

Festival of Ramkatha - 12th - 15th March, 2008

Lok Ramayan in Himachal Pradesh



Chhadi gayan, Simla, Himachal Pradesh

Narration of Ramkatha in Himachal is a sung tradition often accompanied by rituals and offerings in the form of dance. The oral rendition of the epic has brought Ram as a deity who is 'here and now', very much part of the everyday life of the community. The various forms that were documented during the workshop are:

Katha-Kathan: a form popular in Kullu and Siraj area in Mandi District. The narration in verse form is interspersed by explanation in prose.

Chaadi: This refers to a style of singing. Sacred tales from Hindu Mythology come alive in this form of sung rendition. Singers are divided into two groups; while one sings the main line the other repeats it. Instruments such as bansuri, denkuli and kansi add to the richness of the performance. Chaadi is performed on auspicious occasions either privately in houses, or publically at temples during festivals.

Musada: This is a form of narration in which the sung and narrated word come together in the performance of Ram Katha of the Gaddi community of Himachal Pradesh. There are mainly two performers one male and other, more often than not, his wife. The man is the lead singer and the woman lends vocal support along with playing on the Kansi. This style of singing is also called Khanjari Bharna, which refers to a small percussion instrument. Apart from Khanjari, the main musical accompaniment is a stringed instrument called Rubana. Shiv Katha and other oral narratives also form part of the repertoire of Musada singers known as Ghurai.

Barlaj: Performed as a ritual to honour the memory of king Bali, this style is popular in Shimla, Solan and

Kangra. Tale of Bali Raja is sung during the ritual in simple local dialect. It is performed in an open courtyard of the temple. The performance take place around the bonfire called Geetha or Ghiyana. Dhol, Karnal, and Ransinga are the main musical accompaniments. Along with singing, people dance through the night around the sacred bonfire.

Sanskar Geet: that accompany birth and marriage rituals were also recorded from an 82 year old lady of Kangra. Birth and marriage of Ram forms the main themes of these songs.