

Design Resource

## Batik Prints of Indore

Art of Printing

by

Sakshi Gambhir

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<http://dsource.in/resource/batik-prints-indore-0>

1. Introduction
2. Place
3. People
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Source:

<http://dsource.in/resource/batik-prints-indore-0/introduction>

## Introduction

Batik is an ancient art of printing supposed to be two thousand years old. It was brought to India by the late Rathindra Nath Tagore, son of the poet Rabindra Nath Tagore. The word batik actually means 'wax writing'. It is a way of decorating cloth by covering a part of it with a coat of wax and then dyeing it. The waxed areas keep their original color and when the wax is removed the contrast between the dyed and undyed areas makes the pattern. This is called resist dyeing. The crackle effect of batik is the most fascinating part that makes it unique.



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## Place

Batik printing can be done anywhere but each area and region has its own specialty in designs and colors. Bherongarh and Indore are two places in Madhya Pradesh where this is carried out in large volumes. Yusuf and Mush-taq two printers based in Shnelata Ganj area of Indore, are trying to keep the tradition alive like many others. Both of them are very passionate about printing and their units are self sufficient for producing many other types of prints. Many locals are employed for help in these workshops.



Clear skies of Indore.



The cluttered urban landscape.

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Streets of the city.



Narrow lanes of Shnelata Ganj area.

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Entrance to Yusuf's and Mushtaq's workshops.



U. M. Printers' board outside the adda.



The windows for the sunlight to see in.



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Colors of the adda.



Colors of the adda.



Colors of the adda.

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## People

Mushtaq and Yusuf are actually cousins but they have their own, independent printing units. Both of them learn the art from their own fathers who further learnt it from their grand-father living in a village near Tarapur. Mushtaq's father, Babu Bhai has been printing since the last forty-six years. Mushtaq does printing with one of his assistants while Babu Bhai irons the printed fabrics. They run their adda in the name of 'Shanoo prints' and largely make batik dress materials and wall hangings for the local market. Their business is not very large scale. On the other hand, Yusuf Bhai largely exports his products that include block prints, batik, bagru, dabu, t.c. prints etc. He experiments with newer products like scarves and stoles as well. This state awardee likes to participate in several fairs. 'U. M. printers', as his workshop is called, is four decades old and employs eleven people. It is one of the bigger ones in the city.



Babu Bhai ironing the printed fabrics.



Mushtaq and his help 'waxing' the fabric with block.



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The sand under the fabric to ensure that the wax doesn't spread.



Yusuf's printing unit.



Yusuf talking about the various types of printing he does.



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## Process

Batik constitutes the process wherein a line or a patch is drawn with wax on cloth. This is done so that the surface is protected from the color. When it is dipped in the dye, the color does not penetrate the area that has been waxed. This is basically the resist dyeing technique.



Waxing



Dyeing



De-waxing

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## Waxing

Wax is prepared by mixing bee wax and paraffin wax in the ratio 3:7. A hot plate or electric heater is used to heat it because it is inflammable. Resin is added when the wax is hot and acts as a binder. The wax has to be absolutely clear and thin to penetrate the other side of the cloth. Cotton and silk cloths are usually used for batik printing that are first bleached and dried overnight. These are laid out on a table that is kept cool with sand and water. This ensures that the wax doesn't spread and the design stays consistent throughout. Wax printing is done either with the hand, using a brush or with wooden blocks depending on the desired result.



A block of wax.



Resin.



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Molten hot wax.



One of the printers planning the fabric and making markings on it.



Stack of fabrics ready to be printed.

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Wide range of blocks to choose from.



The printing table.



Fabric being waxed with a block.



Fabric being waxed with a block.



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Patterns waxed with a block.



A flower waxed with a block.



A flower waxed with the brush, free-hand.

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## Dyeing

After the initial printing (for the areas to be left white), the fabric is soaked in naphthol. Then it is dipped in a cold dye of the lightest color, say yellow, for ten minutes. Once it is dry, it is waxed where yellow is needed and dyed in the second color, say red. This process is repeated as many times as the numbers of colors required. Three to four colors are common. There are two thumb rules. One, the subsequent color always has to be darker than the previous one. Second, always wear a glove to dip the fabric in any of the chemicals.



A waxed fabric ready to be dipped in naphthol.



Fabric being dipped in naphthol.



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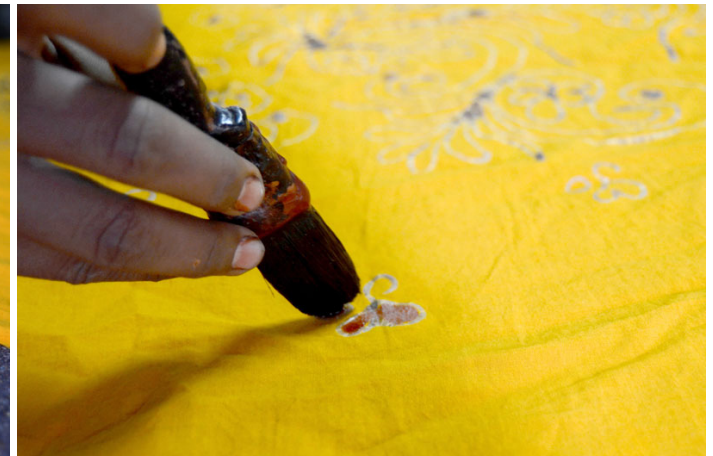
Fabric soaked in naphthol.



