Exploring the problems of craftsmen involved in traditional block printing

■ RUPAL BABEL **AND** SONU MEHTA

See end of the paper for authors' affiliations

Correspondence to :
RUPAL BABEL
Department of Textile and Apparel Designing, College of Home Science, Maharana Pratap University of Agriculture and Technology, UDAIPUR (RAJASTHAN) INDIA

■**ABSTRACT :** The earliest recorded history revealed that man decorated the fabric surface with natural sources perhaps his clothing first, than the other items necessary for his existence. India has a rich cultural heritage and its traditional printing is a great source of inspiration for apparel decoration.

■**KEY WORDS :** Block printing, Craftsmen, Problems

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The present study explored the various problems faced by block printing craftsmen in Udaipur city. Block printing is an ancient printing technique and numerous examples of historical block prints can be found in the historical records of Europe and Asia in the historical Indian culture and its heritage of tradition are reflected in many of the various regions of this country and Rajasthan is famous for its profile art treasure. Printing has been a long tradition in Rajasthan and this manner of decorating textiles was extensively applied to the costume of royalty. Though practiced all over Rajasthan, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Barmer and Udaipur are the most popular centres for their elegant block prints.

This ancient tradition of ornamenting cloth in Rajasthan makes use of special engraved wooden block, one end of which possesses a design or motif engraved on it (Verma, 2003).

It is much like stamping. The design can include text or be purely visual and the block can be applied to paper or textiles (Naik and Wiston, 2006). In block printing, chemical artificial and natural dyes are widely prevalent.

The purpose of the study was to explore the various problems faced by the block printers due to which they are shifting to some other employment and leaving their ancient craft.

■ RESEARCH METHODS

Locale of the study :
The study was conducted at Udaipur city of Rajasthan as Udaipur is the cultural centre of Rajasthan and traditional art of block printing is very popular in this city.

Selection of sample :
For this purpose a survey study was conducted. The survey was done on 30 craftsmen involved in block printing work. Other secondary sources of information explored were through newspaper, journals, internet, books etc.

Criterion for selecting sample :
Craftsmen were selected on the basis of experience of doing block printing work from last 15-20 years.

Development of tool :
Structured interview schedule was developed to know the existing and past trends of block printing. Questions dealing with the background information about the age, education, caste, monthly income and the problems faced by the craftsmen. This consisted of both open and close ended questions to collect the desired information.

Procedure of data collection :

The investigators personally visited to all the places of Udaipur where craftsmen were doing block printing.

■ RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the present study as well as relevant discussions have been presented under following sub heads:

Profile of craftsmen doing block printing :
Age :

The data collected on age of respondents revealed that 20 per cent respondents belonged to 35-45 and 45-55 years age group. Sixty per cent respondents were more than 55-65 years of age groups (Table 1 and Fig. 1).

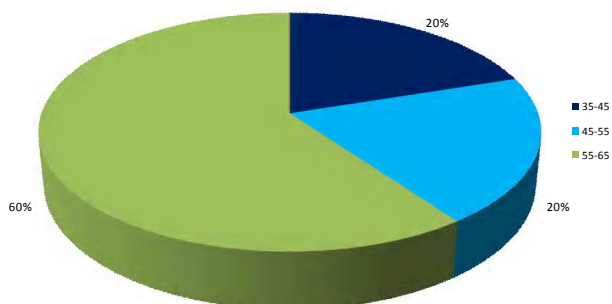| Table 1 : Distribution of respondents according to age (n=30)			
Sr. No.	Age (year)	No.	Percentage
1.	35-45	6	20
2.	45-55	6	20
3.	55-65	18	60

Fig. 1 : Distribution of respondents according age

Caste :

It was found that all the respondents were Muslim and belonged to Bohra community.

Education :

The data pertaining to education revealed that the respondents were not highly educated. It was interesting to note that equal percentage (30%) of respondents were educated up to 8th, 12th and Graduation level (Table 2 and Fig. 2).

