

Umaima Mohsin¹:

Humna Qais²:

Launch of Punjabi Website “Culture of Punjab Pakistan (CoPP) Promoting Punjabi Culture through Seminar and Exhibition – A Project of Institute of Punjabi and Cultural Studies, University of the Punjab, Lahore

Abstract

World is known as a global village and people are investing in this digital world not only in fields of science but in fields of arts to spread their cultures worldwide virtually and mark their presence. Pakistan being a culturally rich country with different cultures like Pashtun, Balochi, Sindhi from which Punjabi culture is one of them. Due to high influence of western culture, Punjabi culture is losing its essence. An over view of cultural websites was done which led to realize that many other countries have invested and secured their cultural aspects but there is no source to find Punjabi cultural data under one roof. This research was done to create a platform that can endorse Punjabi culture of Pakistan securing our Punjabi culture which is not far from being included in the forgotten culture’s list by launching a website under the patronage of Institute of Punjabi and Cultural Studies, University of The Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan. A website where most of the Punjabi data will be compiled and will be available for the researchers and future generations.

Keywords: Website, Digital World, Cultural Aspects, Research, Endorse Punjabi Culture.

Introduction

Culture refers to the features of a group of people well-defined by language, religion, values, norms, cuisine, social habits,

and arts. It plays an integral role in the development of a cultural outlook of a particular country. A country may comprise of one or several cultures which combine together to form a unified nation. It enhances the quality of life at individual and communal level.

Like every country, Pakistan is a country which exhibits different cultures i.e., Punjabi, Sindhi, Balochi, Pashtun and Kashmiri. Punjabi Culture is known to be one of the oldest and richest culture in world history, from ancient times to the present time which is still practiced in India as well. Sikhs in India these days practice the Punjabi culture and in Pakistan it is followed in the province of Punjab. The scope, history, complexity and density of the culture is vast. Punjabi culture comprises of the following: Punjabi cuisine, philosophy, poetry, artistry, music, architecture, traditions and history. All these cultural aspects are important but people are considering them as secondary.

A greater percentage of Pakistan's population comprises of Punjabis i.e., 52.6%, still people are not cognizant of the importance of culture. They have forgotten the cultural values as the youth is now influenced by the western culture. They have started to adopt values and norms from western side and are considering their own Pakistani culture as simple “boring”. They have adopted customs, language, traditions, and morals which prevail in the west.

The domain of “preservation of Punjabi culture” is the main focus of this research. It is reported in “*The Importance of Culture Throughout All of Life and Beyond*” by Thomas Norma (2001) that culture is like a spine of a country which holds an image of a country globally. Culture of any country is a representation of society and their language, religion and rules and rituals. The writer compares the cultural values between Africans and Americans to have an analysis of mutual cultural values of both places along with the effects of culture maintenance on

economy and lifestyle.¹

Pakistani culture is one of the well-known cultures in the world. M. Sher Juni (2014) in *“Impact of Global Media on the Culture of Pakistan: A Case Study of Youth of Layyah City”* concluded that young generation of Pakistan is extremely motivated and impressed by the foreign media. In the present time, youth has mixed our national culture with the foreign culture but has failed to preserve our local cultural values and heritage of Pakistan. As compared to foreigners, we as a nation lack the element of ownership for our culture. People abroad have saved and displayed their heritage and cultural items in museums and on websites to preserve their culture for the development of the country.²

Literature has reported various studies for the preservation and maintenance of cultures of a particular place. In case of culture prevalence, Anil Singh (2012) *“Digital preservation of cultural heritage resources and manuscripts”* reported the significance of the culture. They have mentioned about the benefits (economical) a country could have. It is mentioned about preserving the Indian culture and proposed the idea to promote their culture worldwide with the help of advancement of technology in present time (by compiling and giving access worldwide through website) which will result in better image formation of Indian culture across the world and will benefit the Indian economy. This research also reports about the initiatives for preservation of cultural heritage, resources, and manuscripts that Indian government has already

¹ Thomas Norma, “The Importance of Culture Throughout All of Life and Beyond,” *Holistic Nursing Practice*, Issue 2 (January 2001): 40-46, https://journals.lww.com/hnpjournal/Abstract/2001/01000/The_Importance_of_Culture_throughout_All_of_Life.7.aspx

