



## Echoes of Tradition: The Role of Folklore in Preserving Kashmiri Culture

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### ABSTRACT

This paper explores the vital role of folklore in preserving cultural identity in Kashmir, the region of rich traditions with a complex historical backdrop. From the analysis of the numerous forms of oral narrative, myths, and other traditional practices, the research illustrates how these features work as a repository for collective memory and a mechanism for cultural resilience. Using fieldwork and interviews with local storytellers, we have explored the dynamic interplay between folklore and contemporary social issues and highlighted its importance in cohesiveness at community levels and dialogue between generations. The findings of the research indicate that Kashmiri folklore not only continues to exist but also makes adjustments for modern challenges and is a living tradition that manifests the regional identity. It thus remains at the core of the message of this research to be able to conserve folklore as an important component of the Kashmiri heritage in this time when globalization is moving at a speed that is extremely fast.

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### Introduction :

Kashmir, often called "Paradise on Earth," features beautiful landscapes and a wealth of cultural heritage. The history of the region is a rich tapestry woven with a tapestry of influences in terms of



Persian, Central Asian, and indigenous traditions. Folklore is the epicenter of this richness: oral narratives, myths, legends, songs, and proverbs passed on through generations. These narrations are not only entertaining but also convey moral lessons and values about society, thus holding great importance as a means to connect the past and present. This paper aims to focus on the multifaceted role of folklore in upholding Kashmiri cultural identity and its importance in developing strength in the face of the challenges of modernity.

### **Literature Review :**

Folklore has remained a significant area of scholarly research, often treated as an optic through which one examines cultural identity and community function.

Researchers like Alan Dundes and Barbara Babcock have focused on the crucial role of folklore in showing the mores and social values of society. Different studies on Kashmir prove how these oral traditions construct collective memories and identities in the context of the area. For instance, some research works by authors like Mohammad Yousuf depict how Kashmiri folklore succeeds in safeguarding historical narratives and cultural practice in the context of different sociopolitical changes in the region.

This part reviews the key literature that sets the current work within broader discourse on folklore and the preservation of cultures.

### **Methodology :**

The current study pursues a qualitative research method in which the data have been gathered through interviews and field visits among the narrators of the locals and village people. Purposive sampling has been conducted with regard to participant selection; individuals knowledgeable about the Kashmir folktales were chosen for the interview. Thematic analysis of the gathered data was carried out so as to find the commonness in themes and narratives talking of the cultural ethos of Kashmir. The field visitations to a number of villages had the effect of providing an ambient setting for the acquisition of the living culture of the folktales.

### **Thematic Folklore Analysis :**



The Kashmiri oral narratives abound in symbolism and represent the community's values. Tales of legendary figures, including the folk hero "Kahwa," impart moral values and reinforce cultural identity. Often, these stories are read aloud at gatherings and festivals, linking the community to its heritage.

Myths and Legends Mythology is a significant element of Kashmir's spiritual geography. Local myths and historical facts are essential to understand the beliefs and practices that compose the culture of Kashmiri society. For instance, the Shankracharya legend symbolizes the themes of spirituality and devotion. It narrates the close connection between folk culture and local identity.

Folk practices Folklores are also integrated in the rituals and festivals of Kashmir, which work towards strengthening the cultural identity and bonds within the society. Festivals like "Mela Kheer Bhavani" uphold the folklores and traditions of the land; hence different sections of society remain united. The festivals here are more than just to worship gods but also as narrations and sharing of cultures.

Folklore is one aspect of cultural resilience characterizing the Kashmir Valley, more so in political upsets and social change. The stories and traditions kept a form of identity and continuity through communities. This section critically analyses how folklore encourages cohesiveness in society through affording people a sense of belonging and collective identity more so in times of turmoil and uncertainty.

### **Case Studies :**

This section introduces some case studies of renowned storytellers and how they contributed to the preservation of folklore. For example, storytelling by Gulzar Ahmad reflects how oral traditions can fit into modern contexts without losing their essence. His performances are both entertaining and educative, making the younger generation appreciate their heritage, thus enhancing a sense of pride and belonging.

### **Current Relevance :**

Kashmiri folklore does not have static life; rather, it lives on on the bases of the evolution of the modern issues on hand. The current section looks into how technology advancement, relocations, and story spread to the people, either in the keeping and sharing thereof, and the way it impacts today's contemporary folk art. For example, literature cannot be forgotten even while doing activism and activism- orientated activities. Presently, the contemporary social media channels have, in fact become



the new places of narrations where young people also apply their cultural heritage in one or more innovative means.

### **Conclusion:**

These results point out the need for keeping Kashmiri folklore alive as a living tradition, which stands out as treasure trove of cultural identity and strength that has the potency to unite past and the present. At the same time, it highlights the relevance of conserving such traditions into this increasingly globalized world that would be able to give unique identity to Kashmir into future times. Future research shall look into the role played by folklore in cross-culture situations and its possibilities to enhance dialogue and mutual understanding in the increasingly rapidly changing world.

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