



phulkari

# PHULKARİ

A SPECIAL PROJECT

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GUIDE  
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**IIT BOMBAY**  
**IDC 2011**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would earnestly like to thank my guide Prof. Nina Sabnani, for her valuable suggestions.

I am grateful to Dhiman House Patiala helpers, without their help the present Phulkari making process would not have been possible to comprehend. Rajesh Taneja and Darshana Taneja, for their hospitality, their insight and their great help on illuminating me with Phulkari have been exceedingly appreciative. Ms. Sonia Sharanjeet Kaur, my gratitude on introducing 'The wide world of Phulkari' meticulously. My father for edifying me more about the subject .

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phulkari

beginning



### **My Journey...**

had evidently begun with a lot of exhilaration as I was, yet again; about to witness the vibrancy of the state I've been residing in, Punjab. I had been observing the enthralling Punjabi culture closely; the folk stories, the dances, being the most interesting ones, the people, food, attire, their living, the loudness, their devotion, and their everyday prayers, did move me. The people might look lighthearted and jovial, but when they talk about the origin of their culture, one could see the fidelity and passion.

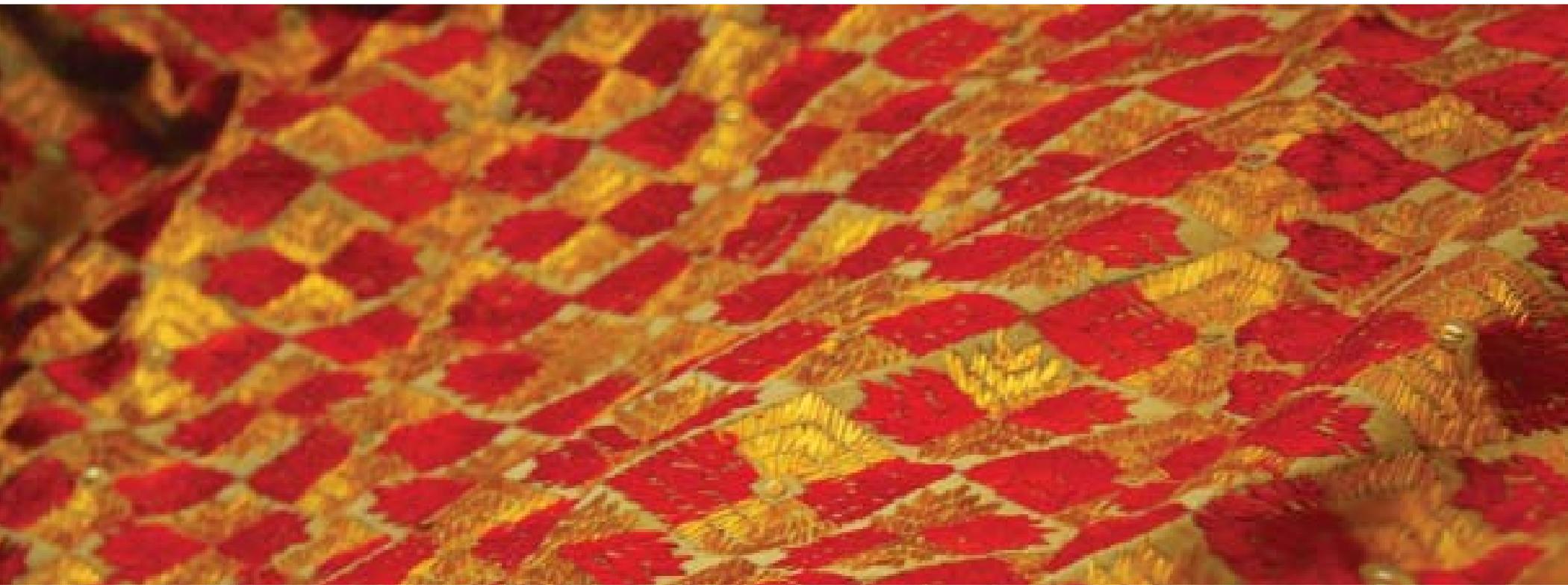
The Princely state of Patiala, named after its founder 'Baba Ala Singh' was established in the year of 1754. It's traditional attire has been a pagdi (turban), paranda (a kind of tasseled tag for braiding hair), salwar (a Punjabi form of trouser for females), jutti (the traditional footwear). It's here that Phulkari continues to blossom in its most quintessential Patialvi style. The embroidery is stitched on the traditional apparel of women in Punjab.e.g. salwar suits, dupatta, sari, scarves, shawls, wraps and so on.

I knew this would be a great opportunity to unearth the world of Phulkari that brought about unity in most of the religions both in India and Pakistan. The enlightenment grew as I learnt progressively about one of the auspicious and oldest, folk art that have meant a lot to the women of Punjab, the remarkable embroidery of Punjab, 'PHULKARI'.



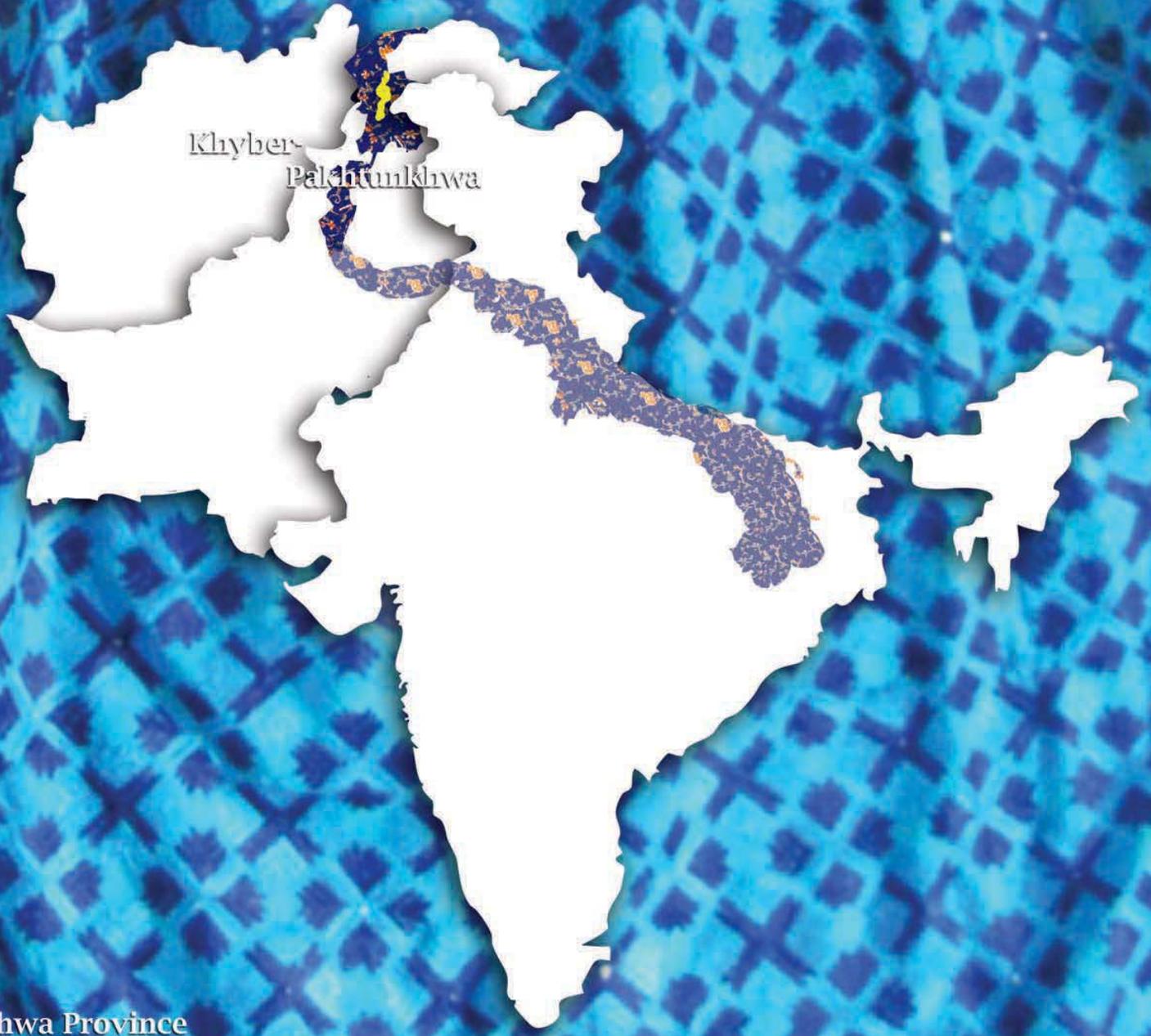
Patiala

PUNJAB



### **Origin & Reflection of the Culture**

‘Sapat Sindhu’ another name given to one of the most effervescent states of India, Punjab. ‘Punj’ represents five and ‘Aab’ means water, the name put together discloses the five rivers that were flowing in the state of Punjab before Indian Independence (1947). Punjab was also widely referred as meaning the seven rivers, sixth being Sindh in North-West and seventh being Saraswati in South-East. Like most civilizations that dwelled along the natural water-course, rivers, the very famous of Indo Aryan civilization took birth, cultivated along these five rivers. They further spread to other parts of the country. Agriculture is the main occupation of this brave population of Punjab. As vibrant and boisterous has always been the style that is quiet evident and articulated in their folk tradition. The traditional dances of Gidda and Bhangra express their vigor and similar exuberance is reflected in their art and one of crafts widely known to be as Phulkari.



