

Block printing – an artistic legacy



Woodblock printing is a quintessential example of art transcending history and border throughout the South Asian subcontinent. It originated in China, and remained to be the most non-communal method of printing books, text, and images. The earliest and most fashionable use of woodblock printing began with the Han Dynasty, where silk fragments were printed with flowers in three colours.

Indeed, it has been many years since that time. The technique has well diffused into Eurasian countries, and has since then thrived in the textile industry of Bangladesh.

The traditional art of woodblock printing has seen many shifts in our country. In the late eighties, block printing arrived here. To begin with, people hardly expressed any appreciation towards it. At the time, it was a novel medium of art for artists to highlight their talent and establish appreciation towards this medium of art.

HOW IT WORKS

Woodblocks for textile printing maybe made of box, lime, sycamore, plain, or pear wood. The block size varies largely, due to the fact that different designs are embedded on it. The block surface is initially smooth, and perfectly flat. The design drawn upon it is done by tracing an outline of the design in lampblack and oil. The areas that are to be kept are then tinted with ammoniac carmine and magenta. Once that is done, the woodblocks are covered with wet cloths during the whole process of cutting. Afterwards, the block cutter commences carving off the heavier pieces of the wood at first, and then the lighter ones, to create an intricate design for the woodblock.

TRANSFORMATION OF BLOCK PRINTING

Today, block printing has gone far from the tradi-

tional form of wood dipped into colour. Prints are an innovative way to bring a special touch to any collection of designs or attire. In fact, in the past few seasons, runways have adopted this traditional form of artwork and imbued many innovations. Starting from handmade, in-house, a recycled vintage piece, or re-interpreted in digital form, block printing has inspired a number of looks in fashion.

FORMS OF BLOCK PRINT AND WHERE

Block printing in our fashion industry commenced with printing silk saris, mainly the Balaka silk. Today, we have come quite far with block printing and it's all thanks to the contribution of the initiative that was taken by a multitude of fashion designers and boutique houses in Bangladesh.

Nowadays, the sari is not the only comfortable thing that women like to wear, but also shalwar kameezs, fatuas, and kurtas, which are all essential daily wear.

Keeping that in mind, designers and fashion houses have a wide variety of motif and designs for different attires. Discharge block printing is often designed on apparels where the entire fabric is dipped in colour, including the specific areas on which design is to be created. It is then reacted with a chemical to make it faded from that particular area, and later, the faded portion is coloured with a different dye.