Legacy of Design; Motifs of Northeast Handloom and its Future

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MESSAGE

It is most heartening to see the efforts of Invest India’s Northeast Desk in organizing a special event on National Handloom Day, i.e., 7th August 2021, as a tribute to our local weavers and our luxuriant handloom culture. I believe that it will be a very enlightening experience with regards to cultivating our knowledge about the indigenous north-eastern handloom traditions.

There are varied tribes, sub-tribes and clans within each of the North East that have their own unique handloom patterns, symbols and motifs, which are representative of their distinct cultural traits, aesthetics and identities.

The state which I hail from, Arunachal Pradesh, itself boasts of plentiful handloom worker households (IWHH) wherein one or more than one member of the family derives their livelihood from the handloom sector. The statistics clearly show how much the sector is integral to people’s socio-economic life. Its promotion and development are crucial in India’s journey towards attaining ‘Aatmanirbhar Bharat’.

My earnest support goes out to Invest India in its initiative to publish an opportunity paper titled, "Legacy of Design, Motifs of Northeast Handloom, and its Future" which will exhibit the vibrant textile culture of the region. I hope this event will be a most wholesome and enriching one for all participants!

New Delhi, India
5th August, 2021

(Kiren Rijiju)
MESSAGE

It gives me immense pleasure to know about the upcoming National Handloom Day celebration to be organized by Invest India which will especially feature the rich indigenous handloom culture of the North Eastern states.

The Handloom sector is one of the oldest industries in our country and has been an important source of livelihood employing millions across the country. Indian handlooms are diverse and represent our regional geographies and cultures. Mahatma Gandhi once said, “Assamese women weave dreams on their looms.” Being a melting pot of diverse ethnicities, North East is also home to the largest number of weavers in the country.

As important as it is to preserve traditional techniques of weaving, it is also essential to incorporate sustainable modern innovations of science and technology in order to boost the output. The survey of production and marketing chain must be conducted to estimate the requirement of clothing materials and there should be value addition through creative thinking to enhance the appeal of the products.

I strongly urge our people, to strictly follow the principles of “Aatmanirbhar Bharat” vision of our Honourable Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi Ji. We should all be working together in unlocking the true potential of our handloom industry, in addition to the government-aided handloom cluster projects.

It is essential to give the reins of the sector to our local weavers (Vocal for Local) and to create demand for our indigenous products at national as well as global levels. (Make for the world) In this context, I am immensely grateful to Invest India for providing a platform where our traditional weaves can be showcased and given due recognition.

Place: New Delhi
Date: 4th August, 2021

(Sarbananda Sonowal)
MESSAGE

I am pleased to know that our dedicated Northeast Desk at Invest India is launching an opportunity paper entitled, “Legacy of Design, Motifs of Northeast Handloom and its Future” while celebrating the National Handloom Day on 7th August, 2021.

India is a country with diversified cultures that coexist in harmony. The cultures that each community possesses are a reflection of their identity. I have been a steadfast believer in the power of our traditional skills and knowledge. Handloom is one such cultural boon that has been in practice in our society even today.

The northeastern region of India is a captivating cultural mosaic of rich heritage and exceptional biodiversity. The linguistic diversity, distinct cultures and heritage get reflected through handloom products made in the North East.

The Sericulture & Weaving Industry has a special significance in poverty alleviation, as it is labour intensive, less strenuous, requires less capital and has a good market. It also generates sizeable employment opportunities in rural areas. Moreover, it involves a large segment of women in the State through activities such as silkworm rearing, silk reeling, and spinning and weaving in their own houses which contribute towards their upliftment.

It is extremely important to encourage and facilitate our local handloom weavers to excel in their art as it is essential in the preservation of handloom legacy, particularly the ethnic, versatile & colourful motifs and apparels of the region. And further, let us be “vocal for local” to strengthen the exquisite talent and tradition of the handloom industry.

I convey my heartiest appreciation and sincere support to Northeast Desk at Invest India for taking the lead in organizing the event. I am confident that this event will provide a basis for more robust engagement from investors to promote sustainable business.

New Delhi, India

5th August 2021

(Deepak Bagla)
INTRODUCTION

While handlooms from any part of India enjoy popularity around the world for their vibrant, colourful and traditional styles and intricate detailing, it is the northeastern region of the country that is essentially the heart of the handloom industry of India. According to the Fourth All India Handloom Census 2019-2020, the total number of households in India engaged in handloom activities (weaving and allied activities) is 31.45 lakhs, out of which 18.35 lakhs households are from NER states. The Northeast Handloom products flourish in the climate that favours the growth and development of the sericulture industry. Northeast India is home to distinct silk varieties that include Muga, the fabric of peace: Eri/Endi, and cotton varieties like Comilla Cotton. Using vegetable/plant-based dyes also ensures that the products get made of environment-friendly material.

An endowment of exquisite craftsmanship, handloom industry in the northeastern part of India is more than a means of livelihood for the indigenous people. It is a reflection of their rich heritage and a symbol of each community’s individuality in the presence of immense diversity in the region. Before being a business activity, handlooms cater to the personal requirements of each family, with most families possessing their own looms and weaving patterns specific to their community or tribe. This goes on to further demonstrate the high reverence and importance the people of these states give to their handloom. In such a scenario, it is but natural for the fabrics to be distinct from any other part of the country or the world.

Indeed, the styles and designs of clothes produced here, as detailed in the paper ahead, uniquely bring out the religion, cultural beliefs, and geographical area of the exact tribe they originate from. While the world has moved towards mechanical creation of fabrics, the people of northeast, fiercely protective of their culture and heritage, continue to keep the handloom tradition alive. In the words of Mahatma Gandhi, the fabrics created in these states are like poems weaved on looms. The handwoven quality of these fabrics in the current age easily make them rather limited and luxurious, containing within them decades worth of history.

The stunning motifs and patterns of the north-eastern handlooms tell tales of glory of the region and are a rather intimate look into the modern-day picture of the civilisation. The sarees of Northeast India with tribal designs tend to be abstract and geometric with depictions of natural objects like flowers, leaves, and animals in highly stylised forms. The loin loom, one of the oldest devices for weaving cloth is used in Northeast as opposed to the throw-shuttle used in other parts. The loin loom is made from bamboo with simple construction and is easy to use. It neither has permanent fixtures nor heavy frames, which makes it portable. The greatest advantage that the loin loom offers is unlimited scope for designing.

1 http://handlooms.nic.in/writereaddata/3736.pdf
The government bodies governing the development of traditional handlooms in northeastern states have played a critical role in the continued progress of handloom industries and are working on expanding the scope of this industry even further. The aim is to not just preserve one of the oldest systems of the world but also to make it an integral part of modern clothing industry. Through the right intervention, the industry is to be led towards higher employment, greater profitability, and increased visibility. Among other things, the state wishes to achieve improvement in design capability, diversification of product lines and value addition, upgradation of technology and improvement in labour productivity while keeping the authenticity of the system alive.

This paper attempts to bring forward the traditional northeastern motifs, namely from the states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura, not just for their unique designs and patterns but also for their inspiration and heritage. We begin with describing each state's geography, ethnicity and cultural practices and then delve into how these amalgamate into the most common motifs of the states. Due to its strategic location, the region has seen migration from surrounding countries over the decades and it is reflective in the diverse types of handlooms produced. While throwing light on the historical influences on handloom sector, the paper also highlights how modern parameters have beautifully interwoven themselves into the everyday outfits of the people. An average resident of the Northeast, through his/her perfectly balanced modern-traditional attire, can be a quintessential model for millennials around the world. The paper goes on to discuss the positive changes brought about by the intervention from state bodies and leaves open room for intervention from private bodies through mutually beneficial collaborations.
TANGKHUL NAGA BRIDE SITTING IN TRADITIONAL DRESS AND ORNAMENTS AFTER THE WEDDING.
MANIPUR

The etymology of the word Manipur directly translates into “land of gems.” Its economy is centred on agriculture and forestry, and trade and cottage industries play an important role as well. Textiles’ weaving has had a pivotal role in the social and the economic life of the people of Manipur throughout the ages. This craft is extremely pivotal in the predominantly agricultural society. The art of weaving made the village society a self-sufficient and self-reliant one, which is a characteristic of Manipur society. The social functioning of Manipur is based on the code of personal relations and duties handed down from generation to generation. The people of this land do not take the performance of this craft as a compulsion but a sacred duty.

Meitei are an ethnic group native to the state of Manipur. In Meitei lores, the weaving of textile appears as a reflection of the cosmic process. During the dance of the creation, the male and female messengers of God (Maiba and Maibi) produce the sound of spinning and weaving. It is a matter of great significance that in the traditional belief system of the Meiteis, it is the God of Handicrafts (Leismbi) who taught the Meiteis, the method of textile weaving as well as the mystique of the dance creation.

Among the rulers, who are believed to have been great patrons of the craft in their time, it is vital to mention Jabista Nongda Laivel Pakhangba (who is supposed to have ruled between 34 A.D. to 153 A.D.) and the king Loyamba. The art of weaving has developed more in Manipur as compared to any other part of India. Unlike weaving in other parts of India, weaving in Manipur is entirely the work of womenfolk since it is a part of their domestic duties. In fact, it is a primary qualification of a Meitei woman. Handloom industry, which has a legacy of unparalleled craftsmanship, is spread throughout the length and breadth of Manipur. It is a household cottage industry with decentralised set-up. This handloom industry is practically monopolised by women not only from the idea of economic necessity but also from the sense of social custom. About 70% of the total weavers are outside the co-operative fold and the remaining 30% are under co-operative fold and hence, a large number of weavers are self earners.

The record of Manipuri handloom and handicraft also depicts the possession and culture of the tribal communities. The fabric design and accessories which comprised traditional garments embody the material culture in an efficient manner. The source of material, process of fabric manufacture and its utilisation in their costume reflect not only the flora and fauna of the area but also talk about the effortless living amongst tribal communities.
To catch a glimpse of traditional Manipuri attire and to indulge in the textures and colours of hand-woven designs, it is best to head to Manipur during their festivals. Right after monsoons, from October till February is when the state comes to life. From the farmer's festival called Kut - held in November - to Cheiraoba (Manipur New Year), there are two things in common: dressing and dancing. Locals dress up in their best and brightest Phaneks and Innaphis to celebrate their hard labour, to worship and to welcome a new year. Like all Indian festivals, there are distinct costumes for different festivals in Manipur as well, inspired by the Phanek and Innaphi for women. The Raas Leela festivals are extremely popular here and are commonly known as Jagoi Rasa. The festivals take place several times a year, on full moon nights. Women are usually seen wearing Potlois and Kumins, a kind of Phanek that comes only in red or green, but with more embellishments like mirrors and shiny borders.

DESIGNS AND THEIR LEGACIES

1. Changkhom

Changkhom is the ethnic shawl of the native Tangkhul tribe of Manipur. The Tangkhul have broadly eleven kinds of hand woven cloth. In most cases, these clothes are woven on loin loom, which is an indigenous loom native to Manipur. In contemporary times, the production of fabric is gradually shifting to produce on frame looms as well. The shawl is used by both men and women. These clothes showcase ubiquitous features. In most Changkhom fabric, the colour red has a pivotal portion, which is often complemented by a minority of white and black shades. These clothes have now been diversified to many other products, such as wall hangings, cushion covers as well as curtains. These clothes are moulded on both mercerised and acrylic yarn of 2/32s, 2/34s.

‘Innaphi’ and ‘Phanek’ constitute the Manipuri traditional dress for women in Manipur. ‘Innaphi’, in short, is a cloth to wrap around your upper body, mostly like a shawl. Contrary to the traditional textiles with vivid colours and bold motifs, Manipuri weavers use soft pastel colours highlighting the shawl's serene appeal and maintaining the poise. The fabric used is semi-transparent. The result of this beautiful craftsmanship and skill is a royal sheer inaphi with perfect finesse. In the present day, a modernised and trendy version of the Innaphi is also widely available called the ‘Rani Phi’. It includes the use of silk threads, modern dyes and different motifs on the traditional cotton innaphi. To keep up with changing trends, one can experiment with colours and fabrics.

The ‘phanek’ is just like a sarong or a wrap-around skirt. But unlike most regular sarongs, it is not semi-transparent. Phaneks are handwoven on loin looms using cotton, silk and other synthetic fabrics. Floral prints or bold designs are frequently missing in the traditional attire. Casual wear Phaneks are traditionally block colours, whereas the ones worn for occasions, called 'Mayek Naibi', are often striped. Usually worn with a mini blouse and upper cloth, a phanek is the local equivalent of a North Indian saree. Meitei Females only stitch a cloth called ‘Kanap Phanek’.

‘Chin-Phi’ is also another Manipuri traditional costume made with embroidered Phanek. Young girls sometimes wear adaptations of the traditional dress, where Phaneks become wrap-around skirts. Phaneks are very comfortable, and hence, commonly utilized as summer outfits.

STATE DRESS - Innaphi and Phanek

‘Innaphi’ and ‘Phanek’ constitute the Manipuri traditional dress for women in Manipur.
The Tangkhul tribe resides in the Indo-Burma border area, thus occupying the Ukhrul district of Manipur. It is believed that they came to Manipur from China through Myanmar. According to the elders of the community, the word 'Tangkhul' originated from the Meitei dialect, which is the largest ethnic group of Manipur. Tangkhul is a combination of the words 'Tada' and 'Khul' - Tada means elder brother and Khul means village. Therefore, Tangkhul means the village of the elder brother. Tangkhul tribe has a renowned and magnificent textiles heritage in terms of traditional costumes, colours, specific design and motifs with significance and symbolism. Changhom is one of the most famous shawls amongst the Tangkhul youth. It is woven in a red base with broad black colour stripes.

