

Design Resource

Block and Hand Printing - Varanasi

Dyeing and Printing Crafts

by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral and Aakash Sharma

NID Campus, Bengaluru

Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/block-and-hand-printing-varanasi>

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
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Introduction

The Indian Textile Manufacturing units have been very prominent for its textile products since ancient times. India is second leading manufacturer of textiles in the world. The consolidated textile industry of India is range over the states of like Gujarat, Varanasi, Rajasthan and West Bengal. It is also true that Varanasi, a leading state in the country has been famed for its textiles and especially dyeing and printing crafts since ancient times. There is an important economic reputation of this sector in the state in the whole value chain from farm to fabric and garments with innovative idea and diversified products.

Textile printing comprises the manufacture of a predetermined colored design on a fabric, usually with a definite repeat. This can be described as a restricted form of dyeing, applying colorant to selected areas of the fabric to build up the design. The supreme change in the fashion and design that has ever occurred in European textiles was the universal introduction of printed fabrics.

One of the earliest methods of textile printing was the painting of a design on the cloth using a bamboo pen or brush. The technique was widely used in India to produce a range of elaborate and beautiful designs. Indian printed fabrics began to be imported into Europe in the late sixteenth century. The designs were based upon floral motifs and these formed the basis for early European printed designs. Penciling was used in Europe until the early nineteenth century. The method supplemented hand-block printing.

Gujarat being the largest producer of cotton in our country supplies its raw materials to Varanasi. Various modes of dyeing and printing have been developed highly in Varanasi from the beginning of the 19th Century. Including Varanasi, other states like Ahmedabad, Rajkot, Jaipur and Kutch are a few places where dyeing and printing productions are developed in cotton materials.

This method of printing patterns on cloth is used across India, but the tradition is strongest in Varanasi where societies of hand textile printers once prospered. Wood block printing is a technique which is used for printing text, images or pattern which are widely in demand, this technique is very prevalent in the European part of the world and majorly determined by India. This technique is used to print on cloth with the help of a wooden block. The printing of fabrics with hand blocks is fundamentally similar to the use of a rubber stamp and an ink pad. Although block printing is perhaps the oldest method of the local application of color to fabrics, it still persists but it is mainly confined to the decoration of scarves and sarees. As blocks are generally made of pear wood which is cut so that the design is raised in relief; the blocks are about 3 to 4 inches in thickness and vary in size up to 9 maximum of 18 inches square. Beyond 18 inches, lies the screen printing process which is practiced by the professionals in the similar society.

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According to the artisans, they have been practicing this art after a professional training from their seniors of the family and are following the tradition from last 11 years. An artisan can complete a saree in about 40 minutes and can complete about 4 sarees a day, this total time can prolong according to the design and patterns of the customer's demand. When interviewed Mr. Sonu Singh, it was observed that the industry was setup a couple of years ago with the staff of four which turned to fifteen. This process is very slow and covers every detail in the fabric.



Artisan involved in smoothening edges with buffing machine.



Artisan involved in carving the plywood with the help of customized machine.



Female artists involved in the process of painting the saree.

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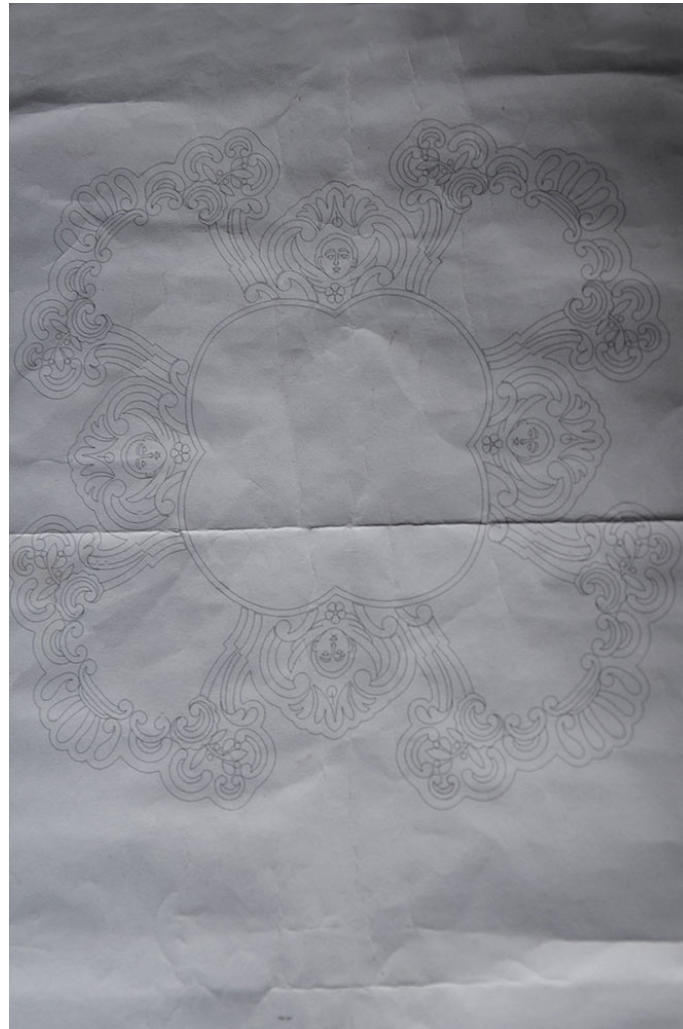
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Tools and Raw Materials



Free hand drawing, which is used as a reference in block making.



