



HOME BASED WOMEN EMBROIDERERS OF ALIGARH: AN INSIGHT INTO THEIR WORK AND WORKING CONDITIONS

Dr. Saman Ahmed

UGC Post-Doctoral Fellow

Sarojini Naidu Centre for Women's Studies,

Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi-110025

ABSTRACT

The conditions of labour in unorganized sector and home based aspect of work having risen in the years on account of structural adjustments in globalized economy has been much covered theme of study. The gendered aspect of the home based productive work including the craft of embroidery has also received attention of scholars. In case of embroidery workers, however, particular attention had been on chikankari of Lucknow and phulkari of Punjab. This study therefore is an extension of the attempts to understand the work and conditions of embroidery workers in Aligarh. Here while the case of lock industry, for which Aligarh remains quite famous, has still been taken for study in some ways the other major craft of Aligarh, involving women working in the home based sector, however, has not received sufficient attention. The attempt is made here to bring out through the case study of embroidery workers in Aligarh, the conditions of home based women embroiderers in the current economic scenario. The paper looks into the monthly earnings, working hours, value chain in the process of work, classification of embroiderers according to their incomes, etc. In the patti business there are men, but mainly as entrepreneurs, contractors, subcontractors while few of them are also tracers, tailors and launderers but not as patti embroiderers. In this gendered division of labour, women embroiderers working from homes earn little, while the male contractors, traders, shopkeepers earn higher profits. This is perhaps on account of embroidery considered as leisurely engagement for women and her skills considered rudimentary. Embroiderers themselves regard their work as little specialized and requiring lesser skills. Different types of embroidery done in Aligarh by women are patti ka kaam, karchobi, cut work, zari, moti work, aari work, gaanth ki kadhahi, etc. The study primarily took up patti embroiderers for study as it is the famous embroidery of Aligarh. For the sake of comparison wherever possible, samples were also taken from cut work embroidery and karchobi embroidery (the sample had 140 patti embroiderers and only 50 cut work and 30 karchobi embroiderers in the total of 220).

Keywords: Women, Home Based Workers, Aligarh, Patti Work, Cut Work, Karchobi

Introduction:

Globalization has complicated the scene of women's employment, the third world facing the brunt of the structural adjustment. There has been a major realization of how feminization of poverty has resulted in the recent years. The labouring sections have regressed from organized sector work to unorganized sector work. With the declining opportunities, a large section of unorganized women workers are forced to much lesser prospects of home based work. Home based work is remarkably conspicuous for the invisibility of workers, their work conditions and exploitation. It is difficult to estimate the home workers exactly but as estimated by G.O.I report, the home workers constitute about 7.4 per cent of the unorganized non-agricultural workers (Government of India 2008)¹. As whole home based workers were estimated at nearly 8.2 million workers of whom about 4.8 million were women.²

My paper discusses such home based women embroiderers from Aligarh who toil day and night to make their lives better. The city of Aligarh being a feudal hub with a number of aristocratic houses, there has traditionally been demand for embroidered patterns on the dresses worn by elite women and heavy embroidery on wedding clothes in golden and silver threads, *zari*, *zardozi*, *karchobi*, *aari*, *moti work*, etc. Such products are sufficient to maintain embroiderers in these crafts traditionally.

Traditionally, the embroidery engaged women of secluded households, even of elite families, so much so that during the early twentieth century campaign for women's education in Aligarh, the meetings were accompanied with exhibition of women's needle work, presenting the high art by women (Minault 1998)³. The attempts were to establish their capacity and efficiency as learners through their fine arts. However, the needle work was treated not as '*women's work*' but as '*feminine leisure time activity*'. Such discourse over embroidery continues even though now done by poor women.

This home based work engaging poor women is marred by the discourse of '*khali waqt mein*' (in free time) which reduces the status of the embroidery as proper work, ignores and marginalizes the women's work—this being the case with other embroideries as well where these are portrayed as use-value production (Wilkinson-Weber 1997)⁴. The very notions of embroidery became different when worked by men in *karkhanas* or removed from the house hold site.

