

Educated Bhuliya Youth and Preserving Sambalpuri Weaving Culture*Shibani Dey**M.A Journalism and Mass Communication*

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ABSTRACT

The dissertation deals with Bhuliya identity from the point of view of an Educated Bhuliya youth. Sambalpuri handloom renowned for its designs and unique weaving style is led by Bhuliya Community across western Odisha. The aim of the study is to exhibit the genuine causes; a Bhuliya does not stick to weaving that derives a unique recognition to them. The profession of Bhuliya in western Odisha transcends the conventional art and how much the educated beings are ready for the mobility in the means of living. The status is positive to the lifestyle they have and do they have a reputation among other Community. The government effort to support the weavers, economic condition of the community and importance of identity to the Bhuliya youth is studied through the narratives of 4 Bhuliya sons. It is crucial to know the need of weaver, mode of the choice Bhuliya youths have before giving them any facility. The students of Kalinga University were chosen for interview. All the 4 students are Meher and are weavers at home in their leisure time. The narratives of the students were recorded and transcript for elusive study. The story of each respondent was thematically analysed to know the general choice each of them have.

Keywords: *Western Odisha, Bhuliya Community, Educated Sons, Occupational Mobility, Preserving identity.*

INTRODUCTION

Sambalpuri Culture practised in western Odisha has worldwide popularity. The ethnic clothes have beauty of classic importance. The weavers of Sambalpuri clothes are known as Bhuliya. The Bhuliya Community mostly reside in Bargarh, Bijepur, Sonepur and other part of western Odisha. The Bhuliya are the Meher people engaged weaving and selling of Sambalpuri saree. The Bhuliya Community has won many national awards and Sambalpuri clothes are exported to foreign countries. The weaver's condition in the community and their identity study is the need of the hour. The way Bhuliya weavers are leaving the occupation and having occupational mobility, I feel the requirement of a study on the youth of Bhuliya Community, who can express the reason behind occupational mobility even though they represent Sambalpuri culture. The Bhuliya Community's identity consciousness and how far it affects their career choice is to be studied in the dissertation. The increase of cheap substitute in the market worst hit the Sambalpuri handloom. The printed saree and clothes are the choice of users and the Bhuliya Community finds it hard to exist as a weaver. The declining demand of Sambalpuri handloom in the domestic and international market is one of the main causes Sambalpuri weaver's abandoning the occupation. The weaving art has gained enormous popularity in the world and these people feel proud over the same. The cloth gives a royal look to the person putting the attire on. People love wearing the Sambalpuri clothes in different occasion as it never goes out of fashion. The art of weaving Sambalpuri clothes is centered on Bhuliya Community; hence these people represent the Sambalpuri unique culture through the skills of weaving. The way their art is neglected in the market, the young children pursuing higher education are trying to have mobility in the family

occupation. The study revolves around the student pursuing higher education and how the education inculcates a thought beyond the perseverance of famous art. The Bhuliya youth are proud to be weaver but at the same time their effort to take the identity to next generation is to be discussed in the study. It is most important student from different tier of Community with varied income are passionate about the very identity they possess of a Bhuliya.

Methodology

Young Bhuliya students were interviewed for primary data. The study uses purely qualitative methods and interprets interviews qualitatively. The qualitative study uses respondent narratives and literature reviews to form a conceptual framework. Western Odisha's handloom industry is expanding beyond Bhuliyas. The study targeted masters and other university students. Western Odisha respondents were interviewed. The research used purposive sampling to pick 4 respondents who weave at home outside of university.

Sampling: I chose responses using Purposive Sampling. When the researcher knows the research's goal, they use purposeful sampling. The purpose helps find and contact suitable people. Judgemental, selective, or subjective sampling is a non-probability sampling method in which researchers choose populations to study. Foley (2018) The chosen participants fit a profile. I rejected numerous Bhuliya youth and adults and chose four who were perfect for my studies. Kalinga University Bhuliya students were interviewed. The pupils were picked for their weaving and family work experience. Masters' students interested in weaving skills were chosen.

Data Gathering: The Sambalpuri textile research literature review informs the questionnaire. The study only included Bhuliya Community's young male students. For the Covid-19 epidemic, interviews were done in person and by phone. Transcription and analysis of respondents' narratives. The tale covers experience, future preservation, and youth identity pride with different employment options. Interview questions were closed-ended and open-ended. The schedule began with a demographic profile, then discussed collective identity, and finally highlighted community weavers' vocational mobility.

Analysis

Our qualitative data was analysed and interpreted using Thematic Analysis. Braun & Clarke and later academics' Thematic Analysis Methodology (TA) was used for this research.

