



## FOLKLORE OF HARYANA: PRESERVING TRADITIONS IN THE MODERN WORLD

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### ABSTRACT

The folklore of Haryana embodies a significant cultural legacy. It reflects the state's agrarian culture, tradition of valor, and social values acting as a vehicle for collective memories and identity. Passed down through oral tradition, folk tales, myth, song, dance, riddles, proverbs, and festivals serve to pass on information, lessons, and bonding. Key parts of the folklore include tales of warriors, particularly Prithviraj Chauhan, of deities like GuggaPir and Tejaji Maharaj, attempting to foster the value of bravery or dedication, narrative songs like Ragini, dances like Phag, Dhamal, and Loor (all describing village life and seasonal aspects), proverbs and riddles that show cleverness; mannerisms, and festivals celebrating Teej, Holi, and I Gangaur where love, Mother Nature, and bonding are combined. While those who adopt folklore traditions continue to practice, to gradually lose connections to the beliefs, through progressive modernization, `urbanize, migration, the digital age, and commercialization, cultural is lost by generations. To continue with the preservation of folklore, positive actions needed are centralizing and integrating folklore forms across the subjects and facets of study and research; preserving digitally at schools; enthusiasm of participation; showcasing community based folklore forms; placing Haryana folklore theory on national and global spheres to cultivate interest and sustainability; to maintain authenticity in folklore forms so that clear, honest, viable, and a viable cultural force, long may folkloric forms exist and could positively enrich identity, and pride.

**Keywords:** Folklore, Haryana Culture, Oral Traditions, Folk Songs and Dances, Agrarian Heritage, Preservation Strategies, Cultural Identity, Modernization Challenges.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Haryana, known as land of bravery, strength and agrarian wealth, is undoubtedly home to a wealth of cultural tradition which forms the basis of a very complex and colourful identity which has taken a long time to manifest into its present state. The stories, pout multi production of customary folklore, have of course, been informed by the ordinary agricultural lifestyles of the people, the trouble in their contemporary lives and the collective memories which embody these social values. Consequently, Haryana, and its folklore, is a legacy of mythologies about the son of the earth and the fight for survival against destiny and misfortune that emerges from this context. Folklore, in many conceivable formats: myths, heroic tales about heroes and deities, folk songs, folk and riddles full of wisdom, festivals with a mixture of osmosis with devotion and simply stories weaved around learning and living has more than a few characteristics which separate Haryanvi folklore from other regional folklores. Folklore is both an educational and an entertainment process. Each time a ragini is sung at a village fair/religious ritual, or a folk tale recited, it represents both a cultural repository as well as an effort to transmit values and worldviews in dialogue and generational succession. Folklore has thus been an important, sometimes the only form, of resilient cultural expression for the Haryanvi people, contemporary or historical.



**Figure 1:** Traditional Folk Dance of Haryana

However, even with its depth, folklore in Haryana is facing a serious decline in current times.



Social dynamics in rural areas have changed drastically due to rapid modernization and urbanization, created by rural entities becoming scarce and sales - oriented. Additionally, leaving rural areas to relocate to cities and towns for the sake of education and employment has severed the ties of rural life with the vibrant condition of practicing cultural expressions. Due to the growth of digital entertainment through media as well as cultural globalization, older cultural practices are being suppressed as traditional cultural expressions become ancient for new generations. Similar to written text and older conversational traditions, legendary stories, local phrases, and oral expressions are being buried in oblivion. To ensure preservation of folklore and its transference, deliberate consideration to documentation, education, and reviving cultural products and practices within Ontario is essential so that folklore interpersonal engagement is revitalized in space and time while modern world practice is kept at bay.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

**Beniwal et al. (2020)** examined the range of ethnic fermented foods and vegetarian beverages associated with foodways in Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, and Punjab, drawing attention to their cultural meanings, preparation and use, and health implications. Emphasizing that these traditional foodways were integral to communal life as part of a community culture, and were sources of nutrition and preservation of cultural identity and transference of knowledge from one generation to the next, the study also emphasized the association of fermented foods within seasonal cycles (timing), festivals (place), and while socializing (practice), thereby associating food practices with folklore and community rituals. In positioning fermented foodways in Haryana alongside others that occupied the North Indian food landscape, the research demonstrated how food cultures were more than nutrition—it exemplified a reaffirmation of oral tradition, symbolic meanings, and heritage.