² M Sher Juni, “Impacts of Global Media on the Culture of Pakistan: A Case Study of Youth of Layyah City,” Vol 8, No. 3 (September 2014): 1008-1014, <https://www.proquest.com/openview/1bf20cdee3414c92413832c98c092b18/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=2031961>

taken steps for.³

It is a responsibility of government to maintain the cultural values of their country and to promote it so that it lasts long. Gurpreet Singh Sohal (2012) in “*Digitization preserves Punjab region’s Heritage and Culture*” discussed that present generation lacks the enthusiasm to preserve the culture and heritage. Sohal mentioned the presence of digital library to preserve the regions culture and heritage of both India and Pakistan. Targeted regions of the research were Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and specific areas of Rajasthan and Western Punjab which is now in Pakistan. He claimed that Punjab Digital Library (PDL) which through a website gathers literature from two main sources i.e., villages and educational institutes but people from rural areas by far have preserved cultural values and literature in a better way than educational institutes. And to date PDL has digitized more than 6.5 million items from which some are more than 300 years old. (Including manuscripts, maps, magazines etc.) Writer said that the presence of E-Library plays an important role to spread and to preserve the Punjabi cultures and heritage of both India and Pakistan. Sources like PDL provides most of the literature on one platform, this proves, that Punjabi Culture (west Pakistan) needs to be gathered on one platform so it could restore the original essence of Punjabi traditions and customs and also to spread our Punjabi culture.⁴

Discussion of Punjabi culture is incomplete without the references of Baba Bulhe Shah. Naeem Dilpul (2016) reported in “*Critical Discourse Analysis of Bulhe Shah’s and Masts’s poetry*”

³ Anil Singh, “Digital preservation of cultural heritage resources and manuscripts”
Volume 38, no. 4 (2012): 289-296,

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0340035212463139>

⁴ Gurpreet Singh Sohal, “Digitisation preserves Punjab region’s Heritage and Culture,”
Last modified August 2012,

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/230758213_Digitisation_preserves_Punjab_region's_Heritage_and_Culture

The writer mentioned about the attempts to capture the essence of two Sufi poets hailing from divergent origins. Studies exhibit that the beauty of Baba Bulhe Shah’s Qalam has led many people to feel the element of Sufism. The writer reported about the books (secondary sources) that were studied for the analysis of the poetry and mentioned that these art pieces that represent our culture should be secured and compiled on one platform as in the present time there is a lack of culture preservation. The writer in his say promotes the idea of preserving the Sufi poetry of Baba Bulleh Shah and Mast like on digital platforms.⁵

This lack of culture preservation is growing and affecting tourism as well. Regarding this aspect Anem Syed (2017) stated in *“Preserving South Asian Cultural Heritage through Animated Storytelling”* that people specifically youth is less inclined towards culture because of lack of ownership. Education sectors have failed to guide children to protect their culture or to even respect it. She also described that the world is getting digitized in the present time and for her thesis project, she decided to re-create and preserve one of the oldest folk stories سوہنی مہینوال through an animation project with the mindset that people can watch it easily and have an access to it on a digital platform. Her point of view of launching it digitally was because people are living in digital world. She proposed that this project can be displayed on any Punjabi cultural website so that people could watch this animated short film easily and to preserve our such cultural aspects. This supports the argument that there is a need to launch digital platforms for preserving the Punjabi cultural heritage.⁶

⁵ Naeem Dilpul, “Critical Discourse Analysis of Bulhe Shah’s and Mast’s poetry,” Vol. 2, Issue 1, (March 2016): Pages 8.

https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3820499#

⁶ Anem Syed, “Preserving South Asian Cultural Heritage through Animated Storytelling,” (2017),

