

## Success Story

**EARNING FROM THREADS OF HERITAGE *PHULKARI* – A SUCCESSFUL VENTURE OF SUKHMANI SELF HELP GROUP****Gurupdesh Kaur\*** and Jasvinder Singh

Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Patiala, Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana, Punjab-141004, INDIA

\*Corresponding author's E-mail: kvkpatiala@gmail.com

**KEY WORDS:**Thread,  
Heritage,  
SHG**ARTICLE INFO****Received on:**

30.04.2017

**Revised on:**

12.06.2017

**Accepted on:**

14.06.2017

**ABSTRACT**

Punjab has a rich traditional heritage, of which *Phulkari* is an integral part. It is a form of hand embroidery which is carried forward from one generation to another, but lately this art form has undergone lots of evident changes. The journey which started from rural milieu has found a place in urban household. The present case study is an attempt to describe the journey of semi-literate rural women from mere workers to entrepreneurs. The study also reflects on issues how this craft acted as means to exploit rural craft women. An attempt is made to bring in the picture, the role of Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Patiala in skill development, value addition and marketing of *Phulkari*. Through KVK interventions in product development, business skill trainings and linkage to new markets, Sukhmami self help group reaped economic and social benefits.

**INTRODUCTION**

The *Phulkari* is the embroidered shawl formerly worn by the women of Punjab. It is the cultural heritage and Geographical Indication of Punjab. Girls were given *Phulkaris* in trousseau. Earlier, the *Phulkari* embroidery was done on home spun, hand woven and hand dyed cotton material known as Khaddar with soft untwisted raw silk yarn called "Pat". Rural girls and farm women of Patiala, the princely city of Punjab have been engaged in this form of hand embroidery for generations. This business has been flourishing on its own without any state government intervention or developmental agency, but this business is highly unorganized leading to exploitation of labour i.e. rural girls and farm women. The women in rural areas are dependent on traders for supply of cloth and thread and the sale of end products i.e. *bagh*, handcrafted souvenirs, suits is through middle man and traders. Women don't have money and other resources to purchase inputs and artisans are paid pittance for the embroidered work e.g. a *Phulkari/Bagh* takes about three months to complete, but artisans are paid little amount of Rs. 800-1200 for this embroidery. The same *bagh* is sold for Rs. 5000-5500 in the market.

Apart from the exploitation, this art form is in the danger of diminishing away into oblivion as this

traditional hand embroidery has competition from *Phulkari* craft practiced through machines. Computer

aided designing through machines make these items in very less time. It becomes very economical for traders also. But the soul of *Phulkari* is through hand craft. There is also need of refinement of base material, colour combination, designs and use of decorative material to make it popular amongst young generation so that spirit of traditional hand work may remain for the generations to come.

**INSTITUTIONAL INVOLVEMENT**

As evident from the situation above, it is clear that *Phulkari* trade is flourishing in Patiala but in unorganized manner. The role of Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Patiala was to streamline women's role from mere-workers (artisans) to decision makers so that they can be real beneficiaries in the economic, social and cultural spheres of life. This has been possible through their capacity building of women. Apart from skill development, a number of extension activities like organization of awareness camps, exposure visits, technology week, radio and TV talks were organized by the Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Patiala. They were motivated to form self help groups. Trainings were provided to rural women to compete in the market by making traditional products as well as utility articles such as

clutch bags, file folders and mobile covers etc. To make *Phulkari* popular amongst new generation, traditional *Phulkari* has been diversified into novelty items by KVK Subject Matter Specialist (Home Science)

- *Phulkari* Dupattas
- Jaal Work
- Suits, sarees, kurta, stole and shawls with *Phulkari* embroidery
- *Phulkari* purses, bags, hankies and wall hangings
- Mobile covers, shagun envelopes and shagun thalis
- *Phulkari* file folders, belts and hand fans
- *Phulkari* bed sheets, cushion covers & dining sheets

KVK, Patiala has also encouraged these women entrepreneurs to use their thoughts to create new *Phulkari* designs in shades which were trendy instead of manufacturing *Phulkaries* only in traditional bright colours. KVK, Patiala also helped the rural women in direct marketing by facilitating their participation in Kisan Melas, *haats*, and exhibitions. This has empowered these women to sell their craft directly to the consumers, thus earning the profit of their hard earned handicrafts.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT SUKHMANI SELF HELP GROUP