Khyber-  
Pakhtunkhwa

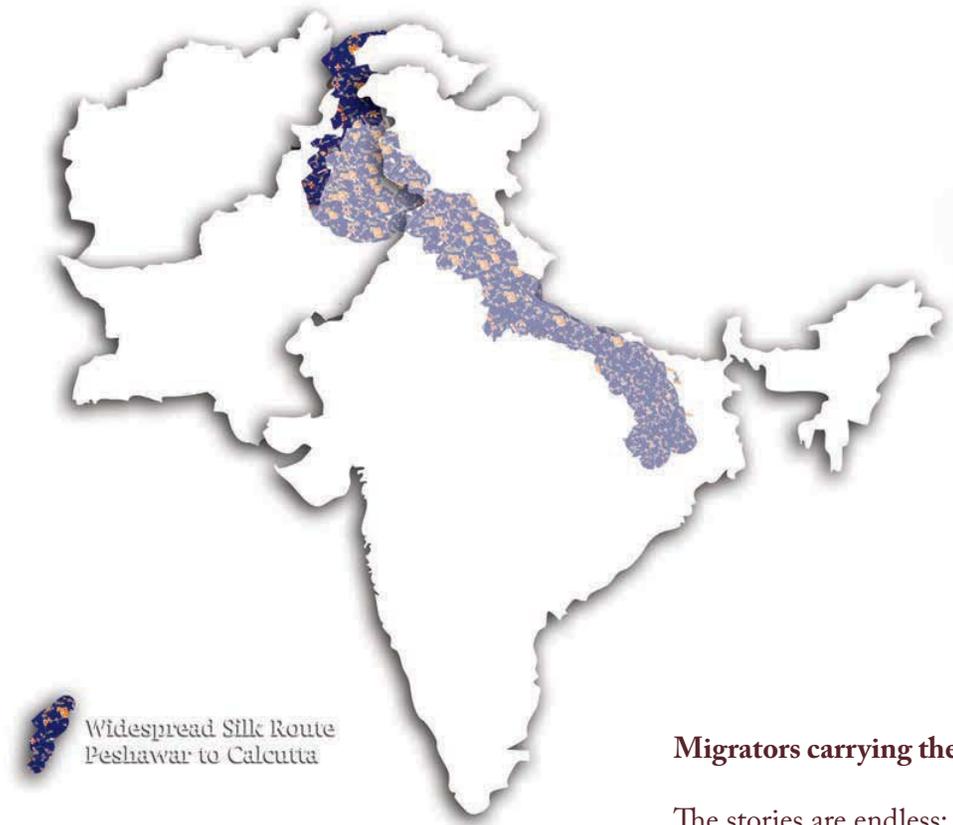


Swat Valley in  
Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Province



### **The vague Beginning**

Flowers and colors crafted in various geometrical patterns clout together to form up the art of 'Phulkari'. This exceptionally beautiful embroidery is believed to have come from the lands of Persia. Not much is known as to where and how it began. The scholars believe that the craft initially was known as 'Gulkari', 'Gul' meaning flower 'kari' meaning work (flower work). More than an era ago, it came along with the Muslim Persians as they migrated to Lahore, Pakistan. The intriguing and extraordinary style of embroidery came into being somewhere in South-east Punjab. This beautiful needlework was entirely done by women.

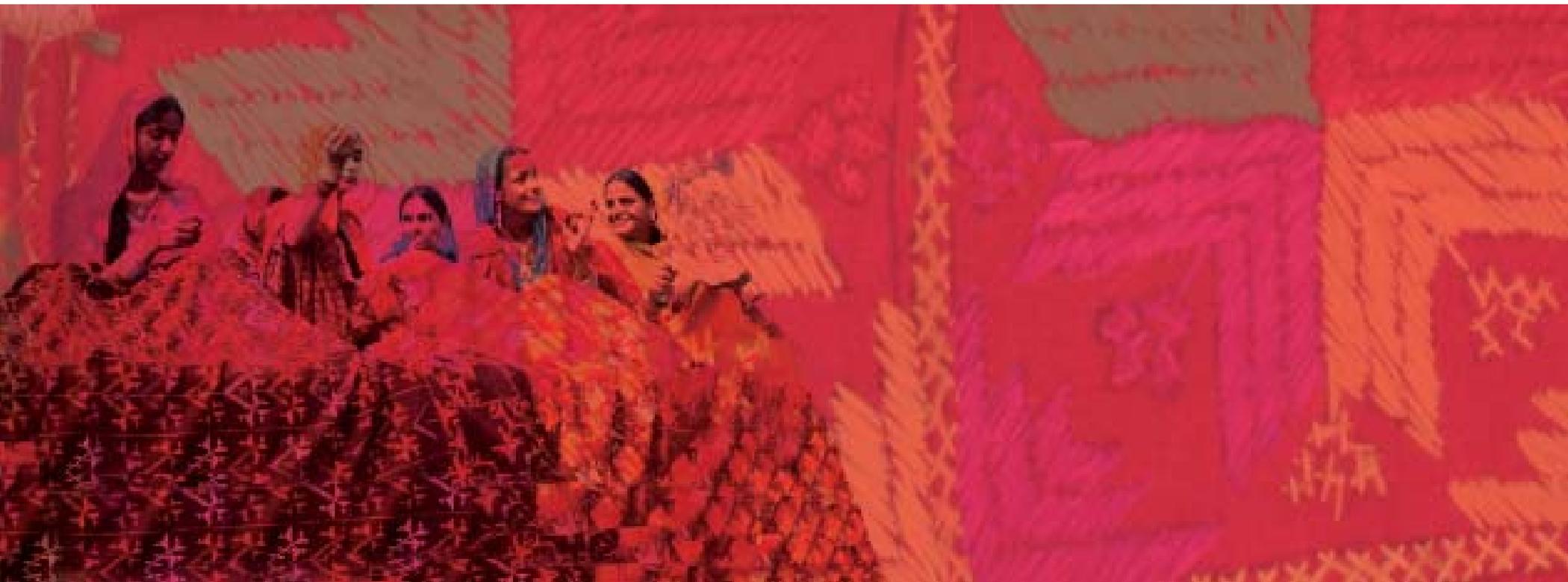


Widespread Silk Route  
Peshawar to Calcutta

### **Migrators carrying the art**

The stories are endless; some say the traditional embroidery was brought to the lands of Punjab through the lands of Persia. The design, in its earliest stage was known to be 'Gulkari'. There's another account that says the Swati's, migrated have been carrying the tradition of the darn stitch particularly with them. The Swati's, basically a Pashtun tribe, was based on and around the Swat valley, associated themselves as the due to their initial settlement at the valley. Swati's in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, a province on the Afghan-Pakistan Border around the 15th century had been forced to move on to different lands due to the attack by the Mughals.

This tribe had moved on to the neighboring lands of Mardan Basin, the Mansehra valley, Hazara and Punjab. These lands have been situated near the silk route and the Grand Trunk Road from Calcutta to Peshawar. The market was apparently a wide spread variety for the tradesmen and travelers. This as a result ended up in having large assortment of colours and good range of textures, along with the flora and fauna. Hence, the life was more settled and promising here in plains.



### **Women Oriented Proficiency**

The women found their way of leading life, as they had begun to be put in close quarters. Singing and sewing, they embroidered and crafted the most beautiful articles staying together indoors. They were made for the everyday use and also the best of pieces were kept securely for the auspicious occasions like the weddings and dowry, which would be used by the girl after marriage for herself. This important work of art was known as 'Phulkari'. The khadi cloth used would be of deep reddish-brown in colour with 50 to 100 grams of silk floss work done with the most contrasting monochromatic colors of maroon, green, yellow, pink, green and golden.

These colors had been widely available due to the good trade networks of Punjab. The trading of the silk thread was mostly from Kashmir, Bengal and the countries like Afghanistan and China. Since, the trade was streaming in the Hindu and Muslim population together sat down to embroider the vibrant, 'Phulkari'.



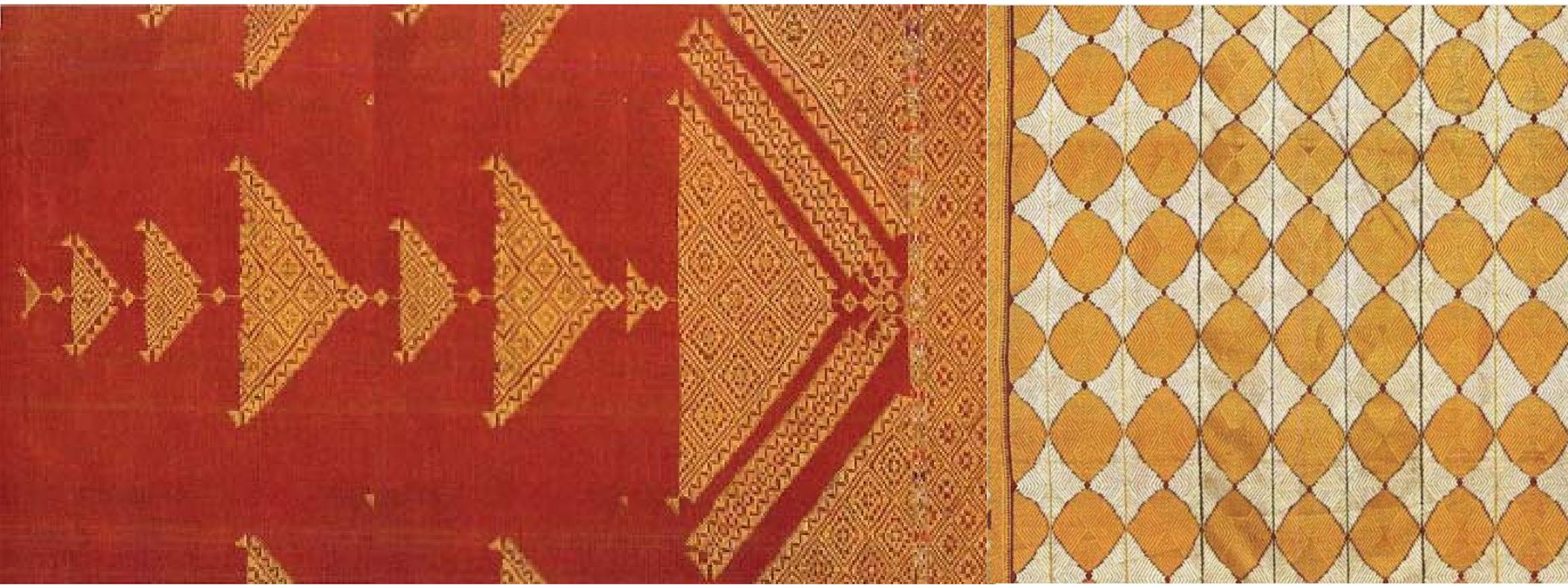
### **Crafting had Begun**

The traditional Phulkari was always woven by the women for their own use. They crafted it either for daily use or for the ceremonial purposes. It clearly meant Phulkari was not for sale use. The intriguing geometrical patterns mostly diamond, triangles and chevron were put in, though it is believed, Hindu's mostly embroidered objects, rituals and narratives. embroidered objects, rituals and narratives. Gradually, Phulkari were not holding upto the domestic use for the rural women, they had begun to get commissioned by large amount of owners. A wide spectrum of social positions were being held by the Punjabi women, in the 19th century, where they stitched, wore, exchanged, purchased, inherited and hoarded Phulkari.

