

# hastavem

**the woven stories of Indian handloom**

Documentation of textile industries of india, By MES Pillai HOC College of Architecture, Rasayani



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Mahatma Education Society  
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**PHCOA**  
PILLAI HOC COLLEGE  
OF ARCHITECTURE

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## PREFACE

This book is a study of the textile industry of India- an invaluable heritage. The book studies the history of weaving communities across the different Indian states documenting the handloom industry. It looks at the origins, economy, housing and transition of the weavers.

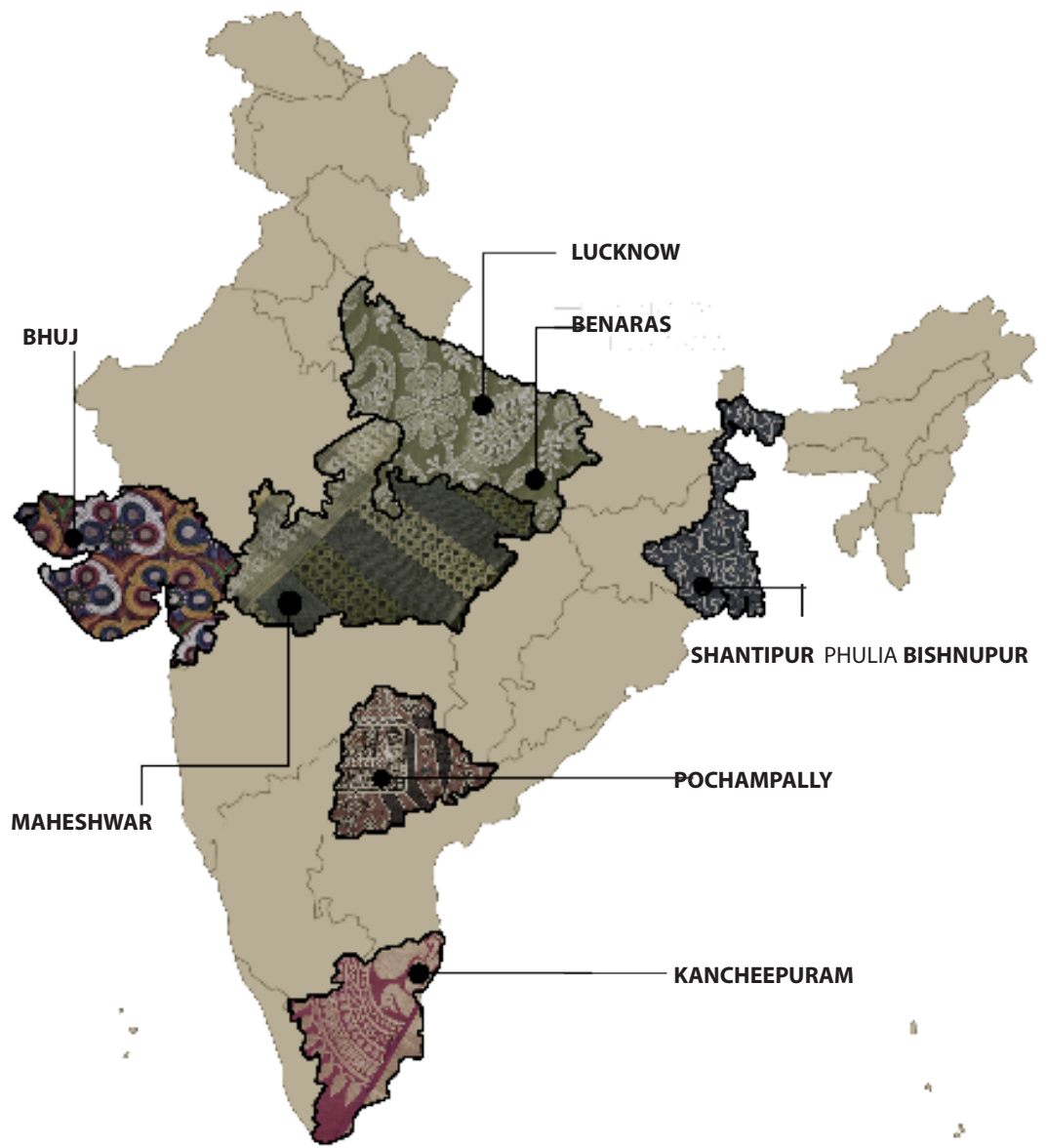
A month long journey in different weaving communities dispersed across various states by the students of Pillai HOC College of Architecture (PHCOA) has resulted in the publication of the documentation through this book. The students were divided into multiple groups to study, interact and understand the handloom industry and the weaving community.

We have made an attempt to delve into the heritage that showcases the unique design features, gorgeous detailing and a timeless quality. Indian textiles have always charmed the connoisseurs of fine design and clothing. Weaving is a traditional art form and to let it fall into obsolescence is negligence of fine skills, technique and indigenous fashion.

Handlooms are a sustainable and ethical art practice providing livelihood to greater population in rural India.

We feel that it is crucial to revive the handlooms to protect the country's heritage. Adhering to Mahatma Gandhi's words of - "Be the change you wish to see in the world," the students of PHCOA have stepped up to weave stories of the many cultures within our diverse nation, create a revival in appreciation of our heritage and architecture.

This book is intended to be a guide to students, researchers, readers and enthusiasts who wish to know more about the weaving heritage in India, their lives, housing and the art they create.



