

Limbu's Traditional Thaka Fabric

-Su Hangma Limboo

Deptt. Of Limbu

Sikkim University.

Abstract

Limbu are known as the hells man. They are well known as Limbu/Limboo, Subba and Tsong. In Sikkim Bhutia and Lepcha community addressed them "Tsong". In 1662 "Lho-Men-Tsong Sum" Treaty was signed among Limbu, Lepcha and Bhutia, before the Chogyal Dynasty.

This abstract is about the Limbu communities *Thakthakma* (Small hand loom industry) weaving.

Keywords: *Limbu, Limbu Culture, Thaka/dhaka, Sukhim, Thakmana Tet.*

Methodology: The present topic is about the authentic fabric of the Limbu community of Sikkim. Which reflects the cultural value and tradition, with depth history and importance in their tribe. Their particular cloth Thaka weaving is practicing as old as Limbu community. Primary information is collected through field-based work and secondary information is from journal articles, magazine and some relevant books.

Introduction

The Limbu/Yakthung, are also one of the earliest inhabitants of Sikkim. The name of Indian State Sikkim itself is a Limbu name, a combination of two Limbu words: *su*, which means "new", and *khyim*, which means "palace" or "house". The history is associated with the Sikkim's history (Chogyal Dynasty), II Chogyal has Limbini wife, Thungwamukma Yoyo Hangma, daughter of Yoyo Hang. She named new palace Rabdentse, 2nd capital of Sikkim as a Sukhyim/Sukhim (New House).

In Limbu society, women are skilled in many fields, like fabric weaving. Their creative ideas and arts are reflected in weaving *Thaka* (Limbu's traditional weaving fabric), integrating and promoting old patterns with a new style.

Dhaka originally called "*Thaka*", the word '*Thaka*' originated from Limbu language, *Thakmana Tet* (woven cloths) is a traditional handcrafted fabric and ethnic traditional fabric cloths of the Limbus. It is woven on a small loom industry (bamboo and woodwork) or home-based industry. Old days threads are used by making stinging nettle threads and now weaver using Suti, silk and nettle threads also.

Origin

The origin of *Thaka* goes back several hundred years, and thousands and thousands of years old myth is associated to *Limbu Mundhum*. Goddess *Yuma Mang* and *Mujigna-Kheyongna* is the first teacher to taught *Thak:Thakma*. and her son Susuwen Lalawen has two wife one *Thosulungma Fiyamlungma* in mountain and other *Yosulungma Mukkulungma* in the plane, they then he first met them while weaving *Thaka*. And that art of making *Thaka* is taught by generation to generation, still it gaining popularity in this modern era.

And was originated in the Terathum district of Nepal

"The Lepchas and Limbus both trace their origin and the origin of on earth to the Khanchendzonga landscape. The dive deity of the Limbus, *Sigera Yabhundin Mang Porokmi Wambhami Mang* was advised by *Tagera Ningwaphuma*, who collected bamboo ash, bird droppings, rainwater and resin from lower hills. With these items he returned to a spot identified as '*Mangjirima Manglodama in Phoktanglungma*' (called Kumbhakarna or Jannu

Peak) lying at the western edge of the Khangchendonga mountain range. Here he creates two idols--*Laikkangsa* the male and *Simbummasa* the female, who are the original ancestral couple of the Limbus"(www.iied.org).

Limbu's are residing in Himalayan belt of Kanchenjunga, North Eastern States of India like, Sikkim, Darjeeling and Kalampong district of West Bengal, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Bhutan, Eastern part of Nepal, and migrated to United Kingdom, Hong Kong and so on. They are very close to nature and always have faith in it and which are reflected in *Thaka* weaving patterns, shapes and motifs.

Patterns and Style

Thaka fabric or cloths patterns seems very beautiful and attractive with a multi-color. The shapes are zig zag (narrow and wider) patterns like a mountain's picks, bold geometrical shapes denoting the layers of atmosphere, a diamond and half diamond shapes, floral patterns of rhododendron, birds, Limbu Manghim (Limbu Temples), Limbu alphabetical patterns, butterflies etc., and regular weavers knows about 100 basic patterns and they invent new all the time. And patterns and style depend upon weavers' skills and ideas, it may vary from one to another. Among variety of *Thaka* patterns,

Traditions

Limbu women weave *Thaka* fabric on small, traditional handlooms made from bamboo and wood. The traditions of art of making *Thaka* fabric is taught from generation to generation. They weave *Poth:thang* (Swal), *makhli*, sari, mufflers, men's hat (*Thak:khuk*), and piece of cloths which could design in any other moderns dresses. *Thaka* cloths represents the Limbu cultural dress. Limbu wedding attire typically features handwoven *Thaka* outfit or *Thaka changwa*, highlighting and preserving the cultural heritage.

They usually wears *Thaka* fabric cloths attire. It signifies the rich tradition of their tribes. Ancient tradition of weaving *Thaka* and wearing this generation to generation is rooted deeply in history of Limbu tribe. And Limbu women are also engaging in these skills.

Entrepreneurship

Almost all the Asian countries women are skilled in weaving. Each of countries are famous for handlooms and have unique tradition in weaving. Likewise, Limbu community also has wide skills in weaving field. Limbu women are really engaged in weaving called *Thaka*. According to their history ancestor used to woven the *Thaka* and then shifted to generation to generation. Improving the skills, developing and promoting the nature of *Limbu Thaka*.

