GLORY OF INDIAN TRADITIONAL SILK SAREES

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ABSTRACT

Textile industry is a very important component of India’s economy, and silk forms a small, yet important part of it because it is a high value fibre. The size of the silk industry in India presently, is about US $ 2.75 billion. Sericulture is spread all over India, while it has a long standing tradition in states such as Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Jammu & Kashmir.

Silk the very name itself evokes delicate feelings. Silk is the most elegant textile in the world with unparalleled grandeur, natural sheen and inherent affinity for dyes, high absorbance, light weight, soft touch and high durability and is known as the queen of textile in the world ever. Silk has a sacred place in the cultural heritage of Indians and intermingled with the life and culture of the Indians; which no other country can share. Silk saree is an important bridal wear while the traditional practice of wearing silk clothing on all auspicious days has been the strength of the Indian silk in the domestic market. No other fabric has fascinated man so continuously over millennia as silk. Till today, no other fabric can match it in luster and elegance

Silk has been intermingled with the life and culture of the Indians. Though India is producing all the varieties of silk garments i.e., dress materials, scarves/stoles, readymade garments, etc., the silk sarees are unique. The saree is almost synonymous with the word silk. It is the traditional costume of Indian woman since time immemorial. The silk sarees of India are among the living examples of the excellent craftsmanship of the weavers of the country.

The artistic and aesthetic sense of Indian weavers is not content with striking colours they choose for the fabrics, but lies in their mastery over the creation of floral designs, beautiful textures, fine geometry and the durability of such work. The weaver not only weaves with yarn but with intense feeling and emotion. Indian handloom silk sarees known for their unique features like beautiful colour combinations, intricate designs and wonderful motifs, tops the demand of the domestic market. In India, there are a number of silk weaving centers spread all over the country, known for their distinct and typical style and products. South India is the leading silk producing area of the country also known for its famous silk weaving enclaves like Kancheepuram, Dharmavaram, Arni, Pochampalli, Gadwal etc. The beauty of the silk is the key to having wonderful silk sarees. Hence the paper made an attempt to enlighten the world famous Indian traditional handloom silk sarees.

KEYWORDS: Handloom, Silk Saree, Kanjeevaram, Pochampalli, Dharmavaram, Banarasi Sarees

INTRODUCTION

The national garment of the Indian woman is the saree. Silk saree is the traditional garments of Indian women of all ages. Whether living in India or in another country, Indian women and women from other cultures adorn themselves with the most beautiful silk sarees they can find. The Silk sarees are known around the world for their beauty, elegance and intricate trim palu. The beauty of the silk is the key to having wonderful silk sarees. The traditional silk sarees match every
mood, every occasion, and to suit everyone's budget. Indian traditional silk sarees hold the credit for excellent quality and unique designs. Silk costumes are an integral part of Indian festivals and traditional ceremonies. In fact, one can not imagine a South Indian wedding without womenfolk flaunting their silk saris bearing a heavy ‘Pallu’ and gold embellished ‘Zari’ border.

Today, silk weaving tradition in India revolves around the sari, the ethnic traditional wear that is worn in most parts of the country. The Indians dress themselves in elaborate and colorful silk sarees on festive occasions. The vibrant colours, light weight, resilience and excellent drape etc. have made silk sarees, the irresistible and unavoidable companion of Indian women. Indian silk is popular all over the world with its variety of designs, weaves and patterns

Silk, the queen of textiles dominates the textile industry with its luster, sensuousness and glamour. Silk has been intermingled with the life and culture of the Indians. Though India is producing all the varieties of silk garments i.e., dress materials, scarves/stoles, readymade garments, etc., the silk sarees are unique. The saree is almost synonymous with the word silk. It is the traditional costume of Indian woman since time immemorial. Saree is the only garment in feminine apparels that has stayed ‘In Fashion’ for 5000 years. Silk weavers in India have contributed to the development and fame of Indian silk. The silk sarees of India are among the living examples of the excellent craftsmanship of the weavers of the country. Across the length and breadth of the country, generations of weavers continue to create magic giving their creations a distinct touch - through the use of colours and designs. Their mastery lies in the creation of floral designs, beautiful textures, fine geometry, durability of such work and not the least, the vibrant colours they choose for making sarees. Many states in the country have their own variety of makes in silk as well as weaving centres with their traditional designs, weaving and quality. The silk varieties are renowned by the place where it has been woven.

