



Threads of heritage: A comparative analysis of Punjab and Thai embroidery

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This paper discusses the significance of traditional Indian textiles, which are recognized globally for their intricate surface ornamentation techniques like embroidery, dyeing, and printing. Embroidery has been a popular technique used for centuries to adorn clothing and textiles. Different regions in India practice distinct embroidery techniques, each having unique features. The study analyzes two embroidery styles: the Hmong embroidery from Thailand and the Phulkari of Punjab. The paper summarizes the history, techniques, design, and material used for embroidery, types of stitches, end products, and the cultural significance of these traditional art forms and further analyzes the similarities and differences between the two crafts. The study found that though both embroideries share similarities in the use of colors, cultural significance, and women's art forms, they also have notable differences. These findings highlight the rich diversity of textile arts around the world and the importance of cultural heritage in preserving these traditions.

Keywords: Embroidery, Hmong tribe, Needlework, Phulkari, Punjab, Surface ornamentation technique, Thailand, Traditional craft

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Traditional textiles have deep historical and religious significance, serving as an integral part of the cultural heritage in many regions. Passed down through generations, these textiles hold immense value. Embroidery, the art of decorating fabric using a needle and thread or yarn has been practiced for centuries worldwide. The history can be traced back to ancient Egypt, where it was used to decorate garments and household items. Today, embroidery finds application in fashion, art and crafts. It encompasses various techniques such as surface embroidery, counted-thread embroidery, and needlepoint¹. Both hand and machine embroidery are employed to enhance clothing and accessories in the fashion industry. India's rich cultural diversity showcases a wide array of traditional embroideries, including *Kasuti*, *Chamba Rumal*, *Chikankari*, *Phulkari*, *Kashida*, *Kantha* etc. However, hand embroidery tradition extends beyond India, with the diverse forms of this art practiced in countries like Japan, China, Indonesia, Vietnam etc. Phulkari embroidery, a traditional embroidery of Punjab, holds significant cultural, commercial and artistic value. Its distinct characteristics include geometric designs and patterns. During a cross-cultural study on embroidery traditions worldwide, a researcher discovered a

striking visual resemblance between Phulkari and Hmong embroidery from Thailand. Moreover, both styles are imbued with cultural significance in terms of colors and motifs. To verify this observation, the researcher undertook a thorough literature review resulting in a comprehensive summary of origin, history, motifs, designs, stitches used, products, and cultural significance of both styles of embroidery. The history, techniques, colors, motifs, design and significance of Phulkari embroidery have been extensively explored by researchers, artists and designers. Various books have discussed the embroidery's history in Punjab. Phulkari holds immense cultural importance in Punjabi weddings and ceremonies. It has transitioned from a domestic craft to a commercial product with impacts on the artisans involved^{2,3}. Traditional craft impacts and supports the idea of women's empowerment, specifically in the context of Phulkari needlework embroidery in rural Punjab. Women have historically been the primary artists of this craft, using it to adorn their bridal attire or everyday clothing as a hobby⁴⁻⁶. However, there was a decline of this craft due to the introduction of cotton fabric and embroidery thread from Europe, as well as the cost-effectiveness of machine-made textiles, and the influence of western culture, leading

to a decrease in the quality of fabric and neatness in embroidery. After independence, industrialization, influence of western culture through films, radio and television promoted materialism and consumerism resulting in the decline of traditional art and craft⁷.

According to Indian folk art expert Pratapaditya Pal, the word "Phulkari" is derived from "phul" (flower) and "kari" (craftsmanship) and means "flower work"⁸. The embroidery style involves simple and sparse designs in shawls and dupattas, utilizing the darning stitch on the reverse side of the coarse cotton fabric known as 'khaddar' and silk thread called 'pat'. Skilled Punjabi women create innumerable alluring and interesting designs by manipulating the darn stitch. Phulkari has cultural, commercial, and artistic significances, in the following ways:

Cultural significance

Phulkari has been an important part of Punjabi culture and heritage, passed down through generations and traditionally crafted by women for special occasions like weddings. It was considered a symbol of prosperity and good fortune.

