



Full Length Research Article

RESURGENCE - THE BOUNDLESS KALAKRITI OF PUNJAB

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ABSTRACT

India has a strong history of crafts and traditions. These craft traditions especially in the Indian Textile sector led to India being one of the top most countries when it came to textile exports even before the British Raj, and probably leading to it. Due to modernisation and mechanization a lot of crafts were slowly beginning to get lost in history, but the love of craft, design and tradition helped the revival of Indian Craft Industry. Design intervention in terms of latest trends, technical knowhow and contemporary fashion needs have helped the crafts and craftsmen gain a foothold in the Indian Fashion Industry. This paper is a study of the rebirth of these dying crafts as pillars of Indian Haute- Couture. The handicraft industry of Punjab is one of the most flourishing and lucrative industry of the state. Punjab has a rich tradition of arts and crafts. The richness of the land is reflected in its handicraft. The people of Punjab lay much importance on their artistry and the minute details of their work. You get to see their skill in the footwear, daily dresses, dupattas, walls, furniture, carpets and rugs and almost every other thing and article. The artistic creations of Punjab are acclaimed all over the world. The skilled and dexterous artisans of the state produce a variety of handicrafts and even the rural women have a major contribution in the production of these fascinating art works. This article contributes to the study of revival of these handicrafts and traditional textiles of Punjab.

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INTRODUCTION

Punjab, located in the north west of India, is one of the smallest and the most prosperous states of India. The five rivers Sutlej, Beas, Ravi, Chenab and Jhelum gave it its name 'punj-ab' or the 'land of five waters'. These five rivers divide the state into three regions: Majha, Doaba and Malwa. Punjab is certainly a primarily agricultural state and enjoys the natural benefits of fertile soils and abundant waters. As a civilization, it is one of the most ancient in the world with a distinguished culture. Enriched with a distinct blend of rural and urban flavors, Punjab has a lot to offer to a tourist eye. The culture of Punjab has its own unique fragrance. It is unmatched. The scent of this fertile land is such in which the warmth of you-are-my-own is inborn. All communities hold pride in their traditions and the Punjabis whose open-mindedness has become proverbial also hold their unique tradition of hospitality high in their estimation as well as in their values of life.

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MATERIALS AND METHODS

The topic was approached at various levels:

- A detailed study of Handicrafts and traditional textile of Punjab was undertaken.
- Various steps taken by the government to promote the handicrafts and textile of Punjab and its revival was studied

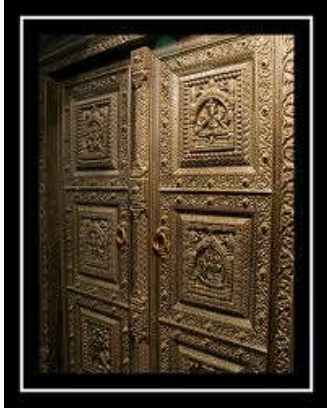
A Study of Handicrafts of Punjab

WOOD WORK

Punjab is well known for its artistic woodwork. Punjabi carpenters are highly skilled in making strong, durable and at the same time, visually attractive furniture. Their specialty lies in making a creative bed that has the back fitted with mirrors and has beautifully carved, colorful legs called pawas. The carpenters of Punjab are also apt in making the comfortable low seats called Peeras and Peerians. This piece of furniture are made in almost every village of Punjab.



The carpenters are also famous for making the decorative boxes, pidhis and toys. The decorative pieces of Woods Works are generally given the finish of laquer. The Woods Works are often engraved to give an attractive look and majestic finish. Works of inlay ivory have been also popular with the craftsmen of Punjab. The carpenters of Batala, Amritsar and Hoshiarpur are highly acclaimed for their artistic skills. The carpenters use floral, animal and geometrical motifs in wooden carvings.



MUD WORK

The Art and Crafts of Punjab are the reflection of the heritage and culture of Punjab. Mud work is an ancient handicraft of Punjab, which is popular in the state till date. It marks the zenith of Punjabi creativity, in turning out dull objects into masterpieces of art. Generally it is a trend in Punjab to plaster the walls of the house with mud and then create different motifs and designs on them. These kind of works are generally performed by the rural women of Punjab. Earlier the Mud Works were done due to certain superstitions to keep away the evil spirits from the households. This art of painting mud walls is known as Chowk-Poorana in Punjab. Mainly the Mud Works were done during the festivals in the village, like the Navaratra poorna, Karva-Chauth, Hoi or Ahoi, and Diwali. The mud is obtained from the nearby water bodies like ponds. The clay is used to make pottery and toys for the children. The shape of the potteries dictate their usage. The pottery are sold by the village men to earn their living. It is a very traditional practice to make potteries and use them for various purposes in their daily life. These potteries are often decorated and painted very colorfully and vibrantly.



