Evolving identity: a study on changing choices in the clothing of tribal women of Tripura, India

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Ethnographic research was conducted from the year 2011 to 2017, as a part of the author’s Ph.D. research to study the transformation of costume among the Tripuri tribal women of Tripura, India. Data were collected using methods such as participant observation, face-to-face interviewing, focus group discussion, and visual ethnography. The main objectives of the research were to study the traditional textiles and costumes of the Tripuri tribal women of Tripura, India with reference to weaving, designs and motifs, colour, and draping styles. To study the preference for the tribal costume of Tripuri tribal families residing in rural and urban areas in the state of Tripura. The study also aimed to correlate the changes in the tribal costume with various socio-economic and socio-cultural factors. It was found that the change in demography, exchange of culture, change in religion, the influence of media and communication, and religion play a significant role in the transformation in clothing. The study ideates that there is a rise of contemporary contexts of the local, regional, national, and global raised questions about cultural conviviality and the influence of trans-cultural, trans-national, and multicultural influencing different cultural identities, which can also be witnessed through the textiles and costume of the tribes.

Keywords: costume; tripuri; tribal; tripura

1 Introduction

The state of Tripura is situated in the northeastern part of India. It is surrounded on the north, west, and south by Bangladesh and is accessible to the rest of India through Assam and Mizoram state (Tripura State Portal, 2012). Tripura was a Princely State until it merged into the Union of India on 15th October 1949 after the Indian independence of India on 15th of August 1947. Since then the history of Tripura has witnessed various political, economic, and social developments. During the last phase of the princely rule by the Manikya dynasty, Tripura witnessed the emergence of a new culture, which was the outcome of the migration from Colonial Bengal and from the adjoining territories of the state. The flow of immigrants increased in the state during the 1950s and reached its zenith during the Independence movement of Bangladesh in the year 1971 (De, N., 2012).
Tripura is an abode of indigenous people who migrated to this state during an unknown period in the history of the Indian subcontinent. There are about nineteen different tribes living in Tripura. The Tripuri, Reang, Jamatia, Noatia, Halam, Chakmah, Mog, Garo, Munda, Lushai, Oraon, Santhal, Uchai, Khasi, Bhil, Lepcha, Bhutia, Chaimal and Kuki tribes have their own cultural heritage and identity, which is reflected in their traditional costume. The tribal communities are known for their conformity in dressing, a form of social interaction within the tribal community in which one tries to maintain standards set by the group. However, with the increasing impact of the outside world, the tribal costume among the younger generation has generated new ideas and fashion to match with changing lifestyle (A Land of Rich Ethnic Tapestry-Tripura).

The Tripuri tribe is the most primitive tribe. According to Census India, Tripura Report 2001, the Tripuri tribe has the highest tribal population in the state. The motivation behind the present work was the realization that an attempt is being made among the tribal societies to modernize their traditional costume. The so-called traditional costume worn in present times has also undergone.

2 Methodology
Ethnographic research was conducted to study the tribal costumes in Tripura. Ethnography is the study of people in their environment using methods such as participant observation, face-to-face interviewing and visual ethnography. As ethnography documents cultural similarities and differences through empirical fieldwork and can help with scientific generalizations about human behaviour and the operation of social and cultural systems, this approach seemed appropriate to study the tribal costume of Tripura as the researcher is not a part of the same community or culture, being studied. Anthropology as a discipline is holistic (meaning it looks at the past, present and future of a community across time and space), an ethnographic account of a given community or society that attempts to get a comprehensive understanding of the circumstances of the people being studied. (Bryman, 2004). To study the relationship of traditional costume to culture and identity, and the place of traditional tribal dress in contemporary Tripura, the ethnographic research study covered the main areas where the population density of the Tripuri tribe is highest. West Tripura District, Khowai District, South Tripura District, and the State Capital Agartala were a part of the study, as the concentration of the Tripuri tribe is highest in these geographical areas, as per the statistics of the Survey of India and Local Authorities. Data were gathered through observations during the period of ethnographic study and being a part of tribal marriages, household activities, and cultural events (where traditional dress is likely to be worn), visiting tribal museums (Tripura State Museum, Khumulwng Museum and Tribal Research and Cultural Institute), Weavers’ Service Centre and clothing stores. Observations were conducted between 2011–2017. The purpose of these observations was to find out the variations in the traditional costumes and to generate information relating to events during which traditional dress and the different contemporary versions are worn or used. One of the most striking developments in qualitative research in recent years has been the growth of interest in the use of visual materials. The use of such materials in social research is by no means new; for example, social anthropologists have made use of photographs of the tribes and villages in which they resided for many decades. (Bryman, 2012).