**ARCHITECTURAL EXPEDITION**  
documentation of Textile Industry  
from seven different Textile towns by  
Second and Third Year students 2019.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The publication of this extensive report on the Textile Industry in India has been a collaborative and great effort of labour and love.

The Mahatma Education Society is celebrating a glorious 50 years of establishing itself as one of the leading educational institutions in the country. The vision of Dr. K. M. Vasudevan Pillai, Founder, Chairman and CEO with Dr. Daphne Pillai having guided the MES which grew from a single school into a multi institution and multi-location group, delivering quality education at all levels.

Dr. K. M. Vasudevan Pillai has encouraged and continues to inspire a large community of students and teachers to undertake initiatives like this publication. We are pleased to present this Textile Documentation as a commemorative record to celebrate 50 years of excellence of the MES and 10 years of growth and success of Pillai HOC College of Architecture Rasayani (PHCOA).

We would like to thank the following student team members who contributed towards the written and graphical information in this book.

01. Benares: Ichchha Singham, Darsheet Vora; 02. Bengal: Bhargavi Harpude, Rohit Mharav, 03. Bhuj: Yukta Naik; 04. Pochampally: Nrupa Joshi; 05. Kanchipuram: Akhilesh Nambiar, Manas Ranadive; 06. Maheshwar: Zaid Mapkar, Nishant Jage; 07. Lucknow: Sayali Jogi, Amruta Wadekar; 08. Introduction: Purva Balchandani, Rutwik Joshi.

The publication team work would not have been possible without the mentors and editorial team members. We wish to thank everyone for contributing towards the making of this book into a reality.

There is a greater involvement of many individuals in making the Textile Towns voyage a successful venture. We would like to thank and appreciate the faculty in making arrangements, and motivating students to undertake a fascinating journey over a carefully planned itinerary. It allowed students to explore the places, their architecture, many cultural specimens involving food, lifestyle and people.

An extensive architectural expedition documentation of Textile Industry from seven different Textile towns undertaken between 31st May and 18th June, 2019 was put up by the Second and the Third Year students from 9th August to 13th August, 2019. They created an exhibition of their studies with architectural detailed drawings and a colourful assembly of fabrics and artefacts from the Heritage Handloom towns spanning Bhuj in west, Maheshwar in Central India, Lucknow and Benares in North, West Bengal in East to Kancheepuram and Pochampally in South. The expedition titled: PEOPLE\_TEXTILE\_HERITAGE was a huge success with people visiting the week-long exhibition and commending the students.

Design studio projects were generated based upon the expedition. The brainstorming between the students and the faculty resulted in Semester III and Semester V Architectural Design Projects. The content presented in this publication has been crowd-sourced from various sources by undergraduate students. Thus, the listing down of bibliography or references has not been possible. The authors take full responsibility for this shortcoming.





## INTRODUCTION

India has had a sacramental collaboration of master masons and artists since a long time. These individuals and their alliances are credited with safeguarding Indian Heritage. A large repository of traditional and vernacular skills of knowledge related to building and weaving craft has grown with their many endeavours. Through this book, we talk about the ways in which the Indian textile industry has survived and lived through an era of darkness for itself.

History is a social nerve; events of today are the history of tomorrow. Unless that history is recorded well, there is every possibility of it degenerating into mere folklore. It is happening with the textile industry, an inherently integral part of our nation's culture since ages.

The book talks about the history of the resilient textile industry as well as about its present struggle for survival in a society of fast fashion. We take a look at the ways India has managed to sustain and innovate on processes of hand manufacturing of textiles in the last seven decades. Unlike the common perception that such traditions are static and bound with strict rules of making and usage, they have been observed to be dynamically influenced by new stimulus — political, social, economic, scientific — and are inspired by emerging cultural developments. It helps the viewer not just to look at the journey of the fabric over time, but also at the people - the master artisans, craftspeople, artists, designers, niche design studios and popular brands, who breathe life into it with their unique vocabularies. The industry holds a marginal market at the moment and appears to be deteriorating with time.

Handloom industry soon might become extinct due to the fast pace at which our nation is developing and future generations may be deprived of this rich tradition. This book is an attempt to document and recreate interest in the wonderful world of weaving that remains an astonishing craft of our people.

# HISTORY

The Textile Industry in the contemporary market is a global industry. The history of clothing production can be traced back to the year 2000 BCE; gradually becoming one of the large scale economic activities providing significant employment, after agriculture. The Indian textile and clothing industry provide a wealth of craftsmanship both, skilled and semi-skilled work force that is a major contributor towards the development and economy of our nation. The organized Indian textile industry of modern era traces its origin to the year 1817, when the first mill was set up. From that early beginning, about 183 years ago, the industry has come a long way and has made the phenomenal growth against heavy odds. Before the British arrived, the Indian Textiles were an integral part of our society, and royal patrons like Ahilyabai Holkar of Madhya Pradesh revolutionized the handlooms and created a center of innovation and excellence.

