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Traditional handloom weaving: A cultural heritage in jeopardy among Gaddi scheduled tribe of Bhaderwah (J&K), North West Himalayas

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Abstract

This research paper seeks to examine the Traditional Handloom weaving practice among the Gaddi Scheduled Tribe of Jammu and Kashmir. This work is based on primary data collected during survey in six Gaddi inhabited villages of Bhaderwah valley of Jammu and Kashmir. Frequent field visits were conducted to the study area for collection of data from January to May 2021. The data was collected about different woollen products made by Gaddi tribe, different traditional tools used for making woollen products, different plant species used for making these tools and allied information. The information was collected from a total of 60 respondents belonging to Gaddi tribe from 6 villages. Gaddis are highly skilled in making traditional woollen products at home which, inter alia, include their traditional costume and blankets. A total of 13 woollen products were made by Gaddis out of which 8 products viz. *chola*, *dora*, *unala coat*, *unali baskaat*, *unalakurta*, *unali suthan*, *topi* and *jarabe* comprised their ethnic and traditional costume which is their cultural identity. Three different types of woollen blankets viz. *chitru/kambal*, *chadar* and *fadki* were also made by Gaddis. 13 different traditional tools used by Gaddi tribe of study area for making woollen products have also been documented in the present study. These tools are *khaddi*, *naal*, *taharnethi*, *aeirnoti*, *charkha*, *therka (aeti bala)*, *therka (dagdu bala)*, *jandri*, *kaanghi (motti)*, *Kaanghi (nikki)*, *unsaan*, *konkdi* and *kaat*. These traditional tools are made from 10 different locally growing plant species belonging to 9 genera and 8 families (Table 1). The maximum number of plant species belongs to family pinaceae (3 sps.). The largest number of tools were made from *Cedrus deodara* (8) followed by *Fraxinus excelsior* (6) and *Aesculus indica*, *Pinus wallichiana* and *Quercus floribunda* (4 each). The results of the study reveal that gaddis of Bhaderwah are highly skilled in making woollen products by using traditional handloom.

Keywords: handloom, scheduled tribe, Gaddi, Bhaderwah, *khaddi*

Introduction

Clothing is one of the basic needs of human beings and thus humans have been weaving textiles since ancient times (Khatoon *et al.*, 2014) ^[11]. In order to protect their bodies from cold, the early human beings used tree barks and animal hides and subsequently learned to make yarn for making clothes in Neolithic era around 8000 BC. (Sharma *et al.*, 2008) ^[10]. The textile handicraft has been an important and integral part of Indian culture and civilization since time immemorial (Chakravorty *et al.*, 2010; Kurup, 2008) ^[5, 13]. The method of weaving involves interlacing of threads to make fabric and this method has not changed since ancient times. (Gangurde, 2017; Rawat, 2017) ^[9, 18]. India is an epitome of rich biological and cultural diversity where a large number of biocultural products are produced by the local communities using traditional knowledge. (Srivastava, 2016) ^[22]. Traditional practices are eco-friendly, poor-friendly, sustainable and cost effective. (Chakravorty *et al.*, 2010) ^[5]. Tribal communities constitute about 8% of total population of India and about 11.9% of J&K (<https://tribal.nic.in/ST/Statistics8518.pdf>). The indigenous Himalayan communities use different plant species for varied purposes like medicine, food, fodder, timber, fuel wood, making traditional tools etc. Traditional tools used by aboriginal communities, inter alia, include tools for making woollen products like handloom, spinning wheel, spinning top etc. The prominent tribes inhabiting Indian Himalayas include Gaddis, Gujjars, Bakerwals, Bhotias, Buxas, Lepchas, Chakma, Nagas, Adis, Mishmis, Nishi,

Monpas, Apatani, Tangsa (Chauhan, 2014; Samant & Dhar, 1997) ^[6, 19]. Gaddis tribe is a pastoral tribe of North West Himalayas who rear large flocks of goats and sheep, make woollen products and practice subsistence agriculture. (Thakur *et al.*, 2020; Kapoor *et al.*, 2008; Rani *et al.*, 2013) ^[23, 10, 17]. Gaddis are thus shepherds by profession and at least one member from each family or few people from each village resort to the profession of shepherding and are locally known as *palh* (Dutt *et al.*, 2015) ^[8]. This tribe was notified as Scheduled Tribe vide the Constitution (Scheduled Tribe) Order (Amendment) Act, 1991. The Gaddis of Jammu believe that they have migrated from Brahmaur region of Himachal Pradesh to hills of Jammu region.

