

Design Resource

## Batuas of Bhopal

The art of traditional purse making

by

Palash Vaswani

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/batuas-bhopal>



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2. History
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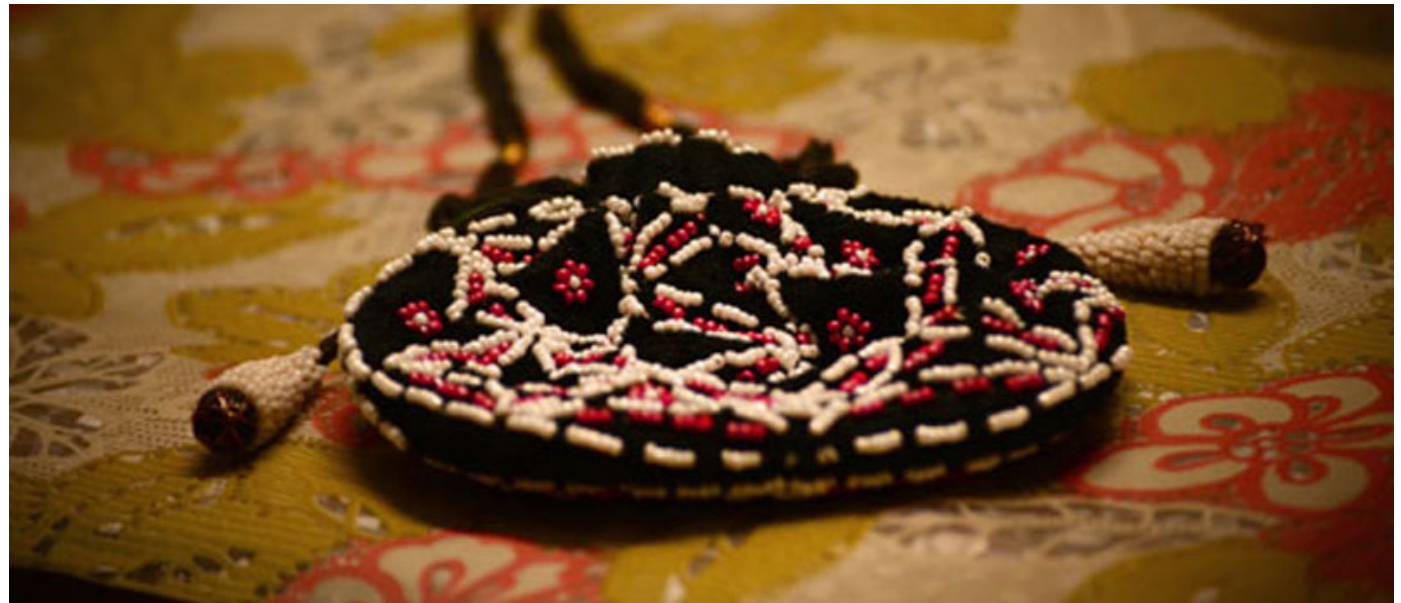
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IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/batuas-bhopal/introduction>

## Introduction

The batuas or the small purses of Bhopal are famous for its beautiful designs and intricate embroidery work. These purses are popular amongst the local people and are used for storing small coins, betel nuts, scent bottles, cloves, paan and other mouth fresheners. Being the most prominent part of the Nawabi culture in the past, these purses are now used as souvenirs too.



Bhopali batua

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<http://www.dsource.in/resource/batuas-bhopal/history>

## History

Batuas, which are one of the identities of the heritage city, also reflects the traditions and culture of Bhopal. The craft links itself to the early tribal culture, which made beautiful ornaments from wood, shells, metal, ivory and bones. This traditional skill later caught the eye of the Begums (Muslim women rulers) of Bhopal, who supported the craft and gave it a Persian touch. They used it for carrying cloves, betel nuts and other mouth fresheners. It was also used to keep currency. Today, the traces of the craft can also be found in fashion accessories, dress materials, wall hangings, lamb shades, bags and other decorative items.



Embroidery on the cloth to be stitched



Modern designs in purses

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## Place and People

Bhopal, which is also known as the city of lakes is the capital of Madhya Pradesh. The city is divided into the new and the old parts. Chowks lined with old mosques and havelis in the old city makes it a picturesque sight. Poetry recitals, zarda (tobacco), music, arts and theatre are an integral part of Bhopal. The city is said to have been founded by the king Bhoja of the Paramara dynasty (1000-1055 CE). Ruled for almost 200 years by the Muslim rulers, merger of the Hindu and Muslim cultures is evident at every corner of the capital. The traces of this religious and cultural amalgamation can also be found in the arts and crafts of the region.

