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COPYRIGHT PROTECTION ON 3D AND 4D PRINTING IN INDIA – A CRITICAL LEGAL ANALYSIS

Authored By- Kavitha Christo Nelson¹ & Dr. Upankar Chutia²

Abstract

Intellectual Property Rights is always a tug-of-war between the emerging technological innovations and inventions with the existing national laws and regulations, whereby 3D and 4D Printing technology is no exception. 3D and 4D printing- a technology that can reprint or produce a replica of any objects or prototypes with one of the printing machines with the aid of an available CAD file or in absence of such file the technology is so advanced that a 3D Scanner can scan such an object that converts to CAD file to reprint the replica objects or prototypes where such objects pose threat to the original inventor of the patented objects or any other new artistic works. As 3D and 4D printing are advanced in technology that is currently used in all the fields from constructing unique and unimaginable designs of architectural buildings, food, and pharmaceutical drug printing, to the most advanced 3D bioprinting of replicas of metal implants, and artificial human organs to hearing aid in the medical industry, environmental concerned objects, to the world's largest rocket engine, etc., thereby protecting the intellectual property of the same is the need of the hour. The research will analyze the lacunae in the existing IP law, evaluate the concerns as well suggest probable amendments to the existing Copyright regime protecting the authors or creators in India.

Keywords: Intellectual Property Rights, IPR, 3D and 4D printing, Technology, CAD file Copyright

Introduction:

A carte blanche work of authors and artists, and any emerging new technology in any industry would be a tribute to Intellectual Property Rights in return always pose a challenging task and debates the existing Intellectual Property Rights Laws in India.

The concept of transformation of 2D or two-dimensional to 3D or three-dimensional printing or “additive manufacturing” dates back to an invention of 1986 by Engineer Chuck Hull³. The 3D printer transforms the computerized 2D blueprint files called the computer-Aided-Design file (CAD file) a software that deconstructs the 2D to 3D model or object in layers termed additive

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³Engineer Chuck Hull, “Chuck Hull Invents Stereolithography or 3D Printing and Produces the First Commercial 3D Printer

<https://www.historyofinformation.com/detail.php?id=3864> (accessed on 1st May 2022)

manufacturing or 3D printing. In such circumstances where such a CAD file to produce or print a 3D object isn't available, there comes the support of the 3D Scanner that scans the object and creates a CAD file to support the replication of the desired object. The present 3D printing has given its technological advancement to emerging 4D or four-dimensional printing which holds up more advanced applications, increased capabilities, and efficiency.⁴

The 3D printing technology had remarked its next-gen revolution where its applicability and usage extend to the creation of printing replica objects in almost all the industries from the agro-food industry, pharmaceutical industry to print 3D drugs, prosthetics, fashion industry, jewellery making to meet the global requirement where such 3D printing technology caters to produce cost-effective and accommodate the customized requirements of an individual.

The concept of 3D printing and 4D printing through an Intellectual Property Right acquires the Patent protection for the invention of 3D or the 4D printing machine and its subsidiary 3D Scanner to support producing the CAD file to produce a replica object or prototypes. The design of the 3D printer is protected under the Designs Act, 2000, The Trademarks Act, 1999, and the blueprint CAD file is protected under the Copyrights Act 1957 in India. Irrespective of existing IP laws in India demands a challenging IP law that handles the 3D printing technologies and their exploitation from an ethical and economic perspective. 3D printing infringement and remedies are not covered under the Indian Penal Code, 1860 and not nor in the Copyright Act 1957.

When considering the pros of the 3D or 4D printing technology in the medical industry is advanced and supports in production of a replica of human organs, artificial limbs, and tissues for transplantation in humans, especially in emergency cases of the non-availability of organs/donors.

Another consideration towards the environmental aspect would help in recyclability of the plastic or polymers to create another artistic object or prototype using the 3D or 4D Printing technology.