In Medieval India, weavers exclusively weaved clothes for the royal families. Handlooms have traversed a long journey from weaving for royal families to weaving for the common man. For centuries, Bengal textiles were exported to Egypt, Turkey, Java, China, Japan and Europe along well-established trade routes. In 1750, the association of East India Company traders is estimated to have increased the Bengal's textile and silk production by 33%, a figure already expected to be 16 million annually. The industry became more creative, innovative and productive and the export boomed. Pre-colonization India enjoyed the 25% global trade in terms of textiles, which diminished later due to the imperial policies of British. India still grew cotton but only to export it to Britain. Weaving fell into disarray due to the lack of raw materials. Gradually the population moved towards agriculture beyond the land could sustain. This in turn affected the peasants and as drought and the changing weather conditions reduced the agricultural work, there were fewer means left to earn a living. India's textile market had been disrupted since cotton was being produced in large quantities in England thus leaving the weavers unemployed.

Some daring Indian entrepreneurs set up their own mills after 1850 and tried to produce the cloth that could compete with the British imports. The swadeshi movement resulted in homespun khadi innovations and by 1945, the 76% of the cloth consumed in India was made by Indians. On the way to National Independence, textiles played an integral role by contributing to the Swadeshi Movement. The khadi, simple and hand-woven cotton, became a symbol of honest labor and the survival of village economies. This growth was more rapid after independence in 1947 as it had the burden of meeting the demands of a new nation. This responsibility was immense as the partition had taken away a large number of weavers from India. The nation was left with its natural resources but had to rely on imports to meet its demands. Today, it has grown to be the largest segment of the country's industrial sector with a share of 20% and earning about 32% of the foreign exchange. Production of hand-woven fabric from India constitutes 95% of global production. The Indian Textile industry has gained stature among the global textile markets by being the second largest manufacturer.



## WEAVING AND ARCHITECTURE



Architecture involves developing community-based projects to benefit large groups. Architects believe that it is necessary to make efforts to conserve and promote the cultural heritage of communities living in heritage precincts. It is necessary to develop and upgrade the craft skills of these communities by inculcating pride and confidence for their hereditary skills and the living heritage they create. The aim is to provide models of sustainability and economic growth.

Not much attention has been given to the decrepit conditions of weavers' homes and their civic amenities that affect their cluster living. It is understood that the weaving heritage cannot be kept alive merely with input of subsidies, acts and national policies and that architecture will play an extremely important role. As Architects, we are supposed to revive and truly appreciate this iconic legacy and restore and preserve it for sustainable growth. Through our studies, we have tried to understand the role architecture plays in the workspace of a weaver and interpretation of apt spaces for the community. The vernacular architectural practices from the weavers' houses necessary for the smooth running of weaving processes were also studied as part of the documentation.

## PRESENT SCENARIO



Today, Indian craftsmanship remains in demand across the globe. International designers use the Indian skills to produce garments with hand-beading and embroidery. Fashion brands appreciate the great diversity and the quality of skills available in India and the ability to create innovative designs for an international clientele. The handloom industry provides employment to over 4.3 million people engaged in the weaving and allied activities.

Handloom weaving is spread across many states in the country and is in considerable decline in some of them. If numbers could tell a story, the reduction in number of handloom weavers over decades make a significant point. Official surveys published by the Office of the Development Commissioner (Handlooms) suggest the number of weaver families reduced from 124 lakhs in the 1970s to 64 lakhs in 1995, and further down to 44 lakhs in 2010. According to the 4th All India Handloom Census (2019-20), there are 26,73,891 handloom weavers and 8,48,621 allied workers in the country. This sharp decline in numbers clearly indicates the failure of various methods adopted to protect the handloom sector.

The depletion of natural resources has forced certain changes in the handloom industry. The use of synthetic yarn in place of natural fiber and using power looms to produce well-recognized handloom products has resulted in a chaos of regional identities. From the famous Benares silks to Kanjeevarams in the south, cheap imitations have robbed the handloom sector of its identities. In addition, an easy access to synthetic dyes mean that natural indigo and alizarin have been replaced by chemical complements which are then passed off as natural dyes. Take the famous *Ilkal* sari from Karnataka, which used natural indigo for its rich blues and greens and natural

material for black color. They use only synthetic dyes now. The reduction in cultivation of indigo is one of the chief factors. In *Bagru* block printing, although natural materials like madder, indigo, pomegranate rind and turmeric are still used, they are replaced by the synthetic supplements due to ease of availability and use. *Ajrakh* printing from Gujarat and Rajasthan was similar though the colors from Gujarat were supposed to be brighter due to the quality of water. After the 2001 earthquake in Gujarat, the quality of the water seems to have changed, affecting the dyeing in *Ajrakh* printing.

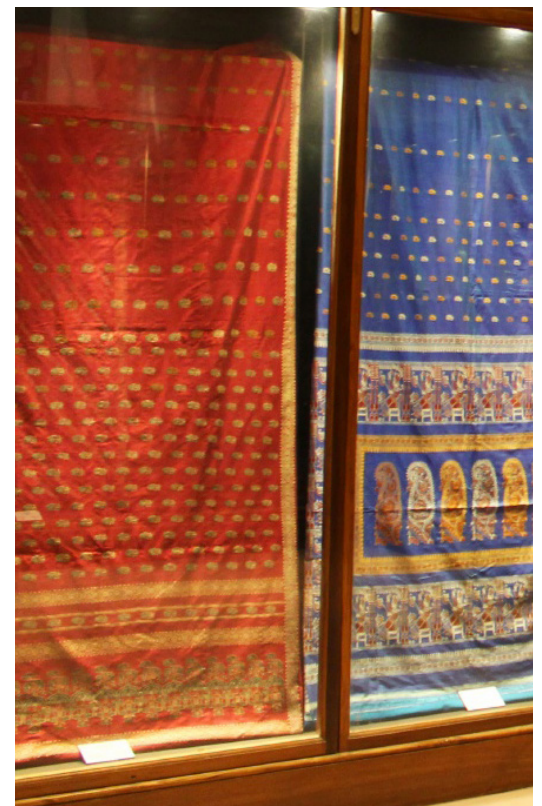
The product identity linked to a particular place is no longer sacrosanct. There are *Benarasi* saris being made in Chirala; Orissa look alike saris in some parts of Andhra Pradesh and so on, and copies on power looms are made everywhere. In this situation, without a proper evaluation of the old legislation and its efficacy, new protections in the form of the Geographic Indication Act (GI) and handloom mark are mooted by the state.

