



Adi Gale: A female wrap around of Adi tribe of Arunachal Pradesh

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Abstract

Adi tribe is one of the major tribes in the state of Arunachal Pradesh. Adi is an umbrella term denoting 'hill men' and it consists of number of sub-tribes who are residing in central and Eastern part of the state. The word Adi is a generic name of a large number of ethnic communities which included the Padam, Minyongs, Komkars, Milangs, Panggi, Ashing, Karko, Shimong, Bori-Bokar and Pasi. It is one of the major ethnic groups among the 26 major ethnic groups in the state of Arunachal Pradesh, India which is a home of 110 sub tribes. The female dress of Adi tribe is divided into two parts. One is upper garment worn above the waist called Ulta Galuk and the another is the lower garment called Gale. Their women developed an appreciable knowledge and skill in traditional attire especially in Gale. Culturally and traditionally, they weave important varieties of Gale. They are competent in selecting of devices and materials in making it which requires years of experience. The culture, belief and spiritual aspects are attached with this. Various sources are utilized in making of it, like varieties of traditional cotton and mechanically made thread available in market. The Adi art is almost entirely confined to the decoration of their own person which is expressed in the weaving of fabrics. Thus, we can say that the weaving of Gale is not only important for economic life but it also important for the social and religious life of the tribal people. This Paper will highlight the significance of Gale and its values in their aspect of life.

Keywords: Arunachal Pradesh, Adi, ulta galuk, Gale, gekong-gallong, pore, nyogon, gasor

Introduction

Adi tribe is one of the major tribes in the state of Arunachal Pradesh. Adi is an umbrella term denoting 'hill men' and it consists of number of sub-tribes who are residing in central and Eastern part of the state. The word Adi is a generic name of a large number of ethnic communities which included the Padam, Minyongs, Komkars, Milangs, Panggi, Ashing, Karko, Shimong, Bori-Bokar and Pasi. It is one of the major ethnic groups among the 26 major ethnic groups in the state of Arunachal Pradesh which is a home of 110 sub tribes.

The female dress of Adi tribe is divided into two parts. One is upper garment worn above the waist called Ulta Galuk and the another is the lower garment called Gale. Their women developed an appreciable knowledge and skill in traditional attire especially in Gale. Culturally and traditionally, they weave important varieties of Gale. They are competent in selecting of devices and materials in making it which requires years of experience. The culture, belief and spiritual aspects are attached with this. Various sources are utilized in making of it, like varieties of traditional cotton and mechanically made thread available in market.

It is one of the major traditional sources of income and livelihood, but younger generation does not show considerable interest in learning and continuing such culturally important practices. A mission mode integrated effort would be required to conserve women wisdom of weaving and making this profession economically viable through value addition, entrepreneurship development, chaining market and economic empowerment.

The Adi is recognized for their skill of weaving Gale and making viable cloths through their traditional handloom called Gekong-Gallong. Gekong consists of two-pieces of wood with tapering ends and a Gallong is a horizontal

bamboo pole to support the warp. Women in this Gekong-Gallong weave the varieties of culturally and traditionally important dresses including Gale. The entire traditional weaving technique of women is attached to many designs depicted in forms of flowers. The designs used in dresses are very important because it reflects their socio-culture, belief and spiritual aspects. It seems that the diamond shape of design is popular textile motif in their dresses. The textile pattern in the Siang belt is called Pore. In the words of Verrier Elwin "the importance of weaving Gale to the tribal mind is illustrated by the number of words therefore everything to do with it, even where the general vocabulary is small. The Padam and Minyong classify at least twelve different designs woven for the vertical strip that runs through the middle of a girl's Gale". They have a large number of words for their various patterns and for all the processes of weaving Gale. He further said that the Adi art is almost entirely confined to the decoration of their own person which is expressed in the weaving of fabrics. Thus we can say that the weaving of Gale is not only important for economic life but it also important for the social and religious life of the tribal people.

