

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF CHHIPA: THE HAND-BLOCK PRINTERS OF SANGANER

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Abstract

Archival sources confirm the oral tradition that Sawai Jai Singh invited artists and craftsmen from different parts of the country to settle at Jaipur. From amongst them were *Chhipa* the printers who have mastered the art of hand block printing with the use of organic colors, which were environment friendly and the base cloth used was soothing to skin in harsh weather of Rajasthan. Later the screen printing technology invaded the hand block printing that used chemical colors. Across sectional descriptive study was carried out with the artisans who were engaged in hand block printing units in Sanganer, Jaipur. The idea was to understand the how it impacted their socio-economic status.

Key words Hand block, Organic print, Artisans, Socio-Economic Sanganeri Print

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Introduction

Sanganer was known for its bright and fast organic dyes¹. As far as tradition goes, it was told that king Sawai Jai Singh was responsible for giving impetus to the art² of organic printing– in Hindi *Chhapa* with traditional motifs and the artisans involved were *Chhipa*. Archival sources confirm the oral tradition that Sawai Jai Singh invited artists and craftsmen from different parts of the country to settle at Jaipur. Sanganer has earned a name not only in India but also around the globe especially Europe, America and Japan. The Chhipa's adept in traditional art have kept the rich heritage of hand block printing with the choice designs of various classes and communities. The rich gentry prefer dark yellow, green and pink colors and natural designs of wild flowers and leaves, creepers and plants and groves whereas the local people prefer red and black prints. The artistry flourished further with the receivable of royal patronage. Sanganer became the important trading centers of printed textiles in Hand Block Print art. In the decade of eighties Hand Block Printing has gained new height by reaching in the different corners of the world. The artisans tried hard to develop the art completely through natural means using vegetable dyes and natural colors for printing and preserving their workmanship³ by passing it over to the coming generations. It was developed to highest level of sophistication⁴ with great quality control. There were incidences reported when owners themselves use to monitor and teach artisans how to print a cloth without spoiling the designs using multi-color and maintain the quality. Although all this use to take much of the time but the owners were very quality conscious and less into money making. That was the reason why Sanganeri print products received demand in various countries and attention of international audience⁵. Importers from different countries use to flock in Sanganer town to make bulk purchases for their countries. Un-fortunately this scene did not continue for a very long period. Gradually it was noticed that to make fast buck some of the new entrants so called entrepreneurs compromised with the quality of color and replaced the organic color with chemical colors, to reduce the price they started using inferior quality of base cloth, Screen printing was introduced, etc. and eventually the demand of importers was reduced significantly.

All these developments in the Industry leads to turmoil in the export and import of Sanganeri printed material and finished products. How it makes a difference in their socio-economic status of the artisans who were involved in it? This study brings all the data on socio-economic status

of the Chhipa such as religion, residence status, age of the respondent, educational level, compensation, monthly income of the respondent and standard of living index etc.

Research Methods

The Universe of Study for the present research was Sanganer town, where the hand-block printing industries functions. A total of 250 hand-block printing units were present in Sanganer that formed sampling frame. The artisans (Chhipa) who were employed in these units and the units which were functional at the time of survey were filtered out for the survey. All the units were visited by the research team, and permission was sought from the factory owners. The sample size was calculated with the following formula- $n = Z^2 * pq \div d^2$. Where, n = desired sample size, z= Standard Deviation, p= proportion in the target population estimated to have a characteristic, q= (1-p), and d= margin of error, or the sample size was calculated by using online sample size calculators. Hence, the sample size of artisans was 648. Also, taking 10% non-response rate, the total sampling size was 715 artisans. P value and Chi-square statistical analysis was used to test for significant associations between independent variables (age, gender, socioeconomic status, marital status, etc.) with set of dependent variables. Standard of Living index was generated through the survey data. To calculate the standard of living index Cronbach's alpha and reliability check was performed. The score was then divided into three categories i.e. low, middle, and high.