Emerging technology in any new invention would always be protected under the Intellectual Property Rights but another critical scenario always demands a debate and challenge towards the up-gradation of the existing laws to protect the intellectual aspect of one person and restrict its usage from infringement by another person.

Fostering 3D or 4D printing technology in India ensures adequate protection in the existing Copyright Law where the question arises concerning section 2(c) which specifically doesn't mention the copyright protection for 3D or 4D printed objects or prototypes.

The use of 3D printing in the unauthorized reproduction, duplication, and distribution of

⁴ 3D printing industry,
<https://3dprintingindustry.com/3d-printing-basics-free-beginners-guide/>

copyrighted material would amount to copyright infringement in India under *section 52(1) (w)*⁵ and needs to be justified as such would be a dilution of creative works of another person. This lacuna holds a negative impact on the original or genuine copyright owners and the Indian economy as such would result in huge loss.

When a 3D object is created who holds the exclusive copyright ownership is a debate as to whether it is the CAD file owner or the person who printed the 3D object, the copyright law holds lacunae in specifying the 3D prototypes which the copyright law demands to justify.

3D printing and 4D printing support and cater to all requirements in industries and household prototypes don't hold stringent regulations to control their unauthorized production. This loophole may impact the national security as well when on leakage of such CAD files or genuinely obtaining such blueprint of making machine guns or other negative circumstances. This posits the question of whether hobbyists would be charged as infringers in such a scenario.

Even though the *TRIPS Agreement under Article 13* provides the limitations and exceptions, "members shall confine limitations or exceptions to exclusive rights to certain special cases that *do not conflict with a normal exploitation of the work and do not unreasonably prejudice the legitimate interests of the right holder.*"⁶ In India, we lagged in strict IP laws when there are emerging new technologies, unlike in the USA. There is a grave need for an exclusive addition towards 3D printing or 4D printing in copyright law in the perspective of economic growth, to protect the monopoly rights of the original owner, and to avoid and regulate such illegal sale and use of 3D printing CAD file to produce unauthorized objects that are patent protected usually sold through online or other modes.

The objectives of this paper are:

1. To analyze the protection regime of 3D and 4D printed objects or prototypes in India.
2. To evaluate the liabilities on infringement on CAD files, 3D and 4D printed objects or prototypes in the Copyright Law in India.

The paper hypothesizes that "*The regulatory mechanism that prevails in India in relation to 3D and 4D printing is insufficient thereby we need separate provisions to regulate the sections in Copyright Law*".

The scope of the study extends to the copyright protection of artistic 3D and 4D printing objects or prototypes under section 2(c) and limits the infringement under section 52(1)(w) of the Copyright

⁵Section 52(1)(w) of the Copyright Act,

[https://indiankanoon.org/doc/257434/#:~:text=\(za\)%20the%20performance%20of%20a,Explanation.](https://indiankanoon.org/doc/257434/#:~:text=(za)%20the%20performance%20of%20a,Explanation.)

⁶Article 31, TRIPS Agreement,

https://www.wto.org/english/res_e/publications_e/ai17_e/trips_art13_jur.pdf

Act,1957.

3d And 4d Revolution In Technology And Industry:

WIPO on, “3D printing and IP Law”⁷ an article on the current 3D advantages, the gap between the laws and emerging technology, and how the existing IP laws try to handle 3D printing in their respective nations. This article also refers to the TRIPS agreement and the WIPO Copyright Treaty to curb unauthorized use and extend its limitation and exceptions to copyright protection in the legitimate interest of the right holder.

3D and 4D printing have gone ahead in developing unimaginable products in the technologically advanced world’s largest 3D rocket engine by the UK-based Orbex⁸ a single piece manufactured with the perfect temperature and to handle the power fluctuations a much advanced and better rocket engine than the other space engines.