<https://www.proquest.com/openview/343b5093f84b0d6f22aa45d0b82d5852/1?pq->

As discussed in the previous reference, digital platforms will be helpful in preserving and reviving our traditional handicrafts without which our culture is incomplete. Prabhjot Kaur (2011) emphasized the importance of traditional handicraft especially Phulkari in “*Revival of Punjab’s Traditional Handicraft: Phulkari*”. She concluded that handicrafts are showcases of our culture that proves its richness and artistic history of the nation. She mentioned that phulkari has been under a severe threat of extinction and major cause of this issue is lack of knowledge and misuse of the craftsperson by middlemen. She suggested that these cultural aspects that are so rich culture and data of famous craftsmen must be preserved to let our coming generations learn about the values and cultural importance.⁷

Other than to educate people, it is important to spread knowledge amongst children at all educational levels as they are the buildings blocks of the next generation. Dina Ahmed Ismaeel and Ahlam Mohammed Al- Abdullatif (2016) in “*Impact of an Interactive Virtual Museum on Students’ Attitudes Toward Cultural Heritage Education in the Region of Al Hassa, Saudi Arabia*” mentioned that the students in Al Hassa, Saudi Arabia showed their interest about the existence of a virtual museum and this study showed that such virtual museums can be a great source of information and knowledge for people. Ismaeel and Abdullatif also mentioned that there should be a platform like virtual museum to preserve our culture for a better learning and ease of witnessing cultural beauty digitally to overcome the lack of interest towards culture and heritage. The idea according to the writers convey to preserve the culture on digital platforms, supports the initiative to

origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750

⁷ Prabhjot Kaur, “Revival of Punjab’s Traditional Handicraft: Phulkari,” Last modified January 2011, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/303844447_Revival_of_Punjab's_Traditional_Handicraft_Phulkari

design a website of only culture that could help people learn and gather material regarding their interests in different aspects of culture of a country.⁸

As mentioned in the above reference, it is claimed that a specific platform should be made for preserving the culture for which virtual museums and websites are the suitable solution for this. T.P. Kersten, F. Tschirschwitz, S. Deggim (2017) wrote in “*Development of a Virtual Museum Including a 4D Presentation of Building History in Virtual Reality*” that website as a medium to promote this museum was a suitable medium, which is beneficial to keep data saved. They mentioned that a virtual museum has two uses, one it helps to enhance an experience of a visitor and second, it can be used as a teaching material in terms of museum education. They mentioned in the journal about the website and plan of a virtual museum Old-Segeberg town house as a case study and shared some visuals of the virtual museum digitally.⁹

According to another reference, Satyendra Kumar Mishra and Satyaki Roy (2017), in “*A Story of Languishing Doll: Revival of Cloth Dolls of India*” reported the effects of industrialization on culture. The domain of the research is based on the extinction of cloth dolls that carries the value Punjabi culture. He claimed that making dolls was one of the major sources of earning for craftsman in 1950’s. Kumar Mishra and Roy mentioned the reasons of the revival of Punjabi cultural aspects and suggested to restore and gather the remaining art pieces on one platform to

⁸ Ismaeel, D. A., & Al-Abdullatif, A. M. “The Impact of an Interactive Virtual Museum on Students’ Attitudes Toward Cultural Heritage Education in the Region of Al Hassa, Saudi Arabia.” *International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning (IJET)*, 11(04), (2016), pp. 32–39, <https://doi.org/10.3991/ijet.v11i04.5300>

⁹ T.P. Kersten, F. Tschirschwitz, S. Deggim, “Development of a Virtual Museum Including a 4D presentation of Building History in Virtual Reality”, Volume XLII-2/W3, 2017, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/313963055_DEVELOPMENT_OF_A_VIRTUAL_MUSEUM_INCLUDING_A_4D_PRESENTATION_OF_BUILDING_HISTORY_IN_VIRTUAL_REALITY

maintain the chain for future generations.¹⁰

Punjabi culture comprises of not only literature but also, crafts like basketry, doll making etc. Jyotindra Jain (2018) said in “*The Crafts Museum, New Delhi*” that crafts are the essential part of Indian culture. Main aim of this writing was to mention the importance of cultural heritage of India. Jain claims that preserving the crafts of a culture which would serve as a source material for the revival, reproduction and development of crafts. He claimed that The Crafts Museum has secured items like laps, incense burners, ritual accessories, wood carvings, painted woods and such other daily life material used. He states that museums like crafts museum must be introduced to help the spread of a culture on a larger scale and there should be more platforms to compile and preserve cultural values. This claim of Jain supports the argument that there should be platforms where people can preserve their cultural values to mark the importance of cultural.¹¹