Smt. Bhupinder Kaur, a rural women from village Jahlan learned about activities of KVK, Patiala through All India Radio, Patiala. She contacted KVK for getting trainings during the year 2007. She first got the benefit of basic training package of KVK that puts emphasis on nutrition, health and wellbeing of family. She also learned about drudgery reducing technologies for farm women. Afterwards, she acquired vocational trainings for income generation. She also learnt that by making a

self help group of her fellow women, she could enhance working hands from two to twenty. So, she formed SHG namely, “**Sukhmani Self Help Group**”, Village Jahlan on 10.3.2010. After visiting Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Patiala, Members of Sukhmani SHG learnt that they can alleviate their poverty through capacity building and skill development. The group members were trained in various income generating activities by Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Patiala like embroidery and needle craft, garment stitching and enrichment, specialized training course in painting, tie & dye and contemporary uses of *Phulkari* craft etc. Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Patiala provided marketing support in the form of free exhibition space at farmers' fair organized by PAU. Afterwards the group was linked with NABARD and Development Commissioner (Handicrafts) for sale of *Phulkari* products at national level. NABARD sponsored participation of Sukhmani SHG in “SARAS fair” held at Hyderabad during October, 2010. Afterwards, this group actively participated in different exhibitions organized by Indian Council of Agricultural Research, Punjab Agricultural University, Punjab International Trade Fair, Amritsar, Global Conference on Women in Agriculture etc. The group was also registered with Development Commissioner (Handicrafts) for participation in national level exhibitions organized by Govt. of India.

The group members are approximately earning Rs. 35-40,000 from these exhibitions as profit. The group has assets worth Rs. 2,00,000/- in its kitty and is inter-lending Rs. 70,000/- as credit amongst its members. This group has not only taken *Phulkari* craft to great heights but has trained women and school drop out girls of adjoining villages like Sauja, Kheri Mania, Bibipur etc. in the craft and is generating gainful employment for them.

**Table 1. Economics of *Phulkari* craft of Sukhmani SHG**

Name of product	Quantity	Market value	Gross income	Expenditure	Net income	BC ratio
Khadar bagh and silk <i>Phulkari</i>	20	7000	140000	45000	95000	3:1
Silk <i>Phulkari</i> suits (dress material)	50	3500	175000	62000	113000	2:8
Cotton <i>Phulkari</i>	80	2500	200000	75000	125000	2:6
Patiala shahi salwar	100	500	50000	21000	29000	2:3

**SPECIAL INNOVATION****Setting up of Rural Mart for marketing of *Phulkari* crafted products**

With the initiative of Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Patiala, NABARD has sanctioned "Rural Mart" a market place for sale of *Phulkari* crafted products to Sukhmani Self Help Group at Village Jahlan. Financial assistance of Rs. 92,500/- has been granted to this rural mart by NABARD, Punjab and this mart has been running successfully since March, 2013 till date. This outlet is doing brisk business and is particularly preferred for doing trousseau shopping.

**CDs developed, if any**

Sukhmani Self Help Group, Jahlan – an SHG trained by Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Patiala featured in digital media prepared by Zonal Project Directorate, Zone-I, Ludhiana in 2013-14.

**RESULTS**

Members of the group have won prizes in competitions like *Phulkari* embroidery, *sevia* making, crochet, hand knitting, preparation of *poshtik ladoo* organized during farmer's fair at KVK, Rauni and at PAU, Ludhiana since 2010. President of the group Smt. Bhupinder Kaur has won award of "Best Entrepreneur" in home

science during kisan mela held during September, 2011. The group has been awarded with cash prize of Rs. 20,000/- by the Agriculture Technology Management Agency, Patiala. The members of the group have participated in Radio & TV shows like "Naari Lok", "Krishi Vaani", "Mera Pind Mere Khet" and "Krishi Darshan" to show their progress from mere workers to entrepreneurs. The efforts of the group have been recognized by Advisor Group of Publications in Jatt Expo 2015 held at Paragpur, Jalandhar for gainful employment of women in traditional *Phulkari* craft along with cash prize of Rs. 5100/-.

**CONCLUSION**

Social mobilization among women is a social phenomenon which gets boosted up when they interact and work in a group for economic benefits. Formation of self help groups has led to spirit of self-effort and self-reliance among these rural women. Dissemination of knowledge regarding health and nutrition of family along with trainings for income generation through *Phulkari* craft can greatly improve livelihood security of the rural economy as evident from the successful activities of Sukhmani SHG.

**How to cite this article?**

**Gurupdes Kaur and Jasvinder Singh. 2017.**  
Earning from threads of heritage *Phulkari* – A  
successful venture of sukhmani self help group.  
*Innovative Farming*, 2(2): 139-141.