CHAPTER 5

FOLK ARTISTS OF HAMIRPUR REGION
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FOLK ARTIST

1. Sh. Rafo Rām

The pride of Hamirpur, the recipient of Senā Medal (1971) and a versatile folk music artist, Sh. Rafo Rām s/o Late Sh. Phangi Rām was born on 30th of November 1942. Resident of village Thānā- Darogon, Hamirpur, Sh. Rafo Rām had musical instinct from the very childhood. At the tender age of 10 years, he played Nagār & sang. He was in Army (Dogrā Regiment) from 1960 to 1978. During Indo-China war (1965), he was in Lahore Sector and during Indo-Pakistan was (1971) he lost his right foot while fighting bravely for his country and also received Senā Medal.

After his retirement in 1978 from Army, he got the job in State Bank of India, Hamirpur where he served for twenty two years i.e. 1979-2001. One of his sons Kuldeep Chand is in Chandigarh Police and plays trumpet in the Police Band.
A true artist and a true humanist, Sh. Rafo Ram is very kind at heart, ready to solve the problems of people, noble, caring and ready to help others the qualities rarely found in today's era.

He has performed all over Himachal Pradesh as well as in Delhi, Nagpur, Jammu and so on. He has also been recorded for AIR and Doordarshan has performed in all state level functions of Himachal Pradesh. Besides Nagāra, he also plays Shehnāi and Tablā.

Sh. Rafo Rām plays tough and variegated layakaris of Ṭals Ādā Chautāl, Deepchandi, Roopak, Jhaptāl, Teentāl etc. on Nagāra, with laggis, Bānt and Tihāeeyān effortlessly. There are many Nagārā Players in Hamirpur region but Sh. Rafo Rām tops the list.

2. Sh. Nārangā Rām Ji

Ninety two (92) years old Sh. Nārangā Rām S/o Late Sh. Mathru, resident of village Ree Bhalānā, Hamirpur excels in Shehnāi playing. With an excellent memory at this age Sh. Nārangā Rām has always given memorable recitals. Besides folk tunes and folk songs, he has rare skill and knowledge of classical Rāgas, which he plays on folk Shehnāi according to the Time-theory of Rāgas along with the accompaniment on Nagāra, mostly played by Sh. Rafo Rām, the Nagāra Maestro. Both of them have travelled widely in Himachal Pradesh and out of Himachal Pradesh and have performed together. Sh. Nārangā Rām Ji has been recorded for AIR and Doordarshan also and has participated in state level functions of Himachal Pradesh.

3. Sh. Mast Rām

A renowned folk artist of Tumbā Bhajans of Hamirpur, Sh. Mast Ram, son of Shri Durgā Dāss village Upmahal P.O Ānu (H. No. 355, ward No. 1) Hamirpur was born in 1947. He hails basically from village Sihupi (P.O. Ānu). He started singing Tumbā Bhajans at the age of 11-12 years, playing Tumbā and Khaḍṭāl along with Bhajans.
He also sings Guggā Gāthā, which he learnt from his father, maternal grand-father and uncle Sh. Sant Rām and learnt Tumbā Bhajans from Sh. Longu Ram and Sh. Kānshi Rām from Bālīh.

He also plays a number of folk-instruments and specializes in Tamak playing.

His Tumbā Bhajan and Tamak Dal (Group) is registered with Art, culture and Language Department of Himachal Pradesh (Registration No. 108) for the last twenty years; a group of fifteen members players of Tamak, Dhol, Ṭāshā, Shehnāī, Been, Khanjari, Daflā, Nagārā and Narsinghā in the Tamak Dal and Tumbā and Khanjari in Tumbā Bhajans.

Sh. Mast Rām along with his group has been performing in Haryana, Gujrāt, Āndhrā Pradesh, Agartala, Tripurā, Gangtok, Sikkim & Delhi, besides hundreds of places in Himachal Pradesh.

He also sings ‘Chātki’ and performs ‘Chandrauli’ Dance. A group of ten folk artistes perform these after the festival of Diwali, in the dance, men wear women's dress. Sh. Jonki Rām accompanies him in Tumbā Bhajans and his son you Raj plays Doru and Kānsiyān and accompanies him while singing Guggā Gāthā.

Sh. Mast Rām also has been recorded for Doordarshan Shimla. He is also an approved artist of FM Radio station Hamirpur. His two cassettes: (i)‘Guggā Janam Gāthā’ and (ii) ‘Kanjru Kā Jheḍā’ have been very popular.

4. Sh. Jaunki Rām

Born on 02-06-1955, Sh. Jaunki Ram S/o Sh. Garīb Dāss, Village Upmahal, P.O. Aṇu, Hamirpur is a renowned Khanjari and Dafli player and a singer of Tumbā Bhajans. He inherited musical instinct from his father Sh. Garīb Dāss, who was a singer too.

Jaunki Rām- Mast Rām duo is renowned for Tumbā Bhajans in Hamirpur region and allover Himachal Pradesh. Jaunki Rām plays his vital role as an important player cum singer of Tumbā Bhajan Dal and Tamak Dal,
registered with Language Deptt. of Himachal Pradesh. He has performed throughout Himachal as well as Suraj Kund, Delhi, Agartala, Sikkim, Gangtok, Tripura and so on. Tamak group is an essential Part of Chhinj in Himachal Pradesh. His skill of memorizing the words of Tumbā Bhajans is great. He creates the apt atmosphere of religious Folk Bhajans with his Khanjari and singing. His children are studying and none of them has adopted his profession.