Thematic Analysis is used to analyse and interpret qualitative data in numerous domains to answer research objectives. This is one of many qualitative analysis methodologies that emphasizes dataset patterns. Thematic analysis involves reading the respondent's lines after transcription of the interview audio and framing theme in inductive analysis or reviewing theme in deductive analysis. The six steps of TA are familiarization, coding, generalizing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing up.

The research will use Thematic Analysis since qualitative data from interviews must be analysed to determine perspectives, opinions, knowledge, experience, and values. TA can help with explorative and deductive studies where the researcher knows the theme. Respect interviews and be honest. It will reassure readers about research findings.

RESULTS

The respondents were interviewed in person and also via phone call. The respondents were asked questions based on their personal experience and how they perceive the culture as a progressed member of the Bhuliya Community. The narratives of the 4 respondents were in Sambalpuri Language (a dialect of Odia). The interviews were recorded in cell phone and later transcript into words. The interview transcript is placed in the Appendices of the dissertation in last pages.

1. **Good in Weaving:** The respondents said all the family members irrespective of their gender are weavers. When an individual sees the work since his childhood, he would gradually learn it. In the absence of the father these respondents extended help in weaving till he returns home. "I don't stitch on my own; I help my father in weaving when he asks me for it". (Rohan) The father of the family is good in all kinds of clothes and design and these respondents can weave simple Sambalpuri clothes. The Educated Bhuliya kids have mostly learnt weaving a simple design cloth. The father is expert in every kind of cloth weaving. These respondents in their early 20s are aware of the requirements, days needed and also the sales of saree. The knowledge is inherited through living together. The educated Bhuliya is acquainted with the weaving art but they do not have creativity of their own for the culture. It's just family occupation helped them know the Bhuliya Culture. It seemed these respondents are not well versed in skills of weaving. The father is the one who weaves more but they know how many days it takes to weave a saree as they have watched the weaving and also have weaved sometimes. Different set of clothes take different period of time to complete weaving. It also depends upon the experience of the person weaving. The type of saree weaved is also a factor that decides time period needed to complete it. The respondents asked me to meet their father who can describe better on the work practised.
2. **Economic Condition:** The responses were almost similar. There are poor in the community whom you can count in fingers. When those weaving for a long period of time and there are more family members to be fed with the same amount of money earned, the family will be poor. There is strata in Bhuliya community also, such weavers are lower middle class, retailers of saree upper middle class, whereas the wholesaler by using his business technique earn a lot and are millionaires. "People have a steady income in my community. A family's financial condition depends upon the work it is engaged in. There are different categories of work in the community. People are having a house and vehicle. It's not four-wheeler, how can a person buy car with INR 15,000 income. The wholesaler whom we sell our saree is also Meher, a Bhuliya. He earns in Corer. He is a Millionaire; think he is also a Bhuliya." says Rohan.
3. **Abhiram feels the status as a Bhuliya is respectable** when we take it as an artist of classic clothes appreciated all over the world. But at the same time, we don't make any reputation out of the job we are pursuing as a community of other backward caste. The Brahmins wear our saree on a regular basis but do not praise our artistic value. The status of Bhuliyas is not something which will feed their family. The identity is not important earning a handsome amount of money is something the Bhuliya weavers are mostly concerned about.

Debasish says, “The Bhuliya tries to maintain his status as a Bhuliya when there is good inflow of money. We can’t think of staying as a Bhuliya when there is less amount of income. Being Bhuliya is not important being a well earner is important.” Abhram sounds less concerned of political activism in western Odisha. But at the same time, he believes there should be development in western Odisha. Rohan seems to not have any expectation from government. And same as other respondent wants the split of the state in two pieces. Then he explains how the Bhuliya can be benefitted out of the separate state. He expects government to provide tools and threads to the Bhuliya. The farmers get money and seeds but the Bhuliya do not get anything from government.

4. **Generation Gap:** When asked about the variation in weaving culture in Bhuliya community since his father’s age, Abhram says there were more Bhuliya weavers those days, his father realized the value of wealth that one can earn through business, so left the weaving job. There are many people doing the same and also want their sons to engage in business rather just being called a Bhuliya weaver. Here one perceives the notion living as Bhuliya with a profit motive rather than just engaging in Bhuliya work. There is difference between being Bhuliya and doing Bhuliya work. People are having the identity without knowledge of the traditional art. Whereas Debasish said the machine or the tools needed to weave a cloth should be there at home, at least the grandchildren of my parents will know that there is a culture of our own. Earlier people wanted to weave themselves but now, the Bhuliya boys are just interested in keeping the tool as a showcase at home. It says that these people are just culture conscious not scared of losing it. Rohan, the third respondent says his father is the master of the art; they (he and his younger brother) only help their father in weaving the body portion of the saree.

