INTRODUCTION

To understand the progress of hand block printed textiles from the late eighteenth century to the twenty-first century, it is necessary to study the history of the motifs and the craft itself. Some 300 years ago, the Raja of Bagru had brought chippa printers from widely divergent areas of Rajasthan like Sikar, Jhunjhunu, Alwar and Sawai Madhopur. The little Sanjaria river passing by the town, between the banks of white sandy loam in the sunny fields, and the khar earth from the river bank, provide plenty of water, sunshine and natural ingredients required by the artisans (Nath, 1996:199). Thus the printing centers developed near water resources when the printing communities migrated from neighbouring areas to settle in Sanganer and Bagru. But the water of river has dried for more than 50 years now and so has the chemical composition of the river mud which had enhanced the dyeing process, adversely affecting the hand block printing (Wilkinson-Weber and De Nicola, 2016:84). The collection of traditional motifs displayed in the museums makes it evident that Chippas, the handblock printing community from Rajasthan, were really creative and had technical acumen as early as the late eighteenth century. A leaflet printed on Bagru in the late 19th C. While describing the thikana of Bagru mentions printing industry of this village (Kothari, 1995:42). Each motif found was matchless and exemplified the unique bygone printing style. Motifs varied from intricately detailed ones from Sanganer to coarser motifs of Bagru. Delicate flowers and foliage, paisleys, birds and animals on a white background are Sanganer’s typical motifs. Delicate patterns and lines with vibrant coloured designs are the defining factors for this kind of printing technique (Bais, 2018:8). Handed down from father to son, these designs were inspired by the flower studies of miniature paintings and Mughal pietra dura motifs (Travel, 2015:209).

The traditional hand block printing of Sanganer and Bagru from Rajasthan has undergone a major urbanization due to its heavy demand in India and abroad. To keep up with the increase in demand, the artisans have adopted short-cuts in the printing processes, layout,
colour delivery and definition of motifs. The evolution is so profound that the contemporary depiction of the craft almost disregards its historical and cultural context, but for a few artisans.

Industrialisation, followed by tourism and export have severed the artisan from his patron (Nath and Wacziarg, 1987:17). A majority of the artisans are now mass producing run of the mill fabrics rather than creating exquisite ones. Use of screen printing, chemical dyes instead of vegetable dyes and hand block printing has increased to meet the growing demand abroad (Kothari, 1995: 78-79).

**METHODOLOGY**

To accomplish the objective of the study, the primary data were collected through conducting a semi-structured interview schedule designed with an effort to cover the essential aspects related to designing and printing of textile handicrafts. Owners and artisans in urban *haats* of Delhi/NCR and those practicing the trade in Jaipur district formed the sample of the study. These samples were selected through purposive and snowball sampling techniques. 30 artisans from Sanganer and Bagru, practicing hand block printing, were selected from 5 urban *haats* in Delhi/NCR namely Dilli Haat, Crafts Museum, Surajkund Crafts Mela, India International Trade Fair and Nature Bazar through consensus sampling. Urban *haats* are modelled on rural *haats* to provide a common marketplace to artisans practicing various traditional crafts in the urban milieu. The artisans interviewed in urban *haats* referred other artisans residing in Sanganer and Bagru. This led to the selection of 30 other artisans from the craft cluster including master craftsmen who were national awardees in the craft. Photographs were clicked from the archives as well as urban *haats* and Sanganer and Bagru for documentation and analysis. Field observations were also done to form a background of the study. Secondary data was collected by exploring books, catalogues and sample pieces displayed in the museums namely Central Museum and Anokhi Museum in Jaipur.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Popular Traditional Motifs from Sanganer:**

The traditional motifs of flora were mostly facing upwards to emulate the beautiful natural plants and foliage. Animals like elephants and birds like parrot, pigeon and peacock cast a major influence on the Sanganer and Bagru motifs and were even named after them. The Sanganeri motifs were recognized for their fineness and were generally printed on a light cream, white, beige or grey-blue coloured backgrounds. The beautiful curvilinear, red and black floral motifs of Sanganer printed on white, cream or grey-blue background are distinguished by the use of the direct printing style and the Mughal inspired aesthetic sense (Ranjan and Ranjan, 2009:89).

