description of Gopal Singh’s dutiful filial sacrifice to her bridges the twin themes of gender and politics.

As in the previous song, we are informed that not only Marwar but the entire nation would benefit if Gopal Singh was still alive. His fame has spread beyond Rajasthan and he enjoys a reputation throughout India for his selfless dedication as a freedom fighter. He is referred to as a *Krāntikārī Pūjārī* (Priest of Rev-

olution), which imbues Gopal Singh and his companions' struggle with a religious dimension. The nation is feminized and deified (Bhārat Mātā), injecting an additional layer of sacred meaning into the song. HARLAN interprets the Rajput hero's struggle as a self-sacrifice to his *kul devī*, likening the fallen warriors on the battlefield to her sacrificial goats (2003, 19–26). Here, the clan goddess has been substituted for Mother India, and Gopal Singh, the modern nationalist Rajput hero, sacrifices himself to the nation. His struggle transcends the political secular: it is a holy war to liberate the nation from the British who have enslaved and abused her.

As a nationalist who took to arms to liberate Bhārat Mātā from the colonial powers that wronged her, Gopal Singh may be termed what Lise McKean has referred to as a “militant matriot,” which she defines in the following manner: “Bhārat Mātā's devoted and dedicated children ... those who, ever eager to assert their devotion, readily construe events as offences against Bhārat Mātā (MCKEAN 1998, 252).” “Militant matriots” therefore refers to martial nationalists who envision the nation in feminized, specifically maternal terms, and view their militancy as their duty to Bharāt Mātā. Significantly, in this *kitrī* Raj Bihar Bengali refers to the bombers before carrying out their plan as “sons of India,” reiterating McKean's notion of India as a mother in need of protection from her devoted sons.

It is not known if the politicized term “Bhārat Mātā” to refer to India was ever part of Gopal Singh's rhetoric. However, the song's incorporation of the topos of the nation as an offended mother is apposite, as it portrays our hero as urbane and well-versed in contemporary nationalist discourse. McKean discusses how both the term and the accompanying personification of the nation as a mother goddess have their roots in the early twentieth-century Bengali nationalist movement.³³ This of course was around the same time that Gopal Singh, together with nationalists from different regions of India, was canvassing throughout Rajasthan. The notion of the deified nation and the very name of Bhārat Mātā is frequently evoked in the song “Bande Mātaram,” which was to become the nationalists' anthem and rallying cry (MCKEAN 1998, 252).

In this song the viceroy is never referred to by name and the British in general are referred to as *gaure* (whites).³⁴ The British are incisively mocked. They are surrounded by the iconic trappings of Indic kingship; the Viceroy rides an elephant to the *darbār* (itself a royal arena) and sits upon a throne. However, they are inept (they cannot even keep Gopal Singh in prison) and cowardly (they shiver with fear). Such qualities are unforgivable in a ruler according to the Rajput model of kingship, which extols bravery above all other qualities in a king. Thus, Gopal Singh, the paradigm of Rajput rulership, is juxtaposed against the British, who are presented as unworthy, false kings who abuse the land they have conquered.

KĪRTĪ #3

You are the jewel and lion of India. Only a brave lioness could have given birth to a hero such as you. You follow the true course of freedom (*azādi*) and have no fear of the British (*būpatī*).³⁵

You shook the unmovable throne of the white rulers. There is no one like you in all the land.

When the country was in the grips of slavery, Mother India was miserable in her chains. He became the shield of the nation.

He tied the *moṛ* of freedom on his turban and became just like a young bridegroom going to claim his bride on the battlefield.³⁶ He clashed with the British to liberate India.

He was a Rathore and the son of the powerful Rao Madho Singh jī of Kharwa.

Oh, King, you cast your shadow in all four directions, giving shade and shelter from the sun.

The great sacrificer was like Narasimha. He was unafraid of anyone.

He fixed his mind on Kṣatryā ideals and spread the idea of revolution to every corner of India. He gave his life, heart, and wealth for the motherland (*Mātr Bhūmī*).

But, all of a sudden, his allies turned and joined the British! The enemies surrounded Kharwa. Still, the brave son of India did not give up.