The paper tries to highlight on few Indian traditional Handloom silk sarees.

- Kanjeevaram silk sarees
- Pochampalli silk Sarees
- Dharmavaram silk Sarees
- Banarasi silk Sarees

KANJEEVARAM SILK SAREES

Kancheepuram, the golden city of thousand temples is famous for its traditional silk sarees. The sarees those made in Kanchi are among the living examples of the legendary craftsmanship of the weavers of the country. Kancheepuram sarees are known for this royal look contrasting colours, Korvai work, marvelous motifs and intricate designs these sarees have broad pallu with traditional motifs and temple designs. The Kanjeevaram sari is not only the choice for weddings in South India and elsewhere but also worn at all other auspicious and religious occasions. The Kanjeevaram sari is a tradition often passed on from mother to daughter over several generations as an heirloom in much the same way they might pass on jewellery or diamonds. A Kanjeevaram sari is made to last a lifetime.

The Kanjeevaram sari is made of a heavy silk called Kanjivaram silk, so durable that it can be washed in water at home. It is one of the finest and most popular forms of silk in Tamilnadu. Kanjee silk is thicker than almost all other silks, the heavier the silk, the better the quality. The creation of a Kanjeevaram sari is no easy task. The process begins with the the silk thread being twisted, then dyed and dried in the sun after which it is ready for the weaver’s loom. The weaver creates the border, body and pallu separately and then interlocks them together in an impossible to detach joint. A weaver
takes about 10-12 days to weave a simple Kanjeevaram sari while decorative ones could take up to 20 days. Kanjeevarams are favoured for their durability. The glamour of the Kancheepuram silk sarees lies in its colour contrasts. Pyramidal temple borders, checks, stripes and floral "buttas" are traditional designs you will find in a Kancheepuram saree. In a genuine Kancheepuram saree, the border, body and pallav are woven separately and then interlocked together. The joint is woven so strongly that even if the saree tears, the pallu (or border) will not detach.

Kanjeevaram silk sarees are always of bold and bright colour contrasts, favoured by almost every Indian woman. Some common designs woven on the saree are as follows:

- Peacock and parrot are the most common motifs.
- Major attractions are the also beautiful tribal designs.
- Now focus is also on contemporary patterns.
- These are sarees of vivid colour contrasts with traditional patterns derived from the Pallava temples, palaces and paintings.
- You will also find scenes from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata and Bhagwad Gita being incorporated into these works of art.
- A decorative saree contains Zari interwoven with the silk; the 'zari' work in the border and the Pallu are generally woven in gold-dipped silver threads. The more the Zari the more expensive you can expect the sari to be.
- The sarees can also be a plain silk saree.
- There can also be little gold motifs scattered all over its body.
- There are also sarees with gold squares or stripes

Kanjeevaram silk sarees are perhaps the most well known of Indian silk sarees. They are the famous sarees of Tamil Nadu. They are world famous for their royal look and rich feel. The Kancheepuram silk industry, with its 500-year-old tradition, is known for producing heavyweight stiff silk saris. The saris are woven with three ply, high denier threads using thick zari for supplementary warp and weft patterns that consist of unique and intricate designs. Silk threads are dyed in a variety of color. The threads are dipped in rice water and dried in Sun. Depending on the intricacy of design, it may take 20 to 30 days to weave a Kancheevaram Pattu Saree! (Kancheepuram Sarees are also known as Kanchipuram and Kancheevaram and sometimes Kanchivaram Sarees!)

POCHAMPALLI SILK SAREES

The manufacturing history of Pochampally Ikat saree dates back to 1970. It has been said that at that time some village headmen of pochampally decided to weave silk along with cotton to make a better living. Two young weavers were sent to learn the secrets of the art to Bangalore. This was the beginning of a revolutionary era in the Pochampally handloom industry.