Old photographs were collected from old photography studios and tribal families, to witness the changes in ethnic textiles and the costume. A survey was conducted in urban areas among 100 women to understand the preference for clothing among Tripuri women.
3 Findings and discussions

3.1 Traditional costume of Tripuri women

The traditional costume of the Tripuri tribe is studied from the empirical data collected during the visit to the places, dominated by the Tripuri tribe. Photographs in the possession of families and other private collections, including traditional costumes, from the 1970s to the present day. During the field visits as observed and through analysis of old images, costume collections from museums, and photographs of families who volunteered to support the study, information was derived.

To an outsider, the draping style of the costume of a few tribes may look similar as the tribal women drape a narrow rectangular piece of fabric to cover the upper abdomen, and a wider rectangular fabric is draped like a wrap-around skirt. However, if studied in detail the costume forms the identity of the tribal women. The colour combinations and motifs are unique for each tribe and the costume will identify the community or tribes the women belong to. Conformity in clothing among tribes provided an identity to the wearer.

The traditional costume of the Tripuri tribe is an unstitched and draped textile. Weaving is practiced by the women of the Tripuri community. Traditional costume, of the Tripuri women, consists of mainly two parts: the rigwani (draped on the lower abdomen) and the risha or ria (draped over the upper abdomen), as shown in Fig 1. The entire set of costumes worn by the Tripuri women in the Kokborok language is known as Ri-Borok. Traditionally only cotton yarn (grown through shifting cultivation, was used and dyed with natural dyes. The Tripuri women weave specific motifs on the rigwani, different from the motifs of other tribes of Tripura. The length of the rigwani in the olden days was from waist to mid-calf length. The tribal women weave the tribal textiles on a primitive loom also known as a back-strap loom.

Figure 1: Illustration of tribal women wearing Rigwani and Risha. Source: Illustrated by the author.
3.2 Transformation in the costume of Tripuri women

It was observed, that the Tripuri women wear new styles of rigwnai as daily wear in the office, at home, and outside. The new versions of rigwnai will have contemporary colours, and new surface designs (hand embroidery, machine embroidery, and fabric paints), and not necessarily be made on the backstrap loom. Both frames loom woven fabric and power loom-made fabric readily available in the market can be purchased to make this rigwnai. The tribal women can purchase the new rigwnai from local shops; custom-made it from other weavers or can weave the same themselves.

In a similar study done on Rabari tribal costume and embroidery by Judy Frater (2016), the author mentioned that change in traditional textiles reflects socio-economic changes and that the process of change illuminates’ values and coping methods essential to women in society.

