Chapter IV

DRESS AND ORNAMENTS

Man is a rebel against nature. He is prone to accept few things as they are. For the Abujhmarhia clothes are not merely worn for protection against the weather, but they have other defined functions also. The sense of modesty is merely a habit, not instinct. The use of clothing does not arise out of any innate sense of modesty, which itself results from customary habits of clothes and ornaments. For the Abujhmarhia women it is immodest to cover their breasts. In the Abujhmarhia, it is very difficult to draw a sharp line between protective and ornamental articles.

The dress of the female is the most distinctive cultural trait, as it makes out the Abujhmarhias women different from other women of neighbouring tribes. Such a distinction is made not by the variation in the items of garments but by their mode of use and colour.

Ornaments for the Abujhmarhias become a mark of distinction between the newly married women and unmarried women, and the young girls, who, have not attained maturity. Occasions also govern the mode of costume, and there are occasions when a particular item of dress is necessary. Despite their traditional mode of dress which is still prevalent, there appears to have come a gradual change among people of the boundary villages such as Orchha, Kohkameta, Jharawahi, and Hatlanar. Changes in dress have
also been observed in school boys.

Though the Abujmnharia ornaments are few in number, young unmarried girls use the largest number of them to the extent of lavishness.

On the whole, the Abujmnharia has a fairly attractive appearance. He is now better dressed than what was described by Glasfurd and Grigson (1938 : 68-70) who mentioned quoting Glasfurd that the Abujmnharias use for their clothes leaves and bark. To me, this appears to be a fable. However poor he may be, the Abujmnharia would always obtain a small piece of cloth. He has now learnt to dress in the same fashion as the Murias of Antagarh and Bison-born Marisas of Dantewara. As in Glasfurd's days, the women still go with their breasts uncovered in the interior villages and in uni-clan villages. In boundary villages and multi-clan villages they do not cover their breasts but one end of the cloth is passed over on the left shoulder from between the breasts. Whenever they visit weekly markets, or accosted a non-marshia, they unsuccessfully try to cover their breasts. As the age of an Abujmnharia woman advances, her breasts get covered with beads necklaces and brass rings which are presented to her by her female cousins from time to time. The more ornamented an old Abujmnharia woman is, higher is her status and wider her circle of gift-giving cousins.

I

Dress

A. Clothing, Getions :-

The Abujmnharia clothes are usually white in colour
by preference. The distinction between male and female

getlang is that of borders of the clothes as the female

getlang is broader than the male and its length more than
the male. The mode of putting on is also different for various
sexes and age groups.

(i) Male attire, Moctor getlang —

(a) The main clothing of the Abujhmarhias is a loin-
cloth, getla. The shortest loin-cloth is 1½ cubits, khutang
long and half a cubit in width. In other cases which are
usually used, the length varies from 5 to 12 cubits with a
two cubits width. The usual way of tying the getla is not
intricate. They wrap it lengthwise, leaving one end hanging
in front, the waist making of at 5-6 inches wide fold around
the waist covering most of the buttocks and thighs, 

and tucking the other end tucked at the back; the end which
was left hanging is passed between the legs tightly and
tucked in the waist fold above the buttocks in such a way that
the last portion of it is allowed to hang down at the back,
this end being called tail, toga. Unfastening is very conve-
nient. A casual observer like Grigson would get the impre-
sion that a getla is a foot long but it is not so. It gives
that impression because it is passed around the waist many
times. The mode of tying it again, as described by Grigson
(1938:69) seems to be impracticable. The poor men wear three
to four cubit getla but when they work in the fields, they use
a shorter one tucked in saper bark cord which is used as a
waist band by every Abujhmarhia. The boys of 5 to 10 of age
also use similar loin-clothes.
(b) Turban, Agga

Turban, agga or head wear is a common item for the young and unmarried. The unmarried boys use a ten to twelve yards long turban which is a popular dancing dress. In daily use they wrap a piece of old cloth around the head, talla, leaving top uncovered. The old people generally go with uncovered heads. But the youths who are not married attach a great importance to a neatly arranged head dress. Concerning the cleanliness of Abujhmarhia's agga the remark of the Halba is that "He always keeps his agga very neat and clean though he never washes his anus."