5. **Sh. Girdhari Lāl Vermā**

Born in Village Badhāran, Galore, Hamirpur on 01-04-1955, Sh. Girdhari Lāl Vermā is the proud son of Sh. Raghubir Dāss.

He is presently residing in H.No. 135, Ward No: 4 Shiv Nagar, Hamirpur. Sh. Girdhari Lāl Vermā started singing from his very childhood and started performing, since the year 1965 when he was studying in class 5th.

He learnt Tumbā Bhajans from Late Thākur Pramod Singh of Galore. He also learnt Clarinet in 1975 from Bombay. He plays Flute, Tumbā, Harmonium, Key-board (Casio) Dholak, Khanjari and Dafli. He learnt music from Sh. Ramesh Sharma, Music Teacher from Lahra, Galore. He has been very closely associated with Rām Leelā Manch, Hamirpur and played the leading role of Lord Rama from 1970 up to 2010.

Sh. Girdhari Lāl Vermā has excellent voice quality. He has been singing from A.I.R. station Shimla, since 1987-88 and from FM station Hamirpur, since 1991-1992. He has also been recorded and broadcast from Bhilwādā radio station, telecast from Shimla and Delhi Doordarshan Kendras. He has been performing on stage throughout Himachal Pradesh and in Bombay, Delhi, Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Andmān, Nikobār, Shilong, Meghālaya, through Art, Culture and Language Department of Himachal Pradesh.

He has written poems in Himāchli- Hamirpuri dialect, which have true folk elements and have been sung as folk songs by his disciples. He runs a general store cum musical- instruments selling shop.
One of his sons Vinay Verma has adopted Music and theatre. The role of Sh. Girdhari Lāl Verma in preserving and propagating folk music of Hamirpur is immense.

6. **Sh. Om Prakash Chandel**

He was born on 26th December, 1971; as the son of Sh. Kānshi Rām Chandel and Smt. Chhunki Devi Om Prakash Chandel has a very melodies folk-voice quality. He had been interested in Music from his childhood; however, after passing his I.T.I., he has been working in public works Department Hamirpur, residing in village Nadiāṇā, P.O. Jhaniārā, Teh. and Distt. Hamirpur. After his association with Sh. Girdhāri Lāl Verma and through Art, Culture and Language Department, Himāchal Pradesh, he performed in Andaman Nikobār Islands Calcutta, Shilong Meghalaya, Āssām Cherāpunji and so on. As an artist in Public Relations Department, he went to many places and through the medium of music and Nukkad Natak, performed on varied subjects of social importance like AIDS, Nashā- Nivāraṇ, Kushth- Nivāraṇ etc. for making people aware of ill-effects of Drugs etc.

Om Prakash Chandel has been singing Pahādi songs and has been recorded by F.M. Station Hamirpur and also in Doordarshan Kendras.

He has to his credit eleven Cassettes/CDS of Bhajan Bhentas and two Cassettes of Pahādi Folk- Songs. He has been performing in almost all state level festival of Himachal Pradesh, in Mandi, Hamirpur, Sujānpur, Sundernagar, Jāhu, Gasotā and so on as well as in Ludhiana Lakhānpur and Jammu. He also performs in Bhagwati Jāgraṇs and Bhajan Keertans.

7. **Rāju Baggā (Vijay Bagga)**

Born on 30th of July in the year 1967 to late Sh. Tarsem Baggā and Smt. Shakuntalā Baggā, (the famous Baggā family of goldsmiths) Rāju Baggā (real name Vijay Bagga) inherited music from his grandfather Late S. Sādhū Rām Baggā, who was a singer and a poet, his paternal aunt Ushā Baggā, who was a renowned singer. From the very childhood, he used to play Dholak, untutored by any (Guru) formal teacher, natural rhythm Layakāris, Tihāyes, Laggis
came to him spontaneously. He started playing Tablā at tender age. When he was studying in school he used to accompany college teams in University Youth Festivals and Inter-College Competitions in Folk Dances, Group-Song, and Light-Music and so on. Listeners used to get spell-bound watching a small boy performing Dholak and Tablā with full confidence in State Level Functions. During his college days, he opted Vocal-music as a subject, but could not complete his studies, as after his father's demise, he had to look after the family business of goldsmiths, but he could never be separated from Music. He participated in the Open State Youth Festivals organized by Himachal Pradesh Youth and Sports Services, represented Himachal Pradesh at National level Youth Festivals for about 25 years. In cultural Scenario of Hamirpur and Himachal Pradesh, Rāju Bagga became an axis i.e. the central figure. He has to his credit 3,50 Albums & CDS, 'Jobnu Naṇāne', 'Dheeyān De Dukhāde', 'Chhaile Bāge Dā Mor', 'Jai Bābā Paunāhār', 'Indro', 'Soene Rupi Chiḍie', 'Heerān Wālā Totā', 'Dhobaṇ', 'Merā Parādesi Ghare Āyā', 'Lalāriyā', Super Hit Ghōdiyān Aur Giddhe', 'Raṇkān Himachal Diyan', 'Jag Rahiyan Jātān', 'Noālā', 'Mohnā', 'Jāndā Musāfār', 'Super-hit Bhyāgade Pyāri Lagdi', 'Shiv Vivāh', 'Gugge Dā Byāh', 'Haryān Pattān Wāli, Mehndi', 'Tumbā Jindri Dā', 'Himachali Dhamākā 2005', 'Rām Nām Dā Gehnā' etc. are numerous Super hit CDS and Albums; Rāju Bagga is Dholak, Nāl, Tablā player, Producer-Director and what not. He has established his own studies Sur-Sangam Digital studio at Palampur. He has his own orchestra and the best players of Instruments are with him. He is a music arranger as well.

