



Sustaining Heritage through Innovation: The Ajrakh Craft in a Changing World

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Abstract: This chapter examines the convergence of innovation, technology, and tradition through the case of Ajrakh, a resist-and-mordant block-printing craft rooted in Kutch, Gujarat, with historical links to Sindh and Barmer. Renowned for its intricate motifs, natural dye palette, and geometric precision, Ajrakh embodies India's craft heritage and ecological sensibility, having evolved from a regionally and functionally limited textile into a contemporary design language spanning apparel, home décor, and lifestyle products. Using practice-led and qualitative research, the study develops new motifs within the traditional framework of natural dyes and hand processes, for a diversified range of contemporary apparel and home-textile products, and examines how artisans and designers reinterpret traditional motifs and compositions to align with current aesthetic sensibilities while preserving authenticity. Through the lens of design innovation, sustainability, and cultural continuity, the chapter highlights how contemporary practitioners are redefining Ajrakh through eco-conscious methods, engineered layouts, mixed-media techniques, and digital collaboration, extending its applications into couture fashion, textile art, interior design, and socio-cultural activism while reinforcing its intrinsic values of geometry, precision, and ecological wisdom. The research argues that innovation in textile design need not abandon tradition but can reimagine it, introducing newness across generations to sustain relevance and expand markets, and positions Ajrakh as a living textile tradition bridging craft and modernity, function and art, sustainability and design innovation.

Keywords: Block printing, motif design, natural dyes, craft innovation, artisan collaboration, textile heritage.

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