



Tribal Fashion and Fashion Design: Anthropological Insights

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ABSTRACT The present short communication is documented on the concept of tribal fashion, fashion design and technology. Tribal fashion is sometimes known as ethnic fashion design. However, from an anthropological context, these terms are not considered synonymous. There are several significant differences between tribal fashion and ethnic fashion. Ethnic fashion encompasses a broad area of design associated with various resident communities or populations, whereas tribal fashion specifically considers the people of definite communities who are socially and culturally different from others. The present article seeks to understand and elucidate the distinctions among the tribal fashion, fashion technology and ethnic fashion. In the contemporary era, modern fashion design has shown increasing interest in creating the garments with a flavour of ethnic composition, and it is evident that many of the ethnic design components are fundamentally derived from traditional tribal fashion practices.

INTRODUCTION

Fashion is not merely an event of wearing a dress. It is neither the protection of the body from the environment nor the reluctance to face shame. It is the 'mirror of culture, history, lifestyle and technological advancement of society'. Tribal fashion, ethnic fashion, and fashion technology, these three have developed separately in different contexts and carry different characteristics, and they are apart from each other. Ethnic fashion means 'the concept of dress design that depends on the customs, rituals, traditions and lifestyle of a definite community'. It does not make it clear the difference between the indigenous or tribal essence. Traditional tribal dress design is generally based on their daily life activities. Different geographical areas and different tribal people generate their clothing relevant to the ecology where they live. Their dress and ornaments are "culturally" related to their rituals, festivals, and war. In ancient times, tribes regularly used their garments for every event in life, but in the present day, they use them occasionally, such as during festivals, rituals, and social events. Tribal fashion is deeply related to the indigenous life pattern. The prime features of tribal fashion are the use of natural production. Tree bark, cotton, bird feathers, animal skin, wood, and mud made armaments are commonly used in tribal fashion life. Designs on clothing are usually hand-

made, and a symbolic meaning has been behind them. Tribal fashion basically depends on tradition, and it is handed down from generation to generation.

Ethnic fashion basically means the wide and regional tradition of a definite community. It is a broader cultural identity, such as Bengali sari, Panjabi dhoti and kurta, Rajasthan ghagra or choli, or the South Indian dhoti. The ethnic fashion is practically the combination of tradition and aesthetics. Ethnically, it has been observed that the use of embroidery, various colours, and historical motifs is common. Although the present ethnic fashion has changed over time, its basic structure and tradition remain unchanged even today.

The creative and professional ongoing process of fashion design combines clothing, jewelry, accessories, modern trends, culture, and customs. The primary goal of fashion design is to create attractive dresses or garments that are durable, functional, and comfortable, in line with modern trends. In fashion design, it is the first achievement for a fashion designer to create a new idea or concept inspired by nature, traditional and modern society, and ethnic traditional communities. Then a sketch or design is drawn showing the fabrics, pattern, and colour.

Modern fashion technology today is concerned with tribal dress and ornaments and gives them significant attention. Once upon a time, tribal

dress and ornaments reflected only tribal identity. However, at present, under the modern fashion imaginary, they have gained universal appreciation within the fashion industry. The modern fashion and industry now preserves the natural colours, traditional weaving techniques and natural materials used in tribal fashion life, and presents themes in new and innovative ways with great importance. Through digital software, 3D modelling, and modern textile technology, indigenous or tribal dress patterns and motifs can now be presented or illustrated accurately and beautifully. Earlier, the design of indigenous people was time-consuming, but it is now produced very quickly by using modern technology while preserving their originality. As a result, the tribal people can present and promote their products to the wider world.

Objectives

The primary objectives of the present study were:

1. To differentiate between the three identities of ethnic fashion, tribal Fashion, and modern fashion.
2. To define and clarify the concept of tribal fashion and ethnic fashion and also modern fashion.
3. Briefly explore the cultural continuity and modernity of tribal fashion.

