

A BRIEF STUDY OF PROMOTERS OF CULTURE OF DISTRICT SIRMOUR

AMAN HABBI

MA Education 2nd Year, Department of Education, Himachal Pradesh University, Summer Hill, Shimla (H.P.)

ABSTRACT

A person is identified by his culture. Someone's food and lifestyle, clothing and language give an introduction to that person, his region and his culture. Every country has its own cultural heritage. When we talk about culture in the context of a huge country like India, every region has its own culture. That's why it is also considered a country of cultural diversity. But in the present time, due to increasing westernization, youth are ignoring their own culture and getting attracted towards western culture which indicates cultural decline. That's why it becomes necessary that special efforts should be made to protect the traditional culture. Refinement is necessary in culture with time but only to the extent that it does not harm the originality of the culture. Such changes are often seen in the culture which should not happen but there are some great personalities in the society who make every possible effort to preserve and promote the culture. In the presented research paper, the promoters of culture of district Sirmour situated in Himachal Pradesh have been highlighted. In this, the people working for the preservation and promotion of culture from the *Himachal Nirmata* Dr. Yashwant Singh Parmar to current time have been highlighted. These are all such personalities who have tried their best to preserve the pure form of culture.

Keywords- Culture, Folk Culture, Promotion, Preservation, Sirmour.

INTRODUCTION

While Himachal Pradesh, the land of Gods and Goddesses, is famous all over the world for its natural beauty but the folk culture of Himachal Pradesh is very rich in itself. The culture of *Mahasavi* region has its own special identity in the folk culture here. *Solan*, *Shimla* and *Sirmour* districts comes in *Mahasavi* region and among these districts, *Sirmour* has a special place. The reason for this is that in the past, the princely state of *Sirmour* was extended upto *Tharoch* of *Chaupal* sub division. Therefore, the folk culture of *Sirmour* holds a special place in the *Mahasu* region of Himachal Pradesh. The fairs, festivals, handicrafts, customs, folk cuisines, divine traditions, folk literature, folk music and folk arts give district *Sirmour* a special place in the folk culture of Himachal Pradesh. The residents here preserved their rich culture along with their livelihood. From time to time, the folk artists have been made important contributions to the promotion of culture. However, if we see from the present perspective, the western culture is attracting the attention of the youth by replacing folk culture. There are some artists, desecrating the culture and serving it to the youth, to get overnight success. As a result, this form of culture is contributing in destroying the original culture. But there are some great personalities in *Sirmour* district who have contributed in the preservation and promotion of the rich culture here. Among those, whose activities have a special impact on society and culture has been discussed.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Pawan Bakshi (2022) in his edition *Main hoon Sirmour* studied district *Sirmour* in detail. He has included its geographical, historical, cultural and social aspect. Ashok Hans (1999) in

Parvat se Ubhre Kalakar have studied the bollywood artists, folk singers, folk dancers and folk theater artists from all over Himachal Pradesh.

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

The purpose of this study is to highlight all those great personalities who have made valuable contributions to the promotion of culture of *Sirmour* district. This study will help in giving recognition to some people who have not been adequately recognized. By studying the culture promoters and their efforts, researchers can understand how local culture is preserved and transmitted to future generations. Efforts of culture promoters can inspire others to get involved in cultural preservation and promotion.

PROMOTERS OF CULTURE OF DISTRICT SIRMOUR

1. DR. YASHWANT SINGH PARMAR

Dr. Yashwant Singh Parmar was born on 4 August, 1906 in *Chanhalag* village of district *Sirmour*. Dr. Parmar is famous throughout the state as the '*Himachal Nirmata*' but most of the people of the state are unaware that Dr. Parmar, besides being a skilled politician, was not only a lover of culture but was also involved in the promotion and spread of culture. He also made important contribution to the culture. With his inspiration, '*Pahari Kalakar Sangh*' was established in *Sirmour* district in the 1970s for the promotion of culture. In this group, he took an important step to bring Sirmouri folk culture to the people by gathering experts of art of the region. Dr. Parmar also gave special recognition to the traditional costumes of *Sirmour* district. He himself used to wear *Loiya* and *Suthan*. Along with *Suthan*, they also used to wear closed neck coat which had a special place in the costumes here. The result was that, officials holding high positions in the state get inspiration by him and started wearing the *Loiya*. It was a matter of pride for Sirmour. Dr. Yashwant Singh Parmar was also very fond of folk dishes. Whenever he had to go somewhere, he liked to eat traditional folk dishes like *Sattu*, *Dharoti*, *Askali*, *Patande*. Mostly he used to have *Sattu* with *Lassi*.