From an educational point of view, supports that the 3D printing technology attempts to be an alternative to traditional learning which incorporates more 3D printed student projects for a better understanding and learning process.⁹ The developments in 3D printing along with the Intellectual Property concerns highlight that the Copyright law protects only the objects created through the expression of ideas. Whereas the US copyright law extensively protects the author’s creative work whilst protecting exploitation of the copyright information in the education and research field and with the digital revolution it becomes readily accessible to anyone. The article highlights the challenges for the 3D printed objects regarding the copyright protection and its infringement as at times in circumstantial cases such transformative uses claimed as legal as in cases for the academic purpose or project, especially would be an advantage for those visually impaired.¹⁰

Food is an essential part of every human life, and the same if served with an unimaginable designer product adds not just aesthetic creativity but also the innovator’s creativity towards delivering the intricate shapes and geometric designs on the plater. Such 3D and 4D printing ways of printing the

⁷WIPO MAGAZINE, 3D PRINTING AND IP LAW,2017,
https://www.wipo.int/wipo_magazine/en/2017/01/article_0006.html

⁸MADDY WHITE,UK SPACE BLASTS OUT OF ORBIT WITH WORLD’S LARGEST 3D-PRINTED ROCKET ENGINE,
<https://www.themanufacturer.com/articles/uk-space-blasts-out-of-orbit-with-worlds-largest-3d-printed-rocket-engine/>
(accessed on 1st May 2022).

⁹PATRICIA MCGAHERN, FRANCES BOSCH, & DOROTHY BELLE POLI. (2015). ENHANCING LEARNING USING 3D PRINTING: AN ALTERNATIVE TO TRADITIONAL STUDENT PROJECT METHODS. THE AMERICAN BIOLOGY TEACHER, 77(5), 376–377.
<https://doi.org/10.1525/abt.2015.77.5.9>

¹⁰AAGAARD, P., & KOLITSKY, M. (2014). 3-D PRINTING, COPYRIGHT, AND FAIR USE: WHAT SHOULD WE KNOW? IN B. R. BERNHARDT, L. H. HINDS, & K. P. STRAUCH (EDS.), *Too Much is Not Enough: Charleston Conference Proceedings, 2013* (pp. 470–473). Purdue University Press.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt6wq772.87>

*food product and end-product have become a trend in the Food industry.*¹¹

*Owning a designer house is everyone's dream, and 3D and 4D printed house is just another amazing concept of building aesthetically beautiful and intricate designer houses with minimal construction costs compared to traditional manual constructions. The pros are the architecture of the house is just as per the CAD blueprint and the designer's creations without any flaws which normally doesn't happen in any architectural construction as promised by the architecture.*¹² 3D printing is a concept of robotic construction where high-rise buildings are constructed using concrete 3D printing methods. Also highlights the advancements and challenges of 3D printing in the architectural industry with three cases addressing the eco-friendly construction requiring minimal human labor or effort as in traditional architectural construction¹³.

*Whenever there is an advancement in the medical industry, that would always benefit the public at large, especially when 3D and 4D printing can create customized hearing aids, 3D printed metal implants, and another prospect of the creation of artificial human organs using 3D- bioprinting.*¹⁴ The use of 3D printing in the healthcare industry and its demanding need for regulations, especially in 3D bioprinting where such involves the medical devices that mandate quality, medical technology for better clinical practice in ethical and moral in the demanding technological¹⁵.

*Everyone is bound to save the environment as a part of sustainable development, and 3D and 4D printing have gone ahead to print the replicas of coral reefs with fine intricates and structures to protect the environment*¹⁶. Another scientific approach towards the printing of micro-organisms that attracts over to the research is the field that is using 3D micro printing and 3D cellular printing to produce micro-organisms and bacteria. Also proves the technological advancements in 3D printing

¹¹LUCAS CAROLO, 3D PRINTED FOOD: ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW IN 2022, <https://all3dp.com/2/3d-printed-food-3d-printing-food/>, accessed on 1st May 2022.

¹²MADDY WHITE, WOULD YOU BUY A 3D PRINTED HOUSE?, <https://www.themanufacturer.com/articles/would-you-buy-a-3d-printed-house/>, accessed on 1st May 2022.

