

TRADITIONAL COSTUME OF BHOTIYA TRIBE OF KUMAUN REGION OF UTTARAKHAND

Simran Preet Kaur*

ABSTRACT

Costume is often referred as the second skin. Costume of people differs from one society to another. It depicts various things such as status, sex, occupation and religion. In a country like India ornaments along with clothing plays an important role. The traditional costumes of the Bhotiya tribe of Kumaun region of Uttarakhand have now got contemporize to such an extent that the traditional costumes are at a verge of extinction. The present study was undertaken in order to help retain the costumes before they are completely abandoned. Bhotiya tribe had adopted contemporary dress which was causing a threat to their age old heritage.

Keywords: Bhotiya, Kumaun, Costume, Ornaments, Society.

Introduction

*“ Earthly interests are all hooked and
buttoned together and held up by clothes”*

- Elwin.V

Costumes provide the visible index of the homogeneity and the unity of the people or their absence. It often forms the first impression of the person and speaks of his time, self and aspiration. Language a matter of fact takes rank after costume. Costumes are one of the most significant visual expressions focusing on the habits, thoughts and conditions that characterize a particular region. In most civilizations costume connotes something more than mere clothing. Very often it expresses some of the structures and aspirations of the region. Costume have been tended to be cultivated as an art. Among men and women in all parts of India there are similarities and differences in clothing, ornaments and hair styles. Costumes worn by people are also an expression of social beliefs.

*“Diversity is the magic. It is the first manifestation,
the first beginning of the differentiation of a thing and of a simple identity.
The greater the diversity, the greater the perfection.”*

- Thomas Berry

India is known for the cultural diversity of her people. These ethnic groups, tribes, communities, religions, have been judged by their costumes through centuries. Uttarakhand was carved out of the hilly areas of the Uttar Pradesh. Uttarakhand is inhabited by several ethnic communities since immemorial times. Kumaun and Garhwal are the two regions and administrative division of Uttarakhand. The Bhotiyas are tribal people who live in Bhot, a region of highland valleys bordering Tibet situated in the Kumaun Himalayas of Northern India. Since centuries the Bhotiyas lived a nomadic life travelling with large flocks of goats, sheep and ponies from the trade post of Gratok and Gyanima in Tibet across the innumerable ridges and valleys of Kumaun into the Gangetic plains. (1)

Majority of the population of Uttarakhand has developed and modernized in the past few decades resulting in a loss of traditional cultural heritage at an increasing rate. People of Bhotiya tribe are shedding their traditional customs and costumes causing a threat to their unique and age old tradition of dressing and grooming. Uttarakhand, being a tourism hub is exposed to outside world and due to this influence the chances for losing away its traditional uniqueness is more. Investigator was sensitive toward the present trend. The study was planned in view of the following objectives:

* Ph.D Research Scholar, Government Arts Girls College, Kota, Rajasthan, India.

- To document the traditional costume of Bhotiya tribe of Kumaun region of Uttarakhand.
- To analyze the constructional details of the traditional tailored garments and schematically document the draped garments.
- To study the changes occurring in the traditional costume of the Bhotiya tribe of the Kumaun region of Uttarakhand.

Review of Literature

Borpujari, M. (2004) conducted the study to document the traditional costumes of Mising, Deuri and Singpho tribes of Assam with their special significance and the changes they have undergone across three generations. A descriptive research design was planned using multistage stratified sampling method to draw a sample of 150 families from 18 villages. The result revealed that the costume of Mising tribe men included *Mibugulak, GonroUgon, Ribigaren, Tongali* and *Yasunam*. Costume of women included *Age, Gasor, Pere, Alak aria* and *Gero*. Costume of Deuri tribe men included *Jima* and *Ikun*. Costume of women included *Ingu, Baiyaand Isha*. Costume of Singpho tribe men included *Pulong* and *Baka*. Costume of women included *Pulong* and *Bukang*. In all the three tribes mainly draped garments were worn by both men and women. A lot of similarities were found among the traditional costumes of Mising and Deuri tribes. Head dresses were used by men and women of all the three tribes and it was most strictly followed by Deuri women even today. Ornaments used by them were mostly of silver, beads, stones, amber and gold. Traditional footwear like *Phantoti* and *Khoram* have been completely replaced by modern footwear.

The major objective of the research of Pandya, A. (1991) was to document the traditional and existing costumes of five tribes of Gujarat namely Bhill, Halpati, Rathwa, Kotwaria and Choudhary. A multimethod approach was combined with descriptive survey method for the investigation. The results revealed that cotton fabric with varying textures was used for traditional garments by all the tribes. The traditional upper garments had greater variations than the lower garments. Present day upper garments mostly of the young had a lot of similarities in terms of constructional details, as well as the name of the garment among all the tribes. Sleeves and pockets were the important features of traditional upper garment worn by women of all the tribes.

Chandradkar, N.M. (1968) carried out a study of the changes in the traditional costumes of the Maharashtrian Brahmin community. The sample for the study included three socio-economic groups according to the B.Kuppuswamy scale (1962) and 60 families belonging to each of the four sub-castes were interviewed. The three socio-economic groups did not show any marked difference in the older generation as far as the mode of wearing the traditional costume was concerned. But there seemed to be some difference in upcoming generation. *Dhotar* was a common ceremonial dress worn by men and the 9 yard *Sari* and *Choli* for women. There is no noticeable difference among the four sub-castes. It was revealed that the first socio-economic group was found to have changed the maximum probably due to the availability of better facilities, followed by the second and then third.

