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The Effect of Colonization and Globalization in the shaping of *Phulkari*: A case study of the Textiles of Punjab, India

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Hand woven fabrics and embroidery are known to be some of the most ancient form of handicraft nurtured in almost every corner of Indian subcontinent. Embroidery is often an expression of the maker especially women depicting their emotions on fabric and their lived histories. Usefulness of this form of decoration is reflected in the fabrics used in clothing for humans as well as domesticated animals, household articles and decorations in temples. Besides being practical, these ethnic embroideries have symbolic and traditional purposes.¹ It expresses several cultural metaphors of a community. It is also one of most distinct forms to study flora and fauna of the period in which the craft is created. In rural tradition, embroidery is featured as dowry goods, wedding paraphernalia, for rituals and as symbolic of ethnic identity.

Phulkari: An Expression of Punjabi Women

Punjabi women's upbringing orients them to decorate their surroundings and lives using stitching and embroidery skills showcasing their creative abilities. One of such vent is floral decoration of cloth using embroidery known as *Phulkari*. Scholars like K.C. Aryan, Nasreen and Rosemary² believe that this form of craft emerged as 'domestic necessity' where as some others³ argue that other than being made for domestic usage, rural women also took order and embroidered *Phulkari* for sellers in the markets or for large landowners on commission basis. Nevertheless, even if this art form was a result of 'domestic necessity', its vivacity, beauty and innovativeness are extraordinary. The red and orange wraps, 2.30 meters by about 1.40 meters, were produced with extreme love and care and were 'essential dowry needlework of the Punjabi farming women.'⁴ Over the years and largely due to market forces, personal and ritual value of this traditional wrap may have declined but its significance in the life of an average Punjabi woman continues to inspire several texts comprising of literature, poetry and oral folklore.

The *Phulkari* shawl is commonly described as a spectacular piece of head cloth (*odhini*) vividly ornamented with birds, flowers and human figures embroidered conventionally on a base of hand woven *Khaddar*.⁵ The word meaning 'flower working' or *Phulkari* initially referred to any form of embroidery but later came to specify only embroidered *odhnis*, or

¹Rosemary Crill, *Indian Embroidery* (London: V & A Publications, 1999),7-14; Janet Harvey, *Traditional Textiles of Central Asia* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 2002),113-114; Melanie Paine, *Textile Classics* (London: Mitchell Beazley Publishers, 1990), 9-12.

² K.C. Aryan, *The Cultural Heritage of Punjab: 3000 B.C. to 1947 A.D.* (Delhi: Rekha Prakashan, 1983),72; Nasreen Askari and Rosemary Crill, *Colours of the Indus:Costumes and Textiles of Pakistan.* (London: Merrell Holberton, 1997), 95.

³ Shehnaz Ismail,"A Stitch Travels-Embroidery in Swat Kohistan,Swat Valley and Hazara." In *Asian Embroidery*, ed.Jasleen Dhamija (Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 2004),110; Flora Annie Steel, "Appendix." In *Monograph on the Silk Industry of the Punjab,1886-87*, ed.H.C. Cookson (Lahore: Punjab Government Press, 1887),7; Also see George Watts and Percy Brown, *Arts and crafts of India*(New Delhi: Cosmo Publications,1979), 372-375.

⁴Nicholas Barnard, *Arts and Crafts of India* (London: Conran Octopus Ltd., 1993),144.

⁵ Ilay Cooper and John Gillow, *Arts and Crafts of India* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1996),91. Mrinal Kanti Pal, *Crafts and Craftsmen in Traditional India* (New Delhi: Kanak Publications, 1978),76.

wraps that were used by Punjabi women irrespective of their religious affiliations to cover their head and shoulders.⁶ As a wrap, it was worn with an ankle length gathered skirt (*ghagra*) and a close-fitting bodice (*choli*).⁷ Natives of Punjab also made a distinction between intricate silken thread embroidered *Baghs* (garden) and sparingly embroidered *Phulkaris*. Uniqueness of *Phulkari* lies in the intricacy of embroidery through the skillful manipulation of the darning stitch,⁸ which is done from the wrong side of fabric⁹ by counting yarns, where one pattern was separated from the other by single yarn¹⁰ made it difficult to discern if this was a painted or embroidered creation. Shukla Das has compared *baghs* with a tapestry of velvet sheen.¹¹ In local parlance such fabric was often referred as 'makhmali' or 'like chenille.'