Results and Analysis

Socio-Economic Status of Chhipa Artisan's

Religion of the Respondents

Table1 presents the socio-economic profile of the Chhipa artisans. Out of 681 male Chhipa artisans almost 95 percent of the male Chhipa artisans were Hindu's and rest 15 percent of the male artisans belonged to Muslim category. All the female respondents (n=34) were Hindu. Majority of Hindu respondents shows that the people who in-migrated to Sanganer from various parts of the country were Hindu. In fact, they set up the hand block printing units in Sanganer. Larger number of artisans were required who can carry out the process of printing were required hence some of the local Muslim dwellers joined them and hence there were lesser number of Muslim.

Status of Residence

Data pertaining to status of residence exhibits that almost 48 percent of the male Chhipa workers were the permanent residents of Jaipur. Whereas around 88 percent of the female respondents reported that they are permanent residents of Jaipur (n=34). Sawai Jai Singh II was an ardent admirer of art and craft and he deliberately invited artisans to Jaipur. The art of Sanganeri organic printing was unique. Therefore, at the outskirts of Jaipur Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh gave the land to artisans and requested them to establish the units in Sanganer Town.

Age of the Respondent

Data on age of the respondent illustrates that 28 percent of the male respondents were in the age group of 15-25 and 26-35. A little more than one fourth of the male Chhipa artisans were in the age group 46 and above. This shows that the male members see it as their main source of employment and earning their subsistence through it. That is the reason why they are engaged in the profession in their early age and continue to work in the industry. The data from the female Chhipa artisans represents that almost two fifth of the female respondents were in the age group of 46 and above. A little less than one fourth of the respondents were in the age group of 26-35 and around one third of the respondents were in the age group of 36-45 years. Women enter profession not as a main earner for their family but to supplement the household income. That is the reason why most of them enter in profession in later age and not when they are younger.

Education Level

Data collected for age of the respondents of Chhipa artisans reveal that out of 681 male Chhipa artisan's 15 percent were not educated whereas a little more than one fourth of the workers were educated till primary level. Furthermore, a little less than one fourth of the respondents were educated till middle level. Information regarding female artisan's education level signifies that around little less than one third of the respondents were not educated at all. Around two fifth of the respondents attended school till primary level. In most of the handicraft industry it has been seen that the literacy level is quite low. The importance is given on learning the skill than to learn the 3R's. This has an advantage as well as disadvantage the advantage is that they master the art when they are very young and become master craft person in their third decade of life.

The disadvantage is that after reaching to certain level in their craft they cannot manage or at least find it difficult to operate on a scale and do business internationally.

Compensation to the Respondent

Data also provides information regarding whether the Chhipa artisans feel that they were adequately compensated or not. Data highlights that almost four fifth of the male Chhipa artisans reported that they were satisfied with the compensation they were getting. Whereas about three fifth of the female Chhipa artisans reported that they feel that they are adequately compensated. In almost all professions in India and abroad this gender discrimination is observed. Women are paid lesser than the man. Although the directives in Indian constitution says that there should not be any discrimination based on gender but the things at the ground level are different. The reasons accorded to lesser pay to women is that they have lesser skills, they give lesser time, they cannot perform some of the functions which require more muscle power and men can perform etc. Everyone know that justification can be given but this is not the solution. In Sangaeri print industry also the women are dissatisfied because they were paid lesser.

Monthly Income of the Respondent

Table 1 illustrates a detailed picture of the monthly income of the artisans. Almost half of the male Chhipa artisans reported that they had a monthly income of 5000-1000 Rs., whereas around two fifth of the respondents reported that they had a monthly income between 10001-15000 Rs. Likewise, almost three fifth of the female Chhipa artisans reported that they had a monthly income between Rs.5000-10000. About one fourth of the female Chhipa artisans reported that they were earning below Rs. 5000 from hand block printing. The hand-block printing is the profession which is labor intensive. Most of the families who work as artisans have lesser negotiation capacity and have no other alternative employment opportunity. So, they are happy and contented with what they were earning. Also, because they have lesser literacy and knowledge of outside world, so they failed to hop to other places. In a town like Sanganer the income of this level is sufficient for their subsistence. There were many artisans who were living in the unit itself to save the rent of home.

