



Grinding Songs from Goa. As Women Grind Grain and Predicaments

Canções da lavoura de Goa. Enquanto as mulheres moem grãos e angústias

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to bring an analysis of *oviyos*, folkloric songs that Indian women from the Hindu community of Goa, former Portuguese colony in India used to sing while working at the grinding stone. These songs, a sample of Goan folklore, were collected by Heta Pandit in the book *Grinding Stories. Songs from Goa* (2018), based on her field work with singers Subhadra Arjun Gaus, Saraswati, Dutta Sawant and Sarojini Bhiva Gaonkar. The songs, sung in a dialect of Marathi-Konkani, were transcribed into English. These elaborate songs are of psychological and social significance as they provide a release from a sometimes harsh reality, at the same time they are an invaluable cultural document. They have been analyzed from the perspective of Goan folklore as discussed by Phaldesai (2011), the meaning of folkloric narratives (DUNDES, 2007) and a reflection on the genre *oviyos* (JASSAL, 2012).

Keywords: working songs; *oviyos*; folklore; Goa; women singers.

Resumo: O objetivo deste artigo é fazer uma análise dos *oviyos*, canções folclóricas que as mulheres indianas da comunidade hindu de Goa, ex-colônia portuguesa na Índia (1510-1961), cantavam enquanto trabalhavam na moenda. Essas canções, uma amostra do folclore goês, foram coletadas por Heta Pandit no livro *Grinding Stories. Songs from Goa* (2018), baseado em seu trabalho de campo com os cantores Subhadra Arjun Gaus, Saraswati Dutta Sawant e Sarojini Bhiva Gaonkar. Essas canções, cantadas em um dialeto de marati-concani, foram transcritas para o inglês e são de grande valor psicológico e social, pois fornecem às mulheres da comunidade um canal de liberação

de uma realidade às vezes dura; mesmo tempo, são um documento cultural inestimável. Os oviyos foram analisados sob a ótica do folclore goês discutido por Phaldesai (2011), o significado das narrativas folclóricas (DUNDES, 2007) e uma reflexão sobre o gênero *oviyo* (JASSAL, 2012).

Palavras Chave: canções da lavoura; oviyos; folclore; Goa; mulheres cantoras.

Sit on the grinding stone and a song will emerge
Old Konkani Proverb

Women and Folklore. The Grinding Songs

Alan Dundes (2007, p. 64) defines folklore as a type of narrative through which the members of a community deal with the crucial events in their lives, whether such events have to do with the life of the individual: birth, initiation, marriage, death, etc., or the calendrical cycle of a community: sowing, harvesting, etc. In this sense, folklore is autobiographical because it shows how the members of a community see themselves. Folkloric narratives can be understood as the system of knowledge of a community because they convey community values. As such, they are the property of an entire community. Critics agree that at the beginning of the twenty-first century, due to urbanization and globalization, there has been a drastic change in folklore. Nonetheless, according to Pandurang Phaldesai (2011), folklore is perpetuated by ethnic, labor and religious communities as a way to state their identity, establish links of solidarity among its members, preserve their past traditions and adapt to the new times.

As folklore reveals the areas of concern of a community, many times these narratives become a socially sanctioned outlet for wishes or anxieties individuals would not be able to express in their ordinary lives: “One can do or say in folkloric form things otherwise interdicted in everyday life” (BRONNER, 2007, p. 3). This is why many times folkloric narratives have offered a space for resistance and have had a cathartic effect, in particular for women.

Beverly Stoeltje (1988, p. 144) has pointed out that there has always been a gender bias in folklore studies that tends to associate them with patriarchy while subordinating women to the establishment. Nonetheless, women occupy a large space in folklore and there are

many narratives told by women, in which they are author, narrator and main character that have become important channels to question their own condition. Such is the case of the “grinding stories”, *oviyos*, work songs, grounded in oral technique and intended for oral performance, traditionally sung by Indian women, in particular young daughters-in-law, while sitting, precisely, at the grinding stone on the courtyard floor as they crushed grain to flour. These women would give free vent to their feelings and worries, as they sang to the rhythm and sound of the grinding stone. They would sing for themselves and not for an audience. This genre was common among rural women all over India. Smita Tewari Jassal (2012, p. 33) says that this practice was discontinued thirty years ago, in particular due to the introduction of motorized devices to crush grain. This is why nowadays these grinding songs are mainly sung for an audience at wedding ceremonies. Nonetheless, in some households the practice still continues. As Dundes (2007, p. 80-81) has remarked, one should distinguish between folklore as use and folklore as meaning since, for example, the singing of these *oviyos*, even nowadays at a festival or wedding ceremony, is not limited to a memorabilia from the past but is also a reflection on the society of the present.

