

Design Resource

Block Printing - Ahmedabad

Craft of Textile Decoration

by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral, Divyadarshan C. S. and

Vijay G.

NID Campus, Bengaluru

Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/block-printing-ahmedabad>

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Introduction

The technique of decorating the textiles by hand with the wooden blocks is referred to as block printing. Gujarat is an intensive area for printing where, generations of printers and dyers of the Chitara family have used river Sabarmati for washing fabrics and its banks has provided an area for sun-bleaching and drying cloth. Printing is a process of applying colors to fabric in localized areas. On the other hand design is drawn and transferred to the prepared wooden blocks for every colors. The colors are applied in a sharply defined pattern and separate blocks are made for each distinct color of the design.

Vasna is located in vadodra district of Gujarat, a well-known place for fabric printing. Chitara family belongs to the Vasna region in Ahmedabad which has been practicing the art of fabric printing from ancient times. Hand block printing of Vasna is a craft known since ages for bright colors, delicate lines printed against a white background. Traditional knowledge of craft skills is transferred from one generation to another and each place has its distinctive design elements, color schemes and motifs. This craft is highly dependent on water sources. Therefore the areas near water resource are much suited to prepare a beautiful hand block printed product. Hand Block printing is extremely fine due to the superbly carved wooden blocks of various patterns, where the patterns are inspired from the nature and people.



Artisan involved in block printing the designs on cloth.

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Each block is pressed on the cloth to print the design with the support of thumb finger.



Selected portions of the cloth are only printed with hand blocks.



Separate blocks are used for different colour and pattern.



Printing block is immersed in the printing ink kept in a wooden tray.

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Designs are drawn on the butter paper primarily.



Minute designs are carved using hammers and chisels.

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Motifs vary from geometrical to different types floral designs.



The designs are then traced on the wood to prepare the block for printing.



Patterns on the blocks are raised by scooping out the negative areas (designs are carved out).

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Tools and Raw Materials

Tools and raw materials required for:

- Block Printing are as below:

Wooden Blocks: Wooden Blocks are used to print the patterns on the cloth.

Printing Table: Printing table is used for printing.

Wooden Tray with a Bamboo Lattice Bed Cover: Wooden Tray with a Bamboo Lattice bed cover is used for spreading of the color evenly.

Printing Pad: Printing Pad is used to spread the colour evenly in the wooden tray.

Pins: Pins are used to tighten the cloth on the table.

Brushes: Brushes are used to clean the surface for better printing.

Scale: Scale is used for marking the areas to be printed.

Sponge or Woolen Cloth: Sponge or woolen cloth is used to spread the colour evenly in the wooden tray.

- Block Making are as below:

Chalk Powder: Chalk Powder is applied on the surface which is easier for marking.

Chisels: Chisels are used to carve the surface as per the design.

Hand Drill: Hand drill is used to carve the coarser parts of the wood.

Wood Planer: Wood Planer is used to smoothen the surface of wood.

Butter Paper: Butter Paper is used to make the designs on to the wood.

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Different sizes of chisels are used to carve minute designs on the wood.

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Log of wood is cut into required size.



Wooden scrapper is used to smoothen he surface of wood.

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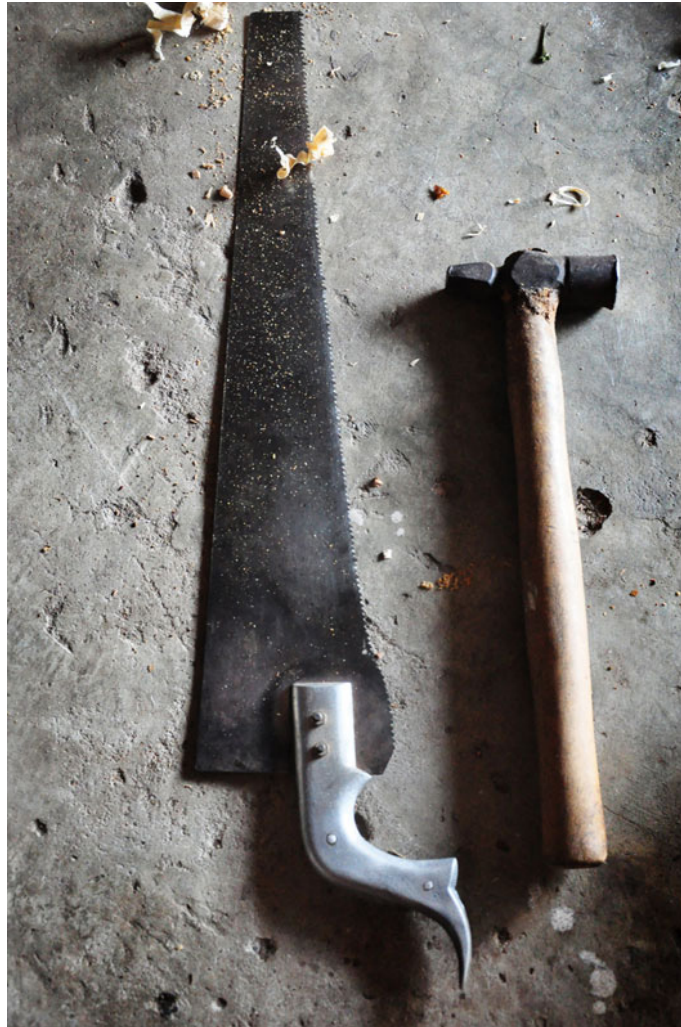
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Saw and hammer is used to cut and shape the wood as per required design.