Many Abujhmarhias have began to wear half-shirts, which they called angi or at least a tight-fitting short waist-coat which leaves the arms bare or covers them only upto the elbows. These angi are readymade cotton shirts, generally preferred brown or dusty in colour, purchased from weekly markets. They never wear angi daily. But it is put on, when some Government officers visit their villages or whenever they visit weekly markets or tahsil headquarters. The Abujhmarhia youths prefer to wear clothes of dancing, the white or the black angi which they purchased from weekly markets. Incidentally, all the clothes required are purchased not only from these markets but also from the Ganda, Fanka and Mahra weaver castes of the district, who would visit the Abujhmarhia villages. An average family would spend from Rs. 15 to 20 on this purchase per year. Now-a-days a few headmen wear khakhi waist-coat and some of them put on red turbans as head dress.
The reason to this taste, as far as my knowledge is that the red turban, brown waist-coat and half trousers called Lunka are supplied by Government to the pargana Manjhis as Manjhi's dress is free of cost.

In cold weather they often use black woolen blankets gamid, made by mill woven of sheep wool, costing Rs. 12.20 per piece. The poor Abujhmarhia who cannot afford it purchases a rough cloth similar to a bed-sheet costing about Rs. 9/-.

These are tied in a knot under the chin, for the protection against cold. They have no need for clothing because a bamboo mat is a bed. In every well-to-do Abujhmarhia family there are not more than four blankets and two or three bed-sheets. As far shoes and sandals, neither man nor woman uses them.

(ii) Dress of the Abujhmarhia women, Ancharhta setlong:

The main garment of woman ancharhtagelung is similar to man's setla, white in colour. The length varies from 7 cubits to 10 cubits, and width near about 1 1/2 cubits. It is twisted with the muddanone (infra.112) ring cord keeping two feet length hanging, which is then crossed through the legs and tucked behind; then the remaining cloth is wrapped tightly covering the buttocks and thighs, the end being tucked in front. It covers the body below the navel, Moddi and above the knees minda. A few old women wear nothing better than rags.

In some boundary villages such as Kohkmata, Orchha, Kabagaon, women as well as young unmarried girls cross their setla over the left shoulder taking it up from the front right
hip, between the breasts over the left shoulder and tucked behind over the right buttock. Their breasts are not covered. None of them cover their heads with gatla nor do they wear a bodice. A few unmarried girls at Kagsar dances wear bodice and blouse, some of them working as labourers with outside agencies, covering the head, talla with red coloured scarf, pachorhi 2 to 3 cubits in length. Some of them tie a red coloured scarf drawn over their shoulders and tie into a knot at the breasts, is also used.

B. Hair dressing, Kilkku Erhane

Hair do not merely a matter of decoration and ornamentation in the Abujhmarhina community but it also serves as a symbol of the social position and the status of different individuals and groups of men and women. Men and women have a different ways of fixing the hair. Hair styles indicate age status.

(1) Youth keep hair, while the male children and old men have their heads shaved, with remaining a round patch of hair on the same on the crown intact to be drawn back into a knot. Some of them shave only a portion of the head, in half-moon form, over the forehead while the hair at back of the head is allowed to grow down to the neck and twisted and ties into a knot. The head of every individual as a whole is shaved once in his life time on the day of his birth by his mother.

Wearing the long hair is the approved Abujhmarhina's hair style. To have a hair cut (as in town etc) is considered as lago, bad. Those who do so, are nick named kork woyantor re,
Government has come by their village Gotul boys and girls.

The Abujmarhia grows very slight beard which is shaved only once or twice in a month with local razor called a maja. Or safety blade is also held together with a thin paper cord and twin between two of bamboo trellies. Only water and no soap is used for shaving. There are no recognized barbers among them. The main tool used for this purpose as mentioned above, called maja is convexly curved blade, 4-5 inches in length and 1/2 inch about in width, fitted into a small wooden handle. Some of them also use a pair of scissors. Combs are always kept tucked in their hair near the knot and used whenever necessary. Combs are artistically made by the Abujmarhias themselves.

(ii) Hair dressing of the women :-

The knot of the Abujmarhia women's hair is a sign of beauty. The unmarried women and young girls always keep their hairs properly dressed and well knotted. Before a bath the knot is untied, hair combed and tied over the crown. After the bath it is combed again and tied into a knot at the back. The hair is not washed at the time of daily bath, but only occasionally, after menstruation or at the time of a fair or a Kagaar dance.

