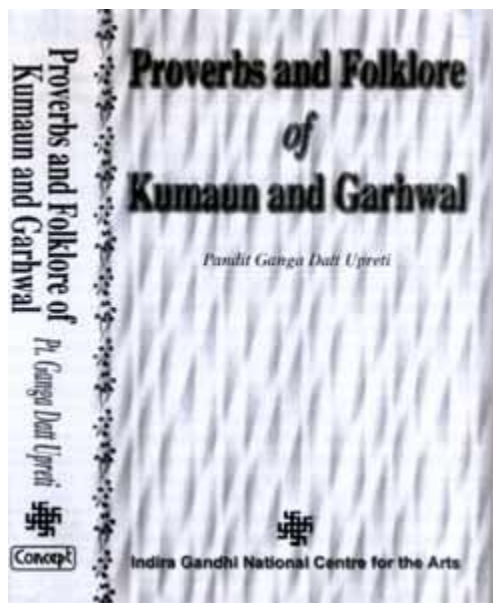


## Book Review

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### Proverbs and folklore of Kumaun and Garhwal



Proverbs and folklore form an integral part of the wisdom tradition of a community. They are the time-tested treasure trove of wisdom coming through ages, history, and culture. While proverbs form part of a language, folklores are an inseparable entity of a culture. They stand testimony to belief systems, customs, laws; taboos; and other cultural aspects of a community. Thus both serve as literary traditions of a certain place and people.

Proverbs and folklores of any society serve as an important tool for in-depth study and proper understanding of that society. Though orally transmitted, proverbs and folklores are the terse metaphors which give as insight into the life pattern and attitudes of the communities towards their own tradition.

Folk culture from its initial stages to the present times express different ways of thinking and feeling. To understand these, local and regional details are necessary. In retrospect, myths, legends, dialects, customs and traditions all form part of a culture where folklores and proverbs thrive as main component. By exploring these components, one gets the understanding of the true nature of human relationship which identifies cross-cultural influences. In doing so, one must be familiar with the land and people in respect to their surroundings, history, culture, environmental conditions, traditions behavioral pattern etc.

*'Proverbs and Folklore of Kumaon and Garhwal'* by Late Rai Bahadur Pundit Ganga Datt Upreti, is one such commendable effort in this field. Having had the advantage of belonging to the region and working in the remote interiors as a Deputy Collector, the author, during his course of service in the Government, sought and collected information from the local inhabitants. These collections consist of folklores and proverbs prevalent in the area at that time. The author has very laboriously and painstakingly collected and translated these proverbs, giving an insight into the character, habits, customs and traditions of the people of Kumaon and Garhwal.

*'Proverbs and Folklore of Kumaon and Garhwal'* illustrates the customs and behavioral pattern of the people. The book thematically and alphabetically arranged in *devanagari* and 114 entries of new proverbs, meticulously treated by the author. Availability, bravery and courage, calamity, meritorious acts, virtue of necessity etc, are some of the themes under which proverbs are very carefully selected along with associated folklore or fable:

*Mari talawara nama Guladara (whoever wields a sword is called the chief). The proverb is applied to a soldier and also to the one who creates mischief and is therefore dreaded by the others and treated as champion.*

*Nani puja panchai bhanda thuli puja panchai bhanda (whether ritual is small or big, at least five vessels are needed for the purpose). The same number of utensil are needed to cook food for either for one*

*person or for many. This proverb is further elaborated as all men whether great or small have the same necessities and similar fate.*

In the foreword, Prof. Baidyanath Saraswati remarks, "proverb is a revelatory reminder. As a universal subject of the human way, it reflects the light of reason, experience, and contemplation. Rich in structure and vocabulary, it reveals the perceivable world in general and the pragmatics of social behaviour in particular. Horizontally, it concerns the phenomenal world; vertically it moves toward the metaphysical order. Hence, on the one hand it is practical; on the other it is essential, absolute." The book also has an introduction by Rev. E.S. Oakley. Although, initially collected to enable the European gentry to understand and comprehend the customs and cultures of the natives, this work has tremendous potential and relevance in the present context, especially in the domain of cultural studies. The author's diligent treatment of the proverbs, relates them with daily activities of the people. Agricultural activities, human behaviour, food habits, customs, belief systems, moral values, adaptability, calamity, adversity and other day to day matters are some of the classifications of the proverbs, containing witty aphorisms of the hill people of Kumaon and Garhwal.

One of the objectives of the IGNCA is to promote and encourage such studies. Reprint of this edition was carried out under the Lok Parampara programme of the Janapada Sampada division of the Centre which explore the fields of cultural knowledge with a view to understand the functioning of various communities in their totality.

Proverbs, one may say, are recurring and traditional by virtue of being the items of folklore. The didactic content present in proverbs suggest a statement of fact that can be identified as a tendency with relevance for knowledge and behavior of human life. Thus proverbs and folklores serve as revelatory wisdom of a community.

Scholars and experts and also those interested in folk culture should encourage and promote similar studies in order to understand and preserve the cultural ethos in various communities of a society. But most important of all, such studies should contribute to the understanding of the folk customs, rituals and lifestyle.

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