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हरियाणा की आवाज़

HARYANA KI AWAAZ

Volume III Issue I

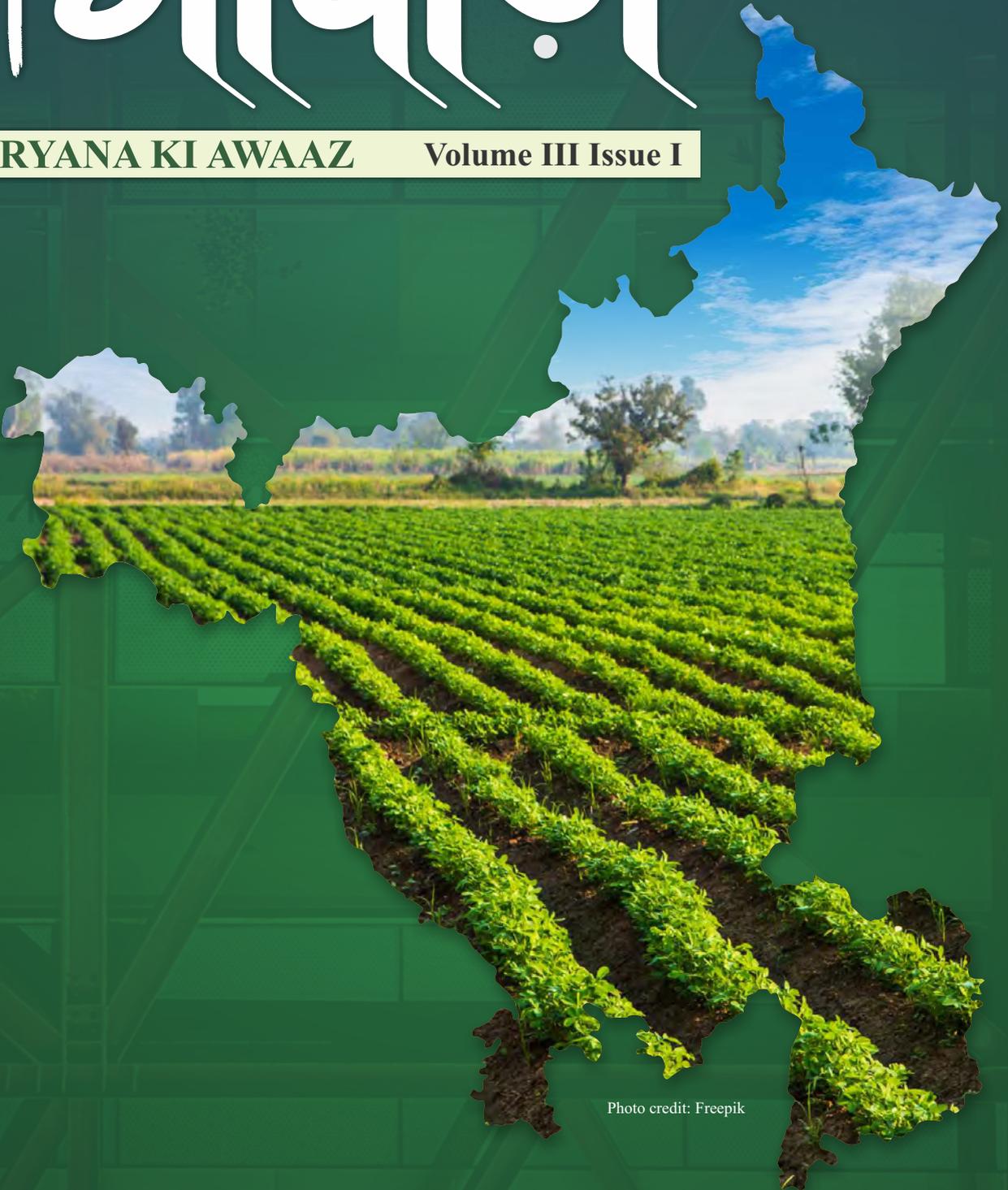


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We would also like to acknowledge and extend our appreciation to all our respondent for sharing their time and experiences with us.