There are many regional varieties of *oviyos*. The aim of this paper is to study the *oviyos* from the state of Goa, India, former Portuguese colony (1510-1961). These grinding songs were popular, in particular, among the Hindu community. Among the Christian community of Goa, they are called *ovis*, and were banned by the Inquisition in 1736. Unlike the *oviyos*, sung by women to themselves while they work, *ovis* are related to several rituals in which women were involved at the time of marriage. They were performed and sung in groups and not in isolation, and attended exclusively by women; they referred, for example, to the dowry paid to the groom by the bride’s father. These *ovis* are disappearing among the Christian community (GRACIAS, 2007, p. 55). Nonetheless, there is a community of Christian Adivasi in Quepem, south of Goa, which still sings them (PANDIT, 2020, personal communication).¹

The *oviyos*, sung among women from the Hindu community, analyzed in this paper, were compiled in the book *Grinding Stories. Songs from Goa* (2018) by Heta Pandit.² They were sung by Subhadra

¹ E-mail from Heta Pandit, Sept. 11th, 2020.

² Pandit is now organizing a volume of *ovis*.

Arjun Gaus, Saraswati Dutta Sawant and Sarojini Bhiva Gaonkar, and transcribed from oral to written form, as well as translated from the Konkani-Marathi dialect, spoken by the women of this community, into English by Heta Pandit. In the Introduction to the *Grinding Stories*, Pandit (2018, p. 13-14) tells that she came in contact with these songs while she was visiting the Shri Mauli Temple on the border between Goa and Maharashtra. While she was looking at the Kaavi art on the walls –“a monochromatic form of art rendered on the walls of Hindu temples and in sacred spaces of Hindu homes” (PANDIT, 2018, p. 14)– she saw a narrative that called her attention: on Garuda, the Sacred Eagle, holding Bhujang, the King Cobra, on very friendly terms. She then learnt that many of these stories were contained in the *oviyos*. And thus she came into contact with the lady singers who, honoring the tradition of the Vedic hymns, had received these grinding stone songs from their ancestors, orally.

Transcribing an oral song into written form, and then adapting it from one language into another, has been defined by John Niles (1999, p. 103) as “an oral poetry act”. It implies, precisely, what Pandit did: requesting someone to sing a song or recite a poem in the presence of a scribe or of a recorder. The collector thus becomes an important factor in shaping the poem for they also influence what is being performed. This is why it is sometimes argued that the reading of printed records of songs or narratives that were meant for oral performance might be hampered in the sense that they might have been distorted in the process of transcription –since they were reduced to a “two-dimensional structure” as they are deprived of their audio-visual quality (PANIKER, 2003)– as well as of translation, as is the case of the grinding songs. Pandit (2018, p. 14) explains that she collected the songs over a year of travelling, writing her notes in English with the assistance of scholar Shubhada Chari who would translate them into English from the Marathi-Konkani dialect of the storytellers. Then, not only did she transcribe them into English but also tried to make up for the visual lack of the narrative by imprinting on the pages of the book “motifs, borders, mandala and figurative Kaavi art from temples all over Goa, Maharashtra and Karnataka” (2018, p. 14). These art forms were photographed and then adapted to the songs by Nina Sabnani.

As for the audio aspect of the narratives, in her transcription and translation, Pandit kept oral modes of expression such as the use of

vocatives, and dialogues among the characters. The fact that the stanzas are in free verse, and vary in length and number of verses, depending on the story being told, helped Pandit imprint upon them an oral cadence, so much so that, when reading the *Grinding Stories*, the readers feel that they are actually listening to them since the songs have kept the displays of the technical skill associated with oral performances.

Grinding Spices and Predicaments at the Grinding Stone

Jassal (2012) points out that folkloric songs and narratives, as part of a community's oral tradition, both tell their stories and show the construction of gender ideology not only as it is transmitted and reproduced but also interrogated by the tellers and singers. These narratives shed light on “caste, kinship and marriage, work cultures, gender, power, sexuality, family life and patriarchy” (JASSAL, 2012. p. 2). Also, as Jassal goes on to add, a close analysis of these songs allows us a glimpse of women's intimate lives since in a culture where inner feelings are sometimes not openly stated because there is nobody to discuss them with, as was the case of the young wife at the in-laws', these tales and songs offer a space to express what might be silenced in every day conversation. Likewise, the fact that different women within their own households sang about similar predicaments indirectly helped create a network of solidarity among all of them. In this way, these songs both help construct and resist a female identity as they contribute to raising consciousness among women. As Jassal (2012, p. 8) states

If the act of singing imparts psychological strength to individual women and to women's collectivities, then the underlying messages these songs transmit should cover a range of clues about how the feminine gender is constructed.