Figure 1: Phulkari embroidered with darning stitch: Right and wrong side of the embroidered Khaddar fabric

The ground *Khadi* fabric customarily used for this form of embroidery was made with home grown and home spun cotton¹² and was usually dyed with madder to a deep reddish-brown or rich earth red or sometimes an indigo blue or black shade;¹³ red symbolizing being married, power and passion and indigo blue associated with blue-black Krishna.¹⁴ Extant *Phulkaris* varied extensively: in design and colour, as also in the types of fabric, method of fabrication

⁶ Prem Nath, *Resurgent Punjab*(Chandigarh: Public Relations Department Punjab, 1956),27.

⁷ John Irwin and Margaret Hall, *Indian Embroideries:Historic Textiles of India at the Calico Museum*. vol. II. (Ahmedabad: S.R.Bastikar, 1973),161.

⁸ Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, *Handicrafts of India* (New Delhi: Indian Council for Cultural Relations, 1975),55; R.M. Lehri, *Indian Embroidery: Ethnic and Beyond*. (Mumbai: Super Book House, 2006),5. Charu Smita Gupta, "Picturesque Frame of Non-Cognitive Expression:Phulkari." In *Embroidery in Asia:Sui Dhaga:Crossing Boundaries Through Needle and Thread*, ed. Kapila Vatsyayan (New Delhi: Wisdom Tree, 2010),51; Ann Shankar and Jenny Housego. *Bridal Durries Of India* (Ahmedabad: Mapin Publishing Pvt.Ltd., 1997),19.

⁹ Rustam J.Mehta, *Handicrafts and Industrial Arts of India*(Bombay: D.B.Taraporevala Sons and Company Private Ltd., 1960), 111.

¹⁰ Jamila Brijbhushan, *Indian Embroidery* (New Delhi: Director, Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1990),31;Irwin and Hall, *Indian Embroideries:Historic Textiles of India at the Calico Museum*,161.

¹¹ Shukla Das,*Fabric Art: Heritage of India*(New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1992),102.

¹² Rampa Pal,*The phulkari-a lost craft* (New Delhi: National Printing Works,1955),38.

¹³Neelam Grewal and Amarjit Grewal. *The Needle Lore* (Delhi: Ajanta Publications, 1988),38-39; S.S. Hitkari, *Phulkari:The Folk Art of Punjab*(New Delhi: Phulkari Publications, 1980),19.

¹⁴ Jasleen Dhamija, "Embroidered gardens of flowers: Bagh and phulkari of Punjab." *Marg* 58, no. 4(2007):14-15.

and size. Embroidery was conventionally almost always done with yellow or golden or ivory white silk thread.¹⁵ Contrasting shades were used on the borders to enhance inner designs. *Phulkari* and its variations *Bagh*, *Chope* and *Tool* were traditionally related to rituals and were ornamented keeping the wearer or the object in view.

Embroidery in Punjab was a community activity. Women would sit in groups and embroider during their leisure hours talking to each other. Each piece of embroidery became a canvas personifying individual imagination and skill.¹⁶ Togetherness inculcates feeling of caring, sharing, exchange of ideas, neighbourliness, bonding and the fact that both Hindu and Muslim women residing in proximity embroidered together, communal harmony in the region was exemplary. Devayani Mitra elaborates that though there was a wide spread of regional areas where *Phulkaris* and *Baghs* were stitched by women, but there existed a regional variation especially those produced in West Punjab were considered to be fine and of best quality as compared to the East Punjab.¹⁷

There were dozens of highly imaginative *Phulkari* patterns: geometrical shapes including lozenges, squares, triangles forming various designs as kites, peacock, rolling pin, train, vegetables, fruits, kitchen equipments, as well as figured designs and familiar objects in the rural environment as animals, plants, farm, fields, sun, moon, jasmine, marigold flowers, cotton balls, comb, mirror, dagger, waves of the sea,¹⁸ jewellery like *hansali*, *tika*, *karda*,¹⁹ folk depictions as village scenes and humans either prepared by counting the yarns or tracing the complicated designs in outline with black ink and then filling them in with darning stitch.²⁰ These designs and motifs are an expression of the embroiderer's thoughts and aspirations or observations of life around her.