In the economic life of the Adis, the role of men and women are sharply divided. It is said that since early life, they are dependent on the natural resources, climatic conditions, geographical features and their interaction with the other people for their daily uses and livelihood. Various types of timbers, bamboos, canes, roots, leaves, and the bark of trees are commonly used. Verrier Elwin said that the real ruler of the tribal people has been environment. It has shaped their bodies, directed their art, governance and their policymaker. The people therefore evolved their own economic institutions having certain unique features. Their economic conditions mainly depended on the form of agriculture that they practice. Agriculture contributes an important share in

the economy of these people. The nature of the terrain has forced them to follow jhum/shifting cultivation. Apart from agriculture, in their economic life, the weaving Gale is regarded as both an economic activity as well as an art. Weaving Gale is considered to be significant attribute of women among Adi. Traditionally, they are weaving for their own sufficient needs of the household. Most houses possess a loom in which cotton cloth is woven.

In the contemporary period there is significant scope of expanding weaving Gale as a livelihood option for women. The women living in remote areas who are dependent on traditional resources have developed appreciable knowledge and skill in weaving and making crafts for their subsistence livelihood in mountain. This traditional profession is one of the major occupations among the Adis, especially among the women. Because added to the weaving of Gale, the female weaves the Adi's Nyogon (bag) Galuk (shirt), Gasor (shawl) etc. It is a source of income to every household. They possess skill to make these technologies and sell in nearby town.

Regarding the textiles design of Adi, Verrier Elwin said that Adi has an excellent taste in color and in combining colors. Some of them show remarkable skill in devising patterns and if the old records are to be believed, they have developed many of today's designs during the past fifty years, and are still creating new patterns, partly under the stimulus of external example, but largely as a result of their own natural zest for creation. In art of personal adornment even the remotest tribes reveal a singular fertility of invention. This is very true in the context of Adi Pore design. The Pore design seem to be self-invented by Adi people as no other communities which are near neighbors of Adi have the same design and pattern. The pattern and designs of entire Gale and Pore design are as follow:

Abe: Abe is usually made of black color. But one can also use other dark color like green, brown etc.

Paatang: Paatang is the main component of Gale. It is made of yarn of single color and there should be two Paatang divided by ire/panngul. The foremost color of Adi Gale Paatang is red.

Ire/panngul: it is the line which divides Paatang into two. Ire/panngul consist of four yellow yarns and eight black yarns (in alternative pattern of one yellow yarn and two black yarn). This is the first and bigger Ire/panngul.

Paare: It is the yellow strips which is after the second Paatang.

Panggul: It is second panngul and it is smaller than the first one and it consist of 3 yellow yarn and 4 black yarns.

Omging: It must be of the same color of the Abe. It is smaller than Abe and it is used as the seam or joining point.

Pore: This is the most quintessential design of Adi Gale. Pore design is very intricate.

There are various myths regarding the origin of Pore "quintessential design of Gale". There is a myth which reveals regarding the origin of Gale and its designs. According to the myth, Pedong Nane and Yidum Bote gave birth to a child name Doni or Tani who was a human and he

became the first human being in this world. Pedong Nane and Yidum Bote were spirits and they have to abandoned him as Tani was not in form of spirit. So, he was abandoned by his parents when he was merely an infant. He grew up by himself and took shelter in a cave known as Pedong Pirbo Lipik to save himself from natural calamities. In helpless condition, he felt very thirsty and hungry and roamed in the wildest forest and later his condition became very weak.

Later his parents felt pity and they sent Kongki Koomang, a spirit who is designer of nature, to guide the child and teach him the art of survival. Kongki Koomang taught him many things which included craft making like Tali 'haversack' from cane strips and many designs of handicraft. He taught that Tali will be used as mark of man and Lekkeng 'Leg girdle' should be used as mark of women. In such way, use of cane started in human life and human started making many types of basketry, dress and other cane works like head gear, carpet etc. with different designs and later these designs which were used for crafting, were used in weaving as Pore.