**Floral Motifs on Textile Pieces from the Museums:**

Anokhi and Central Museums house a lot of textiles from Sanganer. They have either been printed especially for documentation purpose by the museum or are original pieces dating back to the twentieth century. It was observed that the body of most of the fabrics was printed with a single *buti* and brick placement was the most common one. The traditional motifs used in Sanganer were *Pankhi, Phooli, Nargis ki Buti, Kairi, Dhania, Mor, Chaubundi, Aamki Buti, Kharbuzza ki Buti* etc. Generally a fabric was printed with a single *buti*, however, exceptions were also seen where two or three motifs were printed on the same fabric.

Fig. 1 shows a shoulder cloth or *angocha* from Sanganer used by the male community, printed with natural dyes on a cream coloured background. It displays an uncommon grid placement in the traditional *pankhi*.

![Angocha with Various Motifs](Source: Anokhi Museum)
phooli and bhil patta motifs printed in 2004, a recreation of the traditional design. There is a bel bordering the grid. Elaborate stylized floral butas in paisley shape have been used in the pallu of the fabric. The pallu beautifully coordinates with the detailed motifs used in the body to enhance the look. This piece beautifully exemplifies the use of bel, buti and buta.

Geometric Motifs/Placements on Textile Fabrics:

Fig. 2 presents a jajam for covering floors used by local patrons, printed with zig-zag, diamond and square shaped borders all around, belonging to the late nineteenth century. It does not mention the particular place it belongs to but the senior master artisans relate it to either Sanganer or Bagru. It shows an aerial view of flowers, a unique feature, as most of the prints represent the front view of flowers.

A Rare Sample Piece with Various Motifs and Borders:

Fig. 3 represents a unique combination of floral motif enclosed in diamond patterns formed by a four scaled fishes facing each other. It is a printed running material.

Bird Motifs on Textile Pieces:

A multicoloured tota bui or parrot motif has been printed in brick placement in Fig. 5. The museum does not specify the date for this particular motif but mentions generally that the collection of pieces displayed in the museum belongs to the late nineteenth century. It is a
finely designed, beautifully stylized buti of parrot perched on a finely detailed grapevine with leaves taking after the natural shape. It has most probably been influenced by European designs, as according to the respondents, the artisans then, had no way of being exposed to such a kind of creeper because it was not native to Rajasthan.

Fig. 6 shows a fine stylized peacock motif with radial placement. A floral motif has also been stamped thrice to form a \( \frac{3}{4} \) radial at the lower edge of the fabric (not shown in the figure). The motif has been printed on a traditional Sanganeri rumal belonging to the early 20\(^{th}\) century. Delicately designed borders have been used across the handkerchief.

**Paisley Motifs:**

In Fig. 7, two varied motifs have been used— one is a set of small and large inverted paisley motifs placed in harmony on the body of the fabric. The other is a large floral buta placed in a straight line to form the pallu. The buta is enclosed by two thin bels.

A simple paisley motif has been printed in a straight line on a blue coloured ground in Fig. 8 which seems very strange as the most popular placement is the brick
Motifs from Bagru:

