

TRADITIONAL COSTUMES AND ORNAMENTS OF THE GADDI TRIBE OF HIMACHAL PRADESH

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ABSTRACT

A beautiful state 'Himachal Pradesh' is comprised of fistful of tribal folk who reside in the north and north eastern extremities of the state. Gaddis are among the largest populated and influential tribes of the state and are known for their peaceful nature. They are settled in Bharmaur region of Chamba district which is called as 'Shivbhumi' or 'Land of Shiva'. Gaddis are intense followers of Lord Shiva. Their clothing is assumed to be of special and *distinctive* nature influenced from the outfits of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati, which seems to be very characteristic and striking. Men's costume consists of chola, dora and topi whereas the women wear launchari, choli, dora, suthan and ghundu as their main dress. They use shells, cowries, mirrors to decorate their costumes and ornaments. They also use ingenious objects from nature to decorate their topis and pagaris like tuft of wild flowers, birds' feathers and red berries etc. Gaddis are also much fond of ornaments. Their traditional jewellery is designed in an exquisite manner. This paper attempts to document traditional costumes and ornaments of Gaddi tribe.

Keywords: Gaddi tribe, Himachal Pradesh, Traditional costumes, Traditional ornaments

INTRODUCTION

Himachal Pradesh is a land of Deities also called "Dev Bhoomi". Most of the tribal people dwell in the forests and hilly regions of Himachal Pradesh in the districts namely Chamba, Kinnaur, Kangra, Mandi, Bilaspur, Mahasu, Sirmour and Lahaul & Spiti. There are five dominant tribes in this state which are Gaddis, Gujjars, Kinners, Lahaulas and Pangwals, whereas minor tribes are Lamba, Khampa and Jads. The largest population of tribes in Himachal Pradesh is of the Gaddis and Gujjars which are ninety percent out of the whole tribal population.



Fig.1 Himachal Pradesh District Map (Source: <http://www.mapsofworld.com>)

Gaddis are one of the most dominant and popular tribes that mostly reside in Bharmaur region in district Chamba. Bharmaur was the ancient capital of Chamba district which is situated at an altitude of 7000 feet in the Budhil valley, 40 miles to the south-east of Chamba. This tribe is known for its uniqueness in tradition with respect to their unique clothing, customary ornaments, food habits, rituals and festivals. Shepherding is the main profession of Gaddi tribe, for which they own large herd of goats and sheep. In present times, they are also getting involved with diverse occupations. The Gaddis have their own

village and therefore they cannot be referred to as nomads or vagabonds. However, in specific seasons the movements with goats and sheep to higher altitudes and even to the low pasture locale is a sort of conventional practice by the Gaddis. In summers, they take their cattle to pasturing extensively. As they have moved towards the plains, their literacy and economic empowerment have raised; their traditional style has undergone a change for the advancement of the tribe. They still dress up in their traditional attire during their rituals and ceremonies. Their traditional costumes are very eye-catching and prominent. Their traditional jewellery is exquisitely crafted from metals like silver and gold and embedded with either semi-precious stones or ornamented with beautiful *mina* work (*meenal/minakari* work is an art of painting or embellishing metals with vibrant colours). They are also fond of tattoos: women especially make tattoos on their chins and hands whereas men make it on their hands, arms and even on legs.

TRADITIONAL COSTUMES

It is mentioned in the history that one of their ancestors, Jaistambh had meditated for Lord Shiva and with his arduous meditation, Shiva was pleased and offered him a set of *Chola*, *Dora* and *Topa*. Since that time, these three outfits became men's authentic costumes. Gaddis are considered to have their roots from Rajasthan -this can be inferred from the use of hand-block printed cotton fabric in Gaddi women's *luanchari* and embellishment of their costumes with *gottas*, *cowries*, shells and mirrors specifically by this community and is unknown to the other ethnic communities of the region (Handa 2005, 32-34).

Men Costumes: Men's costumes are prepared out of hand woven woollen cloth which is referred as '*patti*'. *Patti* is a narrow width fabric woven in neutral off white or in black.



