

## UTTARAKHAND SPLENDOUR: A GLIMPSE INTO THE TRADITIONAL COSTUMES OF THE KHASIYA COMMUNITY OF THE KUMAUN REGION

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### ABSTRACT

*Traditional costumes have been bound up with beliefs and symbols with religious significance. Costumes fulfil a function beyond simple utility. Clothing symbolises status, occupation, sex and religion. Among men and women in all parts of India there are similarities and differences in their clothing, ornaments and hair styles. Under the impact of rapid development people of Khasiya community of Kumaun region of Uttarakhand are shedding off their unique and age old traditional costume. The present study was an attempt to popularise the costumes of Khasiya community of Kumaun region, which have reached on the verge of it's extinction. Urbanisation, modernisation, migration and influence of media, higher education, occupation and economic status could have been the major factors responsible for the change. They have adopted contemporary dress which is causing a threat to their age old heritage.*

**Keywords:** Kumaun, Khasiya Community, Traditional Costumes, Higher Education, Occupation.

### Introduction

Costume is often regarded as the second skin. Costume of people differ 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 play an important role. Dress played a prominent role in decorating the body of women than that of men's among the earliest inhabitants. Accessories played an important role in day to day life of the people. Most of the primitive people even those who wore no clothing at least adorned themselves with a girdle at their waist. 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.

Uttarakhand is the name of the state that was formed from the hill district of Uttar Pradesh, India. It comprises of two regions, Kumaun and Garhwal respectively. Apart from tourism the economy of the region is predominantly agrarian. Other important occupations include forestry, sheep rearing and livestock farming and household or cottage industry. Kumaun and Garhwal are two regions and administrative division of Uttarakhand. The word Kumaun is believed to have been derived from *Kurmanchal*, the tortoise incarnation of Lord Vishnu the preserver according to Hindu mythology.

The traditional costumes of the Khasiya community have now got contemporize to such an extent that the traditional costumes are at a verge of extinction. Older generation now are the only people who wear traditional costumes. Majority of the Khasiya 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 Khasiya community are shedding their traditional customs and costumes causing a threat to their unique and age old tradition of dressing and grooming. These changes might have occurred due to introduction to modern technology, education, development of transport facilities and industrialization, increasing communication facilities, urbanization and migration. Such a situation is likely to bring a complete change in traditional costume of the particular area. It was discovered that there is a lack of information on the traditional costumes of Uttarakhand; hence, documentation of the costumes was a felt need.

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Hence, the objective of the study was as following:

- To document the traditional costumes of the Khasiya community of the Kumaun region of Uttarakhand.
- To analyze the constructional details of the traditional tailored garments and stepwise explanation of the draping of the draped garments with illustrations.
- To study the changes occurring in the traditional costumes of the Khasiya community of Kumaun region of Uttarakhand.

### Review of Literature

The major objective of the research carried out by Qazi, H. (2003) was to study the costumes of different communities of Kashmir valley. A pre-tested questionnaire was administered to a sample size of 100 families comprising of Muslim and Pandit communities in the form of interview schedule. The findings revealed that traditionally Muslim men's costume consisted of *Pheren, Potsh, Baindh, Kameez, Yazaar* and *Kasaba* and in case of unmarried girls *Dej* was worn instead of *Kasaba*. *Pheren, Potsh* and *Kameez* were common to Pandit men and women. Men also wore *Pyjama* and *Gandhi topi* or *Dastoor*. *Taranga* is added to the Pandit women's costume after marriage. The traditional children wear, were replaced by modern kids wear in both the communities. Generation II and III have completely discarded the traditional way of plaiting their hair and adopted modern hairstyles.

**Patel, F. (2001)** conducted a study on the Parsi community with the main objective of capturing their customs and costumes. The study emphasized on the symbolic significance of the traditional garments and their detailing with respect to cuts. A pre-tested structured interview schedule was employed on 100 Parsi families to collect the relevant data. The findings revealed a number of rapid changes which the Parsi dress is undergoing. The traditional ornaments handed over from one generation to the other did not have any symbolic significance. Use of traditional footwear had almost been discontinued. The study also revealed the major factors initiating these changes as migration, modernization, higher level of education, occupational constraints and income of the family.