Figure 2: *Phulkari with peacocks*



Figure 3: *Bagh with zig zag pattern*

¹⁵ Colours used for embroidery were often described as marigold and jasmine, or wheat and barley, relating these to flowers or crops, symbolizing the agricultural tradition of the region. T.G. Singh, "A Wrap of Blessings." In *Embroidery in Asia: Sui Dhaga: Crossing Boundaries Through Needle and Thread*, ed. Kapila Vatsyayan (New Delhi: Wisdom Tree, 2010), 11.

¹⁶ Brijbhushan, *Indian Embroidery*, 30.

¹⁷ Devayani Mitra Dutta, *A Catalogue on Phulkari Textiles in the Collection of the Indian Museum* (Calcutta: The Museum, 1985), 15.

¹⁸ Pal, *The phulkari-a lost craft*, 24.

¹⁹ Aryan, *The Cultural Heritage of Punjab: 3000 B.C. to 1947 A.D.*, 72.

²⁰ Hitkari, *Phulkari: The Folk Art of Punjab*, 29.



Figure 4: *Phulkari* with lotus motifs



Figure 5: *Phulkari* with animal, bird and human motifs
(*sainchi*)

Effect of Colonization on *Phulkari*

Phulkaris and *Baghs* that a bride acquired as a part of her trousseau - the number and the heaviness of embroidery, was a reflection of bride's talent and the training she received from her mother. There was a trend of giving at least twenty-one *Phulkaris* in trousseau during the nineteenth century.²¹ Even financial status was reflected through the intricacy and amount of silk floss used in embroidering *Phulkari*. The maternal mother, grandmother used to take special pains, care, interest, attention and pride in embroidering the same. Punjabi girl from an early age had also to work on it, which showed her skill, creativity and hard work representing her eligibility as bride.

With the coming of the colonial appreciation²² of *Phulkari* embroidery, also came the decline of *Phulkari* embroidery for personal and ceremonial purpose.²³ *Phulkari* was taken by the British to various exhibitions not for exhibiting the rich tradition of embroidery popular in both East and West Punjab in pre-partition India, but also with the intent to explore its commercial viability in the International market. It was not that there were no admirers of this embroidery as is evidenced in George Watt's catalogue to the exhibition of Indian Art held in Delhi in 1903 in which, he categorically insists on the need to study Hazara *Phulkaris* in particular.²⁴ But it was the commercial aspect of it that encouraged women to embroider for payment²⁵ that was earlier unknown to them. Poverty was one of the potent factors that forced women to sell their treasures of textiles. Prior to its commercialization in the colonial era, women embroidered as a leisure activity, but now demands of the market and revenue generated from its sale reduced it to a routine affair to be pursued under pressures of deadlines and for an unknown customer.

Other factors responsible for the decline of this form of embroidery in rural hinterland of Punjab were the arrival of cotton fabric and embroidery thread from Europe. *Phulkari* was

²¹Few crafts women from the field voiced that twentyone was a small number and they prepared even more number of *Phulkaris* for their trousseau, many of these were used as a wrap by them after marriage and many were gifted to their in-law's close relatives.

²²See Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture Of Victorian England: Advertising And Spectacle, 1851-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990),17-72; Michelle Maskiell, "Embroidering the Past:Phulkari Textiles and Gendered Work as "Tradition" and "Heritage" in Colonial and Contemporary Punjab." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 58, no. 2 (1999): 369-370.

²³Bhupinder Singh Khaira,*Lokdhara Bhasha Ate Sabhyachar*. (Patiala: Pepsu Book Depot, 2004),129-130.

²⁴ Askari and Rosemary Crill. *Colours of the Indus:Costumes and Textiles of Pakistan*,13.