1. **Chola** or *choloo* is the name of the traditional dress (gown) worn by Gaddi men as upper garment which is made of usually white coloured '*patti*' of soft and thin wool (fig.2). Eighteen to twenty-five meters length of '*patti*' is required to make a *chola*. Its length reaches just below the knee. It is constructed with full sleeves, deep broad hanging collars where the wearer can stuff cotton, needles, threads, etc. *Chola* is closed crosswise over the chest and is tied around the waist by a cord called '*dora*'. Thus, it remains loose above the waist and the space formed is called '*kokh*' (womb) which can be used to carry the essentials like food, newly born lambs and kids during migration. A Gaddi can carry up to fifty kilograms of load in it.
2. **Dora** is tightened around the waist over *chola*. It is a black coloured sturdy woollen cord, also called '*gatri*' which is made of sheep's wool and upto sixty metres in length for man. It is an extra ordinary part of Gaddis' dress worn by man, woman and children which probably used to give support to the waist and back while moving on the mountains and it also plays a role to keep the person warm. It also serves the purpose of rope for number of their chores when the ordinary rope is unavailable (fig.2). In its folds, various utilitarian objects are tucked like *bansuri* (flute), *kulhari* (axe), *mandua* (leather pouch), *darat* (iron sickle), *runka* (flint- iron), *chilam* (small hukka) etc.
3. **Suthni** or *unali suthnu* is the local name of the traditional woollen churidar pyjama (warm trouser) worn by men as a lower garment. It is loosely fitted up till knees and tightens below knees and has close or tight fitting till ankles. In summers, men usually wear cotton *suthni* (fig.2). During earlier times, Gaddis generally preferred to remain bare-legged in summers.
4. **Kurta or kameez** is a men's collared shirt worn under *chola* and is stitched out of woollen cloth '*patti*'. In summers, they prefer cotton shirt instead of woollen shirt (fig.2). Gaddi men also like to wear kurta- pyjama while working on agricultural lands for their ease.

5. **Coat** is a tailored jacket which is worn over kurta-pyjama. It is a warm customised clothing constructed out of 'patti'. This jacket has pockets at the waist level and one at the chest level on the left side of the coat. The inner lining also has a pocket on the right side close to the chest (fig.3).
6. **Top or topa** (peak-cap) is a woollen cap worn as a head dress. It is noticeably different from others as it has flaps on two sides and a peak-like projection which represents the 'Kailash parvat' of Lord Shiva. Usually, the two flaps are kept folded up but during the chilled winters or mourning in the family, these flaps are pulled down over the ears and neck. Gaddis usually adorn their peak-caps with *kalgis* (feathers) of 'monal' bird. They also use wild dry flowers or beads on their woollen *topas* as decorative elements. During folk dances, a red handkerchief is tied to the top of the cap which unfolds in the air when folks take swings in the dance (fig.4). *Top* is specifically worn in festivals, folk dances and various other ceremonies. In general, Gaddis also wear *Bushahri topi* or *Pahari topi* which is not their traditional head dress (fig.2).
7. **Safa or pagadi** (turban) of cotton cloth is worn by Gaddimen as an ordinary head dress in daily use. It is worn by giving number of folds to a long coloured cotton sheet of approximately five meters length. They decorate their turbans with flowers especially on marriages and fairs. *Safa* is worn as a symbol of respect and dignity.
8. **Mochrus or desi jutta** are lace less shoes made of crude leather. These are very sturdy which lasts for long and can bear rugged nomadic journeys of Gaddis. In earlier times, Gaddis usually remained bare-footed. But now, they also wear shoes that are available in the market for their daily use.
9. **Jadula or jarelu** are homemade foot-wear of coarse goat hair which resemble long boots and are worn while crossing the heavy snow passes during winters.
10. **Shawls** are wraps draped around the shoulders to cover the upper body during severe cold. These are made of sheep wool in 'single colour (off-white or grey)' or in 'black and white checks' for Gaddi men. These are large in size, heavy in weight and rough in texture. The size of the men's shawls is 3 x 1.5 meters.

Grooms costume:

11. **Kadd or Luancha** is worn by Gaddi groom, which is very fascinating and attractive traditional full length dress. It has a bodice with an attached flared skirt and developed with twelve to fifteen meters length of red or maroon coloured cotton fabric. The skirt is usually made out of about thirty panels that contribute to the heaviness of the dress. Its lining cloth can be of same or in contrast colour. The sleeves are made with double layer of fabric which are fully decorated. The dress has an overlap in the front and fastened with strings. The dress is decorated with frills, laces, *gotas* (golden or silver coloured laces) and mirrors etc. and the edges are finished with bias binding (fig.5).
12. **Patka** is tied around the waist over the *kadd*. It is white and yellow coloured cotton cloth with approximately five meters length which is folded width wise and neatly draped around the waist with two- three rounds and tied with a single knot (fig.6).
13. **Sehra** is tied on the head of the groom. It prepared by local people with beautiful design detailing with *gotas*, glossy coloured papers and mirrors etc. Its edges are decorated with hanging colourful sticks called '*chiris*' all around the circumference made of glossy papers that fall over the face of the groom (fig.5).
14. **Shawl** is draped over the shoulders of the groom to complete the attire. It is specifically in red or maroon colour decorated with *gota* work (fig.5).