The young unmarried girls always keep their hair properly dressed and well knotted, with more than one comb tucked about the knot of the hair. The combs are presents to them from their boy friends. Usually the hair is little parted in the middle of the forehead, and the bunch of the
hair is taken in the left hand and with the help of right hand they fix a bamboo trellice flat ring, kunjarh humar at the back of the head, and then with the help of left hand the hair is wrapped around this kunjarh humar covering it from all sides. After that the hair string (generally a black cotton string or ribben) is tied and 3 to 5 metal or tin hair pins, khuting are fixed in the centre of this kunjarh humar. Some of them fix a little metal knife, kilk basar with metal handle two inches long with a blade of one to two inches long. Thus their kunjarh looks big and beautiful even though their hair are not very long. These unmarried girls make their hair knot upward while the married women put it down. They neither use these kilk basar nor more than one pin or metal hair pin, khuti to fix their hair, if a married women put more than one khuti in her kunjarh or kunjarh humar or make it upward she may bluff to any one, that she is unmarried, this being the main attire of unmarried girls. To make the knot down and fix one tin hair pin is a main mark of a married woman in the Abujhmarhia society.

No woman or unmarried girl combs her hair during the period of menstruation. A married man, whose wife is in her menstruation period or in child bed is not permitted to comb his hair (i.e. at the time of the birth of his child also upto 10 days, and in the period of menstruations upto 4 days). It is dangerous for man and woman to leave hair where their affinal clan members or enemy or some witch may get hold of it; so they gather it, take into the jungle, hold it to their lips and puff it away or they have to bury it.
The Abujhmara women and unmarried girls do not allow hair to grow in their arm-pits and even in public region. These they remove by applying the "mardmarata near," ashes of sanya tree and pulling the hair out.

C. Cleanliness:

Much has been written by Grigson (pp. 65-66) and Russell and Hiralal (III, p. 125) regarding the absence of cleanliness among the Abujhmarias but their information seems to be incorrect. No doubt these people are dirty unlike the Malha or other non-tribal people, do not wash after defecation, but use only leaves. Their belief is the kayna deity of water will harm them, if they use ponds and streams water for the purpose. Water from drinking pots can also not be used for this purpose. They never defecate near the village or in hadum but they generally retire into the forest to ease themselves. The men and women urinate while standing.

(i) As far their personal cleanliness, they wash their faces every morning on getting up. They wash their hair as mentioned, the materials used for washing being as follows:

(a) Young green leaves of Rela tree, belama rata aking:

The women generally use the young green leaves or shoots of relama by crushing them into a paste and rubbing it on their hair. It is then washed with water, leaving it shining and soft.
(b) The young green leaves of maja tree, Mardmarata akinz:

The young green leaves and shoots of mardmara are pressed to bring out juice which is rubbed in the hair. It is a kind of shampoo which keeps the hair clean and soft for a long time and make them darker.

(c) The bark of Darha tree, Darhmara ta tola:

The wet bark of harh tree is reduced to a liquid form and is used for washing the hair. This is usually used by women because it makes hair longer, darker, shining and soft. This is used for cleaning the body also. The Abujhmarhia woman never washes her hair with a plaster of black earth as it is not available in these hills as mentioned by Grigson (1938:66). A few of them use soap for bathing and washing the clothes, specially in boundary villages.

(ii) Bathing:

The Abujhmarhia woman takes her bath in the morning as soon as she finishes her household work. She goes to a nearby stream or pond with water fetching pots or gourd bottles, cleans her teeth by a twig of the garaimara, the one end of the twig being beaten to a brugh. It is called parkal. After that she combs her hair, removes and hangs her clothes on a bush or rock, or puts aside, takes nude bath, puts on her cloth and again combs her hair and knots ring-lets fills her water pots and returns. A man usually taken his bath in the field or in penda whenever he feels hot, usually at noon. Children do not take bath very often. Except in the summer when they would bath on twice a day, it would be an occasional
affair in other seasons. It is neither compulsory nor usual
to take a bath after sexual intercourse as wrongly mentioned
by Grigson (1938:65); even at the time of Kagsar when the
lava and leyor indulge in sexual intercourse more than one
time in a night; they never take bath in the morning.