Some of the traditional motifs used in Bagru printing were *singh baaj, daad, kairi, bichu buti, dhania buti, kachnar buti, pankhi buti, kamal buti, katar, kangura, mirchi buti*, etc., some of which are displayed in the Anokhi Museum. These tiny floral motifs, repeated across the length of the fabric depict the Bagru designs. Motifs were named mostly after the local vegetation which had protective medicinal and spiritual values. Other motifs were symbolic representations of day to day objects like ornaments used by women or things which were considered to keep away from the evil eye like the *daad* motif. There were no printed samples of Bagru available in Albert Hall Museum. The prints from Anokhi Museum were developed on dark coarse *pharads* for printed *ghagras* of Bagru and Jaipur local women. The fabrics were mostly indigo dyed but some fabrics were green in colour which is obtained by over dyeing indigo with pomegranate rinds. The rural people of the region wore colours and prints according to their caste, community and marital position. Some motifs could not be worn by widows e.g. the *laung* motif which depicted the desiccated closed flower buds of cloves while some others were especially meant for them e.g. *rabari ro fatiya* motif for widows of Rabari community and *nodana* motif for widows of Jat and Chaudhary
community. Married women were expected to wear specific motifs like the goonda motif in Jat and Chaudhary communities which was symbolic of a small yellow cherry like fruit from a desert tree. Traditional motifs from Bagru were large with bold lines and included wild flowers, buds, leaves and printed geometrical patterns in black and red or syahi and begar.

**Flower / Vegetation Inspired Motifs:**

- *Nargis*, daffodils or narcissus is a wild spring perennial flower consisting of six petal type sepals covering a central corona and is about 5 cm long. The flower is usually yellow or white in colour and has a tubular stem.
- The motif of *khirni*, a manilkara hexandra tree, in a begar printed motif, dabu printed and indigo and nasphal (pomegranate rinds) dyed to give a green tinge for Bagru ghagras.
- *Pahadi bel* is a 1.2 cm vine striped motif printed in syahibegar process, dabu, indigo dyed, overdyed with nasphal.
- *Kairi* represents the unripe, green mango linked to fertility in the local areas. The smallest of all motifs, measuring around 0.7 cms. It has been printed with syahi and begar then dabu printed, indigo dyed and over dyed with nasphal.

**Inanimate objects:**

- *Ankhada*, also called the nose ring, which when worn denotes the marital status of the women, is one of the few representations of ornaments used in daily lives.
- *Chakri* or the spinning wheel represents a grinding stone which is symbolically connected to progression, is sized around 1.5 cms.
- *Bewada* motif uses two flowers to represent two stacked pots carried on women’s head and measures about 3.5 cms. It is a unique motif where pots and a woman are represented through flowers.
- *Daad* or tooth has been begar printed, dyed red followed by dabu printing and indigo dyeing.

**Stripes:**

Fig. 12 represent thick striped or *mota parcha* and thin striped or *patla parcha* motifs begar printed, dyed red followed by dabu printing and indigo dyeing.

**Contemporary motifs and placements:**

The motifs of block printing are being designed in accordance to the modern aesthetics of the youth today. The transition in the theme of block printing motifs from the ancient times to the present era is clearly visible. Most of the traditional motifs have been lost with time.
and even if the motifs are designed on the traditional themes, their depiction has transformed a lot. Modern motifs can be categorized into many forms like living beings, tribal art, inanimate objects, calligraphy, geometric, etc., contrary to the erstwhile motifs which were mostly based on local vegetation and flowers. The new era motifs seem to be inspired from sundry objects and are not explicitly designed and printed for the block printing of Sanganer and Bagru. There is no symbolism for the modern motifs as they are based upon interesting and fashionable forms stylized to capture the market. Despite the changes in the expression of motifs, a few traditional motifs like flowers are still popular. A few printers, committed to their inherited art form, continue to print the traditional motifs to keep them alive. The motifs displayed below are from Sanganer as well as Bagru. *Dabu* resist printing, indigo and *kashish* (potassium permanganate) dyeing are popular in Bagru while Sanganer is known for its direct printing style. Some contemporary motifs recorded by the researcher in the years 2015 to 2020 in urban *haats*, Sanganer and Bagru can be categorised as follows:

**Calligraphy Motifs**-Belonging to Bagru, these decorative lettered motifs take inspiration from English alphabets, attractive words or letters in Hindi or local languages, art work behind trucks, etc.