Phulkari embroidered as objects, rituals and narratives. The daily lives of the people with their respective tasks has been well depicted.



Birds are seen picking on the food. The most intriguing part is the train on the right side of the cloth with seperated by, boxes with a person travelling, train coaches along with the wheels and an engine rising a dark smoke cloud.



a.

b.

### Began to Spread along the Aghan & Indian belt

Phulkari, literally a flower work, and Bagh, a garden, have been the most popular ones since their early origin. The densely embroidered remarkable designs grabbed enormous popularity throughout Punjab between 1850 and 1950's. The origin crept in the mist and got lost. Only the thought, that the tradition was brought about by the Jats from somewhere in Central Asia to this Land, still remains. Phulkari's can be found in the Swat valley in the North, through the areas of Hazaras, Rawalpindi, Jhelum, Sialkot and Lahore, modern day Pakistan to Amritsar, Jalandhar, Ludhiana and Patiala, presently Punjab, India along with the neighboring parts of Haryana right up till Delhi.

a. *Thirma* Phulkari, women shawl, North West Punjab, c.1900. One of the two triangular section falls over the head of the blessed bride worn both by Hindu and Sikh women.

b. *Bagh*, West Punjab, Pakistan, c.1900. Gold and Ivory floss silk referred differently to as 'marigold & jasmine' or 'wheat & barley' another as 'silver and gold'.



The wider it had spread; the differences in the designs could be seen. Though it's intriguing how they did have elements in common. The embroidered part continued on the reverse side of the coarse hand spun, hand-woven cotton, Khaddar, which is dyed in madder red. The base of the cloth is also dyed in indigo, black and brown, however the color Red has been the pre-dominant one. It's been initiated that the first fragments of madder dyed cloth was found the Harappan civilization in Punjab. Though the Phulkari's did not seem to survive the references in the earlier 1850's both tangibly and in literature.

Post the British rule over India, its quiet likely the economic growth of the traditional embroideries touched the crests. Peace and prosperity produced the social conditions where the craft flourished. Punjab has been rich in cotton producing; therefore the settlement of weavers grew wider. The weavers wove the hand-spun yarn into cloth from they got from the farmers who provided them, in exchange to the agricultural produce.



### **Art Flourished with the Economic Conditions**

Post the British rule over India, it's quite likely the economic growth of the traditional embroideries touched the crests. Peace and prosperity produced the social conditions where the craft flourished. Punjab has been rich in cotton producing; therefore the settlement of weavers grew wider. The weavers wove the hand-spun yarn into cloth from they got from the farmers who provided them, in exchange to the agricultural produce. The untwisted silk skeins, pat, used as the embroidery thread were now imported from Afghanistan, as spinning had become a household occupation.



### **The Tale has it...**

The exact origin of Phulkari cannot be traced back to the point of precision. One may find references to Phulkari as early as 2000yrs back in Vedas. Due to lack of evidences and documentation, the exact history is not fully known. Waris Shah had been a Punjabi Sufi poet, renowned for his contribution to Punjabi Literature. The art of Phulkari has been mentioned, in one of his most popular folklore of Heer-Ranjha. The Phulkari gained its present form way back in the 15th century in the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the first Maharaja of the Sikh empire. Another legend has it, the earliest articles embroidered had been Chamba Rumal (a handkerchief), by Guru Nanak , a Sikh Guru and which had been similar to the, Shamala (a ceremonial costume). The traditional embroidery evolved in many forms and there was one different design for every occasion. The knowledge of this art was passed on from one generation to the other. The art was embroidered for one's own use and was not for sale purpose. As a matter of fact, Phulkari was considered auspicious and was generously used in wedding trousseau.



### **Phulkari & Bagh**

The work of 'Phulkari' was woven by pure silk threads on a cloth of 'khaddar', which was hand spun and hand woven cotton. A bunch of women would gather and sit together to embroider their own apparels for the daily wear. Other than daily wear, a unique kind of 'Phulkari' was made for special purposes like marriages were known as 'Bagh'. The difference between the two has been mostly the spacing of the design patterns. The motifs are made up of horizontal, vertical and diagonal stitches producing geometric patterns. 'Bagh' designs are woven in close quarters, having an overall geometrically floral pattern whereas the 'Phulkari' patterns are spread out on the cloth. Hence, the cloth is visible in Phulkari.



phulkari

process

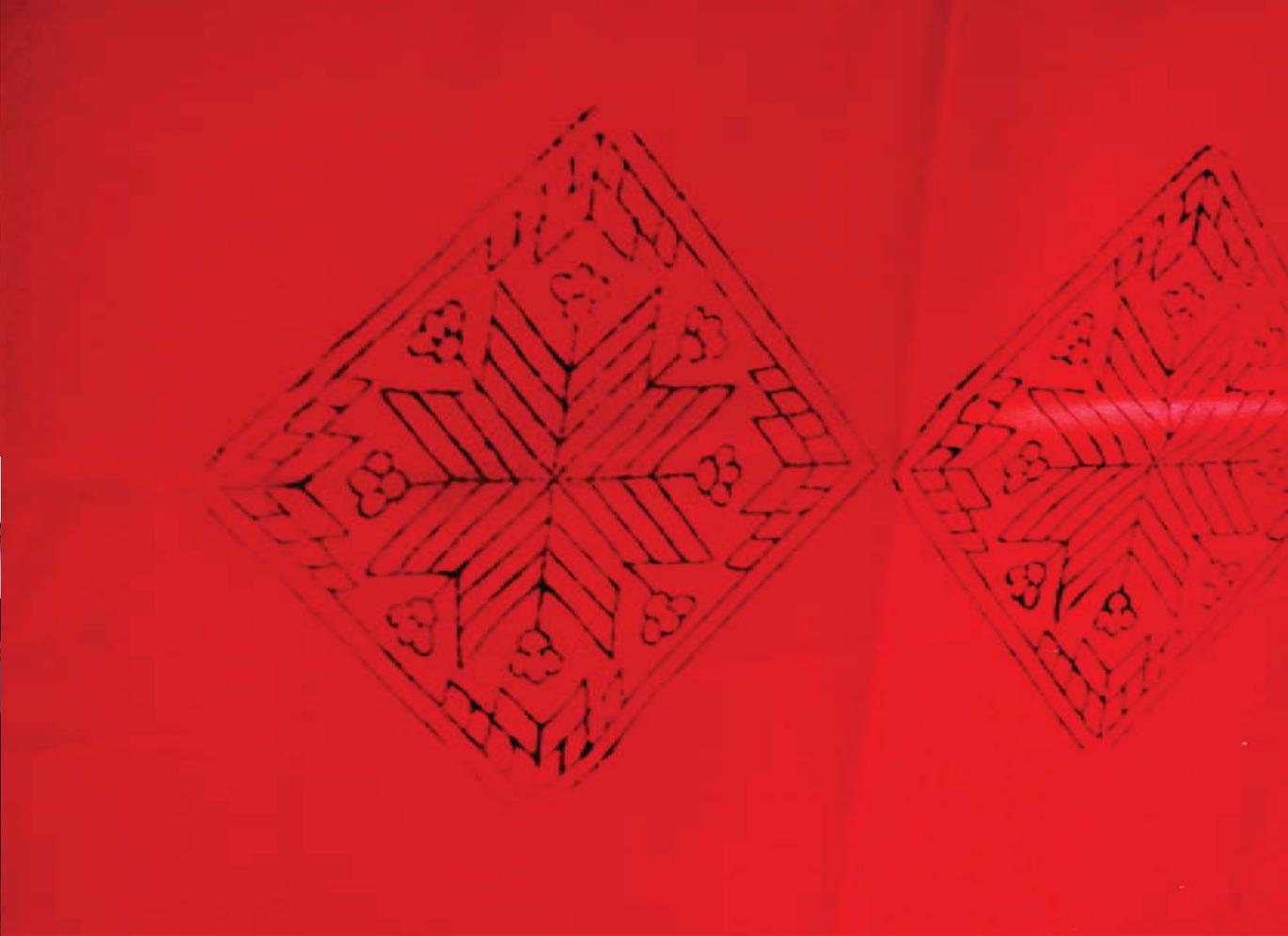


### **My Visit..**

After seeing the innumerable designs of Phulkari, I knew the next step would be to visit the people who were crafting such vivid pieces. A dedicated crafter of Patiala's 'Dhiman House Phulkari, showed us how Phulkari had been making its way to the commercial market streets with shoppers asking for their pick.