**Amin, B.C (1975)** conducted a study on the changes in the traditional costumes and customs of the Patel community of Baroda District through three generations. The major objective was to study the changes in the garments, ornaments, jewellery and hair style of three generations. Interview schedule was used to collect data from the Baroda city. 50 Patidar families of Charotar area (North Gujarat) were interviewed. The results revealed that many changes have taken place in the mode of dress of Patel community. It is more prominent in case of Patel women. Although the traditional *saree* was still worn but the style had changed many times. The younger generation of women have adopted the modern *saree* and the western style dresses. A uniform pattern of dressing has been adopted by all irrespective of caste distinction.

**Anand, H.K (1971)** conducted a study of the changes in the traditional costumes of the Sikh community through three generations. The objectives were to study the traditional clothing usage by both men and women and to find out the changes in garments, ornaments, hair styles and footwear of the four different sub-castes of Sikhs. Questionnaire cum Interview method was used for data collection, for Bombay City. Sample size of 300 families was taken, with 75 families of each community. The results revealed that many changes had occurred in the costumes of the Sikh community. It was more visible in greater extent among Sikh women. Today a uniform pattern of dressing has been adopted by all, irrespective of caste distinctions.

### Methodology

Researcher had keen interest to study the costumes of the two regions Kumaun and Garhwal of Uttarakhand. After the pilot study a lot of similarities amongst the costumes of both the regions were observed. The tradition was retained by the natives of the Kumaun as compared to Garhwal and therefore, only costumes of Kumaun were studied. To achieve the objective of the study a descriptive research design was planned. An interview schedule was used as a tool to collect the data. On the basis of the available literature a structured open cum closed ended interview schedule was formulated. A pretested interview schedule was administered on a final sample size of 25 families of Khasiya community having minimum one member of Ist, IInd and IIIrd generation drawn using snowball technique from two villages of Uttarakhand. Observation method was also used. Case studies of two households of the Khasiya community were also conducted. The data was tabulated and analysed in terms of frequencies and percentages. Description of each garment was given along with garment illustration and schematic diagrams.

## Results and Discussions

### • Costume of Khasiya Men

Khasiya men's costume comprises of *Kurta*, *Vasket*, *Suryaland Topi*. Occasional wear for Khasiya men was *Chwaland Dhoti*. *Mundadewere* the ear ornaments of gold worn by Khasiya men. In ankle they used to wear circular silver anklets called *Zawar*. *Suryal* was the traditional lower garment and its place was taken by Pajama. Very few respondents of older generation are seen wearing traditional garments. Majority of the population had adopted modern attire. *Amritsari Jutis* and *Boots* were the traditional footwears, which were discarded by the respondents of all three generations.

### • Costume of Khasiya Women

Women of Khasiya community traditionally wore *Anghar*, *Vasket*. *Ghaghar* and *Dhoti.RangwaliPichoda* was worn on all the ceremonies. Traditional Jewellery of Khasiya women were *Guloband*, *Chareyu*, *Matarmal*, *Sutta*, *Chandrarahar*, *Haar*, *Champakali*, *MishtKanthi*, *Hasuli*, *Karnaphul*, *Jhumke*, *Nath*, *Phuli*, *Poonchi*, *Dhagule*, *Bichea*, etc. Today, *sarees* and *salwar kameez* had been adopted by the majority of the population. *RangwaliPichoda* and certain jewellery like *Karnaphul*, *Guloband*, *Chareyu*, *Jhumke*, *Nath*, *Poonchi* and *Bichea* were still worn by cent per cent population by all three generations as they were symbols of a married women.

### • Costume of Khasiya Children

The traditional day to day dress, *Jhagule* and *Pajama* were replaced by contemporary wear. For ceremonies like *janeu* the dress is still traditional. *Kurta* and *Dhoti* were continued to be in use by the younger generation.

## Conclusion

The garments of Khasiya men were mostly constructed and in dull colours. The occasional wears were in white. Khasiya women's clothing was composite clothing. They wore garments in floral motifs with printed designs. In case of casual wear surface ornamentation used was only a lace which was placed at calf level of *Ghaghar*. Ornaments played an important role in the life of Khasiya women.

It could be concluded that costumes of Khasiya community have changed to the contemporary garments. Urbanization, modernization, migration and the influence of media could be the major factor contributing to this change along with other factors like higher level of education, occupation and income.

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Fig. 1: Traditional Costume of Khasiya Men



Fig. 2: Suryal



Fig. 3: Topi



Fig. 4: Traditional Costume of Khasiya Women



Fig. 5: Matar mal



Fig. 6: Sutta



Fig. 7: Guloband



Fig. 8: Chareyu



Fig. 9: Chandrahar



Fig. 10: Hasuli



Fig. 11: Haar



Fig. 12: Champakali