During the field visits, the researcher documented different styles of rigwnai. Further observation of street fashion was useful to record the contemporary styles of rigwnai worn by tribal women in daily life. The styles are selected from the photographs and samples of new designs of popular rigwnai, shared by the women interviews. The traditional colour of the costume is always a combination of red, white and black. Motifs are specific to the tribes and are woven with yellow, green, and other colors. The researcher studied family photographs of the last few years from different Tripuri families to research and identified contemporary colours of rigwnai. The researcher examined social networking sites like Facebook and Instagram to identify new colours trends. During the interviews, many women said that either they select colours of their choice, or the selection depends entirely on the colours available in the market. During the market study, the researcher found that the availability of yarns of different colours, adds variety to the ethnic textile. The tribal women have started using colours other than their traditional ones. The mill-dyed acrylic yarn present in the market is available in a wide range of bright colours like blue, brown, maroon, yellow, grey, purple, peacock green, turquoise, pink, etc. Few women also prefer wearing pastel colours. The researcher surveyed 100 Tripuri women to study the preference of colours of costumes they prefer to wear. 20% of the women answered that they prefer wearing only traditional colours like red, black and white. 80% of the women responded that they prefer wearing contemporary colours. Further women mentioned use of contemporary colours like green, dark green, blue, Icy blue, pink, purple, dark pink, multi-colour stripes, orange, black, maroon, brown, pastel colours, golden & silver. Contemporary floral motifs are gaining popularity. The contemporary motifs have no names or specific meanings related to the tribe but are simply copied from printed or embroidered textiles available in the market. New surface techniques like screen printing, hand painting, and embroidery are used of creating motifs. Women also prefer wearing Western dresses (e.g. Jeans, T-shirts, skirts) and other Indian dresses(e.g. Saree, Salwar Kameez, Lehenga). Women have started wearing a blouse with rigwnai. A broader rectangular fabric known as ri-kutur of matching design with the rigwnai is draped similarly to a saree palla to cover the upper abdomen. The experimenting contemporary drapes show the attempt of the tribal women trying to create a new identity in the community. The younger generation takes inspiration from the dressing of television and movie actors. A few styles like wearing T-shirts with rigwani and experimental contemporary draping styles were observers among the new generation of tribal women as shown in Figure 2.
The significance of risha in the present tribal community has changed. From the photographs, it was observed that the risha is just not just a part of women’s costumes but a symbol of tribal identity and culture. The younger generations were not keen on wearing a risha in the traditional way. Both men and women wore the risha and draped the risha in the form of a scarf or stole with both Indian dresses and Western dresses. A collective effort by both the genders of the community in making a fashion statement and yet preserve the tribal culture as shown in Fig. 3 & Fig.4. 

This is also emphasized by Tijana Todorović (2014), who that clothing not only shows our appearance but also represents our interior world. We draw attention with the help of clothing. Throughout apparel, we establish communication with others, express acceptance or rejection, or collective attitudes with an understanding of something that is likable, sociable, or moral, mentioned.
3.3 Choices of clothing among three generations in the tribal families.

The researcher observed that Tripuri women of many families residing in the capital Agartala have stopped wearing traditional costumes for many generations. The findings of the observation were similar to the results of the survey conducted during the research period. During the interview, Ms. Papia Debbarma shared a photograph of her family where she and her mother was wearing a silk saree. Her teenage daughter was wearing an ethnic Indian dress as shown in Fig. 5 She mentioned that her family has been residing in the capital Agartala for the last four generations and have never seen anyone wearing the traditional costume in her family. She also shared that her mother was working in the Forest Department in Tripura, and always preferred wearing saree in the workplace. The researcher observed that many families staying in the capital of Agartala for many generations have stopped wearing traditional costumes. Living closer to other Hindu communities, influenced their material culture, reflected in their clothing.

The researcher found that older women in rural areas still wear traditional costumes. However, the younger generation who have moved and settled in urban areas due to work, have adapted to new dressing styles. During the interview, Ms. Anima Debbarma, a school teacher by profession, showed many photographs of her wearing sarees and unique designs of rigwnai. She shared that her family is from a remote village in Tripura, while she and her husband moved in the capital Agartala for work. The researcher requested a family photograph to include in the research. She selected a new design of rigwnai which she draped with a ri-kutur, for the photo shoot. The rigwnai she wore, though woven in traditional colours had motifs from different communities. Her teenage daughter was wearing a t-shirt and jeans. Her daughter has never worn a traditional costume and does not practice weaving, as shown in Fig. 6. Families who have moved to urban areas dress differently from their elders living in rural areas. She also shared the photo of her late mother-in-law, wearing a risha and rigwnai. The researcher observed in the photograph, as shown in Fig. 6. The mother-in-law was wearing a unique design risha. The risha had a unique colour combination of blue, pink and white. Being a widow, she
did not wear the traditional red colour risha. The families who have moved to urban areas dress differently from their elders living in rural areas.