This tribe is highly skilled in making traditional products using natural resources. They are not fully nomadic as they have permanent settlements in upper reaches of NW Himalayas but some male shepherds migrate along with their livestock to higher reaches of Himalayas during summer season and to low hills near borders of the plains during winter season in order to escape harsh weather conditions. Hence Gaddi tribe is a semi nomadic tribe. (Radha *et al.*, 2018; Bhasin, 2008) ^[16, 3]. They spend most of their time in the forests and pastures by virtue of their occupation and are thus closely associated with the nature and natural products. Gaddis have still maintained their discrete cultural identities and their ethnicity can be easily recognized from their life style and traditional attire which includes *chola*, *dora*, *topi* and *unala coat* for men and *luanchari*, *long duppata* and *dora* for women. (Kapoor *et al.*, 20008) ^[10]. During winter season, Bhaderwah receives heavy snowfall and witnesses severe cold as the temperature drops below freezing point. Attri *et al.*, 20000, have reported that severe winters in the inhabitations of Gaddi tribe of Himachal Pradesh has necessitated the production of woollen products by them for their personal use so as to keep themselves warm (Attri, 2017) ^[2]. The traditional handloom practices of tribal communities has evolved over time and transmitted through generations as a cultural heritage by means of oral transmission and routine traditional practices (Pandey *et al.*, 2021; Khatoon *et al.*, 2014) ^[15, 11]. The traditional woollen products are made by Gaddis generally for meeting their personal needs and rarely for commercial purpose (Attri, 2017) ^[2]. The commercial woollen products mainly include blankets which are very warm and durable but they did not fetch a good price as they lack popularization and market demand because they have coarse texture, are cultural specific products and also considered to be old fashioned (Kapoor *et al.*, 2008; Khatoon *et al.*, 2014.) ^[11, 10]. Traditional handicrafts including handloom products are in jeopardy as they are facing a stiff market competition from the products manufactured on power looms and in factories (Attri, 2017; Chakravorty *et al.*, 2010; & Khatoon *et al.*, 2014) ^[15, 2, 11, 5]. Although the population of men and women in India is nearly equal but the contribution of women in economic development was lower than that of men due to certain social factors. But during recent past women have been found to be playing significant role in economic development of the country (Agarwal 2018) ^[1]. Same is true for the Gaddi women as both the Gaddi men and women actively participate in traditional weaving practices at home particularly during winter season. The women folk hailing from mountainous tracts are highly skilled in traditional

weaving and allied handicrafts which is a source of livelihood for them (Singh & Singh, 2008) ^[21].

Scheduled Tribe: According to D N Majumdar, "a Tribe is a collection of families or group of families bearing a common name, member of which occupy common territory, speak the same language, observe certain taboos regarding marriage, profession or occupation and have developed a well assessed system of reciprocity and mutation of obligations" The term 'Scheduled Tribe' first appeared in the constitution of India. Article 366(25) defined Scheduled Tribes as "such tribes or tribal community or parts of or a group within such tribes or tribal community as are deemed under Article 342 to be scheduled tribe for the purpose of the constitution". Article 342 prescribes procedure to be followed in the matter of specification of Scheduled Tribes. (<https://tribal.nic.in/>)

In Jammu & Kashmir there are twelve Scheduled Tribe communities namely 1. Balti, 2. Beda, 3. Bot, Bota, 4. Brokpa, Drokpa, Dard, Shin, 5. Changpa, Garran, 6. Mon, 8. Purigpa, 9. Gujjar, 10. Bakerwal, 11. Gaddi and 12. Sippi. First eight Tribes got Scheduled Tribe status in 1989. Rest four namely Gujjar, Bakarwal, Gaddi and Sippi got it in 1991 vide constitution (scheduled Tribe) Act (Amendment) 1991. Gujjar is the largest Tribe in Jammu and Kashmir followed by Bakarwal and Gaddis. (<https://censusindia.gov.in/>).

Gaddi: The 'Gaddi' is a Sanskrit word which means 'Seat'. During the reign of Mughal king Aurengzeb, some Hindu nomadic people fled from his region to avoid his cruel policy against Hindus and got settled in a hilly place known as Bharmour in Dhouladhar region of Himachal Pradesh who later came to be known as Gaddis The word 'Gadri' or 'Gadariya' is used in almost all the north Indian Languages for a person who tends the herd of sheep and goat. So the original 'Gadri' (a person engaged in tending to the herds of sheep) could have evolved as such Gadri- Gadari- Gadri-Gaddi in the course of time. This etymology tends to underline the main profession of Gaddis as the herdsmen (Kumar, 2019) ^[12].