Nearly 15% of cloth production in India is from the Handloom sector substantially contributing to the export earnings. To ensure that the art of textiles in our country does not vanish and survives this phase wherein branding and marketing are the determining factors of an industry, the central government is focusing on a number of policies in providing best manufacturing and infrastructure to local artisans, technology and innovation, enhancing skills and strengths of the local industry.

Over the years, traditional crafts have become rather repetitive and have a limited appeal. Although artisans have a strong urge to carve their own market niche, the major constraints in their development are lack of new design inputs, poor exposure to market demand and ineffective infrastructure at the grass root level. The challenge that weavers face is to produce new designs that restore the soul of the craft, preserve the hereditary and traditional essence, and are still trendy and well considered for urban lifestyles.

The government and some private organizations are working to improve the living conditions and initiate opportunities for self-employment and income generation to the weaver families. They are engaged in endeavours to work with craft clusters to develop the community-based enterprise, to revive and promote the dying skills and to assist artisan groups to find lucrative outlets for their products and provide marketing linkages and platforms. Similarly design and development workshops, setting up of common facility centers, social development initiatives are undertaken as further measures to sustain the sector.

Amongst the many schemes and campaigns launched by the Government of India like the National Handloom Development Programme (NHDP), Handloom Weavers' Comprehensive Welfare Scheme (HWCWS), MUDRA, MAKE IN INDIA, the labor reforms, Geographic Indication Act has given a ray of hope and a chance to revive the exclusive tradition of crafting textiles to the manufactures and handloom sector.





विजय वैमिष्यल प्लस

प्राशन

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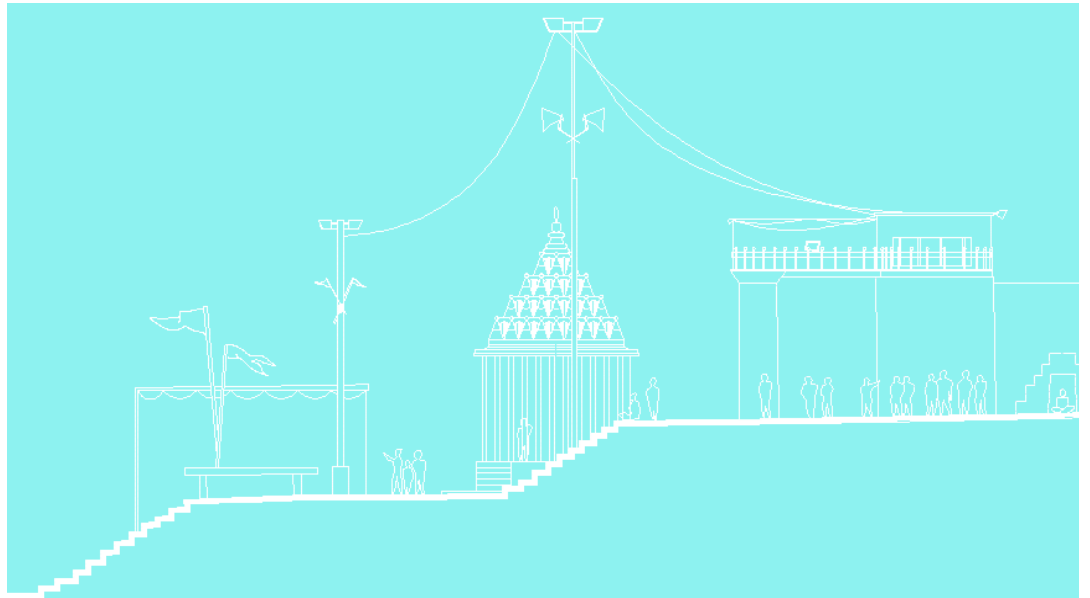


# **BENARES**

A CITY AS OLD AS TIME

## HISTORICAL HERITAGE





Benares is a place imprinted with art, culture, stories, food, devotion, colours and so much more. Every inch of Benares reflects the stories of the place. This oldest living city is influenced by its myriad history as seen today. It was earlier known as Kashi with diverse architectural influences of the Rajput, Vijayanagara and Maratha Empire.

Textiles of Benares are easily distinguished from other textiles due to their brocade work, the *zari* details, bright colours and patterned motifs. The handloom textiles have evolved with time in Benares. The Mughals brought with them their floral motifs and intricate design patterns.

The most evocative image of Benares is its many Ghats and their representation impacting the arts and craft of the city. Today, there are 88 functional ghats many of which were reconstructed during the Maratha rule in 18th century and are now used for ceremonial purposes.