Red, black and white colours were dominantly used on their textiles as a base. Colours such as green, blue, yellow/orange were used for designing motifs. In the early days, the tribe people followed a dyeing process using naturally available materials such as fruits, barks and roots of different trees, as well as clay and mud. They made the colour combinations ideally suited for the hill environment. They used to dye hand spun cotton yarn for their weaving as well as cane, bamboo stalk or animal hair for their accessories. Both acrylic and mercerised yarn produce these cloths. The shawl is usually worn by the first youngest or second youngest male member of the family. It was also used as an over garment by unmarried womenfolk.

2. Raivat Kachon

It is also a shawl of the Tangkhul tribe of Manipur. It is among the eleven kinds of hand woven cloth of their tribe. The cloth has been woven on loin loom with acrylic yarn both in warp and weft. The motifs of animals and insects are hand embroidered. It is now gradually being converted to produce on frame looms, in contemporary day and age. It is generally used by women, with the cloth exhibiting ubiquitous characteristics. This cloth has now been diversified to many other purposes. It is woven with mercerised or acrylic yarn of 2/32s, 2/34s.

The traditional Raivat Kachon textiles of the tribe are not only derived from the environmental physiology, but also marked socio-cultural meanings that reveal the societal norms. They reflect age, sex, social status and sacred or profane activities which appear in various contexts. In earlier days, males of the Tangkhul tribe mostly wore the shawl only in cold weather or due to changing temperature during the evening. Cotton was the most preferred yarn to weave their fabrics. In earlier times, most of the Tangkhul villages not only wove cotton cloth but also cultivated cotton and spun it into yarn. Barter system of cotton with other goods was also practiced between the tribe's people and Meiteis. The tribe people used to trade cotton with the Meiteis weavers and in return they got goods which were not easily accessible in hills.²

Base fabric is woven in plain weave and swivel extra weft technique is employed for designing motifs. Woven at the loin loom, the breadth of the cloth is generally narrow. The weavers have to stitch together two or more pieces of cloth by

hand to get a wider cloth. Traditionally, the weavers got inspiration for designs and motifs from their natural surroundings. They wove designs very intricately and mostly used motifs such as insects, animals, plants, and geometrical shapes on the textiles. Raivat Kachon, is woven in black base and decorated with hand embroidered designs. The shawl can be worn by the chiefs and important persons in the village such as warriors, head-hunters, heroes and men who performed functions of merit. It is also used as a bridal shawl.

3. Mareipan

It is a traditional shawl of the Kabui tribe of Manipur. The Kabui people have fourteen kinds of hand woven clothes. Of these, seven are used by men and the remaining seven by women. In most cases, these clothes have been woven on loin loom. Frame loom is also commonplace these days. These clothes have intricate hand woven extra weft designs on the border. In most of the Mareipan fabric, white colour is prominently featured and is subsequently complemented by red and black colours. These clothes are produced on both mercerised and acrylic yarn of 2/32s, 2/34s.

Kabui tribe is one of the sub-tribes of the Naga and distributed in Manipur, Nagaland and Assam. They are popularly called Rongmei which is literally derived from two words “ruang” and “mei” - meaning “south” and “people” respectively. This stands for the southerners who move to Tamenglong district of Manipur. The ancestral home of the Kabui tribe lies in the mountain ranges in the Tamenglong sub division of Manipur. All these clans are exogamous and the Kabuis speak Kabui dialect. Agriculture is their main occupation. Rice is their main crop and it is their staple food. Weaving is an indispensable skill of the Kabui women done in subsistence scale which is carried out in the loin loom. Gan-ngai is their biggest festival celebrated annually in December or January.³

The fabric used in Mareipan garments have designs imparted through extra weft figuring methods. The motifs used are geometrical in nature with religious significance. Ethnic symbols, painting on the wall of houses and the symbol of gods were the sources of motifs according to the key informants. Kabuis use warm colors - red, orange, green, blue and black are frequently used in their garments. Both the wraparound and the shawl are made on the loin loom using different coloured threads; mostly cotton and silk in older days. At present, mostly synthetic yarns (especially acrylic) have replaced the cotton threads. The Mareipan shawl can be worn by unmarried males and females who are eligible to enter Khangchu and Luchu (Khangchiu and Luchiu are boys and girls dormitories respectively). However, with passage of time Mareipan shawl has become exclusively popular amongst the men folk.

4. Pheingao

It is another shawl of the Kabui tribe of Manipur. It is used by both men and women. In most cases, these clothes are woven on loin looms and the frame looms. These clothes have intricate hand woven extra weft designs on the border. Like in most Kabui clothes, white colour occupies a major portion which is accompanied by a small portion of red and black. These

³ https://www.ripublication.com/ijhss19/ijhssv9n1_01.pdf
The shawl is designed with ‘Pheingao hu’ at two ends of the cloth and ‘Pheibei’ design on the red broad border of the shawl. According to information received from the tribe people, Pheingao hu design was inspired from the art painted on the wall of the Tarangkai, the traditional ceremonial house of Kabui. It signified the mark of God. Pheibei is a long-dotted line usually woven in two colours i.e. yellow and black alternately, which was used on their clothes in order to protect them from disgrace or anything unpleasant.

clothes are produced on both mercerised and acrylic yarn of 2/32s, 2/34s. The Kabui tribe possesses cultural and religious denominations of their traditional textiles and have specific significance, symbolism, colours and design. In earlier days, the traditional textiles and costume of Kabui, including Pheingao, were regulated on the basis of age and sex of the wearer rather than social status. In Kabui lore, the tribe people bury their dead with this cloth or use the old loin cloth of the mother to cover the body of a sick child so that evil forces could not harm her or him.

3 https://www.ripublication.com/ijhss19/ijhssv9n1_01.pdf
Sikkim is a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural state in North-eastern India, filled with the grandiose of the snow capped jewel of the Himalayan ranges. The people here are renowned for their diversity, traditions as well as beliefs that lend the Indian plains and subcontinent a unique fervor. Sikkim state comprises three communities - Lepchas, Bhutias and Nepalis. They follow their traditions devotedly; among them, the wearing of costumes are very significant to the native Sikkim people. Here, the costumes reflect the integrity, social and cultural lifestyle as well as the richness of the native tradition.

Traditionally, due to the coarse texture of their outfits, men wore their traditional garb while working in forests and fields. But when the texture was replaced by finer fabrics like cotton and silk, it acquired a more stately appeal which made it fit for wedding ceremonies, folk festivals, harvest festivals, religious rituals and other gatherings. To augment the look of this traditional attire in Sikkim, men usually wear embroidered hats and boots to compliment the look.

Handlooms and handicrafts of Sikkim formed an inseparable cultural trait of a society from the beginning of civilisation. The cultural influence of the Sikkim society is reflected through the quality crafts and craftsmanship of the people. The terms handloom and handicrafts include those products of a specific community which are produced manually with their indigenous technology. Sikkim handicrafts often become the chief means of livelihood. It also fulfils their daily requirements and provides employment to the members of the households of the society. Hence, handlooms and handicrafts play a vital role in the socio-economic development of a society.

The Directorate of Handicrafts and Handloom (D.H.H) was founded in 1957. Over the years, this Institute has evolved into a major hub of learning and training in the Traditional Arts and Crafts of the State. The Directorate of Handicrafts and Handloom is a confluence of activity, development and progress showcasing the traditional arts and crafts of Sikkim. The growth and expansion in terms of physical assets, infrastructure and manpower has been impactful - with 32 branch training centres throughout the State with a total no. of 388 trainees.

The Directorate aims to preserve and showcase the traditional arts and crafts of Sikkim. Promotion and dissemination of information regarding the policy direction of the government for state-of-the-art facilities, skill development and environment friendly working culture is also encouraged. As a policy initiative, there has been tremendous investment in Skill Development Programmes whereby local trainees and artisans are trained in multiple crafts with the objective of acquiring skills which will enable them not only to generate employment but in the long run to acquire self-sufficiency and self-reliance.
Previously, a pure traditional attire in Sikkim showcased ‘bakhu’ which was escorted with cotton or silk belts and leather boots. But over the years, more additions have refined the essence of the outfit in the form of a waistcoat popularly known as ‘jya jya’, ‘shambo’ which is an embroidered cap and a jacket called ‘kushen’. With these new enhancements, the overall look has become more elegant and poised, while retaining the original crust of the attire. Over the years this simple and traditional clothing attire of Sikkim has gone through a substantial change to cater to the needs of the changing generations and the age of modernisation. Women nowadays pair it with a pair of jeans to add a western twist to the look. Shawls popularly known as ‘majetro’ and classy blouse designs like ‘chaubandi cholo’ and ‘tharo cholo’ are also in fashion.

DESIGNS AND THEIR LEGACIES

1. Lepcha Handloom

The handloom of Sikkim is famed for being the origin point of Lepcha handloom, a traditional fabric woven on back-strap loin loom. The weaving is done predominantly by womenfolk of the Lepcha community. The traditional Lepcha fabric is distinguished by intricate and colourful motifs arranged in a vertical striped pattern. It is woven out of yarns made of cotton and wool. In early times, yarn moulded from nettle plant fibres was used for weaving. In ancient times, the Lepchas of Sikkim were said to use yarn spun out of stinging nettle (sisnu) plants to weave clothes. Lepcha women work on traditional back-strap loin looms that bolster the quality of the fabric. The vertical frame loom with a back strap used by the Lepcha women is indigenous to Sikkim. The weave frame is made from...
bamboo or various types of wood which is available locally. Nearly all types of weaves can be woven in the loin loom. On a loin loom, the possibilities of weaving patterns are unlimited. The raw materials used for producing the Lepcha handloom are of two categories - the yarn and the dye. Earlier, highly stingy, but the fibrous nettle plant and coarse silk from the caterpillars in the jungle were used to make yarn for weaving. However, due to the easy availability of cheaper fibres like cotton, the traditional practice of using nettle fibres has ceased to exist over time. In contemporary times, cotton brought in from Assam and wool produced in North Sikkim is used for weaving.

2. Thokro Dum

The main traditional outfit worn by the people of Lepcha tribe is known as ‘Thokro Dum’. It contains a pajama style outfit that is traditionally worn at the calves. ‘Thokro Dum’ is paired with a cap known as ‘shambo’, and a ‘yethatse’ which is a traditional Lepcha shirt. The fabric is usually worn alongside cone-shaped bamboo and rattan hats at weddings as well as frequented at special occasions like festive and religious celebrations. The ‘Thokro Dum’ and its adjacent fabric types are intricately woven - with heritage true to their roots submerged in history and authenticity. The fabric is normally made from fine canes from bamboo, straws and leaves apart from Anok Thakytuk’ which is made from fine velvet cloth. It was used as a traditional headgear of royal soldiers during the regime of the Chogyal dynasty. Even today, this headgear is a must during marriage ceremonies or religious festivals. These are worn as an ode to the royal soldiers who worked hard during the era of Chogyal Dynasty.

3. Daura-Shuruval

The Nepalese men of Sikkim wear this outfit. A long double-breasted garment flows below the waist along with a trouser. The Daura is a variant of the Kurta and is the upper garment, with the Suruwal being the trousers. Askot (a waistcoat) and patuki (a belt) are worn to complement the shuruwal.

In the early years of monarchy in Nepal, government officials used this dress as a national dress. ‘Daura’ is the upper wear - its design distinguishes it from the kurta, which has religious connotations. It has, therefore, remained unchanged for centuries. ‘Suruwal’, the trousers have no religious significance - because they are worn on the lower part of the body. The designs of daura that identify with religious beliefs are the eight strings, five pleats or kallis and its closed neck. Each string represents one of the eight mother goddesses of Hindu religion - Kumari, Mahalaxmi, Barahi, Brahmayani, Indrayani, Maheshwori, Vaishnavi and Byagini. In Sanskrit, the eight mother
They traditionally woven, hand-knotted woollen carpets employ Tibetan designs on upright wooden frame looms. The warp ‘taan’ of the carpet is cotton and is mounted on the upper beams while the woven fabric is wound to the lower beam. Knotting is done, with great skill and dexterity, by looping the woollen thread around the warp, and the rod which is used for looping is placed along the warp. When a motif or a new colour is introduced, the ground colour is cut and the new coloured thread is inserted by twisting into a single wrap thread and looping. The loops are finally cut with a knife and a pile is created. The number of knots per square inch could vary from 40 to 100.

The design is first drawn on the graph paper and later translated in the weaving process. The methods of weaving and the use of decorative motifs and colour schemes are unique to this community. The patterns commonly woven on to the carpets are stylised floral motifs, compositions borrowed from Buddhist iconography, eight Buddhist lucky signs, geometrical designs, and most popularly, Tibetan designs like a dragon holding a ball in his mouth or the two mythical Tibetan birds called the dak and the jira. Tibetan designs have a wide range and each has a significance and name of its own. The overall effect of the carpet is a single, powerful, bold design. Geometrical patterns are created using knots of different colours. Vegetable and natural dyes are still used to obtain the right colours. Besides regular carpets, the Bhutia women also weave small bedside carpets and squares called ‘asans’ to sit on. Their weaving techniques are also being extended to dhurrie-weaving and woollen dhurrie-weaving.

4. Carpet Weaving

The women of the Bhutia community of Sikkim practice the oldest form of carpet weaving in the world. First and foremost, for carpet weaving, all the taan is made from cotton yarn according to the sizes. This is followed by the weaving process that begins according to the design drawn on graph paper. The weaving process is simultaneously in tandem with wooden hammers called flags, which are used to beat the woven wool into place. After the weaving is over, leveling is done with leveling scissor to make the carpet thinner. Finally, the scissoring is done and the carpets are ready, which are then used for covering sofas, beds, walls, chairs, etc.
TRADITIONAL DRESS OF NAGALAND PEOPLE DURING A FESTIVAL
NAGALAND

The state of Nagaland constitutes the Naga Hills district that was once part of Assam, along with the North East Frontier Agency’s Tuensang Frontier Division. Prior to becoming a state, these areas became centrally administered on 1st December 1957, supervised by the President of India through a governance delegation made to Assam’s governor. However, in 1961 it was conferred statehood, with its official inauguration taking place in December 1963.

