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Existing *dasuti* embroidery practices of rural women

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Abstract

Dasuti embroidery is known by different names as needle point work, needle work, tapestry, and canvas needle work and canvas work or canvas embroidery. It is locally known as '*dasuti kadhai*' in rural Haryana. In almost all the districts of Haryana, it enjoys a high favour among rural women for their personal use as a bed cover, table cloth, furniture coverings and wall panels, etc. They started this embroidery on their own at the age of 11-13 years and learnt this art from family members, neighbours and friends. According to them it is the easiest among all the embroidery stitches and also a form of relaxation, person doesn't feel tired even after the long working hours followed by it is the only embroidery for which they can use the left over raw material available at home. Canvas embroidery articles made by learners and inexperienced rural women had some defects. These were improper colour combinations, bi-directional top stitches, wrong worked designs, knots and loose threads on wrong side of articles and also the unfinished canvas embroidery articles. The major problem faced by all the women was non-availability of newer designs, fabrics and threads in the villages. All the women also mentioned that they don't have knowledge about other canvas stitches, their combination and embroidery ornamentation material which could be used in canvas embroidery to add glitter. Thus, it was realized that the various value added techniques in canvas embroidery like the use of different raw material and stitches other than the existing one would prove as an endeavour to touch the futuristic vision of *dasuti* embroidery.

Keywords: *Dasuti* embroidery, embroidery ornamentation material, fabric, stitches, threads

Introduction

Embroidery is a beautiful thread work on variety of fabrics which makes the fabric more attractive. The tradition of Indian embroidery is one of the most diverse and mastered in the world. The traditional embroidery of each state is unique, which has the influence of not only the foreign countries but also the neighbouring states too. In spite of diversity in embroidery, with respect to the ground cloth, thread type, stitches and motifs, the articles prepared ultimately depict unity in one or the other aspects.

Phulkari of Haryana popularly called '*Chhamas*' is slightly different from that of Punjab in design and stitch. The cross stitch, herring bone stitch, which is a variation of cross stitch and satin stitch are some commonly used stitches in the embroidered articles of Haryana.

Cross stitch is one of the basic and most commonly used stitch of *dasuti* embroidery. This is known by different names as needle point work, needle work, tapestry, and canvas needle work and canvas work or canvas embroidery. However, the most common terms used are the canvas work or canvas embroidery. In almost all the districts of Haryana, canvas embroidery enjoys a high favour among villagers for their personal use as a bed cover, table cloth, furniture coverings and wall panels, etc. Well known centres of this craft are Sonapat, Ambala, Karnal, Rohtak, Hisar and Sirsa. It is locally known as '*dasuti kadhai*' in rural Haryana and mainly worked on *jali* casement with woolen threads. They also use plastic canvas for decorative articles especially wall-panels. Rural women used those tools of this embroidery which were easily available at home. A study was conducted to know the *dasuti* embroidery practices of rural women of Hisar district of Haryana state.

Materials and Methods

In order to study the existing state of *dasuti* embroidery, 100 rural women practicing this embroidery were selected from ten villages located in different directions of Hisar. The *dasuti* embroidery practices of rural women including type of activities and hand embroidery practiced by rural women, reasons for practicing this specific embroidery, source of learning *dasuti* embroidery, tools used for *dasuti* embroidery, *dasuti* embroidery articles produced by rural women, common defects in *dasuti* embroidery and problems faced by rural women along

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with their personal profile were studied using an interview schedule and through observations. The collected data were coded, tabulated and analyzed by using frequency, percentage, weighted mean score to draw the meaningful inferences.

Results and Discussion

The data regarding *dasuti* embroidery practices which includes type of activities and hand embroidery practiced by rural women, reasons for practicing *dasuti* embroidery, source of learning this embroidery, *dasuti* embroidery articles produced by rural women, defects in embroidery and problems faced by the rural women have been presented in Table 1-

Majority of women were married (93%), illiterate (44%) and having 25-50 years of age (77%), belonged to joint family (78%) of medium size (5-10 members). Their main family occupation was farming (64%) and had monthly family income between Rs. 15,000-20,000/-(74%).

Type of Tailoring Activities and Hand Embroideries Practiced by Rural Women

Majority of rural women in their leisure time during seasonal slack periods of summers when days are longer, stitch garments mainly for their personal use (89%) and hand embroidered their garments and household articles using different kinds of embroidery stitches (85%) (Table-1). These two activities were closely followed by the knitting sweaters for their family members in winter (75%) and *durrie* weaving (72%). Only 48 per cent rural women did crocheting.

