

Epic story of Gurghuli

Gurghuli is one of the noble intellectual products of Tajik folklore dedicated to heroism, defending ones native land and social justice. It consists of series pieces expressing big dreams of people about a certain ‘thought country’ Jambul where justice and rule of law is practiced fairly and brotherhood of population and peaceful life is a norm.

The central hero-figure in Gurghuli is called Avaz-pahlavon, who defends his native land from the enemy’s attack and extends protection and justice to the poor and working population at the same time fighting against the injustice and lawlessness. Gurghuli in his turn is the name of a just king whose domain is called Jambuli Maston and this king shows great care to his subjects.

Jambuli Maston is a utopian kingdom



Well-known Gurghuli performer Hikmat Rizo



Pirnazar Haqnazarov

reflecting the sentiments of Tajik people to live in the just kingdom and have a just king. Just kingship and utopian kingdoms is of course very well recorded through the classical Tajik authors and is a prevalent topic in Tajik literature, both written and folk.

Gurghuli epic has very many ‘fairytale’ characters, such as black demon, white demon, phoenix and fairies, which are central figures in many Tajik traditional stories. Also there are great deal of narratives on divination, witchcraft, diviners and how ordinary people fought against the demonic powers and certain heroes changed to another type of character etc. This demonstrates that those stories encompassed in Gurghuli epic have a deep root in ancient Iranian folktales and stories.



Gurchuli performing Competition in Dushanbe city (1968)

Structurally Gurchuli epic is similar to “Shahnameh” of Firdawsi, a folk novel of “Samaki ayār”, “Jame’-ul-hikāyāt”, “One thousands and one night” and “Abu Muslimnāma”, which are popular folktales.

In the Folklore archive of the Rudaki Institute of Language and Literature are kept 140 Gurchuli epic *dastans* or pieces recorded from 20 reciters; these are also voice records, transcribed in text as well the recitation captured in video.

Gurchuli recital is accompanied by *dutor* a Tajik string musical instrument and several different notes are played. The tune in Gurchuli recital depends on the theme of the epic whether it is sad or joyful.

The Gurchuli reciters among people are

called as *gurchulikhon*, *gurchuliguy* that is Gurchuli singer or *guyanda*. These men who recite Gurchuli will know from 40,000 to 60,000 couplets of Gurchuli epic and usually in different traditional ceremonies would perform in presence of guests.

Most famous Gurchuli singers in Tajikistan were Hikmat Rizo, Kabudi Haknazar, Talbi Zamir, Odina Shakar, Jalili Kurbon, Boboyunus Khudoydodzoda and Sherali Mulokoni. Nowadays Awazbegi Ziyoy, Hotami Hokim, Islomi Najmiddin and some others continue this tradition performing single pieces among fan of Gurchuli.

Due to different socio-cultural factors Gurchuli today is in decline and a few people attend the Gurchuli performances.