BASKETRY

Punjab Art and Craft includes the fascinating and indigenous work of Basketry. Mainly the women folk of the villages of Punjab are engaged in the work of Basketry. Some of the Basketry works of Punjab is known world over. The Basketry were made by the village people mainly for household usage. The Basketry works are done by shaving the thin straws of grass. These straws are used to weave mats, rugs, carpets, curtains and hand fans. These hand fans are known as Peshawari Pakkhe. The fans comparatively of smaller size is known as Kundaldar Pakkhi. These fans are small and delicate and have beautiful curl ends.

The fans made by weaving are object of fascination to the tourists in Punjab. Basketry of Punjab also includes Chhaj which is made from sarcanda. It is used to separate the grain from the husk. The practice of weaving with the straws and vegetable fiber is still prevalent in the rural areas of Punjab. The Basketry works have been a traditional occupation throughout the villages of India for a long time.



FOLK TOYS AND DOLLS

Folk toys of Punjab are the products of the perfect amalgamation of artistry and social values. The earliest handmade toys of Punjab can be traced back to the Indus Valley Civilization, from 2500 to 1700 BC. Keeping in trend with the lively and colorful traditional culture of the state, the craftsmen of Punjab are apt in producing attractive and beautiful "Dolls" which represent the dynamic and vibrant culture of the state. Almost all the districts of Punjab have flourished in the art of Doll Making. However, the city of Chandigarh has become one of the important centers of "Doll" making. The Dolls of Punjab have an internationally acclaimed status that are purchased by the tourist for their near and dear ones as a token of love and appreciation



The craftsmen make Dolls from mud or wood and later on decorate them with satin cloths, beads, buttons, feathers, tassels, kaudis, fine threads and mirrors which adds to their beauty. The Dolls that replicate the brides of Punjab are the best ones of the industry. Folk toys are available in a variety of designs; all of them having the most desired appeal. They usually depict animals, birds, equestrian and wheeled vehicles, with variation in quality and purpose. The women Punjab still make toys of cloth, stuffed with cotton. The fairs like Basant Panchami, Chapper Mela, Jarag Fair, Roshni Fair, Muktsar fai etc are the places to get the best of folk toys.

PUNJABI PARANDA

The colorful hanging worn by the Punjabi women in their hair is called the "Paranda". Parandas are available with a great variety in designs and colors. The craftsmen require a great deal of patience and creativity while producing the parandas. They reflect the natural liveliness and spontaneity of the Punjabi people. In Punjab, parandas are available in different types, each one of them designed for a specific occasion.



The villages in the districts of Jalandhar, Amritsar, Nakodar, Hoshiarpur and Ludhiana are mainly engaged in the handicraft industry of parandi. They are made out of a bunch of silk threads, intricately woven with other skillful works. Decorative, colourful strings, knotted together into a woman's braid or designed into hair buns, parandas form an important part of women's attires in Punjab. The tassels are highly decorative: red is usually used for brides, gold or silver for special occasions, and other colours to match the everyday apparel.

PIDHIS

Comfortable, attractive and the eloquently decorated "Pidhis" of Punjab are some of the splendid products of the handicraft industry of Punjab. During the olden days, the Punjabi women preferred to sit in the four legged small stool that were very comfortable, longlasting, convenient and usable as well. However the "Pidhis" or the short stools are still in vogue, not only in Punjab but in the other states as well. The "Pidhis" or the small stools are made up of woods. To add to the beauty of the stools, the craftsmen design the stools with colorful threads to give it a majestic look. To give a traditional and a royal touch to the splendid houses the owners use the beautifully adorned stools. This marvelous creation of the traditional handicraft industry of the state has a wide market within and outside India. This industry flourished in the districts of Karatpur, Jalandhar and Hoshiarpur where most of the people have mastered the art of producing such wonderful artistic creations that requires patience and diligence.



