

Traditional Textile Designing Practices of Weavers of Uttarakhand

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ABSTRACT

Extensive survey was conducted under the present research to know the existing status of textiles with reference to their designing i.e. their inspiration for designing, types of designs being used for different textile items. It was observed during present survey research that traditional communities residing here are still following quite the same textile techniques and practices as used by the men in their ancient times. Thus, the manufacturing and designing practices adopted for textiles by the hill people lags behind in terms of new innovation and modern taste of customers. Therefore, it needs addition of some advanced technologies of manufacturing and designing for upliftment of their textile trade. Trader and local artisans need training on different aspects of manufacturing, finishing and designing of textile products for which suitable education and skill development policies are also required. Thus, there is a dire need to educate them on this aspect, which will help in making product different for its technical, physical or aesthetic features or unique performance capabilities.

Key Words: Traditional textile; Designing practices;

Uttarakhand, a newly carved state, is well known for eternal beauty, ethereal scenes and characteristic geographical symmetry. Uttarakhand state comprises of 13 districts. Geographically it can be divided into three regions that are high hill region, mid region and Tarai region. It was noticed that high hill region and to some part of mid region of Uttarakhand, Bhotia community has dominated the textile trade. However, at most parts of mid hill region and Tarai region, other people are also earning their livelihood with textile trade. Sheep and goat rearing plays an important role in rural economy of Uttarakhand (*Lamba, 1986*). The wool obtained from these animals is mainly used by local artisans for manufacturing of a variety of textile articles catering the needs of that particular area only. The diverse articles range from woollen textiles of fleecy soft texture to hand woven carpets of finest warp and weft, which are examples of unique craftsmanship. In spite of the fact that the traditional craft of hill are popular, the economic status of the artisans and craft persons has not improved proportionally (*Chaudhary, 2005*). Therefore a survey was planned as analysis of survey in Uttarakhand provided latest information regarding textile designing and training requirement of the people engaged in textile trade. On the basis of information collected need based modern designing technology would be developed and training would be planned accordingly. Therefore present research was conducted with following objectives:

1. To study the current status of textiles in Uttarakhand with reference to designing
2. To assess the training need requirement of rural people on various aspects i.e. use of advanced technologies for manufacturing, finishing and designing of textiles

METHODOLOGY

Present survey research work was carried out in the Uttarakhand state. Till date status of Uttarakhand textiles designing have not been documented. The target population contacted was private organizations, government organizations, non government organizations, self help groups and traders, etc. who were working on production of textile products made by locally available natural textiles fibers. Simple random sampling was done to select the respondents. The total sample size was of 220 respondents. Exploratory research design was chosen to find out the prevailing textile designing practices, their status and related problems of respondents of Uttarakhand. Variables under study were categorized into two groups viz. dependant variables and independent variables. The data or information regarding the above variables was collected through observation-cum-questionnaire method by the investigator. Thus, the data was first hand and factual. In the present research, primary sources to get first hand information were group members of govt. organizations, private organizations, SHG's,

NGO's, traders etc. To gather information from respondents' tool was prepared in the form of questionnaire. Two techniques used in the study for collection of data were: Interview Schedule and Observation and Interpersonal discussion with respondents. Data obtained with the help of questionnaire-cum-observation method was first tabulated for further analysis. The specific information of respondents were then analyzed for results & discussion and also for making simple comparisons. Frequency of number of respondents and their percentage were calculated to derive results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of study and relevant discussion are presented in accordance with the objectives of the study. Survey of Uttarakhand was carried out in order to collect detailed general information about the respondents and specific information of their work on traditional designing practices. In Uttarakhand the status of natural textile fibres and their products has not been documented, so results of this survey work would be beneficial for the policy makers and also for the people who deal in textiles in other parts of India, they may also get idea to start their own need based textile enterprise, further new technologies as per requirement of respondents may be developed to boost textiles trade of Uttarakhand. Observation cum questionnaire method was used for data collection. Random sampling was done. Data was collected only from those respondents who were working on natural textile fibres. Therefore, a total number of 220 respondents were selected for data collection, i.e. weavers, traders, members of NGO/SHG's, employees of government organization, KVIC and other agencies.

It was noticed that combination of designs i.e. naturalistic, geometrical, stylized and abstract designs were used on most of the textile articles produced in Uttarakhand. It was also found that some articles were prepared in their natural colour and with out any designing on them i.e. loi, pankhi, chutka (means coarse woollen rug, which is used as bedcover to provide warmth) and thulma (it is a very heavy type of furnishing which is used for covering the bed or as a blanket to provide warmth) etc. It was observed that surface enrichment was desired by respondents but they had restricted use of different surface enrichment techniques to certain specific articles only i.e. embroidery technique was preferred for shawl, silk saree, ladies suits, namda etc. printing was specially used for cotton bed sheets/ bed

covers and piece dyeing was followed for many articles i.e. shawls, stoles, mufflers and suit length etc.