Many of the themes of these songs have to do with the condition of women in general, disregarding their caste and class. However, the repertoire of the grinding stone singers, from the peasant or laboring classes has gone unheard due to the fact that, as Jassal (2012, p. 10) also observes, women did not receive formal education and, because of this, might have internalized their exclusion as normative. Nonetheless, times are changing. While some singers have learnt the songs in an oral form from their ancestors, and it is in their memories that the songs live on,

others are actually doing research in local folklore. This is the case of the singers from Goa, all of them belonging to a Maratha rural community. Subhadra Arjun Gaus, from the village of Ghoteli No 2, Sattari, Taluka in the north of Goa, learnt the songs from her grandmother in her childhood. Though no member of her family is interested in learning them today, she is teaching them to some young women in her village. Many times interest in this kind of folkloric songs and traditions is being lost because people do not want to be associated with certain customs for fear of discrimination.³ Saraswati Dutta Sawant, from the village of Poriem in Sattari, composes her own songs. She says that she was married at the age of eight; this is why the grinding stone was her only friend. Sarojini Bhiva Gaonkar composes her own *oviyos* and sings at weddings and different folk festivals. She is a teacher and researcher. Both her grandmother and mother were well-known singers (PANDIT, 2018, p. 16).

The grinding songs usually tell a story. As already stated, the length of the song is irregular and depends not only on the theme of the song but on the amount of grain to be ground. Hence, folkloric genres, like the grinding songs, are descriptive rather than prescriptive. As Paniker (2003, p. 135) observes, though there might be some constraints as regards their form, they are comparatively free from rules and regulations. This is why they maintain a certain spontaneity in order to adapt to the story being told. They are in general narrated in the third person with the focus on the young bride or in the first person singular by a young wife who lives at her in-laws'. The common theme of the grinding songs is marriage in India while a common motif is the desire to run back to the parents' house. According to Niles (1999, p. 70), oral narratives cover six main functions: the *ludic*, the *sapiential*, the *normative*, the *constitutive*, the *socially cohesive*, and the *adaptive*. In one way or another, the *oviyos* encompass these functions: they are ludic because they entertain when sung at a wedding or help the lonely bride pass the long hours at the grinding stone; they have a pedagogical purpose as they help transmit social values from one generation to the next. They also prepare women for the hardships of married life which often appears threatening as, according to Hindu custom, the young bride must leave her paternal

³ See Mozinha Fernandes. *Where have all the Songs and Rituals Gone?* 2019. Available at: <https://hanvkonn.wordpress.com/2019/08/02/where-have-all-the-songs-and-rituals-gone/#more-357>. Access on: Feb. 24th, 2020.

home behind as she moves in with her in-laws at a very early age; in this sense, they pass on traditional wisdom, though many times it is contested and, because of that, the *oviyos* constitute a parallel reality in which to problematize traditional customs and knowledge; they are socially cohesive in the sense that they are shared by most women though each lives apart in her own home; they can be argumentative because they not only affirm existing social conventions but also criticize them.

If these songs revolve around domestic life, there are others also published in *Grinding Stories*, and retold directly by Heta Pandit, that deal with Gods and Goddesses and thus connect everyday life to the divine. They function as a chorus on the theme of the other grinding songs, the ones on domestic life, contrasting the imperfection of life among humans, in particular married life, with the perfection of the life of the gods and goddesses, who know how to overcome their differences and live in peace, precisely, in Goa:

At this sacred spot where we [Krishna and Parvati] meet,
amongst the beauty of Goa
And its peepal trees
Its mangroves, its banyan trees and life itself
We shall now reside in forever harmony and peace
[*The Gods Come to Stay*, as retold by Heta Pandit, 2018, p. 31)

On the Grinding Stone

There are some songs in the anthology in which the main theme is the grinding stone itself, or which make direct reference to the grinding stone in the refrain. In these songs the circular movement of the grinding stone, which marks the compass of each song, can be understood as a reference to the Hindu's concept of time as being circular rather than linear. One is born, lives and dies and is reborn endlessly until through understanding of *maya*, cosmic illusion, and adhering to *dharma*, moral duties, one is released into *nirvana*, peace of mind acquired with liberation from suffering.