Besides his musical skills his contribution in the field of acting and dramatics is immense. He is a store house of laughter and can make listeners burst out in shrieks of laughter. Excellent in mimicry, master of varied expressions, he is a spontaneous poet also and has written many songs and bhajans.

Recently he has completed an Album on Chambā folk music in his studio, in which he has used only the folk instrument of Chambā to produce
pure folk CD; however, in the age of commercialization, listeners like heavy music and the companies have to cater to the needs of listeners. However, Baggā's quest for pure folk songs and Bārhāṁśās has continuously been adventurous.

Simple, respectful and humble Rāju Bagga has a sharp ear for music. He is an excellent organizer of programmes and has been a source of inspiration to many budding artists. He is very particular about tactics of stage. According to him- ‘For successful performance, which require confidence, good and melodious voice, face expressions, co-ordination with accompanists, singing-according to the emotion of the song and on the top the choice of apt song according to the listeners, are required.

8. Sh. Ajay Dogra

Born in the year 1967, on 26th of December, Sh. Ajay Dogra son of Sh. Ravinder Kumār Dogra and Smt. Kāntā Dogra inherited musical instinct from his grand-father Sh. Kishori Lal Dogra. He plays Flute, Dhōlak, Naṅgārā, Dafli, Khanjari, Doru, Chintā, Ghāḍā, Kānsiyān, Tumbā, Harmonium, Sitar, Keyboard, Mouthorgan, Tablā i.e. each folk and classical- music instrument. He has got a very melodies voice; however, he does not sing. Ajay Dogra has a very fine ear for music. From his childhood days, he used to play instruments and participate in cultural programmes and competitions & win laurels. His passion for music grew so much that after his father's demise, who was the owner of very popular sweet shop at Nadaun, he took over the business and ran the shop of sweets, fast food and mobiles successfully, but ultimately shifted to musical instrument sales business along with sales of mementos and mobile phones. His better half Sapnā helps him in his business, when he is away for programmes of music.

Ajay Dogra also learnt the art of Tablā from Pandit Ramākānt Ji of Punjab- Gharāñā. Pleasing, respectful, helpful humble Sh. Ajay Dogra is not only the Prop. of `Sapnā Traders, busy in sales of musical instruments, but, has encouraged thousands of budding artists by organizing Music (Folk, light and...
classical), Dance (Folk and Classical dance) and dramatics competitions according to the age groups through his 'Sā Re Ga Ma Music Academy', Nadaun.

He is doing extra-ordinary service to music by encouraging children and young artists, by providing a platform for them to perform in front of the audience, so that they gain confidence while singing, playing instruments and dancing and do better next time.

These competitions are adjudged by eminent and neutral musicians and these go on until late afternoon. In the evening, starts the Sangeet Sammelan; Sh. Ajay Dogrā besides picking up a Local Classical-artist, who performs first and then the Sammelan catches momentum by performances of renowned artists of repute from all over India. Sh. Ajay Dogrā organizes the annual Sammelans in such a way that Classical vocal, Tablā Vādan, Sitār Vādan; all streams be covered for keeping the listeners’ curiosity maintained up till the end of Sammelan.

This is the need of the hour that the classical tradition of music be presented and popularized amongst the audiences as people can like that only, with which they are familiar and if they never get a chance to listen to the high music, they cannot appreciate it.

Actually, this should have been done by the Govt. by the Art, Culture and Language Department but Sh. Ajay Dogrā is selflessly doing so of his own. This shows his dedication and serious approach to music and musical appreciation.

He established 'Sā Re Ga Ma music Academy in the year 2001 and since then till date, noted Vocalists like Pt. Bholā Nath Mishrā, Sh. Shailender Mishrā noted Tablā Player, Sh. Megh Sunder Mukherji, Violinist, Aminabh Chatterjee, the Sitār Maestro, Pt. Ramā Kānt Tablā Vādak, Bhushān Goswāmi Sārangi player and so on, have performed during Sangeet Sammelans. Similarly, local Classical- artists Nalini Kaushal- Vocalist, Hari Dutt- Flute Player, Hem Rāj- Vocalist, Ilā Pandey- Kathak dancer have performed. Ajay
Dogra has performed and won in Ṭabla Vādan, Flute and Harmonium Vādan in Open State Level Youth Festivals for 15 years, since the year 1995 and has attended 5 National Youth Festivals.

Another quality, which is rarely found in Musicians is co-operating and seeking co-operation of one and all, maintaining relations and successful programmes. Extremely hospitable, Ajay wins love and affection of all artists.