Mapping the locality, workers and work

The Aligarh city is divided by a railway track on north south axis. The southern divide by the rail line is the old city area of Aligarh which has many lock factories for which the city is famous. The north of the rail track known as civil lines area from colonial times houses the famous Aligarh Muslim

¹ Government of India. (2008). *Report on Conditions of Work and Promotion of Livelihoods in the Unorganized Sector*. New Delhi: Academic Foundation.

² Ibid

³ Minault, G. (1998): *Secluded Scholars Women's Education and Muslim Social Reform in Colonial India*, Delhi: Oxford University Press.

⁴ Wilkinson-Weber, Clare M. (1997): Dependency and Differentiation: Agents and Embroiderers in the Lucknow Embroidery Industry. *Ethnology*, Vol. 36 (No.1), pp. 49-65.

University. There are scattered labouring localities on the outskirts and fringes of the university which are mainly Muslim dominated. There are limited job opportunities for women in this area. Available employment sources are only to work as casual labourers in the university or as construction workers or as domestic servants. But the women embroiderers mainly belong to *lower caste Muslims* where, in majority of cases, going out for work is considered a social taboo thus, pushing more and more women workers into home based embroidery work. It was found that majority of women workers were married with children. Restricted choices in work and abundance of labour leave them with zero bargaining power thus making their conditions more terrible. Different kinds of home based embroideries in the area done by women are *cut work, karoshia, kaamdaani and karchobi* but I have restricted my study on women '*patti workers*' as its reputation among the other embroideries in Aligarh stands out in the local, national and even international markets. As a lady contractor puts in, "*patti work* is to Aligarh as *chikan work* is to Lucknow".

Brief profile of patti work

Phool patti ka kaam is a traditional appliqué embroidery style from Aligarh in north India. The only other location in India where this is also practiced is Rampur. Appliqué refers to a needle work technique in which pieces of fabric, embroidery or other materials are sewn onto another piece of fabric to create designs, patterns and pictures. *Phool patti* was initially made only on *organdi* and cotton fabrics on which *patti* of *rubiya* cloth was cut and stitched but now *organdi* fabric becoming expensive the suits mostly for the local market are made of mixed cottons on which there are *organdi* patches stitched. However, this embroidery is also done on a variety of fabrics like *tissue, chanderi, silk, net, cotton, organdi, semi organdi, organza, etc.*

There are no written records on the history of *patti work* yet it is believed that *phool patti* work was done by court embroiderers initially on the *shalukas* (blouses) worn by the *begums* of *nawabs*. It was done by the maidens of the courts for their *begums* to please them and as a part of their leisure activity. With the university town becoming the feudal hub and the aristocratic *nawabi* families settling in Aligarh, the craft reached Aligarh. The embroidery reflects Persian influence and draws on *mughal* art designs.

The working pockets of embroiderers have extended now. Many *patti* embroiderers introduced the craft in the localities they went after marriage. The work in this manner has now spread in the adjoining localities of Aligarh and to newer localities like '*jalaali*', '*radgaon*', '*sahawar*', '*kher*' etc. (around 20 to 30 kms from the city). Similarly, the girls who got married into families of *patti* embroiderers learnt the craft from the marital family. Obviously the growing demand for embroidery provides much scope for extension of embroidery in newer localities.