In "Grinding Grain is Life" (2018, p.43), as sung by Saraswati Dutta Sawant, the grinding stone is one of the main motifs of the song. The theme is a happy wedding ceremony, the starting point of the young wife's future life. It is presented through some formulaic expressions

through which first there is an invocation to the goddesses and then a request to married ladies to participate in the ceremony, thus showing the narrator's desire to involve all in the festivity, and the communal quality both of the wedding ceremony as well as the song. Nonetheless, it should be observed that single women were not invited to take part in the celebration, while widows could only participate as singers, as is the case of Saraswati Dutta Sawant herself. At the same time, the use of vocatives and imperatives, calling people to action, contribute a sense of exaltation but also of worry about the preparations for the festivities:

O Mother Sateri! O Mother Pavnai!
 My grinding stone today is made of gold
 The mat I sit on is made of silver
 All the goddesses have come down
 Flying over the wedding canopy

The song is in the first person. However, it is not clear who actually sings it. What stands out in the stanza above is the importance given to the grinding stone and the mat where women sit while grinding grain which, on this particular occasion, are made of gold and silver as gods are invited to participate in the festivity.

Come to the ceremony all you
 Married ladies of the village
 Of the towns and of the territory
 Turmeric and vermillion await you.
 Place the ceremonial grinding stone
 Carefully
 For the grinding stone is life

There is then a particular request to the married ladies to bring the grinding stone to the ceremony with great care. As explained in the opening paragraph that contextualizes the song, the grinding stone is one of the symbols of the wedding ceremony, and as stated in the last line of the stanza, it stands for the new life the young bride is about to embark on: "*For the grinding stone is life*". In addition, as can be seen in the following stanza, the song has the style of a collective song, as the women seem to answer to the invocation of the singer:

"Yes! We are on our way to the ceremony!
 Yes! We are all coming!"

Not only that but also, these married ladies seem to converse directly with the goddesses:

Rambha, Lord Shiva's consort
Is on her way too.

Likewise, the Gods Ganesh, the god of knowledge, and Shiva, associated with destruction and new beginnings, are also invited. So that the gods will want to stay long enough in the celebration to bless the new pair, and pass their wisdom upon them, all has to come out to perfection. This apprehension of the community works like a refrain as it is repeated in several parts of the song:

We have called the gods, don't forget.
They must like our canopy
Like it enough to want to stay.

The cost of the wedding is a topic which will be present to the end of the song indirectly referring to all the expenses that the father of the bride, even though not having enough money, will have to incur for the wedding: buying the decorations, presents for the groom's and bride's relatives and a great amount of food for all the guests, including the neighbours. This is why there might be a sponsor, a wealthy relative, or landlord who might have lent the money for the wedding (PANDIT, 2020, personal communication):

Now call the parents of the bride
And both parents of the groom
And forget not the host of the day
Our sponsor!

While some of the grinding songs tell a story with a clear development or depict a scene that is easily visualized, others appear as being encrypted. This is because, as Paniker (2003, p. 109) remarks, the theme of these narratives as for example, family relationships, or customs, are a matter of convention shared by all the members of the community. This means that only the minimum information has to be supplied as can be seen in the next stanzas when after the invitation to the gods, and without much explanation, the priest's son is asked to participate in the ceremony:

With this song I request the priest's son
To come to the ceremony with grace and decorum

Pandit (2020, personal communication) explains that many times priests asked their young sons to assist them in the ceremonies and even step in to officiate as priest when they themselves could not attend. As they were almost children, they were asked to behave properly:

Leave the betel leaf creeper alone
It goes up the coconut tree
Like a serpent

The innuendo implied in the betel leaf creeper, used for the wedding ceremony and compared to a serpent, adds both a playful and admonitory tone to the poem. These young boys might also have been already betrothed, as marriage at a young age was the custom. This is why they were warned not to get distracted with other young ladies during the ceremony. If so, the red left by the *pãn*,⁴ made of betel leaves, would denounce them while they would be rendered speechless for a month out of shame (PANDIT, 2020, personal communication):

Don't pluck a leaf off the creeper

For fear it might strike you dumb
Your lips will be tainted red
And you will be speechless for a month.
Instead, concentrate on the rituals.
We must have everything work
To perfection.

