

# VISHWA NATH KHAJURIA

## A profile

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As I remember it was in January 1975 that I met Vishwa Nath a versatile writer for the first time. The occasion was Dogra-Himachal Sanskriti Sangam's 2<sup>nd</sup> conference. I however, was already acquainted to him through his writings.

In the very first meeting we became close friends I found in him almost all the good qualities of a true human being and also that of a sincere writer. He was a true picture of simplicity. His sweet tongue was endowed with courteousness. On account of his multi faceted personality he could endear anyone who happened to come across him.

He was born on 25<sup>th</sup> of November at Madi (near Reasi). His father Gouri Shankar Khajuria was an Ayurvedic practitioner and had shifted to Jammu and settled at Karan Nagar.

Khajuria had written a one act play-"Achhoot" during 1935 when he was posted as a teacher in Govt. Middle School Ram Nagar. But because of want of recognition and publicity, the controversy persisted if the play-"Achhoot" was really written by Vishwa Nath Khajuria or anybody else? It was Om Goswami who took initiative and proceeded to Ram Nagar on a fact-finding mission on his own. He met several people at Ram Nagar both old and young and found that a one act play-namely

“Achhoot” was actually staged in the then Govt. Middle School Ram Nagar in 1935. The play was written by Vishwa Nath Khajuria, a teacher in that school. The play was staged under the active supervision of persons like late Hem Raj Jandial (ex-M.L.A) and Raghu Nath Singh Samyal (who was posted there as tehsildar), a well known Dogri poet.

After his intensive research, Goswami not only collected an upto -date data regarding the drama “Achhoot” but also acquired the original manuscript of the play which was actually misplaced somewhere in the personal book-stock of late Hem Raj Jandial. It is really a matter of great surprise that when Om Goswami published his detailed survey- report in ‘Shiraza’ Dogri No.57, 1983, a few scholars of Dogri had started hue and cry against Goswami’s postulation of the antiquity of this first Dogri- one act play, but nobody came forward to refute Goswami’s theory with solid evidence, that too in writing which is considered to be the real response of such a controversy.

Khajuria records in his latest book Pagdandian (his autobiography p-76) that after his posting in Middle School Ram Nagar when he got first summer vacations for two months, instead of coming down to Jammu, he decided to spend his vacations at Basantgarh, a famous hill station in Ram Nagar area. So he went there along with his wife, Smt. Lila Devi. He writes in his autobiography that though he was extremely happy to enjoy the scenic grandeur of the ever fresh and picturesque surroundings of the forest of that area, his mind was filled with a constant pang and agony to see the pitiable condition of the people belonging to the Scheduled caste who were being subjected to constant torture and worst type of hatred by the high-caste people in that area including Ram Nagar town itself.

He was shocked to note that some influential persons belonging to upper caste in that area including Ram Nagar town and its vicinity, were having illicit relations with the ladies of those poor and down-trodden whom the former did not touch during day time, Pagdandian, p-76). Thus they used to play with their poverty, helplessness and above all with their respect even. Such touching plight of those innocent people and the hypocrisy of the high caste people gave a big jolt to the compassionate and sensitive heart of Khajuria. The result was the creation of the first one act play” Achhoot” (in Dogri).

The successful staging of the that one act play at Ram Nagar was acclaimed by all. On getting so much appreciation and acclamation, Khajuria became so enthusiastic that he even dared to pick up a piece of ‘Jalebi’ from the hand of a cobbler in presence of some upper class orthodox persons which created hue and cry amongst all the orthodox people. Such type of hypocritical attitude on their part inspired Khajuria to expose such people in a solid way. With the result he was not only subjected to a strong criticism from the orthodox people but he also got scornful attitude and social boycott from such people. Khajuria writes that even then he was not perturbed at all, rather he was watching their dual character and hypocrisy. Khajuria further states that ultimately those orthodox people took a strong action and stopped him and his wife from taking water from the wells and springs of the upper class. With the result, the Khajuria couple had to remain without water and meals for three consecutive days. When Late Sant Ram Jandial, the father of late Hem Raj Jandial, came to know about this, he was shocked. He instantly invited the Khajuria couple to take water from his private well. At the same time, Jandial challenged all the orthodox Ram Nagaries to face the consequences in case they prevented Khajuria

couple from taking water from his private well. This was a great relief to the Khajuria couple (p-79).

But there was still no end to Khajuria's suffering for his conviction of writing such a controversial play "Achhoot" and also taking some pieces of Jalebis from the hand of a cobbler who was considered untouchable in the society. After a few days, the village Panchayat dominated by people belonging to upper caste called for Khajuria. He was about to be subjected to a severe punishment that Bhikhu Chameri (a cobbler woman) stepped in before the village Panchayat and exposed all the secrets of hypocrite members of the village Panchayat. Khajuria notes in his autobiography that at that time, Bhikhu's voice was full of anger and condemnation. She was glittering and shouting just like thunder bolt (p-83). Then all the members of that village Panchayat started beating to the bushes as if no one was having tongue in his mouth and started slipping away by and by. Grateful Khajuria paid a great tribute to Bhikhu Chamcri by giving her an honourable place in some of his dramas (p-83).

By writing the drama "Achhoot" during early thirties, Khajuria supported the 'Achhoot sudhar' movement of Mahatama Gandhi, which got him acclamation from the people having liberal outlook. The versatile scholar of Dogri who contributed plays, essays, translation works and then his autobiography has enriched Dogri literature to a great extent. Thus, he can easily be categorized as the first play wright, first essayist, and first autobiographer of Dogri literature.

Khajuria has written eight plays. The dialogues in his plays are full of harmonious blend of words which touch heart and mind of the reader and audience alike. Since he possessed an immense love for Duggar, its snow-clad mountains, lovely and sweet springs, splendour of charming meadows, ever-fresh and ever-green forests and

page of its tossing streams, his heart seems to be throbbing in his writings. All the characters in his plays seem to be living beings which are the true representatives of Duggar.

Though he is faithful and sincere to social customs of Duggar, its rich cultural heritage, its valuable and virtuous traditions, he never hesitates to support any reformation whenever and whichever was urgently needed as per the changing scenario of the time.

Khajuria's style of writing is very lucid and lofty, his language has a natural flow and rhythm with cohesiveness. His idiomatic usages adjust themselves in his writings with convenience and ease.

#### His works include:

1. One act plays:- 8(Six under the caption Nilkanth.)
- a) Essays:-Duggar da Jeevan Darshan (a collection of 10 essays)-1967. The theme of these essays is Duggar's folk culture and folk art. They depict life of Duggar as enjoyed by them. Chandra Bhaga's Atma Katha and Diary da Kirk Panne are most appreciable. This book was awarded by State Academy during 1968.
- b) do-Saptak (a collection of essays) 1968. A beautiful picture of the places and villages situated at bank of Chandra Bhaga river.
2. Autobiography- Pagdandian.
3. Lok Naach-A monograph on the folk dances of Duggar.
4. Translation:- Battai de devadar from "path ka davedar" of (Hindi) of Sharad Chander.
5. Nila Kamal from "Maila Anchal" (Hindi) of Phanishwar Lal-Renu.

6. Umro Jan Ada(Urdu) of Mirza Hadi Rusva. This translation work was awarded by Sahitya Akadami, New Delhi.
7. It is really sad that despite his valuable contribution towards enriching Dogri literature, he was not awarded by Sahitya Adademi for his original works.

Khajria died on 26-01-1993 at the age of 87.

(The author is a writer based at Jammu.)

