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Padma Sachdev laments decline of Dogri language

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Doyen of Dogri poetry Padma Sachdev, who was recently elected fellow of the National Sahitya Akademi, is the first woman poetess of the state to have received the highest honour in Dogri language.

The eminent poetess and writer was conferred the highest honour by Sahitya Akademi Chairman Chandrashekhar Khambar on June 12.

Talking to *The Tribune* from New Delhi, Padma Sachdev said though her achievement was celebrated and acknowledged, her heart pained to look back at Jammu, the Dograland, where the language was fast diminishing.

She primarily blamed mothers of the region for the loss. "Though my achievement as fellow of the Sahitya Akademi is one step in furthering the language onto the national milieu, at its basic roots in Jammu, Dogri is taking the backseat. I blame mothers of the Jammu region for keeping their children away from the language," said Padma Sachdev, 79.

She said her heart aches when she sees young generation speaking all other languages like Hindi and English fluently, but ignoring Dogri, adding that the only mode of preserving a language resides with mothers who give birth to children.

"I appeal to all mothers, sisters and daughters to use their motherhood to imbibe the spirit of the mother tongue among children. All other languages will automatically follow," she said.



Sahitya Akademi fellow says children not being guided

She also held eminent Dogra scholars, propagators and different sanstha heads in the region responsible for their nonchalant approach towards disseminating proper information and guidance to children about the uniqueness of the language and its significance.

"The culture, heritage and ethnicity of a community only survives if its language survives. Dogras should wake from their slumber before it is too late," said Padma Sachdev.

In her latest poetry collection, "Laladiyan" (Monsoon Insects), Padma has glorified Jammu's composite culture of love, brotherhood and integrity of yesteryear when community members used to assemble at different places in small town of Jammu to discuss various issues, including politics, art and culture.

Padma Sachdev, to her credit, has 10 anthologies of poetry, three collections of interviews, five novels, three collections of short stories, two travelogues, an autobiographical book, an epic account of life of her people during the last 60 years, besides a host of translations and other works.