**Bhaskar and Bahl (2022)** examined the significance of color in traditional Indian folk media and art, and how visual aesthetics and symbolism create cultural accounts. Their study found that the function of color in folk expression was much more than decoration, but contained a rich store of meaning associated with emotion, spirituality and social identity). Certain colors signified fertility, prosperity, or the presence of divinity, among other things, ultimately adding cultural layers to

visual art forms. By emphasizing the interpretative aspects of folk art, it became apparent that traditional forms of expression acted, in some ways, as archives of collective memory - influencing how communities engage with their past; how understanding and memory of the past informs the present. The study indicated how folk art and media, with special emphasis on Haryana, convey values and traditions in nuanced and persistent ways.

**Dhull (2022)** explored narrative and structural similarities within a handful of Haryanvi folk narratives, characterizing consistent narrative patterns, cultural values, and archetypal figures. The research uncovers a tendency for Haryanvi narratives to follow traditional structure patterns which could be found across the landscape of Indian folk narratives, including salient use of a moral, heroic figures, or divine intervention. Haryanvi folk narratives do include content that reflects more recognized rural regions that chronicles lived experience and identifies local gender relations, cultural landscapes, socio-economic practices and local deities, a social and cultural mirror of the Haryanvi milieu. The research contended that oral traditions demonstrate a resiliency while demonstrating a moral code, xerox communal indigenous knowledge, and pride in culture.

**Gupta et al. (2024)** considered the relationship between Haryanvi festival food and the cultural traditions of Haryana, providing an in-depth description of the way's food practices solidified folk traditions. Their study demonstrated that collectively preparing festival foods was a process of consumption but contained ritualistic and symbolic meanings that reflected the agricultural origins and spirituality of the community. As an example, some foods were only prepared during harvest festivals, thus linked seasonal rhythms with food practices and mythological traditions.

They emphasize that food practices both create bonds with other community members, clarify kinship bonds and provide an active continuity of culture memory. Within their discussion they note the blending of tastes, ritual, and folklore suggests that food practices in Haryana are significant representations of intangible cultural heritage.

**Harlan (2024)** examined contemporary accounts about Rajput women, measured against the ethic of protection relative to religious and cultural contexts. While the study was not limited to Haryana, it benefited from insights into the wider cultural environment in northern India. The study demonstrated how narratives through folklore and oral traditions portrayed Rajput women as



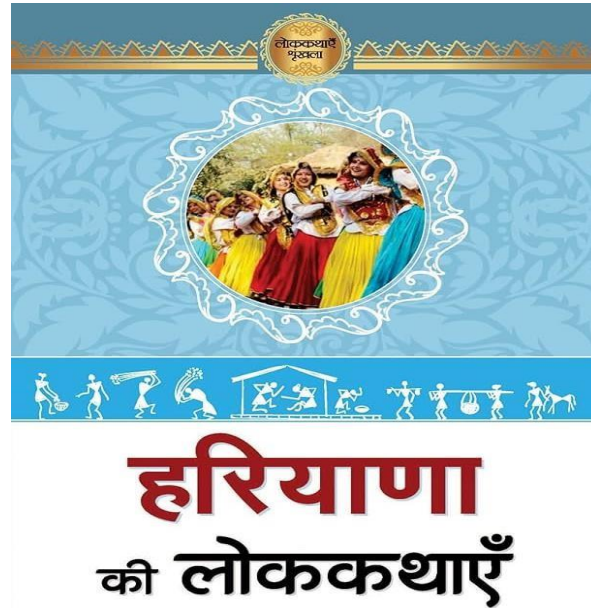
embodiments of honour, sacrifice, and fortitude, while their narratives became potent cultural markers depicting normative behavior and meanings. The narratives exemplified how folklore conditioned gender expectations and mitigated social roles and meanings, revealing the overlap between religion, protection, and identity formation. The findings of the study animated the discussion on folklore knowledge, through the establishment of women's knowledge and symbolic representations concerning community values, cultural continuity, and social hierarchies, and indirectly supported the understanding of Haryana folk traditions as a continuum of wider cultural consciousness.

### **3. FORMS OF FOLKLORE IN HARYANA**

Haryana's folklore is an exciting combination of oral traditions, music, dance, and rituals displays its agrarian character and strong sense of community. These oral stories or myths told about legendary warriors such as Rana Sanga or folk deities like GuggaPir and Tejaji Maharaj preserve the social and cultural value of the community memory and mythology, while folk songs such as Ragini, wedding songs, or harvest songs allow for the expression of love, humor, communal and individual observations. Folk proverbs and riddles showcase the depth of rural wisdom and humor, while festivals such as Teej, Holi or Gangaur, balance devotion, nature worship, with societal meaning progressing the social meaning and ideology of Haryana's cultural identity.