¹³GAUDILLIÈRE, N., DIRRENBERGER, J., DUBALLET, R., BOUYSSOU, C., MALLET, A., ROUX, P., & ZAKERI, M. (2020). INDUSTRIALISING CONCRETE 3D PRINTING: THREE CASE STUDIES. IN B. SHEIL, M. R. THOMSEN, M. TAMKE, & S. HANNA (EDS.), *Design Transactions: Rethinking Information Modelling for a New Material Age* (pp. 158–165). UCL Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv13xprf6.31>

¹⁴SEVEN INNOVATIVE REAL-WORLD CASE STUDIES OF 3D PRINTING, <https://www.themanufacturer.com/articles/seven-innovative-real-world-case-studies-of-3d-printing/>

¹⁵MARUTHAPPU, M., & KEOGH, B. (2014). HOW MIGHT 3D PRINTING AFFECT CLINICAL PRACTICE? *BMJ: BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL*, 349. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26517730>

¹⁶MADDY WHITE, COULD ADDITIVE MANUFACTURING FIX CORAL REEFS?, <https://www.themanufacturer.com/articles/could-additive-manufacturing-fix-coral-reefs/>

which mandates adapting legal regulatory methods for the next-generation technology and sustainability.¹⁷

*3D printing concept has become an added advantage in the manufacturing and automobile industry as the most intricate spare parts are printed at ease to perfection that would help any machine work perfectly. The technological potential growth in additive manufacturing or 3D printing technology is a revolutionary method and a transformative technology to the traditional approach. Such advancements though hold to increase the GDP of any nation hence suggesting the policymakers look into predicting the future aspect of technological challenges that would arise and make regulations holding a better disruptive technology of additive manufacturing.*¹⁸

*The Do-It-Yourself (DIY) trend has been increasing day-by-day where each one would like to create new or imitate the other either for hobbies and passion or for the commercial benefits, where the 3D / 4D printers and scanners have supported them enormously letting the public opt for CAD files where at times are misused to make of replicas of counterfeit goods and illegal metal gun-making which would be a threat to the national security of any nation. A classic example of the ‘Makers Movement’ and how any small-scale industry can make replicas of unauthorized, replication and duplication of any prototypes or objects by DIY communities (Do-It-Yourself) which also highlights the making of 3D printing guns and gun parts that exclusively doesn’t hold any statutory restrictions over the DIY maker and the threats associated with such a technology where for production of prototypes blueprint CAD file is readily available in the online market that can be accessed or obtained either ethically or unethically by any ordinary person or hackers.*¹⁹

Such 3D and 4D printing deserve protection not just on the national level since the 3D CAD files are easily accessible the international organizations are trying to find regulations to protect such under the Copyright Law.

¹⁷CONNELL, J. L., RITSCHDORFF, E. T., WHITELEY, M., & SHEAR, J. B. (2013). 3D PRINTING OF MICROSCOPIC BACTERIAL COMMUNITIES. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 110(46), 18380–18385.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/23757552>

¹⁸CAMPBELL, T., WILLIAMS, C., IVANOVA, O., & GARRETT, B. (2011). COULD 3D PRINTING CHANGE THE WORLD? TECHNOLOGIES, POTENTIAL, AND IMPLICATIONS OF ADDITIVE MANUFACTURING. ATLANTIC COUNCIL. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep03564>

¹⁹SHAW, R., DALNOKI-VERESS, F., COTTON, S., POLLACK, J., TOKI, M., RUSSELL, R., VASSALOTTI, O., & ALTAF, S. G. (2017). DIY COMMUNITIES, MANUFACTURING, AND 3D PRINTING. IN EVALUATING WMD PROLIFERATION RISKS AT THE NEXUS OF 3D PRINTING AND DO-IT-YOURSELF (DIY) COMMUNITIES (p. A-83-A-95). James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies (CNS).

