

Kinnaur : Place of unique wovens

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ABSTRACT

Weaving is a method of fabric production in which two distinct sets of yarns are interlaced at right angles to form fabric. Woven textile have always been an interesting part of people's life and India is the country that still creates textiles coming from the genius of its master weavers. Kinnaur the land of god is situated deep in the Himalayas is cradle of famous handicraft and handlooms. The tradition of wool weaving in Kinnaur is an ancient origin and each unique combination of weaves, patterns and colors carry mythological background. A large no of woollen handloom product like dhoru, pattu, shawls and stoles are made by the weavers on the looms. Dhoru is the traditional woven costume which is wrap by women in daily routine or at the time of ceremonial occasion and made in coarser wool spun into a thick yardage, pattu is a beautifully woven and colorful woollen shawl which is only used in marriage and occasion by both male and female, shawls and stoles are worn in daily routine. Women of Kinnaur and of other high regions have great love for traditional designs and colour combinations of specific shades. The designs and motifs of woollen clothing are exclusive and portrays the glorious and beautiful history of tribal costume.

Key Words : Himachal Pradesh, Kinnaur, Tribe, Unique woven

INTRODUCTION

India is a land of multitude culture, tradition, costume, fashion. It is confounding to see, that within the country there is a diversification of fashion and clothing which could be due to weather condition and culture of society. India have 29 states and Himachal Pradesh is one of them. Himachal Pradesh, which, before 1947, was known as the pahari (hill) and also known as "Dev Bhumi" or abode of the gods, shares its borders with Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Haryana, Uttrakhand and international border with China. Its rich cultural heritage and traditions have survived because of its geographical isolation. The low lying Shivaliks, the Dhauladhar and Pir Panjal ranges and the great Himalayas and Zaskar ranges straddle the state. The Chenab, Ravi, Beas, Satluj rivers originate from these mountains. The higher valleys beyond its capital Shimla are known as the apple bowl of the country. The lower hills offer scenic beauty and the fragrance of flowering fruits tree. The dry deserts of tribal areas

of Kinnaur, Lahaul and Spiti hum with Buddhist culture and the lower areas resound with temple bells and conch shells at the shakti sthals (Jaitly, 2012). Himachal is the abode of several tribes and ethnic groups that can be identified as cultural communities on account of their life style. These communities are still maintaining their own distinct cultural identities that have become typical of their regions because of certain factors such as the mountainous terrain, general social backwardness and absence of broad social contact. These tribe inhabit certain geographical pockets of the state that have been declared scheduled area. These areas that comprises the district of Kinnaur, Lahaul Spiti, Pangi and Bharmasol tehsil of Chamba district (Mehta, 1995).

Lying in the western recesses of the Himalayas, Kinnaur district constitutes a fringe area which was hitherto remained largely unknown to anthropologists (Riaboff, 2005). There are five tribes residing in Himachal Pradesh - Gaddi, Gujjar, Kinners or kinnauras, lahaulas and the pangwalas. Kinnaur is one of the most backward area of our country inhabited mainly by the schedule castes and schedule tribes. Kinnaur, the land of Gods, fairy tales and fantasies, is one of the twelve districts of Himachal Pradesh in Indian Western Himalayas. Kinnaur is a tribal and hilly district with altitude ranging from 1600m to more than 6800m which presents an intricate mosaic of lush green valleys, mountain ranges, orchards, vineyards, snow-clad peaks, cold desert mountains and with a number of rivers. Earlier Kinnaur formed the Chini Tehsil of Mahasu district and came into being as an independent district on 1st May, 1960 with administrative headquarter at Reckong Peo.