**Vehicles**: Motifs inspired by the vehicles and gadgets which are an indispensable part of our daily lives were observed. One of the renowned textile designers from Sanganer who is an artisan too, had designed prints for vintage scooters and cars (Fig. 14) in unique color combinations. These printed fabrics were used to make full and half sleeves men’s wear shirts. It was observed that once these designs were out in the market, it was flooded with poor copies of the same print. The ‘auto’ motif is from Bagru-*dabu* printed and dyed in indigo.
Other Inanimate motifs from Bagru like buildings, slippers, coins, cameras, kite, bulbs, charkha etc., were found in abundance in the urban haats. The motifs varied from objects of daily use in the present era to vintage articles like 20 paisa coins, fans, sewing machines, bicycles etc., popular in both Sanganer and Bagru alike.

Variety of geometric motifs were also being printed both in Sanganer and Bagru. Kanguras or waves, horizontal and vertical lines, diamond shapes etc., were being printed. Use of synthetic colours was quite evident as motifs were also printed in bright colours as the ‘waves’ motif (Fig. 16) from Bagru.

Animal and Bird Motifs- There were artisans with formal training in design from Sanganer who designed special range of motifs for kids dohars inspired by owls, cats, tortoise and dogs etc. The animal motifs were represented like cartoons to make them attractive for kids (Fig. 17 a to d). Fig. 17 (e to h) represent motifs from Bagru like fishes, elephants, tribal and stylized peacocks dyed in kashish (hues of brown and grey), indigo and syahi begar, respectively. Birds and animals were found to be the most popular theme for designing motifs both in Sanganer and Bagru.

Insect and Reptiles- Insects and reptile motifs were popular in Bagru which were being printed using
dabu resist printing and dyed in kashish to obtain a grey background.

**Tribal Motifs**- Warli art, tribal faces and other ancient wall paintings inspired motifs were being printed in Bagru. Both the motifs (Fig. 19) use dabu resist printing and are dyed in kashish to obtain hues of brown.

**Figurines**- Human figure motifs were rarely seen in the earlier eras. But today, in order to create something new, the figurine motifs made way to the hand block printing market. On the left side, there is a motif of a king (Fig. 20) with head covered in a safi and supporting a handle bar moustache typical of the kings of Rajasthan, kashish dyed dabu printed from Bagru. On the right side (Fig. 20) a queen is shown holding a flower in one hand and wearing a ghagra-choli and head covered in dupatta in an indigo dyed dabu printed motif from Bagru.

**Floral Motifs of Sanganer**- The popular Sanganeri motifs were still being printed in numerous representations. The artisans were working hard to bring out newer floral representations like the motif in the left corner below is a Mughal art inspired beautiful gainda flower motif which looks like an exact drawing of the flower made by master artisan Abdul Ghani in Jaipur.

**Comparative Analysis- Traditional vs Contemporary:**

**Design Vocabulary:**

The basic vocabulary of the motifs of block printing has not changed over the years. Four forms of block designs were popular i.e. Buta-large motif, Buti- small motif, Bel- creeper and Jaal- interconnected design. Buta is a single, large detailed block varying from 3” onwards and going upto 10” or more depending on the design and end product. Buti is a tiny motif, repeatedly carved on a single block mostly in brick placement. There are different designs used like flowers, leaves, paisley, dots and lines etc., in a buti. 20 butis or more could be carved on a single block. Bel is a narrow border design block, generally 2” inches to 4” wide, given on the pallu or edges of the cloth, made to look similar to the butis. Jaal designs can vary from floral to geometric and are used to cover the majority of empty space on the cloth. As per the respondents the use of bel and jaal has become very limited today as it is more time consuming to print. Printing a variety of butis and butas was the popular choice for mass markets while outlets like Anokhi, Fab India etc., had more detailed and fine work with jaal and bel