As at present times, Phulkari designs are made on the customer's demand. The shopkeepers have saved a huge bulk of pieces of Phulkari. They are ideally mixed and matched to get a desirable amount of design. The design selling the most is sent to the block and dye maker, who carves these designs to the intricate detailed wooden blocks. The wood is made out of the mango tree for the block making. The stencil blocks are sent to the Tracer, who has the indigo colored ink made out of 'Kikar ki gond' mixed with ink and gum, used for putting it on the block through pressing it hard against a oval-ish sack filled with the ink. It is pressed hard so as ink the embossed part of the block and trace it onto the cloth. The traced sheets are further passed onto the embroiderer, to begin with the needle and thread work along the lines. Its further reaches the market flooding the customers with variety of colors and designs.











**Phulkari : The Crest & The Base**

This unique method of the embroidery is worked on the inner side of the cloth and the pattern takes shape on the upper side. The pattern is controlled by the counting of the thread. The needle picks up only one thread at a time as so to make the back of the pattern well defined with single lines of color in extremely fine stitches. In front the stitch ranges from 1/2 to 1/4cms in size.

Phulkari is traditionally done on khadi cloth with simple darning stitches using the hand spun silk floss yarn called the 'pat'. The stitch is done through single darn thread and the simple adept to hands make it one of the most sought after embroidery craft. Shading and variation is often obtained by using horizontal, vertical or diagonal stitches. This variety of Phulkari is hence used for different occasions and purposes.

Though not all the Phulkaris' go through the same process. In its initial years, the Phulkari's were directly embroidered on the cloth without any traces. Ahead are some examples of this method where patterns are directly made on cloth. Clearly, the experts handle this department.





phulkari

ਯਾਦਨ

ਦ ਪਏਰੀਏ

RAJESH TANEJA

98888-97301, 0175-2355700, 0175-2359300

# Corner Phulkari & Dupatta House



A House of Phulkari Shop



GOAL GAPPA CHOWK, TRIPURI PATIALA



### **Work Of Honor**

My further visit was at Mrs. Darshana and Mr. Rajesh Taneja's 'Phulkari Corner & Dupatta House', in the interiors of Patiala. Their insights and fascinating chronicles were a lot more than just Phulkari. I knew the helpers as shopkeepers were yet again ready to sit back and listen to the old story that Mr. and Mrs. Taneja had offered to share with me. It dated back at the time of India-Pakistan partition when the division had brought about an appalling chaos in both the countries. Thousands of people left their respective lands to find hope at the other one. This is how Mr. Rajesh's parents came down to Punjab. His mother knew she was to stay back on this very land. At her initial years it seemed impossible to earn a living, she had come all the way to India, selling off everything she had. She was not left even a single rupee. The only friend she had was her sewing machine beside her and her knack of embroidery. It took years to turn the little workshop to a dual story shop at present. They had the most remarkable pieces of Phulkari and little did I know, each had a specific name and embroidery that meant for special occasions.

Rajesh Taneja



Mrs. Darshana told me how important Phulkari has been to the Land of Punjab. Every year a heavy number of Punjabi's leave Punjab to places like Canada, England, New Zealand, Australia and more. They make sure to carry a part of Punjab with them, Phulkaris. Subsequently, the history has it the Phulkaris for every occasion was designed differently. The colors were too decided beforehand. So the Tanejas had made sure to keep every possible variety with the hint of present times and the designs of earlier days, blending to make up a perfect looking vivid Phulkari.

Darshana Taneja



### **Bringing people together & Joining the forces**

Soon enough I was introduced to Sonia Sharanjeet Kaur, who had been a devoted helper and care taker of the shop. She had yet another tale to offer that meant a lot to the people I was with. Apparently, few years back Phulkari had been anyways been diminishing from rest of the cities in Punjab, leave alone Patiala. They knew they had to save the art somehow, as the people had begun to give up on saving this evergreen blooming Phulkari. All that Mr. & Mrs. Taneja had were the few helpers and very little skill left. So they had decided they would try and try up till the time they had people to help them save the art and take it forward with time. They weren't getting enough funds from the government, but they tried and tried to set up a little school of Phulkari where not only women but even men would be part of it. The government was not ready yet up till the time they had enough people with them. After a lot of hard work the duo had succeeded in collecting around ninety people. The work today is somewhat outsourced locally to the residents around. The skill is taught to the willing ones who would devote themselves completely to Phulkari and provided with the raw materials. Ms. Sharanjeet, a teacher, caretaker and an incharge makes sure the raw material reaches the people on time. her mornings are spent in the shop and around afternoon she begins her classes at the pind, village to get more and more people. The only worry she shared was "people are no longer willing to come forward and learn. All they think of his better ways of earning a living or work with their computer box". Well, I could see in other shops how computerized designs had turned up and the patterns had been set in to make the machine work Phulkari.

The only way to reward and encourage people has been to not only pay their respective wages but also honor them with a certificate designed by the Phulkari house of Taneja's. The people feel more attached to the art now. I could tell as I saw some came in and went out of the shops running round with lot of work, but made sure I got to know about each design in detail.

Sonia Sharanjeet Kaur

**DARSHANA WOMEN CO-OP. PHULKARI & DASTKARI SABHA LTD.**



*Certificate*

*This Certificate is awarded to Mr/Mrs .....*  
*for having attended ..... days/weeks/months course in the field*  
*of .....*

*Dated :*

*Place :*

# 862, Golgappa Chowk, Tripuri Town, Patiala. Ph. 2359300



### **The Stitch in Time brought more Dimes**

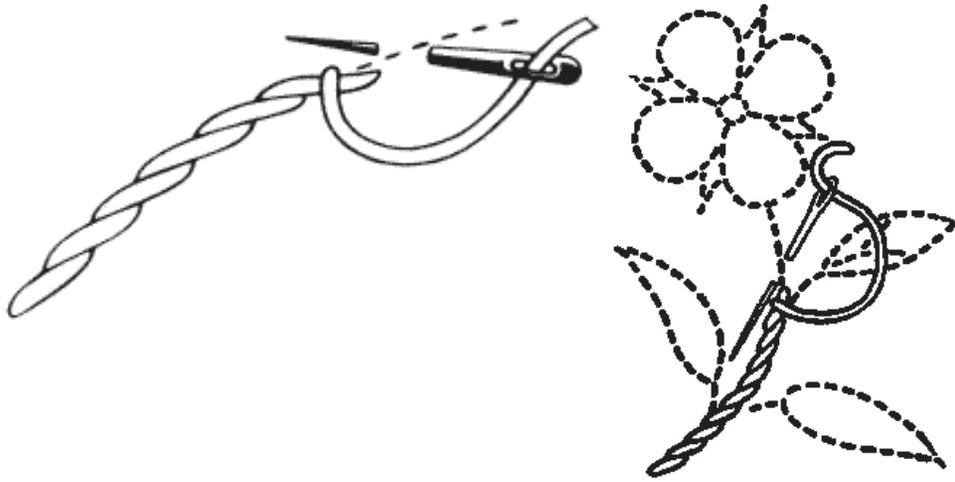
Ms. Sharanjeet had now begun explaining me what and how the Designs of Phulkari were being crafted. The silk for the embroidery was brought from Afghanistan and China most of the time. The dealers who sold it were selling it by weight. Silk had been quite costly for the weavers. The women of Punjab seem to have no choice but to use the silk threads embellishing maximum part of the patterns they made. That is how we see a neat and minimum threads used at the reverse side of the Phulkari cloth.

Bagh designs are in an area that divides it into twelve squares by this fine line, the squares themselves being covered with stitches going in different directions. As it is done on a thick material the embroiderer can work without a frame. The quality of the cloth piece could be measured according to the width of the stitch. Narrower the stitch, the finest is the art.

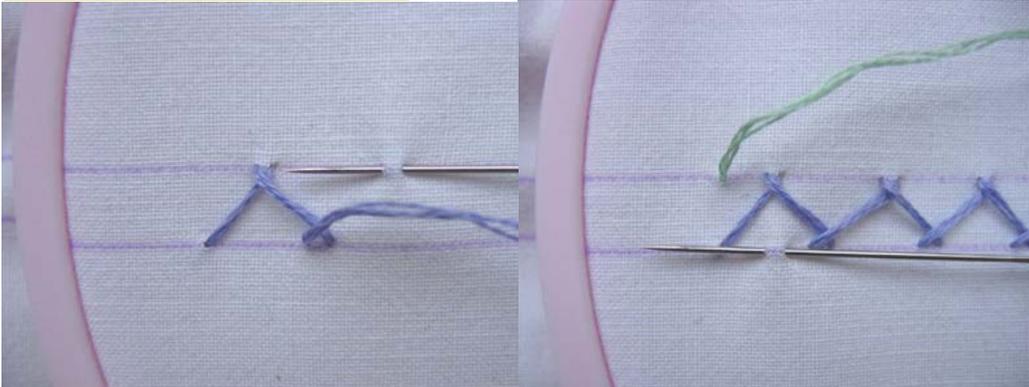
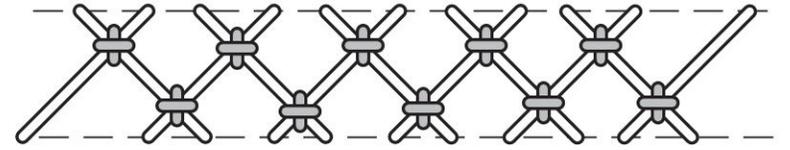
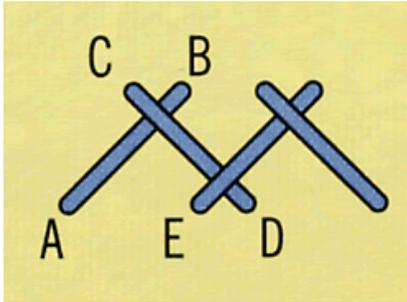
The stitches used in this traditional embroidery are:-

darn , dandi (stem) , herringbone , satin , straight , back , running , blanket , split , cross , chain , lazy daisy , whole , fish , French (Bullion), as we further see, form up Phulkari bringing multiplicity in the designs & patterns.