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



Prachy Hooda

Curator

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

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

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

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Volume III – Haryanvi Religiosity Issue I – The Peers of Haryana

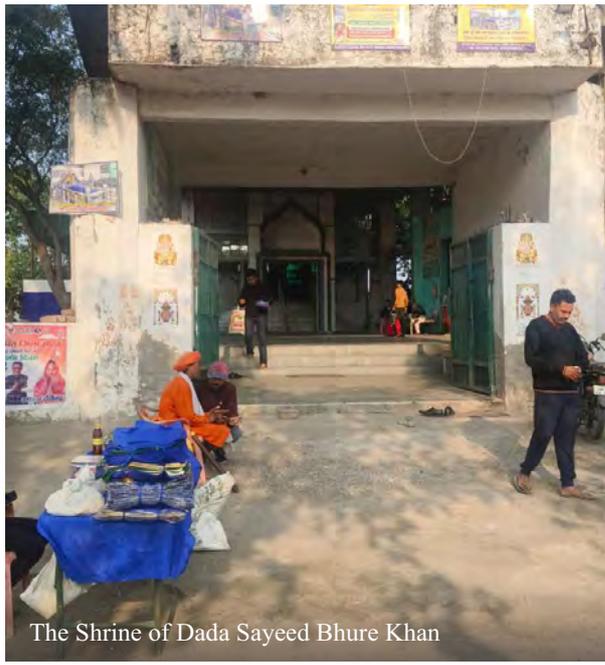
In Haryana, everyday religiosity is not confined to formalised, mainstream places of worship. It is part of daily life, with structures and ideas like dada than, peers, local Matas, folk deities and deras shaping the spiritual contours of rural Haryana.

Across villages, communities are organised around local saints and folk deities. Rural women play a central role in keeping these traditions alive. Throughout the year, they offer grain from the harvest, jaggery, and simple homemade sweets at village shrines. These offerings are not just symbolic; they are acts of protection and gratitude. People turn to these deities to keep illness and misfortune away, and to ensure the well-being of family and cattle.

While some, like Guga Pir, are followed across regions beyond Haryana; others, such as Kheda or dada than belong to a particular village or a particular clan and are closely tied to its land. The ancestral shrines dedicated to pitars are where families remember their own dead and seek their blessings. In some cases, a small village shrine gradually attracts devotees from neighbouring areas and becomes a recognised place of pilgrimage.

Folk worship of this kind is not unique to Haryana. Yet in Haryana, these traditions have a distinct form shaped by agrarian life and local memory.

This issue brings together reflections on these living practices. By focusing on folk deities, and ancestral shrines, we hope to highlight a dimension of religiosity that remains central to rural Haryana today.



The Shrine of Dada Sayeed Bhure Khan

Just a short walk from the university campus, in the village of Jagdishpur, is the shrine of Dada Sayeed Bhure Khan Peer. From here, the buildings of the Jindal campus are visible. Yet inside the shrine compound is an entirely different lifeworld.

In one corner of the compound, devotees light incense sticks and earthen lamps. Blue, yellow, white, and green chadars lie folded and layered over the grave of the Peer. Some are new and

bright; others have faded under years of sun. People step in quietly with prasad, heads covered, hands folded – some in the style of a dargah, some in the manner of a temple.

For the people of this area, the Peer is not defined by religion. He is defined by presence.

Yameen, the head priest, has served here for nearly forty years. A resident of Rathdhana, he grew up around the shrine. Before him, his father looked after the shrine, and before his father, his grandfather did. Caring for the shrine has been a family tradition passed down through generations.





Yameen tells the story that established Bhure Khan's power in local memory. In 1964, when the road and drain were being constructed, officials tried to remove the shrine (very small back then). A crane attempted to lift it three times and failed. On the fourth attempt, the machine reportedly flung a labourer into the drain. Children grazing cattle nearby – including Yameen – pulled him out and washed him with well water. The message was clear to the village: the Peer did not wish to be moved.

Since then, the shrine has stayed exactly where it is. Any infrastructural development like roads or sewage circumvent around it. Locals say the Peer protects travellers. Despite sharp turns and fast traffic, accidents rarely turn fatal. Even when university students meet with serious crashes, they are believed to “walk away” because Baba kept his hand over them. Whether one calls it faith or coincidence, for devotees the explanation is simple: the Peer guards the road.