Commercial significance

Phulkari textiles are highly valued and sought after, providing livelihood for many artisans in Punjab. It has empowered women in rural Punjab, allowing them to achieve financial independence.

Artistic significance

Phulkari is a type of folk art with intricate and colorful designs admired for their beauty and uniqueness. Contemporary artists, designers, and fashion houses incorporate Phulkari designs and techniques into their work. The floral designs and vibrant colors fascinate people worldwide representing Punjabi identity and creativity.

The term 'Hmong' refers to upland people living in southern China and northern Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand. The embroidered patterns served two functions: decoration and communication. According to oral history, long ago, when the Hmong were still concentrated in China, it was forbidden for them to use their original written language, which was made up of picture symbols. So, the women started sewing the symbols into their skirts to create messages, disguising them as patterns, rich in meaning and symbolism. The skill passed down from mothers to daughters was primarily used to decorate hand-sewn clothes for the Hmong New Year and other occasions.

Traditional Hmong textile is produced with hand-spun hemp using basket weave and dyed using batik technique. 'Paj Ntaub' (pronounced as "pan dow") is the name of the embroidery done on this textile, which means 'flower cloth' in Hmong Language. Hmong story cloths is a way to preserve historical and cultural heritage⁹. With their own distinctive language and traditions, the Hmong people have inhabited the serene hills of Thailand for generations, imparting their wisdom and values to all who visit¹⁰. Community Research Project launched in Oct 2012 through the partnership of Photo Forward and The Traditional Arts and Ethnology Centre in Lao and Walk Sew Good channel gave the glimpse of traditional Hmong embroidery skills, their learning process and significance of the art form in Hmong culture. It shows examples of the artisans' beautiful embroidery works and give the viewer a treat for the eye. It also explains designs tell stories and reflect the Hmong people's history and way of life. There has been an evolution of clothing in Vietnam from prehistoric times to the modern era⁷. A significant change in women's clothing and the ao dai's role as a symbol of Vietnamese identity was examined^{11,12}. The cultural significance of Hmong textiles, which encompasses embroidery and batik, was explored as a means of communicating identity and social status¹³.

The literature review highlighted many aspects such as history, techniques, tools, colors, motifs, design, cultural significance, and changes that have occurred over time. Furthermore, the researcher has documented the crafts in detail and conducted a comparative study on the traditional embroidery of Punjab and Thailand. The study examined the history, techniques, and designs of the embroidery styles in both regions, as well as the cultural significance of this traditional art form. By comparing the embroidery traditions of these two regions, author hopes to gain a deeper understanding of the similarities and differences between them.

Materials and Methods

This study aims to compare Hmong embroidery of Thailand and Phulkari embroidery of Punjab to identify their similarities and differences. The methodology includes a literature review of existing embroidery traditions in both regions, which will allow for a deeper understanding of techniques, designs, colors, motifs, and cultural significance etc. The research design is comparative and qualitative,

and data was collected through literature review, observation of embroidery techniques, and analysis using a thematic approach. The aim of this research was to determine the changes that have occurred over time in both embroidery traditions. Finally, a comparative analysis was used to compare the collected data and identify similarities and differences in the two embroidery styles.

Results

Origin and history

Phulkari

The exact origins of the embroidery are unclear, but it is believed to date back to at least the 15th century. Historically, it was created by women for their own use or as gifts for family members, and was often used to embellish clothing and household textiles. It was a symbol of a woman's skill and creativity and was frequently included in her dowry. Phulkari embroidery became commercially successful in 19th and 20th century. Bagh, a type of Phulkari, meaning a 'garden', is a name for embroidered cloth made in Pakistani cities such as Peshawar, Sialkot, Jhelum, Rawalpindi, and Hazara¹⁴. The main difference is in Phulkari embroidery the base fabric is visible, while in Bagh the entire surface of the fabric is covered. The main feature of Phulkari is that the embroidery is on the backside of the cloth, so the design is immediately embroidered on the right side of the cloth¹⁵. Despite the popularity of machine-made embroidery in the modern era, Phulkari embroidery is still practiced by women in the Punjab region and has gained popularity as a form of traditional art and craft.