Figure 5. Preference of clothes in three generations of women in the same family. The photograph was taken in a Studio in Agartala, West Tripura District. [Photograph] (Photograph from the private collection of a Tripuri family).

Figure 6. Preference of clothes in three generations of women in the same family. The photograph was taken in Agartala, West Tripura District. Source: Photograph from the private collection of a Tripuri family.

During the field visits, the researcher found that both the older and younger generation wear contemporary colours for non-ceremonial occasions and daily wear. Traditional colours like red and white are worn for special cultural gatherings. For everyday wear, they prefer mixing and matching contrasting colours. The younger generation, especially the teenagers in rural areas can be as trendy and wear colourful t-shirts with rigwnai in traditional or contemporary colours. Teenagers in rural areas were seen wearing colorful Western and other Indian dresses.
In similar research, according to Gregory (2018), clothing tastes become more settled with age, older persons tend to have a more significant percentage of their income taken up with commitments, and after years of experiment, one finds the styles which are most satisfying to him or her. Young people may welcome frequent fashion changes, which give them a chance to experiment and still be like everybody else.

The trend of wearing both regional costumes and Western dress is commonly seen in various parts of India and the world. According to Dhamalji (2010), in the early twenty-first century, in India, the younger elite wear the universal Western jeans and t-shirts many men and women are comfortable wearing both jeans and traditional dress, thus demonstrating their ease in the multinational world of the new millennium.

3.4 Survey on the preference of clothing women among Tripuri Tribe.
A survey was conducted among the Tripuri women in an urban area like the capital Agartala, to understand their preference for their clothing. Nearly 100 tribal women participated in a survey. Women from age group from the age group of 15 to above 60 were selected. The selection of this age group was selected to understand the preferences for clothing among younger and elderly people.

The findings of the research are as followed.

- It was found among the Tripuri women 12.0% always wear, 42% on occasion, 14% sometimes wear their traditional costume and 32% said they never wear the traditional costume.
- 71% of the Tripuri women said that Women in the last two generations wear the traditional costume
- it was found that 31% of the Tripuri women said that they wear the traditional costume when they travel outside the State.
- Only 35% of the Tripuri women said that they can weave the traditional textile on a loin loom.
- It was found among the Tripuri women 27% said they prefer wearing fabric woven in loin loom, 9% said they prefer wearing fabric in other looms, 32% said they prefer wearing fabric on both loin loom and other looms and 32% said they do not prefer wearing traditional textiles.
- 69.0% of the Tripuri women said they can drape the traditional textile in the traditional way and 31.0% said they would cut and stitch the fabric to construct a garment.
- 2% out of 100 Tripuri tribal women answered that they only wear the traditional dress, 45% said they prefer wearing other Indian dresses like salwar kameez or saree, 10% of the women said they prefer wearing only western dresses and 43% said that they wear both Indian and Western dress.

The result of the above clearly shows that there is a transition and change in the preference of clothing choices among Tripuri.

3.5 Evolving of the traditional costume of Tripuri women
A description of the change in the traditional costume of Tripuri women is presented in this section. The focus is on the continuation and change in traditional costumes. Besides, the key reasons are discussed. This section explores the way Tripuri women’s costume was affected by the economic,
social, and cultural changes in Tripura in the latter part of the twentieth century and for the first two decades of the twenty-first century. The researcher observed that the traditional costume of the Tripuri tribe has developed and evolved. In the absence of authentic documentation, the researcher found that there is no record of the exact It was found there is a significant difference between the dressing of Tripuri women living in urban and rural areas. Global influences have resulted in the modification of traditional costumes. Wearing a Western dress and other Indian dresses like saree and salwar kameez are the prevalent form of dress in urban areas.

