



An overview of hand block printing units in Jetpur of Gujarat

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Abstract : Gujarat has been famous for its textiles and especially dyeing and printing craft since ancient times. Before the beginning of the Christian era up to the rise of the British power in India textiles from Gujarat were popular all over the known world. Jetpur in Gujarat was famous for its unique art of block printing. The air in Jetpur was laden with the smells of dye stuffs spiraling out of large copper vats with translucent layers of colored fabrics drying to the percussion beat of wooden printing blocks. In this study process carried out for hand block printing with special reference to Jetpur of Gujarat state had been studied. To cover the whole process, survey and observation methods were used, and by these methods data were collected. A sample size of 30 units was selected randomly and study was carried out with the help of survey and observation method. Then data collection was done after which raw data was coded, tabulated and statistically analyzed. The units were small scale units which did not require heavy investments and provide employment to many people. It is found that the mainly wax-resist printing is done for block printing and products used for preparing dyes are all chemical.

Keywords: Block printing, Dyes, wax-resist printing

I. INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Jetpur is a city in Rajkot district of Gujarat state which is renowned in history as a center for block printing. Various modes of dyeing and printing were highly developed in Saurashtra (Gujarat state), more particularly, the western peninsular of Gujarat, where Jetpur is located.

Origin of block printing in Jetpur

In Jetpur, 72 kilometres south from Rajkot, on the western bank of the Bhadar river, the origin of dyeing and printing craft could be traced to the beginning of the 19th century. Gopalji Chatrabhuj Kamdar, who was the councilor of one local ruler of Jetpur at that time (namely Shardul Vala), called upon various artisans as well as traders, from different places of Saurashtra, in order to promote the economic expansion of the town. In 1813 the first families belonging to the Khatri community were called from Kalavad in Jamnagar district to develop dyeing and printing craft and trade in Jetpur. They were followed by other Khatri artisans coming from textile printing centres located in the neighbouring districts of Junagadh and Amreli (like Kuthiana, Bhesan, Majevedi, Bagasara) (Sampatram, 1868). In the latter part of the 19th century up to 1947, Jetpur became a flourishing and prosperous town and an important centre of trade in textile. One specific factor gave an impetus to the commercial development of Jetpur before Independence it was a Kathi princely state wherein no duty was levied on the cloth imported in the town. This concession made it profitable for the traders of Jetpur to import cloth from Japan and other countries (cotton as well as silk) and sell it in other parts of the country (Trivedi - 1970). The development of dyeing and printing of cloth also progressed along with the expansion of textile trade. The concentration of this craft in Jetpur was further encouraged by the special properties of the water of the Bhadar river, on the bank of which the town

is situated: this water is famous to help in developing the colours and prints. Around 1920 nearly 100 artisans were engaged in dyeing and printing craft in Jetpur. Later block printing got a considerable impetus during the Second World War (Trivedi-1970). But then, the technique of screen printing was introduced in Jetpur in 1947, and the rapid development of this new mode of printing gradually supplanted block printing.

The partition of the country after its independence in 1947 put and ends to the flourishing economy of Jetpur as a textile trading centre. The town was subject to communal riots in 1948 and 1949. The neighbouring state of Junagadh, ruled by a Muslim king before Independence, and under which an adjoining village of Jetpur, Navagadh, was, wanted to merge with Pakistan. Jetpur was used as a military base for the army sent to crush the rebellion, and eventually the king of Junagadh escaped to Pakistan. Following these events, the Muslim community, especially the Memons, migrated to Pakistan. Thus their migration led to an economic depression, which was further aggravated by the successive departure of other communities. In the seventies, block printing had disappeared from Jetpur, except for one or two units which are still running today. Since last few years block printing had been revived and was done by the bhaiyas of Uttar Pradesh. As various arts and crafts that are slowly dyeing and so have to be renewed and brought back to life.

Objectives of Study: To carry out the study following objectives have been decided which are as follows-

- 1) To study the origin of hand block printing at Jetpur in Gujarat.
- 2) To study the process carried out for making block printing fabrics at Jetpur in Gujarat.

Procedure carried out for block printing in Jetpur (Gujarat)

- 1) Table is prepared for block printing by placing wet sand on it which is known as *Athro*. Due to wet sand on the printing table wax does not spread while block printing and fabric does not get stick to it so block printed fabric is easily removed.
- 2) Cotton fabric is washed to remove starches and sizing materials. After that they are dried and ironed. Mainly four types of design were carved on the blocks- Geometric, floral, abstract and human figures. Borders and neckline blocks were also seen in Jetpur.
- 3) Mostly beeswax and paraffin wax are used because of its malleability and friability and the addition of resins will increase the adhesiveness. The exact combination for batik wax is 70% of paraffin wax and 30% of beeswax but now a day's mostly paraffin wax is used because it is easily available and less costly. The wax must be kept at the proper temperature. The wax container is placed on a small stove may be of charcoal or electricity to convert it into liquid form as wax has to be in melted form before being applied to cloth. The temperature of the stove should be maintained at low temperature.
- 4). Wooden block is dipped in molten wax solution and applied to the cloth to get the required design on fabric. Melted wax is applied to cloth through wooden blocks before being dipped in dye. Wherever the wax has seeped through the fabric, the dye will not penetrate leaving blank or actual colour of the fabric in the dyed fabric. This is called as resist form of printing.