JUTTI

The jutti or Punjabi Jutti is a type of footwear of Punjabi origin that is common in North India and Pakistan. They are traditionally made up of leather obtained from the hide of buffalo, camels, or cows and with extensive embroidery, in real gold and silver thread in olden days, though now with changing times different jutti with rubber soles are made available. There is a wide use of fancy materials like beads, pearls, coloured threads, small mirrors and seashells. They

have no left or right distinction, and over time take the shape of the foot. They usually have flat sole, and are similar in design for both women and men, except for men they have a sharp extended tip, nokh curved upwards like traditional mustaches, and are also called khussa, and some women juttis have no back part, near the ankle. Even with changing times juttis have remained part of ceremonial attire, especially at weddings, the unembellished juttis are used for everyday use for both men and women in most of Punjab.



Juttis come in wide varieties; some of the popular ones are the King wedding jutti, style jutti, khausa jutti, punch zari and comfort juti, energise jutti and mesmeric embroidery jutti. These ethnic shoes were worn by wealthy zamindars, chaudhary, nawab, jagirdars Maharajas and Maharanis of India (esp. Punjab), and most of the designs are inspired from the Mughal era. Juttis are usually named as Mojari or there is another name called Khussa, this name mainly used in Pakistan and they are now very famous in the West also. Mojaris are like long shoes with end curled up. Besides Punjabi jutti, there are various local styles as well, like Lahori, Peshawari, and Kasoori juttis.

Chandigarh is also one of the best centers to soak up and halt over the multi-ethnic atmosphere high rich tradition. The muktsari jutti is also very popular throughout the world. Punjabi juttis are also exported to other countries like Canada, UK, America and Singapore and many more on a large scale. Today Amritsar and Patiala ("tilla jutti") are important trade centers for handcrafted juttis, from where they are exported all over the world to Punjabi diaspora. The most stunning varieties of juttis are discovered in Patiala city. Muktsar, near Faridkot, is another famous centre for juttis. It is well known for the production of two varieties of juttis - khosa and kasuri. More than 50 families in Muktsar specialize in making juttis.

WEAVING AND DURRIES

Punjab durries are flat woven rugs, quite like carpets and are widely used traditionally in India to seat on floors. Durries are mainly used in the countryside but the look cozily fits in

contemporary homes too making it favorite and sought after by the urban people in India as well as abroad. Cost-wise they are cheap but are very colorful, attractive and elegant as well. The durries are woven in a variety of pattern and designs that are unique to different places of Punjab.



Punjabi durries are made mainly in two distinct ways. Striped multicolored durries to be used on beds are manufactured by pit loom. On the other hand, durries for use on floors are usually in two contrasting colors and are made on adda. These are also woven in stripes, check boards, squares, and motifs of birds, animals and even plants as a part of dowry. Different parts of the country have localised durrie traditions; the particular combination of weaving technique, weft material, pattern stylisation, and motifs and colours used in different areas creates several interesting kinds of durries. The Panja durries are one among a multitude of styles; they are defined essentially by the use of the panja in weaving them, and known for fairly bold colours and patterns. Several important centres of durrie-making in pre-Independence Punjab are now in Pakistan; however, in present-day Punjab, the areas around Ludhiana, Faridkot and Bhatinda are fairly prolific and well-known. Amritsar is one of the oldest centers of carpet weaving in the country. Mani Majra, on the outskirts of the city of Chandigarh, makes durries in unique designs with distinctive textures.

PHULKARI

Phulkari work is one of the most fascinating expressions of the Punjabi folk art. Women have developed this art at the cost of some of their very precious moments of leisure. It has also been customary for parents and relatives to give hand-embroidered clothes to girls in dowry. When translated, phulkari means 'flower work'. The stitch-art form of Punjab is simple yet stunning, its floral magnificence capturing the spirit of the land in its weft, warp and silken strands that thread tales of its people and folklore. The fabric is skillfully embroidered with such perfection that the end result presents a piece of visual excellence. A fully embroidered phulkari in which the base fabric is not visible is called the bagh. Another unique aspect is that it is worked entirely on the wrong side of the cloth with the pattern taking shape on the front. The design is made such that it does not have an upward or lower end. The skill of the untrained artists doesn't stop here. It draws further appreciation owing to the fact that it is neither drawn nor traced. Conventionally phulkari was done on coarse homespun, hand-woven cotton that was used as a shawl to be presented by a mother to her daughter on marriage. A modern day shift has seen phulkari embellishing any fabric, from

chiffon to satin to cotton. In its contemporary avatar it is being fashioned on jackets, suits, dupattas, coats, skirts and men's shirts to mention a few among the range of apparel that is being touched by the embroidery. Phulkari is the skillful handling of a single stitch, which when positioned in a sequence forms striking designs. The darning stitch is the basic unit of Phulkari and the workmanship of both Bagh and Phulkari are graded according to its length and density of the stitches. The usual length varies from half to one-fourth of an inch. The long and short 'darn' or 'straight' stitch, which when placed in different directions – horizontal, vertical or diagonal – give the threadwork many hues and thus its opulence. The smaller the stitch, finer is the quality of embroidery. The other stitches used in tandem to extenuate the design are: stem, herringbone, satin, back, blanket, split and cross-stitch. What gives the embroidery its opulence is the thread used, which is untwisted pure silken floss called pat, that is dyed in the colours of choice.



