PREFACE

The study concerns with Folk Music prevailing in the socio-cultural life of Hamirpur; hence, on the one hand it unfolds the social sacraments and rituals of the region and on the other, deals in detail with folk songs associated with each ritual and ceremony.

Right from the birth of a child up to the death, numerous customs and traditions are connected and with each ritual, folk songs are closely associated. Ranjhnjhaña (the folk songs sung at the time of child birth), Suhāg, Ghodiyan, Badhowe and innumerable other folk songs are sung traditionally in Hamirpur, mostly by the women-folk.

Born and brought up in Hamirpur, as well as due to my keen interest in Music, I gained profound understanding of the local dialect and culture of the region and my intense curiosity to learn and collect folk melodies paved my path to this field of searching for typical and traditional folk songs, unheard, hidden in remote areas, totally untouched, unaffected and uninfluenced.

I strongly felt the requirement of preserving and conserving these folk melodies, adopting essential measures; which, otherwise would be forgotten with the passage of time.

The sanctity and purity of our cultural heritage of folk music needs to be protected and transmitted to the generations to come. Evolved and developed along with the evolution of the society, folk music would remain in the world till the existence of humanity. But our basic old principles, culture and traditions are being swept away by the stormy influence of Westernization. Folk lores, folk instruments, dances and folk songs are in danger of becoming extinct. Hence, the purpose of the study is to draw attention of one and all towards our culture and traditions.
Folk music is brought up in the lap of Mother-nature; it cannot be learnt from books, it is an integral part of our life and soul because it comes naturally from within due to hereditary factor intermingled with environment around us.

Hence, the title of my work ‘Comprehensive Study of Folk-Music Prevailing in Socio-Cultural Life of Hamirpur’ flashed in mind spontaneously and I heaved a sigh of relief, as I had acquired the purpose of my research. My keen interest in English Literature encouraged me to carry on the regional study in English language, which would create interest in non-Hindi speaking Indians as well as foreigners to be acquainted with the culture and traditions of Hamirpur region.

Although, to start with as a toddler, it seemed quite difficult as there was not much material available on the subject, yet of obtaining original folk songs from rural areas, getting in touch with the local people, talking to them in local dialect, spending hours and hours together for getting something worthwhile out of them, recording them, trying to understand the shaky and muffled voices of the old folk artists noting down the text, notating the folk songs and so on created a great enthusiasm to work in the field of preserving treasure of folk songs.

I have divided this study into various chapters. Entering into the subject, the first chapter deals with the definitions of the term, ‘Folk’, ‘Folk Lore’ and ‘Folk Music’ by various Indian and Western philosophers. Also, origin, evolution, historical development and significance of folk music as well as its impact on social life have been discussed.

The second chapter obviously deals with the second part of the topic, i.e. background and topographical condition, socio-religious culture, rural aspect, living style of the people, language and dialect, caste system as well as the
places of historical and religious importance, traditional fairs, festivals and so on, providing a strong link to the next chapter.

Chapter three is devoted to the role of folk music in social customs and traditions of Hamirpur. Difficulties and hindrances in collection of folk songs have been discussed in details as well as solutions and reconciliation too, have been provided. I have also categorized the folk songs of Hamirpur under five broad divisions for methodical study. Folk songs associated with the social sacraments (of various stages of life) have been dealt in detail. The subject matter so wide spread and extensive, that it consumed the whole third chapter for its vast and minute study. Hence, the other four categories, i.e. the folk songs associated with seasons and crops sung by the folk singing communities of Hamirpur, religious folk songs, songs of love and passion and other miscellaneous folk songs as well as folk lore, folk drama, folk musical instruments and folk dances had to be carried over to chapter four.

In the fourth chapter I have taken up ‘Chaitra’ singing tradition of Hamirpur by folk singing communities and also the ‘Chātki’, ‘Kandi’, ‘Gaddan’, ‘Shiv-Vivāh’ and ‘Bārāhmāsā’ singing tradition. Folk bhajans and ‘Tumbā bhajans’ of Hamirpur region are also dealt with. Songs of Love and Passion (Jhinjhotiyan and Pakhdu) and miscellaneous folk songs form an important part of the chapter. Folk Dramas ‘Bhagat’ and ‘Swāng’, folk tales, folk musical instruments and dances, too, have been covered under the same chapter. The minute study has brought forth the repertoire of the known few to many unknown rare melodies, thus unfolding the significance of folk music in socio-cultural life of Hamirpur step-by-step.

Life sketches of famous folk artists of Hamirpur have brought forth another comparatively shorter chapter five.
In chapter six, the entire work has been critically evaluated and analyzed
and the conclusion has been drawn.

Photographs of important places folk artists/ instruments of Hamirpur
region, symbols of sounds of words and list of recordings in the form of CD
have also been given in Appendix A- D.