

# G.B. Pant National Institute of Himalayan Environment

## Special Lecture Series

### Lecture-2

6<sup>th</sup> June 2023 (Tuesday)

4:00 pm (Hybrid mode)



## *Re-greening the Himalaya via the trails of cultural ecosystem*

**Prof. D.R. Purohit**



### **Chairperson**

**Shri Vineet Tomar, IAS**  
District Magistrate, Almora



### **Welcome**

**Prof. Sunil Nautiyal**  
Director, GBPNIE

Prof. Purohit is former Head in Department of Cultural History at the **H.N.B. Garhwal University Srinagar, Uttarakhand**. He had published more than 50 publications on central Himalayan culture and wrote, directed and produced theatre plays on the Himalayan culture. His Ph.D. addressed Medieval English Folk Drama. He has given a new dimension to folk culture and has worked hard towards preservation and promotion of the ancient Bhaldra tradition's mask style Ramman and the famous Pandav dance of Kedarghati, Chakravyuh and Sri Nanda Devi's mythological folk Jagar, Pandvani, Bagdwali, Shellnut, Theatre, Dhol and Dhol Vadan in Kedarghati, and getting them wide recognition.



**About Speaker**  
**Dr. Rajesh Joshi**



**Vote of thanks**  
**Dr. Arun Jugran**



**Moderator**  
**Dr. Suresh Rana**

# Re-greening the Himalaya via the trails of Cultural Ecosystems

Prof. D.R. Purohit (Retd.)

HNB Garhwal University, Srinagar, Uttarakhand

## Abstract

The term re-greening does not encompass the world of trees and plants alone; it is an inclusive process addressing the challenges of agro-pastoral ecology and economy. Biomass based agro-pastoral economy was the rock bottom of the Himalayan subsistence patterns once upon a time. Around these subsistence systems grew a comprehensive structure of agro-pastoral rituals and beliefs, accumulating a solid mass of its own palpable historical artefact which in turn has nourished and sustained human and natural order of being.

The perceptual philosophy originating from such a belief system has been helpful in conserving and perpetuating the existence of the floral and faunal world. Following an adage from the medical science “your eyes cannot see what your mind does not know”, we can well postulate that the love and respect for nature is a direct outcome of our *weltanschauung* ‘worldview’. The deep seated *samskaras* of the Indian subcontinent contain in themselves the attitude and comprehensive understanding of the cosmic design and role of human agency in it. The mindset teaches profound respect for the eight elements of nature as propounded in *Mangalacharan of Abhijnanshakuntalam*:

या सृष्टिः स्रष्टुराद्या वहति विधिहुतं या हवर्या च होत्री  
येद्रेकालंविधतः श्रुतिविषयगुणाः प्राणवन्तः या स्थिता व्याप्य विश्वम्  
यामाहुः सर्वबीजप्रकृतिरिति यया प्राणिनः प्राणवन्तः  
प्रत्यक्षाभिः प्रपन्नस्तुनुभिरवतु वरताभिरष्टाभिरीशः॥

The entire system of vedic yajna is, in fact, a scientific process of establishing philharmony with the elements of nature and ensuring full wellbeing for the gross and the minutest organism on earth. Similar system of beliefs, philosophy and ritual practices exists in the Central Himalaya which can broadly be discussed under the categories of *Aakash, Ksiti, Jal, Pawak, and Sameer (sky, land, fire, water, and air)*. There exist a plethora of origin myths in grand narratives of folk Mahabharatas, Nandadevi, Mahasu, Nagarja, Nirankaar, Dholsagar, Fuldei, Golju, Ramolgatha, Nrisimha, and Bhairava. The myths present significance of multiple organs of nature in grand design of the Creator.

The presentation will give a short view of the history, myths, and rituals relating to all the five/eight elements and describe the functions they have in the grand design. In the second half a tentative plan of using these intangible cultural resources for preservation of natural resources and for creating a politico-cultural will for the socio-economic development of our populace, will be discussed.