The people of Nagaland are believed to have descended from the head hunters of the Malay races that once inhabited the Southern seas. In the book ‘Origin and Culture of Nagas’ (1985), R.R. Shimray noted that the Nagas have a fondness for enhancing their dresses with conch and cowrie shells. Furthermore, their traditions and way of life are also very similar to people in Borneo, Malaysia, Indonesia etc., indicative of their origins from somewhere near the sea, if not one of the islands. In fact, the loom used by the people of Nagaland for weaving bears great resemblance to the simple Indonesian loom.

The Nagas have, for a long time, remained isolated from the neighbouring villages, and even their own people at times. This has led to a wide range of varied designs and colours in the clothes that they weave. However, the most common pattern in the clothes of most Naga tribes are vertical stripes in red and black colours. These were made using coarse cotton along with fibre yarn, dyed with home-made dyes. ‘In the olden days the only clothes used by this tribe was loin cloth and the costumes used by males and females were made of coiled cane crinoline, which began at the waist as a number of coils of cane 30 or 40 and it was joined below at the hips by other coils 20 or 30 of fine plaited cone like coarse string. Beneath there was the red and blue striped loincloth 2’10’ long by 10’ wide which went round horizontally and fastened at one side by the upper corners and thus extended a little way down the thigh. This cloth is of the same size and worn in precisely the same way as the loincloths of the women of the large group of Nagas to the west who do not, however, wear the cane coil. (Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Volume IXV Part III Anthropology and Cognate Subject No. 1, 1896).

Unlike most parts of the nation, weaving is exclusive to women in Nagaland. The most common loom is a back strap one that has six sticks. The produce thus created, has come to be used not just for the tribes’ own use but also for trading purposes with other Naga tribes, and in other regions in the country. However, it has been noted that, in recent times, the industrialised manufacturing process using mill-made yarn is quickly replacing indigenous spinning. Nevertheless, weaving still remains a popular vocation.
The textile tradition of Nagaland mainly comprises spinning and weaving, traditionally which are solely attributed to the women in the family. These activities are carried out generally after the first consumption of the new harvest. The state dress of Nagaland is created by using warp colours or by using the method of weft weaving. It constitutes a lower garment for the men, and lower and upper garments for the women.

While the clothes differ greatly between and within Naga tribes, despite all the diversity, red, white and black are common characteristics. This is because for all the Naga tribes, red is seen as the colour of war and the consequent bloodshed. The white in the clothes refers to the peace that follows this violence, and black being symbolic of the dark aspects of human life such as loss, negativity, etc.

Shawls are a common element of Naga wardrobe, and have a central place in Nagaland’s traditional attire, woven as three separate pieces of fabric, to be stitched together later on. This number of fabric becomes two when weaving children’s shawls and women’s skirts. The shawl’s pertinence in Naga culture is also reflected in the fact that the patterns on it appear as per the tribe one belongs to, enabling people to identify each other’s social location. These shawls differ from being plain white in appearance to having elaborate designs. Even within tribes, there are further variations and boundaries. For instance, among the Changs, the dress which is worn by men and women before marriage is called ‘Kaksi Nei’, while newly married people wear the ‘Silang Nei’.

Moreover, common man cannot wear the same shawl as that worn by the head hunter, leading to certain social sanctions in case one fails to adhere to these rules. Tigers are one of the recurring motifs on Naga textiles, in addition to elephants, human heads, weapons and geometric patterns. Zigzag patterns have particular significance in portraying the long convoluted paths taken by warriors in order to engage with enemies’ villages. It is also considered as a natural representation of aggression and forceful temperament. There are times when even the entire story of the wars or attacks is narrated through these motifs on the shawls. The state dress, therefore, plays a critical role in being more than a mere piece of clothing, but an embodiment of the rich and diverse identities of the people of Nagaland, incorporating the tangible and intangible elements of nature.

**SHAWLS AS SYMBOLS OF HETEROGENEOUS NAGA IDENTITIES**

**Tsungkotepsu: Ao Nagas**

Members of the Ao tribe in Nagaland are believed to have the highest levels of literacy among all the Naga tribes. They refer to themselves as Aoer, and primarily inhabit the Mokokchung district within the state, surrounded by the Dikhu river. Ao mythology states that the tribe’s ancestors came out of the surface of the earth at Longterok.

The colours traditionally used in Ao shawls are red, black and white, while the skirts are usually blue in colour. These colours were once obtained using natural dyes made from plants. However, in present times, synthetic dyes have come to be widely used.
The decorative ‘Tungkotepsu’, a warrior shawl, is one of the most prominent in Ao clothing. It is exclusively worn by the male members of the tribe, who have either taken heads during conflicts or those who have made bison sacrifices. On a generic dark base, the fabric has a median white-coloured band, located between contrasting bands of black, white and red. There are at least 5 red broad bands close to each other at the top and bottom of the shawl, while the median band has 6 narrow red-coloured bands on either side of it.

On the median band, there are patterns mostly in black, along with figures of animals such as elephants, tigers and mithun or bison. While the elephant motif is a manifestation of the conquest of spirits over matter, tigers symbolise the bravery and valour of the owner. The bison is a representation of wealth. The horns of bison are also popularly used as motifs on decorative shawls. The horns and head of a bison are even placed above houses of tribe members in honour of dead warriors. The symbols on the median band also constitute human heads to represent the owner’s success in the vocation of head hunting. Other symbols that decorate the shawl are spears to show the weapons used in acts of valour, and roosters to depict the domestic animals owned by the Aos, and the hornbill, which is the traditional bird of the tribe. The shawls are often enhanced with the use of ornaments made out of cowrie shells.

Loramhoushu and Lohe: Chakhesang Nagas

Until recently the Chakhesang tribe was considered as a social group within the Angamis, and were even called the Eastern Angamis. The term ‘Chakhesang’ emerged from the first few letters of its three constituting sub-groups known as Chakru, Kheza and Sangatam. The members of this tribe are known to be good at carpenting, being extremely dexterous at can and bamboo work. They are also considered good at creating brass wares, particularly the ornaments.

For the members of this tribe, wardrobe is an indispensable part of their cultural identity. They make use of the Indonesian tension loom or loin loom for the purpose of weaving. The colours traditionally used by them are red, black, yellow, green and white. Older literature on the tribe states that red colour was derived from plants named tsenyhu, tangmo, tangshi and aozu, while yellow coloured dye came from akhung and athuo.

Loramhoushu is a fabric that has black, green and red stripes, while Lohe has green, red, black and yellow bands. The addition of green has emerged only recently in modern shawls. The motifs used in handicrafts of Chakhesang tribe are spears, diamonds, flesh and ‘nii kongra’. The spear here is a symbol of courage, and is, therefore, only used in warrior shawls for men. Diamond, being a precious stone, is symbolic of aesthetic beauty, good fortune and auspicious things. The ‘nii kongra’, or v-shape motif represents the weapon which is used to shoot arrows in wars, whereas the flesh motif is the manifestation of dead bodies represented as a piece of flesh. The Chakhesang Nagas
also wear short black-coloured shawls that have been decorated with cowrie shells in four bands.

The fourth band here depicts one’s prowess in love, often worn by women.

**Lungpensu: Lotha Nagas**

The Lotha Nagas are among the most prominent tribes in Nagaland, residing in the Wokha district of the state. They are surrounded by the Mokokchung district in the north, Kohima district in the south, Zunheboto district in the east and Assam in the west. The primary occupation of the tribe members is agriculture, along with being excellent craftsmen. The tribe is also known for its varied festivals and ceremonies.

The Lothas are a colourful people with wonderful weaving workmanship. They make use of various different colours such as blue, yellow, green, red, white, black, and so on. The shawls of this tribe are, therefore, equally diverse. They are mainly specific to the number of gennas, or social gatherings for the purpose of achieving certain social status, performed by a member. Someone who has completed the entire series of gennas wears the ‘Lungpensu’. It is a shawl with broad as well as three narrow light blue stripes on a dark blue base. In case one completes the social gatherings by dragging a stone multiple times wears the fabric with four or five narrow strips, which is then called ‘Eshamsu’.

The motifs used here constitute fish tails, diamonds, flowers, etc. The fish tail motif represents prosperity and luck, diamonds symbolise aesthetic beauty and fortune, and flowers depicting the beauty and diversity of the tribe.

**Rongkhim: Yimchunger Nagas**

The term ‘Yimchunger’ refers to someone who has achieved her or his goal in life. The members of this tribe inhabit the Kiphire and Tuensang districts of Nagaland. Some of them even live in the western parts of Myanmar. Those living in Nagaland are also believed to have migrated from the northern parts of Myanmar in a single wave, as one group. The Yimchungers are very passionate about nature and, by extension, agriculture.

They have a number of traditional attires, including ornaments and headgears made of colourful cane and feathers. ‘Rongkhim’ is considered to be one of the most beautiful Yimchunger tribes’ shawls which is worn by men who have taken heads during wars. It is black and red in colour, decorated with narrow stripes of grey at the edges. The red colour in the shawl is believed to represent the enemy’s blood.

Those with 96 designs were adorned by the most reputed of the warriors, while the others wore those that had 64 designs. There are further varieties based on the nature of ‘warriors’ participation in wars. In fact, there is even a special design for when one kills animals, such as a tiger. Such a shawl reflects the stripes of tigers, and when its owner dies, a tiger is created using spitted bamboo and is placed in the person’s grave, covered in the shawl.
A LADY WEAVING TRADITIONAL FABRICS OF MIZORAM
Mizoram is the southernmost landlocked state in North East India sharing its border with three of the other north-eastern states of Manipur, Assam and Tripura in the North. The state also shares 722 kilometres long international borders with Myanmar and Bangladesh. The name of the state is derived from ‘Mizo’, the name of the native inhabitants, and ‘Ram’, which means ‘Land’ in the Mizo language. Thus ‘Mizoram means ‘Land of the Mizos’.

Mizoram was known as ‘Lushai Hills District’ of Assam before it was renamed the ‘Mizo Hills District’ in 1954. In 1972, it became a centrally administered union territory under the name of Mizoram, and in 1987 it achieved statehood. Mizoram is one of three states of India with a Christian majority (87 percent). The state has a literacy rate of nearly 90 percent.

About 95 percent of Mizoram’s population are descendants from a diverse tribal origin immigrating from Southeast Asia since 16th century. These groups are loosely called Mizo, a local term meaning “highlanders.” Among the most prominent of state tribes are the Luseis, Hmars, Paites, Pawis, and Maras. Most of the Mizo are Tibeto-Burman people, speaking Mizo or a closely related Tibeto-Burman language or dialect. The Duhlian dialect, also known as the Lusei, was the first language of Mizoram and has come to be known as the Mizo language. One group in the state, however, the Chakma, speaks an Indo-Aryan language. Mizo, English and Hindi are the official languages. Mizoram is a land of rolling hills, valleys, rivers and lakes with as many as 21 major hill ranges or peaks of different heights. Mizoram has the highest percentage area (90.68 percent) covered by forests with two national parks and six wildlife sanctuaries – Blue Mountain (Phawngpui) National Park, Dampa Tiger Reserve, Lengteng Wildlife Sanctuary, Murlen National Park, Ngengpui Wildlife Sanctuary, Tawi Wildlife Sanctuary, Khawnglung Wildlife Sanctuary, and Thorangtlang Wildlife Sanctuary.

Weaving is an internal part of the Mizo culture and the women are very proficient in weaving from an early age. They normally use the loin loom to weave traditional clothes. Just like other parts of Northeast region, weaving and other associated work are entirely carried out by women during their free time.

Cheraw dance is the famous traditional cultural dance of the state. It is popularly known as bamboo dance as it consists of six to eight people holding pairs of bamboo staves on top of horizontally placed bamboo on the ground. The male performers clap the bamboos rhythmically while groups of female dancers in colourful costumes and headgear dance expertly between the beating bamboos. Similar dances are found in eastern Asia and in the Philippines. It is believed that the Cheraw dance originated sometime in 1st century AD and was performed in rituals to provide solace to the soul of a deceased mother who had passed on leaving her new-born child on earth. However, these traditional beliefs have diluted now and the dance is performed as part of many festivals.
STATE DRESS -

Puans are the traditional dress of Mizoram. There are many kinds of Puans, and each colour, motif and design have a traditional and cultural significance to the Mizos. Worn by both men and women, “Puan” means ‘cloth’ in the native language. Production clusters in Mizoram include Serchhip district (Thenzawl), and Aizawl district (Aizawl). The weaving is done by women on the loin loom. Sometimes, Puan is also occasionally woven on a frame loom or a Zo loom. The weaving in the loin loom is done in two parts, and the fabric is later stitched together. Frame handlooms produce single width fabrics.

The traditional way of wearing a puan is to wrap it around oneself from the waist to the ankle. The length of the puan is normally sixty to sixty-five inches. It takes a week or more to finish a plain puan, and a month or more for one with patterns, on a loin loom.

‘Puan Laisen’ is a traditional wedding, festival and dance costume, with a red horizontal section in the middle. The ‘Puan Hruih’ has a white background with black stripes and is worn by both men and women. The ‘Puandum’ is black, while its edges are red. The ‘Tawlhlopuan’ is black, with red, yellow and white strips, denoting bravery. Patterns like ginger flower, stars, roses, tiger’s skin etc are traditional motifs and designs used in the weaving of Mizo puan.

Men in Mizoram like to live a simple life. This also reflects in their traditional clothing. They dress up in a long piece of cloth, almost 7 feet long and 5 feet wide. It is worn as follows: – one corner is grasped in the left hand and the cloth is passed over the left shoulder, behind the back, under the right arm across the chest and the end thrown over the left shoulder. During the winter season, additional clothing is draped like a coat which comes down from the throat enveloping till the thighs. Red and white-coloured coats are mostly preferred by the Mizo males. During the summer months, they wear outfits around their waist to make themselves comfortable. The males of Lusei tribe consider only cotton made clothing, cultivated in the region itself.