METHODOLOGY

According to Jha (1999,^{P-197}) 'methodology' may be used to theoretical discussions concerning the entire research proposal including the forms of thought of the research, aims, and objectives of the research, application of the research methods, etc. How should research be planned, structured, and executed to comply with the criteria of science? In actual fact the etymological meaning of the word 'Methodology' could be interpreted as the logic of implementing scientific methods in the study of reality. How should the collected data be analyzed? What do the findings mean and how do they relate to the original formulation of the problem? Methodology, then, is defined as the logic of the application of scientific methods to the investigation of phenomena. According to this definition methodology refers to the logic of the decision-making process in scientific research

(J.Mouton & H.C. Marais, 1988p¹⁶). The present short communication or paper has initially arranged with help of the method 'content analyses'. No primary data were collected or applied using a synchronic in the present paper. Content analysis is potentially one of the most important research techniques in the social science, including anthropology also. The content analysis views data as representation not of physical events but of texts, images, and expression that are created to be seen, read, interpreted, and acted for their meanings, and must therefore be analyzed with such uses in mind. Analyzing the text in the contexts of their uses distinguishes content analysis from other methods of inquiry. (K.Krippendorff, 2004)

Cultural Continuity and Modernity

In anthropology, the dress and ornaments of a tribal community is an essential subject for developing the concept of 'Material Culture'. Material culture, in the anthropological point of view, refers to objects manufactured through human cognition and stored knowledge, fabricated to satisfy practical and cultural demand. Intimate hidden cultural expression in relation to the environment is strongly reflected in material culture. Behind the material culture, human ecological knowledge, perception, adaptability, and cognitive development are remarkably inculcated and preserved. Tribal garments voice cultural relativity, tradition, knowledge about nature, religious standpoint and interpretation, and the need for defence to secure a balanced and sustainable-legitimate life. Modern fashion technology has kicked off to restore this domain, offering it to a wider global audience, while giving traditional forms an elegant and contemporary expression.

The above pictures have been collected from free source websites on the internet. The researchers do try to explain how the tribal communities use colour combinations and dress motifs that have inspired modern fashion technology. Over time, tribal materials and traditional clothing techniques have been modified and adapted using different raw materials and manufacturing methods. The practical use of tribal dresses, especially its role in environmental protection and sustainability has also been reviewed in the context of modern fashion and current trends. These traditional styles are

How Modern Fashion is Inspired by Tribal Dress in the Context of India



Picture-1



Picture-2



Picture-3

[Source: Tumble-dry – Traditional Dress of Gujarat(1), High Heel Confidential-LFW winter festive 2012: Abhishek Dutta (2) and Authentic vintage Banjara/Gujarati/Kutch textile (3)— similar folk embroidery style]

being modified and remodelled to make them more suitable and appealing for contemporary people.

CONCLUSION

Numerous similarities can be observed among tribal fashion, ethnic fashion, and modern fashion technology, although each possesses its own distinctive cultural characteristics and contextual significance. The dress and ornaments of tribal communities not only serve the practical purpose of covering and protecting the body, but also reflect their lifestyle, ecological surroundings, religious practices, social identity, cultural values, and inherited traditions. On the other hand, ethnic and modern fashion represent a broader sphere of cultural expression, where traditional forms are continuously modified, adapted, and reinterpreted within contemporary perspectives.

In the present era, modern fashion technology has increasingly embraced tribal designs, colour combinations, weaving techniques, and natural materials, thereby providing them with a new global dimension. Through the application of digital technology, advanced textile production, and 3D modelling, it has become possible to adapt tribal motifs and patterns to the demands of the modern fashion market while preserving their originality and cultural authenticity. As a result, tribal culture is not only being preserved and promoted on a wider platform, but the economic potential and livelihood opportunities of tribal communities are also being significantly enhanced.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Tribal fashion should not merely be regarded as a relic of the past. Rather, it has emerged as an important source of inspiration for modern fashion and technological innovation. From an anthropological perspective, tribal fashion deserves more extensive and critical academic exploration in order to assess its contribution to the evolution of modern fashion technology and to identify sustainable developmental approaches embedded within indigenous knowledge and traditional practices.

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