# MADANPURA

It is one of the oldest weaving settlements in Benares with almost every house having a textile *kharkhana* (workshop). Many weaver families have set up workshops in their homes and have passed the practice to their subsequent generations. It's a community with co-existing religions. Many handlooms are visible through the windows of the houses as one passes through the narrow alleyways. The dim lights, brick walls, arches, and the constant whirring of handlooms at work are symbolic of their entrepreneurial dedication.



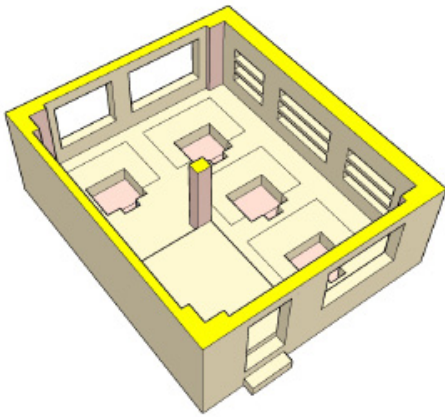
## Life of Weavers:

Over 75 % of people are engaged in weaving. More than a livelihood, it is a legacy of their ancestors that is being continued by successive generations. Usually men work in the handloom industry. The age group varies from 20– 50 years old. Pit Looms are seen in larger quantities. In Benares, the weavers of expensive silk fabrics and brocades are known as '*karigar*' (artists).

The weaving industry in Benares works on a feudal structure. The *Gaddidars* (middle men) are at the top- they sell to retailers and wholesalers. The *Gaddidars* buy from the Master Weavers who, in turn, provide work to the individual weavers. Some weavers work independently while some work in this hierarchy, other people engage in the dyeing and threading process.

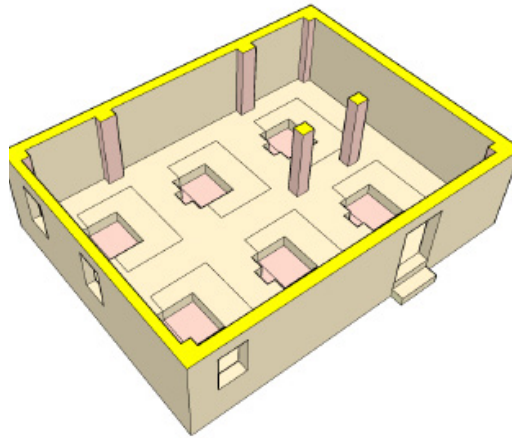


## Typical weaver spaces:



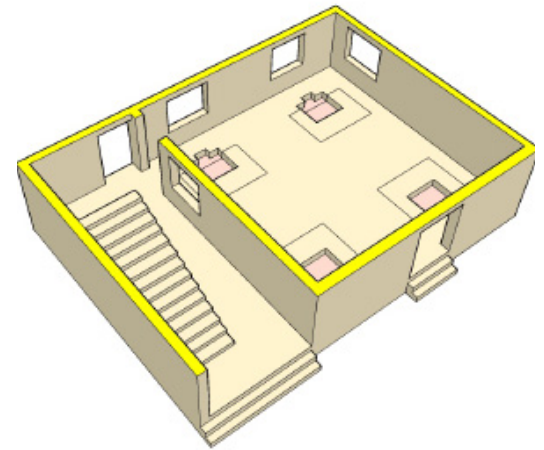
### Typical house with workshop:

This is a workshop cum house, the house layout is quite similar to a workshop layout only difference being is the number of looms in the house, there is platform at the entrance supported by a column, usually used as a meeting or waiting space. The windows are also wider letting more light in the loom spaces since more light is required here for special kinds of threads used. Storage spaces are made in the walls to avoid extra built up space.



### Typical *Karkhana* (workshop):

The house is used only for weaving purposes and called a *karkhana*. Weavers from different houses in the settlement come together here to weave under a *gaddidar*. The space is planned very formally and functionally. Looms are placed axially to provide an ambient circulation. Light is inadequate in this space due to less openings. It is kept so as not to ruin the silk threads with harsh sunlight.



### Typical house:

This is a residential space also used as a loom workshop. The houses are built in a very traditional way and follow the typical architecture of Benares which is usually a G+1 structure, where the weaver's home is on the first floor and the workshop on ground floor. The houses generally have two exits, one for the loom and other for family members. A partition wall is provided to separate the public and private spaces. Windows are large which provide the maximum intake of the wind and the sunlight with ample circulation spaces.



JACQUARD

BANA

TANA

## PROCESS OF WEAVING:

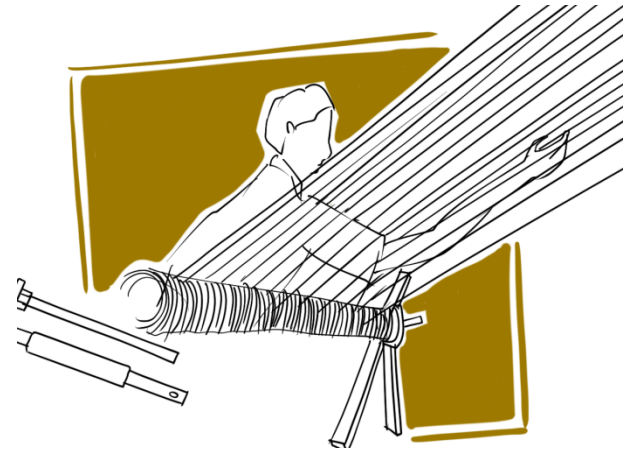
The common textile features of a *Benaresi* textile include the following:

1. Heavy gold work.
2. Compact weaving.
3. Figures have small details.
4. Metallic visual effect.
5. *Pallus* – a wide middle portion with decorative motifs seen all over, with one cross border on the top and another at the bottom.
6. Border, usually with a decorative *jhalar* (inside edge).