The Chief Commissioner and *Kothwal* with his officers (*thānā*—head of the police station) surrounded the fort, and demanded his weapons.

He rode away on his horse, brandishing his sword. He broke through the British ranks and no one dared stop him. It was a miracle.

Gopal Singh jī sacrificed his life, heart and wealth for the motherland. His only aim was to protect his country.

Rao Gopal Singh jī was a priest of revolution. The entire world knows of his piety. He increased the Rajputs' glory.

There is no other like this great warrior in this world. His name will live forever and the poets will continue to sing of his bravery and selfless deeds of the Rathore warriors who serve as examples to the sons of India.

GOPAL SINGH AS BHĀRAT MĀTĀ'S OEDIPAL BRIDEGROOM

Chronologically, *kīrtī* #3 follows *kīrtī* #2 in the narrative of Gopal Singh's life. It deals with the consequences of the bombing; Gopal Singh is deserted by many of his supporters, he escapes from the British, and clashes with them as they attempt to recapture him.

This *kīrtī* engages in the trope of the Rajput warrior as bridegroom, which is common to women's songs. As discussed in relation to the employment of the trope in the women's songs, the hero's status as a would-be bridegroom is used to allude to his attractive appearance and, as a corollary, to express the female singers'

covert sexual longings. By contrast, this *kīrtī* employs the same trope to an exclusively political end, again a concern that is the prerogative of the male singers. Unlike more traditional Rajput martyrs, Gopal Singh's implied bride in this *kīrtī* is not a Rajput woman, but the nation, which was presented as a maternal figure in *kīrtī* #2 and in subsequent verses in this song.

Writing in relation to how the Hindu nationalist movement—the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP)—has appropriated Bhārāt Mātā, recast her to serve their own religio-political agenda, and advertised their perceived duty to protect the motherland from Muslim abusers, McKean identifies an oedipal element in the phenomenon of “militant patriotism.” In McKean's scenario the nation is the mother, the fundamentalist militant patriots are her devoted children, and the tyrannical patriarchal figures are India's Muslims (especially the present day ancestors of Muslim invaders). The mother and her children will thrive with the removal of the father, and militant patriotism is thus equated with righteous patricide (McKEAN 1998, 252). The scenario presented in this *kīrtī*, with its oedipal subtext, is not dissimilar: the mother remains the same and Gopal Singh is her devoted martial son, while the father is now the Raj. Gopal Singh's liberation of his wronged mother is thus cast as righteous patricide, not murder or sedition. Significantly, the Raj of course promoted itself as a father figure, whose paternalistic duty was to protect the Indian states within its political orbit from the “despotic” Mughals and “rapacious” Marāṭhās who had hindered its transformation from mercantile East India Company to empire (FISHER 1984, 403; PEABODY 1996 and 1997).

Typical of the men's songs, this *kīrtī* privileges Gopal Singh's physical strength, which enables him to act as an ideal king and protect his people according to the dictates of his *dharm*. In addition to a bridegroom, Gopal Singh is here likened both to a real lion and the divine lion, Narasimha (The lion *avtār* of Vishnu), as well as a rare jewel, a shield protecting the nation, which is conceived of in maternal terms, and an umbrella. The latter is a particularly appropriate metaphor. Kharwa, like most of Rajasthan, is arid and the sunlight is so blinding that it is often negatively described as “sharp,” “biting,” and “crackling.” The reference to the sun, which is generally regarded as merciless and hostile in Rajasthan, should be understood here as an allusion to the British, who are described in the previous verse as similarly aggressive. Like an umbrella, the warrior Gopal Singh offers respite from these antagonistic elements. The conflation of Gopal Singh and an umbrella is also apt as the latter is a pan-Indic indexical sign, signifying that whatever it surmounts (generally a deity or ruler) is extraordinary. In this verse the relationship between the sign (umbrella) and the signified (rulership) is so intimate that the two are fused into one, and Gopal Singh is transformed into the umbrella of his office. Additionally, recall that Gopal Singh's cenotaph, his *chatrī* (literally “umbrella”) in Kharwa is his cultic locus, where his devotees come to have *darśan* with him, as the women's *bhajan* details.