9. Sh. Lāl Chand

To the question ‘Which is the golden voice of Hamirpur region? The answer is 'Lāl Chand', which is absolutely correct. He is the most talented and humble artist of Hamirpur and Himachal Pradesh Lāl Chand, son of Sh. Zulfi Rām and Smt. Durgā Devi, resident of Tikker, Post Office Đudhānā, Teh. &Distt. Hamirpur was born in the year 1972 on 13th of September. His father is a famous Guggā Gāthā Singer, Harmonium, Dholak Doru, Thāli, instruments were at home and Lāl Chand took keen interest in playing those from the very childhood. During school time, he played Harmonium during functions he used to sing too. He opted for music vocal as a subject in college. He also learnt Rāgas and also participated in the University Youth Festivals and Inter College Competitions in Folk Music, Light and Classical- Music, Group Songs and won laurels for the College and University.

Very humble and respectful, he earns everybody’s love and affection. Since the year 1991 up to 1998 he participated in the Open State Youth Festivals in Folk- music, Classical Vocal and Harmonium Vādan and won many prizes at State Level. He also participated in National Youth Festivals held in Calcutta for Harmonium Vādan and at Ahmedabad for Classical Vocal.

He has been recorded by AIR F.M. Station Hamirpur since 1991 and by All India Radio Shimla since 1996. He is an approved artist of AIR Shimla for Folk music and Ghazals. He has been recorded for Television for Ghazals and Folk songs.

He has performed all through Himachal Pradesh in prestigious functions.
He worked as performer cum Harmonium Player for seven year from 1999 to 2006 in the Song and Drama Division, ministry of Information and Broadcasting Govt. of India at Shimla, travelled widely and performed and he was lucky enough to be selected through H.P. Public Service Commission as Lecturer in Music- Vocal (He is M.A. M.Phil, PhD in Vocal Music) in the year 2006 and at present he is serving as Assistant professor in Vocal Music in Govt. P.G. College Arki. He was in G.C. Dehri and Bilaspur previously.

The pride son of the soil of Hamirpur, Lāl Chand rose to the highest ranking job in the field of music, due to his continuous hard work rigorous riyāz, natural gifted voice and a deep knowledge of Rāgas, Swar and Tāla. His wife Mamtā, another gifted singer and dancer and a very fine human being too, is working as performer in the Song and Drama Division Ministry of Information and Broadcasting at Shimla; both sing duet folk songs, a lucky made, for each other couple. Both are very affectionate, caring and hospitable. It is a daily routine for them to entertain and cater to groups and groups of artists. Their off springs, little son and daughter are also interested in music and Dance.

Lāl Chand has extra-ordinary Voice Quality, which comes out to be all the more vibrant after recording, whereas, many artists having good voices do not sound good, when they are broadcast on air. His knowledge of Rāgas and Tālas is great. He plays Tablā well and hence, has a sound rhythmic base.

Coming to his Harmonium Vādan, he is one of the most competent Harmonium Players of Himachal Pradesh. Sh. Lokender Kanwar tops the list. Lāl Chand too has been recorded by Doordarshan while he accompanied Kathak Dance performance and also in Gaiety Theatre, Shimla.

His humble and respectful behavior and high quality performances earn a respectable place for him.

10. Sh. Joginder Ballā

The hottest selling Folk name of Himachal Pradesh, the honour of Himachal, Joginder Ballā hails from Village BarādBalh, Ward No. 3, Shiv
Nagar, Hamirpur. He was born on 10th of March 1967 to Late Sh. Pritam Pyārā Puri, the respectable personality, Pradān of Hamirpur Zilā Parishad for years together and Late Smt. Shakuntalā Devi, The queen of folk melody. Joginder Ballā inherited melodious, natural and Buland(Bold) Voice quality from his maternal side. Besides successfully managing his family business of leading Cloth merchants of Hamirpur; Joginder Ballā, has to his credit more than 50 CDS and Albums. After his graduation, he also did his Post-Graduation in Sociology. After his father's demise and untimely demise of his only brother, he had to look in to the business. Since the year 1990-1991 till date, he has been singing and has become favourite of most of the listeners of Folk Bhajans and folk songs.

Besides performing throughout Himachal Pradesh, he has performed in 10 states of India as well as in Kathamāṇu and Thailand.

Having name and fame Joginder Ballā is very humble and down to earth.

11. **Sh. Jagat Rām**

Sh. Jagat Rām, son of Sh. Taisu Rām resident of Jasoh, Nadaun, Distt. Hamirpur is 55 years old reputed folk singer. He also plays Dholak with sticks (Baiñe), Tablā and other Folk instruments. Musical inheritance in his family makes him to earn through singing. He has rare collection of old folk songs of Hamirpur region; sings ‘Pehlā nāun’ and numerous other songs and also ‘Chātki’- the rarely heard folk in the modern age; sung conventionally after Diwali Festival in a group of five to seven people throughout the night. Chātki is associated with the Pândawas and is sung for five days of "Punj Bhikhmi" (Pāṇch Bhishmi).

12. **Sh. Parushottam Lāl**

Son of Sh. Jindu Rām and resident of Village Batrāṇ, Nadaun, Distt. Hamirpur, Sh. Purushotam Lal plays folk Shehnāi and Nagārā, He is a singer to and has intricate Murkis in his voice and has knowledge of musical Rāgas also.
He hails from musical family of the famous Shehnāi and Clarinet-player of Batrān, Late Sh. Bhagwān Dāss Ji, Sh. Bhagat Rām and Sh. Bidhi Chand.