Narayan, D. (1968) carried out a study on the changes in the traditional costumes of Kerala through three generations. The major objective of the study was to find the changes in costumes of men and women belonging to different castes and sects among Hindus, Christians and Muslims. A pre-tested questionnaire was used for data-collection at Kottayam in South Kerala. The results revealed that the traditional forms of dress were fast disappearing. This was more so in the case of the Kerala women than men. In the younger generation of women almost all of them had adopted the *Sari* and *Choli*, whereas most of the men still retain their *Mundu*, though they had added to it an upper garment, shirt. More or less uniform pattern of dressing had been adopted by all, irrespective of caste distinctions, though there were exceptions enabling one to study the old and new methods of dressing.

Methodology

The study was conducted in Pithoragarh district of Kumaun region of Uttarakhand. Purposive sampling method was used for the selection of Pithoragarh district based on the existing traditional costumes and its population density. The related information was collected from secondary sources of information, books and booklet from libraries and primary sources from people who still had interest in retaining their cultural heritage. At the second stage two villages were selected using purposive sampling on the basis of: a) Remoteness of the village and b) Density of the population. A final sample size of 25 households were selected using purposive sampling method and snowball technique from the selected villages. The relevant data was collected using interview and observation method.

Results and Discussions

• Costume of Bhotiya Men

Traditionally Bhotiya men wore *Ranga*, *Kameez*, *Pajama* and *Jyujung*. Additionally, a turban known as *Baintlo* was also worn. Traditionally garments were restricted only to ceremonies and occasions. There was a downward trend in the usage of the traditional garments. Traditional footwear *Dhuriapaula* was not in use at all. Shirt was the upper garment which was adopted by cent per cent of the population in all the three generations. Contemporary garments like trousers, shirts, T-shirts and Jeans have replaced the traditional garments.

• Ornaments worn by Bhotiya men

Bhotiya men never wore any kind of jewellery or ornaments except the gold rings, sometimes studded with semi precious stone. These days married men of younger generations on marriage wore gold chains and rings.

• Costume of Bhotiya Women

Traditional Bhotiya women wore garments like *Chung*, *Rankalch*, *Bala* and *Jyujung*. Traditional head dress *Chyukti* was also worn by women along with *Bhabhche* the traditional footwear. This traditional dress was replaced by *saree* and *salwar kameez* for day to day wear whereas; the traditional dress was still worn by large number of population only during certain occasions.

• Ornaments worn by Bhotiya Women

Bhotiya women were fond of various ornaments. Ornaments were known as *sale pule*. Enormous amount of ornaments were worn especially in neck. It almost covered the front portion till the lower waist level. The richness of their culture was depicted through their ornaments. Bhotiya women wore various neck ornaments such as *Baldang*, *Chandrahar*, *Kanathi*, *Moongamoti*, *Kakshalain* and *Sutta*. *Kakshalain* was a symbol of *suhagan*. It had similar significance as that of *mangalsutra*. *Bheera* and *Phuli* were the nose ornaments. Ears of the Bhotiya women were adorned by *Lakshab-Bheera-Zanzeer* and *Yerrachelakshab*. *Champakaliand Changyu* were the ornaments worn on head of the Bhotiya women. *Nang* and *Bahar* were worn on wrists and fingers of Bhotiya women were adorned by *Lakshab*.

• Costume of Bhotiya Children

Traditionally children wore *Kameez*, *Saltraj*, *Jhugu* and *Jyujang*. Girls wore traditional head dress *Ghungtonamuno*. Nowadays, all these garments are replaced by contemporary wear.

Conclusion

It was noted that usually constructed garments were worn by Bhotiya men and women. The costume of Bhotiya men was entirely in white without any surface ornamentation. This depicts the simplicity in the living standards of the Bhotiyas. There was a shift among the Bhotiyatribe from traditional costume to the contemporary wear. Traditional costumes which were earlier a part of day to day life of people were limited to only occasions and ceremonies. The reason could be their occupation and impact of media. It can also be attributed to the younger population wanting newer styles and fashion to be adopted in their day to day dressing. Most of the women of generation I and generation II own the ornaments but were worn only during occasions such as *puja*, marriage and traditional dance. This could be attributed to the type of occupation and to keep pace with the change in society. As the respondents had adopted the contemporary style of clothing they use accessories accordingly. Modernization and migration might also have led to the change.

References

1. Borpuari, M, (2004) *A study on the Traditional Costumes of Mising, Deuri and Singpho Tribes of Assam across three generations*, Unpublished Master's Dissertation (Home), The M.S. University of Baroda, Vadodara.
2. Chandavadkar, N, (1968) *A Study of the Changes in the Traditional Costumes of Maharashtraian Brahmin Community through three generations*, Unpublished Master's Dissertation (Home), The M.S. University of Baroda, Vadodara.
3. Narayan, D, (1968) *A Study of the Changes in the Traditional Costumes of Kerela through three generations*, Unpublished Master's Dissertation (Home), The M.S. University of Baroda, Vadodara.
4. Pandey, P, (2000), *The Bhotiyas of Kumaun*, Published by Panchachuli Publications.
5. Pandya, A, (1991) *A Study on Traditional and existing Costumes of selected tribes in the state of Gujarat*, Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, The M.S. University of Baroda, Vadodara.