CONCLUSION

As has been demonstrated through the examples and analyses of Gopal Singh's songs, gender, *jātī*, and historical context matter in the genre of Rajput heroic songs. The male and female singers of Kharwa privilege different aspects of Gopal Singh's life and character in their songs of praise to him. The female singers are preoccupied with similar concerns that characterize Rajasthani women's songs to other Rajput heroes and are unconcerned with contemporary political events. Conversely, the men's songs are located in the historical moment of the early-twentieth century against the backdrop of colonial north India, and highlight political concerns. Gender also informs ideas of Gopal Singh's posthumous status and the type of hero he is. The language of the women's song reflects, as well as creates, their perceptions of his divine status, which several women confirmed during interviews. On the other hand, the male singers and participants in the *melā* are generally more concerned with Gopal Singh's status as a secularized hero.

In the men's songs, masculine Rajput values of sacrifice and courage are reconfigured on the basis of historical and social contexts, and the theme of sacrifice is reconceptualized in light of the historical milieu. This is not surprising as premodern Rajasthan politics and warfare were the *dharmik* prerogatives of male Rajputs. It may be tempting to conclude that the Rajput male singers are simply privileging elements from Gopal Singh's narrative that reflect their own gendered and communal concerns. However, I suggest that there are other communal reasons that Kharwa's Rajput men sing to Gopal Singh and perform his annual public memorialization.

The Rajputs have traditionally been the socially and politically dominant community in northwest India. The Kharwa men's songs document a Rajput hero whose political career is rooted in an era when their community still maintained social, financial, and (nominal) political power, albeit under colonial administration. After independence and the further erosion of many of the Rajputs' hereditary privileges and social customs during the 1970s, the Rajputs were largely divested of their caste rights and responsibilities. The land is now no longer theirs to defend and administer according to the dictates of their *dharm*. Often too proud to work for others, particularly non-Rajputs, many have actually fared worse post-independence (HARLAN 2003, 37–42). Might the annual *melā* and the male Rajputs' songs in honor of a member of their own community (who to them represents an exemplar of *dharmik* fulfillment) therefore temporarily assuage a nostalgic longing for a bygone era? As their use of the familiar *tum* when addressing him in their songs indicates, this group of singers not only identifies with Gopal Singh, but emphatically claims him as “one of their own.” ANDERSON asserts that “In the end it is always the ruling class ... above all the aristocratic that mourn the empires and their grief always has a stagey quality to it” (1983, III).

What better way for the Kharwa male Rajputs to mourn and perhaps even temporarily deny the contemporary sociopolitical situation than through group song and public performance? For the few hours of the *melā* Rajput, preeminence is

briefly reestablished throughout Kharwa as their community member is celebrated in the public space. Kharwa's male Rajput singers might thus have a personal stake in Gopal Singh's continued public memorialization, inspiring them to perform their communal concerns during his *melā*.

Males of other *jatīs* and Kharwa's women have different investments in Gopal Singh's memorialization. The former benefit from the commemoration of a local hero who joined the freedom struggle on the national stage. The latter benefit through the acquisition of boons and blessings that an extraordinary figure is believed to posthumously grant. In their performances, both gendered groups engender and reaffirm established, though different, gender norms.

Analysis of Rao Gopal Singh's songs also demonstrates that this hero is distinct within the traditions of both Rajput heroes and Indian figures who are widely celebrated as *svatantrā senani* for their struggle to liberate India from colonialism. What differentiates Gopal Singh from other Rajput heroes is that his struggle took place in the modern era. This is in contrast to the majority of deified Rajput heroes, whose narratives are located in the ambiguous distant past of several centuries ago. He is certainly not the only modern deified Rajput hero whose devotees credit him with the performance of miracles, but he is the only one I am aware of whose narrative takes him beyond his immediate surroundings. Gopal Singh is also an atypical Indian nationalist hero in that he is considered by many, particularly women, to have been posthumously deified. While nationalist Indian freedom fighters such as Gandhi, Bhagat Singh, and even Rana Pratap of Mewar are venerated, they are not considered gods.