The dress of the chief is the same as that of the common people, except on occasions of ceremony, when they wear dark blue cloths, with red lines of a particular pattern and plumes made of the tail feathers of the king crow, in their hair knots. These plumes are very much priced and are kept most carefully in bamboo tubes and leather caps.
DESIGNS/MOTIFS AND THEIR LEGACY

1. Thangchhuah puan

The ‘Thangchhuah puan’ is no ordinary Puan and can be worn only by those who had earned the highly coveted ceremony of Thangchhuah, a ceremony which was so excessively expensive and complicated that it could be performed only by the exceptionally brave hunters or the exceptionally wealthy. The use has been diluted now.

In order to qualify to wear Thangchhuah Puan, a person was required to kill certain animals, or be able to throw a number of lavish feasts for the entire village from his own produce in the field. A small turban in the similar design called ‘Thangchhuah diar’ also exists. Interestingly, those who performed the Thangchhuah were allowed to have a window in their house, as in typical Mizo houses there were no windows, since it was believed this would prevent the entry of evil spirits and demons.

A paper published by Fraser and Fraser in Textile Society of America (2012) delves into the different designs of ‘Thangchhuah Puan’. The qualifying feasts, in a prescribed series, becomes more elaborate, requiring more days, more animal sacrifices, more eating and drinking, and more cost. There are five separate feasts:

• ‘Chong’ lasting 4 days and during which two boars and a sow are killed;
• ‘She-doii’ lasting 3 days during which one mithan (a jungle ox) is killed
• ‘Mi-thi-rawp-lam’ and ‘She-doii’ each lasting 4 days each during which mithans are killed
• ‘Khuang-choi’ lasting 4 days during which at least 3 mithans must be killed.

A person may qualify by slaying enemies and certain large game animals including a bear, an elephant, a wild mithan, a boar, a barking deer, a king cobra, a particular type of hawk, and a sambhur. A Mizo man who has either hosted two complete series of five communal feasts or killed the entire series of wild animals attains the greatest merit and the right for himself and his wife to pass directly to Pial ral (heaven). Only he may build a veranda at the back of his house, place a window in his house and build an additional shelf near his bed. Such a man is known as a ‘Thangchhuahpa’.

The “dark blue cloths with red lines of particular pattern” can be worn only by a Mizo Thangchhuahpa. They are made of indigo-dyed, handspun, locally grown cotton and woven on a back-tension loom by women. The designs may vary a little depending on the Mizo tribe.

2. Puanchei Puan

‘Puanchei’ is the most colourful of the Puans and is a prized possession of every Mizo lady. This is always a part of bridal trousseau, besides being the most commonly used costume in their festive dances. It has received GI tag under the Government of India’s Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade.
Interestingly, many designs of traditional Mizo Puans are found in Puanchei. The two beautiful deep black compactly woven woollen bands of the ‘Ngotekherh’ appear here. Besides these black bands, a number of deep red woollen bands, each about two to three centimetres wide, are also woven vertically with similar compactness on the two edges of the Puan. However, none of the coloured threads on the warp are allowed to make their appearance against these black and red woollen bands. As against the other Puans, the Puanchei is woven in three pieces instead of two and sewn together very delicately to make a continuous whole fabric. The piece which forms the middle one is narrower than the other two pieces and contains the striped patterns with embroidery work throughout the length of the Puan. This resembles the design of the Thangchhuah Puan, artistically incorporated in the Puanchei.

There are two black stripes at the two extreme ends of the piece along the length, next to which in the inner side run two narrower white stripes with Disul-pattern embroidered work thereon. Next to these embroidered stripes, run deep green stripes. Between these two green stripes, there is a pair of red stripes, each almost double the breadth of the green ones separated from them by very thin yellow lines. Between these two broad red stripes, there is a white stripe embroidered with similar Disul pattern. On the middle piece across its breadth, one can see a large number of red and white stripes separated by very thin lines of green, yellow, blue and pink colours. Running breadth wise, these stripes make a right angle with the main stripes and are covered with the Disul patterns of embroidery work — shaped like diamond and square. The two pieces on either side of the middle piece are exactly similar, sewn on either side of it.

### 3. Tawlloh Puan

The ‘Tawlloh Puan’ was historically worn by men who had earned merit during a war with other tribes. It is like a medal or badge of honour. Tawlloh-Puan is another piece of beautifully woven fabric by Mizo Kuki tribes that has got GI tag. ‘Tawlloh’ in Mizo dialect implies to stand firm, not change position and/or not move backward. Tawlloh Puan was thus referred to the never-turning-back attitude of a warrior, who would put it on. It was a cloth that could not be donned by anyone except a very courageous warrior who had established for himself a reputation for such bravery. Even during colonial times, these warriors put on the puan when facing the British soldiers as a token of their resistance and to maintain their traditional dignity.

In its original design, Tawlloh Puan used to be a cloth about two metres in length and about one and a half metres in breadth, with a white surface. Four black stripes were made of four inter-twisted threads that gave a chain like appearance to the stripes. Two of these chain-like stripes running breadth wise were so arranged that they divided the whole cloth into three equal portions. The other two stripes were woven along the vertical edges of the Puan, again running over its whole length in such a way that they divided the cloth into three equal portions. Sometimes, the colour combination could be altered by making the breadth wise stripes red and the length wise ones black.
However, in course of time, this puan began to be used by ladies and rich people in times of festive occasions like marriages and the original significance attached to this cloth started to diminish, giving place to a new significance and status value of it.

The Mara tribe of Mizoram wear very distinct and extremely intricately woven Puan and blouse with lots of metal ornaments. One of the most popular and exquisite puans among the Mara tribe, who inhabit the southern part of the state, is ‘Chyna Hno’. It is quite expensive and a prized possession not only among the Mara women, but among the entire Mizo community. The design has closely placed diamond patterns which are made of tiny dots.

The Lakhers are physically well built and strong. The average height of the men is about 5 feet and 6 inches. They are taller than the Lushais and their physical fitness compares very favorably with that of their neighbours. The women are taller than Lushai women and stronger. The Lakhers have brown complexion and are darker than the Lushais. They have broad noses, high cheek bones and mongoloid eyes.

The Lakher population is concentrated in the Mara Autonomous District Council (MADC) area, situated in the southernmost part of Mizoram. The Lakhers are also found in the Chin State (formerly Chin Hills) of Myanmar (formerly Burma). There are various conjectures as to the origin of the name Mara. Probably it came from 'Mirang', a name of one of the hordes of the tribes presently inhabiting the Arakan Hills. The Mirangs who migrated from central and eastern Burma were also called Rakhong or Kalasa or Mara. The Lushais call themselves Mara, but the Lushais call them Lakhers. The term appears to have originated from the practice of plucking cotton.

The Lushais used to pluck cotton from the fruit with their hands whereas the Lakhers did it with a stick. The name Lakhers came from this method of plucking cotton with stick, la meaning 'cotton' and kher meaning 'to pluck or remove with stick'.

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WOMEN WEAVING ASSAMESE SILK COSTUMES IN A TRADITIONAL METHOD IN A MANUFACTURING UNIT AT NAGAON, ASSAM.
The name Assam is supposed to have been derived from the word ‘asama’ meaning ‘peerless’ in the Ahom language. Assam is the largest of the northeastern states in terms of population and second in terms of area. The state is bordered by Bhutan and the state of Arunachal Pradesh to the north; Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur to the east; Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram, and Bangladesh to the south; and West Bengal to the west. This geographical position of Assam makes it a natural gateway to the Northeast region and offers opportunity to act as a vital trade link with Southeast Asian countries.

Interestingly, the state which is shaped like a T or a slightly flattened Y, contains three physiographic divisions of India – The Northern Himalayas (Eastern Hills), The Northern Plains (Brahmaputra plain), and the Deccan Plateau (Karbi Anglong). The 700-km long mighty Brahmaputra is inextricably woven into the Assamese identity.

The State is one of the richest biodiversity zones in the world being one of the two biodiversity “Hot Spots” in the country. About 300 types of medicinal herbs and plants are found in abundance in the state. Assam has abundant mineral resources like coal, petroleum; limestone, and natural gas. It is also the largest producer of crude oil in India. The state accounts for over 50 percent of the country’s overall tea production - constituting around one-seventh of the global tea production. The wildlife sanctuaries in the state attract large number of tourists every year, particularly the two UNESCO World Heritage sites the Kaziranga National Park and the Manas Wildlife Sanctuary.

Assam has been known as silkworm rearing and weaving centre since ancient times. Recent findings of Muga silk fragments in Harappa, and Mohenjo-Daro towns of the Indus Valley Civilisation, dating back to 2400-2500 BCE, have been traced to Assam. Even Arthashastra, Harshacharita and Yogini Tantra mentions golden silk threads of Assam and the ancient silk routes. The silk industry in Assam reached its peak under the Ahom kings in fifteenth century. The textile sector continues to play an important role in the state’s economy even today. Weaving in Assam, with the exception in Suwalkuchi, has always been a feminine craft with about 90 percent of weavers being women.

The state has been traditionally producing three different kinds of silks – Muga, Eri and Mulberry (Paat) silks. The Muga silk of Assam obtained a Geographical Indication (GI) protection in 2007 in India and the same was renewed in 2017. Thus, Muga silk is primarily grown in Assam. The natural golden sheen of Muga is its USP which is not found in any other silk. Moreover, it is more durable, strong and supple. Almost 87 percent of India’s total Eri silk production happens in Assam. Eri silk has excellent thermal insulating property that is rare in any other textiles. The Mulberry silk is inherently popular because of its high quality, gentle sheen and resilient yarn. However, the Mulberry silk production in the state has been declining over the years. Assamese culture can be considered as a rich and exotic tapestry woven by assimilating different races over time.
Assam has been the melting pot of people of diverse ethnic and linguistic origins — Austroasiatic, Mongolid, Dravidian, and Indo-Aryan. There is a certain commonality in the clothes worn by women and men of different tribes of Assam and general population. Most women wear two-piece attire. The traditional dress of Women in the state consists of some form of wrap-around skirt (stitched like Mekhela or unstitched like the Pini) with a second large piece to cover the upper part like sador, pekok or cheleng. The breast cloth is now replaced by modern blouse. The tribes also have traditional head gears, belts or sling bags. Even though traditional Assamese dresses are woven in white or off-white base, the tribal dresses use more vibrant colours.

The most common traditional dress of Assam is ‘Mekhela-Sador’ worn with a blouse. The ‘Mekhela’ is a stitched skirt that is worn over an underskirt (petticoat) with usually three pleats at the front. The upper piece of cloth is called ‘Sadar’ that is about 3 metres long. It is draped over left shoulder, wrapped around the body and tucked into the mekhela. There is, also, a third piece called ‘Riha’ that is worn in the upper part under the sador. Riha is narrower but longer than the Sador. This is now worn only during marriage ceremonies or festivals. Sometimes, Bihu dancers, wear Riha instead of Sadors. The motifs woven at the ends of Riha are also very distinct.

Most men from the state wear traditional dresses only during ceremonial celebrations. The Assamese men traditionally wear a short shirt or kurta called ‘Sula’ and dhoti on the lower part called ‘Suria’ along with a scarf known as ‘Seleng’.

The traditional textile of Assam is not complete without a mention of ‘Gamusa’ which has great significance in the culture. Gamusa, literally, means ‘something to wipe the body with’. It is a rectangular piece of white cloth with red plain borders on two sides and red woven motifs on the ends. Gamosa is used to welcome guests, show respect and cover scriptures or religious books. It is also used as a head dress, scarf or as a tangali around the waist.

DESIGNS/MOTIFS AND THEIR LEGACY

The design motifs of Assam have been influenced by Ahoms, Mughals and various tribes like Bodos, Mising, Karbis etc. Other Indian influences are also observed in designs like the kolosi (pot) and ambi (mango or paisley) motifs. The textiles, in addition to having the primay motifs, have a border design (kaxori) which is either a floral creeper motif or geometric pattern which are very typically Assamese.

1. Kinkhap

The ‘Kinkhap’ (or xingkhap) motif is one of the most popular motifs of Assamese weave – considered very regal and resplendent. Traditionally, Kinkhap motifs were woven in gold and silver thread but nowadays, these motifs are done in different coloured threads. It is widely believed that this design is adopted from the Ahom dynasty. The motif consists of two lions facing each other within an elaborate floral design symbolizing courage, bravery and royalty. There are other variations of the motif but the one with lions is symbolic of the Ahom kingdom. Kinkhap motif woven in golden zari on white or off-white mulberry silk is the most preferred ensemble for Assamese brides.
Bodos are one of the 17 dominant ethnic groups belonging to the great Kachari race. They are one of the earliest settlers of the Brahmaputra valley, believed to have migrated some 3,000 years ago from the Bod province of Tibet. They are of Mongoloid stock. The Bodo Territorial Council, an autonomous area, was created in 2003 covering several districts on north-western side of Brahmaputra. They speak Boro language of the Tibeto-Burman family, which is recognised as one of twenty-two scheduled languages in the Indian Constitution. The tribe practices Bathouism, a form of ancestor worship. Their popular folk dance is known as the Bagurumba, which mimics the movements of the fluttering butterflies, and hence is also referred to as the 'Butterfly Dance'.

The Bodo-Kachari were also some of the first people to rear silkworms and produce silk material and practiced advanced systems in rice cultivation in Assam. Eri silk is extensively used by the Bodos. Typical attire of Bodo woman is called Dokhona (about 3.25 metre long and 1.4 metres wide) that is worn from chest to angle. Traditional colour is deep yellow with fine stripes in green, maroon and red. However, Dokhanas are available in all colours now. Sometimes small motifs (Agors) are woven on the border. A wrap called ‘jomgra’ covers the shoulder which has motifs of sun, hills, ferns, flowers and spiders. The men wear dhoti, short shirt and Aronai.