Material and Method

Study Area

Bhaderwah is a beautiful small valley situated in North West Himalayas in the UT of Jammu and Kashmir at a distance of 220 kms from Jammu. It is a mountainous valley surrounded by evergreen forests and snow covered mountainous peaks and has beautiful landscapes. Bhaderwah is popularly known as *Chhota* (little) *Kashmir* as there are a number of beautiful tourist places with breathtaking natural beauty in Bhaderwah valley which offers great tourist attraction particularly during summer season. A small water stream known as Neeru River drains Bhaderwah valley and adds to its scenic beauty. It shares border with Chamba district of Himachal Pradesh on its South east and is bounded by district Kathua on its South, district Udhampur on its West and Tehsil Gandoh on its North. Because of mountainous topography, Bhaderwah has a wide range of altitude which ranges between 5290 feet to 14500 feet and its geographical coordinates are 32° 58' N latitude and 75° 42' E longitude. The temperature ranges between 26 °C and 29 °C during summer and between 2 °C and 15 °C during winter (<http://jammutourism.gov.in>). The settlements

of Gaddi tribe of Bhaderwah are located on the higher reaches of the Himalayan Mountains which remain covered with snow and cut off from the rest of the world during winter season.

Methodology

Sample Design

Non random sampling method was adopted for obtaining sample from the population under investigation. Tehsil Bhaderwah of district Doda (J&K) was selected for the purpose of present study based on purposive (judgment) sampling as there is a sizeable population of Gaddi tribe in this Tehsil and they are highly skilled in traditional weaving of different woollen products. There are 13 villages inhabited by Gaddi tribe in Bhaderwah Tehsil out of which 6 villages viz. Haddal, Bharie, Butla, Kansar, Dandi and Dhamunda were selected with the objective of documenting the traditional handloom practices and associated knowledge of this tribe. The selection of these villages was again based on purposive sampling method as these villages hold more than 80% of Gaddi schedule tribe population. In order to obtain maximum information, snowball sampling method (chain referral method) was adopted at village level for obtaining sample of informants from the population under observation. In snowball sampling method some highly knowledgeable informants associated with traditional weaving were initially identified from each village who referred other knowledgeable informants known to them. In this way 10 respondents including 5 male and 5 female from each village were included in the sample, which finally consisted of a total of 60 respondents.

Data collection

Frequent field visits were conducted to the study area for collection of data from January to May 2021. The data was collected about different woollen products made by Gaddi tribe, different traditional tools used for making woollen products, different plant species used for making these tools and allied information. The information was collected from a total of 60 respondents belonging to Gaddi tribe from 6 villages under survey in their mother tongue known as Gaddi dialect. Before collection of data the detailed information was provided to all the informants about the objectives of the study and prior informed consent (PIC) was also obtained from each informant. The data was collected by semi structured interviews and group discussion among the informants and also by direct observation of traditional weaving practices of the community members. Some knowledgeable informants were also taken to the forests for identification of plant species, used for making traditional tools, based on local tribal names which were later on identified botanically with the help of taxonomic experts from University of Jammu and IIM Jammu. Photographs of the plant species were also taken in the forest. The information thus collected was recorded in predetermined interview schedules containing name of the tool used for making woollen products or name of the woollen product, description and method of use, plant species used for making tools and remarks.

Objectives

- To provide the documentation of the Handloom Practices among Gaddi Tribe

- Identify the species of plants used for making Handloom tools
- Suggest the measure to improve this economic activity among Gaddi Tribe

Different types of traditional tools used for making woollen products by Gaddis are mentioned below.

Khaddi-old model (handloom) (Fig. 1): It is a large and fixed traditional weaving tool which is operated by the weaver with his hands and feet. Gaddis use *khaddi* for weaving woollen products e.g., woollen blankets (*chitru/kambal, chadar*), woollen shawls (*fadki*) and woollen fabric (*taani*). *Taani* is a woollen fabric which is used for making different traditional attires of Gaddi men and women, e.g., *unala* coat (Handmade woollen coat), *chola* (Woollen men frock coat), *unali suthan* (men woollen trouser) and *topi* (cap) for men and *unala kurta* (women woollen frock) and *unali suthan* (women woollen coat) for women. *Khaddi* is an assemblage of different wooden parts, e.g., main frame, harness (*rachh*), take up roll (*belnu*), weaver seat, foot pedal (*khadavan*) and reed (*hatha*). Shuttle (*naal*) and shuttle loading stick (*taharnethi*) are used as accessories for operating *Khaddi*.