According to the further studies, Mehmet Fatih Doker (2018) wrote in “*Promotion of Cultural Heritages Through a Virtual Museum Platform: Case Study Hagia Sophia*” the importance of virtual museums. Doker said that digital platforms are primary tools that are used to spread the importance of culture among people such as websites and social media platforms. Considering Hagia Sophia as a case study, writer planned to launch a digital 3D structure of the mosque so that people understand the value of religion and can walk through the mosque digitally. Doker also suggested that virtual museums should be created to spread the importance of cultural values digitally as it is easy for people to visit and people around the world could have an access to it. This

¹⁰ Satyendra Kumar Mishra, “A Story of Languishing Doll: Revival of Cloth Dolls of India,” *Research into Design for Communities*, Volume 2, (February 11th, 2017): 71-77, https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-981-10-3521-0_6

¹¹ Jyotindra Jain, “The Crafts Museum, New Delhi” *Volume 40, Issue 1* (December 18th, 2018) 48-51, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1468-0033.1989.tb00726.x?journalCode=rnil20>

will also help in the promotion of cultural values and will also help in preserving it. The writer’s point of view explained that platforms like social media and website should be launched to compile values of culture and heritage.¹²

To provide a platform for the launch of website through a seminar is the main focus of this study. Thaap (a non-profit organization to promote culture, art and architecture) has conducted a seminar on Punjab Culture: Heritage Conservation & Tourism on March 15th, 2022. Folk tunes and cultural poetry were performed on the first day of seminar. The moto of the seminar was to spread peace, love and heritage conservation. The mission of Thaap is to promote the culture, craft, dialects and literature.¹³

Literature has reported different posters designed on the theme of Punjabi culture that shows the different aspects of Punjabis. Designed and sold by Cybermania Store promotes the music festivals of Punjabi culture. Designer showed his dedication toward the musical aspects of Punjabi culture that brings back to life.¹⁴

All these references in the literature that has been mentioned above have helped to prove that there is a dire need to preserve the culture which will bring back the sense of ownership in minds of people who now have stepped back to preserve the Punjabi culture due to the influence of western culture.

¹² Mehmet Fatih Doker, “Promotion of Cultural Heritages Through a Virtual Museum Platform: Case Study Hagia Sophia” *Sakarya University Journal of Science* 22(5), (2018-03-23), 1337-1345, http://scholar.googleusercontent.com/scholar?q=cache:--ymLzatuYUJ:scholar.google.com/+case+study+on+benefits+of+virtual+museum&hl=en&as_sdt=0,5

¹³ Daily Times, “Day 2 of Seminar on Punjab Culture: Heritage Conservation & Tourism held,” (March 15, 2022), <https://dailytimes.com.pk/901129/day-2-of-seminar-on-punjab-culture-heritage-conservation-tourism-held/>

¹⁴ Cybermania, “For the Culture”, <https://www.redbubble.com/i/poster/FOR-THE-CULTURE-by-bhagwantmba/84395917.E40HW>

DISCUSSION

Around 56% of the population now lacks interest in the culture of Punjab and its importance. To compile and preserve the Punjabi culture of Pakistan, during the initial steps of research a tentative idea was proposed of launching a virtual museum and a website based on Punjabi culture but designing a structure of a museum whether a physical or virtual was not in the domain of working as a designer. To find a suitable medium to preserve the Punjabi culture, a survey was done from which it was concluded that people are more interested to include current technology to take this step.

CONCLUSION

According to the conclusions of the survey and discussions with senior people, it was decided to design and launch a website named, “Culture of Punjab, Pakistan” as a platform which would have most of the data compiled and preserved based on the Punjabi Culture of Punjab Pakistan.

This idea of website was presented to director of Punjabi department of Institute of Punjabi and Cultural Studies, University of The Punjab, Lahore. By the mutual decision of the faculty members and the director of Punjabi Department, it was decided that this website will be owned by them and will be linked with the official website of Institute of Punjabi and Cultural Studies, University of The Punjab, Lahore.

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