Girls learn the embroidery skill within their families. There is an inter-generational element in the transfer of work and skills between mothers and children. Like all other household works in which the female members of the household usually cooperate, and the daughters initiated since childhood

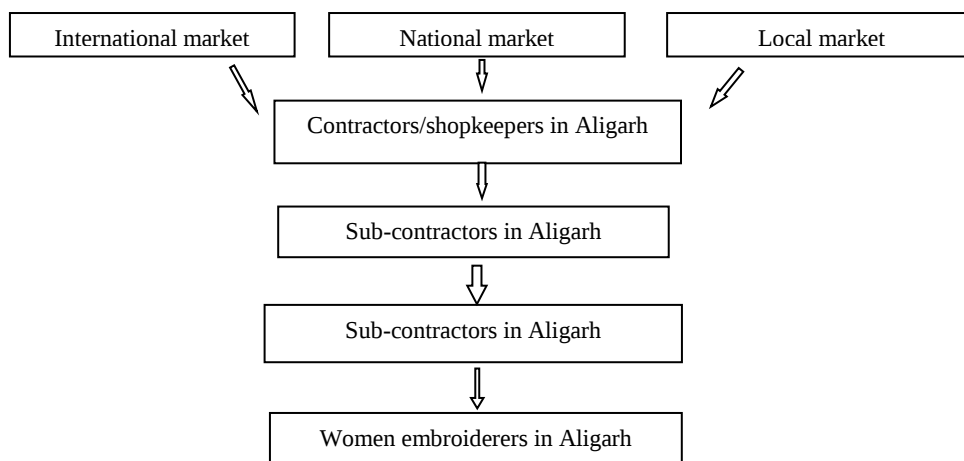
(Mehrotra & Biggeri 2007)⁵; the embroidery work at home similarly draws daughters into the work. Initially by helping mothers in this work, they gradually learn the skill sufficiently to attract greater orders of *patti work* in the household. Women also learn this skill from their neighbours and friends, and begin working in their homes. The home based *patti* embroidery thereby remain the domain of women embroiderers.

In the *patti* business there are men, but mainly as entrepreneurs, contractors, subcontractors while few of them are also tracers, tailors and launderers but not as *patti* embroiderers. Whereas women in this business are mainly embroiderers (*though women contractors, subcontractors are many in business*). The *patti* embroidery is typically regarded as *feminine work*. There is a network of *subcontractors*, mostly residing in the locality belonging to the same community, who bring work from the main contractors or shops in Aligarh and distribute it among embroiderers in their own locality. The designs are traced on the fabric and along with the desired colour combinations handed over to the subcontractors who give it to home based embroiderers who use their own thread and needle for the embroidery. Sometimes these home based embroiderers also take the work directly from the contractors, in that case they earn more.

Value chain in embroidery

The *value chain* describes the full range of activities which are required to bring a product or service from conception, through the different phases of production (involving a combination of physical transformation and the input of various producer services), delivery to final consumers, and final disposal after use (Kaplinsky et al., 2001:4 as cited in Mehrotra & Biggeri 2007)⁶. It would be imperative here to discuss the *value chain* or the set of value adding activities in the embroideries of Aligarh as the product passes from the initial design to its final consumption stage. The *value chain* here consists of usually four to five intermediaries between embroiderers (producer) and the retailer on the other end. The number of intermediaries definitely impact on the bargaining strength of embroiderers.

Chart 1 value chain in patti and cut work embroidery



Source: field survey

⁵ Mehrotra, S. & Biggeri, M. (Eds.). (2007). *Asian Informal Workers: Global risks, local protection*. New York: Routledge Publications

⁶ Kaplinsky, R., Morris, M., & Readman, J. (2001). *A Handbook for Value Chain Research*. sussex

The *value chain* in *patti* and *cut work* embroidery is similar, sometimes the number of intermediaries may increase or decrease. Some embroiderers go directly to the local shopkeepers/contractors asking for any order of work (*this reduces their number of intermediaries and increases their earnings*) but most of them have to sit in their homes waiting for the *sub-contractors* or *sub sub-contractors* to come and deliver work to their homes (*with the increase in number of intermediaries their already low wages becomes lower and lower*). This explains the reason of women being poorer in the informal economy due to their higher representation in the informal economy. Casual wage worker and industrial outworker (Carr & Chen 2001, Mehrotra & Biggeri 2007)⁷. The *karchobi* embroidery however forms an exception following a different *value chain*. The demand for embroidery does not flow from the local *Amir Nishan* shopkeepers/contractors of Aligarh or even from the few big showrooms of Aligarh selling *karchobi* products like ‘*sheesh mahal*’, ‘*vastralok*’, ‘*saree suhag*’ etc. which employ for their work male embroiderers on a regular basis. Women embroiderers of *karchobi* receive their work from contractors from the neighbouring *Bulandshahar*, *Dibai* and *Sikandrabad* areas of Aligarh where this craft is more popular. In Aligarh, it is done on a small scale by few women of a particular locality. Moreover, *karchobi* is in fact a male dominated craft in Aligarh. It is only recently that women have started producing for the market within their homes.