13. Sh. Hari Rām

Sh. Hari Rām, resident of village Batrān, Nadaun, District Hamirpur is a Nagārā-Player, who accompanies Shehnāi and Clarinet-players. Folk artists of Hamirpur region do not get many opportunities to perform; however, in traditional marriages, Nagārā and Shehnāi players are called upon to play folk instruments on the Mangal i.e. auspicious occasions.

14. Sh. Ramesh Rāngrā

Born in Tarkwāri, on 14th of August in the year 1969, Sh. Ramesh Rangrā is an able son of Sh. Amar Singh. He was madly in love with music from his childhood, when he used to take his cattle (goats and lambs) for grazing, he plucked ‘Amaltās Phalis’ from tree and used two as Khaḍtāl, similarly, on the cover of Pitcher, wrapped plastic thus innovating his childhood Khanjari and sang in the pastures, while the cattle grazed, accompanied by his self-made instrument.

When he was in school, he started singing Tumbā Bhajans. He can play a number of instruments like Dholak, Harmonium, Keyboard (Casio) Tumbā, Khanjari, Daflī, Kānsiyān.

He also learnt Classical-Music from Kishore Ji Dhimān of Bhotā (Hamirpur) from 1990 up to 2003 and also worked with him giving musical performances of folk music. He has also been a paid artist of Public Relations Department, Himachal Pradesh and Song and enacted in Nukkad Nātaks on various subjects like Sākshartā (literacy) and other similar programmes organized by Govt. of Himachal Pradesh for social awakening and awareness.

He also learnt the art of acting for a short period in Bhopal from the legend artist Habib Tanvir. He also wrote many songs on Sāksharta (literacy), Paryāvaran (environment), Kanyā Bhroon Hatyā (female feticide), in 200 working with Gyan Vigyan Samiti.
He established Manil Music Academy, Tarkwari in the year 1990, where interested students can go to learn music. He also has a center of Examination affiliated to Prācheen Kalā Kendra since the year 2007. At present 40 students have been registered for Examination; however, 25 others are learning music from him. His brother Kuldeep Singh also sings. Mr. Rāngrā has been to Meghālaya, Jammu and Āssām in years 1986 and 2000.

His eleven years old son plays Tablā, learnt for a short period from Sh. Ranjeet Pāthak, the Pakhāwaj Maestro from Darbhangā Gharānā.

The role of Sh. Rangrā in Folk Music, Light and Classical Music is great.

15. Sh. Rākesh Kumār

Born on 10th of March 1966 in Village Hār, Nāltī, Hamirpur, son of Late Sh. Garib Dāss, Sh. Rākesh Kumār is a leading singer of Guggā Mandali. He learnt Guggā Gāthā Gāyan from his grand- father Late Sh. Ronki Rām, father Late Sh. Garib Dāss and Uncle Sh. Bedi Rām, who excelled in singing Guggā Gāthā. Since the year 1989, he took the charge of Guggā Mandali in which his two younger brothers Lekhrāj and Suresh Kumār and two sons Pankaj Mohan and Vivek Mohan and other artists are performing Guggā Mandali Gāyan. His family lived below poverty line and they had to work as daily wagers, even then he has been preserving and propagating old tradition of Guggā Gāyan in the month of August, starting from the day of Rakṣhā Bandhan up to the festival of Guggā Naumi. The main instruments played by him are Bronze Thāli and Doru (Damru) The Mandli roams about with Trishool of Guggā and a 1 ½ Kg. in weight a Silver Sangal (Heavy chain) and go door to door along with Chellās Singing Guggā Gāthā; in which the Birth Gāthā of Guru Gorakṣ Nath, Birth Gāthā of Guggā Jāhar Peer, of Guggā Vivāḥ (Marriage), Varlāp (Vilāp, cry) of Guggdi and Sulīar, Birth of Jauḍe, Birth of Blue- Horse and Kunjaḍiyān, Kāliyān Baḍliyān etc. are mainly sung. Derā of Mandali is
organized in one home, all villagers listen with great concentration and religion devotion.

Matric Pass Sh. Rakesh Kumār believes that the interest of new generation in old traditions has been continuously decreasing. He was afraid that if this continues, the old traditions will fade away soon. The Government should also take essential steps for its propagation.

16. Pammi Thākur

Born in the year 1981, in village Telkād, town Kāngū, Teh.Distt. Hamirpur, Pammi Thākur S/o Honorary Captain Subedar Thākur Bhāg Singh and Smt. Kaushalyā Devī started singing at the age of 10-11 years. He performed during his school time and thereafter, there was no end to it.

He recorded Shravan Puttar Kā Kissā and Seetā Haran Vyākhya in the Cassette entitled 'Rāma O Rāma', which was his first cassette that gained popularity in Himachal Pradesh.

After this religious Bhajan Cassette, he sang 'Kāngnā Non- Stop', these folk songs also become very popular. His latest achievement is 'Rām Kehde Velle Japnā', in which Gāthā of Purān Bhagat has been sung by him.

'Himachal Lok Gāyan Ke Prasidh Bhyağde', 'Kāleyā Kukdā Teri Bāng Buri' and 'Satgurū Merā Jāni Charaŋ Vandan' have been immensely liked by the listeners.

