

ABSTARCT

India has a long history of producing traditional textiles that are woven, embroidered, dyed, printed, and painted. India's history of producing excellent textiles is as old as its civilization.

Historical records shows that apart from woven textiles, printed -painted textiles were also exported from India across the Arabian Sea to various ports. Similar trade extended from East Africa to Southeast Asia and Japan until the 17th century. According to the study of Barnes, the patterned fabric excavated from Fustat, Egypt in the early 20th century was produced in India and traded to Egypt (Audinet K., 2019). The oldest known patterned fabrics from India are from Gujarat. They were resist dyed and printed cotton. The stylistic delineation of the patterns was based on the decorative style of West Indian painting and design. The combination printing and painting which is found in many of the textile fragment is also typical techniques used at present at Ahmedabad, Deesa in North Gujarat and in the printing centers of Kutch. (Desai J.)

The oldest and successful method of transferring designs to textiles was that of woodblock printing. One of the earliest methods of printing, woodblock prints were used to create book pages and later images. China is where the first indications of woodblock printing were discovered. The method was later adopted by the Japanese, who over generations elevated it to the peak of artistry and workmanship. The age-old traditions of decorating cloth by stamping it with dye or resists and carved wooden blocks has been known in India for over 3000 years. Everything from newspapers, flyers, and matchboxes to traditional apparel, bedspreads, and textiles have been printed using wood printing stamps and hand-carved wooden print blocks.

The main tool of hand block printing is a wooden block. Hand block is finely carved stamp made by trained craftsmen, which requires concentration, precision and patience. The craftsmen must have good knowledge of geometry to make a perfect block for seamless printing in terms of design, repeat and level of block. In South Asian nations including India, Burma, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan, the "woodblock" is referred to as *Chhapa*. Many communities around the world are connected to the woodblock (Chhapa) printing industry, while some of these communities view this industry as their traditional source of income.

Pethapur situated 40 kms away from Ahmedabad is the only surviving centre of wood block carving in Gujarat. Pethapur is famous for its finely carved wooden blocks all over the globe since the time of *Saudagiri* trade. During this period (1839- 1940) the craft flourished and more than 1500 craftsmen were engaged to this craft. At present the number of craftsmen engaged in this craft has decreased to less than twenty. Thus the study was undertaken to delineate growth factors and the reasons behind the gradual decline by studying the evolution of the craft. The in-depth study of evolution of the craft will portray a whole picture or story about the craft in the last six decades such as factors that influenced the growth and decline, past events, education, technology and interrelationships and present status to develop a systematic document for future references. Further, promotion of the craft using various methods by increasing its visibility and identity through physical reach as well as digital means should be done. The present study researcher has made an effort to promote craft in the best possible way to make people aware of and sensitized about the craft of wood block making. A mixed method approach was used to achieve the objectives of the study. The research consisted of historical research, ethnographic research, applied research and descriptive research. The data was thus collected using a multi-methodological approach to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the research questions. It enabled triangulation, in which results from many methodologies were compared and examined to present a more solid and trustworthy interpretation of the data. The data collected to study the evolution and promotion of the craft was analyzed in the form of description, comparison, establishing relationships amongst the events that occurred and supported with the photographs, drawings, tables, and charts for better presentation of data and clarity. It was concluded from the study that craft has undergone major changes after the *Saudagiri* trade till date such as community shift, less interest in younger generations to take the craft forward, less profit earned against the labour involved, cost, quality and availability of raw material.

It was analyzed from the ergonomic study that work place needs to be re-arranged using ergonomic principles and the table used in making block need to be re-designed with adjustable height.

From the comparative analysis of traditional wood block and the wood block developed on CNC m/c, was discovered that the learning of design software such as Auto CAD, Photoshop proved to be the better option to enhance the work efficiency

against. The awareness camp organized for the promotion of the craftsmen was successful and the craftsmen were satisfied with the information and knowledge shared by the Govt. officials. They agreed to participate in such workshops and camps organized in future.

After studying aspects of evolution of the craft covering various aspect such as community practice, raw material, tools and technique, designs, size of the blocks and its trade practices; it was found that it has huge potential to grow. It can be sustained through planning various promotional strategy for the craft as well as craftsmen.