INDIGO DYED NANDANA FABRIC

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TARAPUR, NEEMUCH (M.P., INDIA)

Madhya Pradesh is a home to innovative and creative age-old handicrafts and handloom products. Be it is the stunning art of Dhokra metal ware, sustainable work of papier Mache, and the most popular naturally dyed handloom art- Bagru, Dabu, Maheshwari, Bagh etc. I luckily got a chance to get a close visit to one of the most important handloom centers of Madhya Pradesh i.e. *Tarapur* (Neemuch district).

NEEMUCH (M.P., INDIA)

Neemuch is a peaceful town in the malwa region in the north western part of MP. The district is rich in tribal culture, food and craft. The major handloom center- Tarapur village is about 28 kms from Neemuch town. The village is famous for its antique bead jewelry crafted by the women of *Bhil and Gond tribes* and printing Nandana designs on indigo fabrics.

THE VILLAGE- TARAPUR

During my visit to Neemuch district, Madhya Pradesh I came across a small village named, TARAPUR on the bank of *Gambhiri* river. The village is known for celebrating art and culture and continuously working with natural colors for more than 200 years. Now the village is Under the supervision of MP Handicrafts and Loom Corporation.

The place is known for DABU, ALIZARIN and particularly NANDANA print, types of block printing techniques on silk-chiffon and other fabrics all dyed with natural colors. Dozens of artisans here not only revive the special art of printing on clothes, but have also brought it recognition all over the world.

NANDANA PRINT

Nandana printing is a 300 year old mud resist block-printing technique which is still being practiced in Tarapur, Madhya Pradesh in its original form.

Interestingly it says that the word "NANDANA" came from "NAAND" which means a "tank" in hindi. The tank full of indigo dye in which the fabric is dipped and dyed. Two adjacent villages, *Tarapur* and *Ummedpura* in *Neemuch* are centers of beautiful Nandana block prints.

The craftsmen use naturally derived dyes on chaste cotton fabric and age old motifs inspired from the nature. The fabric is popularly worn by the women from the local Bhil tribes as their traditional attire.

Traditionally, 'Nandana' print fabric was confined to the women of 'Bhil' tribes, but now the art is quite popular and incorporated into other garments, bedspreads, table cloth, other furnishings and upholstery.

NANDANA PRINTING PROCESS

Nandana printing is a cumbersome process which involve several steps of printing and dyeing.

- The fabric is first printed with begar (Alum) and then dyed with alizarin to get red design pattern.

- The fabric is then printed with Dabu resist with "resin" paste. It is called "Daamar" or Coal-tar covering red designs and dipped into indigo dye tank to get deep indigo blue background.

- Resin paste provide better resist to the fabric when dipped into indigo tank minimum 5-6 times obtaining deep blue color.

PROCESS OF DYING

- "Resin" was boiled for 24 hours before printed on the fabric while boiling. In this step boiling resin produces a very bad odor and also sometimes creates rashes on the craftsmen skin.

- The fabric is then boiled in soda ash solution to remove the "resin" paste.

- Once the paste is removed, fabric is again printed with mud resist and then dipped into pomegranate dye.

- After all these steps, fabric background becomes deep green to black, some parts which was printed with resist becomes yellow and red.

- Now fabric is ready to be marketed. Today "resin" paste is replaced with "mud" resist due to heath issues of craftsman.

PROCESS OF DYING

NANDANA MOTIFS

The Nandana motifs are inspired from natural motifs like chilli, mango, flower etc. in the form of big buta and small butas. Most common motifs include-

MIRCH (CHILLI)

The motif is inspired from the shape of Chilli. The design is slightly bent towards the side with respect to its background. The stem is mostly dyed with Ochre and the chili in red and white color.

JALAM BUTA

The motif is of a fruit-bearing tree, where the stem bears leaves and branches with flowers on both sides. The stem is printed in Ochre and the foliage in red and white.

AMBA (MANGO)

It is the most common motifs which represents the mango tree and is mostly printed on a background color of blue. The skirts with 'Amba' (Mango) print are worn during marriages and also a few months following childbirth.

WOODEN BLOCKS- MOTIFS

DOLA MARU

It is a combination of the 'Champakali' and the 'Aekal' motif.

CHAMPAKALI

Inspired from the Champa (Frangipani) flower, this motif has the stem bent to one side and the leaves on either side of the stem, ending in a flower.

PREPARING NATURAL DYES

Natural dyes used for coloring Nandana fabric are prepared by the artisans using

various locally available materials. Like-

BLACK DYE

Black dye is made by fermenting a mix of iron rust, betel leaves, mahua flowers, besan or chickpea flour, jaggery and water in an earthen vat for close to a month. But the cloth has to undergo elaborate treatment before applying the dye.

READY TO SALE NANDANA FABRICS

YELLOW DYE

Yellow color is produced with pomegranate peels and light yellow from the pot of myrobalan or cherry plum.

BLUE DYE

Blue color from alum and **indigo** plant. Wearing Indigo dyed fabric is thereby considered auspicious.

RED DYE

Red and similar colors are prepared from the local flowers and harad.

PREPARING COLORFUL DYES

The slurry is prepared by mixing black soil, gum and lime. Later, with the help of these, the fabric is printed with natural colors.

MUD- RESIST BLOCK PRINTING

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