²⁵Steel, "Appendix," 7.

earlier embroidered on home grown, home spun and woven fabric. The entire process was cost effective and it continued to occupy woman's domestic space as leisure and recreational activity. But when home production of cotton went out of business and thread became expensive, gradual waning in the production of wrap for personal use became understandable.²⁶ Flora Anne Steel, one of the foremost chroniclers of the *Phulkari* discusses decline in the quality of embroidery:

The cause of this disastrous effect on the craft also lies in the abandonment of the coarse fabric *Khaddar* and substitution of foreign cloths, *markin*, *salu*, or at best a flimsy *chausi*. Moreover this change has been brought about, first, by the desire of the women for a lighter head covering; secondly by the comparative difficulty of procuring strong yet even 'home spun' now-a days; but chiefly of late years by the senseless objections of buyers who do not understand the necessity of a coarse fabric. The real *Phulkari* stitch is fast dying out in almost all areas except few-like Rohtak, Hissar, Hazara and remote and inaccessible areas of some districts.²⁷

British policy towards procurement of cotton also became a major deterrent in the survival of this ethnic craft for local use. Giorgio Riello demonstrates in his work, how production, exchange and consumption of one specific commodity-cotton textiles-came to influence vast areas of the world.²⁸ Europeans started to re-interpret commodities²⁹ to suit their taste though a process of selection and modification of the original designs.³⁰ These were conceived to be 'stimulants' which became integral parts of a shifting material culture.³¹ Promotion of machine made textiles to local populations in Punjab at cheaper rates also contributed to the steady decline of the hand embroidery on cotton. P.N. Mago contends that end of handmade traditions became inevitable because of intervention of machines in the hand crafted work.³²

This gradual decline in the quality of fabric and neatness in embroidery reached its zenith in the beginning of the twentieth century. Largely poor women for earning some money for their survival now embroidered *Phulkari*.³³ Many women started selling fine quality embroidered pieces that they had either inherited or embroidered to traders for what they believed was a profit.

²⁶ Askari and Crill, *Colours of the Indus: Costumes and Textiles of Pakistan*, 14.

²⁷ Steel, "Appendix," 7.

²⁸ Giorgio Riello, "The Making of a Global Commodity: Indian Cottons and European Trade, 1450-1850." *World History Studies and World History Education: The Proceedings of the First Congress of the Asian Association of World Historians*. 2010. 1.

²⁹ T.N. Mukharji quotes Kipling (1888) in his book where usage of *Phulkari* is mentioned by *Jat* women as *ohrni*, bodices, petticoats whereas Europeans converted this wrap into a form of curtain. The initial initiatives of commodification of this form were undertaken by various agencies like Industrial and mission schools where efforts were made to produce Europeanized versions of the *Phulkari*. Firms at Amritsar like Devi Sahai and Chamba Mal, or Devi Sahai and Prabhu Dayal took orders for *Phulkari* on any size or shape of cloth for special uses. T.N. Mukharji, *Art-Manufactures of India* (Calcutta: The Superintendent of Government Printing, 1888), 376.

³⁰ Riello, "The Making of a Global Commodity: Indian Cottons and European Trade, 1450-1850," 20.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

³² P.N. Mago, "Traditional Shilpin and Today's Artist Craftsman." In *Sixty Years of Writing on Art and Crafts in India (From Roop-Lekha 1928-1988)*, ed. Ram Dhamija (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Private Limited, 1988), 82.

³³ Hitkari reveals that Sikh and Brahmin women from poor families in her mother's village prepared *Phulkaris* and *Baghs* for others during their leisure time in the second decade of the twentieth century. Hitkari, *Phulkari: The Folk Art of Punjab*, 51.

Further ruination of the craft came with the partition of India. Jamila Brijbhushan writes, "When refugees poured into India in 1947 these textiles were sold in great quantities to bring in necessities of daily life."³⁴ The craft of *Phulkari* almost went into oblivion during independence struggle. Punjab witnessed ethnic strife and communal violence and division of not only territories but also traditions and handicrafts. Sensitive to this decline, several connoisseurs of craft made efforts to revive the tradition in Post-Independent India.

Globalization and Revival of *Phulkari*

Hitkari converses that after independence industrialization, influence of western culture through films, radio and television promoted materialism and consumerism resulting in the decline of traditional art and craft.³⁵ *Phulkaris* and *Baghs* were confined to the old trunks, brought out occasionally to air or to be sold in times of dire needs to vendors. Light weight and finely woven fabrics like organdie, chiffon, georgette or machine made polyester, rayon and wool with machine embroidery flooded Indian markets. Spinning at home along with the spinning wheel was gradually confined to the realm of history with its symbolic revocation with freedom movement and Gandhi. People like Kamala Devi Chattopadhaya, Pupul Jaykar and organizations like Crafts council, Regional design and weaving centers made concerted and deliberate attempts to preserve traditional crafts and made genuine efforts to revive these with the support of the state funding.³⁶ Mrinal Kanti elaborates the joint endeavors of the 'Handloom Board' and 'Handicrafts Board' for encouraging local weavers and artisans all over India in forming cooperatives, bringing the best of indigenous designs out of them.³⁷ Separate department of Handicrafts were created, Museums exhibiting rare specimens of embroidery were granted space and state support. Commercial arm for promoting ethnic crafts in the form of state emporiums was established in the commercial hub of the capital city Delhi. Presidential awards were announced for master craft persons from different field at regular intervals.