Nazia and her aunt Rashida live in Khanugaon, which lies in the outskirts of Bhopal city. Both the women are a part of 6 families cluster, which are involved in the craft. Where Nazia has involved herself recently, Rashida is making these Bhopali batuas since last 25 years. Only the women of the family do the embroidery. Omprakash is a fitting tailor, who has been working since last 30 years at New National Zari House.



Lanes of old Bhopal



Madina market, Lakherpura

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Madina market, Lakherpura



Madina market, Lakherpura



Lanes of old Bhopal



Madina market, Lakherpura

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Madina market, Lakherpura



New National Zari House

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New National Zari House



Fitting and storage room at New National Zari House

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Storage room in New National Zari House



Tailor Omprakash, who works at New National Zari House

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Amitabh look alike who also runs a purse shop Conversation and music with tea.



Khanugaon



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Nazia and Rashida's home



Nazia and Rashida's home

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Nazia and Rashida's home



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Rashida with adda



Nazia and Rashida



Rashida

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## Process

Initially, a sketch of the pattern is drawn on the butter paper. The paper is then put on the piece of cloth, which is tightly tied to a rectangular frame called adda. Tiny holes following the pattern are made on it with a needle. A solution of chalk powder and kerosene is then applied on the drawing, which seeps through the holes and replicate the exact pattern on the cloth. A sewing needle and a thread is then used to stitch the raised motifs with moti (beads) and sitaare (sequins). Then the cloth is given to the tailor who stitches it in the desired shape and does the final fitting. Chains, threads, zips or handles are attached to it, according to the requirements.