5. **How will the Bhuliya identity live long:** Abhram says the new ways of replacing the labour of Bhuliya is a curse to them. The machine weaved and printed saree are more selling at a fewer prices. A person will definitely abandon the job art, when there is no recognition and value to his art. The financial issue of a Bhuliya is a factor of occupational mobility in the community. People also have started realising that the culture will die soon and they have to search for a different means of living. The response of Debasish is also similar to Abhram. He sounds well prepared to lose the weaving identity of Bhuliya and that’s why he supports the taking place of another community to the weaving occupation. His father was a trainer for some months under government weaving training program to the people of another community. Also he does seem to be much passionate about the preserve of Bhuliya identity he is much concerned about a revolution in western Odisha. “Well, I do not think much about Bhuliya Community’s development. I do think about the development of western Odisha people. How there will be different state named as Koshal Rajya for western Odisha. How can I bring revolution in whole western Odisha”. Whereas Rohan is quite different, he has his scientific ways of replacing the traditional colour with something of chemical colour so that the clothes will be attractive. So I can say, those having a survival and better position of life are willing to compete in the market with innovative ideas. Deepak says, “What do I get keeping it alive, let me survive first. See, my parents work whole day getting tired. Twenty-four hours they weave, there is also household chorus, it’s so pathetic, Girl. Though we are earning, we have to work too hard.” He also added that a culture dies when people are less passionate about keeping it alive. The number of shops selling

saree is increasing. There is a particular season like marriage and festival for the sale of saree and when there is no season people are unemployed. He is not scared of losing it, nothing lives forever.

6. Importance of Bhuliya Identity to a weaver son: The identity of a Bhuliya is not much important, the collective recognition of a Bhuliya is not something that makes more sense to them, profit motive and occupations that thrive their economic status is important. The status of a Bhuliya is secured occupation at home and that's why are relaxed about unavailability of jobs in the urban or city areas. The reason behind people liking the occupation of a weaver is the delinking of weaving task from market sales. Rohan's family is making better sum of money out of the weaving; hence he is positive about the culture and its perseverance. Deepak says the weaving identity is less emphasized occupation, people are losing interest in it. It definitely says, if an individual is interested or has a passion to pursue something he will find out new ways to keep the same alive. "I do not think Bhuliya Profession as my career, what is the worth my Post Graduate Education, where will I use it. I am here to waste my education or what. As I already said, people are weaving out of monetary compulsion, if say the truth people are not interested in weaving".

7. Variation in design to represent the culture: the new weavers in the community are not much aware of the design that really portrays any culture or is a representation of a tradition. The designs they weave in a particular set of clothes is in their mind. It says

they have not explored more on the part how the art can be used to mirror the importance of Sambalpuri culture. They are mere follower of the market designs. Deepak says the designs weaved earlier are not much preferred by people and weaver. People want to wear a saree; they don't want to buy a cloth paying more amount of money. The weaver earlier looking for ways to show up their talents and skill of weaving any design on the saree, nowadays people are living for money. In early days Bhuliya people wanted to feel superior weaving new set of designs and those sarees were also costly. The Neelam saree needs at least 3 persons to weave but Thaan saree is not much difficult. I can weave whole saree without my father's help. It definitely gives a complete idea that the art is no more a means of representing the culture it's just about earning a living through the design a designer gives or that will take less period of time. The respondent added you can weave whatever you want in a saree for example people weave Puri Ratha to show Odia festival, other weave odia letters in a saree. Debasish mentioned there are Educational institutions providing education on Sambalpuri handloom. A person once weaved face of Gangadhar Meher (A prominent odia poet from Bhuliya Community) in saree. The idea behind such steps is to show the Bhuliya persona and preserve the art by spreading it to other Community.

8. Occupational Mobility: The response of Abhiram was quite similar to that of every student pursuing a higher education. He wants to do a job as he has studied till Post Graduation. But the way explains his acceptance to other profession than Bhuliya was satirical, they want to pursue other profession because he will not get a bride if he is a Bhuliya. The community do not want a groom from Bhuliya family. Rohan says he will do the Bhuliya weaving and business in his career. He will do government job and do the saree business

simultaneously. The business has no guarantee of success but his job will be permanent, because it's government job. Risky things should be aimed in life as of great importance. He keeps his service as backup plan. Debasish says, "I am conscious of preserving the culture by keeping the old tools at home. The members in the family if interested will continue weaving, if one is not interested, they will not do. That's what we think. When we are retired at that time will again start weaving at home." He will do a job which would of power and man force. He wants to bring a revolution and development in the society by using that power. Also, he says how long a family will be engaged in one task, he says he has to see the world and also show world to his parents and at the time of retirement he will install machine to continue the weaving occupation to preserve the art.