2. Hawj in Aronai

‘Hawj’ motif is synonymous with ‘Aronai’, a small stole (1.5 X 0.25 metres) worn by both men and women of Bodo (pronounced as Boro) tribes in varied styles depending on the occasion. Most popular colour scheme is green with yellow motifs but other coloured ones are available too. Bodo warriors used to adorn aronais woven by their wives around their waist as a belt during battle. During dancing, it is worn on one side of the shoulder and tied with another aronai worn around the waist. During felicitation ceremonies, it is simply worn on the neck. Different flowery designs, known as agor, are woven into an aronai in varied colours. The ‘Hajwagor’ is the main agor used on the edges of an aronai. Without it, it is not an aronai. The Hajw motifs, a series of triangles, represent the hills that are seen around them.

Bodos are one of the 17 dominant ethnic groups belonging to the great Kachari race. They are one of the earliest settlers of the Brahmaputra valley, believed to have migrated some 3,000 years ago from the Bod province of Tibet. They are of Mongoloid stock. The Bodo Territorial Council, an autonomous area, was created in 2003 covering several districts on north-western side of Brahmaputra. They speak Boro language of the Tibeto-Burman family, which is recognised as one of twenty-two scheduled languages in the Indian Constitution. The tribe practices Bathouism, a form of ancestor worship. Their popular folk dance is known as the Bagurumba, which mimics the movements of the fluttering butterflies, and hence is also referred to as the 'Butterfly Dance'.

The Bodo-Kachari were also some of the first people to rear silkworms and produce silk material and practiced advanced systems in rice cultivation in Assam. Eri silk is extensively used by the Bodos. Typical attire of Bodo woman is called Dokhona (about 3.25 metre long and 1.4 metres wide) that is worn from chest to angle. Traditional colour is deep yellow with fine stripes in green, maroon and red. However, Dokhanas are available in all colours now. Sometimes small motifs (Agors) are woven on the border. A wrap called ‘jomgra’ covers the shoulder which has motifs of sun, hills, ferns, flowers and spiders. The men wear dhoti, short shirt and Aronai.

3. Gero

The ‘Gero’ (1.8x0.9 meter) is a rich woven piece of cloth worn by married women of Mishing tribe over the ‘Ege’ or ‘Mekhela’. The intricately woven multicoloured motifs are at the centre of the garment. It is an important part of bridal outfit.
The Mishing women are expert weavers known for their opulent weaves. Mishing handloom is a rhapsody of colours in intricate extra weft weaving. The weaves have two main components— the ghai and konger. ‘Ghai’ is the main pattern whereas ‘konger’ is the repeat pattern. The weaving motifs and patterns are inspired by nature. Interestingly, they mostly weave with cotton, though they also use locally cultivated eri and mulberry yarns. They are the only tribe that can weave in seven colours simultaneously. The base colour is black, red or white.

The Mishing women wear ‘Ege’ or ‘Mekhela’ from waist to angle. Traditionally, eges are woven in black with motifs in red, yellow and white. The traditional design consists of diamonds and flowers forming the main border and smaller motifs or butas are woven above the border in a pattern. The ‘Ribi-Gacheng’ or sador is worn over the ege which is woven with stripes with geometric motifs of diamonds. The men wear dhoti with beautifully woven sleeveless jackets.

Mishings are the second largest tribes in Assam after the Bodos. The Mishings speak the Tani language, part of the Tibetan-Burman family of languages. The Mishings came down to Brahmaputra valley from the hills of Arunachal Pradesh around 13th and 14th centuries. They had migrated from northwest China to India around 2000 BCE. Mishing population is predominantly spread out in upper Assam (Eastern Assam). They practise animism and ancestor worship. Do-ni, the Sun and Polo, the Moon are the main god and goddess of the Mishing Tribes. They believe in spirits called ‘Uii’ which are manifested in nature – in mountains, rivers and ponds. Ali Ai Ligang is the main festival of the Mishings associated with sowing of paddy.

4. Jambili Athon

The ‘Jambili Athon’ is a popular traditional Karbi motif. The motif has five birds sitting on a tree (Jambili Athon) with five branches representing the five sub clans of the Karbi community - the Engtis, Terangs, Timungs, Terons, and Lekhtes. This design is usually found on the sleeveless jackets of men called ‘choy’.

The womenfolk wear pini (a piece of black cloth that covers the upper part of the body which dangles to the calves), while rikong (a piece of cloth wrapped around the waist) is the customary dress for men. Karbi textiles are deeply influenced by tribes like the Nagas, Khasis and Kacharis with whom they have always been in close contact.

The Karbi tribes with their distinctive life style dominate the Karbi Anglong district of Assam. They belong to greater Mongoloid racial stock and linguistically they belong to the Tibeto-Burman group. It is also believed that they came from central Asia during the first wave of migration. The religious orientation of Karbi is animist but now slowly they have started to follow the Hindu religion, Christianity and Vaishnava. Rongker and Hacha Kekar are the two festivals of the Karbi tribe which have agricultural significance.
MONPA LADY WEAVING A TRADITIONAL HAND LOOM IN BOMDILA, ARUNACHAL PRADESH.
Arunachal Pradesh, the land of dawn-lit mountains is in the extreme north-eastern corner of India situated at the eastern end of the Himalayas. Spread over an area of 83,743 sq. km, it is the largest of the North-Eastern states and 14th largest in India.

Arunachal Pradesh is bordered by Bhutan in the west, China in the north and north-east and Myanmar on the east and south-east. The state has total 1680 km long international border which includes 1080 km with China, 160 km with Bhutan and 440 km with Myanmar. The state also has inter-State borders with Nagaland in the east, south-east and Assam in the south.

The state is ethno-linguistically rich with 26 major tribes and more than 100 subtribes distributed across 26 districts. It has distinct socio-cultural lifestyle. Each tribes have its own distinct language, belief systems and culture very rich in the handloom weaving sector.

According to the All-India Handloom Census 2019, Arunachal Pradesh has 93,314 handloom worker households (HWH) wherein one or more than one member of the family derives their livelihood from the handloom sector. In the trade of Weaving alone, Arunachal Pradesh records a total of 77, 574 weavers in the state.

Traditional handloom is an old practice of indigenous community and has been used since time immemorial. The designs and motifs of traditional weaving of the region are vibrant, attractive, and unique with myriad pattern simple and yet quite complex.

Each tribe has different colour and unique design sensibilities symbolising their identity and significance. The intricate motifs and designs the combination of colours all reflect the social status and ethnic origins of the people.
intricate handloom designs, skills in cane and bamboo crafts, and vibrant traditional village councils called bulyañ.

The loin loom technique locally called ‘Chichin’ made up of Phyllostachys bamusoides and Pinus sp is the traditional weaving practice used for many generations for making traditional attires (shawl, gale, coat, tie, blouse etc) such as ‘Bilan Abi’, ‘Chinyu Abi’, ‘Jig Jiro’, ‘Zikhe Tarii’, ‘Zilang Pulye’, ‘Pisa Lenda’ etc. These traditional attires are used in various cultural occasions like Myoko festival, Dree festival, marriage ceremonies etc.

The eponymous cotton weave of Apatani tribe has nature-inspired geometric designs, with blue, dark blue, red, and yellowish orange being the predominant colour. In particular, red (either flame-red or dark-red) is the dominant color of several female ceremonial garments. In the past colours were obtained using various plant dyes from species such as tamin (Rubia cordifolia; red-orange colour) and sankhii (Eurya acuminata var. euprista; brownish-yellow colour). Indigo blue, which constitutes the dominant colour of male ceremonial garments, was obtained from a plant called yang. Today all organic dyes have been replaced with synthetic dyes.

The traditional attire for festive or ritual occasions has deep intricate patterns and motifs consist of simple straight lines with use of broad bands alternating with narrow lines, nearly always horizontal dec black in colour and decorated with an over-all pattern of white/orange diamonds and orange and white stripes interconnected and enhanced in various ways.

1. Hand knotted Buddhist Carpet Making

Carpet weaving is a high degree of skill and dexterity and is predominantly woven by the women weavers of Buddhist community in West Kameng and Tawang district. Locally known as ‘Thrisho Tan’, the hand knotted Buddhist Carpet Making is an age-old tradition inherited from Tibet. Traditionally, it was made from pure highland sheep’s wool but now a days it is made from dyed spun wool mixed with synthetic fibres. The knotting method in Buddhist carpet making is different from that used in other carpet making traditions worldwide. Hand knotting is done meticulously by tying every single knot in a specially designed loom. Vertical cotton threads are tied onto the looms which eventually became the warp or the fringe of the carpet.

Traditionally, the motifs of carpets consisted of two classes: the first type being simple geometric motifs and the other derived from decorative tradition which are relatively restrained in terms of design and colouring due to limited range of dyes at that time. However, due to easy availability of wider range of synthetic colours to carpet weavers have amplified the production of new and more complex designs. In fact, the design orientation and colour mix of this craft has got high profile to explore in domestic as well as international market.

2. Apatani Textile

The Apatani tribe is one of the major ethnic groups from the magnificent Ziro Valley of Arunachal Pradesh. The tribe is known for its colorful culture with various festivals,
3. Nyishi Textile

The Nyishi community is one of the major and single largest ethnic groups of the state which inhabits as many as five districts of Arunachal Pradesh. The people basically belong to Paleo-Mongoloid stock and speak the Tibeto-Burmese group of language.

The traditional handloom of Nyishi tribe is locally known as ‘Rubung Ruekio’. It is a type of loin loom operated by a single weaver and considered as traditional practice of Nyishi tribe.

Gale is one of the most important cultural attire of Nyishi. It is a traditional dress worn by women especially as lower garment. It is generally made of Eri silk, Muga silk, wool, cotton and even beads. There are six major types of gales woven by the Nyishi tribes namely ‘Pomo gale’, ‘Dumping gale’, ‘Jekum gale’, ‘Jinjab gale’, ‘Juhu gale’ and ‘Luch gale’.

Each gale is intricated with different motifs and design such as ‘bump’, ‘dumping’, ‘jinjab’, ‘juhu’, ‘pomo’, ‘putu’ etc symbolises and represents the cultural significance with different colour combinations. These motifs describe the proximity to the nature, the mountains, ornaments, and cucumber seeds etc.

Even the nomenclature of the Nyishi gales is based on the type of motifs woven on the gale. Women commonly weave two types of gales—

(a) gale with single motif like Pomo gale, Dumping gale, Juhu gale, Luch gale;

(b) gale with multiple motifs such as Muko-khum, Luch, Putu, Dumping, Juhu etc. In Jekum gale four motifs are used namely Muko-Khum, Luch,
perhaps be symbolical of the introverted nature of the people. These varied motifs are woven onto their coats, wraparounds, shawls, and bags, among others. Idu Mishmi coats usually have a common border design of rows of opposed triangles meeting at the tips and forming lozenges between them. Their coats and often their bags also have designs of crosses of the saltire-like crosses.

4. Idu-Mishmi Textiles

The Idu-Mishmi is a sub-tribe belonging to the Mishmi Group (which also includes the Digaru-Mishmi or Taraons and the Miju-Mishmi or Kamans). The Tibeto-Burman speaking Idu Mishmi are of Mongoloid stock. They reside in the Lohit district, Upper Dibang Valley district and prominently in the Lower Dibang Valley district of Arunachal Pradesh. The Idu-Mishmi have a distinctive sense of aesthetics, with their own artistic patterns embedded into their attire. On the 9th October 2018, the Idu Mishmi textile obtained the geographical indication (GI) tagging through the efforts of the Idu Mishmi Cultural and Literary Society (MCLS). This was a landmark step to promote indigenous weaving by authenticating the owners of the designs and the motifs of their textiles and making it illegal and punishable to copy/replicate these patented weaves.

Idu-Mishmi weaving is rather elaborate and involves various intricate geometric patterns. These perhaps symbolise the systematic nature of its socio-religious system. There is extensive use of motifs such as straight forward lines, stripes and bands of different size, colour and arrangement. The tribe also incorporate elaborate diamond designs, arranged in a myriad of combinations (e.g., printed with plain, diamond within diamond, etc.) The diamonds nestled within each other may perhaps be symbolical of the introverted nature of the people. These varied motifs are woven onto their coats, wraparounds, shawls, and bags, among others. Idu Mishmi coats usually have a common border design of rows of opposed triangles meeting at the tips and forming lozenges between them. Their coats and often their bags also have designs of crosses of the saltire-like crosses.

Etopola & Thuma

The ‘Etopola’ is a traditional jacket consisting of a geometric motif on the back which is worn by the females of the Idu Mishmi sub-tribe. Its warp is of cotton and the weft is wool.

The ‘Thuma’ is the traditional wraparound worn by women, from the waist and reaching the ankle. Its length is usually one and a half metres. It is painstakingly woven over a period of around two months and it is relatively expensive and worn only on festive occasions. It consists of a mixture of intricate traditional weaves, incorporating plain as well as intricate geometric patterns in an array of colours.

Aetokozo

‘Aetozo’ or ‘Etojo’ is the traditional jacket worn by Idu Mishmi men. Its weaves are composed of a top broad band, followed by a vertical lozenge pattern weave called ‘Abizo’, and at the end a consecutive placement of 6 lines or bands representing different motifs of Idu Mishmi weaving craft. ‘Jo’ is the term for all motifs whereas ‘Aphuzoo’ is the term for border, outline or boundary motifs.

Slight distinctions in the motif changes their symbolism. Idu-Mishmi people have specific motifs for children, teenagers, adults. Upon seeing a motif, the indigenous
Wancho women are expert spinners and weavers. They use drop spindle for spinning cotton yarn and simple loin loom for weaving. Two important centres of Arunachal Pradesh preparing traditional dresses commercially are Khunsa and Kanubari of Longding District. However, the tradition of spinning gradually subsided due to the introduction of mill-made yarn. Apart from cotton, Wancho women also made use of a variety of vegetable fibres. They often prepare dyes from juices if jungle plants. The Wancho people have a remarkable and vibrant sense of colour combinations. They weave beautiful bags, cotton blankets, and sashes, besides dresses.

Further, like the Konyaks and other nearby tribes, the Wanchos practised head hunting and this traditional form of resistance and fearlessness was reflected in their textile designs, such as on their bags and sashes which have geometrical designs associated with head hunting. There are also certain kinds of bags that can only be carried by members of a head-hunter’s family.