Embroidery on cloth



Stiching of batua

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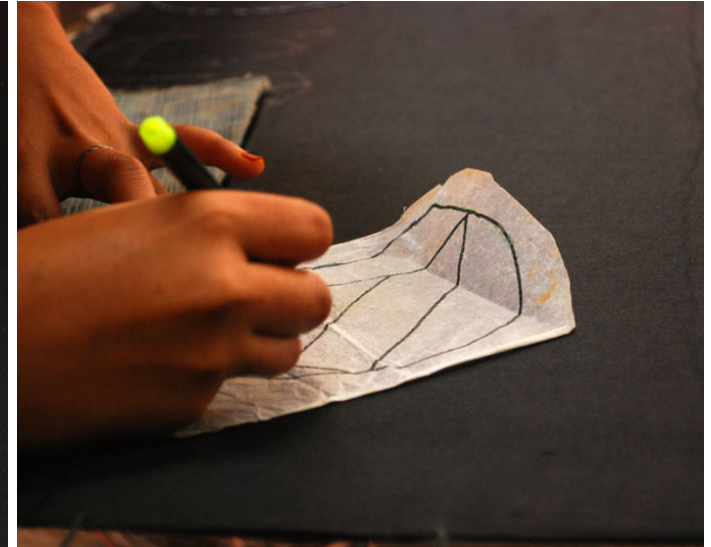
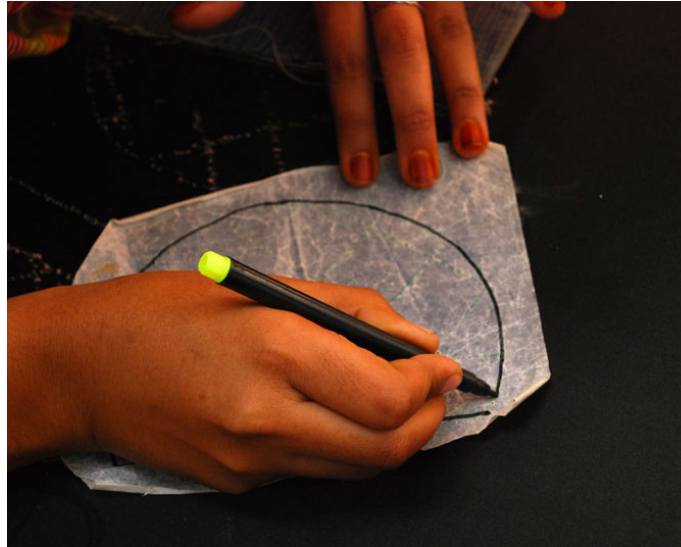
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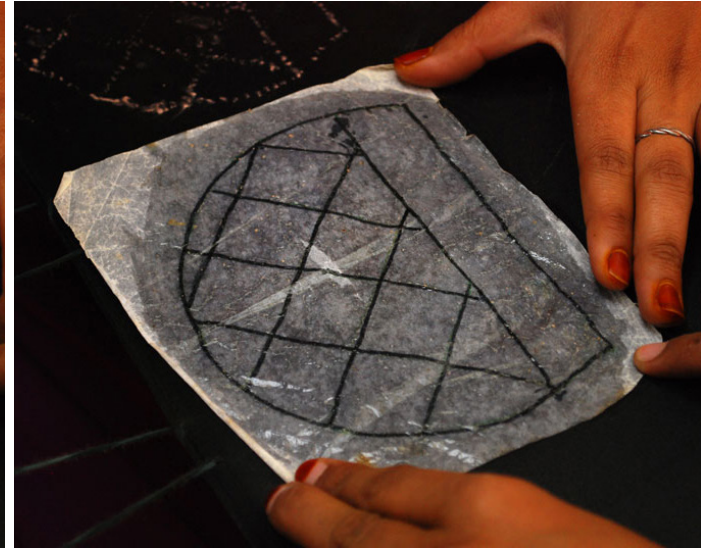
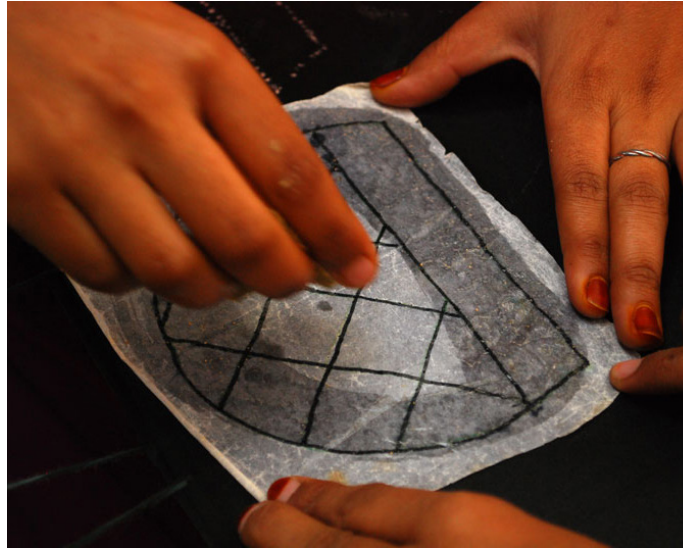
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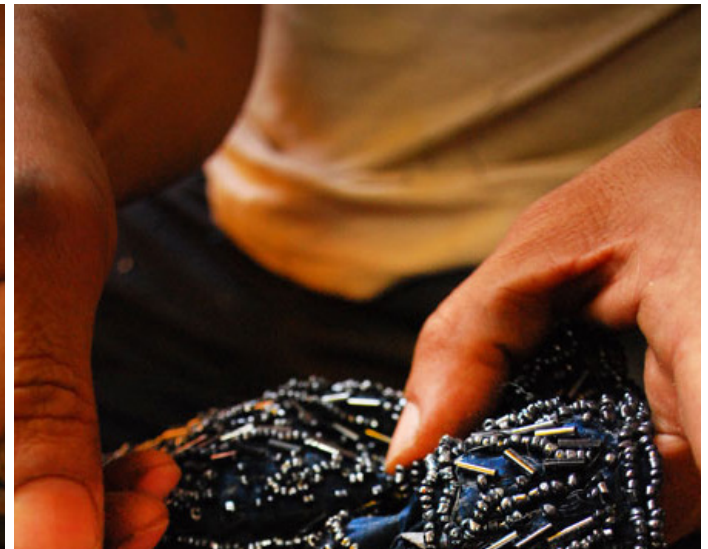
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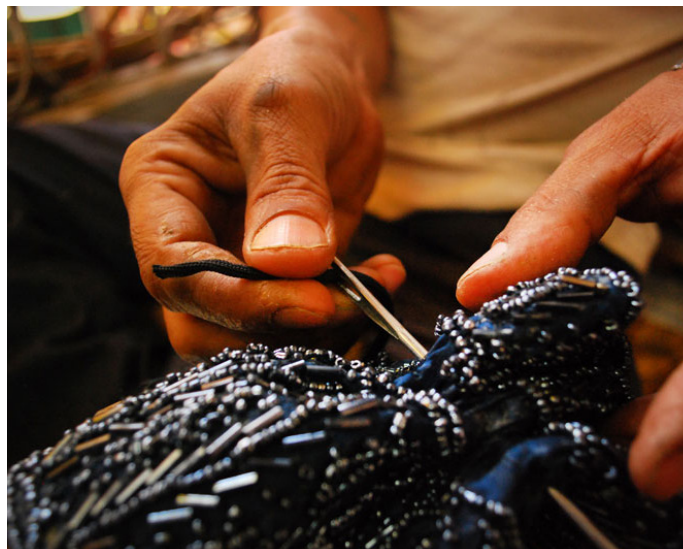
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## Product