In modern era many entrepreneurs exploring the *Thaka*. They can develop the capacity to create fashionable garments. Numbers of unemployed women are getting platform in *Thaka* weaving.

As a Sikkim's context, oldest small handlooms are chosen *Thaka* entrepreneurs. Small looms have no particular names of handloom but they used to weave the fabric and sold continuously. Some oldest weavers of *Thaka* in Sikkim are *Mrs. Purni Maya Seguma Limboo* belongs from small village Singpheng, Geyzing District. She is weaving *Thaka* more than 50 years. She used to teach *thaka* through Self Help Group (SHG) and on her own expenses to many. And her husband was also a *thaka* weaver too (interview with *Mrs. Purni Maya Seguma Limboo*).



Limbu Tribe of Sikkim, India

(Picture copyright from Atlas of Humanity)

Above this picture *Changwa* and *Pot:thang* (cloth and shawl) is weaved herself.

Sany Waves

In Sikkim one of the youngest Dhaka weavers is gaining reputation in weaving traditional fabric of Limbu's. Sandhya Subba (Yangwago) is motivated in this field and also motivating upcoming generation in society. She stated is her Thaka weaving journey from COVID-19 Pandemic at her own home only. During that period, she woven solo. Beginning of 2020 she started given free training to local and unemployed women. She run a small Dhaka cottage called *Sanywaves* in her native placed Hee Bermoik bazar. And has six skilled weavers.

Sanywaves developed a distinctive approach that blends traditional Dhaka patterns with contemporary styles, resulting in innovation, fusion outfits. Commitment to preserving cultural heritage while embracing innovation has enabled us to create unique and captivating designs that cater to diverse tastes. And customer may order online through Instagram, Facebook page and what's app also. Not only the cloths, Thaka slings and design bags for ladies are also available.

The cultural importance of Dhaka in the Limbu community cannot be overstated. Our wedding attire typically features handwoven Thaka outfits, highlighting our community's history and tradition of weaving. This craft is an integral part of our cultural heritage. Weaving is not just a skill; it's an essential part of our tribe's identity and cultural legacy (*Sandhya Subba Yangwago*).

Brief biography

Name: Sandhya Subba (Yangwago)

Address: Hee Bermiok, West Sikkim

DOB: 22.03.1991

Qualification: Bachelors in Mass Communication, Punjab University.

Thakthakma Training in Sikkim

The particular tribe holds significant cultural and historical importance of their Thaka weaving and enhancing their skills by continuing the process the State and Central government also formulating various departmental programs through concern department. In Sikkim Tribale Research Instutude (TRI) also, Thakthakma training on Limboo Tribal Thakka weaving organized by Sukhim Yakthung Sapsok Songchumbho, sponsored by Tribale Research Institute, Social Welfare Department, Government of Sikkim and Ministry of Tribale affairs Government of India in collaboration with Capacity Building Skill Development Department Government of Sikkim held at “Yakthung Him”, Gangtok, Sikkim. The training was started in 01.01.2023 and ended in 19.02.2023, forty-five days, under the guidance of two teacher Mrs. Mon Maya Limboo and Ms. Sandhya Subba Yangwago. Most of the trainees are female and among twenty, only one male has participated.

Trainees name are as follows:

1. Ms. Premi Limboo
2. Ms. Anita Subba
3. Ms. Buddha Rani Limboo
4. Ms. Sunu Hangma Limboo
5. Mr. Ram Hang Limboo
6. Ms. Meena Subba
7. Ms. Anjana Subba
8. Ms. Indra Subba
9. Ms. Bindu Subba
10. Ms. Binita Limboo
11. Ms. Bheema Hangma Limboo
12. Ms. Nisha Hangma Limboo
13. Ms. Numa Limboo
14. Ms. Manisha Limboo
15. Ms. Pramila Limboo
16. Ms. Hangma Limboo
17. Ms. Nima N. Dee Lepcha
18. Ms. Sancha Maya Limboo
19. Ms. Sonila Subba
20. Ms. Hangma Limboo. (Interview taken from trainee Ms. Premi Limboo, MA Limbu, Sikkim University).

Conclusion

Piece of traditional fabric is exploring the Limbu culture is called Thaka/Dhaka. Passing down through generation to generation the handmade fabric expresses the depth history and importance of Limbu's and how they are preserving it. And patterns are really natural that reflects the rich heritage and artistic skills of the Limbu people. Like geometrical patterns, mountains shape, Limbu Manghim shape, flowers, birds, Limbu alphabetical shape, English alphabetical shape (e.g., SEWARO meaning NAMASTE in Hindi) etc., with vibrant designs and colors.

Nowadays, this Thaka fabrics are using it by many styles. They blend in Indian, Indo western and contemporary fusion as lehenga, kurta suits, saree and saree borders, patterns, flower designs, converting in westerns outfits like men's and women's coat suits, formal shirts, skirts, tops, purses, tote bags, sling bags, mufflers, scarf, hanker chips, and many other products.

Originally handmade Thaka fabric which is gaining popularity in all cultures around the world.

Reference

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