17. Neelam Sharmā

Smt. Neelam Sharmā D/o Sh. Rām Prakāsh Sharmā Manu Di Hatti, Jāhu, Tehsil Bhoranj Distt. Hamirpur passed her Senior Secondary Education and did Diploma as Laboratory Technician from Delhi and worked for seven years in Regional Hospital Hamirpur as Lab- Technician and presently runs her own private laboratory. She inherited musical instinct from her parents. Since the year 1993-1994 she has been recorded by FM Station Hamirpur and broadcast which gave immense happiness to her and her relatives and at the
same time inspired her to presume singing. After marriage, she has been lucky enough having been inspired by her husband and in laws.

Her famous Albums are 'Fauji Bābu', 'Kīraṇmaī', 'Ghātīan Kāṅgre Deeyān' 'Fere Range Ch Rangoi Bālmā'. She sang in Himāchli Film ' Fulmu-Rānjhu' and 'Kunju Chanchlo' produced by Divya Himachal.

She has performed in stage shows along with many famous artistes of Himachal Pradesh like Karnail Rānā, Suresh Chauhān, Sanjeev Dikshit and Dheeraj Sharma.

Besides singing in State Level Festivals of Himachal Pradesh like Shivrātrī (Mandi), Dussehrā (Kullu), Holi (Sujānpur and Pālampur), Minjar (Chambā) Hamir Utsav (Hamirpur) and Nalwāḍ Festivals (Bilāspur, Ghumārwin Sunder Nagar, Joginder Nagar), almost in all districts of Himachal, She has performed in Chandigarh, Ludhiānā and Delhi.

18. Bimlā Rāthore

Born on 10th of June 1972 Bimlā Rāthore inherited musical instinct from her father Sh. Sant Rām Rāthore and brother Amar Rāthore, who too are singers. Her sister Sanju Rāthore too is a singer, both the sisters sang together in duet, but now both of them sing separately and have separate appointments and programmes.

After Bimlā's marriage, her husband Bhumī Dev Thakur also encouraged her. He even accompanies her on Dholak and Pad, in absence of accompanying musicians. Bimlā Rāthore on one hand is a folk singer and on the other, has her musical group 'Saraswati, Bimlā Rāthore Musical- group Bījhari.

She has to her credit 73 volumes of CDs and 30 Video CDs.

She has been associated with Nehru Yuvak Kendra, Hamirpur and through that platform, she performs at many places.
Recently, her group has been selected in 'A' Grade by the Department of Information and Public Relations, Govt. of Himachal Pradesh for awareness Programmes through Music Dance and Nukkad Nātaks.

19. **Folk singers- Satyā Devi, Āshā Devi and Triptā**

Living in remote area of Hamirpur region, unaffected by commercialization and modernization, Smt. Satyā Devi aged above 66 years belongs to folk singing community, has an amazing voice quality full throated and extremely melodious at a time. She has role collection of rarest folk song, has knowledge of Classical Rāgas and Time theory of Rāgas. Elderly and graceful lady, Smt. Satyā Devi is apearl of folk music of Hamirpur region, from village Khuthadin.

Smt. Āshā Devi, aged 39 years also belongs to village Khuthadin, Teh. & Distt.Hamirpur. She also belongs to Sanhāi singing community. She sings along with her 18 years' old daughter Sunitā Devi who also sings full throated and can be heard from a distance. Āshā Devi has a large collection of Chaiti songs and other folk songs. The confidence to sing with a great passion is one of their characteristics.

Smt. Triptā Devi aged 32 years from the same village Khuthaḍin is real melody queen, however, totally unaware of her vocal abilities (busy with her own house hold jobs, working in fields, serving cattle, elders and children). She has a rare collection of folk songs which sounds similar to light classical style. She has a high pitched voice quality, which resounds in the surroundings. The emotional content in the songs is presented in such a way that it really enters down the heart and affects the emotions of the listeners, while listening to her and the song continuously resounds in the mind day in and day out. Shy in nature, Triptā Devi is a true folk singer of Hamirpur region who sings pure and original folk.
20. Banitā

Born on 13th of July in the year 1987, to Sh. Amarnāth and Smt. Māyā Devi, resident of village Kharwār, Tehsil and District Hamirpur, Ms. Banitā has a rich, vibrant and melodious voice quality.

Right from her childhood, she used to sing. She performed and won many prizes during her School and College days in H.P. University Youth Festivals and State Level Open Youth Festival she has been performing in State Level Festivals of Himachal Pradesh as well on in Vishāl Bhagwati Jāgrans. She has completed her M.A. in music vocal and is pursuing her M.Phil. from H.P. University, Shimla. She has been recorded for AIR and Doordarshan also.

She has been to Hylākandi, Assām through Nehru Yuva Kendra. She was also adjudged third in Folk Dance at National Level. Her first CD entitled 'Aj Simran Dū Vellā' has been a super hit.

Banitā sings pure and typical folk music of Hamirpur, totally unaffected from the trend of commercialization or her classical training. Keeping folk music in its pure form is the need of the hour and very important.