The introduction of the taboo theme of infidelity through a joke is to be expected in folklore. If not, as Dundes (2007, p. 85) remarks, this kind of oral performance would lose its quality of socially sanctioned outlet. At this point in the song, there is a move from the metaphysical and timeless world of the Gods to the material space of the here and now of certain Goan villages as the singer refers to the relatives who might decide not to come to the wedding. This desire for perfection that adds to the worries of the organizers refers now to the bride and groom's relatives

⁴ A kind of paste made from a special bark mixed with lime. Areca nuts on the leaf and lime is added together with spices.

who might also fail to come because they might feel the party is beneath them or because they live too far away, and the fare is too expensive, implying they want an extra help with this cost too. This direct reference to the local social milieu, implied in the actual names of Goan villages, gives to the grinding song a touch of reality which leads the audience, in the case of *oviyos* sung at a wedding ceremony, to identify with it:

It is so very far. I have no money To pay for the fare. O we will have to give The new son-in-law something We will have to pay the fares.	Ambadgaon, Poriem, Keri villages Are indeed at a distance They all have an excuse not to come.
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The bantering about the groom’s uncle, who is called a snob, reveals the joyful mood of the event, and offers a glimpse into the life of the community, in particular the neighbours’ gossiping about the relationship between the bride’s and the groom’s families as both try to show their superiority:

Come dear neighbours! We call the boy’ uncle Where is he today? He is very dignified. No, he is, in fact, a snob. Well it’s alright, snob uncle If you choose not to come I will save the fancy clothes	I had bought for you And put them to some other use. The boy’s mother ‘s side Is high and mighty. Her brother, his wife Her sister and her husband What can we do?
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Perhaps, what makes the wedding ceremony a happy event is that the relatives of both the groom and the bride come together as, later on, each will go back to their own village, and families will separate, causing great distress to the bride. Meanwhile, as the last stanza of the poem signals, the family deity is again invoked to come and bless their daughter in this rite of passage into the new life:

We will ask our family deity
 To bless our daughter and new life
 So everything goes right.
 For life indeed goes round and round
 For life is a grinding stone.

If on the one hand the fragmented quality of the poem gives to the song its elliptical quality, on the other hand, the poem is well formed and climaxed, as each of the vignettes chosen for the singing fit perfectly into a harmonious and coherent whole. This feature of the *Grinding Stones* shows that though oral, folklore songs have been composed with a confident technique, as if they were already mature by the time they were delivered (NILES, 1999, p. 1).

In “Evening Song” (2018, p. 59), sung by Sarojini Gaonkar, the grinding stone is no longer an ornament at a wedding. The song is in third person and the focus is on the figure of the young wife with her legs wrapped around the grinding stone that is neither of gold nor of silver, but a household artifact that binds her to her daily routines, far from the affection of her family:

It is evening
 She sits at her grinding stone
 At the grinding stone she sits
 She calls out to her family
 “Light the lamps,” she says
 “For the day is turning
 To night”.

In the grinding songs, formulaic lines highlight the dramatic quality of the poem. Hence, the repetition and inversion of the refrain marks the monotony of the young wife’s time-consuming and demanding chore, matching the rhythm of the *oviyo* to that of her grinding stone, in which she grinds not only the grain but also the sorrows of her sombre days, as she endlessly waits for her younger brother to bring news from the paternal house, one of the main topics of the grinding songs:

Light the lamps, let things brighten.
 Don’t you see how the shadows
 Of the trees
 Are changing?

I am sitting on the grinding
While waiting for my younger brother
Who is like a gemstone.
Let the world be a brighter place.

These songs rewrite and complement each other as they tell the same story from different angles. In some songs, such as “The Monsoon Song” (2018, p.21), as sung by Subhadra Arjun Gaus, the young wife feels dizzy by the repeated movement of the stone and, perhaps, by what the words of the song suggest and she is afraid of acknowledging. However, such wives feel unable to do anything about their own condition:

Gurr...gurr...gurr, go grinding stone go
Go round and round in your dizzy fashion
Dizzy you can drive me but nowhere can you really go
You are fastened to the floor of my in-law’s house
Where or where can you go?
Gurr...gurr...gurr, go grinding stone go

In other songs, paradoxically, if the grinding stone keeps the young girls tied to the in-laws, it is also a space outside the in-laws’ control where the young women can express themselves. Besides if “what we call reality is the effect of metaphors and stories, in competition with rival metaphors and stories” (NILES, 1999, p. 3), these songs enable the young bride to criticize accepted life narratives and unburden themselves, as the singer says in “A Sister’s Song” (2018, p. 45) as sung by Sawarsvati Dutta Sawant:

I sing this song as I grind the grain.
Nobody can stop me.
The grinding stone songs are not forbidden.
I need not get about this work quietly.