Hmong

Though the exact origins of Hmong embroidery are unclear, it is believed to date back hundreds of years. The Hmong, a nomadic and agrarian tribe, may have been around for 5000 years⁹. Hmong embroidery is a type of traditional embroidery that comes from the Hmong people or tribe, an ethnic group that lives in China, Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand. Historically, Hmong embroidery was used to decorate clothing and household textiles and was passed down through generations as a form of cultural heritage. During the 20th century, many Hmong people were displaced due to war and political upheaval, and as a result, Hmong embroidery spread to other parts of the world, including the US and Thailand, where they spent time in camps and gradually Hmong refugees settled. The

Hmong were then registered by the state as the Meo hill tribe. Then, more Hmong migrated from Laos to Thailand following the victory of the Pathet Lao in 1975. Today, the embroidery is still practiced by Hmong women in Thailand and has gained popularity as a form of traditional art and craft. The embroidery is a symbol of the Hmong people's resilience and creativity in the face of adversity and an important aspect of their cultural identity.

Raw materials used in the process

Phulkari

- Fabric- 'khaddar'
- Thread- untwisted silk thread known as 'Pat'
- Needle
- Khaat (a wooden frame) - used for holding the fabric taut while embroidering.

Hmong

- Fabric- traditionally, hemp or cotton
- Thread- silk or cotton, often hand-dyed using natural dyes.
- Needle
- Batting: a layer of cotton batting to add thickness and texture.

Procedure and technique

Phulkari

The Phulkari embroidery is done from the wrong side of the fabric by counting the thread. As the needle only picks up one thread at a time, the back of the pattern is defined by single lines of color in extremely fine stitches whereas in the front, the stitch ranges from 1/2 to 1/4 cm in size. In Bagh, a single thread of the base fabric separates one pattern from the other. Thus, an area is divided into number of squares by this fine line.

Traditionally, Phulkari was done on 'khaddar', nowadays, variety of fabrics, including, satin, georgette, chiffon, etc serves as base for the embroidery. The stitches used are darning, stem, herringbone, satin, straight, back, running, blanket, split, cross, chain stitch, etc. The Phulkari embroidery patterns incorporate geometrical designs, including diagonal lines, squares, and circles. There are various types of Phulkari Embroideries, such as Phulkari, Bagh, and Chope, discussed in detail in the further in the paper.

Hmong

The traditional garments of the Hmong tribe are crafted from hemp fiber. Annually, the process begins

by cultivating the hemp, allowing it to grow for about three months until it reaches a height of two meters or more. After harvesting and sun-drying the hemp for over 10 days, the outer layer is peeled off. Women artisans then join the hemp strings together, creating yarn, usually around 5-6 kg for one loom, wound using a spinning wheel. The hemp is then boiled with fire ash for three days to remove the color, producing soft and white yarn. Once prepared, the threads are placed on a loom, and weaving commences to construct the fabric. The finished cloth is dyed in indigo for several times. This is followed by the embroidery to embellish the textile further.

Hmong textiles comprises two styles; first involves embroidering directly onto their clothing using bright colored threads (red, green, yellow, white, and black) and second consists embroidery in red, white, black, or another color, rectangular, square, or triangular-shaped pieces of material, which are then sewn onto an item of clothing or decorative cloths in accordance with the specific customs of each subgroup or region¹⁶. Artisans divide silk threads into three strands twisting them together between knee and palm. The tightly woven fabric serves as the base, and stitches are intricately sewn from the reverse side by counting threads. Symbolic motifs and beautiful patterns depict village life, encompassing animals, rice terraces, stars, and trees. Embroidery serves as a means of communication and commemoration, and distinguishing social standings and personal abilities. All the embroidery sequences are recalled from memory and took years of practice.

Stitches

Phulkari

The main stitch employed in Phulkari is ‘Darning Stitch’ placed in different directions namely, vertical,

horizontal, and diagonal, and used to fill the motifs. Design is never drawn on the fabric, and the pattern is completed by counting the threads of the fabric. (Fig. 1 A to F) explains the Darning stitch steps.