It was found that in Uttarakhand maximum numbers of respondents (32.7%) were preparing dun, asan, durri, chutka, namda and thulma. These articles are made by Bhotia people at high and mid hill region. They prepare thick and heavy products, considering warmth as most important feature. Other articles i.e. shawl, pankhi, loi, sweater (hand knitted), socks, gloves, caps, wall hanging etc. were made all over Uttarakhand. The only difference was that in Tarai region light weight products with stylish designs were demanded, so the respondents consider fashion and consumer demand most, while producing their textile articles. In some area of Tarai (Kashipur) cotton bed sheets, bed covers, khes etc. in plain colour or in printed form were produced. It was found that highest numbers of respondents (40.5%) were inspired for designing from their ancestral work. Some of the respondents (9.6%) were influenced for designing of their articles by customer's choice, followed by the respondents (8.2%) whose designs were influenced by customers demand as well as on market research. Maximum number of respondents (42.7%) prepared traditional designs followed by the respondents (18.2%) who prepared combination of traditional and modern designs. It was also noticed that in some Government agencies (i.e. Rajkiya Design Centre, Kashipur) designers were appointed for designing work and the prepared designs suitable for different articles were provided to the local weavers by the center. Even then demand for new and interesting designs was very high from almost all the respondents. Designing of articles was preferred by a large number of respondents.

Designing of articles : According to *Koshy (1995)* Designing of fabrics and its commercial production depend on many factors, such as the climate, the region where they are to be used, cost factor etc. While the dress is aimed to be attractive it should be economical too. Depending on the above the designer selects the fabric, from cotton to silk to man-made synthetics. The vast range of ethnic designs reflect the sartorial taste of the multifaceted composite culture of the region. The woven designs are produced on different type of conventional looms such as- Pit looms, Fly shuttle loom, Back strap looms, vertical loom etc. Most of the products were based on traditional designs which have been repeated number of time. The products were limited to

suit the local demand only. Problems of the stitched border, poor salvage and excess floats still need to be over come. All the respondents used designs on their textile articles.

Table 1. Inspiration for textile designing

Inspiration for Designing	F	%age
Fashion Magazine	2	0.90
Media	-	-
Customer demand	21	9.60
Market Research	4	1.81
Fashion Magazine + Customer	5	2.30
Fashion Magazine + Market Research	2	0.90
Fashion Magazine + Media	3	1.40
Media + Customer	12	5.50
Customer + Market Research	18	8.20
Fashion Magazine + Customer + Market Research	3	1.40
Ancestral work	89	40.5
Publicity done by Govt.	2	0.90
Fashion Magazine + Media + Customer	11	5.00
All of the above	10	4.60
None of the above	38	17.3
Total	220	100

It is clear from Table 1, that the 40.5% of respondents were inspired for designing from their ancestral work. These designs include the traditional designs, on traditional textile items i.e. on carpets and asan mostly animal motifs of lion, phynix, birds, dragon etc; tanka design of Bhotia people includes a combination of different motifs i.e. great wall of china, phynix, dragon, ferns etc. It was seen that 17.3% of respondents made quilts, for which fabric, designs, threads etc. everything was provided by the contractor. They had to make stitches on the design lines already marked on quilts. Therefore, there was no scope for them to do any designing work. The borders of Uttarankhand state adjoin Uttar Pradesh and Himanchal Pradesh states of India as well as Tibet, China and Nepal countries. It was clearly observed that the designed textiles articles were influenced by neighboring places.

The motifs on different textile products were more or less same which were followed since decades. It was assessed that new designs were not explored except few progressive weavers, who copied good designs from traditional sarees of other states or did value addition by using other surface embellishment techniques viz. embroidery, tie and dye etc.

It is evident from the Table 2, that out of 220 respondents 42.7% of respondents used traditional designs on their articles, 2.3% respondents used modern designs, 10% used traditional and contemporary both and 18.2% respondents used combination of traditional and modern designs. Only 5% respondents depend upon Govt. designers (i.e. Govt. Design Centre, Kashipur) who provide them designs. 4.09% respondents used traditional, contemporary and modern design in their textiles articles. 17.27% respondents engaged on quilt making so that they did not create any design by themselves. They were following the design lines which were given to them by the contractor.

Table 2. Type of designs prepared for different textile articles

Type of designing	F	%age
Traditional	94	42.70
Contemporary	-	-
Modern	6	2.30
Traditional + Contemporary	22	10
Traditional + Modern	40	18.2
Contemporary + Modern	-	-
Design given by Govt. agency	11	5.00
Traditional + Contemporary + Modern	9	4.09
None	38	17.27
Total	220	100

Traditional designs include flower motifs, leaf motifs, traditional temple motifs and stripes, checks etc. The possibilities are endless and such designs have separate identity and are exclusive in nature. Design developments not only require change of motifs, it also refers to change of yarn, change of fabric engineering, change of weaving techniques etc. It is clear from table 2 that highest No. of respondents (42.70%) produced designed effect on textiles articles through colour and weave effect that was the traditional method.

