

A REVIEW ON PHULKARI EMBROIDERY OF PUNJAB**Ms Sandeep Reen****Assistant Professor****Home science (Department of Clothing and Textile)****Guru Nanak Girls College, Yamunanagar****INTRODUCTION**

Since ages man is experimenting with the clothes, new designs and material used to give them an attractive look. Colour is such a vital and vibrant ingredient of our existence that it is difficult to imagine a life without it. The Persian phrase “a colourless life” referring to a meaningless life is in common usage today. (Dhamija, 1979).

One of the oldest technique in the field of textile ornamentation is an art of embroidering it, which is perhaps the most beautiful ways for self-expression. It mirrors the lives, reflects the hidden desires and aspirations and expresses the cultural traditions and religious beliefs of the society to which they belong. Embroidery is an age old craft of embellishing fabrics by stitchery, actually being needle work of antique origin consisting in executing design with thread, yarn or other flexible material on a textile. (Dena, 1973; Siddique and Kale, 1991)

Punjab has the honour of having remained the cradle of one of the most ancient embroideries that is Phulkari ever flourished in India. Phulkari is analyzed as ‘Phul flower and ‘Kari’ work that is floral work or flowering. It is a special traditional handwork basically done in Punjab. (Kang, 1988)

The folk arts may be termed as the product of innocent eye, and this innocent eye is disappearing, not we think entirely due to mechanization, but also from changing social habits bringing a certain lack of initiative and interest in things. But by preserving examples from the past, for study and enjoyment we may through our designers of the future, possibly regain some of the old individual quality and delight in simple forms. (Kang, 1988)

Indian folklore possess a vitality that is at once dynamic and persistent resources are potent and perennial, its roots lay deeper in the soil in India.

HISTORY OF PHULKARI

Phulkari is an integral part of the life of Punjab girl. In any simple or elaborate functions, festivals, get-together functions, one or the other type of phulkari or Bagh is invariably used. It is said to be auspicious, a symbol of happiness, prosperity and 'suhag' of married women. However, it is considered as a great treasure.

The tradition of embroidery in India goes back to the past. There have been references to it in the early scriptures. In fact embroidery had been an essential qualification of a well brought up Punjab girl in earlier times. The great Guru Nank Dev Ji (1469-1538 AD) Sayeth in the Holy Guru Granth Sahib

“Kadh Kasida Pehreh Choli, Ta Tum Janoh Nari”

Translated freely it reads

“Only then you will be considered an accomplished lady when you will embroider yourself your own blouse.”

Earliest mentioned on Phulkari was made in the famous love story of Heer Ranjha written by Waris Shah (1725-1790). Heer has many costume including Phulkari articles too. From this it is quite obvious that Phulkari an article customarily presented to the girl during her wedding. Bhana Bhatt mentioned in 'Harshacharita' around seventeenth century that some folk were embroidering flowers and foliage on wrong side of the cloth where the technique and stitches were similar to ones used in Phulkari.

On this basis Jasleen Dhamija expressed that a similar embroidery was prevalent in different parts of India, but did survive only in Punjab, while similar motifs are seen in traditional art of Bihar and Rajasthan.

The earliest available articles of embroidery were rumal the kerchief, embroidered somewhere during fifteenth century by the sister of Sikh Guru, Guru Nanak Dev ji which was similar to chamba rumal. This indicates Phulkari must have originated during fifteenth or sixteenth century. (Naik, 1996)

Phulkari is a special traditional hand work basically done in Punjab and also found in Gurgaon, Hisar, Rohtak, Delhi. However in West Punjab art is famous by the name 'Bagh' means garden in which entire surface of cloth is decorated with floral designs (Kang, 1988; Naik, 1996)

MOTIFS USED

The motifs comprised of the things used in day to day life articles precious to the women of the house, which are valued and considered sacred and aspired but all had geometrical base.

As the word Pulkari itself suggests a large variety of flowers like lotus, cotton and sunflower. Among fruits orange pomegranate, muskmelon, pear, mango, dates are common. Few vegetables like brinjal, chilli, cauliflower, butter gourd, pumpkin, maize cob are also used.

Varieties of boon domestic and royal animals such as cow, buffalo, goat, rat donkey, rabbit, pig, frog, tortoise, camel, horse, pigeon, crow and owl, few household articles like various type of utensils, rolling pin, brass urn, pitcher, domestic activities like churning curds, pounding wheat or corn, spinning a cone and so on. Peacock, combs, umbrella, mango slice, floral buds, four and eight buds and such other motifs are also used. The motifs may be conventionally geometrical or floral. Some of them render a pleasing effect with colorful stitches. (Naik, 1996; Joshi, 1987).

FABRIC USED

Hand spun and hand woven khaddar is the base material for phulkari, women specially young unmarried girls after completing their household work used to get together in place and engaged in group spinning (Trinjan), knitting crocheting and embroidering.