On the harsh life at the in-laws: from the Natal to the conjugal home

As already suggested, these *oviyos* are different renderings of the same topic that reveal that narratives, like these grinding stone songs, are not just a mirror of culture but, in the act of storytelling, actually constitute life (NILES, 1999, p. 4). This repetition, therefore, creates patterns of symbolism which are significant to the women of the culture

as they tell about the long awaited visit of the brother with news from the family; the stringent control from the mother-in-law, in particular regarding the young wife's chastity since, "it is a family's women that represent the honor of its lineage" (JASSAL, 2012, p. 49); the bright memories of life at their parents' home, which they have left behind, as well as their longing for the affection from siblings and friends as in "Flower Friends" (2018, p. 23) as sung by Subhandra Arjun Gaus:

O the sun is brighter in my mother's front yard In my mother's front yard there are flowers The hibiscus blooms when the sun shines bright The sunlight pours into the front yard all morning The champa tree is filled with buds	When all of a sudden I saw friends from my childhood My childhood friends just standing there! We hugged and kissed for so long There was love and affection even in the air
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The idealized life at the parents' house in the company of friends is implicitly compared to the uncongenial relationship with the husband's kin, in particular the mother-in-law. "Radhika's Song" (2018, p. 41), as sung by Saraswati Dutta Sawant, tells of how a mother-in-law intrudes in the relationship between the son and his new bride as she instills distrust in him, because the girl often goes to the well for water. Jassal (2012, p. 150) observes that many times mothers-in-law have these attitudes because they fear their sons might form a close bond with the new wife to the detriment of his relationship with family members:

O how her mother-in-law harasses her
When she goes to the well for water
The mother says: "Son! Your wife is off to the well again
Why so much water, suddenly?
You must keep an eye on her".

What the mother-in-law does not say is that the young bride not only goes to the well to fetch water for the many tasks she does in the house, but also to eat berries in the woods as she is almost starved at her in-laws':

But she has so many more chores to do.
 She goes to the well for water to drink, to wash, to clean.
 She collects the cowdung to plaster the kitchen floor.
 They keep track of the time.
 They are so mean
 For they do not know
 That she stops to eat wild berries
 For there is never enough food in the house.

With doubts instilled by his mother, the husband, divided between the two women, puts the fragile and anguished young wife to the test, when she goes to the well, by pretending to be another man and alluring her sexually. According to Jassal (2012, p. 67-68), one of the themes of the grinding songs is the danger implied in women coming into contact with men, particularly of a lower caste, in public places like fairs or the community well:

One day he follows her to the well.
 Into the forest, behind the trees
 He hides himself and says,
 “Beautiful lady, come, sleep with me”.

In spite of her predicament, the young wife rejects the proposal without hesitation. Ideally, women would rather commit suicide than dishonor their families. In case they did commit indiscretion, they would be condemned both by the in-laws and their own families (Jassal, 2012, p.67). The young wife explains that she does not need the gifts of any sort. Her true jewel, her husband, is at home:

<p>Horrified, terrified, alone and lonely Yet, she says, “Stranger, do not come close to me. “But I can give you a new sari,” says he. “Nothing else but a silk nav sari.”</p>	<p><i>“Your bed I will break in two. Your sari I will burn to ash. Offer me gold, gemstones and beads. I have a diamond at home That cares for me.”</i> Her husband is so pleased.</p>
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Delighted by the wife’s loyalty, at the next meal, the husband rewards her by letting her eat from the “choicest” leftovers in his plate. Though the husband does not confront the family openly, his behaviour implies criticism since, rather than accepting the authority of the mother,

through his silent action, he supports his wife. For all the romanticized outcome of the story, the lesson implied in the song is that there are ways of righting wrong and putting at stake traditional values and attitudes, which are unfair:

He goes home back to his mother
 But does not speak.
 At the next meal,
 He takes a double helping of the food
 And leaves the choicest leftovers
 For his wife to eat.