The children above the age of five are not given a
bath at home. But they are sent to the streams or ponds for
and same. In general the Abujhmarbia is not very particular
about personal hygiene but he washes his hands and feet and
face regularly whenever he takes his meal.

The nails are never cut, but grow generally very
long and dirty, which are usually lost whenever they grow
long enough working in jungle and fields.

(iii) Washing of the clothes

The Abujhmarbia cannot wash his clothes daily because
he has just one piece, another reason is that if it is washed
daily it does not last long. He washes his clothes when they
becomes dirty, say his loin-cloth about twice in a month. And
his beddings etc. twice a year. But he does not regard the
clothes as sacred and miraculous and therefore impious to
wash them as mentioned by Russell and Miralal (1916:124,
vol. III). They are also not washed if not dirty. The
material applied and methods used for washing the clothes
are as follows:

They drop a handful ashes of saja tree\(^3\) in hot water
then put their clothes in it, aid ashes again and the laundry
boiled for a while. After which it is taken out to the river to wash. Washing clothes is a women's task. Exceptions being the loin-cloth and sometimes which would be at time washed by the wearer himself. The lava and lavor wash their own dancing clothes for which they use generally saja ashes and at times soap.

II

Ornaments

Both men and women wear a variety of ornaments, specially women are very fond of ornaments.

A. Ornaments :-

The ornaments used by men and women are described below :-

All the Abuwhmarhia unmarried girls have a great fancy for coloured head-necklaces, dummy. They purchased the head tassels of different colours from weekly markets at a coat of twelve paisa each. Sometimes these head tassels are purchased by their boy friend for them. Out of these coloured bends they string the numbers of necklaces of different designs, to suits individual tastes. The multi-coloured bead work is intricate and symmetrical. There are vertical bars of coloured with alternate bars of white beads held together in a broad strips bound by strings with the horizontal row of white and red beads which follow longer but fewer rows of blue or green beads and a few symmetrical rows of white and red beads. The ends of vertical bars are tufts of red or green bright wool. One end of this is tied
in a string, and the other end is open or sometime a cowry is tucked in it. The necklaces with vertical bars are generally used by the unmarried boys and girls at the time of dancing and the necklaces without vertical bars are worn in their daily life. These necklaces usually made by the girl friends for their boy friends. These are considered to enhance the beauty of the wearer. They are also a sign of skill of the laya and the many girl friends of layor. As these presents are made by his girl friends, "the more he has of them the larger number it shows he has of girl friends."

In the same fashion the laya tucked hair pin in her knot. These are presented to her by her boy friends. The numbers of hair pins show the number of her boy friends. At the time of Kaggur dancing a laya may wear more than fifty during, and more than ten hair pins. The layor wear the fill-ets of same bead-work loosely over the forehead and temples with the help of clip-pin tucked in turban, sometimes higher around the turban and sometimes looped from ears to hair tufts. After marriage neither women nor men are allowed to wear these multi-coloured necklaces. They wear only red ones.

(1) All the Abujhmarhia women have their ears pierced at various places in helix. They wear more than 6 to 7 brass or aluminium rings in each ear. They wear in the lobe a thick round piece of peacock feather shaft.

Some of the married women wear a necklace of rupee or eight annas pieces or aluminium round in the shape of an eight anna pieces tied into a chain. A necklace of this type is called dabbi.
The married women also wear an iron, aluminium or brass thick neck-let, with one end hooked into the other at the back of the neck, sometimes this necklet has small rings fitted into it. The Abuujmarhia women do not wear any nose ornaments.

On the wrists the Abuujmarhia women wear more than one aluminium bracelets, kada similar to males churha and at the elbow the gaili. A few of them in boundary villages have started to wear glass bangles. Brass rings, barhkesh are put on in the fingers and toes. Some married as well as unmarried women wear thick brass and aluminium anklets, payri. It is taboo for the Mirutti, Diddal and Parshal women to wear payri and gaili. It has been mentioned earlier that married woman wears a twisted cord of paper bark with rings in it which is called muddanone. Unmarried women do not use this because the brass or iron rings are presented to the bride at the time of her marriage by the women of her natal village. These are not only ornaments but they are the good wishes extended to by her kins, the cord made with them is supposed to avert evil eyes. It is worn under every married woman's loin cloth. It keeps her waist tight. It is never removed, not even at the time of child birth. My informant told me that after child birth the waist of child birth, the mother's 'waist' becomes 'loose', therefore to keep it tight the cord is very useful. In her mensties she would fix a piece of cloth to it. The muddanone is buried or burnt with her.