Pencil and compass is used to mark the design on wood.

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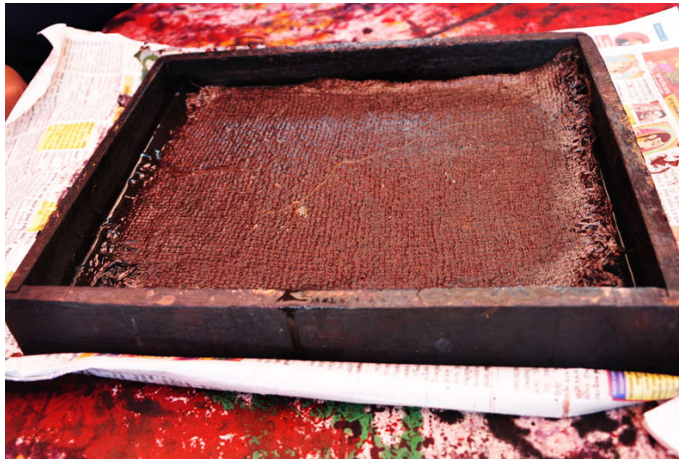
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Printing paste is mixed in a tub before pouring into wooden tray.



Printing paste is poured into the wooden tray.



Wooden blocks of leaf and mango designs.

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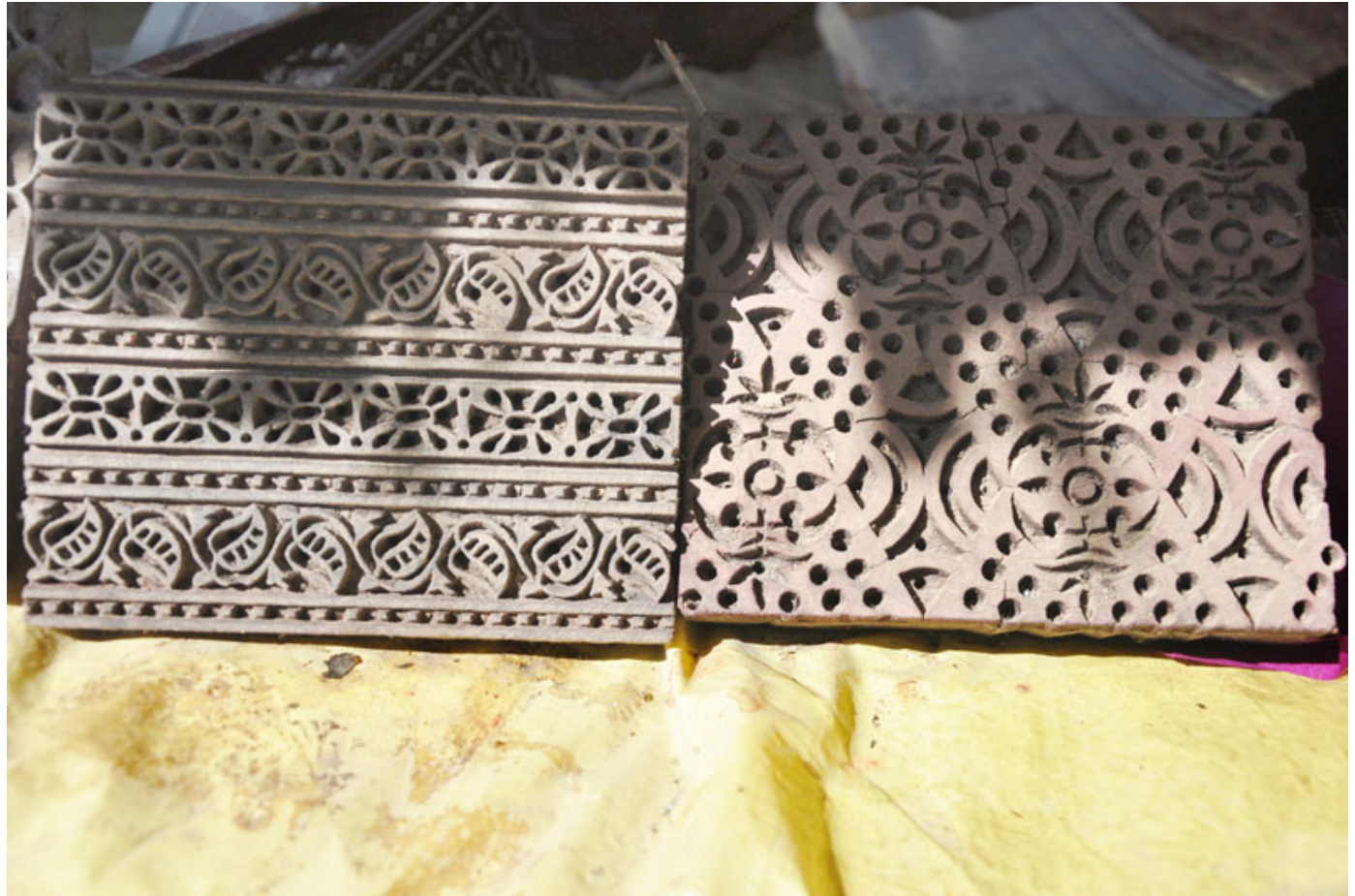
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Wooden block are dried in sunshade after carving.

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Making Process



Block Making



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Block Making

The wood used for the block is seasoned, cut into required size and smoothen for the process, chalk-paste is applied on the upper surface and allowed to dry. Pattern usually based on geometric forms or comprising of motifs derived from leaves, flowers, fruits and figures of animals, gods and goddesses. Block has two parts, a base and the other part as the top, carved out from the same wood or by attaching low cost wood as a handle.