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep17539.16>

International Regimes On Copyrights Law On 3d/4d Printing:

WIPO magazine on 3D printing or additive manufacturing posits that different strategies have been considered by different countries towards the economic and technological ecosystems favouring the development of 3D printing and also the drawback in technology that affects the Intellectual Property in regard to the Copyright, Design Law, Patent Law and to some extent the Geographical Indications. *3D Scanning software can make wonders in the replication of the museum and cultural heritage applications which concludes the impossible to possible. Whilst technological advancement is inevitable in any industry instead of justifying with the Wait-and-Watch approach it's high time to the control application of 3D printing technology*²⁰.

The *Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works*²¹, whilst it supports the 'unity of art principle'²² and honors the protection of copyrighted work across the contracting States to the Berne Convention for a minimal duration until 50 years after the death of the author or 50 years in pseudonymous works, also denies the protection if such copyright protection is ceased or denied in the country of origin.

The *Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights Agreement* (TRIPs Agreement) with the *World Trade Organization* (WTO) binds to automatic protection and independent protection of those members who are not a party to the Berne Convention subject to limitations and exceptions. This provision under Article 13 of the TRIPs Agreement has given way for some countries to adopt the levy of minimal fee towards compensation for unauthorized copying of protected material in 3D printing.²³

Some countries like France hold provisions under the *Intellectual Property Code of France* (Article L 613-4)²⁴ that 3D printed objects can be protected under the Patent which would support the patent holders to seek redress towards the unauthorized use of their 3D printing by the third parties and to honour the copyrighted work.

²⁰WACHOWIAK, M. J., & KARAS, B. V. (2009). 3D SCANNING AND REPLICATION FOR MUSEUM AND CULTURAL HERITAGE APPLICATIONS. *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation*, 48(2), 141–158.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/27784660>

²¹BERNE CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION OF LITERARY AND ARTISTIC WORKS
<https://www.wipo.int/treaties/en/ip/berne/>

²²MASIYAKURIMA, P. (2016). COPYRIGHT IN WORKS OF ARTISTIC CRAFTSMANSHIP: AN ANALYSIS. *OXFORD JOURNAL OF LEGAL STUDIES*, 36(3), 505–534.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/26363506>

²³3D PRINTING AND IP LAW,
https://www.wipo.int/wipo_magazine/en/2017/01/article_0006.html

²⁴INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY CODE OF FRANCE (ARTICLE L 613-4)
https://www.jpo.go.jp/e/system/laws/gaikoku/document/index/france-e_chiteki_zaisan.pdf

3D printing technology from the international perspective addresses the key issues and challenges and also highlights the national strategies promoting the technology for instance the ‘Made-In-China’ movement or ‘America Makes’. Whenever there is technology there are attached threats associated with it.²⁵

3d Printing And Product Liability:

3D printing is a revolution in the technology industry and also posits legal upshots in the Intellectual Property towards the 3D CAD data protection and end-product liability. The availability of 3D CAD files online encourages private individuals to opt for 3D printers at affordable costs that are capable of printing the product that is protected under patent leading to counterfeit products in the market. Such 3D pirated software demands legal protection towards their infringement of IP as well as the misappropriation of software, and 3D printed products and devices associated with the copyright claim.

In another scenario, on the non-availability of the CAD file, the 3D Scanner is capable of scanning the product to convey the CAD file or digital software and then reprinting the unauthorized product without any legal obstructions to their infringement under the Copyright Law even though such software is ethically protected under the artistic works of the Act. 3D and 4D printing could be interpreted with reference to New Zealand’s case of *Wham-O-Manufacturing Co vs Lincoln Industries Ltd*²⁶ where the wooden models are produced from preliminary drawings that fall under the definition of sculptures or engravings under artistic works subject to copyright protection.

On analysing the possible liability issues on the person towards copyright infringement debates on whom, whether the manufacturer or supplier of 3D printer or printing material, or the owner of the printer or CAD blueprint right owner, or the person who printed the object, as the existing copyright law remains silent in that²⁷.