**Traditional Attire Of Wancho Men & Women**

The Wancho tribe is rich in variety of traditional dresses. An insight into Wancho people’s traditional dresses and ornaments makes it prominent that the male and the female have special attires. Like the Konyaks, it was not unusual for both men and women to expose part of their body above the waist. The Wancho men have relatively lesser number of attires. The dress of a Wancho man often comprises of a loin cloth and a shoulder band. The piece of cloth, similar to a wrapper and worn around the waist by the Wancho men is called *Khiya-Hit.* (Khiya means waist and hit means wrapping) It is made from...
The Wancho headgear worn for ordinary everyday purpose is a type of conical bamboo head dress in shape. The small bag carried by the Wancho men on their shoulder while presenting their dance in the villager's homes during Oriya festival is called Dakhau-Pak. Multi-coloured flower designs are woven on this bag. It is also ornamented with ivory and bird's feathers. The Wancho men wear different and varied kinds of ornaments. Male ornaments are limited to small beads garland, bead chains, bracelets (made of beads, long leaves of grass etc).

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Another important dress worn by Wancho men is the sleeveless Nefa coat. The name was given by the British. These coats are prepared by the women at their homes but are now also available in the market. The colour of a Nefa-Coat is generally black but nowadays varied colours of Nefa Coats can be found. The piece of cloth resembling a shirt and worn on the upper body is called Nyipong. These are woven at home by the women. Nyipong can either have sleeves or be sleeveless and with sleeves. Nyibun is a shawl which is worn by the Wancho men to protect themselves from cold. It resembles Assamese Eri shawl. Designs of elephants tooth, tiger, tiger head, wild boar's tooth, khohom and so on can be found in a Nyibun.

The Wancho males and females also wore headdresses. The Khupong is the ordinary one while the Likhasan is the expensive one, decorated with beads, furs, and tusks of wild boars. The Wanchos allow only members of the chiefs' family to wear a certain type of blue head on the arms and legs and have special design for their headbands. The cap worn by the Wancho men is called Khohom. It is generally made from bamboo, fargesia, cloth and animal skin. After attending the Khia Tham Festival at the age of 17, a young Wancho male child acquires the eligibility to wear a khohom. However, Khohom is also worn during dancing in the Oriya festival. It can also be worn casually.

The traditional dresses of the Wancho women, who are weaving experts, also reflect unique features. The piece of cloth, similar to a skirt, worn by the Wancho women around their waist is called Nyikhex. A bride wears it on her wedding day. It is woven at homes and also prepared commercially. The piece of cloth draped around their shoulders is called the Nyisa. It is made from wool and many different colours of Nyisa can be found. It is greater in length and lesser in breadth. Nyipong resembles a top and is worn on the upper part of the body. It is made from wool at homes by the women. Nyipong can either have sleeves or be sleeveless and with sleeves. Nyibun is a shawl which is worn by the Wancho men to protect themselves from cold. It resembles Assamese Eri shawl. Designs of elephants tooth, tiger, tiger head, wild boar's tooth, khohom and so on can be found in a Nyibun.

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collectively call themselves as ‘Adi’ meaning ‘hill people’. The Adis belong to the Austro-Mongoloid race and are good looking, sturdy and vigorous residing in East Siang and the lower part of Lower Dibang Valley district.

The traditional loin loom of the Adi is called Gekong Galong and it is used for making varied traditional products like Skirt (Gale), Shirt (Galuk), cotton shawl, side bag, curtain cloth, badu (blanket). These Adi attires are considered prestigious and are attached with belief and spiritual aspects.

The ‘Gekong’ is a square-shaped long stick chosen from the local eyum and hilika tree. One section is the bamboo pipe. Women get the bamboo for the taapping which is a bamboo stick wrapped in thread and the gepang/gatak, the waist belt used in gale making, is made of rope developed from the Marapat plant.

The Adis concentrate on simple lines and have variety of patterns such as there are arrangements of red and black stripes on a white background; white and yellow stripes on a black ground; alternate bands of red and black or of olive-green and brown; broad border-bands of brown with a central narrow strip of black and white, the body of the cloth being with brown and white stripes at three-inch intervals. The Adi bands, whether vertical or horizontal, are often enhanced by a sort of hatching-rows of coloured dots, frets and single lines of different colours. Tiny vertical bars of red and black serve as space-fillers in the horizontal bands or even the narrow stripes. Different shades are achieved by mixing threads of black with other colours, and by closer or looser weaves.

**Traditional Motifs on Wancho Bags and Sashes**

Wancho bags have a vibrant mixture of deep red, yellow, black and green colours against a white or solid plain background. Wancho bags usually have triangle-shaped designs closely associated with grid and diamond patterns. The Wanchos are also very fond of weaving zig-zag patterns onto the sashes by which they used to carry their baskets as well as their bags.

The Zigzag designs among the Wancho are said to represent their natural aggressive and forceful temperament. Wancho bags also contain herring-bone designs, cross motifs as well as the Lozenge or the diamond patterns. They are either found in horizontal rows and linked together or as unconnected pieces wherein they may represent leaves. Human figures are rarely woven. However, simple geometric designs are certainly associated with head hunting are incorporated rather realistically on Wancho bags and sashes.

**Traditional Motifs on comforters and shawls**

Shawls and comforters are handwoven by Wancho women from the Patkai hills of Longding District. They are meticulously and painstakingly woven over a period of at least a week per piece. These are also have solid plain backgrounds with zig-zag, diamond, cross, and triangular patterns, woven in loud colourful colours to form beautiful bands and borders.

**6. ADI**

The Adi tribe is one of the indigenous ethnic groups of Arunachal Pradesh. The community comprises of Padams, Milangs, Komkars, Minyongs and Pasis.
Padam Gale is a traditional wrap around. An experienced weaver will need around ten days to weave one ‘Galle’ depending on the intricacy of the pattern which is largely geometrical. They wear this wrap dress in every special occasion and also gift in every celebration. The Aztec designs called 'Poreh' in local dialect signifies the subtribe of Adi, giving an aesthetic value to gale. It is woven into the middle portion of the gale. It just differentiates the ‘Padam’ from others. The width of Poreh could be anywhere from 3-7 cm. It is generally made of Eri silk, Muga silk, wool, and cotton.

Depending upon different types of ‘Poreh’ the Adi gale is of varied types:

- Tarok Lebok: This is a Poreh design used only in Gape Gale. In old days only Shamans married women were allowed to wear Gape gale. It is believed that Gape gale should always be woven in pairs or else misfortune would befall on the weaver. These days everyone wear Gape Gale in all colours

- Miktat Gale: In this kind of Poreh, it is intricated with an eye like pattern repeated continuously woven in different colour giving the vibrant feature of the Gale. It is believed that the eyes in the poreh protects the one donning it from evil spirits.

- Yongmo Poreh: In this kind of Poreh, it is intricated with unique motif called yongmo comprises of zig zag line white or green colour. The Yongmo symbolises an arrow-head. The motif is also known as Kedung Letu Poreh meaning zig zag lines Gappe Gale is a red and black traditional wraparound of subtribe of Minyong. In olden times this gale was worn by rich people and priest and Priestess, usually wore it to during the rituals to drive way evil spirit. These days everyone wear Gape Gale.

Galuk is the Adi traditional jacket for men. It has a design at the back, which is a continuous zig zag pattern that allows a person to be distinguished from behind.

The white blanket being woven here is locally known as Gadu. It has a fine texture, multiple woven patterns, and a pleasing cream colour. The Gadu (blanket) is believed to be very much essential after death and usually offered in a funeral ceremony.
YOUNG KHASI GIRL IN TRADITIONAL DRESS PHOTO SHOOT IN SHILLONG.
The Khasis are known to be one of the earliest ethnic group of settlers in the Indian sub-continent, belonging to the Proto Australoid Mon-Khmer race. The Khasi Tribe is considered to consist of seven sub-tribes, hence the title “Ki Khun U Hynniew Trep” or 'Children of the Seven Huts', namely the Khynriam, Phar, Bhoi, War, Maram, Lyngngam and Diko. The Khynriam (or Nongphlang) inhabit the uplands of the East Khasi Hills District; the Phar or Synteng live in the uplands of the Jaintia Hills. The Bhoi live in the lower hills to the north and north-east of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills towards the Brahmaputra valley, a vast area now under Ri Bhoi District. The War, usually divided into War-Jaintia and War-Khynriam in the south of the Khasi Hills, live on the steep southern slopes leading to Bangladesh. The Maram inhabit the uplands of the central parts of West Khasi Hills Districts. The Lyngngam people who inhabit the western parts of the West Khasi Hills bordering the Garo Hills display linguistic and cultural characteristics which show influences from both the Khasis to their east and the Garo people to the west. The last sub-group completing the 'seven huts', are the Diko, an extinct group who once inhabited the lowlands of the West Khasi Hills.

Meghalaya predominantly has an agrarian economy with a significant commercial forestry industry. It also has a rich base of natural resources including minerals such as coal, limestone, sillimanite, Kaolin and granite among others. Sericulture and weaving have an important place in the traditional, cottage-based industries of Meghalaya. An estimate of around 15,900 families and 16,000 families are involved in handloom sector and Sericulture farming respectively. These industries are exclusively run by women in the state. In the absence of appropriate reeling facilities, most cocoons
reared in Meghalaya State are exported to neighbouring states. Meghalaya produces three out of the four varieties of silk available in the world – Eri; locally known as ‘Ryndia’, Muga and Mulberry. Eri is the most important tout of the three silks in Meghalaya. While Eri silk is best known for its production in Assam, it also has a long history with the people of Meghalaya. Eri silkworms are reared and the silk is woven traditionally by weavers in the Khasi hills. The main hub of Eri silk weaving in Meghalaya is in the Ri Bhoi district, which has a lush and fertile area perfectly suitable for rearing. Eri Silk is spun from open-ended cocoons, and is traditionally hand spun directly from the cocoon a conventional spinning device known as “Takli”. It is often termed “peace silk” as it is processed without killing the pupae inside. It is also referred to as “poor man’s silk” as it is not so exorbitantly priced as other types of silk. The rearing of Eri silkworms can be done throughout the year, though March to April, and September to October are the most suitable. The natural colour of Eri silk varies from white to very light cream or light grey. The colour and shade depend upon a number of factors - quality of the worms, their feed, area temperature and climate.
STATE DRESS -
Traditional Attire of the Khasis, Jaintias & Garos:

1. Khasis

The traditional Khasi male attire consists of the ‘Jainspong khor’ (a beautiful golden silk turban with maroon prints either of geometric design or animal motifs) which during festivities is attached with an 18-inch-long plume called ‘U Thuia’. Around his neck, a semi-circular collar of gold or silver plate, or two rows of gold and red coral necklace (paila) is fastened and this is called ‘U Shanryndang’. On both ears are earring of solid gold made of various designs which are known as ‘Siar Shynrang’. He wears a ‘Jymphong shad’ which is a black sleeveless jacket embroidered with motifs of leaves, flowers and animals in various colours and decorated with golden or silver tassels at the bottom end of the jacket.: These are a bunch of silver chains purposely made for the male referred to as the ‘Kynjri tabah Shynrang’ which entwines his body front and back. There is also a bunch of silver chains called ‘Kynjri Syngkai’ which adorn the waist. He wears a ‘Jainboh’ which is a red coloured dhoti made of silk and bordered with golden threads. A waistband known as the ‘Jainteh Syngkai’ is knotted on the left side of the waist leaving a projection downwards up to the left leg below the knee.

The Khasi traditional female dress is rather elaborate with several pieces of cloth, giving the body a cylindrical shape. She wears the ‘Jainpien shad’ (a single piece lungi from the waist downwards to the ankle) along with the ‘Sopti-Mupmor’ (a long sleeve velvet blouse, usually red, with rows of button on the front and lace decoration around the neck). Over this, she wears the ‘Dhara’ (yellow or saffron coloured silk cloth with an intricate border) on the right side, covering the ‘Sempoh’ (inner drape) and fastened over the left shoulders with pins or decorations. On ceremonial occasions, she also wears a crown of silver or gold on the head. A spike or peak is fixed to the back of the crown, corresponding to the feathers worn by the menfolk. She is also decked in ornaments such as the ‘Shanryndang’ (three rows of gold and red coral necklaces called ‘Kpieng Paila’ of different sizes and arranged in a descending order). A bunch of silver chains known as the ‘Kynjri tabah Kynthei’ and gold chains called ‘Kynjri ksiar’ are also placed along with the paila necklaces in the apparel of a female dancer.: These are silver armlets and fore-armlets respectively called ‘Taj Rupa’ and ‘Mahu Rup’, adorning both arms of the female. She also wears wristlets of pure gold called ‘Khadu syngkha’ on both wrists.

2. Jaintia

Traditional Costumes of the Jaintia men include the turban (Ka Yusppong) or a conical cap (Ka Tupri Pynyien), a white shirt (Ka Miaj or Ka Sula Poh), a waistcoat (Ka Putoi), an eri silk shawl known as Ka Ryndia-Tlem, a loin cloth (Ka Kamsa), and a strip of cloth worn by men round the waist (Ka Yuslien).

Traditional costumes of the women include the Sopti Mukmor (red Velvet Blouse), along with wraparound skirt with alternate white and black/maroon prints either in the form of vertical stripes (Thoh Khyrwang) or checkered-print (Thoh Saru). Over this, the female may wear a type of cotton apron (Ka That Kyrchah).
in case of casual wear. For formal events, they instead wear a silk drape with an intricate red border, variously known as ‘Ka Yusem Ryndia’ (Eri garment), ‘Ka Yusem Muka’ (Muga garment) and ‘Ki Yusem Dhara’ (usually luxurious mulberry silk). The attire can be paired with a yellow checkered print Eri shawl (Ryndia Thoh Rew Stem). Females may also wear a cloth tied round the neck, covering the head and dropping over the shoulders (Ki Spainkhlieh), a cloak (Ka That-kup), a Headdress (Ka Yuchniat Khlieh) and the puttees (Ki Yusap Kjat).