2. VAIDYA SURAT SINGH

Vaidya Surat Singh was born on 8 December, 1912 in his maternal village *Chakhal* in *Sirmour* district. He belonged to *Katogada* village located in *Sirmour* district. Vaidya Surat Singh was an ayurvedacharya and had treated many patients for decades. He used to do *Kariyala* (folk theater) in the village. He played a major role in Pajhauta movement. That's why he is known as a freedom fighter throughout the state. If we talk about culture, Vaidya Surat Singh was also a poet, writer, litterateur and singer. On the one hand, he was was fond of writing Hindi poems on other hand, he also wrote many poems in local dialect. The folk song '*Banka Mulka Himachala Teri Choti Upre Kailasho*' which glorifies the entire Himachal Pradesh, has also been written by him. Apart from this, he has also written many *Pahari* songs. Vaidya Surat Singh had established the *Pahari Kalakar Sangh* along with *Himachal Nirmata* Dr. Yashwant Singh Parmar. The Sangh brought together the main artists of the region and exposed the culture to the public. It is believed that in the 1970s, the *Pahari*

Kalakar Sangh made every effort to highlight traditional folk songs and folk theater. *Pahari Kalakar Sangh* organized a huge workshop in *Rajgarh* in which *Jhakho Ajba's pawara* (a story of brave woman *Jhakho*) was given a dramatic form.

3. KRISHAN SINGH THAKUR

Krishan Singh Thakur was a resident of *Kotla* village located in *Pajhauta*. He was born on 17 November, 1917. Krishan Singh Thakur learnt singing from Shri Mahant Vairagi ji, who lived in the temple of *Narsingh Maharaj* located in his village. Apart from singing, he was also adept in *harmonium*, *tabla* and *dholak*. He had also received the education of these instruments from Vairagi ji. He was a famous folk singer of his time. His songs were broadcast on All India Radio. He also gave many presentations in Doordarshan Kendra, Jalandhar and Delhi. Many of his songs are popular even today, of which '*Laga Dholo Ra Dhamaka*' is the prominent song. Thakur Krishna Singh had sung this song at the time when Late. Dr. Yashwant Singh Parmar was fighting with the Central government of India to get full statehood status for Himachal Pradesh. This song became so famous that in the year 1975, playback singer *Mahendra Kapoor* also sang the songs '*Laga Dholo Ra Dhamaka*' and '*Jug Jio Dhara Re O Gujro*'. He has contributed to folk music even while representing the *Panchayat* for almost 35 years. He was considered an impartial judge to end any controversy. He did not give up singing till the end of his life; in fact, the sweetness of his voice had increased even more in his old age. Krishna Singh Thakur was honored as a patron of Himachali culture by various institutions for his excellent folk singing. This great protector of the state's culture passed away on April 20, 1997.