Most evidences suggest that Ikat weaving began in the late nineteenth century. Pochampally in Nalgonda district is famous for its Ikat sarees. It is not the only town where Ikat sarees are woven, however as many towns in Nalgonda, Hyderabad and Guntur districts such as Chirala, Golconda and Jalna are some of the known centres of pochampally Ikat sarees. The Ikat weaving is called by the name of “Chit-ku” in these places. The 8 metre (26 foot) saree called Zjanani has Ikat bands in the end piece and it was one the woven in pochampally.
The characteristic features of pochampally Ikat sarees lie in the big, bold and bright patterning. The modernization of thought and choice has inspired the artisans to create modern motifs that are abstract, modernist and geometric with plenty of brilliant colours. The most modern pochampally Ikat sarees are vibrantly colored and with wide range of modern designs. The weavers who are involved in creating pochampally saree follow a particular way for weaving the sarees. At first the yarn for the warp and weft is stretched on warping blocks in the form of quarter circle. They consist of one strong peg connected with a circular segment of a wooden plank. These are studded with about 35 pegs. Then the thread is stretched on it and divided in to a number of sets. After the weaving is done the artisans go for dyeing the fabric. The dyeing process is repeated several times. The process of dyeing involves taking off the yarn and stretching it. Then it is partly opened and tied again for dyeing. The method of weaving the pochampally sarees to the tie and dye method but the yarn is dyed before weaving. The pochampally Ikat sarees have a good market in India and abroad because the eavers use modern synthetic colours and create exclusive designs that are typical of the saree tradition.

The beautiful balanced geometry and subtle color changes of Pochampalli make them a sought after textile for dressy occasions. Medium guage silk with a dupioni like finish. One of the most fascinating technique of Master Crafts men of Pochampally handloom cluster of Nalgonda District of Telangana Region in Andhra Pradesh. IKKAT-Tie & Dye - a fascinating technique developed in the current century has a unique character of its own. Here the warp and weft threads are dyed in beautiful colours before weaving begins. The pattern that emerges as the sub tile intermingling of pastal shades and brightly contrasting hues, very elegant and chic, , Table covers,. The hole effect as a touch of class. The IKKAT fabrics also more chic to the younger generation in their apparels. This product is given Patent right under Geographical Indication by Govt. of India.IKAT - is a type of weaving where the warp, weft or both are tie-dyed before weaving to create designs on the finished fabric. Great care must be taken in tying resist areas with water repellent material such as bicycle inner tubes cut into strips. The precision of the wrapping determines the clarity of the design. After wrapping, the warp threads are dyed. When finished and unwrapped, the areas under the ties have stayed the original colour. Numerous colours can be added after additional wrappings. Designs generally are worked out on graph paper. Great care must be taken in putting the warp on the loom, keeping all the threads in position is necessary for the design to work. The natural movement during weaving gives ikat designs a feathered edge which characterize this technique

Specification: Filature silk warp and weft i.e. 16/18D to 20/22D and 22/24 D warp and weft 45” wide and 5.50/6.20 mtrs. length. Recently the famous Pochampally saree has won Intellectual Property Rights protection. It is the first traditional Indian craft to receive this status of geographical branding. The design won protection in the Geographical Indications (GI) category. This will protect the Pochampally handloom sari from unfair competition and counterfeit.

Pochampally products are handcrafted to perfection by skilled artisans who are endowed with critical skills in intricate designs, having decades of experience behind them in their respective fields. In certain cases these masterpieces can take up to one hundred and twenty days to take final shape, to the satisfaction of our craftsmen. Pochampally is organised as a network of the crafty weavers to provide a clear & synergistic focus to business for customer service, product innovation & profitability

DHARMAVARAM SILK SAREES

Dharmavaram, a pulsating weaving centre, has enthralled, endeared and throbbed the hearts of millions of women with its elegant, splendorous and classic silk sarees. Dharmavaram silk has carved out a niche for itself in south India by rolling out sarees catering to all strata of people. Dharmavaram a small town of rich handloom cluster situated in the District of Anantapur of Rayalaseema region in A.P. Amongst the silk weaves the Dharmavaram silk sarees are famous.
Broad solid colours borders with contrast pallou woven with brocaded gold patterns are the coveted wedding sarees. Simpler patterns for every day use have the specialty of being woven in two colours which give an effect of muted double shades accentuated by the solid colour border and pallu. The Dharmavaram weavers generally practice solid border and body technique. Mainly two types of sarees are woven in Dharmavaram. Kuttu sarees with contrast borders and pallu with entire weft having only one colour. The process is slow because it involves stitching. The other is Lattu sarees with self borders and pallu, the process of which is very fast and in line with the latest trend and fashion. The hallmark of Dharmavaram sarees are the motifs and designs adapted from the sculpture of Temples at Lepakshi and Tadipatri and other motifs of nature like peacock, deer, flowers etc. The culture and tradition has also been woven into the saree. Dharmavaram sarees are light in weight and broad heavy zari borders ranging from 6 to 12 inch, known as Gatti anchu or solid borders. Earlier, pallu and border were stitched to the main body of the saree. Later star, diamond and flower shaped buttas appeared. These features help in identification of Dharmavaram sarees. The weavers generally use two types of yarns, charkha (4 ends) yarn of good quality and the other is doubling yarn.Korvai design with 2-3 inch of zari woven double sided border, zari butta in the body and zari border woven 20-26 inch rich pallu. This center is known for ornately designed silk Sarees heavily decorated with gold zari borders. Located in the Anantapur district of Andhra Pradesh, Dharmavaram Sarees are a must-have in the women's wardrobes. During weddings and festive occasions, the vibrant Sarees in contrasting colors add the much needed gaiety.