3. Garo

The Garo female traditional attire comprises of the Ganna Dakmanda which is a wraparound reaching from the waist to the ankle. The Dakmanda is of varied colours and has muikron motifs and flowery designs on it. It is often paired with a matching stole and a blouse in a contrasting or complementing colour. The attire may also include the ‘Ganna Kore Kinga’ (Petticoat), ‘Chroko ganna’ (wrapper with shells and beads), ‘Dodok’ (one-piece cloth worn across one arm) and ‘Chinami’ (special shawl with bead designs). The ‘Gana’ is a plain cloth with simple stripes, much less decorated than the ‘Dakmanda’ and is usually worn at home. Re·king is a scanty cloth worn by women wrapped around the waist, usually about 16 to 18 inches long and 14 inches wide. A traditional cloth head gear called ‘Kotip’, usually in red and ornamented with white beads on its fringe, is usually worn by Garo women. Garo female jewelry include ‘Ripok Do’katchi’ necklace with stone gems and emerald, Rikgitok (a coral beads necklace of 10 lines), Rikgitchak (necklace with various gems, ivory and metal bells), Ollongga/Nakongsi (Brass Earrings in bunches), Kabong / Kade) head gear made of shells, Asingsok/Riksil (necklace with metal bells), Bato Rengki (Hair Band), etc. Nowadays, the head gear is ornamented with beads on its fringe and is worn by both men and women.

The Garo men wear ‘pandra’ (a single piece of cloth worn criss-crossed across the body). It is traditionally worn during a dance to celebrate a successful raid. The principal waist cloth worn by men is the ‘Gando’ having a width of about 6 inches and its length measuring between 6 to 7 feet. A gando is often a strip of blue cotton cloth interwoven with lines of red. The Garo man wears ‘Kotip Nokma’ (a silk maroon turban), a ‘Kadesil’ (head gear), and makes use of ‘Mending’ (hair String for tying the hair) and ‘Do’me’ (Cock’s Plume). Garo male ornaments include ‘Tapa/Jaksil/Rikgitok’ (Brass armlets), ‘Rikmatchu’ (coral beads necklace), Konal (tight silver necklace), ‘Naderong’ (bead earring), ‘Sisa/Narikki’ (a bunch of earrings made of lead), ‘Rang’ (brass gongs), etc.
2. Muikron on Dakmanda

The ‘Dakmanda’ forms part of the traditional attire of the Garo Tribe of Meghalaya. It is the piece of unstitched cloth worn like a wraparound skirt. The Dakmanda is generally woven face side down on the indigenous loin loom. The lower part of the Dakmanda has a border with the traditional concentric diamond motifs woven in, known as the *muikron*, which means the eye in Garo. Geometric patterns such as straight and zig zag lines as well as crosses are unique to the weave. It can also be covered with beautiful floral motifs painstakingly woven by the women weavers. The intricate details in the Dakmanda takes a lot of hard work and patience since a lot of different coloured threads are incorporated in the Dakmanda motifs. Traditionally, Dakmandas are woven with yarns from long staple cotton called Khilding in Garo. However, there has also been a steady shift to materials like acrylics and polyester silk yarn, since these were more affordable, offered greater variety with a myriad of fast colours and floral designs and also eliminated effort and time-intensive processes such as farming and reeling of yarn. Over the years, the demand for Mulberry and Muga silk Dakmandas has significantly risen increased. However, there is a gap between the demand and supply of silk Dakmandas due to the lack of skilled weavers. These need consistent training for two-three months to weave with delicate Mulberry and Muga. Further, the heavy monsoons are a set-back to the production of Muga Dakmandas. In order to bridge the demand-supply gap, the Sericulture and Weaving Department of Meghalaya has sanctioned aid to revive this age-old tradition among women, such as the distribution of yarns and looms in Garo hills under the Income Generation Programme for weavers.
3. Thoh Saru & Thoh Khyrwang

‘Thoh Saru’ and ‘Thoh Khyrwang’ are two main motifs of the traditional ankle length sarong or wraparound worn by the females of the Jaintia tribe during ceremonies or festivities. Black thread is interwoven into off-white cotton or Ryndia (Eri) Silk. The Thohsaru has been woven in such a manner that black and white stripes of the same size and shape are arranged both in vertical and horizontal directions, crossing each other at regular intervals and producing squares in a synchronised way both in colour and size. A uniform checkered pattern is formed wherein the squares of black, white and combination of black and white are arranged in a systematic order at regular intervals. Colour scheme and design of the same type extend all over the body. The Thoh Khyrwang, on the other hand, is woven to form vertical black & white stripes in alternate succession. Some varieties of the Thoh Saru & Thoh Khyrwang wraparounds also come in maroon and white combination. The wraparounds are often paired with a ‘that kyrchah’ (a checkered-print cotton drape fastened on one shoulder) in case of casual everyday wear or with the ‘yusem muka’ (the cream-coloured muga silk drape with a red intricate border) in case of festivities or formal events.

4. Jingthoh Tapmohkhlieh

Shillong has been referred to as the Scotland of the East due to the resemblance of its climate and topography with Scotland. Moreover, the Khasis also have a fondness for a pattern similar to the Scottish Tartan print which can be found on the Khasi woollen shawls known as tapmohkhlieh. The word ‘Tapmohkhlieh’ can literally be translated as “head covering” and it is usually worn by either men or women from the top of their head, tied behind the neck in a knot and then loosely hanging over the upper body like a cape. Since much of Khasi tradition has been passed down through oral history, it is unclear how the Tartan-like print reached Meghalaya. It might possibly be due to the influence of the European missionaries or the settlers from Scotland or Lancashire who passed through the Khasi Hills whilst being clad in their woollen shawls to shield them from the cold hills. This might have inspired the enterprising Khasi women to begin weaving similar colourful designs and eventually to incorporate these “jingthoh” (print) as part of their traditional attire. Nowadays, the people in the urban areas have made certain modifications to the traditional tapmohkhlieh by using it to sew matching sets (usually skirts and blazers), whereas the villagers continue to wear it as a head covering.
religious ceremonies. The Argon shawls are worn along with the Pathin, a wrap-around skirt that covered the upper and lower part of the body from the bust till the calf of the leg. A Modern Hajong women occasionally wear 'Pathin' to cover the lower part of the body from waist to ankle similar to Garo and Mizo tribes. Women in the upper class wore a long pathin which falls down to the floor while women in the lower class wore a shorter pathin which length reaches to the ankle. The pathin is a horizontally striped, colourful, rectangular piece of cloth with alternate layers of different colours between red stripes called kan and thick horizontal borders called chapa. Pathins are woven by women at their family looms known as Bana or Tath which are operated by only hands.

5. Chiwar Phule Border Motif on Argon Shawl

The ‘Argon’ & ‘Pasa’ is the traditional shawl like garment of the Hajong people, an ethnic minority of India, found in both the Garo and Khasi Hills of Meghalaya, largely along the South-West Garo Hills District of Meghalaya and Bangladesh border. The Argon shawls are shuttle-woven and characterised by large-scale, symmetrical patterns, featuring geometrical shapes and stylised leaves and flowers in coloured silks, with or without gold and silver threads. This forms the Chiwar Phule border motif. The Argon is a form of festive wear, worn during special occasions. Argons can also be worn by the men in weddings or when attending religious ceremonies. The Argon shawls are worn along with the Pathin, a wrap-around skirt that covered the upper and lower part of the body from the bust till the calf of the leg. A Modern Hajong women occasionally wear 'Pathin' to cover the lower part of the body from waist to ankle similar to Garo and Mizo tribes. Women in the upper class wore a long pathin which falls down to the floor while women in the lower class wore a shorter pathin which length reaches to the ankle. The pathin is a horizontally striped, colourful, rectangular piece of cloth with alternate layers of different colours between red stripes called kan and thick horizontal borders called chapa. Pathins are woven by women at their family looms known as Bana or Tath which are operated by only hands.
‘Tripura’, in Sanskrit, means 'three cities'. The discovery of fossil-wood-made Palaeolithic tools found in Khowai and Haora valleys indicate existence of ancient civilisation in that state. The state is even mentioned in Indian epics like the Mahabharata, the Puranas, and the Edicts of Ashoka. The entire region of this state was ruled by Twipra kingdom for many centuries. It was considered a princely state during the British rule. After India’s independence in 1947, the Tippera district, initially, became part of East Pakistan. In 1949, the Maharani of Tripura signed the Tripura Merger Agreement with India. In 1956, the state became a union territory and later in 1963, it gained statehood.

The state is surrounded by Bangladesh on its north, west and south. It shares a domestic boundary on the eastern side with the states of Mizoram and Assam. The indigenous communities or the Tribes account for only 30% of the population with majority of population being Bengalis. The state has nineteen ethnic groups, as well as sub-groups with different cultures and languages. The largest ethnic group in the state is Tripuris who speak Kokborok. The other groups that are present in this state are Reang, Chakma, Jamatia, Mog, Halam, Kuki, Munda and Garo. The dominant language is Bengali due to a high percentage of the Bengali population in this state. Kokborok is the language that is prominent among the tribal population.

The Unakoti Archaeological Site with incredible rock carvings, murals and the amazing waterfall, is a major tourist site. The kokborok name of Unakoti is Subrai Khung. Unakoti literally means one less than a koti (crore) in Bengali. The rock carvings date back to the 8th to 9th centuries. The central Shiva head known as Unakotiswara Kal Bhairava is about 30 feet high including an embroidered head-dress which itself is 10 feet high. On each side of the head-dress of the central Shiva, there are two full-size female figures - one of Durga standing on a lion and another female figure on the other side. In addition, three enormous images of Nandi Bull are found half-buried in the ground.

Handloom weaving is the most important craft in the state. Each of the clans of Tripuri has their own distinct ‘rignai’ (wrap-around skirt) pattern and design. Weaving reached its zenith during the reign of Subrai Raja, the most famous and legendary King of Tripura. He married 250 women who had individually invented 250 unique designs of rignai – many of these are lost now. In ancient times, a women’s intelligence used to be judged by her woven design of rignai.
The ethnic groups of Tripura have their own traditional dresses. The traditional dress for women of Tripura consists of three parts – Rignai, Rikutu and Risa.

For Women

**Rignai**

‘Rignai’ is the woven piece of cloth used to cover the lower half of the body. It is similar to the traditional dresses of other indigenous communities in the north-eastern states of Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram. Most of the traditional rignai design are believed to be about 4,000 years old. A clan of a Tripuri woman can be identified by the pattern of the rignai she wears. Some of the designs are viz. ‘Chamthwibar’, ‘mikhunchok’, ‘takhumtwi’, ‘khaklubar’, ‘kuwaifang’, etc. Nowadays, due to inter-mingling of different clans, new designs are being woven differently. It is used like a wrap-around skirt or cut in half and stitched to make it like a Mekhela.

**Rikutu**

‘Rikutu’ covers the upper part of the body. There are different ways to wear a Rikutu among Tripuris. One way is to simply wrap it around the body like a shawl during winter. The other way is to use it like a ‘dupatta’ over the front and keep the ends hanging down the shoulder to the back. Yet another way is to wrap it from waist through back to front passing below the armpit in anti-clockwise direction covering the chest and drap it over the left shoulder. It looks like ‘Pallu’ of Indian sari. Rituku is also worn to cove the head of newly married women. Now a days, Rikutu is woven to match the rignai, so it looks almost a continuation of rignai and looks like a saree.

**Risa**

It is a beautifully woven narrow piece of cloth to cover the chest. The risa which is 1.5 metre long and 0.3 to 0.5 metre in width, is wrapped around the chest in two layers. Some of the Risa designs are kwchak pali, kosompali, takhumtwi, khamjang etc. The blouse has replaced the risa for convenience. It is also used as a head turban by men for special occasions or as a belt or scarf. Risa is, now, offered as mark of honour to welcome guests in formal occasion.

For Men

The Traditional dress of Men in Tripura consists of ‘Duti Borok’ for the loin and ‘Kamchwlwi borok’ for the upper part of the body. For protecting from the summer heat, Men in Tripura wear Turban or Pagri over the head. Sometimes men wear a narrow towel around neck called ‘Rikutu Gamchi’ with shirt.
Ethnically Tripuris belong to Indo-Mongoloid origin and linguistically within the Tibeto-Burman family. They speak the Kok-Borok language. Tripuris are now treated as an advanced tribal community among the tribes of Tripura.

Tripuris are mainly Hindus. They follow both the Shakti Cult and Vaishnavism. They have colourful folk dances like, Garia, Lebang, Musak Surmani, Tangbiti and Mamita. These dances are accompanied by sweet melodies of folk songs and music of flute, Sarinda, Champreng and other indigenous string instruments.

2. Rignai Reang

The Reang is the second largest tribe of Tripura after the Tripuri tribe. Although they are native to the state of Tripura, they can also be found in neighbouring states of Mizoram, Assam, and Manipur. They are recognised as one of the 75 primitive tribes in India. Reangs are said to have come first from Shan State of upper Burma (now Myanmar) in different weaves to the Chittagong Hill Tracts and Tripura. Reangs belong to Indo-Mongoloid racial stock. They speak the Kau Bru language which has affinity to Austro-Asiatic groups under Tibeto-Burman family. Ethnically Reangs are divided into two major clans (i) Meska and (ii) Molsoi. The Reangs are primarily Vaishnavis, but there are many Christians among them as well.

Reangs can be distinguished from other tribes by their unique attire, coin jewellery and dialect. Although their dressing is quite simple, the hand-woven clothes the ‘Rignai’ (wraparound for covering the body waist-down) and ‘Risa’ (covering the torso), are very colourful. The Rignai of Reang tribe is easily identified by the fine lines of horizontal stripes placed with
mathematical precision. The Reang women like to adorn themselves with lots of silver coin jewellery.

Their traditional dance Hojagiri is very popular and widely known. The dance involves slow hip and waist movement while the upper body does not move at all as the dancers balance earthen lamps or other objects on their heads.