4. PADMA SHRI VIDYANAND SARAİK

Vidyanand Saraik was born on June 26, 1941 in Deothi Majhgaon. Vidyanand Saraik has made a special contribution in promoting the folk culture of district *Sirmour*. Apart from being a poet, folk artist, lyricist, musician, Vidyanand Saraik is also a litterateur and educationist. He started performing on stage at the age of 4. He has written hundreds of folk songs and apart from *Pahari* poems, he also has a special contribution in the folklore of *Sirmour*. 18 chapters of *Shrimadbhagavadgita* and 51 poems of *Rabindra Nath Tagore* have been translated into *Sirmouri* dialect by him. Apart from this, he has contributed in the promotion of folk culture through books like *Chitti Chadar*, *Nalo Jhalo Re Sur*, *Hari Jubti*. He also worked on *Loktalas*. He gave many programs in Akashvani Shimla. In 1957, when Saraik was studying in 8th class, he performed in the North Indian Folk Dance Competition organized by All India Radio in Delhi. He has also made a special contribution in the revival of extinct folk dances of *Sinhtoo*, *Bhadhaltu* and *Dagyali* of district *Sirmour*. Vidyanand Saraik has been a member of the governing body of Academy of Art, Culture and Language and the Editorial Board of *Pahadi* Dictionary. Even today, at the age of 82, when Vidyanand Saraik picks up pen and paper to write, his pen flows continuously. Even at this stage of his age, he sings and composes songs. He has been awarded by the state government for his efficient teaching. He was awarded the 'Sangeet Natak Akademi Award' by Sangeet Natak

Akademi in 2018 for his outstanding work in folk music and he was awarded the 'Padma Shri Award - 2022' by the Government of India for his excellent work in literature and education. Himachal Gaurav Vidyanand Saraik's contribution to culture is priceless.

5. DR. KRISHNALAL SEHGAL

Dr. Krishnalal Sehgal was born on 9 January, 1949 in *Kyaratu* village near *Bhuira* in *Rajgarh* tehsil of *Sirmour* district. While Dr. Sehgal has done commendable work for the classical music and folk music of the state, he has made a significant contribution especially in the field of folk music of *Sirmour*. Dr. Sehgal is not only a famous folk singer but he is also a lyricist and musician and also a writer. Dr. Sehgal has retired after serving as an associate professor of music in the Department of Education, Himachal Pradesh. Before this, he had held the post of music teacher in *Kendriya Vidyalaya, Palampur*. Dr. Sehgal is the first person from district *Sirmour* to obtain Ph.D degree in music subject. He is the first *Himachali* artist who passed in *Ghazal* singing in B High category from *Akashvani Shimla*. Along with singing folk songs, he has also made a special contribution in preserving the extinct genres of folk singing like *Dheeli Nati*, *Jhuri* and *Gangi*. While teaching, he taught the classical music to his students by adding references to folk music. He brought out many audio cassettes of *Sirmouri* folk songs which is popular till today. Devotees listen to '*Shirgul Mahima*' with great faith, a bouquet of folk hymns of *Shirgul Dev Maharaj* sung by him. He also prepared a bouquet of bhajans and released a cassette with Anup Jalota, known as *Bhajan Samrat*, which became very famous. In the year 2020, Dr. Krishnalal Sehgal published a book named '*Geet Mere Mati Re*'. He has been awarded '*Himachal Gaurav Samman*' by the Government of Himachal Pradesh for his commendable work in the folk music of Himachal Pradesh.

6. BRAHMADUTT SHARMA

Brahmadutt Sharma is a resident of *Baunal* village of *Sangrah* tehsil. *Baunal* has been a village of artists. Many famous artists have been from here. Out of which Brahmaddutt Sharma is such an artist who led the cultural group for many years and under his leadership, the *Bounal Sanskritik Dal* presented *Sirmouri* folk dance in many states of India. Apart from this, under his leadership cultural group showed *Sirmouri* folk culture in foreign countries also. He presented the folk dances of *Sirmour* in Germany, Malaysia, Japan and Thailand. Therefore, he made an important contribution in the promotion of culture.

7. JOGINDER SINGH HABBI

Joginder Singh Habbi was born on 9 February, 1974 in *Jalag* village of *Pajhauta*. Joginder Habbi is working intensively in folk theatre, direction, choreography and traditional costume making. Joginder Habbi has been working for the preservation and promotion of *Sirmouri* folk culture for almost three decades. His father Shri Maan Singh Habbi was also a radio artist. He established a cultural group to promote the culture of district *Sirmour*. While leading this group, Habbi has showcased *Sirmouri* culture in almost all the states of the country. Under his leadership the cultural group has also performed in foreign countries with