Illustration 1-Wax block printing,

Illustration 2- Fabric dyeing in dye-bath,

Illustration 3- Fabric drying

5) The fabric is then immersed in the dye bath using vat dyes as per requirement of colour combination in the design. If more colours are required where already wax has been applied or the new colour has to be maintained as per design requirement then dewaxing is done where new colour has to be applied using hot water which will separate the wax from the fabric. And the fabric is waxed where first dye has to retain as per design requirement. This process of waxing and dewaxing is followed till the design is complete. Finally the printed cloth is washed thoroughly with normal water and dried. Apart from vat dyes, naphthol dyes/ reactive dyes are also used in Jetpur.

Reviews

Karth K. (2008) study about “Indian hand block prints” – in which she had told about the blocks we use for our printing. All blocks are hand carved. Carving is very fine and advanced. The delicacy of the lines is phenomenal. Blocks are quite deliberately designed to be slightly non- quite regular and practised all over India.

Iqbal M. (2009) article “Dyes and Colour” he showed the importance of colour and dyes, that a dye is a coloured organic compound that absorbs light strongly in the visible region and can firmly attach to the fiber by virtue of chemical and physical bonding between group of the dye and group on the fiber. To be of commercial importance a dye should be fast to light, rubbing and water.

Mirza V and Mallya V, (2012) Jetpur, a small town in Saurashtra, became active in the '60s, with the growth in demand for exports of chemical-dyed block-printed textiles. This generated demand in the domestic market too. The craft flourished here due to the natural salts in the water sources, which helped to develop vibrant and deep colours. The Jetpur print was popular all over India during the '80s and '90s.

Methodology

The present study was conducted on hand block prints of Jetpur in Gujarat state. For the present study the method used for investigation was the survey method as it is one of the most important and commonly used techniques for data collection. Methodology includes data collection through primary and secondary sources. Then they were recorded, classified, analyzed and finally interpreted.

Data was collected personally by the interview schedule through survey and observation. This study is based on structured interviews with block printers of Jetpur in Gujarat state. A questionnaire is prepared containing close and open-ended questions which are to be filled by the investigator after getting the information from the informants. The interview schedule contain question with specific aim of seeking information with regard to different aspects of the study. Purposive random sampling technique was used for selection of the sample. Thirty manufacturers of hand block printers were selected from Jetpur.

Result and Discussion

1) Block printers of Jetpur belonged to the age group of 20 to 50 years were as follows-

Age in years	Frequency
20-30	16
30-40	8
40-50	6

2) Education of block printers in Jetpur were as follows-

Education of respondents	Frequency
Illiterate	2
Primary	3
Secondary	22
Graduation	3

3) Products manufactured by them were mostly dress materials, running materials and duppatas.

4) 29 units were self developed and 1 was family developed business.

5) They generally face water, raw materials and labour problems.

6) Most of the block printers had not taken any skill up-gradation training programme.

- 7) Generally cotton, mulmul (loan) and chiffon materials were used for block printing.
- 8) Blocks were mostly purchased from Ahmedabad.
- 9) Mostly resist technique of printing was used by the block printers.
- 10) Block printing is done directly over fabric and on garments.
- 11) It was found that mainly male employees were employed.
- 12) The units were divided into three sections: washing section, printing section, drying section.
- 13) Difficulties faced by the Jetpur dyeing and printing industry were dependence upon climatic conditions, fluctuations in prices of raw materials, irregularity of labour supply, increasing competition, over indebtedness, water pollution, or still some more minor problems like electricity load shedding.
- 14) It was found that almost all the units have skilled and experienced worker whenever they need some guidance, the owner provide them.
- 15) The printing technique follows the old traditional methods without use of any modern technical equipment and procedure which were relevant years back.

Conclusion

The development of Jetpur dyeing and printing industry exemplifies transition from handicraft to industrial production..

- 1) Maximum numbers of block printers were in age group of 20-30 years.
- 2) Maximum number of block printers had taken secondary education.
- 3) Maximum number of block printers produced dress materials in Jetpur of Gujarat state.
- 4) Maximum number of producers had self developed their business.
- 5) Maximum number of producers faced problems in procuring water.
- 6) Maximum number of producers had not undergone any skill or up-gradation training programme.
- 7) It has been observed that basically cotton fabric is used for the process of wax resist printing in Jetpur of Gujarat state due to its ability to absorb dyes easily amongst the various available fabrics.
- 8) The dyes used are all chemical dyes.

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