Important components of Khadi are mentioned below

1. **Main frame:** It is the main supporting structure of *Khadi* which is made up long wooden beams. It supports all other functional parts of *Khaddi*. Plant species used for making main frame of *Khaddi*: *Cedrus deodara*.
2. **Rachh (shaft/harness):** *Rachh* is a frame like wooden part of *Khaddi* which is moved up and down by the weaver with the help of treadles. Thus it holds warp threads in desired position during weaving and facilitates the movement of shuttle carrying weft across the warp sheds. Plant species used for making *rachh*: *Aesculus indica, Quercus floribunda, Cedrus deodara, Juglans regia, Fraxinus excelsior*.
3. **Hatha (reed/ hand beater):** It is a moveable bar like part of *Khaddi* having a number of combs like vertical slits through which warp threads are made to pass. It is used to forcibly press the weft fiber against the fell during weaving. Plant species used for making *hatha*: *Juglans regia, Fraxinus excelsior*.
4. **Belnu (take up roll):** It is one of the components of *Khaddi*. It is a thick wooden roll which is used for rolling and collecting the fabric during weaving. Plant species used for making *belnu*: *Cedrus deodara*
5. **Khadavan (treadles/foot pedals):** These are the wooden foot pedals at the basal part of *Khaddi* which when pressed with the feet helps in formation of space between the upper and lower warp threads during weaving. Such a space between the warp threads is known as warp sheds. Plant species used for making *khadavan*: *Quercus floribunda, Fraxinus excelsior*.

In addition to the old model of traditional *Khaddi* as described above now a days many Gaddis are also using a improved, efficient and time saving New Model of traditional *Khaddi* (Fig. 2) which has been introduced by J&K Khadi and Village Industries Board (KVIB).

Naal (weaving shuttle) (Fig. 19): It is a small wooden hollow cylindrical tool which is open at one end whereas its other end is closed and tapering. The weft yarn is loaded in its cavity through the open end with the help of *tarnethi*, the loading stick. The loaded shuttle is then pushed forcibly by the operator from one side to the other through the space between the upper and lower warp yarn during weaving. Plant species used for making *naal*: *Aesculus indica*, *Prunus armeniaca*, *Fraxinus excelsior*.

Taharnethi (Shuttle loading stick): It is a simple wooden stick which is used as accessory during weaving. The *naal* is loaded with weft fibre with the help of *tarnethi*. Plant species used for making *taharnethi*: *Berberis lycium*.

Aeirnoti (Fig. 15): The term *aernoti* is derived from the Gaddi dialect word *aeir* which means warp fibre. It is a large four sided rectangular frame made up of 4 wooden bars with 10-12 wooden pegs arranged in a series on each of two opposite vertical bars which holds the warp fibre. The warp fibre is systematically arranged across the pegs of this frame before weaving on handloom (*khaddi*). Plant species used for making *arenoti*: *Cedrus deodara*.

Charkha (spinning wheel) (Fig. 17): A *Charkha* holds an important place among Gaddis. It is a wooden tool consisting of a drive wheel which is used for spinning wool into thread. At the time of girl's marriage, the *charkha* is gifted to bride by her father. Plant species used for making *charkha*: *Aesculus indica*, *Juglans regia*, *Cedrus deodara*, *Fraxinus excelsior*.

Therka (aeti bala) (Fig 10): It consists of a small drive wheel with a handle which is turned manually for making thread loops from thread cops. The thread loops are made to wound around the wheel. Thread is made into loops for washing and colouring before it is used as warp thread. Plant species used for making *therka (aeti bala)*: *Cedrus deodara*, *Pinus wallichiana*.

Therka (dagdu bala) (Fig. 11): It also consists of a small drive wheel but without handle. After washing and colouring the thread loops are again wound into thread balls, locally known as *dagdu*, with the help of this *therka*. Plant species used for making *therkan (dagdu bala)*: *Cedrus deodara*, *Pinus wallichiana*.

Jandri (Fig. 16): It is a small wooden tool which consists of two horizontal wooden strips connected in the middle by a vertical wooden strip. It is placed on the ground with the

help of an oblique supporting wooden strip. Two iron needles, each having a cop of thread around it, are placed in the pair of holes at each side of this tool. It is used for joining two threads from the two cops which are wound together into a thread ball (*dagdu*). Plant species used for making *jandri*: *Pinus wallichiana*, *Cedrus deodara*.

Kaanghi (motti) (comb for wool) (Fig. 14): It is also a small wooden tool which bears a number of comb like teeth on a vertical wooden strip as its functional part. This tool is used for combing the wool with both the hands before spinning so as to make the fibre straight, smooth and fine. Plant species used for making *kaanghi*: *Prunus armeniaca*, *Pinus roxburghii*, *Pinus wallichiana*, *Aesculus indica*, *Zizyphus jujuba*.