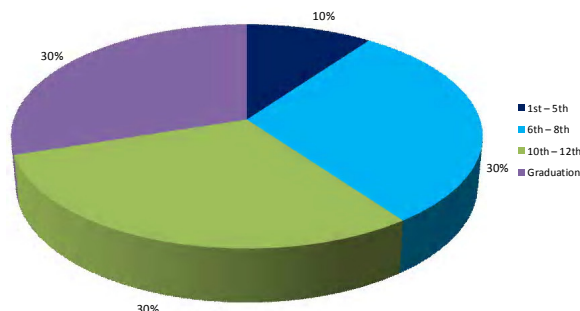| Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to education (n= 30)			
Sr. No.	Education	No.	Percentage
1.	1st – 5th	3	10
2.	6th – 8th	9	30
3.	10th – 12th	9	30
4.	Graduation	9	30

Fig. 2 : Distribution of respondents according to education

Income :

Table 3 shows that 60 per cent respondents belonged to income range of Rs. 5000-7000 per month while 40 per cent respondents belonged to income group of Rs. 7000-10,000 per month income range.

Table 3 : Distribution of respondent according to income			
Sr. No.	Income	No.	Percentage (%)
1.	5000-7000	18	60
2.	7000-10,000	12	40

Mode of learning :

Seventy per cent of the respondents said that block printing was their ancestral work. Only thirty per cent respondents learned this craft (Table 4).

Table 4 : Block printing learned by the respondents			
Sr. No.	Craft learned from	No.	%
1.	Inherited	21	70
2.	Learned	9	30

Major problems faced by block printers :
Health problems :

Table 5 shows that most of the respondents faced eye irritation, knee pain and palm hardness during block printing

Table 5 :	Distribution of problems of the respondents faced while doing block printing (n = 30)		
Sr. No.	Problems faced	No.	Percentage
1.	Eye irritation	30	100
2.	Wrist pain	9	30
3.	Headache	18	60
4.	Knee pain	3	10
5.	Heel pain	6	20
6.	Back pain	21	70
7.	Finger injured	15	50
8.	Palm hardness	22	75

work. Around 60-70 per cent respondents faced headache and back pain. Other problems were wrist pain, heel pain and finger injury (Fig. 3).
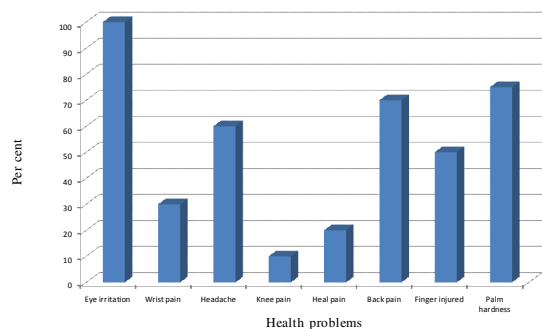

Fig. 3 : Distribution of problems of the respondents faced while doing block printing

Table 6 shows that the major problem came out to be water scarcity. 80-90 per cent respondents reported that block printing is a labourious task and also the new generation is shifting to other jobs. Around 60-65 per cent respondents said that block printing is time consuming and requires more number of people at a time (Fig.4).

Table 6 : Distribution of common problems faced by block printers			
Sr. No.	Problems faced	No.	%
1.	More time consuming task	19	63.3
2.	Poor colour fastness	05	16.6
3.	Less wages	18	60
4.	More number of people are required	20	66.6
5.	New generation shifted to service	25	83.3
6.	Water problem	30	100
7.	Labourious task	27	90

Conclusion :

Thus, it can be concluded that the traditional art of block printing is diminishing day by day due to several reasons. The people are not getting desired value for their efforts. Therefore, the new generation is not interested in this traditional craft and they are shifting towards other professions. Another major problem is that block printing
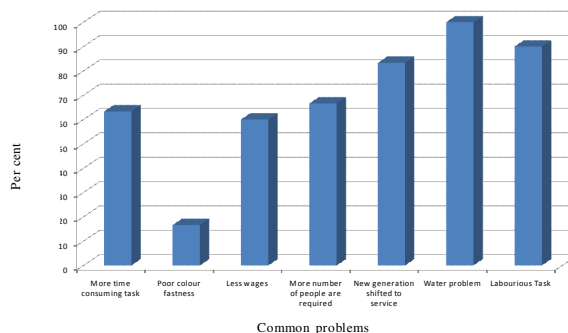

Fig. 4 : Distribution of common problems faced by block printers

requires lot of water in bleaching, colouring, printing and steaming. The less availability of water sources is another issue which is making the craftsmen to be diverted. Several health problems were also reported by the craftsmen like palm hardness, eye irritation and headache.

Therefore, it is high time to preserve this craft. Government and NGO's should take a step forward to bring this craft back to mainstream and preserve our cultural heritage.

Authors' affiliations:
SONU MEHTA, Department of Textile and Apparel Designing, College of Home Science, Maharana Pratap University of Agriculture and Technology, UDAIPUR (RAJASTHAN) INDIA

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