Designs are first drawn or traced on the butter paper, these are then carved on to the wood, and the repeating patterns are traced by applying the carbon filling to imprint the designs on to the wood. The negative space is then carved out with chisels, leaving the finer and more delicate work until last so as to avoid any risk of injuring the cutting of the coarser parts. The pattern is then raised in deep by scooping out the negative areas with the aid of a manually operated hand drill, ensuring the pattern is thrown in high relief by removing the intermediate walls of the bored sections through careful chiseling. Each block has two or more cylindrical holes drilled into the block for air passage to allow and release of excess colour. Blocks are soaked in oil for 10-15 days to soften the grains. The finished block presents the design standing out. Rectangular, square, oval, semi-circular, circular are the common shapes of the blocks. The makers of these blocks specially make for the Chitara community as per the designs.

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Wood is cut into required shape and size.



Surface of the wood is smoothened using wood scrapper.

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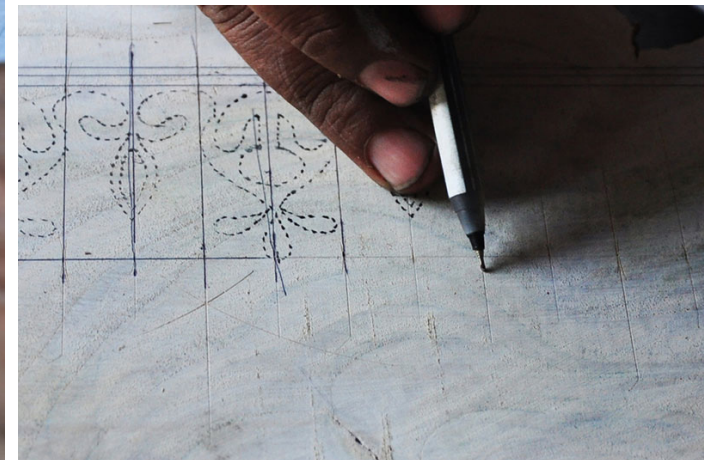
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Initially the designs are drawn on the butter paper.