These purses made out of cotton and satin clothes with bead, star and zari work on it, is an integral part of Bhopal's culture. Available in different sizes and color, it attracts the buyers to the lanes of old Bhopal. New National zari house is one of the few shops selling the batuas.



Traditional batuas



Traditional batuas

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Traditional batuas



Traditional batuas in a different shape

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Experiments with the shape and size



Experiments with the shape and size

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Experiments with the handles can also be seen



Experiments with the handles can also be seen

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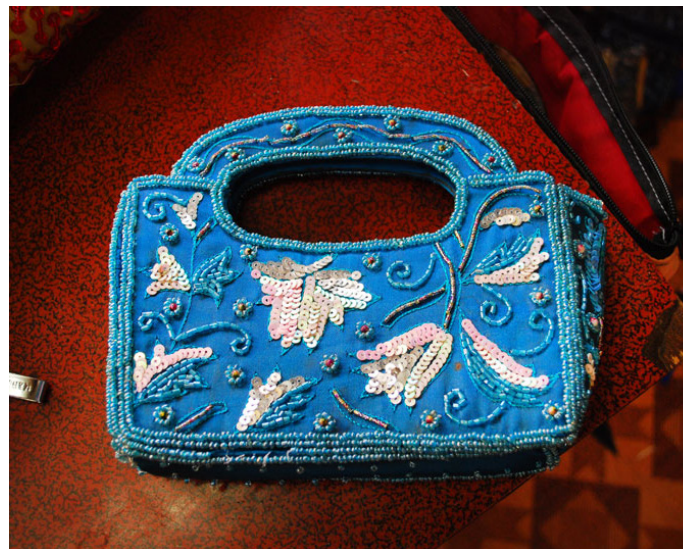


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Modern design in purses



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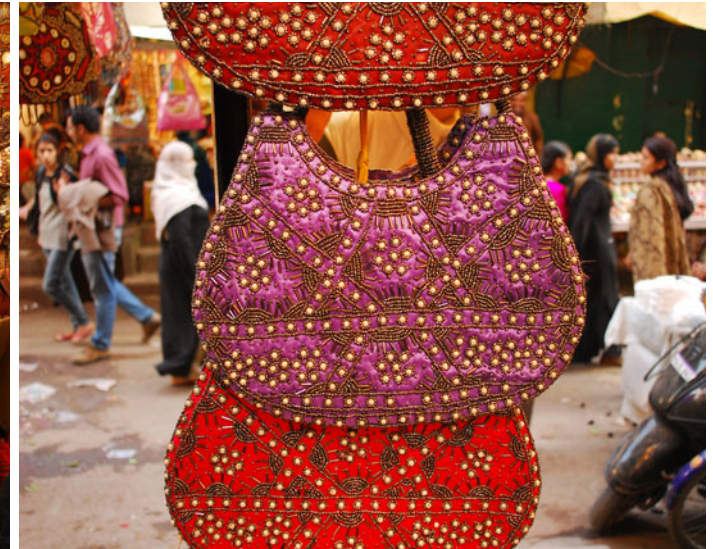
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## Contact Details

This documentation was done by Palash Vaswani, Design Associate,  
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You can get in touch with him at [palsonline\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:palsonline[at]gmail.com)

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Email: [dsource.in\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:dsource.in[at]gmail.com)

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