There are three types of hand woven fabrics, khaddar being a loosely spun and coarsely woven fabric and the other chaunsa khaddar, woven with fine yarn on which Baghs were embroidered. The third type material, the Halwan, light weight finely woven fabric popular in Hazara and Rawalpindi districts of West Punjab are exclusively used for Phulkari. However most popular fabric on which Phulkari done was the inexpensive durable, easily and locally available khaddar. White khaddar used to be dyed indigenously by local dyes using natural vegetable colours.

The embroidery invariably done on home woven and home dyed cotton material non as khaddar. The unique quality of these shawls embroidered was that these were never attacked by moths and pests. (Naik, 1996;)

THREADS AND COLOURS USED

Soft, glossy, untwisted silk thread is employed for the stitchery, which is basically supplied from Kashmir, Afghanistan and Bengal. However best quality pat covers

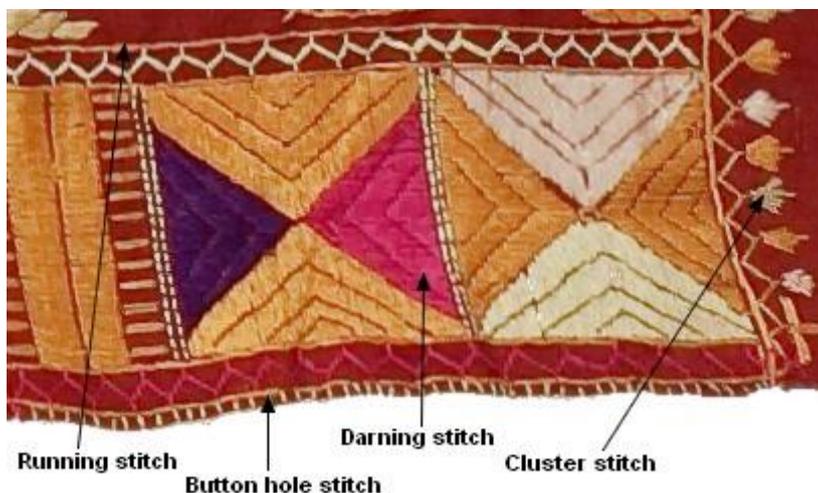
from China. To complete Phulkari work require around fifty to hundred grams of silk thread. However, woollen yarn is employed for handwork in some parts of Punjab.

The colours predominantly used are red, orange, green, white, golden yellow and deep blue. A peculiarity of Phulkari is that the fabric itself is used geometrically as an inner decoration so that the medallions and diamonds are not just patterns sewn on but become an integrated combination of colour yellow and madder brown.

The stitches are mainly in golden yellow or white or green and a few bright colours are introduced in the borders. (Chattopadhyay, 1985; Naik, 1996)

Phulkari designs display imagination, originality and profound knowledge of colour blending. The village women have no pattern books or model designs nor do they know any thing of geometry or art composition but after year of practice with only crude needle they learn to produce the most exquisite patterns possessing both symmetry and precision

STITCHES USED The darning stitch is the basic unit of phulkari. The workmanship of phulkari and bagh are graded according to the length and density of the stitches. The needle craft consists of many long and short darning stitches. For outlining the borders and marking the areas the stem, chain and herringbone stitches are used. Double running and satin stitch are also employed. Edging is done with buttonhole stitch. The joints of the fabric are expertly covered with herringbone stitch.



TYPES OF PHULKARIS

Through the craftsmanship is one and same, the embroidery of Punjab, they are distinguished for better understanding on the basis of types of motifs used, colour of the base material, stitches employed, area or part of the base material embroidered and their utility.

CHOPE

A precious red coloured phulkari, prepared and presented by the maternal grandmother of the bride at her wedding function. The triangular designs are embroidered with golden yellow pat by double running stitch, which appears identical on either sides of the cloth.

However, a small Nazar buti is embroidered in one corner of the chope to keep off the evil eye. Chope is always emphasized on the border, having large triangular or pyramid shapes having their basis parallel to the selvage.

The gap between two such triangles is fitted with another triangle in opposite direction. Each triangle is further designed into some sort of geometrical that too bird motifs. The body of the chope, many times remains uncovered but rarely is been filed with small triangles spreadout wide apart. This manual workmanship is so fine, delicate, intricate and neat that, it is very difficult to identify the right side of the chope. The chope is draped around the bride at the time of 'Chura Charana' a ceremony when the bride wears red ivory bangles presented by her maternal uncle.

SUBHAR

Another rich, gorgeous, red coloured phulkari worn by the bride, during her wedding, at the time of 'Pheras', taking rounds around the holy fire. Though the colour of the base material and floss is same as that of chope, the area embroidered varied. Subhar has a central and four corner motifs where the center has a group of five motifs and similar ones repeated at the corner.

