[Document of Surjit Kaur Sidhu's Story]

Surjit Kaur Sidhu Narrative – SCHF

Conversation between Karun Soni (SAS Coordinator) and Surjit Kaur Sidhu

Video 3:

Surjit Kaur Sidhu was born in Village Ganga in District Bhatinda, Punjab. She lived in that Village for almost 20 years and she didn't go to school for her formal education because there were no schools in her villages those days but she said, "now there is a school in the village". The school was there almost a mile away in the village Nathana which was a bigger village than Ganga. Those days, mostly in her village, parents never used to send girls to the school, that's why she didn't go to school at all.

Since she didn't go to school, so she spent her time at home doing house-hold work and in free time she used to do embroidery, knitting, doing crochet, or making durries, spinning Charkha etc. this is what she was busy all the time apart from regular house hold chores like cooking etc. Mostly her mother used to cook but she also helped her.

Surjit Kaur Sidhu had five more siblings and including her, they were six brothers and sisters. They were five sisters and one brother and now they are only four sisters who are alive; one sister and a brother have passed away.

The reason Surjit Kaur kept herself busy making durries and other embroidered materials was due to the customs those days that at the time of wedding, all these art works were displayed as "Daaj" when the girl made or was given to the girl as wedding gifts. So she kept making all those things and saved at one place. Mostly the older sisters will make for the younger sisters also, that used to be the custom those days. Surjit Kaur started spinning Charka and crochet from a very young age, approximately 7-9 years of age and started making durries from 13-15 years of her age as that was bit hard and tedious work. She also learnt how to make the tepar (Nawla) at young age, when she was 8-9 years. She could make them all with her hands such as Naala, Prandis etc. She described very passionately the procedure how to make Naala with bamboo sticks called "Peris" and how creative she was to make different types – the ones with bells and plain etc. The one with bells and sequels was used in Ghagras, even though she never wore a Ghagra but she made one such special Naala with the bell which she explained, was very special with intricate design. She recalled that she brought one Ghagra with her to Canada which she stitched herself after learning from an older woman in the village. It was made with 20 meters of black cloth of Saaf and was decorated with a golden tape called Kataan (gota) put on the whole rim of ghagra.

When asked at what occasions the ghagras were worn, Surjit Kaur explained that mostly the married women used to wear Ghagra not the unmarried girls. The women would wear a Ghagra while visiting anyone's house or going out to the fields in the morning as the shape of legs were not supposed to be seen in public. Those days, there were no in-house toilets and people used to go out in the fields. But morning and evening when women had to pass through the streets to go to the fields where men were sitting in groups (Satti) then the women were supposed to be properly covering their bodies that their legs were not showing off their shapes also. They Ghagras were used to cover the legs, instead of salwars. The Ghagras were worn on top of Salwars to cover the leg-shapes and some ghagras are made of even 20 yards of cloths. On the top used to be a Kurti and covered with thick dupattas sometimes in doubled-up layers (called Chaadar). The ghagras and big chaadars were worn only by the

IDENTIFIER
2022_05_04_028