Scholarship has neither enquired if a tradition of males' laudatory songs to Rajput heroes exists, nor has it investigated the narratives of Rajput heroes of the modern era. It has focused instead on Rajasthani women's songs in praise of largely anonymous heroes who were martyred in the distant pre-colonial past. My analysis of Rao Gopal Singh's songs offers examples of the different concerns of these two gendered groups of singers in Kharwa. The songs also present a rare case in which the heroic struggle is located in a specific recent historic moment. However, the extent to which Gopal Singh's narrative and the tradition of males singing his songs are anomalous within the wider tradition of hero veneration in Rajasthan can only be answered conclusively through further research on gender and performativity in the region.

NOTES

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1. Roughly translated as “chief,” *rao* is a more honorific term denoting higher rank than *Thākur*. The term is akin to the title of “sir” for a lord. Gopal Singh’s full title is Thākur Rao. These titles and the lands that accompany the positions are hereditary and typically transferred from father to eldest son. In this article I will employ Gopal Singh’s full title or parts of it before his name as appropriate.

2. *Svatantrā senānī* is a respectful term for Indian nationalists who resisted British rule. Their struggle took many forms, from martyrs such as Bhagat Singh, to nonviolent protesters such as Gandhi.

3. A *chatrī* is erected at the site where a Rajput is cremated. The name of these memorials (literally “umbrella”) is appropriate, as the Rajputs are the hereditary class of rulers of north India and the umbrella is a metonym signifying royalty and divinity, which are closely associated in the Indic context.

4. CAUGHRAN (1998) analyzes stories that a group of women belonging to the lower-middle potter caste in Uttar Pradesh recite on occasions of sacred fasting. Caughran interprets the narratives and some of her informants’ actions as a form of resistance to the patriarchy through the only way available to them—food: in other words, its denial or forbidden indulgence.

5. GOLD and RAHEJA (1984) examine narrative and singing traditions among rural women in Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, many of whom are lower caste. GOLD and GUJAR (2002) employ narrative as a lens through which to analyze rural Rajasthani peasants’ experiences before and after Indian Independence.

6. There are several categories of Rajput heroes, and their epithets reflect the specific manner in which they were martyred. Although not all Rajput heroes were martyred, the overwhelming majority were, and this appears to be one of the (unofficial) prerequisites for posthumous deification (see HARLAN 2003, 14–19). While scholars have focused their examinations of the phenomena of the deified deceased on male and female (*satī*) members of the Rajput community in Rajasthan, it is important to note that there are other cultic traditions in India that worship, seek boons from, and sing songs in honor of historic divinities. For a discussion of the phenomena in Banaras, see COCCARI 1989.

7. The thirteenth to early-nineteenth centuries marks the period of Islamic (Sultanate and Mughal) political supremacy in north and central India, during which time the Muslim political presence in Rajasthan was pronounced. After the majority of Rajput states allied with the British in 1818, cattle rustling was largely stemmed in the region. It is also important to note that the villains in these Rajput heroic songs are not necessarily Muslims. For example, the cattle raiders in the hagiography of the heroic folk god Pabuji were Rajputs.

8. A *dōhā* is a poetic couplet, usually composed in praise of a hero or deity, traditionally in the ancient Rajasthani language of Dingle.

9. The bombing incident is reported in several newspapers, including *The New York Times*, 12 December 1912.

10. Bhagat Singh (1907–1931) was an Indian freedom fighter who is widely celebrated as one of the most influential revolutionaries of the Indian Independence movement. He was hanged by the British.

11. None of the songs are mentioned in this article.

12. This is the regional Rajasthani language spoken throughout the former princely state of Marwar.

13. In Rajasthan, the color, print, and manner in which a turban (*sāfā/pagrī*) is tied communicates the wearer’s identity in terms of his caste, social status, and home village. A popular Rajasthani adage is *Pagrī pechān hotā hai* (A turban is one’s identity).

14. As recounted by my Marwari informants, the finest cotton prints for turbans are produced in Multan (now Sindh, Pakistan), and these have traditionally been particularly prized.

