



BANDHANI (TIE AND DIE) – A RAJASTHANI TECHNIQUE FOR DYEING TEXTILES

Ranjana Gupta, Ph. D.

Associate Professor- Home Science, K. R. Girls P.G. College Mathura



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The art of Bandhani is highly skilled process. The technique involves dyeing a fabric which is tied tightly with a thread at several points , thus producing a variety of patterns like Leheriya, Mothra, Ekdali and Shikari depending on the manner in which the cloth is tied.

1.1 History

Different forms of tie and dye have been practiced in India. Indian Bandhani, a traditional form of tie and dye, began about 5000 years ago. Also known as Bandhani and Bandhej, it is the oldest tie and dye tradition that is still practiced. Dyes were discovered by primitive man/woman in the form of extracts of various plants, flowers, leaves, bark, etc., which were applied to cloth and other fabrics. Even though color was applied they didn't consider this dyeing. It was simply a form of embellishment. What was considered dyeing was the art of using color to form a permanent bond with fiber in a prepared dye bath. Ancient artists discovered that some dyes dissolved and gave their color readily to water, forming a solution which was easily absorbed by the fabric. Herbs and plants like turmeric and indigo were crushed to a fine powder and dissolved in water so that cotton material could be dyed into deep colours. These colours have been used in India since ancient times and are considered to be the origin of the art of dyeing. Throughout Asia, India and the Far East, traders packed tie and dye cloths as part of their merchandise.

Bandhani was introduced in Jamnagar when the city was founded 400 years ago. Bandhani fabrics reign supreme in Rajasthan and Gujarat which are home to an astounding variety of traditional crafts. Century-old skills continue to produce some of the most artistic and exciting wares in these two states and are popular all over the world. Rajasthan is a land of vibrant colors. These colors are a striking part of the life there and are found in the bustling

bazaars, in fairs and festivals, in the costumes worn and in the traditional paintings and murals.

2. Regions

The art of Bandhani is practiced widely in Rajasthan, with Barmer, Jaipur, Sikar, Jodhpur, Pali Udaipur, Nathdwara and Bikaner being the main centers. Bandhani comes in a variety of designs, colors and motifs and these variations are region-specific. Each district has its own distinct method of Bandhani which makes the pattern recognizable and gives it a different name.

The centers of tie and dye fabrics in Gujarat are Jamnagar in Saurashtra (the water in this area brings out the brightest red while dyeing) and Ahmedabad. The craftsmen from Rajasthan are easily recognized because they grow the nail of their little finger or wear a small metal ring with a point to facilitate the lifting of cloth for tying.

Rajasthan

Marwar--Jodhpur

Mewar--Udaipur

Shekhawati--Sikar, Jhunjhunu, Churu

Gujarat

Jamnagar

Bhuj

Mandavi

Uttar Pradesh

Farukabad

Popular Dyes Used in Bandhani

Vat dyes: Vat dyes are an ancient class of dyes based on the original natural dye, indigo, which is now produced synthetically. Both cotton and wool, as well as other fibers, can be dyed with vat dyes.

'Vat dyeing' means dyeing in a bucket or vat. It can be done whenever a solid, even shade, i.e., the same color over the entire garment, is wanted. It can be done using almost any dye, including fiber reactive dye, direct dye, acid dye, etc. The opposite of vat dyeing is direct dye application, for example, tie and dye.

Direct dyes: Also known as hot water dyes, direct dyes can be used with hot water and require no binding or exhausting agents. They are convenient but lack in color fastness and wash fastness. They are used on cotton, wool, silk and nylon. The colors of direct dyes are

duller than those provided by reactive dyes. They can be found in powder form as well as in the form of a liquid concentrate. They do not require any form of 'fixing'.

Naphthol dyes: These are two sets of chemicals which, upon reaction, produce a third chemical, essentially colorful in nature. The fabric is dyed with one and later printed with the other. The chemical reaction produces a third color. However, the biggest drawback of this process is that there are just a few chemicals available which produce colors upon reaction.

fibers like cotton, linen and rayon. They also work well on silk. They are considered 'cold water' dyes. These dyes make fabrics great for solar dyeing, tie and dye and batik. As for the auxiliary chemicals, all you need is salt and soda ash. Synthrapol is optional but very helpful for rinsing out excess dye. Procion fiber reactive dyes can also be used on protein fibers but different auxiliaries are needed and the dye bath must be simmered.

5. Tools

In some places in Rajasthan the craftsmen wear a metal ring with a protruded point to facilitate the lifting of cloth for tying.

6. Process

The process, though relatively simple, is very time-consuming. The tying of the fabric is mostly carried out by women or young girls.

The material generally used is a thin loosely woven silk known as georgette or a cotton known as *malmal*. The area of the fabric to be dyed is outlined using fugitive colors. Then a clear thin sheet of plastic, which has been pierced with pin holes, is kept over this area of the fabric and using fugitive colours an imprint of the desired pattern is transferred onto the fabric. The craftsperson then pulls on a small area of the fabric where each is placed and winds thread tightly around the protruding cloth to form a knot or *bhindi*. The thread generally used is nylon thread.

In Bandhani, different colors convey different meanings. While red represents a bride, a yellow background suggests a lady has become a mother recently. Some of the most common designs are *dungar-shahi* or the mountain-pattern, *boond* that results in a small dot with a dark centre, tear shaped *kodi*, and the *laddu-jalebi* or the swirling. In Tikunthi, circles and squares appear in a group of three, in 'Chaubasi' in groups of four and in *Satbandi* in groups of seven. (*Boond* is a dot with a dark centre and *ekdali* just a dot-) Also different printers can call same design different names. Some names have become famous and some are used for reference reasons with the dyers and printers).



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