It is clear from the Table-3 (a), Part 1, that 10.46%, 13.2% and 31.81% respondents used naturalistic, geometrical and combination of naturalistic & geometrical designs respectively. However, 44.6% of the respondents were not manufacturing shawls so they did not use any kind of design. It was observed that most of the designers create geometrical designs by using simple handloom as it was easy for them to produce check/ stripe designed fabrics just by varying the colour or weave on handloom. These respondents also used extra weft figuring for preparation of stripes.

Table 3. (A) Part 1, Kind of designs used on different articles

S. No.	Kind of design	Shawl		Stole		Muffler		Dun/Asan		Bed sheet & bed cover		Durri		Wall hanging		Blanket		Saree	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1.	Naturalistic	23	10.46	21	9.55	7	3.2	48	21.8	14	6.4	-	-	7	3.2	46	20.9	17	7.7
2.	Geometrical	29	13.2	19	8.64	60	27.3	56	25.5	28	12.7	110	50	1	0.5	49	22.27	10	4.6
3.	Stylized	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
4.	Abstract	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5.	Combination	70	31.81	92	41.81	14	6.36	78	35.45	47	21.36	-	-	10	4.6	7	3.18	-	-
6.	Do not manufacture	98	44.6	110	50	139	63.2	38	17.3	131	59.5	110	50	202	91.8	118	53.64	193	87.7
	Total	220	100	220	100	220	100	220	100	220	100	220	100	220	100	220	100	220	100

Table 3. (A) Part-2 Kind of designs used on different articles

S. No.	Kind of designs	Cap/Socks/Gloves		Sweater	
		N	%	N	%
1.	Naturalistic	-	-	-	-
2.	Geometrical	24	10.9	28	12.72
3.	Stylized	-	-	-	-
4.	Abstract	-	-	-	-
5.	Plain knitted articles	58	26.36	52	23.64
6.	Do not manufacture	138	62.7	140	63.63
	Total	220	100	220	100

It is evident from Table-3 (a), Part 1, that, 9.55%, 8.64% and 41.81% of the respondents were using naturalistic; geometrical and combination of naturalistic and geometrical designs respectively for preparation of stole. It is clear from the Table-3 (a), part 1 that, 27.3% of the respondents were using geometrical designs for mufflers. 6.36% used combination of naturalistic and geometrical two kinds of design. It was found (Table 3 (a), Part 1), 21.8% of the respondents were using naturalistic design, 25.5% were using geometrical designs whereas 35.45% of respondents were using all kinds of design.

It is evident from the Table-3 (a), Part 1 that 6.4% and 12.7% respondents used designs in bed sheet/ bed cover/ pillow cover naturalistic and geometrical respectively. 21.36% respondents used combination of all kinds of designs naturalistic, geometrical, abstract & stylized designs whereas 59.5% of the respondents were not manufacturing bed sheet/ bed covers/pillow covers. It is evident that 50% of respondent used geometrical design in durries however 50% respondents were not manufacturing durries. It is clear that 4.6% respondents used combination of naturalistic, geometrical, stylized & abstract designs in wall hangings. Ancient temple motifs

were presented in wall hangings in geometrical, stylized and abstract design forms 91.8% respondents were not preparing wall hangings. Some of the respondents used only naturalistic (3.2%) or only geometrical (0.5%) motifs for wall hangings.

It is observed that 20.9% and 22.27% respondents were using naturalistic and geometrical motifs in blanket respectively because flower motifs and geometrical pattern and linings were preferred by respondents. 53.64% respondents were not preparing blankets. It is clear that 7.7% and 4.6% of the total respondents were using naturalistic and geometrical designs in saree. 87.7% respondents were not preparing saree. In caps, socks and gloves geometrical designs were used by 10.9% of the respondents, 26.36% of the respondents did not use any kind of design, they were making plain caps/socks/gloves. Another 62.7% of the respondents were not manufacturing the caps/Sock/ gloves. 23.64% of respondent prepare plain sweaters without any designing. Only 12.72% of the respondents were making geometrical designs like check/ stripes/ animal motifs etc. Rests of the respondents (63.63%) were not preparing sweaters, they only produce shawl, loi, bed sheet, bed cover, pillow covers etc.

CONCLUSION

The study conducted to explore the status of design development in Uttarakhand revealed that the products manufactured were traditional with very narrow market base. Traditional communities residing here are still following the indigenous techniques and practices for manufacturing and designing of textiles. It was found that hill people had very good knowledge in making textile craft items but because of lack of inclusion of advanced technologies in their trade, the product made by them are

not getting recognition. Most of the products were uneven/irregular and aesthetically less appealing. These were meant for domestic use mainly and were little known outside the area of production. It was observed that the Uttarakhand weavers are not getting enough profit for their products, so they are still in poor stage as their production is primarily based on age old conventional type

of designs with traditional technology available. All this has resulted in inferior quality products and routine production leading to inevitable pile up of handloom cloth and products. With no marketing taking place, the economic conditions of the weavers have gone down from bad to worse. This has resulted weavers to give up weaving and to opt for other source of livelihood.

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