TIL PATRA

It means sprinkled sesame seeds, scarcely embroidered. Small tiny embroidered dots in the body, of an inferior and inexpensive khaddar is usually presented to the maids during wedding or any other such traditional auspicious occasions.

NILAK

As the name suggests, it is Phulkari of blue colour. The farm women use this khaddar on which embroidery is done with yellow and crimson pat though glaring but exhibits attractive contrast color combinations. Sometimes Nilak is also worked on black khaddar. The motifs commonly embroidered are the articles used at household like, comb, fan, umbrella or rumal and flowers.

SHISHEDAR PHULKARI

Number of disper designs alongwith mirror are inserted on either red or brown background. These were the specialty of south-eastern Punjab, but now in Haryana state. However, it is gradually becoming rare and extinct.

DARSHANA DWAR OR DARWAZA

This Phulkari is a presentation, the Bhet, to some of the religious institutions offered during certain ceremonial functions. It is design worked on a panel, which is draped over the entrance gate from where people take the Darshan (see), of their deity.

THIRMA

A phulkari done on white khaddar is generally termed as Thirma. It is specialty of Hindu women, an important treasure, was presented by bride's family during her wedding. However, the prosperity, status, standard of living of the bride's family will be sealed on the basis of number of Thirma presented, and in some cases as many as fifty one pieces were presented, an affluence of the girl's family.

SAINCHI PHULKARI

It is the folk embroidery of Malwa region of Punjab, depicts the true rural life where, the motifs are being traced, outlined before embroidering. The motifs depict the various activities of rural life, different household articles, daily chores of a housewife and other such incidents i.e. the various agricultural operations like, ploughing, harvesting, a water carrier, smoking hukka, guests drinking sharbat, wrestlers practicing wrestling, hawker carrying his articles. In other words the whole life of the villagers is exhibited colourfully through Sainchi Phulkari. The plain red or black khaddar used as veil or wrapper, for daily wear, is known as 'Salu or Saloo'.

Other phulkari named according to the motifs used are, Butiyanwali (floral buds), Char or Aath Kaliyan (four or eight buds), Amban di (mango slice), Pakhian di (fans), Kangiyan di (combs), Chattariyan di (Umbrella), Moran di (peacock) and so on.

NAZAR BUTI

Its main purpose is to drag off the evil eye. In order to achieve this, a small corner or portion of the design is retained unembroidered, indicating that the work is yet to be

completed. Similarly, few motifs of the main design or a small buti in a corner worked a distinct dark shade of blue, black or purple, which as such is not been used except to denote Nazar Buti. The women being orthodox and religious minded, some commence their craft with a small religious symbol in one corner of Phulkari praying for its speedy and successful completion.

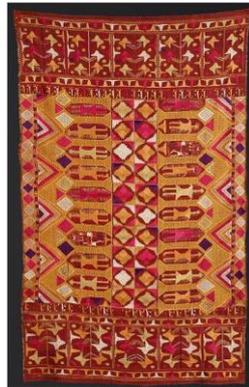
Through, phulkari depicts the traditional embroidery of Punjab has lots of diversity in type and colour of base material, threads, stitches, motifs, area to embroidered, number of colours used, size of the khaddar, and articles prepared, regionwise, sectorwise as well as religionwise.

SOME TRADITIONAL MOTIFS OF PHULKARI

Thirma



DARSHAN



DWAR



Chope



Suraj mukhi

sainchi



Vari-da-Bagh

Bawan Phulkari

Meena Kari



PRESENT STATUS OF PHULKARI AND ITS FUTURE

Phulkari, has not remained as a domestic art but on commercial scale entered the international markets of European countries U.S.A. owing to its demand the manufactures introduced numerous new designs with variegated colour combination according to the taste of the market. This kind of demand, taste and workmanship definitely affects the basic concept of traditional Phulkari and in no time leads to deterioration of the quality of the work. The exported goods were not used as auspicious ceremonial articles but mostly taken as household textiles.

On the other hand the social and economical changes in the life style of the Punjabis has lead to rarity of these exquisite embroidery. The group spinning (trinjangs) has been transferred to schools and colleges. Girls are now attending the school, leading to greater extent of social mobility, availability of wide variety of fabrics, modification of traditional stitches into much simpler forms, increased demand, shortage of time to meet the demand and so on, have adversely affected the traditional art of Punjab.

At this juncture, a thought to revive this super art is felt to be very essential. Adoption of new type of material similar to khaddar, tracing on block printing the outline of the design, use of viscose rayon floss, have been encouraged . On the other hand new modified motives if introduced may increase the demand of phulkari articles in country and abroad. There are many private and Government institutions who undertake the production of Phulkari articles. It is surprising to know that Rajasthan has also involved in Phulkari work.

This review on Phulkari embroidery concludes that this embroidery still it has preserved tradition and is also in demand by people of different states in india as well as abroad. On the other hand the new changes introduced by the manufacturers has also resulted in creating a variety which has been appreciated in the market.

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