#### **1. Folk Tales and Myths**

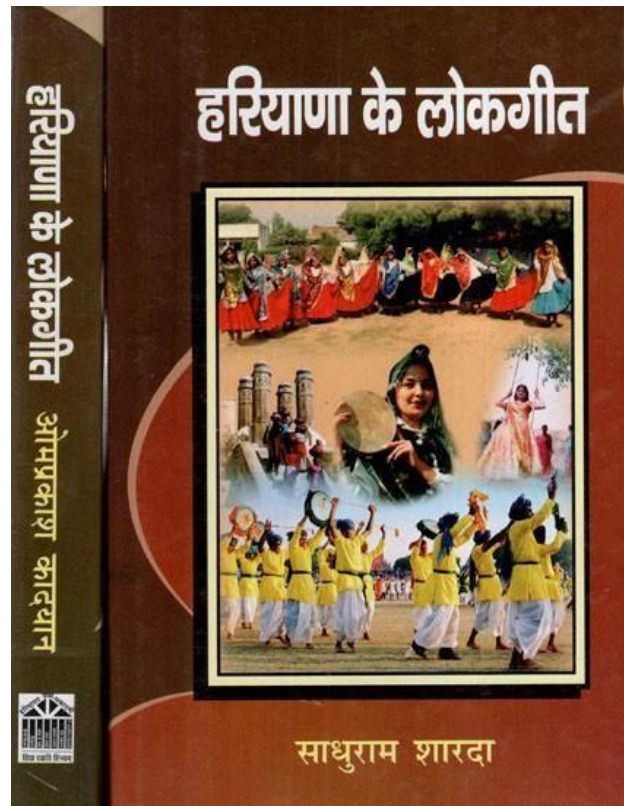
Storytelling occupies a dominant position in Haryana's cultural life, transmitted through oral history and family function in villages. The stories are primarily about legendary warriors and kings including Rana Sanga and Prithviraj Chauhan, embodying values of courage, honour, and sacrifice. There are local deities and saints including GuggaPir (believed to be a snake god) and Tejaji Maharaj (acclaimed for bravery and protection of cattle) preserved through mythology which combine history, spirituality, and morality. These stories are important to the local people because they provide their cultural base for moral values, religious beliefs, and emotions associated with collective memory.



**Figure 2:** Folktales of Haryana

## 2. Folk Songs and Music

Haryanvi folk music is varied and exists within the rhythms of peasant life. Groups of songs are sung at every stage of life and throughout the agricultural year. Songs account for both the happy and sad experiences. Ragini, a narrative singing, allows for longer performance and has a unique blend of narrative and melodic styles. Ragini incorporates many types of stories, including love, valor, and satire. Wedding songs (ShaadikeGeet) capture feelings within families, provide a deeper perspective of family (extended) and social customs, and prepare the bride to become a new family member. Songs at harvest time provide a link to the blessings from nature and illustrate community prosperity.



**Figure 3:**Folk Songs and Music in Haryana

### 3. Dance and Performance Arts

Dance in Haryana is not just an art but rather a community expression, a celebration, a way of articulating the emotions associated with festivity. Phag represents joy and an abundance of season, as it is usually performed at Holi. Dhamal embodies the vigor of a farming community and their connection to drumming and beats to signify energy and kinship. Loor, typically performed by young girls during the spring season, represents fertility, spring, and youth's joy. These dances express the life and values of a farming community where music, movement, and seasonal change meet in the arena of cultural expression.

### 4. Proverbs and Riddles

Oral traditions such as proverbs (kahavatein), and riddles (paheliyan) constitute an important aspect of Haryanvi folklore. Proverbs are brief expressions of folk wisdom with observations about life, agriculture, social behavior, and so on, expressed in humorous or metaphorical terms. Riddles

are common in gathering and community events, as well as children's play. Riddles combine entertainment with mental exercise. Both preserve the wit, humor, and practical intelligence of local rural life, keeping an informal knowledge-sharing system alive.