It was observed that rural women do embroidery only for their personal use but a few women of those villages which are closely adjacent to Hisar city were also doing embroidery on order basis.

Majority of women who did hand embroidery used a variety of embroidery stitches. All the rural women always used cross stitch very closely followed by chain stitch (96%), stem stitch (94%) and herring bone (87%). Seventy two per cent women sometimes practiced mirror work also. Only 36 per cent women did *sindhi* and 31 per cent women did *phulkari*.

Similar observations were made by Punia (2004). She studied the textile related activities practiced by rural women weavers in Hisar and Bihar. It was found that all the women of Hisar and Bihar had embroidered their garments and household articles using different kinds of embroidery stitches.

All of them used chain stitch, cross stitch, herring bone, satin stitch as embroidery stitches on their garments and household articles. It was observed that mirror were fixed using chain, cross and button hole stitch by majority of them. Bhandari (2004) [1] stated that embroidery becomes the idiom of expression for girls, who may never learn or write. These young artists begin their training at their early age of seven or eight, learning to create exquisite patterns on plain fabric initially working with simple design, they gradually perfect their skills, acquiring delicacy and refinement. They work as apprentices to their mothers, grandmothers, sister and aunts, who pass on to them designs, patterns and a heritage that has evolved over the centuries.

Table 1: Type of tailoring activities and hand embroideries practiced by rural women (n=100)

Sr. No.	Traits	Rural women (frequency/%)		
		Always	Seldom	Never
1.	Activities			
	Stitching	89	-	-
	Knitting	-	75	-
	Crocheting	-	48	-
	Hand embroidery	85	-	-
	Machine embroidery	-	09	-
	<i>Durrie</i> weaving	-	72	-
2.	Hand embroideries			
	<i>Phulkari</i>	-	31	-
	<i>Sindhi</i>	-	36	-
	Mirror work	-	72	-
	Cross stitch	100	-	-
	Chain stitch	96	-	-
	Stem stitch	94	-	-
	Herring bone	87	-	-

Multiple Responses

Reasons for Practicing *Dasuti* Embroidery

All the rural women were practicing *dasuti* embroidery. The reasons for practicing *dasuti* embroidery have been depicted in Table-2. The data revealed that top ranked reason considered by rural women for doing this specific embroidery was that it is the easiest among all the embroidery stitches and also a form of relaxation, person doesn't feel tired even after the long working hours with WMS 3.00 followed by it is the only embroidery for which they can use the left over raw material available at home ranked-II (WMS 2.98). The reason ranked-III was that it can be used to prepare articles for dowry. Rural women thought that this embroidery also shows the creativity of women specially the unmarried girls, ranked-IV (WMS 2.88). According to them, the least preferred reason was that it is the best way to utilize their leisure time.

Table 2: Reasons for practicing *dasuti* embroidery (n=100)

Sr. No.	Reasons	Weighted mean score	Ranks
1.	Use of leisure time	2.80	V
2.	Use of raw material available at home	2.98	II
3.	Prepare articles for dowry	2.90	III
4.	Creative activity	2.88	IV
5.	Easiest and form of relaxation	3.00	I

Sources of Learning *Dasuti* Embroidery

During data collection, it was observed that majority of rural women started *dasuti* embroidery on their own at the age of 14-16 years. However, they started learning and assisting the older woman in the family at the age of 11-13 years. It is envisaged from the Fig.1 that majority of them (92%) always learnt *dasuti* embroidery from family members followed by neighbours and friends (87%) and school and craft teacher (74%). None of the rural women got the training of *dasuti* embroidery either from government or from private organization.