The motifs in phulkari could represent birds, animals, vegetables, rivers, sun, moon, fields and other everyday imagery. Based on these, the patterns get their classification; like dhaniya (coriander), motia (jasmine), leheria bagh (garden of waves), surajmukhi (sunflower), mor (peacock), kukad (cock) etc. Composition of ornaments such as hansali, tika, kada, singhar-patti and guluband can also be seen. There are a variety of phulkari styles for different occasions and purposes. A red cotton base is chosen for weddings phulkaris, the plain brick-red khaddar or black base for home wear and functions, and navy blue for the prayer room. The patterns are diverse and distinct. The different types of phulkaris and bagh are:

- Chope and suber were wedding phulkaris and were presented to the bride by her maternal relations during the marriage ceremony it is done on red khaddar.
- The plain or dark red khaddar shawl known as saloo was used for household wear.
- Til Patra shawls have very little embroidery and was presented to servants and peasants during marriages.
- The Nilak is worked on black or navy blue khaddar with yellow and crimson red pat popular among peasant women.
- Wari da bagh (trousseau bagh) is also on a red cloth with golden yellow embroidery symbolising happiness and fertility.

- Ghunghat bagh (head cover or veil) has a triangular patch of embroidery on that portion of the shawl which covers the head when worn.
- Suber has five motifs, one in the center and one each in the four corners.
- Reshmi Sheesha meaning silken mirror, a fine all over embroidery in white.
- Bagh also has other several varieties known by different names like Shalimar bagh, kakri bagh, mircha bagh, dhunia bagh, derived from their motifs and by their colours like satranga and panchranga, dhoop-chhaun, chandrama bagh etc.
- The Bawan bagh (52 patterned) that is considered most exquisite for it showcases 52 different geometric patterns embroidered in one piece.
- Other types of Phulkaris include Darshan Dwar, Sainchi Phulkari, Thirma, Nazar Buti etc.

The interest being taken by government craft centres, non-government organisations (NGOs) and heritage preservation societies is seeing the revival of the embroidery. Tripri, in Patiala district, is a place where large-scale work is being done. Due to such efforts over the past few years the demand for phulkari sees a major upswing during the wedding season when orders pour in from the non-resident Indian (NRI) population as well as from around North-India. NGOs and other semi-government bodies working on orders are confident of phulkari touching the global scene and constantly innovate, crafting new products and motifs, all within the parameters of tradition. Though striking and opulent there is robustness in the design that stems from the hardy, joyous nature of the Punjabi people, whose lives revolved around agrarian activities. The richness of a golden harvest meant happiness, which was transferred on to the cloth, interspersed with legends, folk traditions and daily life. Women used to sit together and embroider their pieces. While they worked they sang and songs evolved around the art of phulkari, which as time passed became part of folk singing. Looking at the demand for phulkari it doesn't seem a distant dream when the stitch-craft will be singing a new song.

Steps Taken by Punjab Govt

Culture is a backbone for an economy of developing nations. Handicrafts Development is a phenomenal source of earning foreign exchange for the country due to its expert craftsmanship, exquisiteness and aesthetic value. Punjab has a rich artistic tradition that provided ample opportunity to make Indian handicraft to stand apart with its colossal pride. For the greater objective of taking Punjab handicrafts to the next level of maturity a number of handicraft related associations has made their presence felt. Whether to showcase the textiles and handicrafts of Punjab or to cater to the growth and overall mellowness, the wide range of Indian handicraft associations have an immense contribution.