Fig.5 Gaddi groom dressed in Kadd, Patka, Shawl and Sehra and Haar

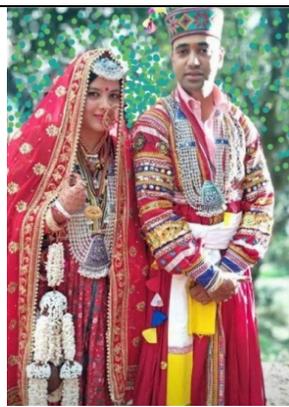


Fig.6 Gaddi bride and groom



Fig.7 Gaddi women dressed in Luanchari, Dora, Kurti, Suthan, Ghundu and Traditional Ornaments

Women Costumes: Gaddi women are known for their rosy complexion, graceful sharp features and are considered to be the most beautiful among the *pahari* women. Gaddi women have their unique identity with their costumes that are developed from hand-woven cotton cloth with block printing. *Chhimbas* are considered to be responsible for the development of hand-block printed cloth. '*Chhimba*' is a traditional caste of the dyers of *Barmer* (Rajasthan) which migrated with shepherding mass from Rajasthan to North Indian plains and Shivalik foothills long time back. Some of *Chhimbas* later settled in Shahpur village at lower range of Dhauladhar in District Kangra to serve the need of their Gaddi clients (Handa 1998, 268) (Handa 2005, 33-34).

1. **Luanchari** is the upper garment worn by Gaddi women. It is frock shaped full length dress made out of fifteen to twenty metres cotton cloth with contrast coloured yoke finished with frills, laces and bias bindings at the edges. Its sleeves are decorated with *gotas* and frills (fig.7).
2. **Dora** is a woollen black cord tied over the *luanchari* around the waist. This cord is forty-five to fifty metres long (fig.7) and serves the same function as for men.
3. **Suthan** is a cotton *chooridar pyjama* (trouser) loose at the thighs and fitted below the knee level and has some horizontal folds referred as *chooris* at the ankle level, worn as a lower garment by Gaddi women. The old Gaddi women even prefer to wear woollen suthan.
4. **Kurti** is a cotton collared shirt with front placket which is worn under *luanchari*. The collars and cuffs are fully ornamented with *gotas*, laces and buttons as these are the only visible parts of *kurti* when *luanchari* is worn over it (fig.7). Its length is up to the thigh level. Plackets and sometimes cuffs are tucked with chained silver buttons.
5. **Ghundu or chadru** is the traditional *dupatta* draped over the head and that falls over the shoulders and to the back. It is 2 to 2.5 meters long coloured muslin with finished edges with frills and laces (fig.7). On occasions, '*gottia wala ghundu*' i.e. *dupatta* with heavy designing and ornamentation of *gota* or *zari* work (fig.6) and '*gothni wala ghundu*' i.e. *dupatta* with borders stitched with different coloured cloth are worn by Gaddi women. These *dupattas* can be of muslin, georgette or silk. The old and widowed women wear white or off white coloured *chadru*.
6. **Chola** is also worn by women in winters instead of *luanchari*. It is made of white coloured '*patti*' but is short in length than one used by men. It is worn over the *kurti*.
7. **Footwear** of Gaddi women are also made of crude leather but lighter in weight and designed with colourful handicraft work. They also wear flat sole footwear and slippers purchased from markets.
8. **Shawls** for women are woven with sheep wool and designed with borders of multi-coloured designs. It is softer than men's shawls. Its size is 2.5 x 1 meters. Gaddi women wrap it around the shoulders in cold weather.

Bride's Costume: Gaddi bride also completes her set of costumes with *luanchari*, *dora*, *ghundu*, *kurti* and *suthnu*. *Luanchari* worn by bride is also called *Nuanchadi* as it is worn by the newlywed daughter-in-law (*nooh*) and is constructed in same style but with the deep bright shades of red or maroon colour in its skirt that is attached with the contrast coloured velvet bodice. It is tied with the black coloured *dora* of ten to twelve metres length around the waist. *Gottia wala ghundu* is draped over the head (fig.6).

TRADITIONAL ORNAMENTS

Gaddis are very fond of wearing ornaments. Silver is considered sacred by Gaddis, therefore their jewellery is mostly made of silver with *mina* work in specific designs and motifs. Only nose ornaments are made of gold. Traditionally, these ornaments were crafted with intricacy and heavier in weight whereas in present time women prefer to wear light weight jewellery.