Designs are traced on the wood with carbon powder.



Vertical and horizontal lines are drawn after tracing the repeated designs.

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Minute designs are carved by chiselling and hammering.

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Final product of wooden blocks.

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Block Printing

Block printing is labour intensive and comprised of several stages in preparing the fabric. As the cloth contains starch and dust, it is pre-treated by dipping in water for two to three days. The cloth is stretched and spread on the ground for drying depending on the weather conditions.

On printing-table the dried cloth is spread and fixed with the help of pins. Marking is done with the help of scale and chalk the areas to be printed, spaces for cutting and stitching. Before printing on the fabric, the printing paste is spread evenly in the wooden tray and the design is stamp on the cloth. Blocks are pressed hard with the fist on the back of the handle to imprint the colour evenly from left to right side; number of colours used in the design defines the number of blocks to be used. Usually borders are printed with the large mango butta and variations of the butti designs.

Printed cloth is dried in shade, sunlight and washed in the river to fix the colours in case of pigment dyes. After drying, the printed cloth is wrapped in plastic or newspapers to avoid the colour spreading.



Cotton fabric is evenly spread on a table before printing.

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Colour paste is mixed evenly in wooden tray with the printing pad.



Wooden block are dipped in the colour paste and printed on the fabric.



The wooden blocks are pressed hardly to print designs on the fabric.

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Blocks are placed on the fabric without coinciding with other designs.

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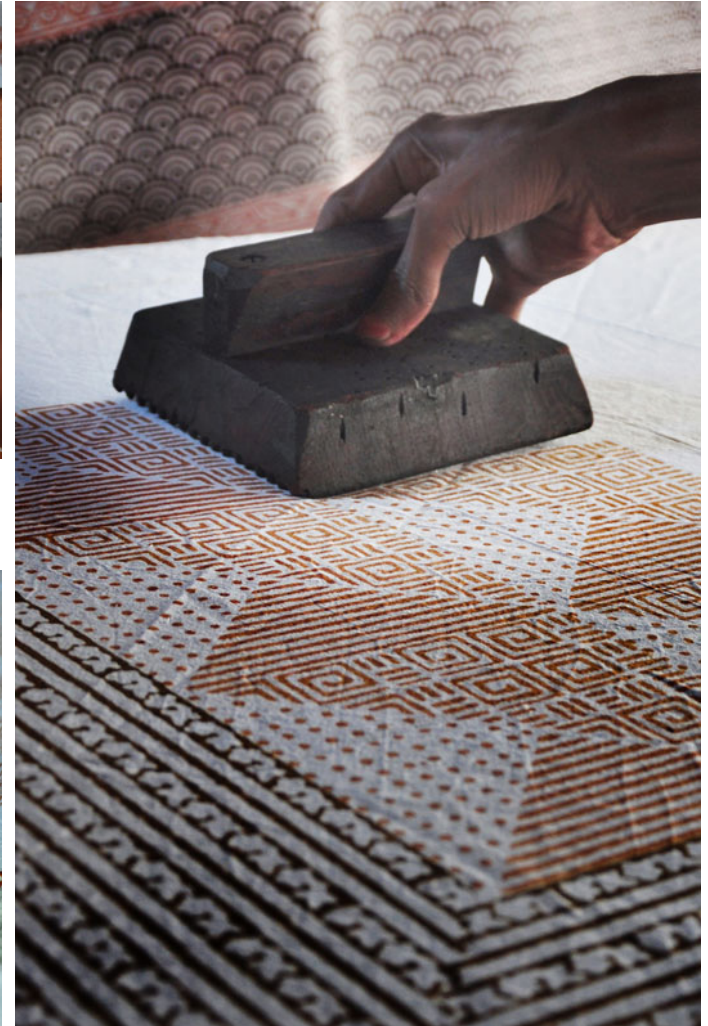
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After placing the wooden block on the fabric extra pressure with fist is applied to print the design.



Edges are imprinted with newspapers to avoid the over printing of designs.



Mostly geometrical and floral designs are printed on the clothes.