Classification of women embroiderers

The study primarily classifies embroiderers as *unskilled*, *skilled*, *worker-cum- subcontractors* and *subcontractors*. Roughly 5 years period in *patti work* and *cut work* is seen as sufficient for acquiring a standing of a *skilled/expert* worker. The movement in wage is primarily on account of the years spent in the craft, or the experience in the craft. There is however not always a direct connection between rise in income and the time spent in the craft.

Notably the skill of *patti work* and *cut work* is regarded as rather rudimentary in terms of techniques in embroidery and no special acquisition of skill is considered as essential for the craft. This may however be purely notional as notions of work have remained gendered¹. This may not be regarded as a high skill perhaps also to keep the wages low. The term *unskilled* is thus for the *beginners* in the craft who have spent less than 5 years in the craft. In *patti work* normally a girl learns from making borders of *dupattas* and sarees called as *keekri*. The *keekri* workers in *patti work* are beginners and it takes at least 2 to 3 years to come into full fledged *patti work*.

Skilled embroiderers therefore are those who have spent much time (*more than 5 years in embroidery*) and have acquired certain skills in the craft. The higher skill may not always lead to higher income of embroiderer as the earnings remain uncertain on a number of accounts. A *skilled* worker may earn lesser than an *unskilled* worker due to lack of availability of work (*work coming through a chain of*

⁷ Carr, M. & Chen, M. A. (2001). *Globalization and the Informal Economy: How Global Trade and Investment Impact on the Working Poor*. Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing

contractors, in which chance, resourcefulness of contractors in getting contract etc. have a play) or according to rates current in their locality, or the rates paid by their specific contractor.

However, there is another category of embroiderers who are also working as *subcontractors* in their own locality, receiving the contract from the higher ones and distributing the work among other women after taking their share of work. Notably, all embroiderers in this category had worked for more than 5 years. We call them *workers-cum-subcontractors* while the *subcontractors* are those who have now left the embroidery and have fully taken the work of *subcontracting*. These women appear well experienced and were found working for more than 10 years in this craft.

Piece rates of women embroiderers

The rates vary according to the amount of embroidery done on the cloth. For a full *shalwar suit*, which on an average takes a week to be completed with 6.6 average daily working hours, Rs 220 is received (*Rs.34 per day*). A *kurta* which takes two to three days for completion amounts to Rs. 45 (*Rs.15 per day*) in case of cotton fabric and Rs. 55 in case of *tissue, silk, chanderi* etc. (*Rs. 18 per day*). A *saree* which takes 12 to 15 days to complete, the average *piece rate* payment is between Rs. 300 to 400 (*Rs 25 daily*). The payment for embroidery varies with the type, extent, fabric and quality of embroidery on each piece. The remuneration per piece also varies in case of different contractors and *subcontractors*. Besides, these rates vary depending on the demand affected by the vagaries of not only limited local market but the demand ensuing from big malls and export oriented market.