Deepak says the uneducated or youth without higher education are weaving because they don't think beyond the family occupation. Deepak says he is educated and he will do a job which will earn him a better sum of money and also a bride. "Those not educated will definitely continue to weave as they don't think beyond the family occupation. If I only had studied till bachelor, I would have the same view on the weaving occupation. I do have an option of doing job outside the traditional family occupation." When asked do you want to preserve the culture he replied, "What do I get keeping it alive, let me survive first".

9. Abhiram says he has no expectation from government, the spinning wheel and thread provided by government is not enough and he has no idea how there can be improvement in the life of a poor weaver through government. It simply reflects his ignorance on government's action for the citizen of the country. Rohan says, the division of state can really bring a change in the western Odisha. The tiny odisha made up of 12 districts is neglected almost all the time. The instance he took is the market for Bhuliya saree. He

added there should be Bayanika in western Odisha rather than in Bhubaneswar only. The Bhuliya in western odisha do not even know about the Bayanika run by government. So when there will be separate government people will get all the inputs to weave a saree like the farmer get seeds and fertiliser from the government. Debasish is also the same; he sternly points the government of Odisha for the underdeveloped state of western Odisha. The people of western Odisha are not much focused in the infrastructure building of western odisha. All of them want the division of the state which some way will benefit to their own community. The Bhuliya sons are politically active in the state, whereas Abhiram as per his ground of knowledge he is in literature study so not much attentive to the politics in the state. Whereas Deepak says Government cannot give job to everyone and how many days government will feed you. He does not expect much from government to help them.

10. I asked the entire respondent about the lifestyle of Bhuliya people, most of them said they do not like going out and work outside. They prefer staying at home, hence the skin complexion is fair mostly. Deepak admits he has been confronted by many of his friends on their looks. "One more thing if you want you can add, Bhuliya girls and boys are good looking, that is also a narrative. I

get to hear it everywhere, mostly. I do not know the reason why but they look different.

DISCUSSIONS

Kalinga University students: They may prioritize education due to familial pressure to avoid pursuing family businesses. Their weaving talents are inferior to their dads'. They can only weavesimple designs, which won't get them anywhere if they want to join the family business. Their identity is the result of their ancestors' work. Being Bhuliya makes them proud, yet they don't comprehend its significance. That is the only reason they are willing to lose and not practice. Mostsaid it's not vital to preserve the culture because the profit margin is so low in the occupation, so they should find other ways to survive.

The economic condition of weavers is assessed. Poor folks are bhuliya or producers. Lower- middle-class people have long woven designs. The financial situation led those who didn't try to escape to consider career mobility. Both Debasish and Deepak are from Bijepur and earn 15-22kper month. By exporting sarees to other states and meeting foreign demand, Rohan's family earns more than these three respondents. Abhiram's family sold sarees since they knew the community'slow-income producer occupation. The respondents showed me economic hierarchy. Authentic cultural preservers don't profit. Their cultural value is less than their monetary value. The Bhuliyaweaver uses his sons to sell sarees or educates them till he finds a job and makes money. For greater pay, the community has occupational mobility.

Economic Hierarchy: Weavers and producers are poor. Lower-middle-class people have long woven designs. The financial situation led those who didn't try to escape to consider career mobility. Both Debasish and Deepak are from Bijepur and earn 15-22k per month. By exporting sarees to other states and meeting foreign demand, Rohan's family earns more than these three respondents. Abhiram's family sold sarees since they knew the community's low-income produceroccupation. The respondents showed me economic hierarchy. Authentic cultural preservers don'tprofit. Their cultural value is less than their monetary value. The Bhuliya weaver uses his sons tosell sarees or educates them till he finds a job and makes money. For greater pay, the communityhas occupational mobility.

Cultural Respect and Identity: Bhuliya status is crucial for national prize winners. The neighborhood is known for its long-term art. Caste has devalued their art. The saree makes the higher caste look royal. Brahmins and other upper castes always discriminate against Bhuliyas. Millionaire Bhuliyas are accepted by the upper caste. Money counts. Social image comes from class disparity. Money also figures in the upper caste. Profit motive and monetary power overlapBhuliya weavers' artisan worth. Human survival is more vital than culture preservation. Bhuliyasstrive to reconcile profit, fame, and culture.