Customized cutting machine is used to cut plywood into required design patterns.

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Raw material on which block printing and hand painting will be made.



Paints used in the process of saree painting.

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Pins are used to fix saree on the table.



Wooden blocks are used to print different patterns on saree.



Chemicals used to prepare paints for block painting and printing.



Acid yellow is a chemical powder used to prepare yellow paint.

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Brush used to paint over the saree.



Fevicol is used to stick carved patterns on plywood in traditional block making.

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Making Process



Block Making



Block Printing



Hand Painting

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Block Making

First a fine pear wood is identified with no cracks and bents, this piece of wood is boiled in salt water to be germs free and long lasting. The piece of wood is then scraped with the help of a scrape tool after which it is smoothed using a sand paper. Once the wood block is ready, a piece of paper is taken on which detailed art is drawn with the help of pencil by a professional artist. The paper is placed on a slim wooden piece to check the size after which, the paper is pasted with the help of gum. The wooden plates are carved out with the help of cutting machine. The running motor has a connected cable with the help of which, a mini piece of spinning machine is controlled, this spinning machine carves & shapes out every pieces. Artisans can fix any size of rivet to the spinning machine. Small wooden pieces are placed on the block to form final shape which produces a pattern and a Block gets ready for the further printing process.



Carving the shape using customized carving machine.

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Artisan applying fevicol to plywood in order to stick carved design.



Carved design is being stick over plywood.



Artisan smoothing the edges with buffing machine.

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Block Printing

The fabric is placed on a flat table covered with blanket and a layer of smooth waterproof cloth covering with starch paste, the cloth is pinned at every ends of the wooden table. Artisans paint the fabric manually with the help of brushes like 8, 10 & 11 numbers that are available in flat and round shapes. The color is brushed on to the surface, each color requires a separate block and the brightest shades may be printed in same pattern as darkest without the risk of dulling. Fabric is dried for the block printing process and sarees with Jerry (Gold finish designs) work are focused with dark tones to highlight the jerry patters. Artesian colors the block by lowering it down onto the color tray, and once sufficient ink is lifted, it's been pressed down to create the print patterns. Pins on the side of the blocks guides artesian in placing every block exactly into position. Accuracy and strength of color is effectively governed by the artisan's 'gut feeling' on how much pressure needs to be applied to the back of the block. After each individual color has been laid the fabric is hung for 4-5 hours to let the thick water-based inks dry, before the next color is applied. A piece of paper is used while the process of block printing to prevent from printing unwanted areas and floral designs are overlapped when multiple colors are added on the fabric. Fabric is then boiled in 100 degree Celsius water for making it a chemical free material, prominent and permanent visibility. Ironing the fabric is an important part of the final product, after which the saree are been placed on a frame where two men iron the saree from both the ends. This process is followed with final folds and goes for the packing.

Ink is prepared by mixing Gum powder, Sodium Silicate, Relative colors, Caustic soda, Liquid soap and Ground oil after which it's been mixed well until every molecule comes in contact with one another. The color is boiled in a container and glidant is added into container to improve its follow ability. These paints are available with chemicals and without chemicals. Colors like Tikan blue and Glydote-BD is mixed to gain the required color. Mixing process is followed until the ink turns to thick liquid.

Usually a set of ink is used consisting of at least three or four primary colors, namely cyan, magenta, yellow and optionally black. Some of which are manufactured in the town and nearby villages. The colors are mixed well and are boiled on the gas, mixed with Gum (Gundh).

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Block is being dipped in paint.



Block dipped in paint is used to create a design patterns on saree.



Artisan involved in the process of block printing.

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Hand Painting

Hand painting is another method used in the Banaras saree making. In this process, the outlines, borders and lines to distinguish the patterns on certain designs are drawn using hand painting technique apart from block printing and screen printing. It is one of oldest technique's to embed designs on sarees.

Screen printing is additional manual method of spread over of color; primarily it is stenciling. The screen of fine silk material is overextended on a four-sided wooden table which may be as large as 4 feet by 6 feet, forming a surface through in which the color lies, each color in the design will necessitate a separate screen. The color is pressed through the open meshes of design by a rubber squeegee. For the actual printing, but on each side is fitted a metal screens. About 30 feet of material is placed in position on the table and the first screen fitted correctly by using the stops. Color is poured on the screen and squeegee into the fabric, imposing two operatives for its application. When the first screen with its own color has been stimulated into the third or fourth point along fabric, the printing then proceeds forming a pattern/design. After the process of printing and drying, the necessary chemical treatments of ageing, followed by washing, soaping, rinsing and drying takes place. As the screens are easy and cheap to prepare, this type of printing has become very popular; the colors have a transparency, clarity, richness and are not seen in roller prints.



Cotton cloth is being spread over the table.



