

No.9/JGVS/2006

Dated 30-09-2006

Member Secretary,
IGNCA,
Rajendra Prasad Road
New Delhi-110001

Sir,

Janjatiya Gaddi Vikas Samiti (Regd) is formed among other aims to protect, preserve and promote our precious cultural heritage and art and our vanishing literature.

We in active association of Indira Gandhi National Centre for Culture and Arts (IGNCA), Akhil Bhartiya Gaddi Janjatiya Vikas Samiti (Regd), Gaddi Vikas Samiti, Delhi (Regd) and Himachal Social Bodies' Federation (Regd) have organized several Socio-Cultural activities in Delhi, Chandigarh, Kalkaji, Shimla, Kangra, Kullu, Mandi and Chamba areas of Himachal Pradesh. These include celebration of Bashoa (Baishakhi), Cheemu, Patroru, Sair, Lohri Sakranti festivals, Suee, Guddi, Gontri, Jatras and Nualas and other Socio-Cultural events.

Being aware and sensitive citizens, we feel that the image portrayed by the people about the Gaddi Community of Himachal Pradesh is not only incomplete but distorted also to some extent. At the same time, we feel that the tribal values are fast diminishing due to impact of modern culture. Consequently, people are least bothered about their cultural heritage and reluctant to conserve and protect it.

So as a sincere attempt to initiate the process of achieving our multiple objectives by creating awareness about primitive culture of Gaddi Tribe of Himachal, we propose to document **RAMEENEE** a Gaddi version of Ramayana.

It is understood that IGNCA is engaged in preserving, protecting and promotion of such socio, cultural, art and literary activities. We are submitting a proposal on Rameenee containing following procedure of

- * Identification of traditional artists,
- * Establishing Repertory,
- * Opening Training Centres,
- * Organising Events,
- * Documentation,
- * Performance and
- * Awarding pension, stipend and giving remuneration.

We shall be grateful to take-up the project itself or award it to us so that this rich heritage can be preserved.

(Rattan Pahl)
Chairman

Through, DS/HOD, Jansampada.

DOCUMENTATION OF RAMEENEE (THE RAMAYANA) OF GADDIS AND PENSIONARY BENEFITS TO OLD ARTISTS

1. THE PEOPLE

Gaddi Community, blissfully nestled in the verdant amphitheatre of Dhaula Dhar, is passing through a transition. It has been a long journey, since the time of its historical **migration from the Central Asia, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Western Punjab and some other parts of the country** to the remote mountains to

- rule,
- capture the land (Kshetras),
- establish Monastries (Goasthas) in ancient times,
- in search of peace in middle historical period and
- escape the persecution and bigotry practiced by the then Mughal rules.

From its self-contented, semi-pastoral lifestyle, the community is striving to cope with the fast changing realities of the present day's socio-economic environment.

The rich **cultural heritage** manifested in its folklore, costume, jewellery and lifestyle, **is under serious threat, and may fade into oblivion**. The Community's values of equality, rectitude, honesty, self-contentment, cooperation, simplicity and camaraderie are slowly but inexorably **falling prey to evils associated with the modern day society**. Penumbra of confusion is dogging the community, especially the youth about the path to be chosen. Unable to recognize and appreciate the richness of this invaluable cultural heritage, the youth is easily tempted to adopt the so-called modern way of life' with all its accompanied evils.

On the life hold front, the community has taken a severe beating. With the shrinkage of pasture and grazing land, it is becoming next to impossible to support the traditional vocation of shepherding. Ever-increasing number is **leaving the profession and joining the burgeoning informal labour market**. **Gaddi, from a position of pride and self-contentment, is getting marginalized and joining the ranks of deprived and excluded**. Though everything is not lost, there is a need for giving a proper direction to lead this Community to a position of pride, self-reliance and confidence.

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

There is a **need to propagate the rich cultural heritage** of the tribal community in proper perspective to the people in general. At the same time it is an attempt to motivate the people of Himachal Pradesh to

- conserve,

- protect and
- promote

the identity of the Gaddi by making our self aware of the glittering cultural values and by developing a sense of

- pride,
- dignity and
- confidence

among the people for our ancient socio-cultural norms which are eroding rapidly. Above all, the ultimate objective is to project and **build up a sound, beautiful and fine image** of our State i.e. with the help of an exhaustive tool of documentation of the Gaddi tribe on its culture and literature.

The Gaddis generally known to be followers of Shakti and Shiva have various occasions throughout the year to organize

- Jatras (Yatras) to please Goddess Shakti, Parvati, Kuljas and
- Nualas (Navmala) to please our God Shiva, Mahesha, Mahadeva, Saieen through Anchalis which are orally conserved for centuries. In the meantime, Gaddis recite
- **Anchalis in praise of Lord Rama, which is known as Rameenee a Gaddi version of the Ramayana.**

3. INVASSION OF VAISANAVISM AND RAMAYANA

It is to be mentioned here that ancient Gaddi inhabited area i.e. Bharmour was formally **organized by Meru Burman and his sons the predecessors of Suryavanshi Rama in around 550AD with its seat at Brahmapur** presently known as Bharmour and later on also ruled from Chamba (Champa) in Himachal Pradesh. The Suryavanshis rulers ensured that the populace gets acquainted with the Vaisnavism and Ramayana. **The acceptability of the Gaddis of various faith and belief resulted into cultural invasion of Vaishnavism through the Ramayana and gained popularity through RAMEENEE.** The populace of Gaddi due to their semi-nomadic, semi-pastoral life style later on spread all over the state mainly to Kangra District wherein they begin other vaisnav practices including Satya-Narayana Vrat Kathas.