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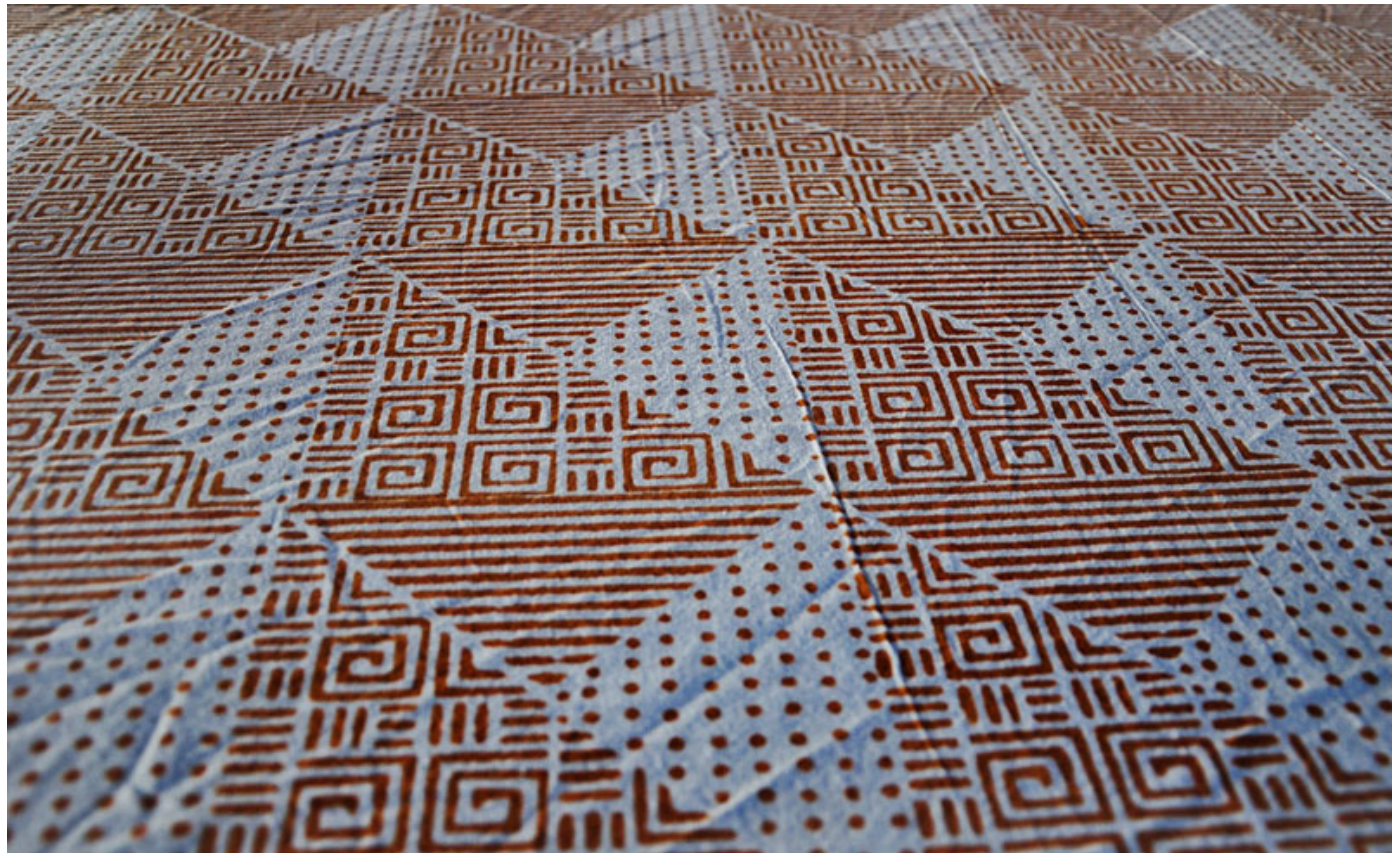
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Products

Block printing is the oldest beautification technique used in fabric. Patterns with open ended, bold designs with colour combinations of intensely detailed works are done on the surface of the cloth. Bedspreads of size 96 inch x 106 inch are used for block printing.

- Pillow covers usually of 20 inch x 26 inch size.
- Curtains vary from 54inch to 90 inches.
- Wall hangings as per the choice.
- Table cloths of varying sizes.
- Churidar dress materials.



Printed fabric with geometrical motifs.

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The designs are printed only on the required areas of fabrics.



Different blocks with colour combinations are used to print on the fabric.



Vibrant colours are used to give the product more elegant look.



Mango designs are preferred to be used as borders.

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Wooden block with small leaf design.



Block used to design borders on the fabric.



To print big design, the design is divided and carved on two block pieces.

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