21. Sh. Hans Rāj

Sh. Hans Rāj was born on 9th Sep. year 1974, son of Sh. Gyān Chand resident of Nugrān Kashmir (Galore Distt. Hamirpur). Hans Rāj is a folk singer and an actor as well. Born in an agricultural family, where none other was interested in music, Hans Raj after his matric adopted the profession of folk singing and acting and by now has to his credit 200 CDS and Albums. He is the hero of the Pahādi Film 'Pahādiā Māmā', which is a great hit. Since 1994, he has been singing folk songs from AIR- FM Station Hamirpur. He also sings folk bhajans and has been to entire Northern India, Jammu and Kashmir besides his stage shows throughout Himachal Pradesh. His wife Ranjanā is an actress and a good folk singer.
22. **Sh. Pyār Chand Vermā**

Born on 15th of March year 1963 Sh. Pyār Chand Vermā, Son of Sh. Jeevan Rām, resident of Village Bhyāḍ, Mahal, tehsil & District Hamirpur started singing at the age of 9 years. He has regd. 'Vermā Musical Group' Mehre and also runs a shop of CDS and Cassettes in Mehre; has a music rehearsal room away from the market hustle-bustle and noise and along with his Co-artist Naveen Sharmā S/o Sh. Satya Prashād (D.O.B. 7th July 1980) resident of V.P.O. Mehre, who is an arranger of background/ accompanying music and plays many music instruments.

Pyār Chand Vermā and has performed all over Himachal, Punjab and Delhi.

He has to his credit 10 Cassettes out of which eight cassettes are of folk music of Hamirpur region and two are religious cassettes.

He also learnt music from late Bhu Dev Shāstri Dixit of Sujānpur. His first Cassette was focused on 'Ghodiyan and Sehre' and Bimlā Rāthoṛe and Sanjū Rāthoṛe were co-singers.

23. **Folk Singers- Sunil Kumār, Ranjit Singh and Satish Kumar**

The three talented brothers Sunil Kumār, Ranjit Singh and Satish Kumār are the proud sons of Sh. Watan Singh, resident of Village and Post Office Jalādi (Nadaun) Tehsil & District Hamirpur. Sunil is the eldest one, Satish (born in 10-8-1985) is younger to him and Ranjit Singh (born on 04-07-1988) is the youngest one. Their parents also sing extremely well. The melody in their voice, effortless singing and rare layakāri are their peculiar characteristics. All of them play all folk musical instruments like Dholak, Nagārā flute, Tablā, Peti (Harmonium), Doru, Khanjari, Chimtā, Dafli, Ghaḍā and what not. The pleasing personalities of young singers and their humility make them all the more popular. They have vast collection of typical folk songs of Hamirpur region like Chaiti, Pehlā Nāun, Dhobbaṇ, Kandi, Shiv vivāh and all other varieties of folk songs and sacrament songs of Hamirpur region. Belonging to
the singing community, they have seen tough times in the beginning, however, with their continuous hard work and persuasion of music as a subject, three of them are gradually settling down. The eldest one is serving in a local B.Ed. college, the younger brother is doing his M.A. in Music vocal from HP. University privately and the youngest one has almost completed his B.Ed. and has got a job in a reputed school in Hamirpur. Satish is working as Tabla player in the department of Music, Govt. College, Nadaun (out of P.T.A. fund). Ranjit Singh, the youngest one does not feel ashamed of doing his hereditary profession of singing with Dholak with sticks (Baiñe), however. The other two do not go singing door to door.

24. **Sh. Mehar Singh (Raṇsinghā Player)**

Resident of village Bāgh Chowbi, Kuthērā, Tehsil and District Hamirpur, Mehar Singh is barber by caste the caste famous for playing Narsinghā (Raṇsinghā) in Hamirpur Region. He is a Narsinghā player and is also associated with the Tamak Dal of Sh. Mast Rām registered with H.P. Kalā, Sanskriti and Bhāshā Vibhāg. On Māṅglīk i.e. auspicious occasions, there has been a tradition in Hamirpur of playing Shehnāį, Nāgarā, Narsinghā Dhol etc. and Mehar Singh Besides getting ‘Sāis’ (booking) of marriages and other happy occasions has travelled widely with Tamak Group of Sh. Mast Rām is Himachal Pradesh and other States, as mentioned in detail in the bio-data of Sh. Mast Rām.


Famous Dhol Players of Hamirpur region are Ramzān Mohammed resident of Village Bajuri, Hamirpur, Ātmā Rām resident of Village Ree Bhalāṇā of Hamirpur, Pappu, Resident of Bajuri, Hamirpur, Sarwan Kumār, Jogi Rām, Village Upmahal P.O. Aṇu, Hamirpur, Dhol Player and Tamak supporters, all of them are associated with the famous Tamak Dal of Hamirpur headed by Sh. Mast Rām, registered with Art, Culture and language.
Department, Himachal Pradesh, have travelled in and out of Himachal Pradesh performing in traditional way.

25. **Sh. Dharam Singh**

Born on 06-03-1962, Son of Sh. Mathru Rām of Village Chab, P.O. Mundkhar, Bhoranj, District Hamirpur, is a famous Tumbā Bhajan Singer of Hamirpur region. Besides an agriculturist, Dharam Singh also is a 'Chelā' i.e. the person who is believed to have direct conversation with deity, who cures people and the people tell their problems and despairs. For the last forty years or more, he is performing Tumbā Bhajans on stage. He has his Jāgrān Party and is always busy going to Jāgrans and Tumbā Bhajan performances.

26. **Sh. Jagan Nath (Kāku)**

Born on 3rd of May 1962, son of Sh. Beli Rām of Village Swāl P.O. Mohin, Tehsil and District Hamirpur is a famous Tumbā Bhajan- Singer of Hamirpur region. Tailor master by profession, he heads a Jāgrān party and is always busy going to Jāgrans and Tumbā Bhajan programmes. He is singing since his childhood and is the most sought Bhajan Singer of Hamirpur region.