Kanghi (nikki) (comb for wool) (Fig. 9): A *Kangi* is a set of two small and rectangular wooden plates with a small handle and each having iron teeth all over one surface. It is used for combing the wool between the iron teeth of two plates before spinning on *charkha* so as to make the fibre clean, straight, fine and smooth. It is purchased by Gaddis from the market.

Unsaan (hand spindle or drop spindle) (Fig. 18): It is a spinning top which consists of a small basal wooden disc attached to a wooden shaft. It is made to rotate by forcibly twisting its shaft with both the hands and dropped down in the air while spinning the thread obtained by spinning wool on *charkha*. During slack winter season Gaddi men are often observed spinning thread on *unsaan* in leisure time. Its spinning involves twisting of two threads together to form of single thick and strong twisted thread wound around the base of shaft as a cop (*kukri*). The twisted thread is subsequently used as warp fibre. Plant species used for making *unsaan*: *Prunus armeniaca*, *Fraxinus excelsior*, *Quercus floribunda*.

Konkdi (Fig. 13): It is a small wooden stick which is bent at one end. It is used for twisting the goat hair together for make thread. This thread is very strong and is used for different purposes e.g., for making rope (*shell*). Plant species used for making *konkdi*: *Quercus floribunda*.

Kaat (shearing scissors) (Fig.12): It is a big size scissors made up of iron. It is used for shearing of sheep and goat. As the Gaddis are poor, they cannot afford the modern shearing machines, so they use this traditional shearing tool. *Kaat* is a cheap tool but shearing with it is a time consuming process.

Table 1: Plant species used for making traditional tools for making woollen products.

Name of the plant species	Local name	Family	No of tools/parts of tools made.
<i>Aesculus indica</i> (Wall. ex Cambess.) Hook.	Goon	Sapindaceae	4
<i>Berberis lycium</i> Royle.	Kishmay	Berberidaceae	1
<i>Cedrus deodara</i> (Roxb. ex D. Don) G.Don.	Gaid	Pinaceae	8
<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> L.	Shunu	Oleaceae	6
<i>Juglans regia</i> L.	Akhod	Juglandaceae	3
<i>Pinus roxburghii</i> Sarg.	Drab Chill	Pinaceae	1
<i>Pinus wallichiana</i> A. B. Jacks	Chill	Pinaceae	4
<i>Prunus armeniaca</i> L.	Cheir	Rosaceae	3
<i>Quercus floribunda</i> Lindl. ex A.Camus.	Maru	Fagaceae	4
<i>Zizyphus jujuba</i> Mill.	Ber	Rhamnaceae	1