Table 3.1 Piece-rates in patti embroidery in the local markets of Aligarh

Items	Piece rates (in Rs.)	Market rate of end product	Hours of labor	Average Hourly wage (in Rs)
Top	15 to 25	125-300	2-6	5.83
Kurta	45 to 55	150-400	10-12	4.54
Dupatta	70 to 220	150- 300	25-40	4.15
Suit	160 to 500	300-3500	40-50	7
Saree	190 to 450	500-4000	60-80	4.39
Bed sheet set	100 to 150	800-1500	40-60	2.5

Source: field survey

Table 1.2 Piece rates of cut work embroiderers

Items	Piece rates (in Rs.)	Market rate	Hours of labor	Average Hourly wage (in Rs)
Stole	15-30	100-150	2-4	7.50
Top	20-30	100-200	2-6	7.50
Dupatta	60-80	150-300	15-30	3.33
Suit	70-200	500-1500	30-40	3.66
Bed sheet set	100-150	700-1200	50-70	2.07
Saree	150-250	500-1800	50-60	3.58

Source: field survey

It was difficult to find out the market price of *karchobi* products as the products were not sold locally. Here the prices of products are considered as informed by embroiderers and *subcontractors*.

Table 1.3 Piece rates in karchobi embroidery

Items	Piece rates (in Rs.)	Market rate	Hours of labor	Average Hourly wage (in Rs)
Suit	250-500	1500-2000	35-40	10
Dupatta	250-350	800-1200	30-35	9
Lehenga	500-1000	10,000-20,000	100-150	6
Saree	400-900	3000-15,000	70-150	6
Suit	250-500	1500-2000	35-40	10
Dupatta	250-350	800-1200	30-35	9

Source: field survey

Table 1.1 shows that hourly wage in case of suits in *patti work* is highest (Rs.7) whereas making bed sheets of *patti* embroidery fetches the lowest hourly wage (Rs.2.5). However, the hourly wages in case of all other products remains more or less same which in any way remains quite low as compared to the market prices of the products.

In *cut work* hourly wages are highest in case of stoles and tops (Rs.7.5) whereas again embroiderers receive lowest wages in bed sheets (Rs.2). In *karchobi*, embroiderers are benefitted more by

making *suits* than *lehangas* and *sarees*, though these products are high priced in the market. The owners and the shopkeepers seem to earn greater profits in case of high priced products by cutting down the wages of these home based embroiderers.

Women workers are generally, totally ignorant about the market value of their products and also about the remuneration given to the workers outside their own locality. Even if few embroiderers have a rough idea of the value of the product in the market, there could be little bargaining for them on this point given the large number of low income home based women who had taken up the embroidery work from home as their only option for work, also given the little opportunities of *dignified work* in the neighborhood.

Monthly earnings of embroiderers

(a) *Estimation of monthly income:*

The earnings through the *piece rate* estimation give us the picture of earnings of embroiderers if she has to produce only a particular type of embroidery, which is not the case. Embroiderers produce different items depending on the demand.

The monthly earnings of women embroiderers are estimated here to assess their real economic conditions. The estimation of their monthly wages is somewhat difficult on account of the payment received in *piece rates* in a highly unstable demand situation and no fixed number of hours for embroidery, as the household tasks gets mixed with embroidery work. Here the incomes of all the four category of embroiderers namely; *unskilled*, *skilled*, *worker-cum-subcontractors* and *subcontractors* have been estimated. The respondents however, mentioned average remuneration they received per piece and the number of such products produced in a week, from which the monthly earnings were estimated. As the data for lean time as well as busy times was collected, the average monthly earning of each respondent was estimated from the highest and the lowest earnings reported.

Table 1.4 Embroiderers in different income groups in the three women specific embroideries in Aligarh.

Range of income (in Rs.)per month	<i>patti work</i>	<i>cut work</i>	<i>karchobi</i>
0-400	46	26	0
400-800	50	15	01
800-1200	15	03	09
1200-1600	12	02	11
1600-2000	08	02	02
2000 & above	09	02	07
TOTAL SAMPLE	140	50	30

Source: field survey

Looking at these monthly earnings of embroiderers and the maximum number of embroiderers in the sample (*for patti and cut work*) falling in the lowest range of incomes further bring in the grim picture of these women embroiderers.