15. The Chundawats are a sub-clan of the Sisodias Rajputs of Mewar.

16. The Sisodias are the ruling family of the former kingdom of Mewar (Udaipur, Southern Rajasthan). Before independence they were one of the largest and most powerful of all of the Rajput clans. Additionally, the Sisodias were and remain respected by all of the other Rajput clans due to their steadfast refusal to completely accept first Mughal, and later British, suzerainty.

17. A flamboyant, well-groomed mustache is a symbol of masculine pride throughout Rajasthan. Gopal Singh's portrait paintings, photographs, and bust sculpture in Kharwa's town square show him with a substantial, neatly waxed mustache.

18. For a discussion of the sacred meaning of *darśan*, see ECK 1998, 2–10. For a discussion of Indian kings giving *darśan* and its religio-political symbolism, see INDEN (1998, 74–75), and ASHER (2004b, 47–48).

19. A *jhunjharjī* is a specific type of Rajput hero who although decapitated in battle, continues to fight headless for some time (HARLAN 2003, 14–16).

20. The wearing of saffron-colored garments for battle was common among Rajput men in pre-colonial India, as dying in battle was considered a form of personal sacrifice to the *kuldevī* (clan goddess) (HARLAN 1992).

21. Literally “curtain” in Urdu, *purdah* also refers to the South Asian practices of sequestering women in the *zenāna* portion of the home and women covering their faces in public.

22. BUTLER 1990, 140. Butler asserts that gender is the product of performance, specifically reiterated acting. Through repetition of stylized acts in time, gendered behavior becomes normative and defines culturally specific notions of masculinity and femininity.

23. I present the men's songs according to the narrative sequences of Gopal Singh's life. Their numerical sequence here does not correspond to the order in which the songs were sung at the *melā*. As this *kīrtī* deals with Gopal Singh's lineage and birth, it seemed the logical one with which to begin.

24. The suffix “jī” after a person's name denotes respect.

25. *Kamagnī* is a respectful Marwari greeting generally given to members of a higher social class than the speaker. *Svargvāseo* is one who is deceased, living in heaven.

26. A *jharokhā* is an elaborately carved projecting window, typical of Mughal and Rajput fort architecture.

27. In Indian art and literature, lions and tigers are frequently interchangeable, and distinction is seldom made between the two. Lions and tigers are commonly employed as metaphors for Rajputs, whose traditional caste vocation and *dharm*, as members of the Kṣatriyā community, are as rulers and warriors. All Rajputs have the last name Singh, which literally means “lion.” The reference to the lion in this verse is thus an apt metaphor for Gopal Singh, who is presented in these songs as an ideal Rajput.

28. For examples of Mughal emperors participating in *jharokhā-i darśan* and the *jharokhā*'s place in imperial architecture, see ASHER 1992, 62, 253; 2004a, 176–82, 184–85; 2004b, 47; THACKSTON 1999, 466.

29. “Brave warrior Rathore of the battlefield” is the Rathore battle cry, emblazoned on the Marwar state coat of arms.

30. The “lord” refers to the British viceroy.

31. The singers alternated between “Mother India” (*Bhārat Mātā*) and “motherland” (*mātr bhūmī*) in different performances of this *kīrtī*.

32. An exclamation: “Victory”!

33. More recently, Paola Bacchetta examines how the Rashtra Sevika Samiti (the women's branch of the RSS) similarly engages the trope of the abused motherland as a nationalist call to arms (PATTON 2002, 172–73).

34. It is difficult to determine if the term *gaure* was intended by the *kīrtī*'s writer to be pejorative. The semantic content of the term simply means "those of fair complexion," and often, as a corollary, Caucasians. The term does not necessarily have negative connotations, nor is it employed as a racial slur in contemporary South Asia. It is usually simply a statement of the subject's appearance, and is often meant as a compliment. After all, in its feminized form (*gaurē*) it is an epithet for the fair-skinned goddess, Parvati. However, its use in this *kīrtī* does mark the British as fundamentally *different* (by virtue of their skin color) from their Indian subjects.

35. Here, the British are referred to as *būpatī* ("masters of the land").

36. *Mor* is a groom's turban ornament.

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