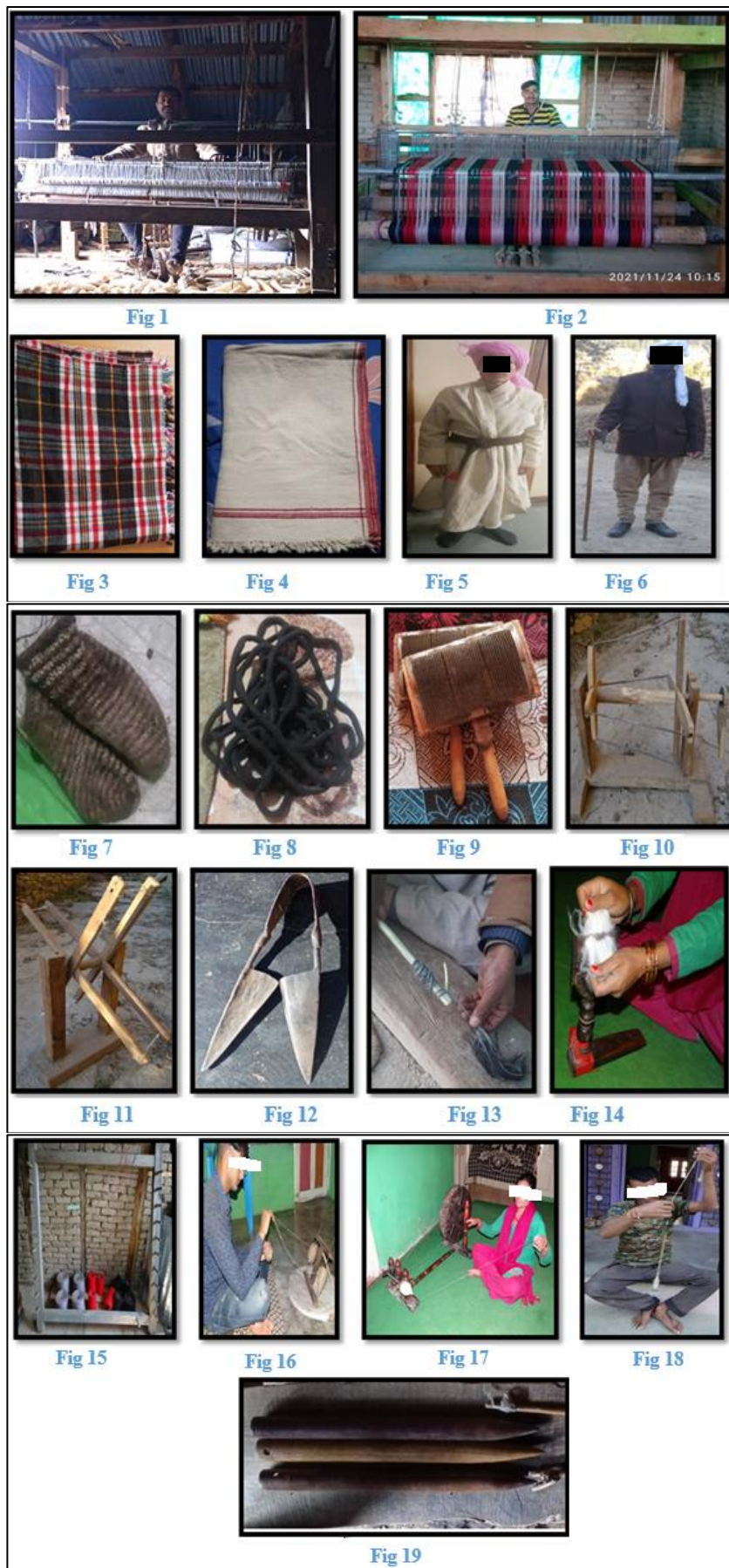


Fig 1-19: Different woollen products and associated traditional tools used by Gaddi Tribe.

Fig.1. *Khaddi* (Old Model) Fig.2. *Khaddi* (New Model) Fig.3. *Chitru/Kambal* Fig.4. *Fadki*. Fig.5. A Gaddi man wearing *Chola* and *Dora*.

Fig.6. A Gaddi man wearing *unala Coat* and *Unali Suhan*. Fig.7. *Jarabe*, Fig 8. *Dora* Fig.9.*Kaanghi (Nikki)* Fig 10.*Therka (Aeti Bala)*, Fig.11.*Therka (Dagdu bala)* Fig.12. *Kaat*, Fig.13. *Konkdi*, Fig.14. *Kaanghi (Motti)*, Fig.15 *Aeirnoti*, Fig 16. A Gaddi boy making thread ball using *Jandri*, Fig.17. A Gaddi women spinning *Charkha*, Fig. 18. A Gaddi man spinning thread with *unsaan*, Fig. 18 A Gaddi man spinning an *Unsaan*. Fig.19.*Naal*.

Different types of woollen products made by Gaddi tribe are mentioned below

Chadar (single coloured woollen blanket): It is a single coloured woollen blanket having two layers formed by folding a long blanket. Generally white or dark grey *chadars* are popular among Gaddis. The length of an unfolded *chadar* is approximately 5 m and its width is 1 to 1.25 m. *Chadar* is used to cover the body while sleeping during winter season and also wrapped around the body by Gaddi shepherds while grazing their livestock in rainy season. Two layers of *Chadar* trap air in between them and provide better insulation which helps in keeping the body warm during severe winter season.

Chitru or Kambal (Multicoloured woollen blanket): It is similar to *chadar* in shape, size and functions and the only difference between *Chadar* and *Chitru* is that the former is single coloured while the latter is multicoloured having check pattern design. Moreover a *chitru* is more attractive as well as costly as compared to *Chadar* mostly offered as bedding for their guest by the Gaddis. It is shown in figure 3.

Fadki (single coloured woollen shawl): It is a woven woollen shawl which is wrapped by the Gaddis around their body during winter season to keep them warm. It also gives protection to Gaddi shepherds from rainfall and snowfall while grazing their livestock in the pastures during rainy/snowy season. It differs from *chitru* and *chadar* in that it is single layered and is thus light in weight. It is generally white in colour with or without red border. But *fadki* with alternate black and white square patterns are also made by Gaddis. *Fadki* is also having ceremonial significance as it is draped over the shoulders of groom and also used to cover the bride and groom together in one of the marriage ceremonies.