27. **Sh. Trilok**

Sh. Trilok, a P.G.T. Lecturer in Geography (School Cadre), since the year 1997, had opted music vocal as a subject in college days and won many prizes in the Youth Festivals and Inter- College Competitions. He also heads a Jāgrān group 'Bhagwati Jāgrān Mandal'. Other co-singers in his group are Pinku Jaswāl of Village Bāloh, Ruplāl of Village Nāḥlwin Yograj of Village Gasotā and Narendra (School Lecturer in Music) from Nadaun.

Born on 01-06-1965, Sh. Trilok is son of Sh. Birbal Rām, Village Lapodu, (Bāloh) District Hamirpur, he has a sound knowledge of Rāgas and has a ‘Buland’ (bold, high- pitched) and melodious voice. Ready to help others and humble, Trilok is an asset to Hamirpur region.
28. **Smt. Urmila and her sons**

Smt. Urmila, resident of Hamirpur, belongs to singing community. Her sister Smt. Sheela Devi, too is a folk singer and they have been recorded for FM Station Hamirpur. Her three sons- eldest Narender and Sohan Singh and Mohan Singh (Twins) are folk singers and play a number of folk instruments like Dholak, Nagārā, Daflī, Kansiyān, Khanjari, Tablā, Flute and Harmonium. Three of them opted for Music Vocal as a subject in graduation. The eldest one is M.A., M.Phil. in Vocal Music and the twins are doing M.A. privately from H.P. University. Besides earning, Sohan Singh is Music Teacher in M.I.T. Bāni School (Distt. Hamirpur) and Mohan is Tablā player (out of P.T.A fund) in the Govt. College. The eldest too is a Music Teacher in the D.A.V. School. Three of them go for Jāgrāṇs. They have performed in almost all State Level Festivals and in University Youth Festivals and Open State Festivals and have won many prizes. Mother Urmilā has a collection of rare folk songs, and so has her sister, resident of Ladraur, Distt. Hamirpur.

The folk songs sung by Smt. Urmilā are low pitched songs but are similar to Light Classical Styles like Chaiti, Holi and Thumri. Sehre, Ghodiyan and Ranjhunjhne sung by her are entirely different from what generally Hamirpur women folk sing during auspicious occasions.

29. **Ms. Sunita**

Resident of Ward No. 11 of Dosarka (Mohin) born on 15th of August 1975, Sunita is M.A. in Music. Daughter of Late Sh. Swami Ram and Late Smt. Sandhya Devi, she was very fond of singing from her very childhood. She started performing on the stage in 1984. She is an approved artist of AIR Shimla nadd Hamirpur for the last ten years. She has performed throughout Himachal Pradesh as well as Andaman and Nikobar group of Islands, Orissa, Madras, Banglore and Bombay in programmes organised by Nehru Yuva Kendra.
She is unmarried and is working in Saint Sai Public School Kot (Hamirpur). She also performs in Jāgrāns. She has three sisters and one brother. Her sister Pinki too is a singer of repute and both of them sing together in State Level Programmes. Having a rich repertoire of folk songs, inspired by parents, they have earned name and fame.

30. **Ms. Pinki**

A talented elder sister of Sunita; Pinki was born on 20.7.1972. She completed her graduation and N.T.T.C and now she is teaching in Saint Sai Public School, Kot (Distt. Hamirpur). Her noble parents late Sh. Swami Ram, late Smt. Sandhya Devi encouraged the children to take up Music as their career. Brother Subhash also has been a great moral support.

Through stage performances she earned name and fame. She has been singing for the past ten years as approved artist of AIR Shimla and FM Station Hamirpur. She has performed in State Level Programmes and festivals as well as outside Himachal Pradesh. She has performed in AIR Concerts of Folk Music. Married to Sh. Sunil Sharma, an electrician in Jadoh (Jahu), Pinki gets great moral support from her husband and in-laws.

Both sisters have a treasurehouse of typical folk songs of Hamipur. The duo (of Sunita and Pinki) is highly appreciated by the audiences far and wide.

31. **Sh. Des Raj**

Born on 15.05.1958, in village Kakriār, Teh and Distt. Hamirpur, started singing at the age of fifteen. His father late Sh. Anant Rām and mother Smt. Kaushalyā Devi were agriculturists. Thakur Des Rāj was fond of singing and hence, he learnt the traditional form of Tumbā bhajans from his reverent Guru Late Sh. Bābā Amar Singh ji of Kakriār, who was a renowned folk artist. Sh Des Rāj performed with his Guru several times. Since 1973, he has been singing Tumbā bhajans along with his co-performer Sh. Dev Rāj of Hamirpur and also with Sh. Girdhārī Lāl Vermā. He has a son and two daughters, but they never opted music as their profession. Thākur Des Rāj runs a sweet shop
in Hamirpur and simultaneously performs with his Ektārā, Khanjadi and Khaḍtāl.

According to him, the traditional art of Tumbā bhajans is diminishing. People do not listen to the Bhajans as they used to do long back. But for eternal peace and tranquility and for the meditation, Tumbā bhajan is excellent medium as the lyrics of these bhajans are written by the eminent Bhakt- poets. According to him, Government pays no head to folk artists and folk arts.

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