According to a research paper on Indigenous knowledge of medicinal plants (Shil, Dutta Choudhury and Das, 2013), the traditional pharmacopoeia of the Reang ethnic group incorporates a myriad of diverse flora available locally. Traditional knowledge of the remedies is passed down through oral traditions without any written document.

3. Tripura Risa

‘Risa’ is a narrow hand-woven piece of cloth used as an upper garment of women. The prime attraction of the woven Risa is their distinct patterns in both horizontal and vertical ways. This beauty of these stripes is enhanced with scattering of small extra weft woven motifs in contrasting colours.

Traditionally the Risa was woven by female folks. In a marriage ceremony a mother presents a Risa to her daughter-in-law to show love and affection. It is also an indication of her acceptance as a bride in their family. This tradition is still continuing which had started during the reign of King Trilochan.

The Risa is a beautiful and decorative garment which, in addition to being a part of attire, is also an object of gift which is much desired among the Tripuri individuals. It is resplendent in vibrant colours. The risa is used in religious festivals such as Garia Puja by Tribal communities, a turban by men during weddings and festivals, a cummerbund over the dhoti, a head scarf by young boys and girls and a muffler during winters. The cloth is also used to carry infant on the mother’s backs. Additionally, it is presented as a mark of respect to distinguished guests.

The present government of Tripura is trying to promote Risa as one of the handloom products as part of Prime Minister’s ‘Vocal for Local’ call. The making of Risa requires considerable amount of time and experience. Risa is common in all the 19 tribal communities of Tripura but each community has its own designs.

Some of the popular designs or motifs used in Risa are: Anji, Bubar, Butaisa, Khumtai & Thaichumbar.

4. Rignai - Jamatia

The Rignai used by Jamatia tribe of Tripura is very distinct and different from Chamathwibar Rignai of Tripuri tribe. The Jamatia Rignai does not have any scattering of tiny woven or embroidered motifs all over the fabric. Instead, it is very structured with white base flanked by coloured stripes on top and bottom. There are also thin lines in various colours going parallel to broad stripes.

The Jamatia clan is the third largest sub-clan of the Tripuri community, after the Tripuri (Debbarma) and the Reang sub-clan in Tripura. They mainly dwell in the Gomati and the South Tripura districts.
The origin of the word ‘Jamatia’, is believed to be from the word jamat, which means 'collection' or 'union of peoples'. The people of this clan live together at a particular place even today. According to another opinion, Jamatia is a union of two Kokborok words - jama means 'tax' and twiya means 'no need to pay'. The men of this clan were part of the Tripura royal force as soldiers for the kings of Tripura during the Manikya dynasty. Thus, Jamatias were exempted from paying tax, for their loyalty, service and sacrifice for the regime. Another believe is that, the word 'Jamatia' is derived from 'Jam' which mean 'god of death' as the people of this clan are fierce, brave warriors.

They have distinct Mongoloid features. Jamatias are Hindus and have embraced Sakti cult and Vaishnavism. They have special from of Garia dance which denote their Hindu based religious culture. They are the only Tripura clan with their own Customary Law in Practice. They speak Tripuri language Kokborok.
CONCLUSION

The northeast, which is often referred to as one entity, is in fact a consolidation of several distinct cultures which find expression in the arts from the different states. Handloom is most definitely the heart and soul of northeastern art forms and also happens to be a celebrated economic activity. The diversity of the fabric available, the traditional methods employed for production, and the general uniqueness of the clothes and carpets available make it almost surprising that the industry is yet to be discovered by major players in the textiles industry.

Perhaps it is the lack of media coverage and the limitations to tourism that have made it hard for textiles from this region to reach communities beyond. Tea from the region, however, is an example of how these bottlenecks can be passed through to globalise fabrics created in the northeastern states. Local entrepreneurship and GI tagging can prove to be gamechangers for this industry. On the positive side, there are several designers from the northeastern states who are already making a mark in the Indian fashion industry and these the people who stand to popularise their traditional textiles, first in the country and then abroad.

The country is now more aware than ever of the physically hard to access northeastern region and the youth is consistently looking for changing trends. Global brands are now looking to manufacture in India and the existing brands will be happy to expand in the presence of favorable policies. Handloom industry can be a new focus of the Make in India scheme with relatively low infrastructure development required and the extensive availability of skilled artisans.

The tourism industry of the states, which is now gradually flourishing, also stands to benefit as a byproduct of the development of handloom industry with the traditional ways of production driving art tourism. Design institutes of the country can play a role in this development by introducing courses specific to the northeast handlooms, considering that a majority of the handloom industry finds a home in the seven sisters. It offers a chance for young fashion entrepreneurs to bring something new to the table while being a part of the progress of the most ancient of cultures.

With the world moving towards sustainable, eco-friendly, slow fashion, northeast can be a paradise for design houses. E-commerce has opened up a wonderful world of possibilities for creators and the northeast region, being relatively hard to access as compared to the rest of the country, can benefit from digitizing its industries. The fabrics from northeast should be seen as intricate, luxurious designs such as the Kanchipuram or Pashmina and not as local goods looking for cheap markets. While the possibilities for business are endless, the human effort going into the designing and creation of the material and the historical and traditional significance of it make it an ideal candidate for the luxury goods markets.
Textiles of the northeast are as diverse and varied as the states themselves. What is common however, is the participation of women in economic activity through the handloom industry. A majority of the workers are females, and the sector has been providing economic agency to women folk of northeast for decades. Development of the handloom sector can be a jump for women entrepreneurship and general economic upliftment of women. Most of these female workers belong to the tribal community thus signifying the importance of handloom industry as a driver of growth for the tribes of northeast. It is one of the few businesses that are still held intact by the tribes of India and has immense potential for development in the presence of right interventions and private investments.

Handloom promotion departments have done an excellent job in keeping the system alive and providing the requisite changes from time to time. These departments clearly already have a strong base on ground and thus new policy implementation would not be hard to manage. It is also a window of opportunity for the private sector to engage and collaborate with local artisans with support from government departments. This paper is a comprehensive presentation of what the textile industry in the eight northeastern states has to offer with its various kinds of motifs and modern innovations to them.
TRADITIONAL HANDLOOM ESTABLISHMENTS
IN THE STATES OF NORTH-EAST INDIA

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Handloom Hues
House No, 39, Mother Teresa Rd, opposite Rodali apartment, Ambikagirinagar, Guwahati, Assam 7810210
Phone no: 70052 11399

Maina Automatic Handloom
Melachokar, Milan Nagar, Sivasagar, Assam 785640
Phone no.: 099549 95598

Hem Maya Handloom (Assam silk store)
Napara, Saualkuchi, Assam 781103
Phone no.: 98641 42095

All India Handlooms
Assam Trunk Rd, PWD Colony, Paltan Bazaar, Guwahati, Assam 781008
Phone no.: 098640 53025

Poddar Handlooms
94, SRCB Rd, Lakhtokia, Fancy Bazaar, Guwahati, Assam 781001
Phone no.: 081340 24709

Bengal Handloom
Nepal Mandir, AK Azad Road, Paltan Bazar, Rehabari, Guwahati, Assam 781008
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Asom Handloom Silkalaya
Noh Durga Puja Mondap Road, Noh-Para, Saualkuchi, Assam 781103
Phone no.: 73996 30889

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AK Azad Rd, Bishnu Rabha Nagar, Rehabari, Guwahati, Assam 781008
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Arunachal Handloom and Handicraft
Arunachal Handloom and Handicraft, Borsapori, near JNV, Mahadevpur, Namsai, Arunachal Pradesh 792105
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Emporium Ajin Apii Artisan & Weavers Cooperative Society ltd.
Gurudwara Line, Hapoli, Ziro, Lower Subansiri District
Arunachal Pradesh- 791120
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Arunachal Bhawan
27, Kauhtiya Marg, Diplomatic Enclave, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi, Delhi 110021
Shri Bimalendu Dey, OSD, Arunachal Bhawan, New Delhi
Phone no.: 9868870272

Idhu Mishmi Traditional Handloom Stores
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Handicrafts Industry
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**Anna Handloom**
Singjamei Leishangthem Leikai, Imphal West, Imphal, Manipur 795008
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**Kunjamani Handloom**
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**Radhe Handloom**  
Khurai, A.P. Road, Imphal, Manipur 795010  
Phone no.: 89743 61699

**Nungsithoi Handloom**  
Top Khongnangmakhong, Porompat, D.C Road, Imphal East, Imphal, Manipur 795005  
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**Sonia Handloom Textiles**  
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**Bebi Handloom**  
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The Store by Daniel Syiem's Ethnic Fashion House
C/O 'Boscobel' Arbuthnot Road, Nongrim Road, opp. Downtown Diagnostic Centre,
Laitumkhrah, Shillong-793003
Phone no.-094361 11151
https://www.dsethnicfashionhouse.com

Motiram's
G.S. Road, Opposite Lila Brothers, Shillong – 793001
072260 64064
https://www.facebook.com/motiramsestd1950/
https://www.instagram.com/motirams_shillong/?hl=en

Zong Hi I- A Bit of Tradition
Opp. Pung Laidong, Umsohsun, Police Bazar, Shillong,-793002
Phone no.-6009056220
https://www.instagram.com/zonghii/

The Diwon Handloom, Cotton and Village Industrial Cooperative Society Ltd.
Diwon
Tander Tmung, Diwon Village, Umden Nongpoh, Ri Bhoi, Distt.-793102
Phone no.-8729992021/6009056220

M/s Nongtluh Women Weavers Cooperative Society
Nongpoh, Ri Bhoi, Distt.-793102
Phone no.-9612896367/6009056220
Email:nongtluhweaver@gmail.com
North East Handloom
Khliechriat West, East Jaintia Hills district – 793200

The District Handloom Office Department of Textiles
Moosalyngkat, Jowai, West Jaintia Hills District.

Chada's Dakmanda Store,
Nokgilawe Williamnagar, East Garo Hills
Phone no.-089748 74473
MIZORAM:

Zonunsang Handloom
M-1/22, Chhinga Veng - Electric Veng Rd, Aizawl, Mizoram 796001
Phone no.: 0389 232 2094

Zuali Handloom
Aizawl, Mizoram 796001
Phone: 094363 65470

Hnamchhantu Pawl Showroom
Republic Veng, Aizawl, Mizoram 796005
Phone no.: 0389 232 8278

Dawli Puanthuina (Handloom and Handicraft Showroom)
Dawrpui, Aizawl, Mizoram 796001
Phone no.: 0389 231 1153

T.L Handloom
Lower Chanmari (Electric Road, Chanmari, Aizawl, Mizoram 796001

Mizoram Handloom and Handicraft corporation (ZOHANDCO)
Chaltlang, Aizawl, Mizoram 796012

Spi Handloom
Project Veng Road, Near DEO Office, Project Veng, Kolasib, Mizoram 796081

The Ethnic Warehouse
Dawrpui, Aizawl, Mizoram 796001

NAGALAND:

Nagaland Sales Emporium
NHHDC, Shopping Arcade, Dimapur, Nagaland 797112
Phone no.: 011 2334 3161

Heirloom Naga
Hussain Building, Circular Road, Dimapur, Nagaland 797112
Website: http://www.heirloomnaga.com/Contact.aspx
Email id.: heirloomnaga@gmail.com & jesminazeliang@gmail.com
Phone nos: +91 9436 003 336, +91 9862 677 093, +91 6009948850, +91 9612164941

Nagaland Emporium NHHDC Ltd.
Walford Road, Super Market, Dimapur, Nagaland 797112
**Gurtel**  
Midland Colony, Kohima, Nagaland 797001

**Weavers Service Centre, Dimapur**  
Lane-3, Toluvi B, Dimapur, Nagaland 797116

**Indigenous Handloom & Handicraft**  
Chumukeidma, Dimapur, Nagaland 797103

**USB Handloom**  
Shop no, Shangrila Market, 13, Nyamo Lotha Rd, Dimapur, Nagaland 797112

**SIKKIM:**

**Directorate of Handicrafts & Handloom**  
Zero Point, NH 31 A, Gangtok, Sikkim 737101  
Website: http://www.sikkimcrafts.gov.in/  
Mrs. Binita Thapa, SES, Director  
Ph-03592-203126 (O) (Gangtok) 9732637742 (M)  
Email: directordhhsikkim@gmail.com

**The Ethnic Store Handloom Showroom**  
AJAY PRASAD, Lal Bazar Rd, Vishal Gaon, Gangtok, Sikkim 737101  
097333 28588

**Norhla House Of Traditional Sikkimish Cloth**  
NH10, Tadong, Gangtok, Sikkim 737102

**Sikkim Handloom**  
Shop No. 17/1, The Rink Mall, Laden la Rd, Darjeeling, West Bengal 734101  
Phone no.: +91 354 225 8105

**Handloom and Handicraft Training Centre**  
Tharpu, Sikkim 737121
TRIPURA:

Directorate of Handloom, Handicrafts & Sericulture, Government of Tripura
ITI Rd, opposite Gomati Diary, Kshudiram Palli, Indranagar, Agartala, Tripura 799006
Phone: 0381-2355340
E-mail: directorthhs@gmail.com
Shri. Pranesh Lal Chakma, Director, Mob-9436508392

Tripura Handloom & Handicrafts Development Corporation Ltd.
(A Govt. of Tripura Undertaking)
M.B.B. Sarani, Agartala, West Tripura, Pin – 799007
Phone: 0381-232-6132,
Fax: 0381-232-3496
Email: purbasha74@gmail.com

Tripura Handloom
Road No. 14, Banamalipur, Indranagar, Agartala, Tripura 799007

Handloom Marketing Complex
Sakuntala Rd, Madhyapara, Battala, Agartala, Tripura 799001

Purbasha (Handloom Products)
Jackson Gate, 13, Central Rd, Indranagar, Agartala, Tripura 799001

Sapam Puspa Handloom
South, Dhaleswar, Agartala, Tripura 799004