There are some ornaments which emphasize the status of the individual in their society; the most remarkable are the following -
(ii) For old respected women, Mutte:

Some of the old women wear more than twenty red beads or simple necklaces and brass necklaces, harhkash, with attached these covering their breasts. These are not purchased by them but are presented to them by their maternal and paternal female relatives who are younger to her. "The more in number they wear these red beads necklaces, the larger is her kin group." This gives them a very respectable status in the AbuJhmarhia society.

(iii) For married women, ancharhi:

The married woman as shown will be later is called ancharhi of such and such a person who is her husband when she grows older she is called mutte. We now know that the main mark of married woman is that she is not allowed to tuck more than one hair pin in her kunjarh, hair knot. More than one hair pin is the mark of unmarried woman. Secondly, married woman in the AbuJhmarh, except for the Middal and Farshal parganas, are not allowed to put on the armlets, gaali above the elbow. "In these two parganas they are allowed before and after marriage to put on these armlets."

Layaakhu do put on these armlets but they can be removed in the hot season. One, therefore, would not know if they are married. But it is necessary to keep more than one hair pin in her hairs for unmarried women.

(iv) For widows, Randi:

All the ornaments presented to her by her husband are buried in his grave when he dies. She is not allowed
to keep even a hair pin nor a bead necklace. If the
widowed woman is above 40 (old enough) she can still wear
all those neck-rings and necklaces which are presented by
her female kins. She is not allowed to wear only the
muddanone. If the widow is young and likes to take another
husband, she can again put on whatever ornaments her new
husband presents to her.

(v) For widows, Randelal :-
The widower in the Abujhmarhia society is called
randelal. At the time of his wife's death, if he is old
enough his wristlet or bracelets are buried in his wife's
glave. After a month of her death he wears a red or black
thick bead necklace. If he is young he wears multi-coloured
necklaces which shows that he wants to take another wife.
"Even some of the married youths 20 to 25 years to 30 years
in age wear one or two coloured necklaces which shows that
they are in search of another wife; though in general married
men do not put on necklaces."

B. Tattooing, Anjela-Kotna :-

Tattooing is Kotna and the tattoo are called anjela.
The men wear only a few from 2 to 5 tattoo marks over the
glabella in a horizontal row. But the women are very con­
spicuous by the tattooing over a large part of the body. The
patterns are always same, but differ from other neighbouring
tribes. The Abujhmarhia women with excessive tattooing over
all the face and forehead, and often on the breasts is easy
to be distinguished from any other tribes or casta women of
the region.
The pattern is produced by vertical and horizontal lines. Neither savastika and sun nor moon are produced by tattooing nor birds, flowers and leaves. Even upto this time they are not influenced by the tattooing pattern of plains tribes. They never come to market for tattooing. They have got their own design and pattern. The tattoo marks are made by their mother or some experienced women of the village.

Kotna:

An Abujmarhia girl is first tattooed when she is eight years old, on the forehead, cheeks and temples. Second time the breasts are tattooed (sometime in the centre of the breasts) when the girl is nubile. "After a year or two for the last time when she reaches her puberty" the girl is again tattooed on her both arms, sometimes only in right arm above the elbow upto the shoulder.

The tattooing is performed by her mother or by an old woman of the village who also prepares the necessary ink which is a mixture of mandhara charcoal powder and the oil of Dhilma or Anil. The needle is a pointed brass wire. The girl lies on her side with one cheek flat on the ground or in some woman's lap while the tattooer operates on the other cheek. Two or three women cooperate by holding the ink and patient. The woman then drops a little ink with the help of a thin pointed bamboo stick on the cheek. Then the skin is pricked at with the needle. The dropped liquid is then rubbed into the wounds. This causes much pain to the girl and if the girl cries, the mother says, "don't cry, this is just an ants bite". After the operation, the girl is not
allowed to wash her tattoo parts. Only gruel, no vegetables or pulses are given to her as food. After three days bean leaves, jatata skin juice is plastered on the wounds for about four to five days. No contact with water is allowed up to a week.