Exigencies of livelihood and waning interest in the commercial value of *Phulkari* also affected the traditional methods of teaching of craft from one generation to another. Revivalist insisted on original form wanting the embroidery to be done only on *Khaddar* with silken floss thread (*Pat*) from the wrong side of the cloth by counting of threads. There were few traditional hands available to meet this expectation. Designers from India and abroad bought old *Phulkari* and *Baghs* from vendors at a pittance and cut these into pieces and re-embellished them in their designer outfits without acknowledging its original form or its ethnicity.

Change in Material, Methods and Design

The process of reviving *Phulkari* brought a perceptive change in the choice of fabrics being used for embroidery in the middle of the twentieth century. It was a consequence of multiple factors that included affordability, convenience of embroidery and changing fashion trends. In the first phase of commoditization of this style of embroidery in the colonial period,

³⁴ Brijbhushan, *Indian Embroidery*, 33.

³⁵ S. S. Hitkari, *Designs and Patterns in Phulkari* (New Delhi: Phulkari Publications, 2003), 10-11.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 11-12.

³⁷ Pal, *Crafts and Craftsmen in Traditional India*, 299-306.

gradual substitution of fabric happened. Innovations in its usage from a traditional wrap to bedspreads, curtains, cushion covers to ladies shawls³⁸ and coats required experimentation with the fabric too. Convenience of embroidering on *Khaddar* restricted commercial production on other fabrics. Qualitative difference in fabric use occurred in the second phase of commercialization of the embroidery. Customs started changing in several parts of East Punjab after independence. Women used heavy *Phulkari* wraps to not only cover their head and face but also upper parts of their body. Literacy and exposure to formal education gave younger women the option to wear headscarf in lighter material. Tradition of women wearing veil also started waning and formal wraps became lightweight *dupattas*. Over the years as the embroidery moved in the mass production mode, fabric range also expanded: from *Khaddar* to fabrics including chiffon, chinon chiffon, georgette, crepe, silk, cotton voile, lizzy bizzzy, casement etc.

Commercial or mass production on these varied fabrics adapted simple procedures and of these, most significant was printing³⁹ of motifs before being embroidered. This process of printing in East Punjab followed by embroidery is just fifty to sixty years old as responded by few artisans from Patiala.⁴⁰ It may be more because a renowned printer from Patiala (sixty years old) revealed that he learnt this art of printing from his father who was also a known printer of the region. Some of the women responded that they usually embroidered articles out of sheer imagination and sometimes by outlining the design with charcoal or pencils copying from others work. In order to have even product and faster production there was introduction of block printing on *Phulkari* base. These motifs are drawn or traced on the fabric or on paper. These designs are also transferred on wooden blocks for quick replication through printing.



Figure 6: Printer printing the base fabric of Phulkari for further embroidery



Figure 7: Artisans embroidering veil (dupatta) for the market

Commoditization has also added numerous colours to this traditional craft. Colour palette of the contemporary form of *Phulkari* is elaborate as compared to the traditional ones.

³⁸A classified advertisement states *Phulkari* in the form of curtain, bedspread and shawls were displayed at *Phulkari*-Punjab Govt. emporium and Trade Centre, Bombay in 1978. "Classified Ad 13-No Title". *The Times of India (1861-current)* [New Delhi, India] 28 Mar 1972, 10. Accessed August 10, 2015, <http://search.proquest.com/hnptimesofindia/docview/498275033/1F42D610B02740CEPQ/11?accountid=28367>.

³⁹ Process of duplication of images on a surface. "*History of Printing*". Accessed August 13, 2014). https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_printing.