State Division Support: Bhuliya community supports state division. Meher people need government aid like farmers. Everyone in western Odisha wants Koshal Rajya. Government facilities like thread and spinning wheels meet community needs. The government wants to trainother communities. Unemployment forces government to offer facilities to other communities. Bhuliyas want a saree market for a marginal profit. They care more about western Odisha's infrastructure and institutions than Bhuliya Community's improvement. Some responders know nothing about government action

for their town and don't want to blame anyone. They oppose government changes.

Generation divide: The neighborhood has a generation divide. The Bhuliya boys picked as samples care about culture but don't preserve it. These educated Bhuliya sons can do machine work without an artistic mentality. Their fathers are the actual artists. Bhuliya sons weave body and simple designs. Education leads to careers beyond family business. The sons are working to move up from Bhuliya. Even the community started valuing Bhuliya not working. Finding a bride for a weaver son is difficult. Thus, to modify their position, they choose a new job with a consistent income and social status. To teach their children about their clan's culture, Debasish and Abhiramsaid to keep the tools at home.

Machine Printing Replaces Weaving: The replacement of weaving with machine printing is why most responders want to preserve weaving. This kills weavers' craft value. Handwoven sarees are less popular since buyers buy them inexpensively. Another reason is that educated Bhuliya children think broadly and aspire to bring a revolution to his community and beyond. They don't want to do the grind everyone in the last generation did. They seem ready to lose their job and be called mere Bhuliya without working. Just one respondent sounds unusual. Using chemical-based colors instead of traditional ones will boost saree demand. His employment gives him a consistent income that no one else in his community possesses. He wants weaving to continue. A person whomakes a lot of money from a conventional occupation wants it to survive.

Educational Impact: Educated weaver boys seek to apply their education in new areas for their family. Education must be valued in thought. Their education prepares them for the job market or to use their knowledge. All respondents was willing to work and keep family occupation as backup. If weaving garments makes money, intelligent people will consider keeping it. An unemployed culture should be excluded.

Lack of Passion for Culture and Identity: Educated Bhuliya boys lack passion for their current culture and identity. Best prepared are designs that are easy to weave and can make money in the market without many individuals. The educated Bhuliya have researched market demand and do not introduce new designs and motifs that reflect their group culture. They realize that weavers who weave clothing for a persona or tradition are bragging about their ability to weave any design. They acknowledge their reputation, but they want to benefit from their weaving skills, not only represent their community or culture.

Occupational Mobility and Marriage Prospects: Occupational mobility influences groom selection, leading to men seeking alternative occupations to find a bride of their choice. Mobility is essential now. Not being well educated and still seeing a family occupation shows how education may affect a person's means and consciousness of another identity. The value of

education spans their culture and community. Society's needs must be satisfied while living. They mainly think as a human who can live with an identity not derived from his family but from his hard work and commitment to go beyond the traditional identification.

Government Expectations and Looks: Respondents do not expect government to affect

the community. The division of state may benefit these weavers. Government amenities would assist marginal weavers stay employed. Students have no government demands since they don't care about the community. Weavers boast about their attractiveness. Most respondents liked their bright complexion since they stayed home.

CONCLUSION

The research points out that the identity of Bhuliya is not just limited to weaving; it's changing with the passage of time. There is a different category of Bhuliya, but the original occupation of a Bhuliya is weaving. People are accepting different means of living, so they are Bhuliya but not doing Bhuliya work. The education of a person is so important to know different perspectives in the world; the education of a person also helps a person to come out of a caged option he has. The market demand and technological advancement, no doubt mentioned in different research done in the past, the students also feel their art is not recognized or does not get due appreciation from the market. On the verge of less demand, hard work to weave and earn more amount of money, the students are willing to abandon the occupation of weaving. The culture has recognition yet does not feed them well anymore; hence they are well prepared to have an occupational mobility which will help them in surviving. The earlier research was mostly centered around the Sambalpuri textile, people engaged, their work and also how are they recognized at state and national level. The research was mostly on the artwork, location of Bhuliya people. There were no research on how educated Bhuliya Sons think about their identity. How secured are they and do they feel positive about the family occupation they have right now. As an educated being, Are they willing to continue the occupation giving it a different look. All these could easily be found out through the narrative of the respondents. The aim of every human being is to live a life of luxury and respect. The educated Bhuliya are also the same; they want to earn money. When the occupation is able to give you a better sum of money it's well and good but if it is not possible find out another means. The identity has not been an extravagant concern for them. I remember the statement of Deepak, "What would I get preserving it, let me survive first."

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