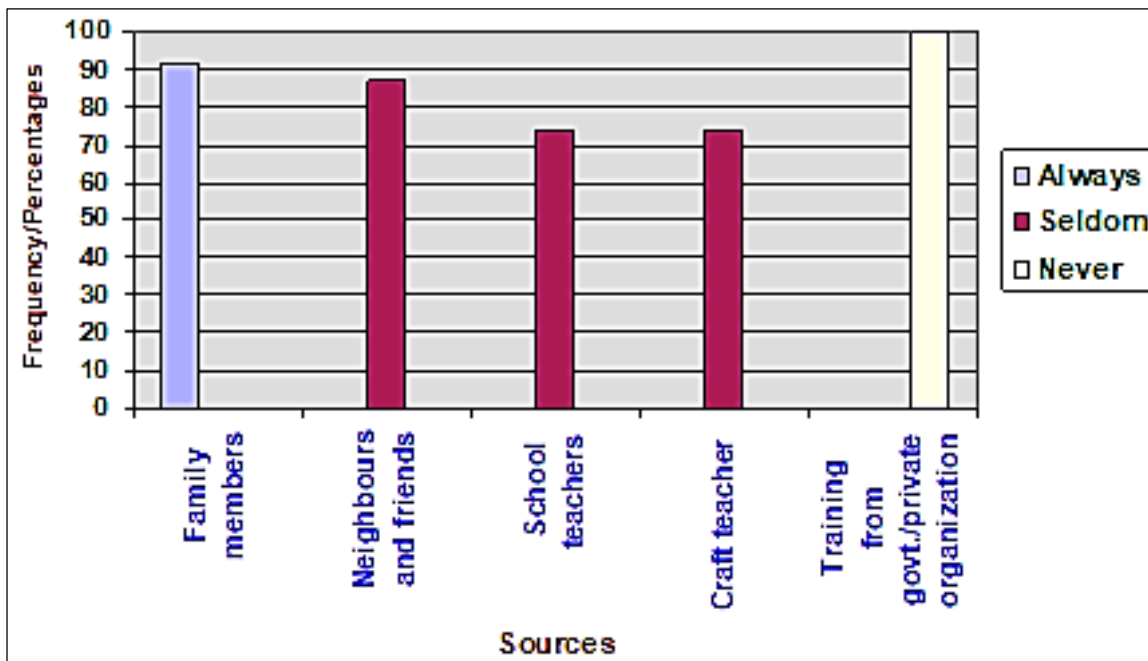


Fig 1: Sources of learning *Dasuti* Embroidery

The data related to type of *dasuti* embroidery tools used and canvas embroidery stitches is very well furnished in Table-3. It shows that all the rural women were doing *dasuti* embroidery by hand. None of the women never also used machine for canvas embroidery.

Table 3: Types of *dasuti* embroidery, tools used and *dasuti* embroidery stitches (n=100)

Sr. No.	Traits	Rural women (frequency/%)		
		Always	Seldom	Never
1.	Type of <i>dasuti</i> embroidery			
	Hand embroidery	100	-	-
	Machine embroidery	-	-	100
2.	Tools			
	Needles	-	-	-
	Blunt needle	-	85	-
	Long pointed needle	92	-	-
	Frame	-	06	100
	Shear	100	-	-
	Measuring tape and marking chalk	-	-	100
3.	<i>Dasuti</i> stitches			
	Cross stitch	100	-	-
	Running stitch	-	08	-
	Stain stitch	-	10	-
	Back stitch	-	06	-

Multiple Responses

Majority of rural women used long pointed needle (92%) for *dasuti* embroidery closely followed by blunt needle (85%). All of them used shear for cutting and clipping of embroidery thread and only 6% women very rarely used embroidery frame for doing *dasuti* embroidery. It was observed that all the women were using only cross stitch as the basic stitch for *dasuti* embroidery. Only 6-10 percent women rarely used back stitch, satin stitch and running stitch, respectively. They used satin stitch alone in the form of *chope* embroidery, running stitch in the form of ladder stitch and back stitch for outlines of various motifs. The rural women never used any measuring and marketing tool for *dasuti* embroidery.

Reasons for Using Particular Type of Tools and *Dasuti* Embroidery Stitches

The reasons for using particular type of tools and *dasuti* embroidery stitches are presented in Table-4. The data revealed that as per rural women, the particular type of tools which were used by them are the only tools required for the *dasuti* embroidery ranked-I with WMS 3.00, followed by commonly used tools, stitches suitable for fabrics and threads of *dasuti* embroidery ranked-II (WMS 2.98). They also thought that these tools are very easily available at home, ranked-IV (WMS 2.92). The least preferred reason was that they don't have the knowledge of other tools, ranked-V (WMS 2.80) followed by that they also don't know to use them, ranked-VI (WMS 2.78).