## 5. Rituals and Festivals

The festivals of Haryana are full of folk elements that bring individuals together in devotion, happiness, and celebratory cycles of the seasons. Teej, a festival led by women, celebrates marital devotion and the onset of the monsoon season with songs, rituals, and swings draped with flowers. Holi, the festival of colors, contains both playful feasting and offers the performance of songs and dances such as Phag. Gangaur, the festival dedicated to Goddess Parvati, portrays messages of love, fertility, and devotion. These festivals illustrate the closeness of folklore, religion, and nature, provide social cohesion, and support cultural continuity.

## 4. IMPORTANCE OF FOLKLORE IN HARYANA

As an important component of culture, folklore in Haryana preserves traditions, values, customs and memories and contributes to unity and a sense of pride among the people. Folklore reinforces a sense of regional identity through language, songs and festivals, teaches moral codes from stories and myths, creates community bonds through collective celebrations, and serves as an oral archive for the social, political, and agrarian past of the region and its heroes.

- **Cultural Identity:**Folklore serves as a dynamic storehouse of traditions, customs, and beliefs for the people of Haryana and thus represents a unique cultural identity for a distinct region of India. Folklore reinforces a sense of belonging and pride through stories, songs, dances, and festivals. Haryanvi folklore not only preserves a sense of linguistic uniqueness through the dialect of Haryanvi, but it also keeps local traditions alive amid modernization.
- **Moral Education:**Apart from entertainment, folklore also serves as a vehicle for instruction in moral codes and social norms. Folk tales, proverbs and folk songs impart lessons in bravery, honesty, respect for elders, dedication, and service to the community. Myths related to gods like GuggaPir and Tejaji Maharaj defined values of protection, sacrifice, and virtue to guide individuals in their everyday behavior.

- **Community Cohesion:**Folklore enhances social bonding and solidarity through collective occasions, celebrations, story-telling, and performances. From communal celebrations of Teej and Holi to singing and dancing together, folklore strengthens social ties, builds relationships across people, facilitates cooperation and collaboratives, and nurtures collective cultural memory. The capacity to come together to participate collectively helps to facilitate social harmony that is sustainable across generations.
- **Historical Record:**The folklore of Haryana also provides a historical record of the agricultural life, social hierarchy, and movements against foreign invaders. There are folk tales and folk ballads that made heroes of legendary people, local rulers and battles against resistance, thus recording versions of events that may not be revealed by written records. In this way, folk traditions preserve an oral history of Haryana that documents the social-political history of the region and its agrarian practices.

## 5. CHALLENGES IN PRESERVING FOLKLORE

Folklore in Haryana is under threat from the rapid urbanization and industrialization that erode traditional agrarian practices and the space for collectively gathering. The migration of younger generations to urban centers disrupts the transmission and folklore directions, while contemporary digital media and global entertainment push folk songs, dances, and storytelling to the margins. The commercialization of authentic though is also a threat as it transforms folklore to better fit the tastes of the masses putting its originality, cultural roots, and authenticity at risk, even as its visibility scales rapidly.

- **Urbanization and Industrialization** -The swift advances in urbanization and industrialization in Haryana have led to the destruction of time-honored practices, as modern ways have displaced leisure time to participate in places, groups, and the performance of folk forms as well as oral storytelling. As agriculture becomes mechanized and cities grow as a result of urban migration, the agrarian landscape that nurtured our folklores is slowly disappearing, and this erosion is attenuating the landscape of folk forth within our everyday lives.
- **Migration** -The process by which younger generations have migrated to cities for



education and employment has disrupted the link between their rural roots and urban living. Away from village celebrations and festivals, folk performance, and storytelling, many youth becomes more disconnected from their heritage. This detachment risks cutting continuity of folklore transmission from one generation to the next.

- **Digital Domination** -The emergence of digital media, television, and global entertainment has all but eclipsed local folk traditions. An overwhelming majority of young audience members tend to favor movies, streaming platforms, or platform content over folk songs, dances, and stories. The dominance of digital culture has resulted in a lack of visibility and appreciation of folklore and has pushed folklore to the margins of cultural life.
- **Commercialization** -Various art forms are modified in the process of popularization and commercialization of folk traditions to account for mass entertainment and market demand. In the folk arts world, the original core or essence is sometimes muddled or exaggerated in portrayal, and it loses the ability to challenge or evoke authentic cultural themes. Commercialization provides visibility to folk arts, but often also distorts folk art culture.