Taani (compacted woollen fabric): It is a compacted woollen fabric woven in single colour i.e. white, black or dark grey and used for making traditional dresses of Gaddi tribe. After weaving the fabric is placed in a large and fixed outdoor hollowed out wooden tub (locally known as *kund*) containing lukewarm water and seed oil cakes of *Prunus armeniaca* (locally known as *cheir*) or shreds of *desi* soap in it. It is then compacted in this tub with feet by jumping on it alternately from one leg to another continuously for one hour. The fabric is then washed and dried and same process is repeated next day and the day after to complete the process of compaction (locally known as *nakna*). Compaction results in irregular width of the fabric due to shrinking of its margins. On 3rd day of compaction the wet compacted fabric is forcibly stretched lengthwise by two persons holding it by its ends to straighten its margins so that its width becomes uniform throughout. The wet fabric is then folded lengthwise and wound around a round wooden pillar of the house tightly and tied with several rounds of a rope (locally known as *shellli*) made from goat hair for three days. After three days the compacted woollen fabric, known as *taani*, is ready for stitching traditional costumes of Gaddis which include *unali suthan* (woollen trousers), *unala coat* (woollen coat), *chola* (loose woollen gown) and *topi* (cap) for men and *unali suthan* (woollen trousers) and *unala kurta* (long woollen shirt) for women.

Chola (loose woollen men's gown): Chola is a traditional male gown worn by Gaddi men. It is a long and loose woollen gown having full sleeves, deep collar and closed crosswise over the breast. It is made up of self-woven whitish woollen cloth (*taani*) and acquires a greyish-brown tinge with the lapse of time. It is tied with several rounds of a long black woollen rope known as *dora* around the waist. The *chola* is thus loose above the *dora* and the receptacle thus formed is called *Kokh*. The Gaddis carry many of their belongings including new born lambs in this receptacle. The *Chola* open up and unfurl like a full bloomed flower from below when a Gaddi takes a swing while dancing. Gaddis are staunch worshipper of lord Shiva and they believe that *chola* and *dora* was the dress of Lord Shiva and thus this dress has a religious significance for Gaddis.

Dora (woollen rope): *Dora* is a black coloured very long rope made up of wool which is fastened around the waist with several turns by both male and female Gaddis. It is probably meant for providing support to the waist while doing routine chores or walking uphill. *Chola* is tied with *dora* around the waist hence it also helps in keeping the body warm. It is a popular belief among the Gaddis that as long as the *dora* is tied around their waist, their wealth and their sheep will bound up and remain with them.

Unala coat (woollen coat): It is a white or dark grey woollen coat made up of compacted woollen fabric (locally known as *taani*). It is worn by male Gaddis in general and Gaddi shepherds in particular. It keeps Gaddis warm during the snowy and rainy season.

Unali baskaat (woollen sleeveless jacket): It is similar to *unala coat* except that it is sleeveless and worn during moderate winter season.

Unala kurta (woollen kurta): It is long woollen shirt made of *taani* and worn by Gaddi women.

Unali suthan (woollen pyjama): It is a generally a white coloured woollen lower (*pyjama*) which is loose in the thigh part and tight in crust part. It is made by sewing compacted woollen fabric (*taani*) and worn by Gaddi men and women in general and Gaddi shepherds and old persons in particular. It keeps the legs warm during severe winter season particularly during snowy season. It is also having religious significance as majority of the Gaddi priests known as *Chellas* wear it as their spiritual dress.

Topi (cap): It holds an important place among the woollens of Gaddis. It is also made from *taani*. This cap is also seen particularly in Himachal Pradesh.

Jerabe (Socks): These are the socks made from goat hair. These keep Gaddis warm during severe cold during snowy winter. These are very popular among the Gaddis as these are warmer and more durable as compared to market socks. The goat hairs are twisted with *konkadi* and the thread thus formed is woven into socks.

Shellli (rope): It is a long, thick and strong rope made by twisting goat hair with a small stick (*konkadi*) which is bent at one end. It is white or black in colour. It is common in every household and is used by Gaddis for collecting grass

and fuel wood from the forests. It is also used for various day-to-day activities. It is also used in a marriage ceremony when a goat hide is tied on the back of groom with a black *Shelli*.

Result and Discussion

Gaddis are highly skilled in making traditional woollen products at home which, inter alia, include their traditional costume and blankets. A total of 13 woollen products were made by Gaddis out of which 8 products viz. *chola, dora, unala coat, unali baskaat, unalakurta, unali suthan, topi and jarabe* comprised their ethnic and traditional costume which is their cultural identity. Three different types of woollen blankets viz. *chitru/kambal, chadar and fadki* were also made by Gaddis. A total of 13 traditional tools were used by Gaddi tribe of the study area for making woollen products. These tools are *khaddi, naal, taharnethi, aeirnoti, charkha, therka (aeti bala), therka (dagdu bala), jandri, kaanghi (motti), Kaanghi (nikki), unsaan, konkdi and kaat*. These traditional tools are made from 10 different locally growing plant species belonging to 9 genera and 8 families (Table 1). The maximum number of plant species belongs to family pinaceae (3 spp.). The largest number of tools were made from *Cedrus deodara* (8) followed by *Fraxinus excelsior* (6) and *Aesculus indica, Pinus wallichiana* and *Quercus floribunda* (4 each).