Table.1- Socio-Economic Status of Chhipa

Particulars	Male (n=681)	Female (n=34)
Religion		
Hindu	84.3 (574)	100 (34)
Muslim	15.7 (107)	0.0
Permanent Resident of Jaipur		
Yes	48.2 (328)	88.2 (30)
No	51.8 (353)	11.8 (4)
Age of the Respondent		
15-25	27.5 (187)	5.9 (2)
26-35	27.5 (187)	23.5 (8)
36-45	18.6 (127)	29.4 (10)
46 & Above	26.4 (180)	41.2 (14)
Education Level		
No Education	15.7 (107)	29.4 (10)
Primary	27 (184)	41.2 (14)
Middle	23.5 (160)	20.6 (7)
Secondary	20.1 (137)	0.0
Higher Secondary	8.5 (58)	8.8 (3)
Graduate	4.1 (28)	0.0
Post Graduate	1.0 (7)	0.0
Adequately Compensated		
Yes	79.7 (543)	58.8 (20)
No	20.3 (138)	41.2 (14)
Monthly Income		
Below 5000	.6 (4)	26.5 (9)
5000-10000	51.8 (353)	64.7 (22)
10001-15000	38.8 (264)	8.8 (3)
15001-20000	3.1 (21)	0.0
Above 20000	5.7 (39)	0.0

Communication with Authority		
Yes	86.8 (591)	34 (100)
No	2.1 (14)	0.0
Others	11.2 (76)	0.0
Family Members in the Industry		
None	0.1 (1)	0.0
One	75.2 (512)	47.1 (16)
Two	20.9 (142)	41.2 (14)
Three or More	3.8 (26)	11.7 (4)
Standard of Living Index		
Low	34.8 (237)	5.9 (2)
Medium	56.2 (383)	91.2 (31)
High	9.0 (61)	2.9 (1)
Member of any Social Group		
Yes	4.1 (28)	-
No	95.9 (653)	34 (100)
Network with Other Artisans		
Yes	10.4 (71)	-
No	89.6 (610)	34 (100)
Associated with Any Government/Private Saving Plan		
Yes	72.7 (495)	73.5 (25)
No	27.3 (186)	26.5 (9)

Communication with the Authority

The findings reveal that 86 percent of the male Chhipa artisans could directly communicate with the authority or owner of the factory/unit. Whereas all the female artisans reported that they could directly communicate with the authority or factory owner and they could share the problems faced by them to the factory/unit owners. These units are very small, and each employee know who the employer is and how to approach them. Even employers also find it convenient to have a personal good relationship with each employee. Hence because of the

absence of hierarchy in the units there were good employee and employer relationship. In major festivals and family functions both sides invite each other that gives a feeling of extended family.

Family Members in the Industry

All the male and female artisans were asked about their family members doing hand block printing. They were asked whether any of their family member is also involved in the same profession. About three fourth of the male Chhipa artisans reported that they have one more family member who was involved in the same profession of hand block printing. Almost one fifth of the respondents reported that they have two members of their family who were into hand block printing. Likewise, same question was asked to female Chhipa artisan's and around 48 percent of them reported that they are the only one from the family who are involved in hand block printing. Another two fifth of the respondents reported that along with them one more member of the family is involved in hand block printing. In earlier years when the organic printing was on peak the artisans were getting enough work. But in later years with dwindling demand of exports there was a slump in profit margin which has negative repercussions on the income of artisans. This was the time when they felt the need of helping hand. Some of the family members pitched in to contribute into earning of the household by getting the employment in the same industry whereas the others found employment in other industry.

Standard of Living Index of the Respondent

From the data on household assets Standard of Living Index was computed and Cronbach alpha was calculated. Results highlight that 56 percent of the male Chhipa artisans belonged to middle standard of living index. About one third of the respondents were found to be with low standard of living index. Rest 9 percent of the respondents were found to be with high standard of living index. The study also revealed that almost 92 percent of the female artisans had medium standard of living index rest of the respondents were with low standard of living index (5.9 percent) and high standard of living index (2.9 percent).