According to Nilanjan DE (2012), in the year 1947, on 15th August, India attained her independence, but Tripura still remain an independent princely state till 15th October 1949 and the period was considered as the Period of Regency. The period was not at all a period of peace and tranquility rather it was a period of great turmoil and bewilderment. Tripura on that verge of time witnessed the worst effects of partition in the form of displaced persons and communal riots. The flow of immigrants towards Tripura, which was on track before the Independence of India, due to communal chaos in East Bengal, remained persistent. Tripura always made available room to her immigrants though the Aborigines did not whole-heartedly accept it in every phase.

The researcher found that the traditional costume worn by the Tripuri women in rural areas has undergone various changes. From old family photographs and in-depth interviews, the researcher found that the significant transformations in the costume started after the second half of the twentieth century. The main changes involved the clothing of the upper torso. Earlier the women wore risha to cover their breast. They also wore many beaded ornaments and coin necklaces to decorate the exposed upper abdomen. After the later part of the twentieth century, the Tripuri women adopted blouses and t-shirts. Women started draping the risha over the blouse, at home.

Women started wearing ri- kutur instead of risha. Often ri- kutur, was draped was carried like a stole. The draping of, the rigwnai has not changed. However, women started wearing rigwnai over the petticoat. During the interview, many women said wearing a rigwnai over a petticoat was more convenient as it secured the rigwnai tightly when they travelled. The researcher found that the beginning of the twenty-first century saw new surface designs (hand embroidery, machine embroidery, hand pain of rigwnai. New designs of rigwnai are seen, especially among the younger generation. Based on Interviews of women of different age groups; study of costumes from museums; analysis of photographs from the private collection of Tripuri families and photographs taken during field studies. the researcher the timeline was identified to explain the transformation of the costume especially in the rural area as shown in Tables 1 & 2.

Table 1. Transformation in Tripuri costume till the year 1950

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Time Period</th>
<th>Original Style</th>
<th>Transformation -1</th>
<th>Transformation -2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Original Style - During unknown period the Boroks (Tripuris) came from China through Burma and reached Tripura. Initially, they reached the hills of Tripura.</td>
<td>1st Transformation was seen around 1860s during the region of Bir Bikram Kishor Manikya Bahadur.</td>
<td>2nd Transformation When immigrants primarily from Colonial Bengal immigrated in Tripura around 1950s.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Illustrations

3. Descriptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Heads</th>
<th>Transformation -3</th>
<th>Transformation -4</th>
<th>Transformation -5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Time Period</strong></td>
<td>Arounds 1950s, when Christian missionaries came in Tripura.</td>
<td>Around 1990s When acrylic yarns were available in the local markets.</td>
<td>Around 2000s New styles of draping observed in rural areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Descriptions</strong></td>
<td>Original style of wearing rigwnai length from waist till mid calf) and risha directly over the skin. Presently the Tripuri women do not wear the style of costume.</td>
<td>Women started wearing blouse and petticoat. Risha draped over blouse. Length of rigwnai increased Presently the Tripuri women wear the style as dance costume.</td>
<td>Ri-kutur is introduced. Women started wearing ri-kutur with the costume. Presently women have stope wearing risha.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Illustrations

3. Descriptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Illustrations</th>
<th>Christian Tripuri womenwear T-shirts with tradional rigwnai.</th>
<th>Tripuri women started wearing contemporary colours and motifs.</th>
<th>Tripuri women started wearing contemporary colours and motifs.</th>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>They draped rigwnai and ri- kutur like a saree (nivi style).</td>
<td>They draped rigwnai and ri-kutur like a saree (seedha pallu).</td>
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3.6 Factors affecting changes in the traditional costume in the Tripuri tribe

Tripura is passing through a transitional phase, that has had an impact on traditional social structures. As mentioned earlier the exposure to new culture and change in the surrounding environment, physical, social, and economic conditions affect the change process in their cultural domain. The overview of the research methodology followed was to study the socio-economic and socio-cultural factors influencing the change in costume.