Another believes regarding the origin of Ege Pore. This myth propagate that the Pore design is an imitation of crisscross in the wing of Goyeng 'Cicada'. In every season of jackfruit, Cicada stridulate or chirp on jackfruit tree and Adis believe that the chirp of cicada leads to the ripening of jackfruit during summer. So, children usually place cicada on stored jackfruit for early ripening. In earlier days, before the advent of rice cultivation, jackfruit was one of the staple foods of Adis. They use to collect ripen jackfruit for instant consumption or they stored about-to-be-ripen one for stock. So, in summer season around June, cicada in jackfruit tree is a very common sight. And children play with cicada and imitate their chirp. Since cicada is closely associated with the livelihood of Adis, they believe that Pore is an imitation of design of cicada wings. Following are the detail of Pore

Pere: It is shuttle usually made of four white yarns. But it can also be made of two yellow and two white yarns. It is the initiation of Pore making. For making Pere, a special heddle has to be made first. This heddle is made by taking two yarns up and two yarns down alternatively in the heddle stick. When heddle is completed, white yarn is shuttled four times.

Kyagul: After Pere, Kyagul is made. Kyagul is the yarn which is simply coiled to hold the Gangin place. Kyagul is usually made of four white yarns but people also replace white with black to make the Kyagul more distinct. Kyagul is coiled on every Gang.

Gang: Gang in Adi means pillar/post. After Pere is made, yarns are again divided into Gang. There are Five-six yarns in each Gang. Nome are the additional yarns for making Pore. Nome is around 24 cm long and will have to be consist of four colors; white (6 Nos.), yellow/saffron (6 Nos.), pink (1 No.) and Green (1 No.). Nome has to be in this order white-pink-yellow-Green. This order is mandatory and should not be altered.

Amik: It literally means eye. This Amik serves as the central Gang (Pillar). There are usually three to four full in one side of Pore. Nome are first diverged from Amik and then again turn back to Amik making a shape of Σ.

Mekok: It is also like an Amik. There has to be 3 to 4 full and 1 half Mekok. The half Mekok is on the seam and when the other half of other side of Pore is combine, 2 halves become 1 full Mekok. There are usually 16-17 Gang between Amik to Mekok as shown with smaller numerals in the image above.

Tirlat: It is the turning of Nome to make a shape of Σ .

Mosang: It is the coiling/plaiting of Nome upwards. Traditionally, Mosang was done 11 times before Tirlat 'turn'. But nowadays people want wider Pore and they make Mosang upto 15 or 16 times. In Pore there is no color restriction. The colour combination is according to the color of the Gale. And even Amik and Mekok can be omitted completely or can be added more.

Their weavers are producing a great variety of Gale, mostly of pure cotton yarn but sometimes of wool and cotton. They are expert with their hands in working wool and cotton. Even in the wave of modern mill made fashion clothes, the rich colorful and variegated traditional Gale of them are still famous among the people. The government of Arunachal Pradesh has established weaving training cum production centers at various places. The good weavers sell their clothes at government sale emporium and private buyers and earn money. Thus, weaving has now become an economic pursuit of the people. The Adi have four main types of Gale which are woven with different type of designs. The four types of Gales are-

Gape Gale: It is also called as Miri-Gale 'Priest wrap around'. This is because during Ponung, the Miri has to wrap it around himself or herself. Usually, it is not common for a man to dress in Gale as it is meant only for woman. But male Miri is the only male in entire society who can wrap himself in Gale. Gape-Gale can have both Padam or Minyong pore.

Galing Gale: It means 'Red wrap around' is one of the most typical Adi Gale. The red color is often associated with blood and something misfortunate. In absence of Miri Gale, a Miri can wear Galing-Gale also. Galing Gale can also have both Padam or Minyong pore.

Ejo Gale: It means 'Old Lady wrap around'. As the term suggest this wraparound is meant for old aged ladies. This Gale has no Pore and thus is simple and plain woven.

Gajok/Panggu pare: It is the Gale woven for old aged ladies like grandmother. It is basically woven from the collection of remaining of different yarn from different weaving. So it has no pattern or design. In order to utilize the leftover yarns, Gajok is woven for old ladies especially grandmothers to be used as rough dress at home and field.

Conclusion

The Gale is a part and parcel of Adi culture. It is intricately associated with the caliber and creativeness of the Adi women. Although some designs like that of Men's coat are being borrowed from neighboring tribes, but Pore designs of the Gale system seem to be sprouted solely out of their creativeness. Currently, the weaving is in transition period as the traditional pattern and designs are being altered and modified for better attraction in today's modern trend. And since traditional back-strap weaving system is tedious, handloom system is being adopted for faster production.

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