Kinnaur district is located in the eastern part of Himachal Pradesh. The district is entirely hilly except few small, deep valleys in between. The district lies between 31° 06' and 32° 06' North latitudes and 77° 45' and 79° 00' East longitudes. The district has a total geographical area of 6401 sq km which covers about 11.5 % area of the state. The district is bounded by Lahaul and Spiti district in the north, Kullu district in the northwest, Shimla district in the southwest, Uttarakhand state in the south and international border with China (Tibet) in the east. The district is divided into five tehsils namely Nichar, Kalpa, Sangla, Pooh and Moorang and one sub-tehsil namely Hangrang. The district headquarters, Reckong Peo town falls in Kalpa tehsil. For development purposes, the district has been subdivided into three Community Development Blocks viz. Nichar, Kalpa and Pooh. There are 660 villages in the district out of which 234 villages are inhabited and 426 are uninhabited. Kinnaur or Kanawar (as it was known earlier) comprises the upper part of the Satluj valley and is perhaps the only district in the north populated mainly by scheduled tribes. It can be divided into three regions:

- 1) Nichar or Lower Kinnaur
- 2) Kalpa or Central Kinnaur
- 3) Pooh or Upper Kinnaur

Due to its peculiar natural phenomena history, language and unusual cultural heritage, Kinnaur was carved out as an independent district of Himachal Pradesh in May, 1960 with Headquarters at Kalpa. Earlier it was a part of Rampur Bushahr state. Now the headquarters have been shifted to Reckong Peo (Sharma, 2000).

India is blessed with many traditional textiles of different state. Whether it is brocades of Banaras, Tanchoi from Surat, Paithani, Patola of Gujarat or Kancheevaram from the

tribal regions of Bihar and Madhya Pradesh. These traditional textiles not only contribute a lot, to the sustained development of the country's rural economy but also contributes a prominent element to the cultural unity of the people (Sharma and Sharma, 2009).

Similarly Kinnaur the "land of snowy mountains" is also known for its woven art. The tradition of wool weaving in Himachal Pradesh is of very ancient origin. Weaving is a way of life with Kinnauris. Each Kinnauri family keeps a small quantity of wool to meet its own requirements. After sheep is sheared, its wool is washed and dried. Combing is done with wooden combs. During leisure, especially in winters when there is no agricultural work, families spin wool on takli, a local spindle which later banuras or julahas weave on traditional looms (www.tribuneindia.com). The design which is weaved on looms are impressive and unique in its self

Designs and motifs :

The designs and motifs of woollen clothing of Kinnaur are exclusive and loved by all. A distinctive feature of clothing are geometrical designs that needed great expertise and the stripes or bands running horizontally widthwise at lateral ends. These bands, a few centimeter wide and vary from two to seven centimeters on each side. The elaborate geometrical designs bear a strong central Asian influence. The designs on these costumes carry special religious significance. All motifs and designs were named corresponding to their shapes. Most of the motifs were inspired from surroundings *i.e.* beautiful nature and the households. The weavers themselves had no idea about the ancient origin of the designs they weave. The popular weaving designs of kinnaur are:

1) Yaguma or chholopanma, 2) Yashin, 3) Kyumsa yongrong, 4) Yongrong, 5) Darjetham, 6) Chhoktin.

These are several angular geometrical types of motifs which are normally grouped in straight horizontal lines, bands and stripes. One or two bands or stripes may be placed vertically as well. These motifs are combined in several intricate but symmetrical orders to produce different effects of design.

Contrast and combination of colours given by expert weavers in a band of similar motifs reflects varying shades.

Yaguma or Chholopanma :

This design is arranged in rectangles and squares having red, green, blue and yellow colour arranged alternately (Plate No.1).

Yashin :

In this design bands arranged in the form of a stair case with a square in the centre (Plate No. 2).

Kyumsa Yongrong :

The yungrong or youngrang consist of four Ts in a square. Considered the first and basic design, it stands for shubh labh. The yungrung is basically found in carvings or paintings in Buddhist monasteries and temples (Plate No. 3).