Hmong

The main stitches used are ‘Chain’ and ‘Cross stitch’. These are often used in combination with applique. There are 3 distinct techniques seen in Hmong embroidery including

Cross stitch- producing a cross-hatched effect and final pattern looks like colored spots. Chain and Blanket stitch are also used at times for the borders. Figure 1 (G, H and I) shows details of Cross, Chain and Blanket stitch respectively.

Appliqué- The technique includes stitching small pieces of fabric onto a backing cloth and edges sewn under, to make a colored pattern and then embroidering them with various selected motifs.

Reverse appliqué- This is done by using two pieces of cloth, layering one on top of the other and cutting the piece above according to a pattern. Then sew them together so that the color of the underclothes can be seen.

Colors

Phulkari

Khaddar was traditionally dyed in red color using plant-based dyes obtained from Palash flowers, madder, or the bark of acacia trees. Earthy colors like green, brown, and yellow are less frequently used, and blue relatively rarely. Phulkari embroidery is done with brightly colored untwisted silk thread. There were very limited hues, the main 3 colors pink (gual nari), orange and green (tote rang) and to enhance the appearance sometimes white (safed) was used. Contemporary designs may incorporate a wider

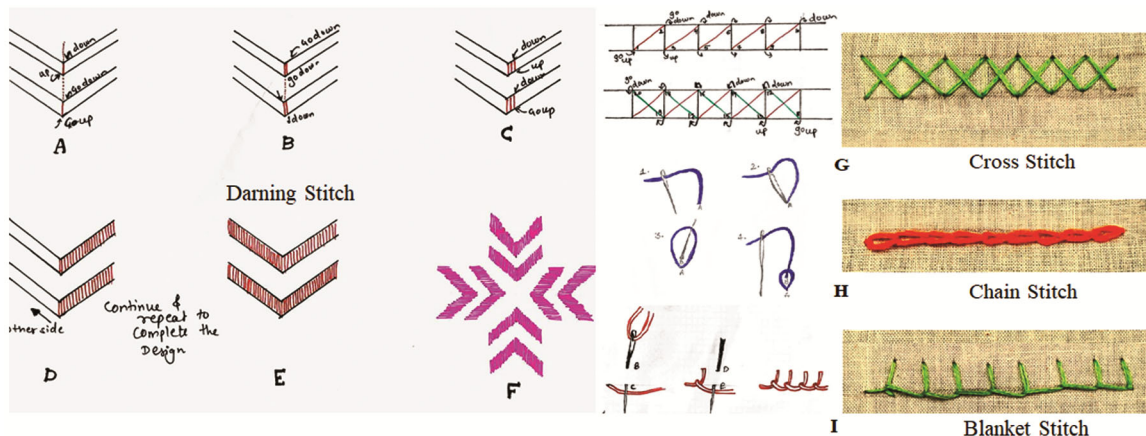


Fig. 1 — Detailed Illustration of Darning, Cross, Chain and Blanket Stitch with final looks

variety of shades as a result of expansion in colors used over the time.

Hmong

Bright colors such as pinks, reds, greens, and blues are used in the embroidery, and sometimes these are used to contrast with yellow and brown overlaid with white.

Motifs and their significance

Phulkari

Phulkari and Bagh use nature-inspired motifs to express emotions, with Phulkari featuring floral designs. Bagh covers the fabric entirely with embroidery and thus Bagh set out to be a status symbol. Table 1 explains the types of Phulkari with its cultural and religious significance. Each motif symbolizes some meaning and intended to be used in particular occasion. Each motif is named after the elements used in it and is easily identified by this. Bagh and Chohe are two well-known types of Phulkari.

The motifs were local animals, birds, human figures, etc. Other motifs used are mainly influenced by vegetable gardens and are named Karela bagh (bitter gourd), gobhi bagh (cauliflower), dhaniya bagh (coriander), and mirchi bagh (chilli) and lehriya bagh (wave). Motifs influenced by wheat and barley stalks abundant in Punjab are also commonly used. The mor (Peacock) is most common amongst animal motif and other popular motifs are Jasmin flower (Motia), Lotus plant (Kamal), Wheat (Kanak), Sunflower (Surajmukhi), and Parrot (Tota, maina). Product range includes sarees, dupattas, salwar pants, kameezes, and home decor items^{10,17,18}. Phulkari is dominated by geometrical figures, each having different meaning. Flowers symbolizes the beauty of nature, the fragrance of youth, good luck, wealth, prosperity, fertility, freshness and creativity. Many animals and birds also have a symbolic meaning explained in Table 2.