Stitches Types



Dandi Stem Stitch



Herringbone Stitch

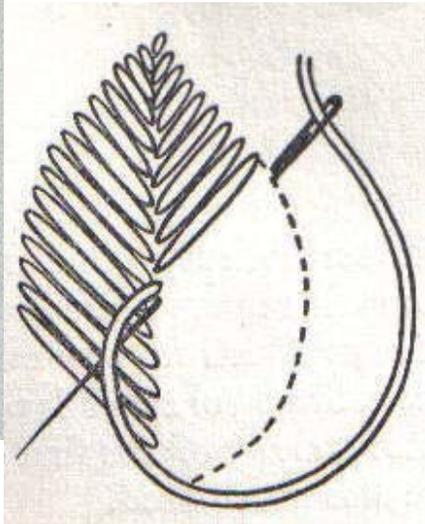
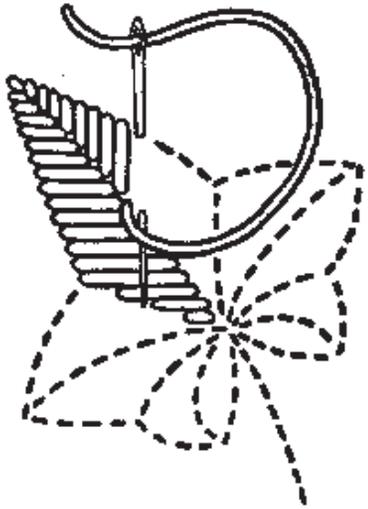
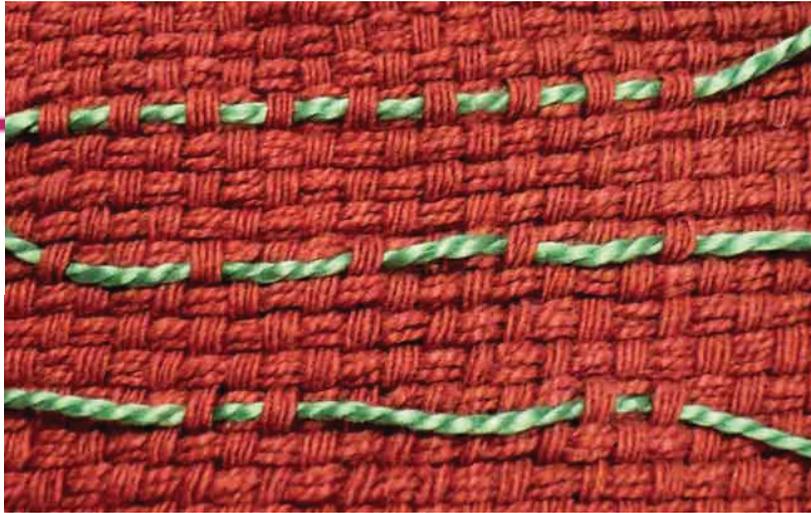
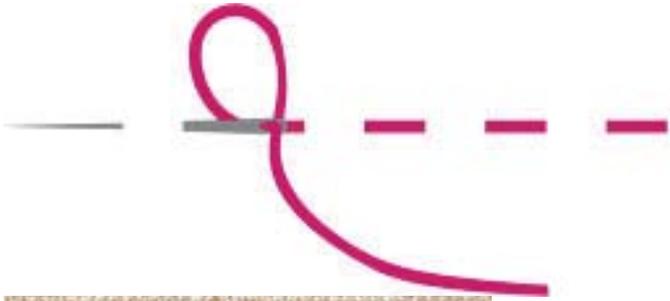


Image from Carina's Craft Blog

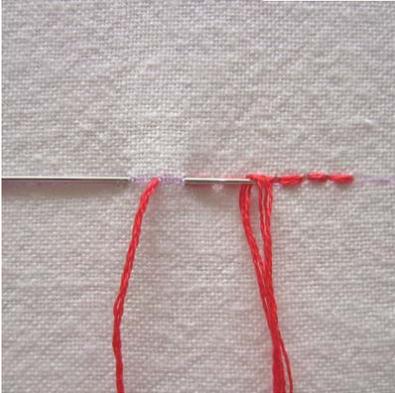
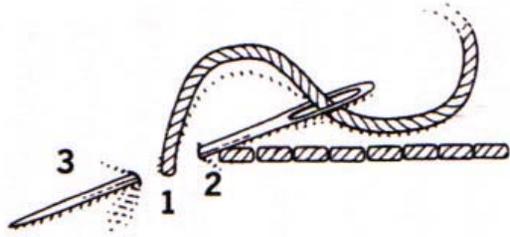


needlethread.com

Satin Stitch



Straight Stitch



Back Stitch Single Threaded

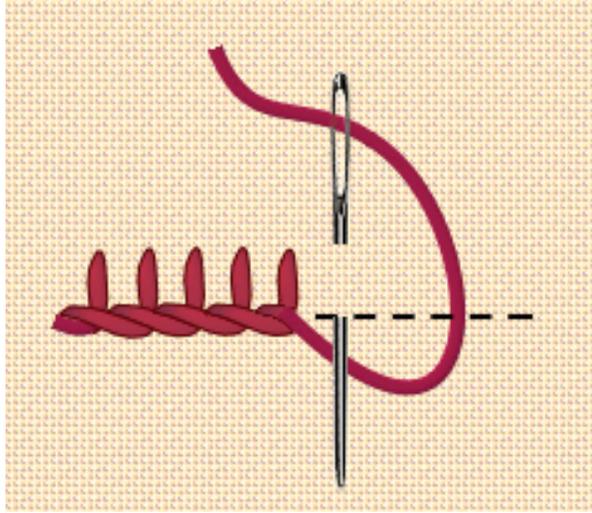
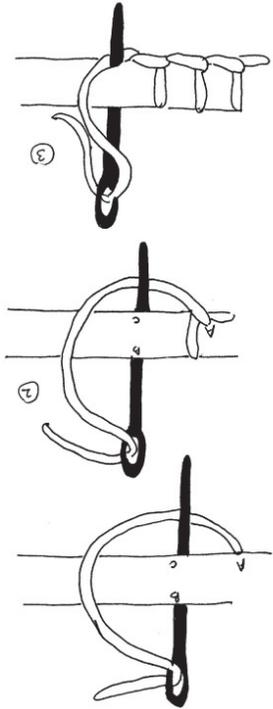


Back Stitch Double Threaded

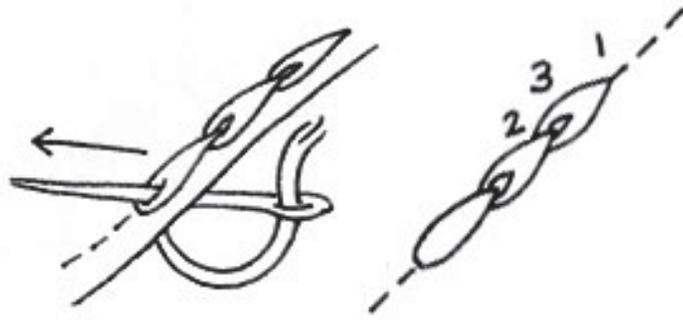
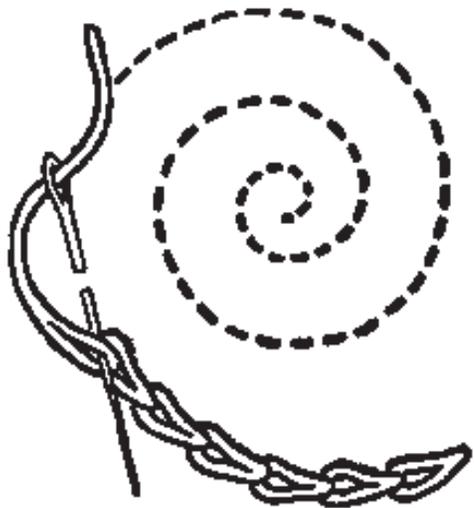