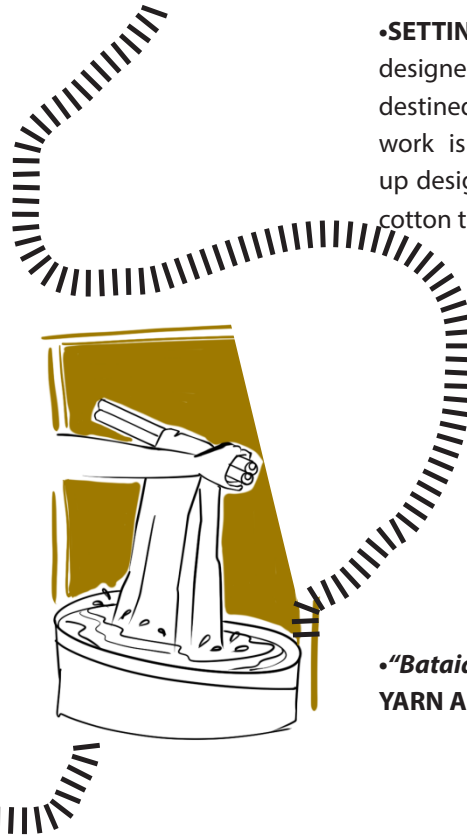
Apart from these Madanpura handloom weaves have a special delicate texture. *Chatai* (mat), *khajuria* (date leaf) weaving in the border, *pallu* and body and a *kairee*(kalgha), *condia*- a *kalghapallu* placed in each corner of the rectangular layout of the *pallu* are commonly seen.



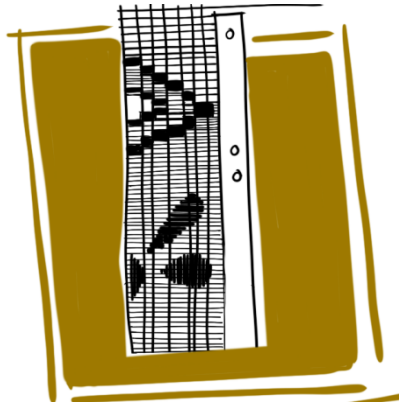
•**OPENING OF YARN:** The warp or *taana* machine is used for this process. It is used to prepare the warp by rolling the threads on a wooden log in a particular sequence of colours depending on the design.



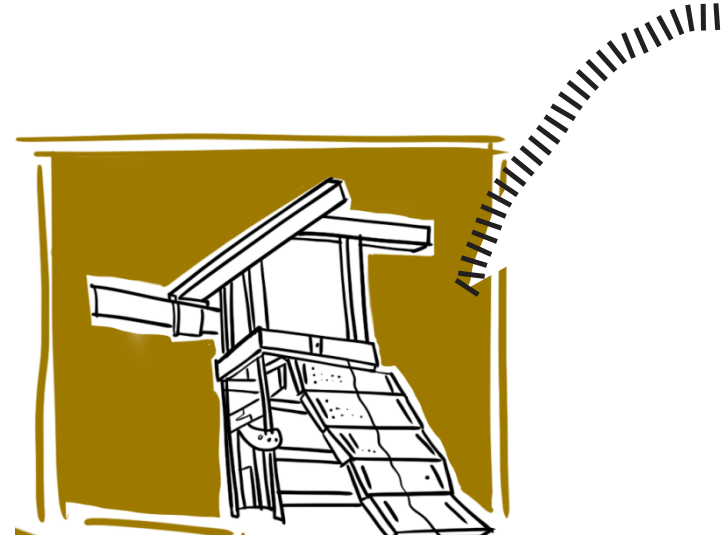
•**SETTING UP OF TANA AND BANA:** The designer first works out the design of a fabric, destined to be reproduced, on paper. This work is called *likhai*. *Thenakshaband* draws up designs to order. This is done by means of cotton threads in the form of graph-work.



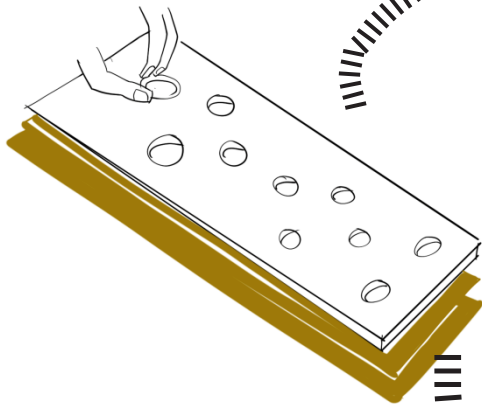
•**“Bataia” OR REELING AND OPENING OF YARN AND DYEING THE YARN**