Table 4: Reasons for using particular type of tools and *dasuti* embroidery stitches (n=100)

Sr. No.	Reasons	Weighted mean score	Ranks
1.	Only tools/stitches meant for <i>dasuti</i> embroidery	3.0	I
2.	Suitable for fabric and threads of <i>dasuti</i> embroidery	2.98	II
3.	Commonly used tools/stitches	2.98	II
4.	Easy to make/easily available	2.92	IV
5.	No knowledge of other tools/stitches	2.80	V
6.	Don't know how to use other tools/ technically don't know the effect of other stitches	2.78	VI

The reasons for using particular *dasuti* embroidery stitches were also in the same rank order i.e. these are the only stitches meant for *dasuti* embroidery, commonly used stitches, suitable for fabrics and threads of *dasuti* embroidery, easy to make, don't know other stitches and their effect.

***Dasuti* Embroidery Articles Produced by Rural Women**

Information regarding *dasuti* embroidery articles produced by rural women has been presented in Table-5 More than three-fourth of the women were always making furnishing articles, only 37 per cent of women were making utility articles and

none of the women were making clothing articles. The furnishing articles produced by them were wall-panel (88%), pillow-covers (79%), table cloth (78%), cushion covers (76%), bed covers (71%) and sofa covers (67%). Only two type of utility articles i.e. shopping bag (37%) and small purse with single pocket locally known at *batua* (7%) were embroidered by the rural women.

Table 5: *Dasuti* embroidery articles produced by rural women (n=100)

Sr. No.	Articles	Rural women (frequency/%)		
		Always	Seldom	Never
1.	Furnishing articles			
	Bed cover	71	-	-
	Table cloth	78	-	-
	Cushion covers	-	76	-
	Sofa covers	-	67	-
	Pillow covers	79	-	-
	Wall panels	88	-	-
2.	Utility articles			
	Bag, purse	-	37	-
	Mobile cover, file cover etc.	-	07	-
3.	Clothing articles			
	Lady's shirt, top, yoke, belt etc.	-	-	100
	Mobile cover, file cover etc.	-	07	-

Defects in *Dasuti* Embroidery Articles

It was found and observed during data collection that *dasuti* embroidery articles made by learners and inexperienced rural women had some defects. These were improper colour combinations, bi-directional top stitches, wrong worked designs, knots and loose threads on wrong side of articles and also the unfinished canvas embroidery articles.

Problems Faced by Rural Women

Dasuti embroidery is an old art which needs to be continued to preserve. To give it a new face, it was essential to study the problems faced by rural women so that either these could be minimized or alternate ways could be searched out. The major problem faced by all the women was non-availability of new designs, fabrics and threads in the village. All the women also mentioned that they don't have knowledge about other *dasuti* stitches and their combination and embroidery ornamentation material which could be used in this embroidery to add glitter. Due to these problems, the women who did embroidery very neatly did not get the proper market for their prepared articles. This necessitates a need to revitalize this art through introducing new innovative designs and value added techniques to produce fascinated articles.

Bhandari (2004) [1] stated that only those embroidery styles that have adopted themselves to the changing trends can stay in the contemporary changing markets.

During the last decades, a few embroideries that have come back into fashion are *kantha*, *chikankari* and *kasuti*, this is because they are now employed to adorn items in use and in fashion (Rajpurohit, 2008) [3].

Conclusion

In rural areas of Hisar district, *dasuti* embroidery is locally known as '*dasuti kadhai*' and '*katein ki kadhai*'. They learnt it at an early age i.e. 11-13 years from their elder family members as they considered it as the easiest embroidery and form of relaxation, which shows the creativity of young girls. Therefore, they prepared canvas embroidery articles for

dowry either of self or of other girls in family. Presenting canvas embroidery articles on such occasions shows creativity of girls. Sometimes women also prepared canvas embroidery articles to give these as gifts to their relatives. It is practiced by majority of rural women mainly to produce furnishing articles and rarely to prepare utility articles. According to them, the fabrics, threads and stitches used for canvas embroidery are strong and durable; therefore, produce durable articles, which is the prime requisite character of furnishing and utility articles. The *dasuti* embroidery articles made by rural women were having some minor defects but rural women were facing major problems of non-availability of new canvas embroidery designs and value addition material. Thus, it was realized that the various value added techniques in canvas embroidery like the use of different raw material and stitches other than the existing one would prove as an endeavour to touch the futuristic vision of this beautiful art by developing novel value added products.

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