Thus, the traditional Phulkari is very symbolic through its motifs and colors. It depicts the rural culture and heritage of Punjab¹⁶.

Table 1 — Types of Phulkari with its cultural and religious significance¹⁹⁻²⁴

Sr. No.	Type	Significance
1.	Chohe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • blessing for brides and new-borns • uses the Holbein stitch which make the both sides identical • made by the bride’s maternal grandmother (naani) when she was born. • used to wrap the bride after the ritual bath on her wedding day.
2.	Thirma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • done on white khaddar • usually worn by elder women and widows, a symbol of purity
3.	Darshan Dwar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • offering to thank God which is given in the Gurudwaras after a wish is fulfilled • Darshan Dwar translates to ‘the gate to see God’
4.	Satrangas	Seven colors
5.	Panchrangas	Five colors
6.	Bawan Bagh	Fifty-Two motifs
7.	Vari-da-bagh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a gift from bride's in-laws to give her, made on an orange-reddish khaddar with a single golden or orange pat to welcome her to her new home
8.	Meenakari Bagh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • made with gold and white-colored pat • decorated with small multi-coloured diamonds
9.	Sainchi	depicts and narrates the village life of Punjab
10.	Sheeshedar Phulkari	(mirror) uses mirrors embellished Phulkari designs.

Table 2 — Symbolic meaning of geometrical shapes, birds and animal motifs

Sr. No.	Category	Shape	Symbolic Meaning
1.	Geometrical shapes	Triangle	symbolizes the holy trinity
2.		Circle	represents the sun, moon and the earth as a circle has no beginning and end
3.		Abstract Square	The multi-coloured abstract square of harmonious growth symbolizes the simple figures of peasants and has many variation
4.		Square superimposed on a circle	symbolizes reproduction, growth and fertility
5.		square and the rectangle	represent equality, conformity and peacefulness.
6.	Birds motifs	Sparrow	is a symbol of creativity and fertility
7.		Peacock	is a symbol of beauty, pride, success, goodwill and immortality
8.	Animal motifs	Cow	is a symbol of maternal nurturing powers of the earth, fertility and abundance
9.		Elephant	is a symbol of strength and victory
10.		Multi-colored fish	Peace and joy

Hmong

During their time in China, the Hmong were forbidden from using their original written language composed of pictorial symbols. In response, women started sewing these symbols onto their skirts, creating richly meaningful and symbolic patterns. The Paj Ntaub (flower cloth) became a medium for depicting ancient stories through textile. Geometrical designs and symbols representing nature, animals, and daily life were incorporated. Negative space played a significant role, intentionally left unembroidered. The cloth is also referred as ‘story cloth’ or ‘Paj Ntaub Tib Neeg’, where the embroidery conveyed various patterns and motifs with symbolic meanings. Women played a significant role in garments making and storytelling through expert embroidery skills, using motifs to convey history, traditions, and experiences. Young women or mothers combined symbols in their embroidery to manifest desired elements in their lives for the upcoming year. For instance, fish hook pattern on a jacket sleeve or skirt symbolized a young women’s quest for a husband, patterns related to the spirit world were worn by the elderly when unwell. Table 3 shows various symbols with their meaning used in Hmong Embroidery.







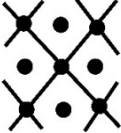

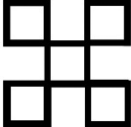
Other symbols include water lilies, dragon’s tail, grand stories of the Hmong tribe’s migration from China to Sa Pa and their experiences during the war and escape to Thailand.