In these Goan *oviyos*, the husband is never presented as being violent, as he might be in songs from other parts of India (JASSAL, 2012). Though wives might not get along with their in-laws, they always love their husbands. Nonetheless, they feel very lonely, in particular because the husband works all day long in the fields, or he is a soldier away on a commission, the mother-in-law is harsh on them, and they have been deprived of the company of their siblings, so young brides are always keen on receiving the visit of their brothers. This is particularly true in the first phase of married life, when they are confronted with the difficulties implied in the passage from the natal to the conjugal home, in particular because in many Hindu communities, the tradition was to marry daughters before attaining puberty, at the age of seven or eight. The marriage was only consummated after the girls had attained puberty, usually at the age of twelve. Today, however, there is no child marriage in Goa. In addition, formerly the marriages were arranged and neither bride nor groom had any say in it. In general, they met for the first time on the day of the wedding (GRACIAS, 2007, p. 48). This explains the young wives' longing to be reunited with their families through the brother's visit, as in "The Monsoon Song" (2018, p. 21) as sung by Subhadra Arjun Gaus:

Today is a special day; today my brother is coming here
 My brother is a lucky man,
 for he has a sister waiting for him
 A sister who is grinding the grain for him at her in-laws
 To give him a meal when he comes, he lives so very far
 Gurr...gurr...gurr, go grinding stone go.

The bond between brother and sister is the theme of several of the *oviyos* in *Grinding Stories*. One of its most salient aspects is the particular relationship between a sister and her younger brother. As women get married at a young age and leave the parents' home, it is the son who stays home, takes care of the aging parents, "and ensure the parental soul's proper transition to the next world" (JASSAL, 2012, p. 55). Besides, marrying a daughter implies not only paying a dowry but, as shown above, the high expenses of the wedding festivities. If women are a financial burden, men are not. This explains why when a son is born right after a daughter, she is thought to have brought good luck to the family (PANDIT, 2018, p. 14), and also protection upon herself as she will be thought to be of good omen. This is the subject matter of "A Sister's Song" (2018, p. 45) as sung by Saraswati Dutta Sawant:

I am my brother's sister
His favourite sister, not just any girl.
I am a sister, much loved, much cared for
For he is younger to me.
On my back he has come riding
I have brought our family luck
I have to my own protection seen.

Nonetheless, in-laws discourage the practice of the brother coming to visit the sister so that the young wife will become integrated into their new house instead of wanting to flee back to the paternal home. As a result, the husband's kin will harden their authority and influence on the young bride (JASSAL, 2012, p. 132-133). This becomes manifest in their indifference when the brother finally comes to visit or in their disregard of the presents that he brings for the sister. Presentation of these gifts is a symbolic ritual in the life of the married young sister and a source of great comfort as they are reassured of their families' affection at the same time that they might try to assuage their in-laws' hostility. This is why, as a way of resistance, the young wives make a point of keeping a tight bond with their families and expect their brothers with great sisterly devotion. In "A Set of Glass Bangles" (2018, p. 52), as sung by Saraswati Dutta Sawant, the husband's kin's impoliteness towards the brother's visit to the young bride is signaled by comparing the brothers-in-law to the Kaurava brothers' cruelty towards Draupadi, the Pandava brothers' wife in the epic *Mahabharata*. Their belligerent attitude, highlighted by

equating them to a hundred Kauravas, becomes evident in the brother-in-laws' scrutiny of the present the young bride's brother brings from home as well as the way they compare it to the presents other young brides of the village have received. In-laws are never satisfied with what they receive from the bride's family, either in presents, as seen in this *oviyo*, or in the dowry (GRACIAS, 2007), theme which is never directly present in these grinding stone songs:

My younger brother is so loving He sent me a set of 12 bangles A set of 12 because I am a married A married Poriem lady.	Now to see this set of bangles A courtyard filled With 100 Kauravas Sat with great aplomb to see What my mother had sent for me. The evil sit to scrutinize The innocent.	And compare what the last bride In the village had received. There was oil for the temple lamps. There were coconuts, betelnuts, rice And ghee. There was nachni and other millets There was horse gram, fruit and flowers Woven in a wreath.
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The repetition of the refrain aims to emphasize the value of the present the young brother has brought to his sister in accordance with her new status as a Poriem married lady. What can be read in between the lines is that in spite of the evilness of the brothers-in-law, the song validates marriage since it shows what a young woman should always expect, at the same time that it aims to educate those who are unfair, like the brothers-in-law.