3.6.1 Social Cultural Factors Influencing the Choice of Clothing

As in many other tribal areas in India, Tripura is passing through a transitional phase. The change is everywhere and has had an impact on traditional social structures. Naturally, the old social structures no longer exist. Though there are many forms of the impact of modern society on them, the impact of dress and ornaments on their women is most effective and rapid. The exposure to new culture and changes in the surrounding environment, physical, social, and economic conditions affect the change process in their cultural domain. They are now subjected to massive cultural change due to the influence of modern society. The studies reveal that due to the impact of outer society, socio-cultural reasons, and attraction towards contemporary trends, the transformation in the traditional costume is observed.
The movements of immigrants were not a new phenomenon for the state of Tripura. Tripura began to witness the flow of immigrants right from the last half of the 19th century and before her amalgamation, she witnessed many immigrants, especially from Colonial Bengal immigrating into the state in search of jobs and livelihood. Moreover, due to the smooth association between the Colonial Bengal and Hill Tipperah, there was an excellent arrangement of socio-economic interaction, which started in the last part of the 19th century and carried on up to its merger with the Indian Union. This close affinity between the Colonial Bengal and Hill Tipperah caused the movements of the people from one place to another. The last part of the Manikya dynasty of Tripura witnessed the emergence of a new culture in Tripura, which was the outcome of the migration from Colonial Bengal and from the adjoining territories of Hill Tipperah. There are two phases of migration in the last hundred years of Manikya rule in Tripura, which not only increased the number of populations of the state but also altered substantially the ethnic composition of Tripura’s population and the resource use pattern. The researcher found that there have been many changes in the tribal communities in Tripura, since 1950. Key change agents impacting the state of Tripura included- Increased migrants from Bangladesh and neighboring states, Increased numbers of the educated tribal population. The flow of immigration, which started in the last half of the 19th century, continued into the 20th century. Both the push and pull factors were responsible for that migration. The rulers of Tripura to modernize their states pulled the elite and educated intelligentsia of Bengal as well as the plough cultivators. The rulers of Tripura provided all sorts of facilities to those immigrants of Bengal. Those migrants were solely economic migrants. The period not only witnessed the flow of Bengali immigrants but various other tribes like Chakmas, Mogs, Santals, Orangs, Bhils, Mundas, Khasis, Panika, etc. from various parts of British India. The above data shows that migration from colonial Bengal and the exchange of culture among the nineteen tribes are now subjected to socio-cultural change in Tripura. The researcher found that the change in the socio-cultural environment is also reflected in the clothing of the tribal women of Tripura.

Urbanization has also left some imprints on the religious belief practices of the urban tribal. Like their Bengali counterparts, the tribal women today control the domestic parts of religious activities. No more tribal priests are invited to drive away evil spirits or witches. These changes are undoubtedly positive for women and signify changes in the institutional character of the tribal religion in urban life. The tribal population of Tripura is either living near caste-stratified Hindu society or converted to Christianity. Therefore, it has much effect on their social and livelihood levels. According to Choudhury (2010) Language is still the most significant marker of ethnic identity and serves to keep tribes defined, but traditional modes of dress run a close second in this regard, as is clear during festivals, marriage ceremonies, or critical social gatherings. One significant trend among the younger generation (one receiving wider social approval) is fashion shows or beauty pageants. Every popular festival, even universities, colleges, and schools, presents such extravaganzas. These events feature innovative, modern, casual garments as well as traditional ensembles from diverse communities. Perhaps the new generations of tribal youth are reinventing tradition to negotiate with the broader sociopolitical realities of life. There is an impact on traditional tribal dress codes, an effect that is more evident in urban and semi-urban areas, where tribal people cut across cultural boundaries and incline toward Western modes of dress for everyday wear. The findings of the research show the nature and dimensions of change in the lives and status of tribal women in Tripura. Socio-economic changes during the past few decades have been observed. The urban tribal women have lost some of their traditional rights; the gains they have made in the spheres of education, employment, or personal mobility are significant compared to rural tribal women.
3.6.2 Social-Economic Factors Influencing the Choice of Clothing