It is understood that the Ramayana-Ramkatha was being recited and performed for centuries in Gaddi dialect as Rameenee through the

- Kathus,
- Storey narrators,
- Commentators,
- Music Artists and
- Traditional dancers.

We use to recite and perform Rameenee for weeks together throughout the night in pray and praise of Lord Rama.

With the advent of sponsoring Mani Mahesh Yatra, the Shiv puja-Nuala and Shakti Puja-Jatras are becoming much popular. Besides, organizing several events by various social organizations and individuals Shiva and Shakti Anchalis are becoming popular but the Rameenee Anchalis are fast diminishing from the folklore of the Gaddi populace in Bharmour, Chamba and Kangra regions.

Recently, a cultural group led by S/Shri Suresh Sharma, Suresh Kapoor, Sunil Rana and Smt. Swarchala Sharma, Seema Rana and Monica under the direction of Shri Hemraj Varsain based at Dharamshala has made an effort to document a few Anchalees of Rameenee through audio cassettes which received a tremendous response from the Gaddi populace as well as the people of the Himachal Pradesh. But such a huge Rameenee which was being recited for a weeks together throughout the nights and was not documented yet needs to be documented as a very traditional singers and Artists are left alive. If this is not done now this will not be done ever.

4. IDENTIFICATION OF TRADITIONAL ARTISTS

There is a very much need of identifying such few

- traditional Artists,
- singers,
- dancers,
- katus and
- storey narrators

by participating in various Nualas, Jatras, festivals, social functions and marriages etc. by researchers. The artists will be invited to participate by organizing related functions on Rameenee in different regions i.e.

- Bahoun, Treta, Kugti, Chhatrari, Bharmour, Banikhet, Chuwari and Churah areas in Chamba district,
- Baijnath, Palampur, Kangra, Shahpur and Nurpur areas of Kangra district,
- Bhuntar and Bajoura areas in Kullu and
- Ghatta and Chountara areas of Mandi district.

The researchers will collect relevant data and do audio-videography.

5. REPERTORY ESTABLISHMENT

In the process of participating and organizing functions and identifying the old but traditional singers, artists, dancers etc, we will able to document Anchalis of Rameenee popular in various regions in their different versions through

- audio,
- video and
- Documentary.

The database then will be presented to

- researchers,
- literary personalities,
- historians,
- anthropologists
- educationists and
- socialites

for examination and putting it in an epic form with commentary on each version. Some **experts would be interviewed** for their comments to add an authoritative element to the document. This will enable to propagate the rich cultural heritage of this tribal community in proper perspective to the people in general. At the same time it will be an attempt to motivate the people of Himachal Pradesh by making them aware of their glittering cultural values and by developing a sense of pride, dignity and confidence among the people for their ancient socio-cultural norms which are eroding rapidly.

6. TRAINING CENTRES

Since the traditional dancers, singers and Artists are disappearing, there would be need of getting young folks trained through these old traditional artists by setting up training centers at various regions discussed above. **The identified artists will train the young folks in**

- traditional reciting, singing,
- commentary, narrations,
- dancing,
- playing and
- performing

of Rameenee in its traditional form **through Guru-Shisya parampara**. These training centers will become source of learning and performing traditional way of reciting and performance of Rameenee.

Once the training centers get established and performance is reached up to a satisfactory level, the competition among different centers will be organized and the selective artists then will be introduced for performance.

7. DOCUMENTATION

The whole process of reciting and performance will be audio-video graphed and documented. The database then will be

- published,

- produced (Audeo-Vedeo) and
- uploaded to web site on Internet and made available to the target audience.

8. THE TARGET AUDIENCE

The audience shall be people of

- all age groups
- classes

of all over the world in general and people of India in particular with special reference to the people of Himachal Pradesh. The Rameenee will be visually strong, illustrative and potential enough to sustain the interest of the audience. The various events will be organized at

- Regional level,
- District level,
- State level,
- National level and
- International level

to perform and to know about the Gaddi version of the Ramayana, which has been written on hundreds of other languages and dialects.

9. PENSION SCHEME TO THE TRADITIONAL ARTS

The traditional **artists who have kept their tradition alive orally through Guru Shisya parampara are great conservators of the rich cultural heritage of Gaddis**. These artists need to be rewarded through pensionary scheme. The young folks in training centers need to be rewarded by providing stipend or remuneration. Similarly, the researchers and other personalities involved in the process also need to be rewarded suitably. Therefore, the beneficiary will be old and traditional

- Artists,
- Singers,
- Young folk dancers,
- Performers,
- Researchers and
- Delegates who will directly or indirectly linked to the project and
- above all the people.