Likewise, the wife's brother's reaction to the way in which his sister is treated at her in-laws, varies, showing that these *oviyo*s, like all literature, rather than giving voice to a single worldview, they may become a forum in which worldviews are, precisely, under scrutiny (NILES, 1999, p. 68). In some of the songs, the brother feels saddened about the sister's condition as in "The Monsoon Song" (2018, p. 21), as sung by Subhadra Arjun Gaus: about the sister's condition as in "The Monsoon Song" (2018, p. 21), as sung by Subhadra Arjun Gaus:

"What is this I see?" my brother says to me
 "Have we sent you to your new home to slave?"
 "Oh, at our house you were like a bird, so free!"
 Oh, no my sister-in-law as heard him!
 Gurr...gurr...gurr go grinding go

In others, as in “I can only come for the Ganesh Festival” (2018, p. 50) as sung by Saraswati Dutta Sawant, they advise their sisters to put up with their luck, explaining that their parents have given her away for a reason, and there is not much to be done about it. Marriage and the bride moving in with the in-laws is part of the tradition and, as such, should be respected. At another level, the *oviyō* reveals that even the young bride’s own relatives might side with the in-laws for fear of contradicting them. Nothing would be more shameful for the wife’s parents than that their daughter should be accused of any type of misbehavior:

<p>“Mother and father have given you away,” The brother said to his sister. They have given you away for a reason. Deal with it, dear sister.</p>	<p>There is nothing more I can do. I can come for you, dear sister But only for the Ganesh festival. I can take you home, dear sister Home just to celebrate.</p>
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Still, these comings and goings between the parental and the conjugal home is what makes life sufferable for the young bride during the first years of her marriage.

Eventually, what will contribute to weakening the relationship between the sister and her brother is the figure of the *vhani*, the sister-in-law, who will become the senior female of the household when the old parents pass away. In “The Homecoming” (2018, p.55), as sung by Saraswati Dutta Sawant, the sister goes to visit her brother when he returns home from army service. The *vhani*, however, feels very jealous of her and thinks she has come to loot them, in other words, claim her part of the inheritance:

<p>Brother is in service So far away from home Brother has come on leave And I rush to welcome him</p>	<p>But my <i>vhani</i>, my sister-in-law is nasty. She says, “Ah, here she comes! Here comes the loving sister To see what gifts he’s brought. Now she is planning to loot us To bleed the brother dry.”</p>	<p>So, now I only have a formal relationship With my brother And only go when I Get a formal invitation.</p>
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Many times women are deprived of their share of the family property, even by their own parents in order not to divide it, or even by

their own brothers. This issue is indirectly suggested in “Flower Friends” (2018, p. 23), as sung by Subhadra Arjun Gaus when a young wife goes to her parents’ house and is disappointed by her mother’s behaviour, when she is given the smallest piece of kevda, a flower much prized by Goan women to wear in their hair:

I am waiting for mother to cut the kevda into pieces
 We all get a piece! We all get a piece, each!
 What’s this? I have the smallest piece?
 My hair is so long and such a small piece?
 I am a married woman now and
 my own mother has been unfair to me?

Jassal (2012, p.135) remarks that though over the last decades women have become aware of their rights on the family lands, they hardly claim their inheritance due to the implication that in so doing they might lose their brother’s support and affection and anger their sisters-in-law.

Final Words

Each one of the songs analyzed show that the singers have been able to bring the *oviyô* to an unusually fine level of achievement. They are not only bearers of a tradition but fine artists in their own way. These grinding stone songs are of great value because as they are autobiographical they represent the way in which a people see themselves and, as constitutive of their own culture, they reveal special areas of their own concern. Also, as each generation might interpret these *oviyos* in a different manner, this shows that these songs do not just help keep alive the memory of the past but serve as an example and warning for the women of the present, since still today, many women are crippled by patriarchal society and fossilized customs not only in India but in many parts of the world, though in different degrees and manners. As Niles observes, “by playing with modes of social reality other than the merely palpable, these songs make possible a future that differs from what now exists” (1999, p. 2).

The value of the grinding stories, in particular in the past, is that as a sanctioned outlet of expression, they helped young wives deal with a harsh reality. In the present, they remind young women of where they come from as well as help them overcome the hurdles they meet in their

everyday life. This is why these grinding stone songs are an essential channel through which cultural knowledge and wisdom is both passed and reconfigured from one generation to the next. And this is what has moved singers like Subhadra Arjun Gaus and Saraswati Dutta Sawant to continue the tradition inherited from their mothers, while Sarojini Bhiva Gaonkar not only sings them at wedding and festivals but actually studies them, much like Heta Pandit who both collected, transcribed and translated them into English so that *oviyos* will live on.

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