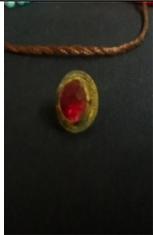
Women Ornaments

1. **Chak or Chonk:** It is conical shaped silver jewellery which is worn in the centre over the top of head. *Chak* is attached with silver strings to two small round structures of uniform sizes called *chakdi*. After mounting *chak*, *chakdis* are fixed on both sides on the back side of the head. This ornament is considered as a symbol of being married.
2. **Beeni Chak:** It is round shaped jewellery worn over the braid. It is attached with one loop and two strings which are used to fix it over the braid. It can be crafted out of different metals.
3. **Clips:** These are silver hair clips connected with silver string which falls over the braid and clips are placed on both sides over the ears to hold hair.
4. **Chiri:** It is worn as a '*mangtika*' on the forehead. It is a big disc shaped silver ornament with multicoloured *mina* work in it and have number of silver beads hanging around the disc (Fig.8). It is attached with heavy silver chain to fix it over the forehead. This ornament is importantly worn by married women on festivals and ceremonies.
5. **Jhumkas:** These are bell shaped hangings attached with studs worn as ear ornaments (Fig.10). These may vary in shape, size and design as well as in metal.
6. **Fulli:** It is a big size round nose pin with a red coloured stone with clasps of gold and is worn by married women (Fig.11).

7. **Balu:** It is a big nose ring made up of gold and has the diameter of 3-4 inches. Its design has an elaborate network which is studded with semi-precious stones (Fig.12). It is worn on the left nostril and a decorated chain is attached to it, which is hooked in the hair for support. It is worn by the brides, newlywed women, and by the married women in festivals and marriages.
8. **Chanderhar:** It is heavy neck jewellery made up of silver with mina work embedded in it. It has a group of chains attached with a triangular piece (on both ends), then with 2-3 rectangular pieces at regular intervals (on both sides) and then attached to the central big triangular piece which is extensively ornamented with *mina* work and hanging silver beads (Fig.13). It is worn in festivals, marriages and fairs. *Chanderhar* is also worn by groom on his marriage.
9. **Singi:** It is light weight, small sized necklace which clings to the neck. It has a tubular shaped silver pendant with a bunch of trinkets which is attached to the light weight strings of golden coloured beads.
10. **Gojru:** These are light weight, silver bracelets with narrow width (Fig.15). These are worn in pair in the wrists.
11. **Toke:** These are flat surfaced, broad shaped silver bracelets (Fig.14). *Tokes* are also worn in pair in the wrists.
12. **Gobi Chain:** These are silver ornaments worn around ankles. These are heavy and finely carved anklets (*pyjabe*) with lots of silver chains and trinklets.
13. **Pari:** These are also silver *pyjabe* but lighter than *gobi* chain. These make loud sound while walking which is usually a symbol of the presence of a newlywed in the house.
14. **Phullu:** These are silver toe ornaments of different shapes and sizes. Although these are worn by most of women and for newlyweds these are considered mandatory.

Men Ornaments

1. **Dur:** These are gold ear rings worn by men (Fig.16&17). Traditionally, it is compulsory for the groom to wear *dur* at the time of marriage.
2. **Chain:** This is a chain either made in silver or gold worn around the neck (Fig.18).
3. **Chanderhar:** It is worn by groom at the time of his wedding (Fig.13).
4. **Chatta:** It is an exclusive ornament which has a mirror with hanging colourful beads or tassels downwards (Fig.19). It is worn by men around their waist over their traditional dress 'Chola' when they dressed up for folk dances.

					
Fig.8 Chiri	Fig.9 Mangtika	Fig.10 Jhumka	Fig.11 Fulli	Fig.12 Balu	Fig.13 Chanderhar
					
Fig.14Toke	Fig.15 Gojru	Fig.16 Dur	Fig.17 Dur	Fig.18 Chain	Fig.19 Chatta

CONCLUSION

Gaddi tribe is the most populated tribe of Himachal Pradesh. They have their heritage culture of festivals, songs, dances, costumes and ornaments. Though the clothing pattern of the Gaddi tribe is changing with the passage of time, yet *chola-dora* and *luanchadi-ghundu* dresses along with traditional ornaments are being worn by older generation in routine as they adhere to their culture. And by every generation it is being worn on the festivals, marriages and local fairs. Gaddi men who are engaged in agricultural and allied pursuits wear *kurta-pyjamas* like other local people. Gaddi women optionally wear *salwar-kameez* for their comfort in daily wear. However, Gaddi shepherds used to wear their traditional dress. Through this

paper, the researchers have put an attempt to spot down costumes and ornaments of the Gaddi tribe which is playing significant role in maintaining and preserving rich heritage and traditional costumes of tribes of Himachal Pradesh.

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