Yongrong :

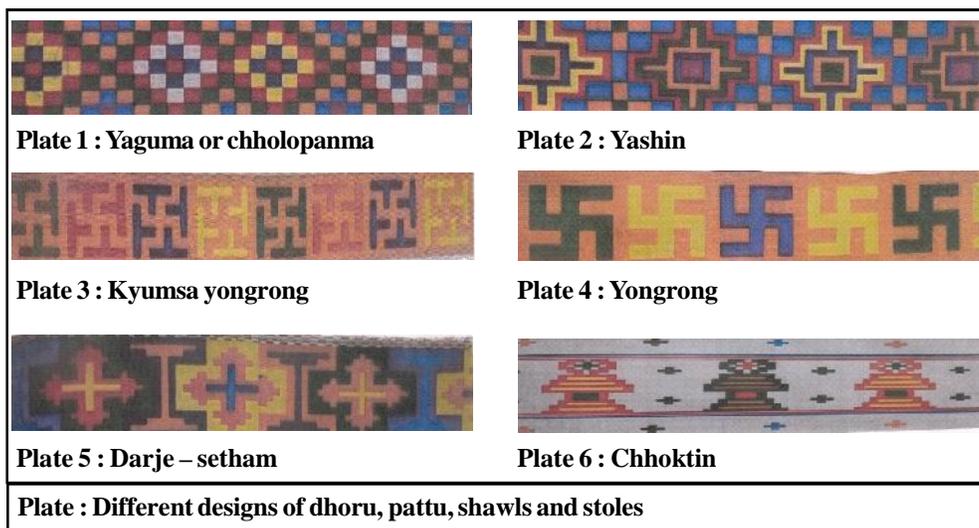
This is known as swastika, an ancient Hindu symbol, is also found interwoven in the designs. It is considered variously as a symbol of the Sun God, the Hindu God, Ganesh and signifies good luck (Plate No. 4).

Darje-setham :

In this design a broad zig-zag line having small squares woven on the borders of shawls. The space in between the embroidered portion is filled with a cross tipped with smaller squares (Plate No. 5).

Chhoktin :

This is a Buddhist temple having a base of 3 to 4 inches (Plate No. 6) (Singh, 1961 and Sharma, 2009).



Colour and its importance :

Colors used in patterning carry mythological background. Usually fine colours are used in the costume. For patterning on white, black, grey and brown backgrounds red, orange, pink, blue, green, yellow, black and white colors are used Out of which five colors represents five elements. The white stands for water, yellow for earth, red for fire, green for air and blue for ether. Different shades are being used in the shawls as per the requirements (Singh, 1961). Kinnauri woollens are widely renowned for their intricacy and fineness. They are well known within and outside for their wovens.

Kinnauri people mostly like to wear woollen clothes which suits the cold climate of the region.

Dhoru :

Women wrap up a woollen shawl like garment called dhoru. It is a woollen blanket woven in coarser wool spun into a thick yardage. Dhoru is generally made from local wool

in checks and stripes. Some dhoru are woven on frame looms whereas for local market it is woven on pit loom in two pieces of half width and later joined from the centre with fine elaborate stitching.

It is generally $4\frac{1}{2} \times 4\frac{1}{2}$ yards. The borders are given beautiful patterns mostly in red, green, orange, blue, and scarlet colours. The first wrap of dhoru is on the back with embroidered border running throughout its length up to the heel. It resembles a saree with the difference in that only the ends are knotted and the embroidered borders are displayed towards back. Dhoru is an all weather dress this is of immense utility to them and serves the purpose of a blanket during night. There are three types of dhoru.

1. Phataorang : It is quite simple and generally worn while at work by poorer people.
2. Orang : It is second type of dhoru and it is superior in texture and design.
3. Tapru-Khamrudar : It is finest among all and worn by women's at the time of marriages and occasions.



Fig. 1 : Dhuru

Pattu :

Pattu is a beautifully woven and colourful woollen shawl, used for everyday wear and are either plain or chequered with simple borders. The ones worn during festive occasions are ornately patterned with designs, motifs along with the weft as well as warp. It is wrapped around the upper portion of the back and around the shoulders and its two ends are fastened together near the breast by means of a silver hook.

These are very popular throughout the Kinnaur and are woven generally in regular twill weave everywhere. Normal size of the fabric is $3\frac{1}{2} \times 1\frac{1}{2}$ yard. Mostly prepared in natural colours of the yarn, which may be black, white, grey or brown or in combination of either of these colours. Sometimes four, eight or sixteen coloured warp ends are placed near the selvages to make the borders attractive. Pattus are made from the woollen yarn weighing between 80 grams to 140 grams. Equal quantity of black and white yarns may be textured in a number of ways. During weaving two shuttles one with black and the other with white weft threads are used alternatively for every twenty picks. This way the design produces a cheques weave consisting of black, pure white and black and white mixed squares.