What makes Bhure Khan's shrine remarkable is its openness. Jats, Brahmins, Dalits, Muslims, everyone comes. “Sab aave hain... Jat, Baaman, Musalman,” (everyone comes... Jats, Brahmins, Muslims) a village woman told us plainly. No one asks who belongs. People come with a *mannat* – for a job, a child, relief from illness – and they return when it is fulfilled. When a *mannat* is fulfilled, people return to offer whatever they can afford – sweets, prasad, or, for those who are better off, a *bhandara* to feed the poor and the wider community.

A young English honours graduate, whose family has visited for nearly three decades, described the shrine as a “charging point.” He now lives in the city, but returns every Holi and Diwali. His reasoning was direct: “*Maano to thik hai, nahi maano to wo kuch bhi nahi hai.*” If you believe, it is everything. If you don't, it is nothing.

It is syncretism that guides everything here. When a *bhandara* is organised after a wish is fulfilled, a *bhajan mandali* from Uttar Pradesh is invited to sing aartis. This, at a pir shrine. Qawwalis blend with bhajans.



Outside the main shrine, we met a saffron-clad elderly man seated quietly. He introduced himself as a follower of the Gorakhnath tradition from the Gorakhnath Math. He had walked from Sonipat to spend the day at Bhure Khan's dargah. For him, there was no contradiction in following both the Nath lineage and the Peer. “*Sab ek hi hain,*” he said – all are one.

The resting place of Bhure Khan's brother, Kale Khan, is equally revered. Oral histories speak of two brothers whose spiritual presence stretches across the landscape – one here in the fields, another across the railway line near Bandepur.

Beyond the main shrine lies another layer of devotion: the dada thans. These thans often begin as a single brick placed in memory. Over years, as prayers are answered, families return to add cement, bricks, and labour. It becomes a permanent structure. In Jagdishpur, the Peer and the thans anchor faith as well as belonging. Families who have moved to cities like Narela still return, ensuring their roots are not forgotten. The shrine holds together caste groups, clans, migrants, villagers.

The sacred space of the Peer refuses neat religious categories. At Dada Sayeed Bhure Khan's shrine, Islam and Hindu practice converge. In a time when identity based differences are often heightened, Jagdishpur offers an exception. Here, faith is the simple belief that if you pray and ask for something with sincerity, someone is listening.

Meet our Team

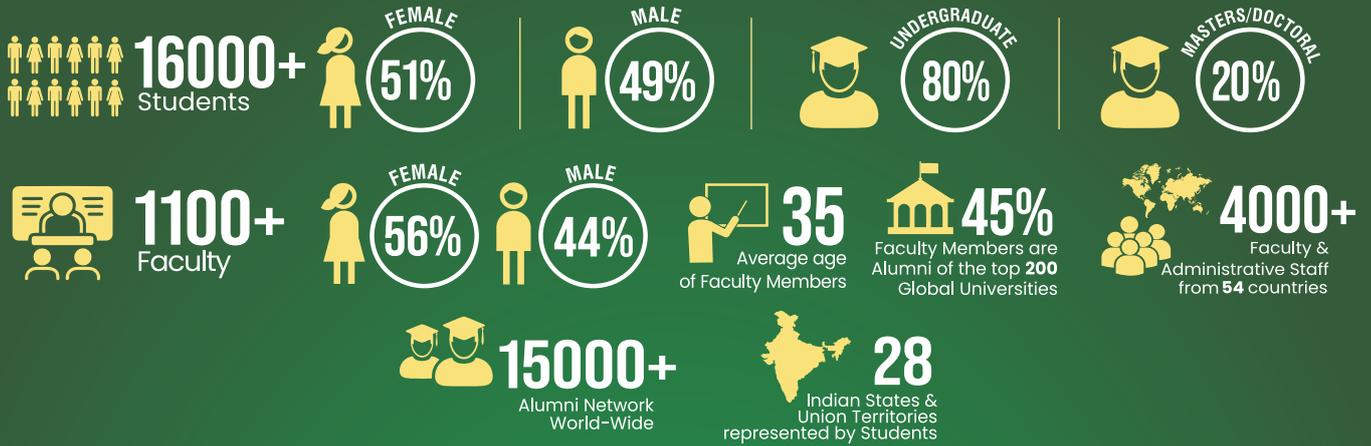


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