1. Punjab Small Industries and Export Corporation Limited (PSIEC) established in the year 1962, while spreading its wings in several directions to boost economy of state of Punjab, has been doing its best to preserve, revive and promote Handicrafts. It helps creative and skillful artists in

- Punjab by selling their handicrafts in the Showrooms at various places in India. Today, using its extensive reach at the grassroot level, it owns a chain of emporia which is famously called Phulkari in the major cities of Punjab (Amritsar, Ludhiana, Jalandhar, Patiala, Chandigarh, Delhi and Kolkata. Phulkari Showrooms are a home to the best of the handicrafts in the world.
2. PSIEC has set-up numerous training centres to develop the rich handicrafts of Punjab and to preserve the art and crafts of the state. These include Crafts Development Centre at Hoshiarpur, Phulkari Production Centres at Patiala and Amritsar, and has a large network of Carpet Weaving Training Centres and Embroidery Training Centres across rural Punjab. PSIEC has been instrumental in training over 4000 women since inception and in the process made them self-sufficient.
 3. Apart from training craftspersons, PSIEC's Marketing and Emporia Divisions organise exhibitions, crafts bazaars and fairs in different parts of India to popularise the art and culture of Punjab. Moreover, PSIEC offers a unique marketing assistance to its associates in selling their products to government and semi-government departments by participating in tenders on their behalf. PSIEC is a recognised export house and a nodal agency for promotion of Punjab Handicrafts.
 4. An independent Directorate of Handicraft and Design was established in 1987. This directorate has provided a massive support in the promotion of the art. PSIC has made valuable contribution towards the regional crafts and uplifting of socio economic condition of the artisans. This has been conducted through Research, Design Development, Publications, Exhibitions, which has played a key role in the revival of the handicrafts of Punjab.
 5. Keeping in view the scope of Cultural Heritage, PSIC formed its Directorate of Handicrafts and Design Development to achieve the following goals:
 - Promotion and development of traditional crafts with cooperative changes taking into account their demands and utility value. Revival of old dying crafts.
 - Establishment of marketing outlets for the products produced by the craftsmen with a view to support their sustenance.
 - Providing design facilities in various trades i.e. Ceramics, Pottery, Textile, Carpets Metal, Wood and traditional crafts through design center dully equipped with professional / creative designers qualified from the professional Institutions like National College of Arts.
 - Research and Development of old crafts in specific areas rich in culture heritage and publication of research work / books on regional crafts.
 - Inducing young generation specially Women Folk towards crafts promotion & development.
 - Participation in local / foreign exhibitions / fairs and preparation of exhibition stalls and floats.
 - Involve NCA and School of Fashion Design to increase and professionalize the base of handicrafts.
 - Poverty alleviation by creating new jobs in private sector.
 6. Another Board "The All India Handicrafts Board" assisted the state governments in setting up their Design and Technical centers in various states of India including Punjab.
 7. Indian Institute of Craft and Design (IICD) initiated a project on "Product development and training of Phulkari embroiderers in Patiala district of Punjab."
 8. According to an article in Times Of India, A high-level delegation of Punjab Small-scale Industries and Export Corporation (PSIEC) visited US and the delegates found a heavy demand of handicrafts in US and felt that if small scale industry innovate itself, export to US could rise manifold.
 9. Universities in Punjab are also introducing heritage items in the zonal youth festivals like guddian patole, chhiku making, rassa vatna, eenu making, paranda making, tokri making, nala knitting, khiddo making, peerhi making etc to make the students get in touch with the traditional roots.
 10. There are number of NGO's in Punjab working for the revival of textiles and handicrafts, and promotion of art and craft of Punjab. Some are named as under:
 - All Indian Salai Kadai Kender Society, Gurdaspur(Pb)
 - Isha Handicrafts Welfare Society, Gurdaspur(PB)
 - Sadbhavna Society (Regd.) Talwandi Road Raikot Distt, Ludhiana
 - Mahila Kalyan Samity Sardulgarh ,Mansa
 - Vidya Education Society, Batala
 - Virsa Vihar, Amritsar
 - We For You Welfare Foundation, Patiala
 - The Craft Revival Trust (CRT)
 - Vivek Foundation, Fatehgarh Sahib
 - Voice Of Women Welfare Trust, Ropar
 - Welfare Youth Club, Patiala

Conclusion

The article concludes that although, the work of NGOs, have revived the art and handicraft sector of Punjab, its commercialization has compromised its quality and durability as a rural art form. The mass produced contemporary craft do not have either the quality or the purpose for which they were originally produced. Traditional pure silk floss pat used in making phulkaris and baghs is now replaced by kucha or second quality synthetic silk floss made of viscose and polyester,. The revival however, is now serving a bigger more elite city and western clientele, living in big cities and buying from NGOs and designers who showcase their collections by using the boundless crafts and textiles of punjab, in all big cities and overseas. It is now done more for a profit motive, as compared to olden times. The plus side of this revival, however, is that it is providing livelihood to many poor rural impoverished households.

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