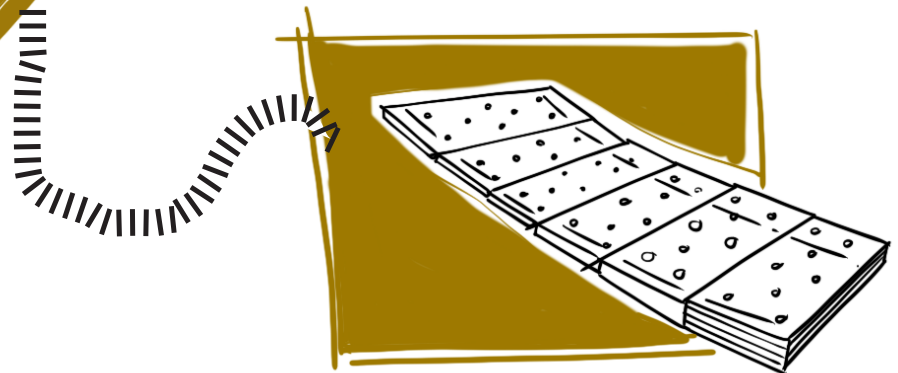
•**MAKING OF NAKSHA:** The design is plotted on graph paper by plotters according to the dimensions desired.

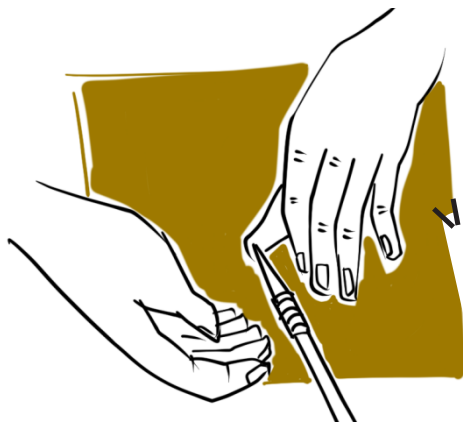


•**MAKING OF JACQUARD:** The plotted *nakshas* are taken to a technician who punches them on cardboards in the required sequence. These cards, linked in a chain as per the design, are then used by the jacquard machine to provide the exact sequence of the different colours of the threads that are required for the design.

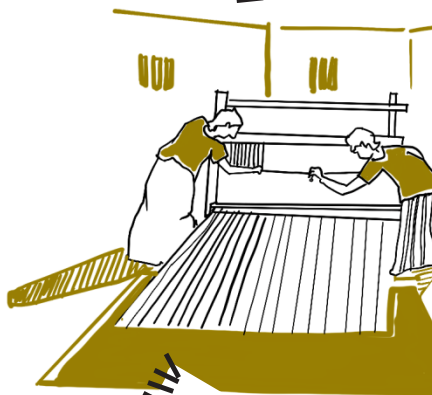


•**SETTING UP JACQUARD**





the designer first works out the design of a fabric, destined to be reproduced, on paper. This work is called *likhai*. The *nakshaband* draws up designs to order, this he does by means of cotton threads in the form of graph-work.



**SETTING UP TOOLS**

**DYEING THE FINAL FABRIC**



**WEAVING**





## WEAVING TODAY:

A lot of handloom weavers claim that the advent of power looms has distorted the market. The quality of the handloom fabric of a true *Benaresi* sari is different than a powerloom sari. The daily remuneration for weavers is a measly Rs. 250/- a day. The marginalisation of the *bunkar* (weaver) is a worrying situation. The *Benaresi* sari got Geographical Indication (GI) tag in 2009. It specified that only the fabric made by hand, using the traditional method, will be considered *Benaresi* in chosen five districts. Currently, there are more than 2 lakh power looms, rendering 5 lakh *bunkars* jobless. Weavers working on handlooms would like the government to work on structuring and creating marketing opportunities. They want direct access between the customers and themselves. Financial help for rebuilding and maintenance of ancestral handlooms through an initial government support is much awaited.







# WEST BENGAL

## INTRODUCTION

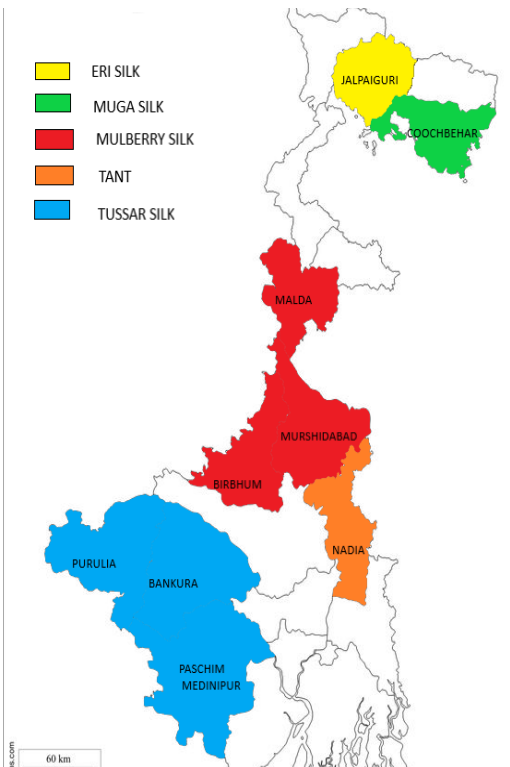
From the mighty Himalayas to the greenery of Gangetic plains, from serene beaches to mangrove estuaries - West Bengal is a land of many natural splendours. Adding to its charm and appeal are the magnificent heritage architecture, colourful folk festivals, beautiful arts and crafts, traditional and contemporary music, theatre and films and delicious ethnic specialties. West Bengal is rich in the tradition of Handloom Weaving. It is a part of its cultural heritage.

