

Contribution of Gujarat Region in the Field of Printing and Printmaking

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Abstract – Print, printing and printmaking has a long world history. In India printing and printmaking activities flourished around in 1556, when the Portuguese missionaries have imported the printing press from Lisbon, to spread out the Christian mythology amongst the Indian people. Here I have found some interesting facts related to the printmaking developments where the region of Gujarat has an importance to help out in one another way whether activities related to printing commercial textiles or establishing printing machineries or to reach and teach the printmaking to the people and so on. In this article I have tried to focus some facts related to my findings on how the region of Gujarat, the people of Gujarat, or the community in Gujarat has helped out in one or other way to establish the reputation to contribute for the development of printing and printmaking.

Keywords: - Printmaking, Oleograph, Block Print, Wood Cut, Graphic Arts, Wood Engraving.

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INTRODUCTION

Print, Printing and printmaking words are common term for the human kind in the recent world. The roots of reaching out to the common man, any such printed material is highly common and to popularizes things, new launches, and or the artistic piece of art, to be placed or hung on the wall of a home, is quiet easy though this bigger invention of printing, which has a deep history of centuries before around in the 8th century AD. When impressions were made on the walls of caves and the Chinese artisan craftsmen have to be known as the innovator to take impressions either on paper, as it could be linked with their invention of paper much earlier in 2nd century AD.

In 21st century we are moved a far ahead of these glory of varied printing inventions to make it more faster, the purpose could be anything such as to spread out the religious scriptures as a propaganda to spread the religious activities, artistic expression, to educate people among the society, advertising, newspapers, magazines, label making or hoardings and so on and on.

If we look at the history Gujarat was a major producer of the block prints to the world. Block making and block printing activities were old trade and craft flourished in Gujarat, and In India. The printed textiles from Gujarat were very popular in the countries like Thailand, Burma and Indonesia during centuries before.

The combination of printing with resist and mordant dyeing is typical of the technique in many parts of Gujarat especially in the district of Kutch. Also a few specimens of this fragile and biodegradable material of a period earlier than the 5th century survive.

The noted German artist Albrecht Durer a well known painter and printmaker, known for his wood cuts and metal engravings, born on 21st may 1471 in Nuremberg. In 1515, he created his famous woodcut of the 'Rhinceros' following by artists including Hans Burgkmair and Francesco Grannaci created images of it. However, the rhino made by Durer became a visual icon. The Rhino arrived in Lisbon, was a gift shipped from the central Gujarat to the king of Portugal, Durer made the drawing from a written description by another artist, without ever seeing the animal himself. The Durer's 'Rhinceros' was popular amongst the people and help him to earn a wealthy living by selling it often, whenever he finds a buyer, Durer sold some hundreds of copies of his acclaimed wood cut print which has deep connection to the region of Gujarat. The image of the Indian rhinceros has such force that it remains one of his best-known and was still used in some German school science text-books as late as last century.

During an early stage of the development of Indian printing activities in various regions of the country, early in the 17th century, a Mumbai based Gujarati businessman Named Bhimji Parikh originally from Surat, Gujarat imported and established the

printing press in Mumbai, to start publishing house and printing activities, which flourished in Mumbai, though it does not last for long time. The contribution by Bhimji Parikh is important as to start the printing activities in the western side of the country at that time.

Major co-operation from Gujarat is associated with the king of Maharaja then Srimant Maharaja Sayajirao Gaikwad III of Vadodara. The celebrated Painter Raja Ravi Verma from Travancore of Kerala who was, known for as the his oil color painting made in purely Indian themes, using the western style of oil painting, called for a huge commission work as to portray the family paintings in the Royal court of Maharaja of Vadodara, at the Laxmi Vilas Palace of Vadodara, the commission had been continued for more than 15 years, in return Raja Ravi Verma obtained a handsome amount from the Maharaja of Vadodara, the full amount was utilized to establish an oleograph press for mass production of his own oil paintings in the form of oleo graphic prints. Before this Raja Ravi Verma used to send his oil paintings to Germany to make oleograph editions to reach out the demands of his religious paintings amongst the Indian people. These cheap alternatives amongst the middle class Indian family as to acquire a copy of Raja Ravi Verma, which could be a dream and can afford an oleo graph, which was very cheap and could be seen on their wall. The idea got succeeded as Raja Ravi Verma has set up the studio and press in Ghatkopar, Maharashtra in 1894, as he imported whole setup of printing mechanism with a specialist technician to help out to run it successfully. The first print of Bharat and Shakuntala was printed, images of popular Indian gods and goddesses were came out of the press, which became so popular that even today many old houses, or families kept them to hung on their walls. Some of these oleographs became so prominent, as they became the popular icons of Indian houses.

Later the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda (earlier started as Baroda College in the year 1881) was established in the year 1949 and the kalabhavan (now faculty of technology and engineering), where art and drawing was taught along with the technical skills and education, was separated and a new Faculty of Fine arts along with department of painting, sculpture and Applied arts began to impart the knowledge of various visual arts. Printmaking was taught as a subsidiary subject as lithography, relief printing were practiced extensively. Later the prominent department of Graphic arts or (Department of printmaking) started around in the year 1971, where the master's degree and post diploma in printmaking courses were started offering. Various printmaking techniques i.e. lithography, woodcut and wood carving, intaglio print techniques like etching, aquatint, dry point and Silk Screen and photography printing were started teaching to the students. Until now the department has acclaimed a high reputation and produced a number of finest

printmakers, designers and artists, who have settled at various places and became the true ambassadors of the M S University.

The Fine Arts Vadodara has a liberal approach towards the art teaching, where the students have freedom to nurture their own ideas and to express and explore with various mediums and materials.

A few famous artists whether painters, sculptors or other visual artists have made their prominent name in the field of printmaking by practicing various print mediums. After finishing their studies in their respected fields, these artists have taken printmaking as passion to express and experiment using different print mediums. Like Yagneshwer K. Shukla, Rashiklal Parikh, Jyoti Bhatt, Vinod Ray Patel, Jeram Patel, Dhruva Mistri, Vinod S Patel, Nainaben Dalal, Jayant Parikh from the earlier generation, and also presently a number of mid age artists such as Jayanti Rabadia, Jayant Gajera, Bharat Patni, Sunil Darji, Anil Majumdar, jignesh patel and from the next lot as well young artists printmakers from Gujarat region have shown their talent and creativity by exploring various printmaking methods and materials in the field of printmaking. The younger generation artists such as Dushyant Patel, Kanika Shah, Chirag Panchal Rajarshi Smart, and many other artists have keep printmaking in their priority and passion through which they not only continued printmaking live, also they contributed in many such community activities of making print portfolios, print exhibitions and running studios by helping other artists who want to carry on printmaking as their carrier or to practice further.

CONCLUSION

I conclude with the remark that though India has wide geographical ambience, though the printmaking started since so long, Gujarat has observed and shared its importance in terms of creating historic printmaking events, images, nurturing the trade of printing, or to mass duplication of an original image using an impression on stone, metal or wood, and to reach out to home to home or nurturing the field of printmaking in the country as well as the globe.

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