## 6. PRESERVATION EFFORTS AND STRATEGIES

The Haryana government aims to protect the region's folklore with initiatives that include cultural festivals, scholarly research that documents the traditions, and media representations in film and music, which can subsequently reproduce and popularize these folk-art activities. In order to support these measures, there are strategies that are even more important than they represent reinforcing: Using digital documentation, informing and creating educational studies of folklore, encouraging the community to be involved in the protection of their traditions, and promoting these traditions on a global scale, are fundamental to protect authenticity, promote pride, and sustain both culturally and economically.

### Existing Efforts

The government of Haryana promotes its folk heritage through festivals and fairs at the

government level, at the academic level through informal ways of documenting and analysing traditions, and through the media in the form of cinema, music, and television which not only animated and glamorized folk art but also kept it contemporary.

- **Role of Government:** The Government of Haryana through organizations such as the Haryana Kala Parishad has been playing its role to promote and preserve folklore. The Government has been organizing folk festivals, cultural fairs, and performances which enable local artists to demonstrate their talents and expose younger generations to these traditions. Important as these festivals are at the present day, it also sustains the traditional forms of art and promotes further engagement with our culture.
- **Academic Studies:** Universities and cultural institutions in Haryana are also taking responsibility for documenting, archiving, and analysing folklore traditions. Research scholars conduct studies on folk songs, proverbs, tales, and dance forms to document, preserve, and record folk traditions. The understanding of the significance of preservation in written and recorded forms is essential in the contemporary era and academic research makes this possible. In addition, scholarly support also provides a means of reinterpreting folklore through its medievalised and modern manifestations, and showing its significance in our modern world.
- **Media Representation:** Haryanvi cinema, folk-based music albums, and local television programs, which are on the rise, provide new opportunities to popularize folk forms and traditions. Contemporary adaptations and mediatisation of Ragini songs, or the folklore themes shown in the narrative of films, will keep traditions relevant and have the capacity to gain much attention globally. The media in particular, therefore will contribute to the sustainable development of both preservation and demand.

#### Suggested Strategies

The aim of preserving the folklore from Haryana is achieved through digital documentation in order to allow global access; integrate them into formal education to share and instil pride in younger generations; encourage family and community involvement and interest that is sustainable; and to internationally promote it to develop cultural diplomacy and further the opportunities of local artists.



- **Digital Documentation:** Systematic documentation and archiving of folk songs, dances, folk stories, and rituals through digital means can help protect folk culture for future generations. Creating online folk repositories, making podcasts, and creating video archives, can ensure the folk cultural at the heart of folklore is available to the world.
- **Educational Integration:** The inclusion of folklore knowledge into the curriculum of schools and colleges would help enable future generations to appreciate cultural heritage at an early age. Learning about folk tales, songs, and proverbs can provide an interactive learning experience and pride in a regional identity.
- **Community Participation:** Local communities should be engaged in practice and passing on traditions at festivals, storytelling sessions, and workshops. Both elders as cultural custodians and youth as learners would help bring continued vitality to living traditions.
- **International Promotion:** The promotion of Haryana folk culture at international cultural festivals and collaborative work with international organizations can expand cultural diplomacy. Cultural diplomacy not only promotes global awareness but creates opportunities for individuals engaged in the local tradition and provides sustainable economic and cultural viability.

## 7. CONCLUSION

The folklore of Haryana represents the very spirit of the state's heroism, agrarian opportunities and cultural uniqueness. It is an active archive of the state's traditions, values and memory. Field traditions including folk tales, folk songs, folk dance, folk riddles, proverbs and festivals manifest the moral education for, social identity and cultural identity over generations, which uphold the day to day life, suffering, ambitions and aspirations of the people. The modern challenges that include urbanization, rural to urban migration, digitization, marketization and the movement from an agrarian to a market economy, has disrupted the continuity of many of these performative practices and, exacerbated the dissociation of contemporary youth to their cultural heritage. Despite the looming threats to the preservation of Haryana's folk traditions, the commitment by government institutions, academic researchers, and media have proven to be valuable tools for the preservation of Haryana's intangible cultural heritage. Ultimately, the transfer and preservation of folklore within Haryana will require new methods such as digital documentation, inclusion in a



formal educational curriculum, community involvement, and global cultural connectivity that will maintain or combine modernity and traditions. If we do, folklore will not only be preserved as a monolithic remnant of a nostalgic past but remain as an active cultural form of expression that shapes identities, instills pride in an individual, and

connects past and future generations in a dynamic and rapidly changing process of cultural accountability.

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