Fig. 2 : Pattu

Kinnauri shawls :

Kinnauri shawls are famous for their intricate geometrical designs. Kinnauri shawls are measured in the range of 39'' - 41'' wide by 79'' - 84'' long. The intricate geometrical designs and finesse in weaving have made Kinnauri shawls very popular across the globe. Kinnauri shawls are available in four variety of designs and patterns.

Kinnauri Teen (three) Patti shawl :

These shawls have three Kinnauri patterns woven in stripes and have intricate patterns adorned with rich colors running along their borders (Plate 7).

Kinnauri pattern along the both ends of the shawls :

These Kinnauri shawls have elaborate geometrical patterns at both the ends (Plate 8).

All over Kinnauri work :

These masterpieces with beautiful Kinnauri pattern woven all over the shawl are feast to the eyes. It takes almost six to eight months to complete one such work of art. Heritage is honoured to have weavers who can create such rare masterworks (Plate 9).

Kinnauri pattern running across the four edges :

Though Merino wool constitutes the warp and weft of these shawls the Kinnauri pattern running across the four edges make these the most expensive Kinnauri work (Plate 10).

Kinnauri Stole :

Stoles are relatively a new introduction in the field of weaving. It is light in weight. Kinnauri stoles are woven exactly same as shawls but the size is small as compare to shawls.



Plate 7 : Kinnauri Teen (three) Patti shawl



Plate 8 : Kinnauri pattern along the both ends of the shawls



Plate 9 : All over Kinnauri work



Plate 10 : Kinnauri pattern running across the four edges



Fig. 3 : Kinnauri stole

Government plans for upliftment of handloom weavers :

The Himachal Pradesh State Handicrafts and Handloom Corporation was set up in the year 1974 for the development of Handicrafts and Handloom sector and facilitate the upliftment of the weavers and artisans. The main activities of the Corporation (Central Government and Ministry of Textiles) includes revival of extinct crafts, design development, skill generation, pre-loom, loom and post loom facilities to weavers and other artisans, production in workshops, marketing of handloom and handicrafts items through chain of the emporia, exhibitions and expositions.

Launched official website :

Government of Himachal Pradesh also took an innovative step by launching a website www.himcrafts.com, which showcases the famous traditional Himachali products for the global buyers. An array of designs, colours and sizes for both genders are available on the website so that the customer can place their order as per their choice. In order to give a boost to the sale of Handicrafts and Handloom products of the Himachal Pradesh. State Handicrafts and Handloom Corporation has started e-shopping facility to make products available to the buyer. The interested buyers can select the products and place their order online and the products will be dispatched within three weeks.

Geographical indications (GI) tag :

With the Kinnauri shawls receiving the prestigious Geographical Indications (GI) tag, over 1,000 weavers involved in the creation of the iconic shawls stand to gain the most. The registration will help in controlling unauthorised production and misuse of its name. Only weavers registered with the Kinnaur Handloom Weavers Association (of Kalpa) can sell the shawls under this brand name. Only the weavers registered with the Kinnaur Handloom Weavers Association will have the right to use this brand name to sell their shawls. The GI tag, under which products are the registered under the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act of 1999, are community rights which benefit the group of artisans, producers and other stakeholders manufacturing a product identified with a particular area. The shawls, with intricate borders in bright colours, are made on traditional looms by tribals of Kinnaur and are sold all over India and abroad. The registration under the GI Act would help the weavers to market their product easily. This will boost the sale of Kinnauri shawls as GI label, which is a proof of the authenticity of the product.

Conclusion :

Woven clothes have been recognized by the unique creativity and skill of the weavers and Kinnauri woollens are widely renowned for their intricacy and fineness but due to the development, competition in market and changing social setups of tribes handicrafts are on verge of extinction. For the revival of woven art of tribes government made plans for upliftment of handloom weavers. Launched official website which promotes the product world wide and showcases the famous traditional products for the global buyers.

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