⁴⁰A city in Punjab: hub of *phulkari* making

Availability of the embroidery thread in enumerable colours, the changed lifestyle, and the designer approach has redrafted the essence of this style of ornamentation of fabric for variety of usage. Many Punjabi households are re-incorporating the traditional *Phulkari* wrap in certain ceremonies but the colour of the fabrics used and that of embroidery have become speckled.

The base colour of the fabric defines the tones to be used for embroidery as responded by the artisans from the field. For a lighter base colour, embroidery yarn is to be in contrasting colours like red, maroon, green etc. Whereas for a darker base, one of the coloured threads should match the colour of the base fabric to have an appealing effect. Women love to experiment with colours, particularly if they are embroidering for a loved one. But in case of embroidering for the market, customer choices have become far more nuanced. Traditional form of this embroidery was always done in bright colours but now shades of grey, black, magenta, maroon, and turquoise blue as also pastel shades and numerous innovative hues are seen. Monochromatic colour schemes are also quite popular exhibiting changing choices. Colour schemes are finalized by the vendors and artisans have to abide by the instructions and variation of any kind is not acceptable.



Figure 8: Colour schemes on light and dark coloured base fabric of Phulkari

Another important component of this form of embroidery are the yarns or the thread with which motif is filled after printing. Artisan's individual choice for a particular kind of embroidery yarn or a particular brand of thread is also curtailed. Craftswoman accustomed to traditional method of *Phulkari* used untwisted silk floss (*Pat*) for enhancing the visual appeal of the embroidery but scientific advancements led to the introduction and usage of synthetic floss yarn. It is inexpensive and available in wide range of colours. Many a times artisans are also provided with twisted floss yarn or mercerized cotton yarn in order to achieve a different look of the *Phulkari* product.

The entire process of *Phulkari* embroidery is like a line arrangement. The line arrangement described by one of the respondents' from field area is:

Sourcing of fabric that is demand driven; blocking/printing with the required design by professional printers; decision for colour combination either by the designer or by the shopkeeper conferring to the choice of the customer; bulk products packed for distribution to middle agents; artisans working from homes or community spaces receive a packet marked for embroidery along with instruction for completing it within a stipulated period on a settled payment plan; middle agent returns to collect the embroidered packets after a stipulated period and delivers fresh ones; embroidered wraps, cushion covers or bedspreads are sent for finishing and embellishments with additional accessories if desired; final product is packaged and sent to the market.

In this customized small-scale industry like processing, procurements are made by the primary investor-the shopkeeper or the boutique owner.

Phulkari designs were traditionally geometric⁴¹ mostly squares, triangles, stripes, floral or waves⁴² and often symbolized objects in nature including celestial bodies like sun and moon to mundane objects like images on the playing cards.⁴³ These designs also incorporate fields, crops, coins, cowrie shells,⁴⁴ domestic and wild animals, birds⁴⁵ in different sizes and from different angles or any other object either owned by the family or seen in their surroundings. These embroidered pieces were expositions of woman's perceptions of her life and surroundings.

Traditional *Phulkari* embroidery was carried from the backside of the fabric but the present-day *Phulkari* work starts from the right side of the fabric that has been printed with the desired pattern or motifs.⁴⁶ Artisans use two strands of untwisted silken floss thread in a darning's needle and start the work without knotting with or without using the frame as per convenience of the artisan. Motifs of peacocks (*mor*); flowers-four and eight petal (*kanchanbuti*), triangular petal (*tikonibuti*), round petal (*golbuti*), leaves (*patta*) and geometrical shapes like square (*parantha*) that were largely inspired by nature continue to find favour with the artisans but printed designs have restrained their imagination.



Figure 9: Motifs and designs of Phulkari

Top from left: Veil embroidered with Paranthabuti, Motif of Paranthabuti

Bottom from left: Eight petalled flower, triangular petalled flower, flower created with chevrons arranged in the increasing order of their width from the edge to the centre of the motif, leaves, woman embroidering veil with peacock motifs

⁴¹ Anne Morrel, *The Techniques of Indian Embroidery* (U.S.: Diane Publishing Co., 2000), 55.

⁴² Jaya Jaitly, *Crafts atlas of India* (New Delhi: Niyogi Books, 2012), 60.

⁴³ Cooper and Gillow, *Arts and Crafts of India*, 91.

⁴⁴ Nora Fisher, *Mud, Mirror and Thread: Folk Traditions of Rural India* (Ahmedabad: Mapin Publishing Pvt. Ltd., 1995), 71.