Glove used for the dyeing process.



Sand laid out under the fabric.



A coat of wax being applied on the dyed fabric.

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Patterns made with wax on the dyed fabric.



Fabric ready to be dipped in another color.



Fabric ready to be dipped in another color.



Fabric being dyed in a darker color.



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Fabric hung on a rod (to dry) after being dyed in the darker color.

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## De-waxing

The characteristic effects of batik are the fine cracks that appear in the wax, which allow small amounts of the dye to seep in. These are actually formed by the cold dye bath. More dramatic results can be achieved by crumpling the cloth. After the multi color dyeing is done, the fabric is dried and placed between two layers of absorbent papers. The wax needs to be ironed out of the material into the paper. Dipping the fabric in hot water can also get the wax to come off.



An electric iron.



Babu Bhai ironing the printed fabrics after de-waxing them.



Printed fabrics, ready to be tailored into dresses.



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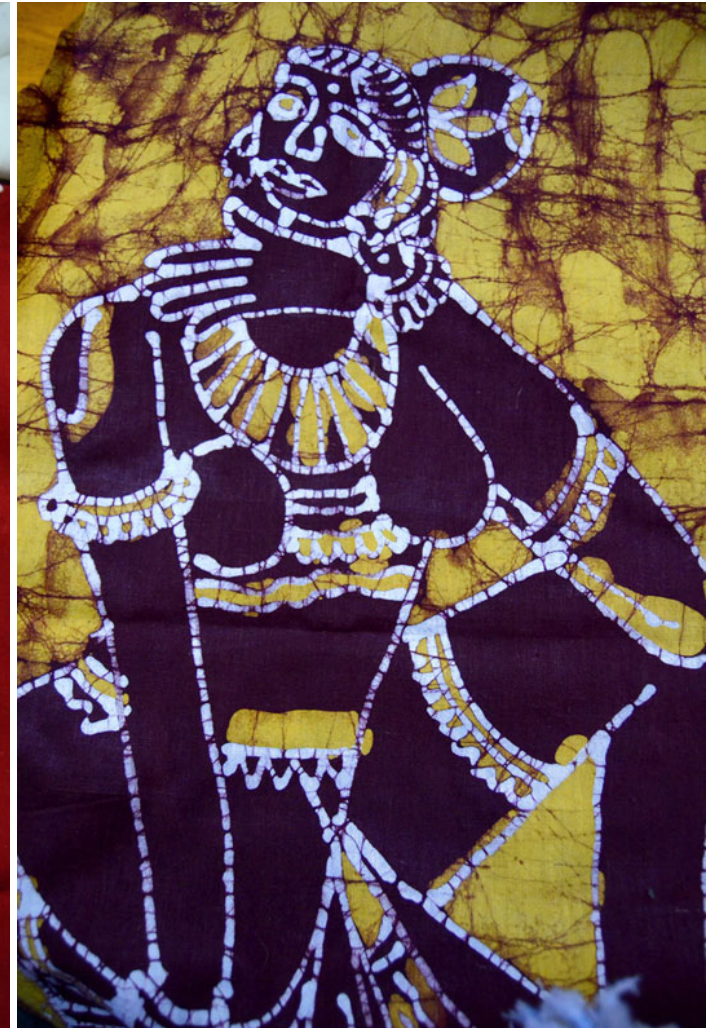
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## Products

The batik industry is still very much alive today. Apart from making traditional products like wall hangings, dupattas, sarees and bed sheets, the artists are also experimenting with sarongs, scarves, bandannas, wrap-around pants, kurtis and home furnishings.



A bright red and yellow kurti.



Burgundy and yellow figurine wall hanging.



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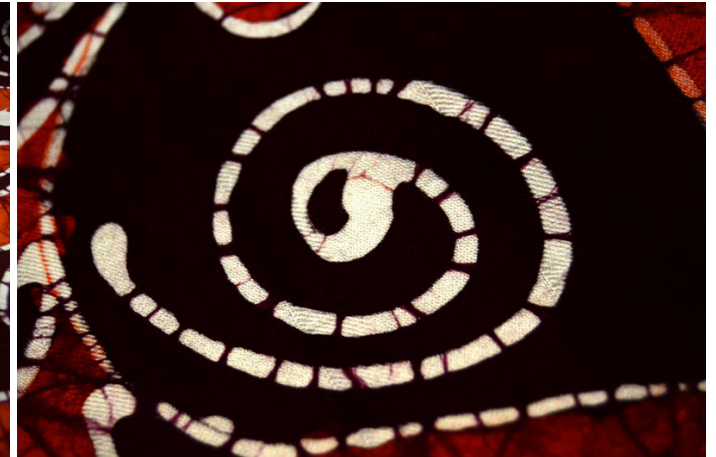
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Chocolate and orange colored double bed sheet.



Spiral pattern of the bed sheet.



Single color dress material.



Double color dress material.



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Burgundy and yellow figurine wall hanging.



Navy blue and yellow figurine wall hanging.



Navy blue and yellow animal wall hanging.



Single color dress material.



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Yusuf Bhai's storage space.



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