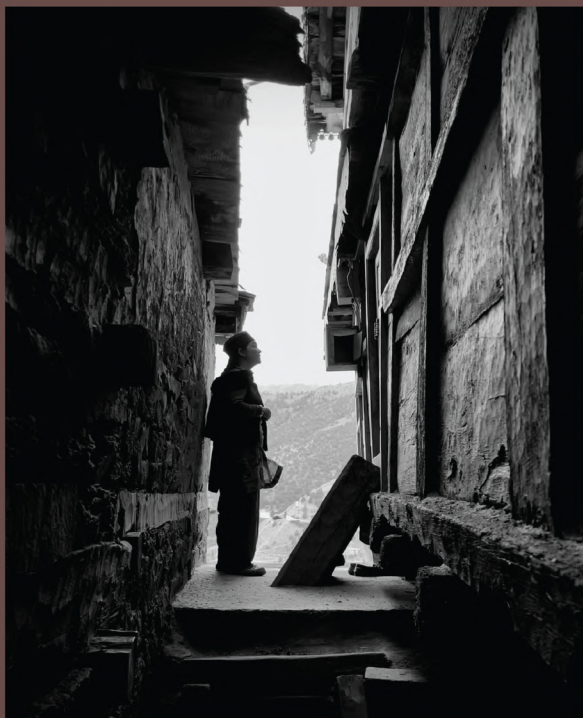




KINNAURI GEETHANG

TRADITIONAL SONGS FROM KINNAUR



Picture by Tanisha Negi

OVERVIEW

Kinnauri Geethang are an indispensable part of oral traditions of Kinnaur. Kinnaur worldviews, philosophies, and values have been passed down orally through songs for countless generations. They are a repository of ecological knowledge, teachings, and wisdom of Kinnaur. And they embody a unique and expressive power of people to tell their histories on their own.

There are verities of songs. Some songs give detailed accounts of rituals and are sung upon celebratory occasions or events. There are Songs that chronicle the lives of deities, Kings, and wealthy families. The modest but alluring are the songs featuring ordinary men and women of past – their dreams of love and hope, their sorrows, isolation and hardships of lives, and the social injustices and inequalities they faced in their lifetimes.

HISTORIES FROM THE MARGINS

Women and their lives are often presented by the meticulous lyrics of *Kinnauri Geethang*. There are songs of lonely shepherdesses, daughters-in-law singing of the cruelties inflicted upon them by their husband and his family, women entering tabooed love affairs, and many more. As our society progresses, customs evolve and perspectives change. However, the timelessness that these songs offer reside in their ability to highlight emotions and issues that are relatable even today. For example, the context of understanding consent, loneliness, gender-based violence, caste discrimination may have altered but the basic questions and essence remain the same - justice and compassion.



ART OF STORYTELLING , CULTURAL PRESERVATION & COLLECTIVE MEMORY



Picture by Prateek Negi

Traditional songs present a rich cultural tapestry of Kinnaur. The ancient art of storytelling through songs is a powerful skill and tool to record and reinforce the beliefs and collective identities of people. They play a vital role in linguistic preservation too.

The contemporary Kinnaur struggles with many issues such as language endangerment, loss of community values, and our *Api-Teytey* (Grandparents) are the last generation to have a deep understanding of the ancient heritage of our ancestral knowledge. Although the future looks uncertain, traditional songs provide a solid ground to resist the temptation to simply give up or turn away.



Picture by Tanisha Negi