

Summary:

This thesis is a study in cultural history that also engages art history. It discovers emotions of Indian Women through analyzing the phulkaris embroidered by them. It draws insights from disciplines of anthropology and cultural studies to pinpoint different aspects of women-homemade textiles/embroideries and colonialism. This approach locates the thesis in newly emerging historical trends of material culture of “textiles” and history of emotions that we can unveil through reading these art forms.

This research locates phulkaris in different museums and art galleries that were made by women in the nineteenth century. It analyzes the embroidered figures critically to dig out the hidden emotions of the maker. It asserts that women have embroidered their emotions of love, anxiety, amazement and curiosity in phulkari figures as they did not have any other platform to express them. Moreover, it highlights that the production of phulkari is deeply connected with a specific image of femininity- as embroidery was considered a decorative and elevated handicraft to portray different female virtues. Quiet, patient, and busy mothers, daughters and wives whose ‘leisure is productive’ is the ideal image of Indian female.

Apart from this, this thesis evaluates the writings of Flora Annie Steel who put focus on female’s work. Her Interest in craftsmanship or hand labor was at pinnacle during the second half of the 19th century. India offered British patrons a source for handicrafts at the time when the Industrial Revolution was threatening to incorporate hand craftsmanship in Great Britain. Phulkaris were hand craftsmanship par excellence. Phulkaris made by rural women was regarded by Steel, J. L Kipling and other authors as one of the last vestiges of an “authentic” handmade. Through critically analyzing her writings this thesis indicates her emotion of pride for belonging to a superior nation. It pinpoints her “white man burden” thinking for the sake of which she was serving Indian women