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Research Paper

Bagru, the Traditional Hand Printed Textile of Jaipur

Home sciences

KEYWORDS : Bagru village, Printing, Dyeing, Blocks, Natural dye, Mordant

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ABSTRACT

This study was carried out to create awareness about the unique bagru printing art where artisan were using natural sources like harda and myrobalam to dye and print the fabric. This report would be a step towards improving economic and social status of the people and help to preserve the cultural heritage of our country.

The objective of the study was to analyse the various aspects of printing process on fabric practised in the bagru village. A descriptive research design was planned. Purposive sampling technique was used where all the craftsmen involved in printing were interviewed during the survey at bagru village, Jaipur.

The interview question dealt with demographic details, history of craft and process of producing the craft. Observations were recorded by taking photographs.

The study was carried out to understand the process which was followed by the artisan to create a bagru printed fabric.

Introduction

India has a rich and diverse tradition in the field of textiles. The printing and decorating technique in India is rather extensive. Rajasthan, Gujarat and Masulipatnam are famous for the block printing techniques used to beautify the cloth material. Block printing on textiles is done with wooden blocks by craftsmen to create beautiful designs.

In Jaipur, Bagru village is one of the places where chhipa community (printers) has been involved in hand block printing for about 350 years, developing a unique process with natural dyes. It was found that Bagru chhipa community has been migrated from Jaipur and settled in bagru area near the Sanjaria river, as it provided the necessary water for dyeing and printing. Even though, the river dried up 20 year ago, but still many printer families still reside in the area called chhipa mohalla(printer quarters).

Methodology

Main objective of the study was to analyse the various aspects of printing process on fabric practised by the artisans in the Bagru.

A descriptive research design was planned. Bagru village in Jaipur is the place where the unique art of dyeing printing was done and is therefore, identified as area of study. All the craftsmen involved in printing were interviewed and personal investigation technique used.

The interview schedule consists of closed and open ended questions. The question dealt with demographic details, history of craft and process of producing the craft. Observations were recorded by taking photographs.

The study was carried out to understand the process followed by the artisan to create a bagru printed fabric.

Result and discussion

Raw material: The raw material used for dyeing and printing are cotton fabric, harda, iron junk, Jaggery and chhiya (tamarind seed powder), Alizarin, phittkari and natural gum (guar gum)

Pre treatment of fabric

Grey fabric was taken and cut according to the size of final product that is 7 meter for sarees, 2.5 meter for dupatta, 10 meter for running fabric etc.

Once the fabrics were cut, they were prewashed and soaked for 24 hour in plain water. This was done to remove all starch, oil, dust or any other contaminants.

After washing, fabrics were dyed in harda solution. The quantity was taken as 100 gm of harda for 1 meter of fabric. Here, harda was used as mordant which allows the natural dyes to adhere to the fabric and make it color fast.

Harda is extracted from fruits of the myrobalam plant (terminlia chebula). The yellow dyed fabric was dried in the open field under the bright sun. The fabric was turned into yellowish cream colour (unique bagru printing process) and is ready for printing.

Printing process

Dyed fabric was spread and smoothened on long padded printing table. Marking was done according to design pattern.

Traditional printing was mainly done by using black and red colours. At present, for producing other colors, synthetic pigments were used in printing paste.

For making black colour paste- iron junks like nails, pieces of iron was soaked in water for one month. Jaggery and chhiya (tamarind seed powder) was added to above solution and heated together till a thick paste was formed. This paste was applied onto the fabric with blocks.

For making red colour- Alizarin was mixed with phitkari and natural gum (guar gum) and soaked for 24 hours. This paste was used for printing and red colour was created.

For other colours, pigment emulsion was used for printing. The block printing was always beginning from left to right. The printer gently taps the wooden block in a tray filled with coloured paste. Block printing was done on fabric carefully by lining up the corners correctly and gives one hard swift hit to the centre of the block to ensure even distribution of the dye. This was repeated over and over, first with the gadh block(background), then with rehk(fine outlines) and then with datta (inside filling) block with different colours.

After treatment

Once the printing completed, fabrics were dried on the sand in the sunlight for 3-4 hours. Then dried printed fabric was washed in normal water and dried again.

Steaming process was also done by keeping the printed fabric in a big drum which has metal mesh (divider), placed horizontally at center of steamer over which the fabrics were laid to exposed with steam. Below this divider, water was heated; steam comes out in contact of printed fabrics. This was done to make better penetration of colour inside the fabric and give good fastness.

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After steaming, the fabric were once again washed to remove any excess dyes or dirt and then finally dried in the sun.

Conclusion

Bagru printing is one of the unique printing style where natural sources like harda, tamarind etc were used till date. But now they have begun to shift on synthetic pigment colour rather than natural color. The method has changed to a great extent in order to meet the growing demand of the market. The production process has not changed but there are changes in the natural ingredients used at different stages.

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