Back Stitch

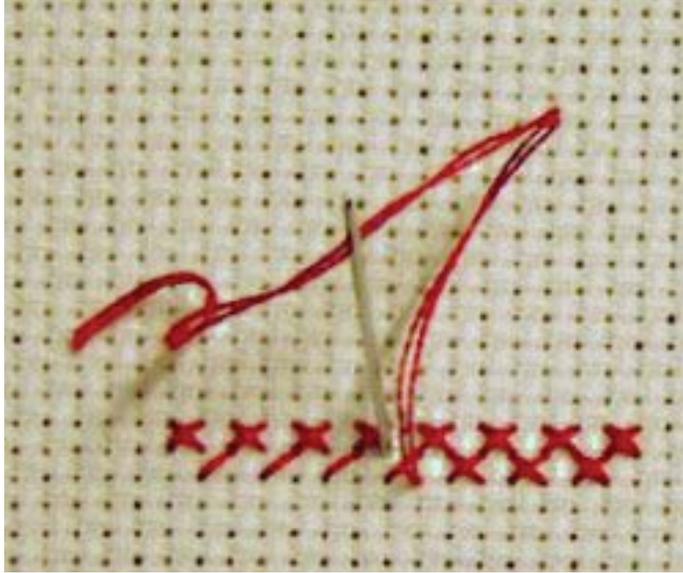
Back Stitch



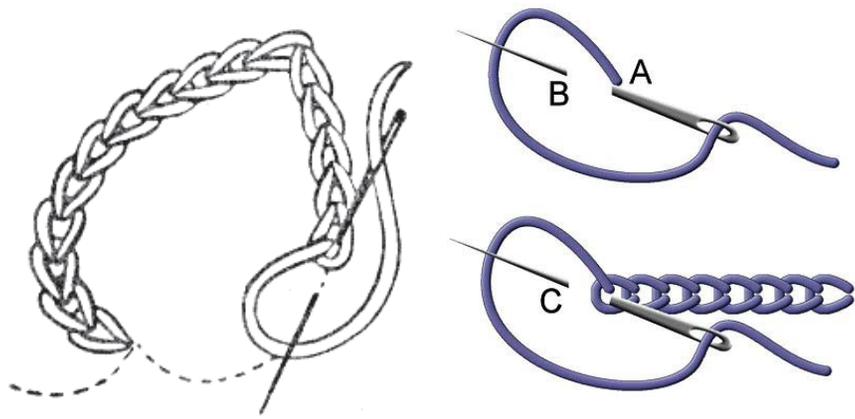
Blanket Stitch



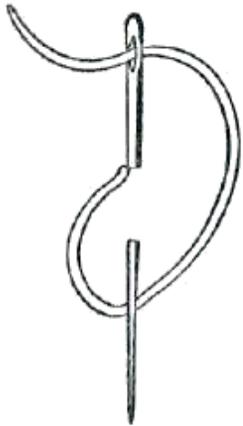
Split Stitch



Cross Stitch



Chain Stitch



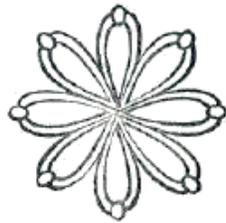
Step 1



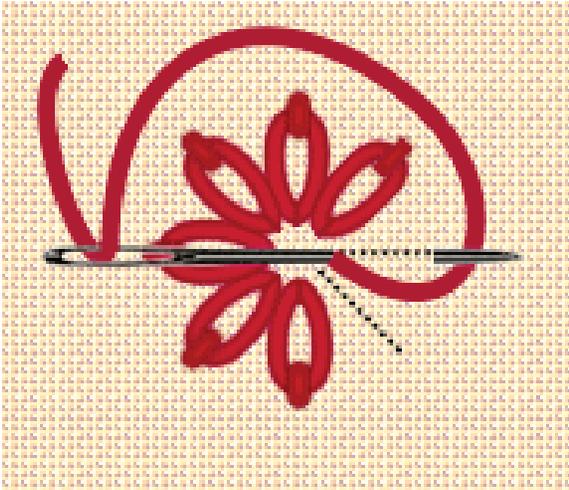
Step 2



Design 1



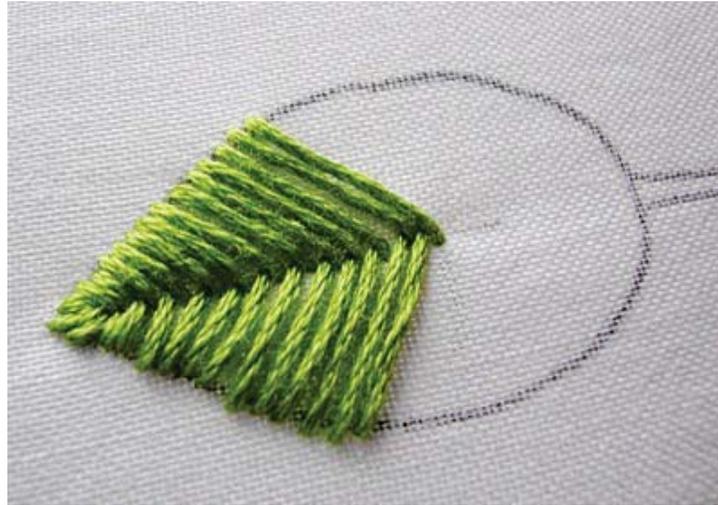
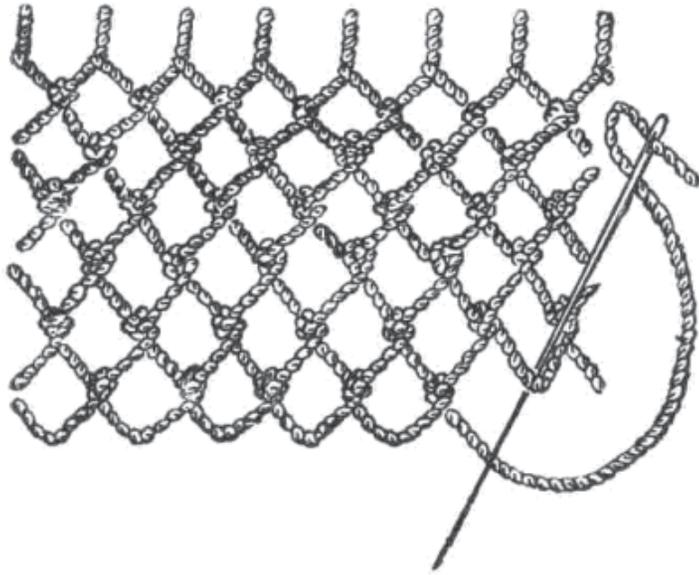
Design 2



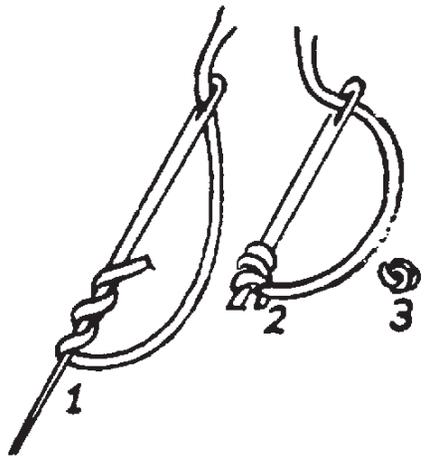
Lazy Daisy Stitch



Whole Stitch



Fish Stitch



French (Bullion) Stitch



phulkari talk



### **A brief conversation with Ms.Kaur:**

#### **Initially I thought that Phulkari is a part of Bagh.**

**Ms.Kaur:** “So I now you know more about the important variation and symbolizations more than the people of Patiala do. The Phulkari has the spaces between the geometrical patches, whereas the Bagh, as the name says is the Garden, it pours down the design leaving no space for the cloth to be visible”.

#### **The cloth in earlier times had only been Khaddar, what more materials have been added to the present day?**

**Ms.Kaur:** Other than cotton, we use crepe, semi-crepe, Khadi is kept for winters, pashmina. Glazed cotton is mostly used for making bed sheets today.

#### **Is it true the original phulkari work has disappeared post India-Pakistan partition?**

**Ms.Kaur:** “It went smooth for quiet long, as far as my grandmother told me, it started to die out post late 18th century around 19th century. Its then they started to commercialize due to famines and hardships. At the beginning of the 20th century the art began to die out. Though fresh attempts are being made, so we can say I am very much part of it... I and the Pind walaas(villagers) are not going to give up(smiles)..I know they are willing and so am I”.

#### **How does the demand supply work?**

**Ms.Kaur:** “It’s sort of funny; the demand has increased as today Patiala is the only district with some serious Phulkari work being crafted day and night. We try to meet the demands of our customers, during the Indian wedding months of October, November, December and January the sales reach the summit. We fall short of kaarigars(embroiders). As today everyone wants to work on computer, earn from whatever they do on it. It’s sad how machine work Phulkari has entered the scene, it doesn’t amuse me, but do we have any other choice? We still are doing what we can. We spread in to groups and go door to door with the traced designs on the cloth and handover to the women who are ‘seriously’ willing to do it. That ways the work gets divided and it finishes quickly”.



**The seasonal colors must be really interesting and difficult to choose along with the embroidered pattern colors at the same time...**

**Ms.Kaur:** “We know our people well, as there are still some who relish the old recipe of colors; khadi in red, mustard, dark mehendi & browns. Apart from these summers we keep it light with pastels of greens, oranges, light mustard, rust for evenings, pinks, skins and white. Winters; Maroon, red, dark magenta, Dark purple, navy blues”.

**I was told the designs vary from caste to caste. The pattern and base cloth changes.**

**Ms.Kaur:** It might have existed during my grandmother’s time but not today.

**Which designs sell the most? How do your customers keep coming?**

**Ms.Kaur:** “We mostly keep the evergreens; wheat/barley, peacocks, blocks, Paratha, Kanchan, Sindhi. Besides, the design keeps changing according to the demand”.

**How many villages at present area part of this program?**

**Ms.Kaur:** “Seona, Rongla, Sidhuwal, Rajpura, Ghanaur, Bakshiwala, Lang, districts have been of great help. Women and young girls learn very fast. Some boys have too turned in but most leave and always busy playing around or lose interest, useless they are...It would be easier if they helped, what makes them think its a woman’s task, even men wear Phulkari vests over their Kurtaa & pathans.”

**You mentioned the interesting names of; Paratha ,kanchan & sindhii work, what work of art is it?**

**Ms.Kaur:** “I don’t really remember when this started, but it so happened that many weavers migrated from all around the country to Punjab, to learn Phulkari. Their contribution had brought about revolution in this field. These embroiderers had been non-punjabi, so the design they mastered was named after them in their honor”.

We see ahead the examples of these weavers that left behind in their name and mastery ,the designs that continue to be adorned by people; ‘the weaver’s choice’.With the help of Ms.Kaur, I got to see these appealing designs.