The best months for tattooing are October-November, diwarbleng. It is never done during the monsoon or summer because of the danger of sepsis. Even small pox is considered special favour of the village mother deity who tattooed the village girls by visiting from door to door.

The reasons for undergoing this painful operation performed and condemning the dangerous diseases like small pox, as good are the following as per them. The marks saves the Abujhmarthia girl from the eyes of lustful outsiders or Government workers. In the former times the Zamindars, Mal-guzars and other Government workers used these hill girls for fulfilling their sex desire. To save the girls from these lustful visitors they have started tattooing on the faces of their girls excessively. The excess tattooing mars the look of the girls.

Tattooing the breasts and shoulders saves the girl from the eyes of witch and from black magic.

III
Impact of the outside world on the dress and ornaments of the Abujhmarthias

The Abujhmarthias have borrowed freely from the fashions of Muria of Narayanpur, khalpatti and from Varia of
Chanda, Khalsa and slightly from the Bison-horn Marhias, Dandaku. The borrowed items of fashion are limited only to the unmarried boys and girls, lya layor. Most of these are worn at the time of Kagsar dance or when they visit some fair or markets.

The khaki coloured waist-coats are generally worn by the village headmen with whom they are very popular. These are purchased from the weekly markets. A readymade half-sleeve blouse of mill-made cloth is also purchased from weekly markets. This is worn by boundary villages, lya asky... at the time of dance only. Not a single married woman in the Abujhmarh wears a blouse nor a red coloured ribbons. Some of them have started to use soap and oil, rubber combs and tin hair clips.

The influence of Marathi dress and ornaments

The impact of Marathi rural dress and ornaments is very much in Chanda Marhias and with whom the Abujhmarhias are in contact through the weekly markets of Garchiroli, Bhavragarh (in Maharashtra). The western boundary villages (of the Abujhmarh like Hinagunda, Birhewada, Ghodagot, Kandashi, Kodanar, Kurusnar, Pethiya, Managewada, Turhtud, and Tekameta, all these villages are of Varanmah and Chhote Marh) are very much influenced by Marhias of Chanda. The half sleeveed waist-coat and a black cap for men and the khalsa bali earrings with oscillating little tin or silver chains are very popular among lya layor. They can afford to purchase these clothes and ornaments as they sell bamboo, annually to the contractors of Maharashtra getting pa
family from 500 to 700 rupees, some of them keep torches, lamps, mirrors, umbrellas and guns. These articles are generally possessed by the village headman or his children or by well-to-do men.

The Abujhmarhias do not very much care for the material goods in certain circumstances in view of their meta-physical outlook. When somebody dies in a family, all his belongings like his ornaments, clothes, mattresses and any other valuable brass vessels are given away to him as they say, i.e. "these things are buried or burnt with him." As for instance in village Ghumandi, when the Gaita Lekma died, his three big size brass vessels were thrown away in the river and the grave was covered with a costly bed-sheet which he had purchased from Narayanpur at the cost of Rs. 45/- in the year of 1965. The handles of his hunting and agricultural implements were also burnt away. The iron portions of the implements are not burnt, as these are considered household property.
1. The researcher himself visited most of the villages of Antagarh, and some of the villages of Dantewara, and it was found that there is a great difference between the dress, mode of use and its functions among the Abujhmarhias, Raison-born Marhias and Murias.

2. Kunjarh humar is a flat bamboo ring prepared with smooth and thin bamboo trellies and covered with red cloth or the hair, or hair strings.

3. Mardmarata tola, the dried bark of Saja tree is burnt to ashes and stored which is used for washing purposes.

4. These necklaces never put on by the unmarried girls. These beads are little longer in comparison to those beads which are used by laya and layor.


7. The charcoal powder first of all strained with the help of a rag of cloth. Then this strained powder used for tattooing purposes.


9. Oil is not generally used even for cooking, for hair dressing nor massing. It is used only in few villages like Orchha, Kohkamata, Ader by laya and layor on their faces at the time of Kagsar.