Dharmavaram is famous for silk sarees all over the world. No functions complete without wearing these sarees. These sarees have simple, plain borders without much contrast. Borders are usually broad with brocaded gold patterns or butta, pallus of the sarees have exclusive designs. These sarees are woven with tussar silk also.Dharmavaram Saree is the trademark product of Dharmavaram in Andhra Pradesh. This silk saree is coveted all over India, especially the South. Andhra women generally select these sarees for all ceremonial and formal occasions. The designs mainly feature simple, plain borders without much contrast. Brocaded gold patterns or butta are widely seen on the borders. Exclusively designed pallus are another quality of the Dharmavaram silk sarees. Indian beauties are known for draping themselves in saris. Sari is the national dress for the women folk of India. Anantapur district in Andhra Pradesh is very well known for its silk saris. The beauty of dharmayaram sari speaks about the volume of hard work and the artistry done by the craftsmen. The borders of the sari is the highlight of this five yards of material because of the brilliance of its colours. Traditional designs of butis and dots are the motifs

**BANARAS SILK SAREES**

An Indian woman, clad in a Banarasi silk saree, complete with her solah sringar (16 makeup items), is the dream girl of every Indian man. There is hardly any woman in India whose wardrobe does not include Banarsi sarees. Even the trousseau of a bride is incomplete without this much-coveted possession. Benarasi Sari offers such grace to a woman that can hardly be matched by any other dress. However, behind all this grace is a weaver, whose skill and genius goes into the making of such a splendid outfit. Usually, it takes around 15 days to one month to complete a Banarasi saree. Still, the time may vary depending upon the complexity of designs and patterns of the sari. The Mughal era was the time when the fame and recognition of Banarsi silk sarees of India reached its pinnacle. Even the motifs underwent a change and the saree saw new designs, resulting from the combination of Indian and Persian patterns.

Today, Indian craftsman are exporting Banarsi sarees, the specialty of Benaras/Varanasi, to the remotest corners of the world. Numerous weavers, in and around the city of Benaras, are engaged in this ever-expanding industry. The silk used in the making of Indian Benarasi silk sarees is being sourced from the southern parts of the country, mainly from Bangalore.
Types of Banarsi Sarees

There are following four basic varieties of Banarasi silk saree:

- Pure Silk Saree (Katan)
- Organza Saree (Kora), with Zari And Silk
- Georgette Saree
- Shattir Saree

Making of a Banaras Silk Saree

An ideal Banarasi Sari comprises of somewhere around 5600 thread wires, all of them 45-inch wide. The base of the sari is woven on the power loom. In case of weaving the warp, the craftsmen make the base, which is around 24 to 26 m long. One of the most important aspects of weaving Banarsi silk sarees of India is the teamwork involved. Typically, three weavers are involved in the creation of the saree. One of them weaves the saree, while the second one is engaged at the revolving ring, where bundles are created. At the time of bundling a new process of designing the motifs begins. For creating design boards, the first thing that is done by an artist comprises of sketching the design on a graph paper, along with color concepts. Before selecting the final design, punch cards are created. A single design of an Indian Benarasi saree requires hundreds of perforated cards for the implementation of the idea. Different threads and colors are used on the loom to knit the prepared perforated cards. The knit perforated cards are then paddled in a systematic manner. This is done to ensure that the main weaving picks up the right colors and pattern.