Gadh, rekh and datta continue to be used as before. The main block called ‘rekh’ is used for printing the
Motifs and their placement:

Particular motifs representing caste, community, widowhood or marital status were no longer customary as the people who used to wear them had also evolved with time. The most predominant change observed in the current era was in the definition of motifs due to prevalent fashion trends, designers intervention, buyers’ tastes and his demands. The contemporary motifs were not restricted to any particular style nor did they follow any distinguishing characteristics. Similar kinds of motifs were being printed in Sanganer and Bagru with slight variations in their detailing and printing techniques as discussed. This was due to the fact that the buyers who placed orders with these artisans had similar requirement of motifs depending on its popularity and current trend in the market. A popular trend disregards and overlooks any regional differences in the art. In order to meet demands of foreign buyers, they have to print butis of Sanganer in the colour scheme used at Bagru (Kothari, 1995:79). Apart from this, design intervention by accomplished designers was also observed who made the products more viable for the elite market. Nonetheless, the designers should be accountable and not interfere with the craft person’s skills with the sole intention of reinventing his creation for a temporary profits (Designers meet artisans, 2005:7).

All over motif placement, brick placement, and linear placement are popular today too. Earlier, the placement was very dense and the motifs fine, today the ground fabric is more visible as the motif placement is less busy. Any dye drips or block displacement are more visible than before due to extra empty space on the fabric so the printing has to be done more carefully. Sometimes the motifs are placed bidirectional in order to save fabric.

Product category and fabrics:

Printing of safas, angochas pharads and the traditional odhnis have nearly discontinued as they have become redundant. No one knows the name of famous motifs like the ‘pankhi’ from Bagru and the use of red and black chundari for brides and widows respectively has also ceased (Kothari, 1995 : 62 ). Erstwhile, fine cotton like mulmul was used to make products like dupattas and odhnis for women, and safas and angochas for men. Coarser fabric called pharads was used for making ghaghras and reja, a thick coarse handspun fabric was used for making jajams, used by the village community as durries or carpets. There was a time till 1980’s when, as per the artisans, most of the printing work was done on cotton fabrics and silk was used mostly for special occasions.

Now printing is being done on a variety of fabrics apart from cotton. The respondents mentioned the use
of many different types of silks like chanderi, maheshwari, gheecha crepe, georgette, khadi silk, modal, tussar, and varieties of cotton like kota doria, cotton slub, mulmul from light to medium weight, mercerized cotton, linen, denim and many more fabric compositions of cotton and silk. Having been a hot-selling item right since historical times, currently the chintzes are printed on the choicest of muslins and denims (Taknet, 2016:269).

Both handloom and power loom fabrics were used in printing but the former is being largely replaced by the latter because it is much cheaper than the handloom fabric. A variety of products ranging from Indian wear to western wear and table linen to bed linen and variety of accessories were made from these fabrics. The use of fabrics varied with seasons as in winters the use of silk, cotton silk for saris and khadi; 40x40 cotton for printing suits and jackets was more prevalent. Fabric was printed for mainly two categories of products in the earlier era-home furnishings and apparels. Today, the product range has widened—there are decorative items, table mats, cushion covers, curtains, accessories, Indo–western silhouettes of garments, men’s wear like shirts, kurtas, jackets, kids wear, along with the traditional home furnishings. The apparel category has undergone the maximum changes to keep up with the lifestyle of the consumers today.