The challenges of 3D printing technology and Intellectual property law give a predominance focus on copyright law. This remains a threat to the creative minds and infringement that demands a Copyright law to protect the rights of the copyright owners. The artistic work of craftsmanship and the Art and Craft Movement lies a controversial riddle of whether the machine-created or mass-produced objects fall under the ambit of artistic craftsmanship was substantiated in the precedents and judicial

²⁵FEY, M. (2017). ADDITIVE MANUFACTURING. IN 3D PRINTING AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY: RISKS AND CHALLENGES OF AN EMERGING TECHNOLOGY (pp. 3–18). Peace Research Institute Frankfurt. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep14453.4>

²⁶*Wham-O-Manufacturing Co vs Lincoln Industries Ltd, Reports of Patent, Design and Trade Mark Cases*, Volume 102, Issue 7, 1985, Pages 127–186, <https://doi.org/10.1093/rpc/1985rpc127>

²⁷EMERGING LEGAL ISSUES IN 3D PRINTING AND PRODUCT LIABILITY, <https://www.lawjournalnewsletters.com/sites/lawjournalnewsletters/2016/09/01/emerging-legal-issues-in-3d-printing-and-product-liability-2/?slreturn=20220407141125>

interpretations.²⁸

Conclusion:

The world has witnessed the unveiled world's largest 3D printed rocket engine²⁹, 3D printed house, 3D printed bone implants, 3D jewellery, automobile spare parts, and 3D printed guns. The pros of the 3D and 4D printing, and prototypes would be the future educational mode as an alternative to the traditional teaching and such posits the advantage of fair use purpose. The possibilities of future 3D printing prototypes are endless as the technology and public interaction with the end product of 3D prototypes are increasing empowering the consumer's influence on 3D printing.

When 3D printing is a threat to the unauthorized copying of prototypes across the world, for some developing countries like Africa such technology can really play a vital role in their economic upliftment in the future³⁰.

The research paper proves the hypothesis by justifying "*The regulatory mechanism that prevails in India in relation to 3D and 4D printing is insufficient thereby we need separate provisions to regulate the sections in Copyright Act*".

The paper concludes that any creation deserves an incentive for the creator's investment in Research and Development and unique designs of CAD blueprints and 3D and 4D printing prototypes. Emerging digitalization and fostering creative content going forward would pressure the IP Policymakers a demanding regulatory challenge on Intellectual Property Rights and their protection worldwide combating the 3D and 4D printing piracy.

Suggestions:

Since the 3D and 4D print market covers the largest commercial application technology from revolutionary applications, regenerative medicine to prosthetics, complex airplane components, the food industry, fashion, and other technology that are deeply embedded in the future, towards which the paper suggests

1. 3D Printing in Africa Can Boost Manufacturing Sector,

²⁸MANYIKA, J., MCRAVEN, W. H., & SEGAL, A. (2019). FINDINGS. IN INNOVATION AND NATIONAL SECURITY: KEEPING OUR EDGE (pp. 13–52). Council on Foreign Relations.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep29894.7>

²⁹SEVEN INNOVATIVE REAL-WORLD CASE STUDIES OF 3D PRINTING,
<https://www.themanufacturer.com/articles/seven-innovative-real-world-case-studies-of-3d-printing/>

³⁰3D PRINTING IN AFRICA CAN BOOST MANUFACTURING SECTOR,
<https://www.borgenmagazine.com/3d-printing-in-africa/>, accessed on 6th May 2022

<https://www.borgenmagazine.com/3d-printing-in-africa/>, (accessed on 6th May 2022)

2. Campbell, T., Williams, C., Ivanova, O., & Garrett, B. (2011). Could 3D Printing Change the WORLD? Technologies, Potential, and Implications of Additive Manufacturing. Atlantic Council.

3. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep03564>(accessed on 4thMay 2022)

4. Connell, J. L., Ritschdorff, E. T., Whiteley, M., & Shear, J. B. (2013). 3D printing of microscopic bacterial communities. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 110(46), 18380–18385. (accessed on 4thMay 2022)

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