Evolution

Phulkari

Phulkari, an ancient folk-art form from Punjab, has evolved significantly over time. The introduction of machines in the textile industry has impacted both production costs and the unique qualities traditional Phulkari. Many NGOs are working diligently to keep this rural art form alive. Cotton, chiffon, georgette, and crepe have replaced the original khaddar cloth, and silk thread has been replaced by synthetic threads. Contemporary Phulkari has also seen changes in design and technique, shifting from embroidery on the wrong side of khaddar to the right side, created by hand or machine. Modern methods involve dyeing the cloth and using block printing and/or CAD machines for design creation. While commercialization has provided employment opportunities for Punjabi women, it has also endangered the original folk-art form, necessitating measures for prevention. Many contemporary Phulkari products like footwear, home décor, jackets, masks and fashion accessories are

Table 3 — Different symbols with their meaning used in traditional Hmong embroidery

Sr. No.	Symbol	Description	Meaning
1		Heart	Compassion, integrity, and friendship
2		Snail	For lineage and protection
3		Ram’s horn	wisdom
4		House	symbolizing unity
5		Mountain	Homeland, strength
6		Elephant’s foot	symbolizing family, prosperity
7		Pumpkin flower or fences	Food or safety, security
8		Field or Landscape	Nature
9		A leaf/ Frond	Growth

produced. Various fashion designers have incorporated Phulkari into their collections to promote and preserve this traditional art form.

Hmong

Hmong embroidery has evolved with socio-economic development. Women now embroider decorative designs on various items and export them worldwide. Traditional methods have changed, and

synthetic fabrics are preferred over hemp. Hmong motifs are replicated into machine-made patterns for pleated skirts, cuffs, and accessories. The lack of opportunities for Hmong girls to learn Paj Ntaub, and the inability of elders to pass down the tradition may lead to its loss. Similar to Phulkari, many designers have explored Hmong embroidery. Jocelyn Yang, a Hmong American fashion designer, weaves her community's history and tradition into modern clothing, embracing body-positive sizing and design. While the market for Hmong embroidery has become commercialized, posing challenges for artisans, dedicated Hmong artisans in Thailand strive to preserve and promote this traditional art form.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to document and compare Hmong embroidery in Thailand and Phulkari embroidery in Punjab. Both regions have a rich history of this traditional art forms and place strong emphasis on its cultural significance. However, distinct techniques and styles are evident, reflecting the specific cultural influences and histories of each region. The study employed comparative analysis to achieve its objectives, revealing both similarities and differences between these two traditions. These findings shed light on the cultural context and artistic expressions associated with embroidery in these respective regions.

Similarities

- The technique used for surface ornamentation in both is same *i.e.*, embroidery
- Along with both embroideries having a rich history of embroidery and are often done by women artisans, it is passed down through generations as a part of the region's rich cultural heritage. The mother teaches and passes on the craft to her daughter.
- The embroidery thread, silk, is same. As a result, the final embroidery has a shiny and glossy appearance.
- The design is not traced in any of the embroidery style and is done by counting the threads in both styles.
- Motifs in both the embroideries include geometric patterns featuring intricacy. Each pattern has some strong cultural significance. One can also observe motif depiction of everyday life from the village, flora and fauna motifs in both the styles.

- The patterns are repetitive patterns, which can create a sense of rhythm and movement in the design.

Differences

- Hmong embroidery is made by the Hmong people of Thailand and other Southeast Asian countries, while Phulkari embroidery is a traditional art form of the Punjab region of India and Pakistan.
- Though the material for embroidery is same *i.e.*, silk threads, there is significant difference; in Phulkari, embroidery is done on hand spun cotton fabric called as 'khaddar' where as Hmong embroidery is practiced on Hmong textiles made out of Hemp fabric grown, cultivated, woven and finished by Hmong tribe women.
- However, geometric patterns are similar in both the styles, each carries different meaning. For example, in Phulkari, triangles represent flower petals, whereas in Hmong embroidery, triangles represent mountains.
- There is a difference in their significance of using the motifs on a particular garment or area of the garment and also with the placement of each motif. A type of Phulkari, 'Vari-da-bagh' is a gift given to the bride by her in-laws. In Hmong, the fish hook pattern on a young woman's garment denotes that she is looking for a husband and wants to marry that year, or a double snail pattern denotes a husband and wife, and so on.
- While Phulkari embroidery typically features symmetrical design, Hmong embroidery often features asymmetrical designs with free-flowing shaped and patterns.
- The motifs used in Phulkari embroidery are typically influenced by the natural world, such as flowers and animals like peacock, elephant, while Hmong embroidery often includes depictions of everyday life, such as people, house, mountains and objects. Mostly depicting the stories, hence also named as 'story cloth'.
- The scale of patterns in Phulkari is often larger and bolder, while Hmong embroidery often features smaller and more intricate patterns.
- The stitching techniques differs between Hmong and Phulkari embroidery. Hmong embroidery predominantly uses cross stitch for delicate designs, while Phulkari uses a darning stitch to create a dense, textured look. Hmong embroidery incorporates applique and reverse applique techniques, unlike Phulkari.

