

Name of the Element: Patola: Double Ikat Silk Textiles of Patan, Gujarat, India.

Community/ies: Weavers : Salvis (Religion: Jains or Vaishnav Hindus)

Helpers: Vankars (Religion: Hindu)

Traditional Users :(in India) Jains, Vohra Muslims, Nagar Brahmins, Kutchi Bhatias, Ghanchis (Religion: Hindu)

In Southeast Asia: Royalty and nobility in East Sumba, Surakarta and Yogyakarta in Java, Certain communities in eastern Indonesia, Java, Lembata, Sulawesi, Sumatra, eastern Flores, Bali and Malaysia.

Region: Patola is produced in the cities of Patany and Vadodara, situated in Patan and Vadodara districts respectively, in the state of Gujarat.

Brief Description: Patola silk textiles are produced by resist dyeing of warp and weft threads before weaving, a complex process known as double ikat which is also practised in other parts of India and abroad. However, Patola of Patan (Gujarat) is unique in its geometric floral and figurative patterns executed with precision of design planning, and meticulously accurate weaving alignment which results in precise outline of the patterns. This requires immense visualisation and coordination skills.

The practitioners of this craft are the Salvis, who get their name from ‘sal’ (Sanskrit for loom) and (the rosewood sword used in a Patola loom). Patola has traditionally been considered auspicious among certain Gujarati communities - Nagar Brahmins, Jains, Vohra Muslims and Kutchi Bhatias. Historically, Patola was a prestigious item of Indian export to Indonesia and Malaysia where it was used as a symbol of power and authority and even attributed protective, curative and magical powers. There are only four existing Patola-making families striving to save the craft in the face of many threats - huge investment of time and money, low returns, and lack of interest for continuing the craft among the younger generations.