Over the cotton cloth saree is being fixed using pins.

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Gold glitter paint is being used to create outlines for designs.



Blue paint is being applied over the saree borders.



Artisan involved in painting the saree.

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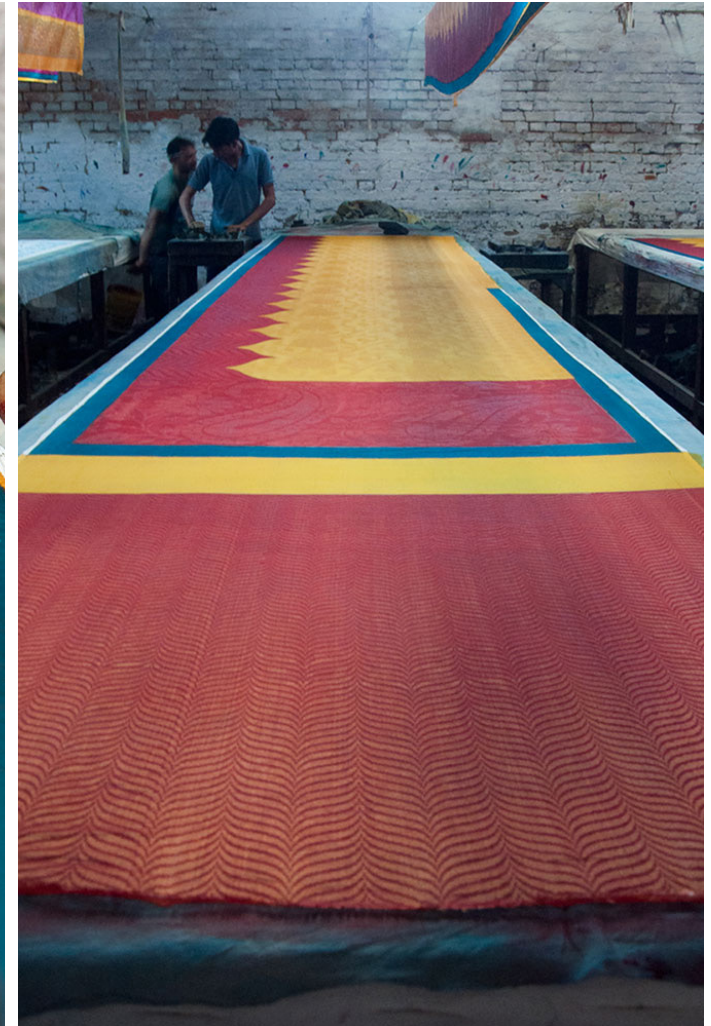
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Red paint is being applied using the sponge.



Artisan involved in painting the saree.

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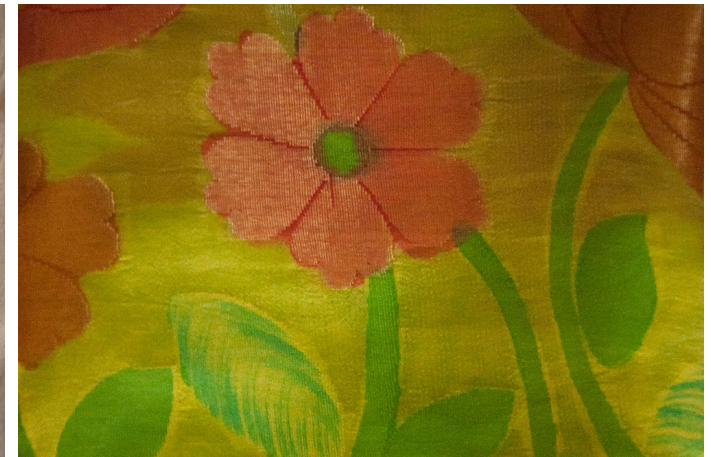
Block Printing is one of the traditional techniques of press printing with fabulous colors followed by the societies of the city Varanasi. Raw materials are bought by the agent and artisans perform only labor on the cloth, these sarees vary from INR 1500 to INR 3000 for an attractive design. The final product undergoes a process of quality check by the agent after which, the final production starts. The complete process is followed by the artisan. Motifs having some subject are transferred onto light colored background with wooden blocks following two styles straight and resist style. These fabrics are also producing for industrial purpose and the available materials are Georgette, Chiffon, Kota Silk and Dupia. But the Dyeing and Printing Industry of Varanasi city mainly deals with cotton sarees, dress materials, khanga, bhandhani and bedsheets. This is very difficult technique because there should not be any imbalance in the design-transfer from the block to the cloth.

Finishing is the last process of the textile industry. It eliminates excess dye, sets the color and also fluffs the yarn that makes up the fabric to complete the structural aspect of the fabric. When anticipated, special finishing manner may be used to soften or stiffen the hand (the way the fabric feels when touched) make the fabric stain unaffected or add shine to the fabric. Finally the products are exported across the world to retain the tradition of India.

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Hand painted Dupion sarees.



Hand painted Dupion saree with flowers.

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Block printing on a chiffon saree.



Hand painted Dupion sarees with leaves.

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Video



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