Table 4 — Difference between symbolic meaning of colors

Color Name	Phulkari Embroidery	Hmong Embroidery
Red	Joy, fertility, used for married life or bridal Phulkari	Good luck, happiness, and joy
Yellow	Sun, harvest, prosperity and associated with spirituality and knowledge	Earth, royalty, and prosperity
Blue	Sky, water, associated with tranquillity, spirituality and harmony	Healing, harmony, and protection
Green	Life, growth and fertility and used in designs that depicts nature and landscapes	Life, growth, and vitality
White	Peace, purity and Spirituality; often used in designs for depicting religious figures or symbols	Purity, mourning, and death
Black	Strength, power and often used for depicting animals or geometric shapes	Sorrow, evil, and misfortune
Pink	Joy	Love, femininity and hope
Orange	Purity, sacrifice and associated with the Sikh religion	healing, transformation, and spirituality

- Color is a crucial design element in both embroidery styles, with bright and bold shades being prominent. While Phulkari primarily employs red, yellow, green, blue, orange, and sometimes white and black, Hmong embroidery incorporates pink and purple in addition to the traditional colors. However, the symbolic meanings associated with these colors differ significantly between the two styles. Table 4 shows the contrasting symbolic interpretations of colors in Phulkari and Hmong embroidery.
- The cultural significance of embroidery varies between the two regions. In Punjab, embroidery holds importance in wedding traditions, adorning the attire of brides. In Thailand, embroidery is associated with decorating Buddhist temples and is seen as an offering to the gods. It is significant in their lives because they spend the entire year creating the Hmong textile that will be used the following year.
- Though both embroideries are made for a specific occasion, they differ in the types of occasions they are used for. For example, Phulkari embroidery is used for wedding ceremonies, childbirth, festivals, and other religious occasions, whereas Hmong embroidery is used to embroider

Fig. 2 — Reference images for Phulkari (to the left side) and Hmong embroidery (to the right side)²⁵

the new year's cloth, where women in the family make Hmong textiles for the entire family to wear on the occasion of New Year.

Conclusion

The purpose of this comparative study was to investigate and compare the embroidery traditions of Punjab and Thailand, emphasizing the significance of cultural heritage in preserving these practices. The findings revealed that embroidery plays a crucial role in the cultural heritage of both regions, despite some regional variations. Analysis shows that both styles share similarities and differences, yet possess distinct features while looking alike visually (Fig. 2). Both styles share similarities, including the use of vibrant colors, cultural importance, geometric motifs, intricate stitching techniques, and the involvement of women as artisans. However, distinctions were observed in the production process, materials used, and types of stitches employed. The study emphasizes the need to protect and celebrate these cultural practices to maintain their diverse richness, as they serve as a means of artistic expression, storytelling, and identity. The challenges faced by these crafts, including limited promotion and insufficient wages, pose a risk to their traditional essence.

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Conflict of Interest

Author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

Author Contributions

The sole author developed, carried out, and documented this research project. The author actively participated in the literature review, the planning of

the research design, gathering and analyzing data, and interpretation of the results from the start of the article's idea to its completion. The author also took the initiative in writing and revising the manuscript. Rasika Bhoj individually contributed throughout the entire procedure of research, from conception to final manuscript.

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