⁴⁵ Irwin and Hall, *Indian Embroideries: Historic Textiles of India at the Calico Museum*, 161-170.

⁴⁶ Though there are efforts from NGOs to revive the craft and train women to embroider *Phulkari* by counting yarns but from the right side of fabric.

Agencies of Revival

Commodification of marketable goods uses many instrumentalities to expand its reach. These external agencies include state, private enterprise and some influential fashion designers and local merchants. Government of India in the year 1952 established 'The All India Handicrafts Board' with the intent of finding some answers to several problems being faced by the handicraft workers in India. This board promoted handicrafts through interventions like many popular exhibitions and fairs at district, state and national level which provide a strong platform for craftsmen to sell their wares from various parts of India like *Surajkund crafts mela*, Haryana; *Kala Ghoda Art Festival*, Mumbai; *Pushkar Camel Fair*, Rajasthan etc. Creation of new markets has also helped in the revival of craft.⁴⁷

In addition to these annual exhibitions, government has also started several nodal avenues meant for exclusive sale of handicrafts and to encourage artisans to sell their products directly to the customers. One such venture was *Dilli Haat*,⁴⁸ established in 1994 by Delhi Tourism and Transportation Development Corporation (DTTDC) and Ministry of Textiles and Ministry of Tourism, Government of India operates in the capital city of New Delhi and mirrors ethnic India. This was followed by *Dastkaar Bazaars* in Delhi, Andhra Pradesh and Ranthambore. Artisans from different parts of the country come, participate, display and sell their products. The idea was to promote ethnic culture and create ethnic habitats in the heart of metropolis and urban complexes; far from their original habitats.



Figure 10: Glimpses of various fairs where artisans participate to sell Phulkari products

Another external intervention made by the state to further the process of commoditization, purportedly to protect artisans interest through the agency of Self-Help Groups⁴⁹. These groups are made by various organizations like KVIC,⁵⁰ NABARD,⁵¹ Ministry of Textiles etc. In many cases NGOs are involved in creating awareness; some of them are entrusted the task

⁴⁷Nelly highlights the role Handicrafts Development Board after India's independence in the revival of craft of *Kalamkari* by setting up training centres and creation of new markets. Nelly H Sethna, *Kalamkari: Painted And Fabrics From Andhra Pradesh* (New York: Mapin International Inc., 1985), 12.

⁴⁸It is a venue to display crafts, music, dance and cultural festivals of India. Only artisans registered with Development Commissioner (Handicrafts) are allowed to get stalls at *Dilli Haat*.

⁴⁹Small homogenous and affinity group of rural poor generally not exceeding twenty members, voluntarily coming together with the motive of saving small amounts regularly, contributing to a common fund for meeting their emergency needs, collective decision making, solving conflicts through collective leadership and mutual discussion and providing collateral free loans with terms decided by the group at market driven rates. Arpita Sharma, *Women Empowerment through microfinance and SHGs* (New Delhi: Sonali Publications, 2012), 11-12.

⁵⁰ Khadi and Village Industries Commission

⁵¹ National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development

of motivating artisans especially those belonging to low income group to voluntarily become part of Self-Help Groups. Members of these groups work together under the guidance of a counselor that helps not only with designs and ideas but also facilitates sale of the products made by them and it provides livelihood and financial independence to these women.⁵²

With the commodification of *Phulkari*, many women adopted this craft initially as a hobby but later it became a full-fledged profession and has helped these women in realizing their capabilities and becoming successful entrepreneurs. The other way to interpret is that because of adoption of embroidery or *Phulkari* as a profession by many women, the craft has flourished. Other than these entrepreneurs, many designers have also contributed in the revival of *Phulkari* taking it to the ramp. There is immense hope and future for a craft that originated centuries ago and continues to flourish irrespective of several hurdles in its journey.



Figure 11: Variety in *Phulkari* products

⁵²See Gurupdesh Kaur and G P S Sodhi. "Traditional Phulkari: A successful enterprise for rural women in Patiala." *Journal of Krishi Vigyan* 3, no.1 (2014):86. ; Anu H.Gupta and Shalina Mehta. "Leisure to Livelihood: A case study of Phulkari tradition of Punjab." *Hoisery and Textile Journal* 82 (2014): 31-33.

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