Conclusion

During winter season, the inhabitants of Gaddi tribe in NW Himalayas experience extreme winter due to heavy snowfall and thus Gaddis make different types of woollen products to protect themselves from severe cold during winter months. Gaddis of Bhaderwah are highly skilled in handloom weaving and making traditional tools associated with this craft. Handloom weaving is one of the main activities of Gaddis of Jammu and Kashmir and it reflects their unique art and cultural heritage. The traditional handloom practices of Gaddi tribe gives a deep insight into their environment, occupation, culture and lifestyle. Gaddis use their leisure time during slack winter season for weaving woollen products. Both the Gaddi men and women are associated with spinning and weaving practices. Sheep and goats owned by Gaddis fulfills the demand of raw wool for the said purpose. Generally the sheep owned by Gaddis are of indigenous breed. Gaddis are staunch devotees of Lord Shiva and offer wool to Lord Shiva while worshipping in a religious ceremony (*nuala*) devoted to Lord Shiva. As they lack modern technology Gaddis use traditional methods for making woollen products. Thus the production of woolens by Gaddis is a laborious and time consuming process due to which the cost of the production increases considerably. Woolens are made by Gaddis mostly for fulfilling their personal needs and rarely for commercial purpose. Although woollen blankets made by Gaddis are extremely warm and durable but they are rarely marketed as they lack popularization and market demand due to their heaviness and rough texture. Moreover they are also considered to be culture specific and old fashioned. Thus there is a strong need for value addition to these ethnic woollen products on modern lines so as to ensure the continuation of this old age traditional handloom practice in future. Unfortunately the handloom weaving and associated practices of Gaddi tribe of Bhaderwah have witnessed a significant decline during last two decades. It is pertinent to mention that the

traditional *khaddi*, which was a common household weaving tool in almost every Gaddi household in Bhaderwah valley, abruptly started disappearing from the life of Gaddis during first decade of twenty first century due to many factors. The first and foremost factor was the diminishing of occupation of shepherding, the only source of wool, as the modern generations were not interested in this pastoral occupation and ethnic woollen products including ethnic dresses. Another reason was reservation in government employment for Gaddi youth by virtue of scheduled tribe status which was granted to Gaddis of Jammu Kashmir in 1991. Thus a good number of Gaddi youth got absorbed in government employment after 1991 who preferred modern lifestyle as there was an improvement in their economic condition. Many of them have migrated from their villages and settled permanently in nearby towns and cities during recent past which was another cause of their dissociation from traditional practices including handloom weaving. Militancy was another important reason which adversely affected the occupation of shepherding as the high altitude forests and pastures used by Gaddis for grazing their livestock were also used as hide outs by the militants during 90's. Many a times Gaddi shepherds had faceoff with militants while grazing their goat and sheep in the forests. Thus there is every possibility that handloom weaving and associated skill of Gaddi tribe will disappear completely in near future if not conserved. It is therefore recommended that initiatives should be taken for conservation of traditional handloom weaving practices of Gaddi tribe.

Some suggestions to improve the traditional handloom practices of Gaddis are given below.

1. Since Gaddis are less exposed to the modern world, community outreach awareness programmes should be organized in Gaddi dominated villages and Panchayats by J&K Khadi and Village Industries Board and other agencies engaged in rural development for spreading awareness about various handloom schemes.
2. J&K Khadi and Village Industries Board (KVIB) should provide financial, managerial and technical assistance to Gaddis for promotion of handloom practices on modern lines.
3. Interest free and subsidized institutional loan should be provided to Gaddis for boosting traditional handloom weaving.
4. KVIB should take initiatives for value addition of the woollen products made by Gaddis so that they can be marketed at a good price.
5. Government should provide small machines to Gaddis like shearing machines, solar charkha etc. to minimize physical labour and increase the production of woolens products.
6. Good quality breeds of sheep like Australian breed should be provided to Gaddis to promote the profession of shepherding and allied activities including handloom weaving.
7. Goats and sheep of Gaddis should be insured.
8. Minimum support price (MSP) of wool should be fixed.
9. Tribal handicraft exhibitions should be organized by the government to promote woollen products made by Gaddis.
10. Forest department should provide grazing pastures free of cost to the poor Gaddis.

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