Techniques and Dyes:

The Secretary of Sanganer Kapra Rangai Chhapai Association, Mr. Rajender Jeendgar, says synthetic dyes like pigment, direct, rapid fast, etc., are used predominantly in the printing industry in Sanganer with a little use of natural dyes. They are popular because they give a huge colour range which is in demand by the masses. With technology gaining importance, dyers have started experimenting with unusual colour combinations (Bais, 2018:8). The use of synthetic dyes recently started in Bagru which was not prevalent about a decade ago. Also a very recent change was observed in the technique of dabu printing. Earlier the method was restricted to hand blocks only as it was done using mud paste. Now this technique has also been adapted to screen which is faster as the other screen prints. The hand dabu requires at least two steps for one colour i.e. first printing the fabric with mud paste, and then sprinkling it with saw dust which has to be done immediately so that the mud paste does not dry before dyeing it. This requires double labour and lengthens the process resulting in more time consumption. The screen print dabu is not sprinkled with saw dust after it is printed with mud paste as done for the traditional dabu hence eliminating one step and thus the cost of labour. The dabu technique is also being used on mill-printed fabrics to simulate the cracked effect of batik where the whole fabric is smeared with mud paste and dried, before over dyeing it. The traditional method of preparing mud paste for dabu printing was by trampling with foot, but today, simultaneously, one can observe a mechanised method being followed by some artisans.

According to Brij Ballabh Udaival, a master artisan, indigo dyes are very popular in the market but over dyeing with pomegranate rinds to obtain a green colour on fabric is rarely seen today, as it involves additional processes leading to increase in cost. Both chemical and natural indigo dyes are being used depending on the client demand.

Value Addition:

Traditionally, value addition on fabrics was not
observed nor mentioned by the respondents. Today some of the respondents continually innovate their products to compete in the urban market. Use of simple embroidery, \textit{khari} (tinsel) printing, tassels, buttons, mirrors and contrasting fabrics to embellish and beautify their finished products was prevalent. Although \textit{khari} printing was not very commonly done due to poor rubbing fastness, it was use minimally to embellish the block prints. Simple running stitch with contrasting colours was done to highlight the textiles and in some cases the edges of stoles were finished with cross stitch with a contrasting thread. Designers from established outlets like Anokhi, Fab India, Jaypore and relatively newer brands like Rust Orange etc., were coming up with a lot of innovations like use of experimental fabric combinations, which then become a trend to be followed in the mass market.

\textbf{Conclusion:}

Block printing is the oldest technique of hand printing patterns on textiles to produce beautifully decorated surfaces using wooden or metal blocks practiced by the Chippa community in various states of India. All art forms depend on constant reinvention, adaptation and modification to survive. According to the evolution theory of Darwin ‘survival of the fittest’ only those survive who are “better designed for an immediate, local environment” (“Survival of the fittest”, 2020). Similarly in the craft sector, it is crucial for any craft form to be made more meaningful to the current times if it is to survive. There are many art forms which have become obsolete or have dyed a natural death because they were not in demand and not relevant to the modern needs like the mendh or wax printing from the same region. Today the masses want fast fashion and are not ready to make huge investments in traditional wear like expensive silks and fine work. Their approach to consider handicrafts as inferior and retrograde, while that of equating mechanised products to characteristic of upper society needs to be addressed urgently (Designers meet artisans, 2005:7). On the other hand, a niche class looks upon the traditional crafts as a status symbol and wants to possess them even at a higher cost apart from the diverse foreign market. Hence there is a need to strike a balance to fulfil the demands of different markets. Design intervention is the need of the hour to ascertain that craft persons survive on their hand craft in the future too. Designers and craft enthusiasts are going back to the organic dyes like \textit{kashish} and the efforts of designers like Bina Rao in reviving them are worth mentioning (Prakash, 2016).

There are also some fundamental challenges threatening the survival of this art which have to be overcome. The water crises is a critical concern, especially in Bagru as water is needed to prepare the dyes, pastes and washing of fabrics which is forcing them to adopt shortcuts. Apart from this, the shrinking open spaces and growing mechanisation also pose a serious threat to this craft. Thus it can be said that though urbanization throws major challenges and threats to the erstwhile crafts, these have to be faced with aplomb to find new opportunities and use the technological advancements to one’s advantage.

\textbf{REFERENCES}

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\textbf{Internet resources:}


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