JANUARY 2009

12 <sup>012-353</sup> Monday *Sindhi designs also include sheesha work in them.*  SINDHI

*Red ones*

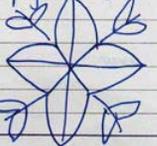
 PHULKARI

 BAIRIK JAAL

 PROTIHAR

13 <sup>013-352</sup> Tuesday *Chokra designs mostly have four blobs in them. The workers/ladies embroider the patterns without any help/use of the tracing/stamping.*  KANCHAN

 CHOKKHA

 NABA JAAL

| January |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|---------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| M       | T  | W  | T  | F  | S  | S  |
|         |    |    | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  |
| 5       | 6  | 7  | 8  | 9  | 10 | 11 |
| 12      | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 |
| 19      | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 |
| 26      | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |    |

2009 JANUARY

<sup>014-351</sup> 14 Wednesday *BAGH JAAL* 

*(Sahn)*  RETA JAAL

<sup>015-350</sup> 15 Thursday *FRENCH NOT* 

*(Billion)*  CHAIN STITCH

| February |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| M        | T  | W  | T  | F  | S  | S  |
|          |    |    |    |    |    | 1  |
| 2        | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  |
| 9        | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| 16       | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |
| 23       | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 |    |



Baagh Jaal



Chaukkhra



Baarik Jaal



Kanchan



Baagh Jaal



Paronthaa



the world of  
phulkari

A Chope Phulkari on beige Khaddar cloth, before getting dyed.



### Phulkari Family & it's Kinds

The other kinds of Phulkari , 'Chope' and 'Suber', had been and still are designed for marriage ceremonies. It is believed that as a girl completes a Phulkari she reaches an important step of her life of becoming a girl to a woman. Hence, during her marriage the traditional embroidery of 'Chope' and 'Suber' Phulkari are presented to her by her maternal relations.

Phulkari for different occasions: Chope, Vari-da-Bagh , Darshan Dwar , Bhawan, Surajmukhi, Kaudi Bagh, Pachranga Bagh, Meanakari Bahg, Suber , Chamba , Saloo , Thirma, Sainchi , Til-Patra and Nilak.



Chope Phulkari on red Khaddar cloth, after the piece got dyed.

### Chope

Phulkari is embroidered on the borders and edges of this red colored cloth of 'Chope' and is presented to a bride by her grandmother. The bride's maternal grandmother gifted Chope embroidery as soon as her granddaughter was born. The Holbein stitch was used instead of the darning stitch which has the specification of creating same designs on both sides of the cloth. One interpretation was that the grandmother wished her granddaughter to be happy in all her lives, be it today and afterlife, which showed two sides of existence.

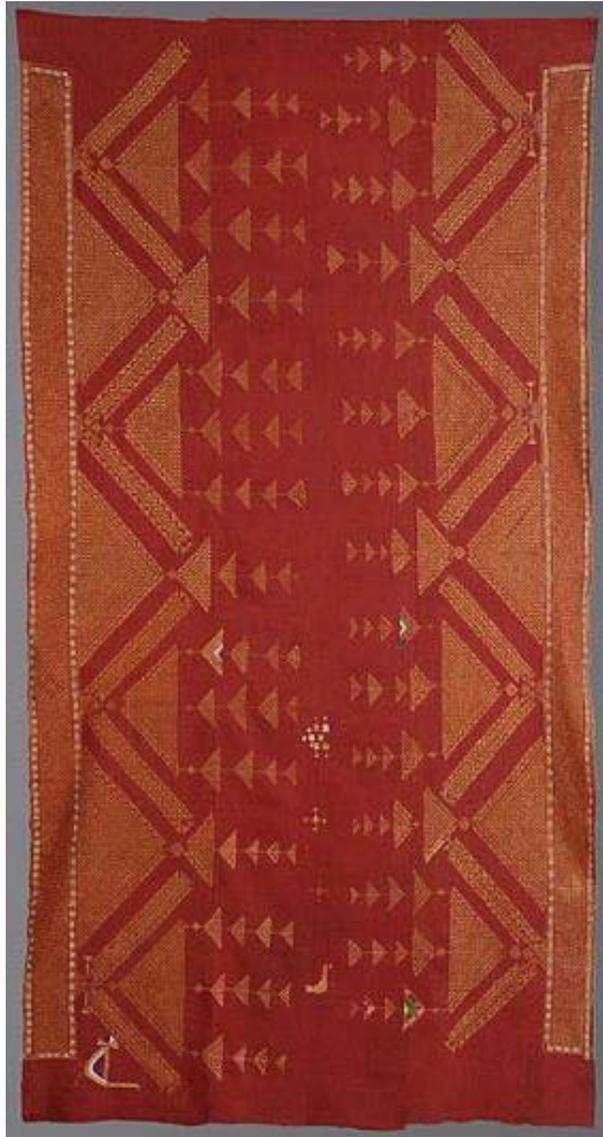
Chope was wrapped around the bride after she took the ritual bath before the wedding ceremony, as Chope had its towering importance of being much bigger than that of Phulkari. Red khaddar, symbolized the happiness and passion, for its practical reason that Chope was never bordered so as to have unlimited blissfulness in life. Pat denoted the desires and wealth. The big triangular patterns are seen symmetrically distributed on the two sides of the chope's longitudinal axis. As yet another account has it that they possibly symbolized male and female principles separated by a distance of expressing the physical intimacy and the fact that the wedding night had yet to be taken place between the bride and groom. On another hand these triangles could also represent stylized peacocks. As well as in other phulkari, some mistakes were voluntarily introduced into the embroidery work in order to protect the bride from the evil eye ("nazar"). Indeed a perfect piece could have attracted jealousy of others.



Chope Phulkari



Bride enters the Wedding venue with her brothers holding on to a Phulkari chaddar above her as a blessing.



Similar Patterns form a distance between them symbolizing the Male and Female principles separated by a distance of expressing the physical intimacy and the fact that the wedding night had yet to be taken place between the bride and groom.



A *haldi* (turmeric) paste being put on the to be bride , under the Chope Phulkari , before being given the ritual bath.



Vari-Da-Bagh of West Punjab



### Vari-da-bagh

A red colored cloth having embroidery in small patterns in yellow all over signifying the fertility and cheerfulness.

“Vari”: gift offered to the bride by her in-laws

This bagh is gifted to the bride on her wedding by her in-laws to welcome her when she enters her new home at her in-laws place for the first time house. The exceptional fact is that as all the other phulkaris had been a part of her dowry, provided by her own family.

Vari-da-bagh work of art is always made on an orange-reddish khaddar and, except for its border. Occasionally a small decoration is always embroidered on its entire surface with a single golden or orange coloured pat. This bagh's main pattern is a group of three or four small concentric lozenges of a growing size included in each other. Regardless of only one colour of pat is used, these lozenges are easily revealed by the reflections of light. The outer one symbolizes the Earth, the next is the city and the third one is the ancestral house. It happens that this last lozenge is split into four smaller ones probably symbolizing the parents of the groom and the newly married couple.

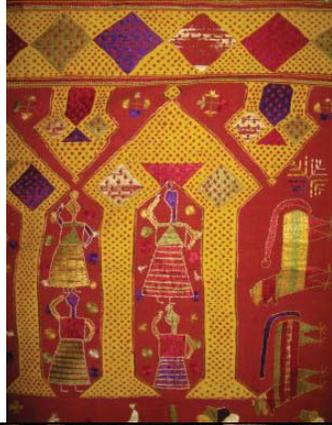
The bride was wrapped in this bagh by her mother in law while she receives the keys of her new home, thereby the bride is now to become responsible for the safeguarding of the house.



Vari-Da-Bagh Phulkari

### Ghunghat Bagh

It is also known as Sari-Pallau, essentially used to cover the head as a symbol of respect for elders. The embroidery is done on the small borders in four sides. Adding on to the vividness a large triangular motif is embroidered at the center of each side.

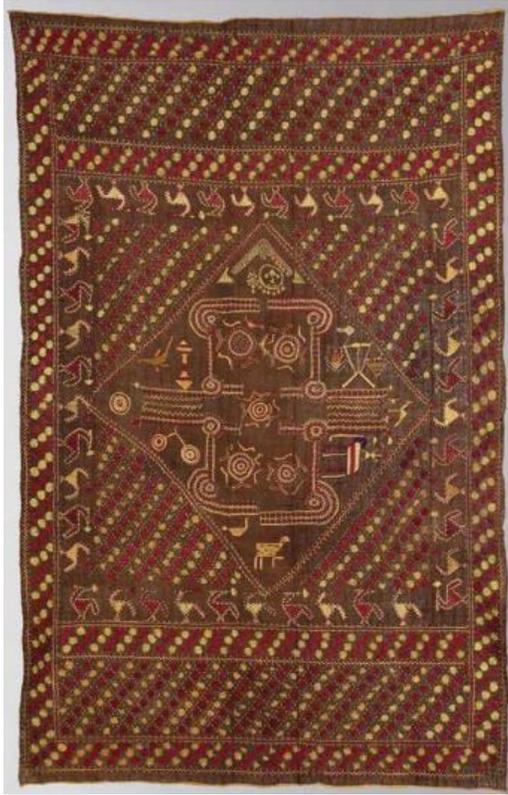


### Darshan Dwar

Darshan Dwar apparently is a gate of any Indian religious place of worship that offers a clear view to the deity. The embroidery made on the fabric is for the presentation purpose at the temples or adorn the walls at home when the holy book of Sikhs, the Guru Granth Sahib, is brought inside a house. It follows the theme of a decorative gate.