Various studies indicate that rapid growth in the State economy and the socio-economic profile of Tripura are mentioned in the following points. The total Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) of Tripura was about US$ 2.7 billion in 2007-08. Rural Tripura is ahead compared to all-India in the share of per capita expenditure on food and education (Source: Household Consumer Expenditure in India, 2007-08 NSS 64th Round). Development in Key industries in Tripura is natural gas, food processing, rubber, tea, bamboo, handloom and handicrafts, sericulture, tourism, IT, and medicinal plants. Agriculture and allied activities are the mainstay of Tripura. They provide employment to about 64 percent of the population.

There has been significant development in the infrastructure of the State. Tripura has a total road length of 15,539 km covering metalled and non-metalled surfaces. The major towns are connected by National Highways that run through the state for about 400 km. NH-44 links. The Singerbhil airport in Agartala is the second-biggest and busiest airport in the Northeast. (Source: Airport Authority of India). The major railway stations are located at Agartala, Dharmanagar, and Kumarghat. Railway station.

As of March 2009, the state had 88 telephone exchanges with 84,207 working connections. The state also had 32,361 wireless local loop (WLL) connections with 38 WLL exchanges. (Source: Cellular Operators Association of India, as of June 2010).

According to the Census 2001, Tripura’s literacy rate was 73.2 percent. The male literacy rate was 81 percent and the female literacy rate was 64.9 percent.

The nature of the existing employment pattern in Tripura can also be revealed from the result of the 6th Economic Census-2013. It is found that about 4,04,024 persons were working in 2,36,773 establishments in 2013 against 3,85,708 persons in 1,89,423 establishments in 2005. Out of the total workers of 4,04,024 in 2013, 2,33,436 were in rural areas, and the remaining 1,70,588 were in urban areas. Other workers were found engaged in retail trade, followed by education, manufacturing, other services, transport, accommodation and storage, and other community and personal services in the non-agriculture segment of the State.

The above data shows a trend of economic growth and development in the state. The researcher observed that the tribes are now subjected to massive economic and cultural change due to the influence of modern society. The researcher found that factors that influenced the choice of clothing among the professional women in Tripura, considered were the nature of the profession, availability of money and the prices of clothes, shopping retail outlets, Local Tailor-made Shopping Outlet, Local Readymade Shopping Retail Outlets.

3.6.3 Co-relating transformation of tribal costume with reference to Socio-economic and Socio-culture

Based on the study of Socio-Economic and Socio-Cultural changes in Tripura and observation and interviews during the research period, the researcher found that external and Internal factors influence clothing preferences. External factors affect us indirectly and sometimes we have no direct control over them. Various factors like Changes in the environment, Globalization, and Political changes come under external factors. Whereas Internal factors are a direct effect on an individual and effects are clearly visible. Demographic factors, sociocultural and the influence of media and communication play a very important role in the transformation of clothing. The researcher found the
that the following Socio-cultural factors like Peer Group pressure, Inter-Cultural marriage, Mass Media, and the Influence of Christian missionaries played an important factor in the change of costume.

The association of the tribes of Tripura following animistic religion, with the Hindu population and other tribes in the state. The major part of the population also consists of Bengali families which continue to influence the tribal culture. The researcher observed that there has been an exchange of culture, as both the tribal and the non-tribal community take part in each festival and has adapted food habits, living style as well as clothing from each other which is clearly reflected and visible in the clothing of the Tripuri women. The tribal youth of today's century often question the values with which they grew up. They get acquainted with new friends some of whom may have completely different values or backgrounds. The researcher observed that the nineteen tribes residing in Tripura has many similarities and has been continuously learning and adopting new culture from each other. There are many common festivals shared by the tribes, and the draping of the costume is similar in many tribes. The researcher observed that earlier the tribes were strict in wearing colours and motifs only from their communities, but with changing times they have started wearing colours and motifs from different communities. The use of contemporary colours and motifs has now removed the age-old tradition of conformity in dressing.