the *Sirmouri* culture. Apart from promoting folk culture, Joginder Habbi is also playing a special role in preservation. He has discovered the endangered folk dances of district *Sirmour* like *Sinhtoo dance*, *Bhadhaltu dance* and *Dagyali dance* and popularized them by presenting them before the common people. He was successful in reviving these folk dances after several decades of research. After extensive research, he prepared the costumes for these folk dances and gave them an attraction so that they could become the center of attraction for the public. Also noteworthy here is the fact that till date they have not tampered with the originality of these folk dances. He is the only person from Himachal Pradesh who has worked so deeply on these folk art forms of *Mahasuvi* region. Apart from this, Joginder Habbi also provides training in folk dances to the youth from time to time and till now he has provided training to more than 1000 youth. Under his leadership, till now more than 5000 stage performances have been shown from small villages to foreign countries, which have proved to be very important in promoting the folk culture of *Sirmour*. For this commendable work in the field of folk culture, he has been honored at many places. He has included his name in India Book of Records, Asia Book of Records and World Book of Records.

8. GOPAL SINGH HABBI

Gopal Singh Habbi was born on 12 September, 1982 in Jalag village of Pajhauta, Sirmour. Gopal Habbi started the journey of culture promotion with the inspiration of his elder brother Joginder Singh Habbi. On the basis of his work and achievements, Gopal Habbi can be called multitalented person. He is folk dancer, folk singer, folk theater artist, costume designer and mask maker. If we talk about his education, he has done *Sangeet Prabhakar* and MA in Music (vocals) from Himachal Pradesh University. He used to sing folk songs when he was in Primary school. He started his journey as a folk dancer and folk singer and gave performances in many national and international cultural events. He started took interest in folk theater and because of his interest and hard work he is a famous comedian of folk theater. In national level competition of folk theater, he got award of best actor in the competitors of 24 states. With the passage of time, he started to make wooden masks and masks made of wooden saw dust. He has made great contribution in the promotion of dying dance forms of district *Sirmour* *Sinhtoo*, *Bharaltoo* and *Dagyali* by making masks and costumes of these dances. For his contribution in the field of mask making of Himachal Pradesh he has been awarded with *Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar-2017* by Sangeet Natak Academy, Government of India.

CONCLUSION

Most of the young singers and artists are distorting the form of songs and dances with the aim of becoming famous overnight. Padmashree Vidyanand Saraik believes, “Culture nourishes the roots of the nation.” In the context of the state, apart from all the people mentioned above, many unknown people have made great efforts to give concrete form to this line. In the present times, it is necessary that by taking inspiration from such people, we should contribute to the preservation of culture at our own level. The young generation should

understand that we have to respect all types of cultures, but first of all we should give importance to our own culture and become transmitters of this invaluable culture heritage. It is necessary to change the culture with time but care has to be taken that the change does not harm the originality of the culture.

REFERENCES

- Bakshi, Pawan (2022): Main Hoon Sirmour (pg 484:485)
Hans, Ashok (1999): Parvat Se Ubhre Kalakar (pg 163:165)
Keeping alive the masks, Retrieved 15, October, 2023 from
<https://theshillongtimes.com/2018/09/23/keeping-alive-the-masks/>
Rahi, Om Prakash (2005): Himachal Pradesh ke Swatanrata Senani Vadiya Surat Singh,
Himachal Kala Sanskriti Bhasha Akademi, Shimla (pg 7:8)

INTERVIEWS

- Amar Singh Thakur, Village- Kotla Bangi, Distt.-Sirmour, H.P. September, 2023
Gopal Singh Habbi, Village-Jalag, Distt.-Sirmour, H.P., October, 2023
Jai Prakash Chauhan, Village-Habban, Distt.-Sirmour, H.P. October, 2023
Joginder Singh Habbi, Village-Jalag, Distt.-Sirmour, H.P., October, 2023
Kailash Sharma, Village-Baunal, Distt.-Sirmour, H.P., September, 2023
Krishan Lal Sehgal, Village-Kyartu, Distt.-Sirmour, H.P., September, 2023
Vidya Nand Saraik, Village-Devthi-Majhgaon, Distt.-Sirmour, H.P. September, 2023