

Documentation of Folklores in the Himalayan Regions of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh

Folklore is a spontaneous outflow of life of the people who live in a more or less primitive condition outside the reach of modern technological and cultural influences. Its seeds lie in the collective life of the community. For these communities, it is not something far away and long ago, but real and living. It is like a forest tree with its roots deeply buried in the past, but which continuously bring forth new branches, new leaves, new fruits. Here, the past has something to say to the present, the oral/ bookless world to a world that likes to read about its past oral culture as a sidelight on history.

Himalayan ranges of the states of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh can be called the abode of gods with Shiva and Shakti as the ruling deities. The lofty mountains, enchanting scenery and variety of landscape have influenced the thinking and character of generations of the people inhabiting these regions, and have brought them close to gods through nature.

These Himalayan regions can be called the treasure trove of folklores. Folksongs, ballads, myths, festivals, theatre, art, craft and dance are abundant in the region. Thousands of songs, ballads, myths, stories have been transmitted orally from generations to generations. All these relate to numerous subjects and themes related to various aspects of life such as, earth and sky, botanical and zoological world, human beings and human made objects, soul & after-life, para-human existence, joy and grief, foretelling and magic, maladies and cures, etc.

Folk songs also never neglect the contemporary issues. They do reflect on the contemporary conflicts, struggles and problems of the society. These regions have, therefore, also championed the contemporary issues and problems through folklores and songs. In a way, folklores of these Himalayan regions tell the history, reflect on the society and polity of the region, and provide insights on the life of the people and their social organisation. Keeping in mind the importance of folklores, Deshkal Society, with financial support from the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, has documented and audio recorded thousands of folklores, religious legends and ballads etc. such as Pahadi Ramayan, Mahabharat-pandayan, Ainchali, Y(J)ukantas, Balraj, and Devkanya from the Garhwal and Kumaun regions of the state of Uttarakhand and from different regions of the state of Himachal Pradesh in order to document the history of the region and to preserve its culture and art.