Banaras is one of the rich weaving craft centre of India, famous for Brocade saris and allover dress material. Exclusive varieties of the saris are Jangla, Tanchoi, Vaskat, Cutwork, Tishu, and Butidar which are made of silk warp and silk weft, on plain/satian ground base, brocaded with extra weft patterns in different layouts introducing Buties, Bells, creepers, Buttas in ground, border and Anchal for getting glamours appearance.

JANGLA SAREE

Brocade weavers of Banares have often endeavoured to add a sense of gaiety and festivity by brocading patterns in colourful silk threads amidst the usual gold and silver motifs of the brocade convention. The present sari is an example in which muga silk motifs have been in laid. Jangala wildly scrolling and spreading vegetation motif is among the eldest in Banares brocades. This old rose sari is embellished with beautifully contrasted gold-creepers and silver flowers of the Jangala motif. The borders have brocaded running creepers in muga silk and gold and silver-Zari threds. The end panel is a combination of motifs of the borders and condensed Jangala of the field. Muga silk brocading in-hances the beauty of the sari while reducing the cost. All over Jal Jangla design to get the stylish work of the sarees and also used mena work for the decoration of the fabrics. The exclusive design sari has time taking skilled work, costly fabrics are widely accepted during the wedding occassion.

JAM WAR TANCHOI SARI

Using a technique similar to that of brocade, weavers of Banaras weave saris using colorful extra weft silk yarn for patterning. This varietyis known as tanchoi. This maroon-coloured sari in satin weave is brocaded with elaborate motifs from the Jamawar shawl tradition from Kashmir, the characteristic feature of which was paisley motif, often elaborated into a maze which would look kaleidoscopic in character. The field has a densely spread minute diaper of Jamawar style paisley. The end panel has large motifs of multiple paisley forms-one growing out of the other. The border, as well as the
cross-borders of the end panel, have miniature paisley creepers. Tanchoi fabric has remarkable fame in the India as well as all over in the world widely acceptable to all kind of the people.

**TISSUE SAREE**

The renowned Zari brocade weavers of Banaras has evolved a technique of weaving tissue material which looked like golden cloth. By running Zari in weft a combination of Zari and silk in extra-weft (pattern thread) and silk in warp, the weave of this sari has densely patterned with golden lotuses floating in a glimmering pond. The 'drops of water' are created by cut work technique. The borders and the end panel have a diaper of diamond patterns enclosed by a border of running paisley motifs. Tissue saris are most popular as wedding saris among the affluent. Tissue sari has glazed, shining character due to the use of real gold Zari/Silver Zari in weft on silk warp ground are ornamented with the particulars traditional design such as Jangla Butidar, Shikargah menadar etc.

**CUTWORK SAREE**

This type of saree prepared by cut work technique on plain ground texture after removing of the floated thread which are not design (Woven) during the weaving process which provide good transparent look. Cut work is the cheaper version of the Jamdani variety. In cut work the pattern is made to run from selvage to selvage letting it hang loosely between two motifs and the extra-thread is then cut manually, giving the effect of Jamdani.

**BUTIDAR SAREE**

The most striking feature of this dark blue silken saree is that it is brocaded with pattern threads of gold, silver and silk. Due to darker shade of gold and lighter of silver this variety of patterning in brocade is conventionally known as Ganga-Jamuna, indicating the confluence of these two river whose waters are believed to be dark and light receptively. The end panel has a row of arches, in each of which a bouquet of flowers is placed. A slightly smaller and variegated bouquet is diapered all over the field.

The butidar saree is a rich kind of the Banaras Saree in high traditional pattern and motif of the design locally popularised such as Angoor Bail, Gojar Bail, Luttar Bail, Khulta bail, Baluchar bail, Mehrab bail, Doller butti, Ashraffi Butti, Latiffa Butti, Reshem Butti Jhummar Butti, Jhari Butta, Kalma Butti, Patti Butti, Lichhi Butti, Latiffa Butta, Kairy Kalanga Thakka Anchal, Mehrab Anchal, Baluchar Butta with the use of real gold and silver Jari and Katan silk in the weft.

These are the few Indian world reputed beautiful silk sarees made in India. Still there is big list of traditional handloom silk sarees with geographical importance. SAREE, the world's oldest surviving garment, is still *de rigueur* outfit for most Indian brides. Indian marriages showcase our ancient rich heritage in the repertoire of saris draped by brides from different regions. Even colours and patterns woven in various fabrics of saree, signify many beliefs embedded in our culture. Undeniably a bride's charm heightens more in a beautiful sari.

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