In the 1950s, Christian missionaries went into the deep forests of Tripura and started preaching to the tribals. Today, according to official figures, there are 120,000 Christians in Tripura, a 90% increase since 1991. The Researcher visited Mission Compound near Arundhuti Nagar, Agartala, and observed that while studying the Christian women attending church, it was seen most of the young girls wear western clothes or western tops with the rigwnai. The elder people and even the young girls wore rigwnai but no risha was worn, though some elderly women prefer to wear saree.

Media and communication have a continuing effect on clothing behaviour. The desire for fashionable clothing was fostered by its increased availability as well as by new communication media like Internet, Magazines, Newspapers, FM radio, Television, Magazines. The researcher found that the tribal women read magazines like Femina, Shanada, Vogue. These publications spread the latest fashion ideas by means of pictures and descriptions. Local dressmakers copy the styles best they could available fabrics. As more women became aware of fashion styles through magazines and other forms of mass communication, their desire to wear this fashion increased.

The theory of mass society and power of media (C. Wright Mills) states that there is a significant relationship between foreign media and fashion trends oriented in girls. Various study shows that clothing displays played a role as a source of information to professional women on the choice of clothing designs. The study results indicated that clothing displays fashion magazines, fashion shows, friends, newspapers and family members were the most popular sources of information used by professional women in their choice of clothing designs as shown in Fig 7.

The researcher found that apart from urban places many houses in rural areas have satellite television at home. Television Channels like Star plus, ZEE, and Sony have developed a new idiom of indigenous entertainment based heavily on the Bollywood film industry. The movies shown on movie channels are very popular among the younger generations. The researcher found posters of Bollywood actors in the rooms of teenagers, staying in both rural and urban areas. The educated tribal youth is now familiar with the increasing use of smartphones. The researcher found that the younger generations are very actively involved in social networking sites like Facebook and wattssup. The interaction is now
not limited to the tribal community but to a wider world. The researcher found there are many online communities promoting both tribal and contemporary tribal costume.

Figure 7. Sarkar, P., 2017. Posters of Indian Bollywood actresses, on the wall of tribal teenage girl. This photograph was taken in a very remote village, Chakhi Kho, Tripura. [Photograph] (Photo taken by the researcher).

4 Conclusion

It was observed that like many other tribal areas in India, Tripura is passing through a transitional phase. The exposure to new culture and changes in the surrounding environment, and physical, social, and economic conditions affect the change process in their cultural domain. The studies reveal that due to the impact of outer society, socio-cultural reasons, and attraction towards contemporary trends, the transformation in the traditional costume is observed. The tribal women residing in the rural areas continue wearing traditional costumes maintaining the identity of their community. Tribal women residing in rural areas are trying to create a new identity as part of the global community. The study on three-generation women shows the transitions down the generations in the same family. The finding of the study supported by photographs of grandmother, mother, and daughter, shows the preferences of dressing of women of three generations, in the same family. During the interviews, the family members expressed their individual preferences in traditional costumes. The young generation, women wear a new-style traditional dress is open to more radical innovation and pride themselves on being trendsetters within the community. To conclude, it can be said that Tripura has been mainly a tribal region, but with the passing of time and growing cultural contact with the neighboring areas, the population of non-tribal people has steadily increased in the state. The older Tripuri tribal women maintain their design preferences of colour, stripes, and motifs. The younger generations are open to a new culture and new mode of dressing. They wear contemporary, traditional costumes, and Indian
and Western dresses. With the change in the socio-economic status of the tribal women, specific cultural changes, observed, and reflection of the same was witnessed in their traditional costume.

References


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