In case of *patti* workers (Table 1.4) women earning in the range 0 to 400 constituted 1/3 of its population (*a real grim poverty situation of the bulk of patti embroiderers*) similarly another 36 per cent fall in the range Rs. 400 to 800 in a month. Looking at its higher end, women embroiderers who are able to earn 1600 to 2000 are 6 per cent and 6 per cent earning above Rs. 2000 in a month. Within *patti* embroidery the *unskilled* embroiderers were earning as low as Rs.200/- while the *skilled* embroiderers could earn up to Rs.2000/ per month, and *worker- cum-subcontractors* and *subcontractors* could earn up to Rs. 8000/. This brings out the income difference and disparity of earnings within embroiderers themselves.

The *cut work* embroiderers appear the most poor from these charts. Around 52 per cent embroiderers (i.e. more than ½) were just getting Rs. 400 in a month while another 30 per cent were earning in the range 400 to 800. To its higher end, only 4 per cent workers were earning in the range Rs.1600 to 2000 and another 4 per cent above Rs.2000 per month, i.e. only 2 women in the sample of 50. In *cut work* also, there is a wide gap in the incomes from as low as Rs.150/-per month in case of *unskilled* and *skilled* to Rs.2000/- and Rs.5000/- in case of *worker-cum-subcontractors* and *subcontractors* in the craft.

Comparatively, the *karchobi* embroiderers appear better off. There was not a single embroiderer falling in the range of 0 to 400 and only 1 embroiderer in the sample of 30 was earning between 400 to 800 (*notably the appearance is in such a small sample of 30*). Maximum *karchobi* embroiderers (37 percent) were earning in the range 1200 to 1600. In *karchobi*, while the ordinary embroiderers were earning around Rs.1000 to 1500, reportedly a woman *subcontractor* could earn Rs.10000/- in a month. Thus, apart from male embroiderers in the markets of Aligarh and male *subcontractors* in *patti*, *cut work* and *karchobi* business whose earnings were much higher compared to women embroiderers, there could be seen wide difference in the earnings of women embroiderers themselves.

(b) Calculation of mean income in the lean and busy time:

The demand for embroideries is irregular in nature. Embroiderers had to sit idle for at least 2 to 3 months in a year especially in the monsoon season. The respondents informed that the order for work was very less in the rainy season but they had no option but to wait for the next order. There is therefore lean and busy time in embroidery work. The questionnaire had the entries of remuneration per piece and average pieces made in a week in lean time as well as busy times of the different category embroiderers, from which the average income (*monthly and daily*) of the embroiderers could be worked out for the lean and the busy time.

(c) Mean income of unskilled and skilled embroiderers:

The *unskilled patti* embroiderers were earning from Rs.177/- per month to Rs.447/- per month which means that these *unskilled* embroiderers had daily wages of only Rs.6 to Rs.15/- The *skilled patti* embroiderers were earning Rs.420/- per month to Rs.948/- per month. Thus their daily wages was Rs.14 to Rs.31 per day.

The *unskilled cut work* embroiderers earned as low as Rs.150/- per month to as high as Rs.453/- per month. Their daily wages was almost similar to *unskilled patti* embroiderers (*from Rs. 5 to Rs. 15*) while the daily wages of *skilled cut work* embroiderers was lower than that of the *skilled patti* embroiderers i.e. Rs.9 to Rs. 25.

The lowest mean income of *unskilled karchobi* embroiderers was Rs.650 in the lean season and Rs. 850 per month in the peak season whereas the *skilled* embroiderers made up to Rs. 1000 in the lean season and Rs. 1500 in the peak season. The daily wages of *unskilled karchobi* embroiderers was Rs.22 in lean season and Rs. 28 in peak season while the daily wages of *skilled karchobi* embroiderers was Rs.33 in the lean season and Rs.50 in the peak season, which appears quite high compared to the other two embroiderers.

