



National honour proves cold comfort for Odisha folk artist

Piece By - Satyasundar Barik, The Hindu, Bhubaneswar, September 07, 2020

Jitendra Haripal, awarded the Padma Shri for his long-standing contribution to the folk music of Odisha's Sambalpur district, is keeping his fingers crossed, hoping the current dry spell of the monsoon continues.

His four-roomed, tile-roofed house in the Stationpada area of Sambalpur town is on the verge of collapse. The incessant rains in the last week of August weakened the house further, with a portion of a wall caving in. The precarious structure shelters 11 members of Mr. Haripal's family.

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Like several thousand folk artistes and musicians across the country, the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown has robbed Mr. Haripal and his family of their livelihood. The legendary singer, who shot to fame for his chartbuster '*Rangabati..Rangabati*', was much sought after for stage-shows and recordings. Other members of his family are also into music with his elder son playing the accordion, while his daughter-in-law is a singer and one grand-daughter a dancer.

"We have managed to survive with the Odisha government's monthly Padma Shri pension of ₹10,000 but it is difficult to arrange for resources to meet other expenses, leave alone repairing the dilapidated house," said Mr. Haripal.

"Our life is also at risk as the walls of house could fall at any moment. The rat burrows inside the clay walls and floors have destabilized the house further. It is now beyond repair. Given our financial condition, no one is ready to lend money for construction of a new house," he added.

Mr. Haripal, from the Dalit community, said he had wanted to meet the district collector and request that a house be allotted to him, but due to the pandemic, he has not been able to arrange an appointment.

The folk singer has huge following and began his career with All India Radio in 1971. He is best known for his 1975 hit *Rangabati*, with the popular song was played during the Republic Day parade in 2007. Mr Haripal has also sung in other languages including Bhojpuri. In 2017, he was awarded the 'Padma Shri'.

A letter from the Editor

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**Odisha: Padma Shri Awardee Loses House to Rain,
Seeks Temporary Shelter
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Sambalpur: Padma Shri Jitendra Haripal, the singer of the most popular folk song ‘Rangabati’, is sceptical about the current situation of folk artists after heavy rain took a toll on his house here.

Haripal and members of his family are residing in a kutchra house at Station Para in Sambalpur. The walls of the house were soaked in the last monsoon and one of them collapsed due to recent heavy rain.

Talking about his plight, he said, “Nowadays, folk artists including me are being deprived of a platform or means to earn a livelihood. We have been chasing dignity and had put our efforts in saving the culture. I would have lost many things earlier had not some people helped me during my time of crisis.”

Haripal further expressed his desire to get a temporary place of residence for his family, including his wife, two sons, their wives, and five grandchildren, till the house is repaired.