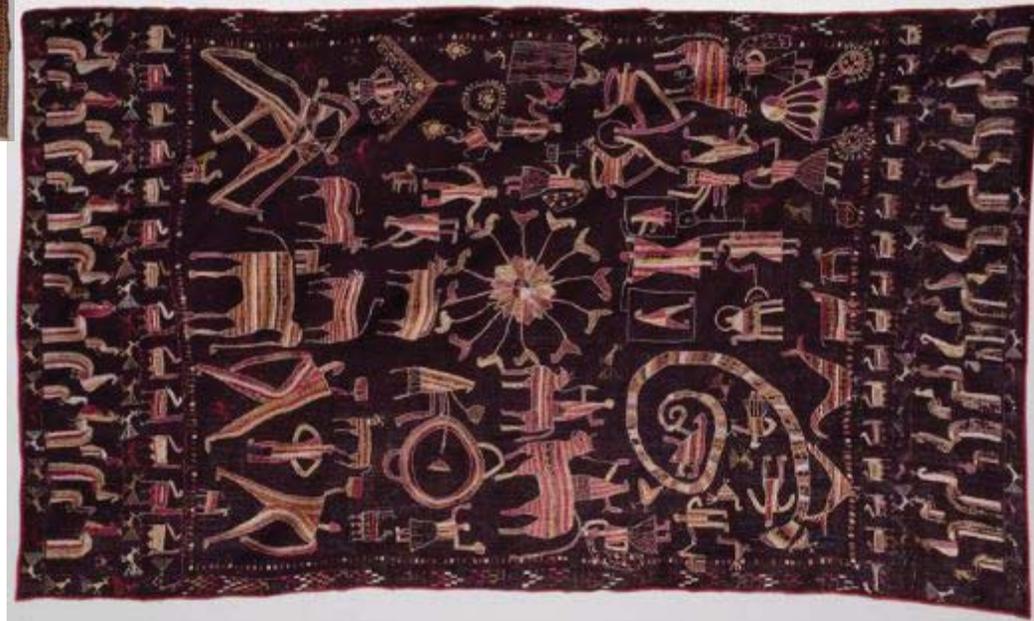
Darshan Dwar, that can be translated as “the gate through which God can be seen”, in Hindu Religion. Unlike other phulkari, this particular one was not made for people’s use, but primarily for the temples as an offering to express gratitude to the Gods after one’s wish had been fulfilled. As for dowry, it contained dozens of phulkari, though Darshan Dwar has been made in little quantities. Like other figurative pieces (e.g. Sainchi phulkari, next) phulkari was made in east Punjab, a mostly non-Islamic area which depicted the development of a broad variety of human and animal representations.

Darshan Dwar, East Punjab, early 20th century, floss silk on indigo dying cloth. As the name denotes the gate from which, one could gain a view of the divine. The gates to the Gurdwara or temple are clearly shown on either side. The pieces are dedicated to the temple on fulfillment of a wish.



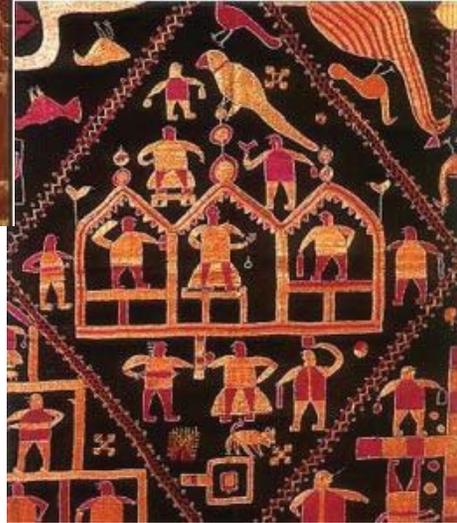
### **Sainchi Phulkari**

Sainchi phulkari are mostly figurative pieces narrating the life in the villages of south east Punjab. Local animals like goats, cows, elephants, big cats, scorpions, peacocks, etc are represented moving in and around the humans as wrestlers, farmers, weavers, etc. Train is also often displayed on sainchi phulkari, this means of transportation, which was brought to India by the British, in the second half of the 19th century, making an impact on the Indian locals. Beyond their aesthetic value, Sainchi Phulkari can be compared to our present day media as they too have been portraying the ways of life, interests and environment like that of the bygone times of the rural people of Punjab. These required high embroidery skills and were produced only in the districts of Firozpur and Bhatinda. The collectors were appreciated and occupied an exclusive position among the different varieties of phulkari.





Suber Phulkari



### Suber

This Phulkari is worn by the bride during the marriage ceremonial rites. There are five motifs crafted, one at the center and four at the corners. It is heavily decorated and comprises of delicate designs.



Chamba Phulkari

### Chamba

Is a fusion work of Phulkari and is characterized by an intricate design of wavy, stylized leaves and flowers. It may also contain designs inspired from day to day life and the fauna of chilies, peacocks, diamonds, sunflowers, etc. As one can see in the picture at left, Chamba *rumaal*, a handkerchief, named as the Das Avatar, c.19th century A.D

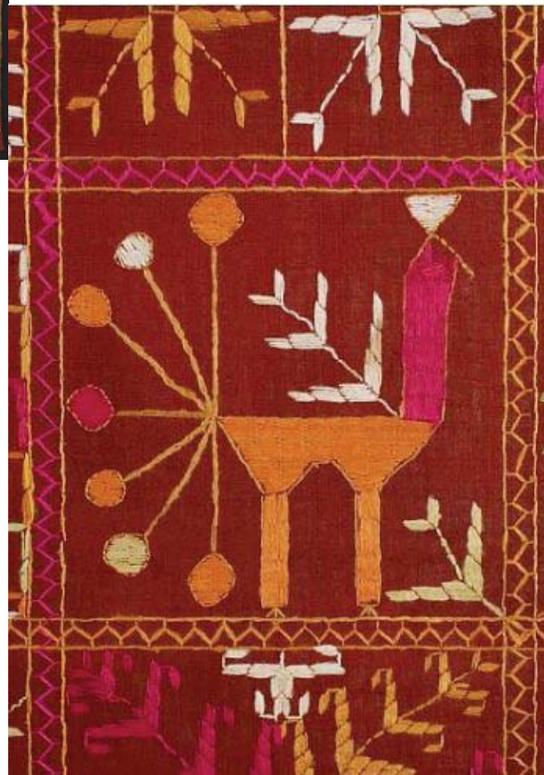


### **Saloo**

Salu or Saloo Phulkari depicts the rural life where, motifs are traced before embroidering. The various activities of rural life are depicted such as household chores of housewives and agricultural process, smoking hukka , guests having sharbat, wrestlers practicing wrestling , pounding , churning , grinding , spinning , weaving and so on. The embroidery is known as the Sainchi Phulkari. The red and black khaddar cloth, wore as a veil or wraparound for daily wear is the Salu.

### **Til Patra**

The embroidery is done on inferior quality cotton and is sparsely dotted along like sesame seeds. The sesame seeds were meant for customary presentation to the attendants and domestic servants on auspicious and festive occasions.



### **Nilak**

A black and a navy blue shawl with crimson and yellow embroidery wore for casual use.

### **Baawan Bagh**

“Baawan” means “fifty-two “ in Hindi & Punjabi languages. It refers to the mosaic of fifty-two different patterns which adorns the piece with 52 numbers of patterns or more. Baawan bagh Phulkari was in fact a display of samples used by professional embroiderers to show their skills and design patterns they could offer to their clients. This clearly clarifies why Bawan is the rarest of all the bagh and phulkari

Baawan Bagh Phulkari



Thirma Phulkari

### Thirma

Thirma phulkari from the North Punjab was shared by Hindu and Sikh traditions and appreciated too by the collectors is well-known by its white khaddar called Thirma, a symbol of purity. It was worn by elder women and widows but, at times, this choice of white coloured khaddar was also made for esthetical reasons. The pat was generally chosen in a range of bright pink to deep red tones. Cluster stitched flowers, wide triangles covering the forehead as well as chevron darning stitch surfaces were very common thirma patterns. This Phulkari has completely wiped out at present.



Surajmukhi Phulkari



### Surajmukhi

Surajmukhi, the sunflower, refers to the main pattern of this phulkari. From a technical point of view this phulkari is unique as it is the only one that mixes in equivalent proportions with the Holbein stitch (used for making chope phulkari) and the regular darning stitch.



A Punjabi Woman wearing a dress ornamented with the cowries  
The Kaudi Bagh in magenta is from the East of Punjab.

### **Kaudi Bagh**

Among their patterns, these bagh include chains of small white squares representing stylized cowries (sea animal having a bright colored shell). They were once used as currency in the ancient times; the shells have now lost all of their value and are being made into ornaments as a sign of modesty. These shells form a shape of the female symbolizing fertility. Kaudi phulkari were often worn by women wanting to become pregnant and further increasing the family.



### **Panchranga Bagh**

Meaning “Five colours”, this bagh is decorated with chevrons of five different colours, similar to the pieces of satranga (“Seven colours”) Bagh.

### **Meenakari Bagh (or “Ikka Bagh”)**

Bagh, often made of gold and white coloured pat, decorated with small multicolored lozenges referring to enamel work (meenakari) or to “diamond” playing cards’.



**Meenakari Bagh (or “Ikka Bagh”)**

Bagh, often made of gold and white coloured pat, decorated with small multicolored lozenges referring to enamel work (meenakari) or to “diamond” playing cards’.



**Me on Phulkari... ?**

**My Favorite has to be the Parontha Pattern , Parontha ( an edible Indian daily bread).I think the marvelous work of Phulkari speaks distinctly for itself. It's not as if the Phulkaris are meant for celebration nevertheless the celebration is made for Phulkari. The beginnings of the art, countless tales of wisdom, celebrations, day to day lives, a new beginning of a life, the love articulated, the merriment, the sacredness is what Phulkari embraces with it. It has bystanded every era of revolution. Even today if I see the machine work of Phulkari, I could tell it doesn't have the sensation of proximity and familiarity. The weavers put down their story of life, with every geometric Phulkari pattern matching the rest. Though only one of the patterns, that go unnoticeable, is the imperfect one done intentionally so we know that the Phulkari is not just showing our happiness or optimism the moment we are wearing it but saves us from the evil eyes of the mysterious strangers.**

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