Hours of labour of women embroiderers

One of the major issues in women's home based work is its complex entanglement with the household chores. While the embroiderers are usually married women in large size nuclear families, the brunt of household work fall on them and their grown up daughters who also help them in embroidery. Embroidery from home had been generally taken up by many as this could go along with the *caring tasks* of the household. The respondents' spoke of embroidery done in *free time* when the household work was done or switching between the two tasks with their other female members of the family helping them in either of the tasks. This also gives us a hind sight to the lack of married women's opportunities of work and mobility on account of the household norms. The other difficulty in assessing the exact number of daily hours put in the task of embroidery is therefore on account of the *helpers* putting in their share of work to the embroidery being produced. Hours of labour of home based embroiderers are thus quite flexible. Embroiderers however reported in rough estimates the number of hours spent in a day in the embroidery.

The hours of labour reported by all the three category of embroiderers (*the entire sample of 220 embroiderers*) are taken together. On the basis of the information provided by embroiderers the average hours devoted for embroidery by each embroiderer was 6.6 hours daily.

Table 1.5 Hours of labour of women embroiderers

Hours of labour per day	Number of workers
0-3	17 (8%)
3-6	77 (35%)
6-9	95 (43%)
9-12	31 (14%)
TOTAL	220 (100%)

Source: field survey

Major problems of women embroiderers

Longer hours and seasonal nature of work: women workers have longer hours of work and seasonality in the work. On an average, they are able to receive work for about 8 to 9 months in a year. For 2 to 3 months especially in the rainy season they are idle with no other alternative work. After working for 6 to 8 hours daily their wages remain between Rs.13 to 20 per day or even less. Even if the order of work is in emergency and they have to deliver the product within limited time, yet, they are not paid for the extra labour. None of the *patti* workers reported of extra payment for overtime work.

Delayed and deferred payments: Though some women reported monthly and timely payments, but majority of them complained about delay in payments. Another exploitative practice adopted by the middlemen is to deduct wages for rejection. Many a times the middlemen withholds partial payment so that the worker is discouraged to leave him/her and tends to remain within the same contractor even in the absence of any written agreements.

Hidden costs: women embroiderers are paid on *piece rate* basis for the delivered work. This wage has many hidden costs including use of house and electricity. Many times the worker herself buys pieces of cloth to cut the petals, in case, the cloth falls short of the required amount.

Social immobility: Most of the embroiderers are cut off from the workers of other locality. The social interaction among the workers is almost nil. Thus making them totally unaware of the market rates and different rates prevailing in the system of embroidery. They do not even realize their exploitation and mistreatment at the hands of middlemen. Very few embroiderers were aware of the situation.

Conclusion and suggestions

The embroiderers of Aligarh come from very poor families and socially backward communities who have no other choice except to work within the four walls of their homes. Most of them work under utterly deplorable conditions to substitute their insufficient family incomes. They face exploitation from

subcontractors and lack bargaining power due to abundance of labour. There are no fixed wages and fixed working hours. There is complete absence of any social security measure. There is no role of any NGO (non-governmental organization) or self-help group for the upliftment of this downtrodden class. Lack of consciousness and voice amongst the majority of workers restrain women to come together to improve their situation. Besides, the fact that women embroiderers form a vast category composed of women from very low income group to even middle class which inhibited the process of coming together. But more importantly, there were different categories of workers and some with differing and even opposing interests which do not immediately bind all in common set of grievances.

They might become visible by forming groups and may have a strong voice for their problems. But they totally lack in initiative, and in fact fear hostility of the intermediaries (*the subcontractors*) if they take up to forming group. Options perhaps lie only with initiative by government, civil groups, or NGO which appears quite a long journey. Organizations such as SEWA (self-employed women's association) would be useful to explore for possible adaptation including formation of cooperatives of workers at Aligarh. This would facilitate standardized remuneration for the embroidery as well as facilitate access to social security arrangements such as nonprofit insurance schemes (covering sickness, maternity and loss of assets) and enable these women to lead more dignified lives.