Member of Any Social Group

Information was also collected on respondent's status of member of any social group. The results revealed that 95 percent of the male respondents reported that they were not part of any social

group. Whereas all the female Chhipa respondents of the study area reported that they were not part of any social group.

Network with Other Artisans

It is evident from the analysis on respondent's network with other artisans that almost 90 percent of the male artisans were not involved or associated with the union for Chhipa artisans. On the contrary all the female respondents reported that they were not part or associated with any union or individual working in the hand block printing industry.

Associated with any Government/ Private Saving Plan

The results also demonstrate that the respondents were attached to some government/ private saving plan. About three fourth of the male respondents reported that they were part of government/private saving scheme. Similarly, about three fourth of the female respondents reported that they were part of some saving scheme by government/private.

Respondents Perception About Any Change in Hand Block Printing Industry

The perception of the Chhipa artisans about any change in hand block printing industry was studied. Almost 58 percent of the respondents reported that they strongly feel that the hand block printing industry has changed and different from it was earlier. The Chhipa artisans reported that 'When they started with the hand block printing; detailed hand block printing was done with natural colors made by vegetables, rock, iron, flower and mud. Now the hand block printing has been taken over by screen printing. The clients have no time they want variety in the designs, some of the shades that cannot be prepared organically, and variety of cloths as base; screen print has all these options hence that came as cheaper option and the orders can be prepared in lesser time. Therefore, over the years hand block print has been gradually taken over by screen printing. Some of the artisans also reported that 'the Chhipa artisans were not involved in every aspect of marketing. This was a disadvantageous situation for them. Although artisans have various issues related to design, production, costing, and marketing, but have no idea on how to adapt with the changes according to the changed market needs.

Conclusion

The artisans engaged in hand block printing have witnessed a sea change in the industry. Their socio-economic status reflects that somehow, they survived in the turmoil. Although there was downfall in the industry itself, but it did not have adverse impact on the relations of factory owners and workers. Study found that the relation between owners of factory and workers was good and the workers reported that they were compensated adequately. Apparently, there was no significant impact on the income of the artisans. Some of the artisans also reported that they have one more family member who was involved in the same profession of hand block printing.

Almost 21 percent of the respondents reported that they have two members of their family who were into hand block printing. Likewise, same question was asked to female Chhipa artisan's and around 48 percent of them reported that they are the only one from the family who are involved in hand block printing. Another 41 percent of the respondents reported that along with them one more member of the family is involved in hand block printing.

Almost 50 percent of the male Chhipa artisans reported that they had a monthly income of Rs. 5000-10000., whereas around 39 percent of the respondents reported that they had a monthly income between 10001-15000 Rs. Likewise, almost 65 percent of the female Chhipa artisans reported that they had a monthly income between 5000-10000 Rs. 26 percent of the female Chhipa artisans reported that they were earning below Rs. 5000 from hand block printing.

From the data on household assets Standard of Living Index was computed and Cronbach alpha was calculated. Results highlight that 56 percent of the male Chhipa artisans belonged to middle standard of living index. 34 percent of the respondents were found to be with low standard of living index. Rest 9 percent of the respondents were found to be with high standard of living index. The study also revealed that almost 92 percent of the female artisans had medium standard of living index rest of the respondents were with low standard of living index (5.9 percent) and high standard of living index (2.9 percent). The results also demonstrate that the respondents were attached to some government/ private saving plan. About 73 percent of the male respondents reported that they were part of government/private saving scheme. Similarly, 73

percent of the female respondents reported that they were part of some saving scheme by government/private.

The Chhipa artisans reported that 'When they started with the hand block printing detailed hand block printing was done with natural colors made by vegetables. Now the hand block printing is taken over screen printing. The client wants more designs and variety and screen printing is cheaper and less time consuming'. Therefore, hand block printing has gradually taken over by screen printing. Some of the artisans also reported that 'the Chhipa artisans were not involved in every aspect of market. Chhipa artisans have various issues related to design, production, costing, and marketing, and don't know how to adapt with the changes according to the changed market needs.

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