The handloom sector is one of the major cottage industries in West Bengal, providing the widest avenues for employment opportunities, next to agriculture. Shantipur, Phulia in Nadia district, Dhaniakhali, Begampur in Hooghly district, Samudragrah, Dhatrigram, Katwa, Ketugram in Burdwan district and Bishnupur in Bankura district are the major handloom concentrated areas in the state of West Bengal (Ministry of Textiles, Government of West Bengal).

Every district has weaving 'clusters', which are home to artisan communities, each specializing in specific varieties of handloom weaving.

The history of textile manufacture in Bengal goes back to the remotest antiquity. At the time when the *Arthasastra of Kautilya* was composed it was already a well established industry with a wide reputation in the country.

In the early days the weaving industry was controlled by the weaving caste. This was the time when villagers were more or less self-sufficient and wants were simple and limited. People from outside the weaving caste took up weaving, with their joining the number of weavers increased resulting in competition in the industry. The intense competition affected the traditional norms, gave rise to internal conflict. The people engaged in the craft felt the need for certain new arrangements that would help to maintain the tradition. Thus guild was formed and gradually it was the guild and not the caste that regulated the industry.



## HISTORY OF HANDLOOMS IN WEST BENGAL



After the partition of India, Bengal was split into two major regions. West Bengal became a part of India and East Bengal became East Pakistan (Bangladesh). Many skilled weavers from Dhaka, in current day Bangladesh, migrated into West Bengal. Many Hindu weavers from Bangladesh migrated to India and were rehabilitated in West Bengal. Fulia (or Phulia), a town neighbouring Shantipur, became a new home for these weavers from Tangail (of Bangladesh), who brought with them the weaving traditions of their ancestral land. Other migrating weavers were settled in the Hooghly and Burdwan districts of West Bengal. Over the years, each of these regions developed their own style of weaving and today, they are the homes of the most well-known varieties of *tant* saris.



# WEAVES OF WEST BENGAL

West Bengal is famous for saris made from quality cotton or silk yarn. *Jamdani* and *Tangail* are two pioneer dress materials which bears a golden legacy in the history of Bengal handloom. The artistic craft of *Jamdani* weaving was derived from Persian technique. *Tangail*, on the other hand was originated from the district of Tangail of present Bangladesh. Previously, this sari was named as '*Begam Bahar*' where silk warp and cotton weft were used. Later on, both cotton warp and weft were used. There is a key difference between the weaving technique of *Jamdani* and *Tangail*. The embroidery thread of *Jamdani* is inserted after every ground pick, whereas in *Tangail* sari, the embroidery thread is inserted after two ground picks.

*Jamdani*, *Baluchari*, *Tangail* and Murshidabad Silk have become a brand name in the market. Silk handloom bears a timeless legacy of the cultural heritage of West Bengal. Shantipur, Phulia in Nadia district, Dhaniakhali, Begampur in Hooghly district, Samudragrah, Dhatrigram, Katwa, Ketugram in Burdwan district and Bishnupur in Bankura district are the major handloom concentrated areas in the state of West Bengal (Ministry of Textiles, Govt. of West Bengal).



## LEGEND:

- 1- *Jamdani*
- 2- *Baluchari*
- 3- *Tant*
- 4- *Kantha*
- 5- *Muslin*
- 6- *Murshidabadi*
- 7- *Garad*
- 8- *Garad Korial*
- 9- *Tussar*

# WEAVERS COMMUNITY



## Actors of the weaving cluster & their roles

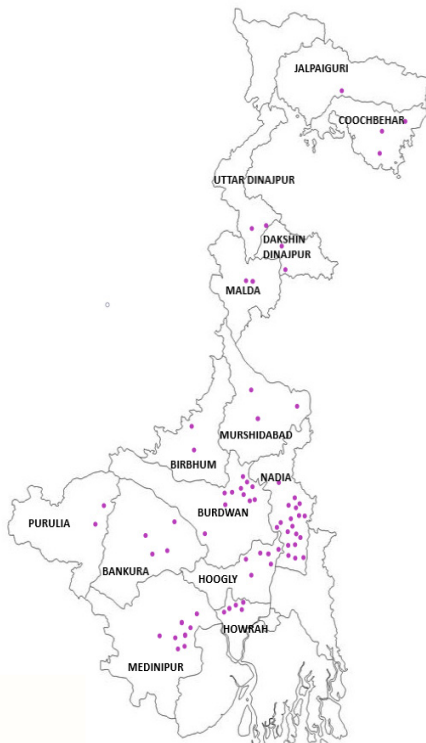
**Mahajans** provide design and colour information and a better price realisation for the sari to the master weaver and make the transactions on credit.

**Master weavers** supply the raw material to the weavers, provide the design and pay wages to the grass root level weavers; and then supply the sarees to *Mahajans*. There are minimum 4 looms under 1 master weaver shed and the number varies based on each master weavers managerial capacity .

**Weavers** are linked to master weavers, who receive the raw material and design brief from the master weaver and pass on the final product to them and receive their weaving wages in return. These weavers own the loom and his entire family is involved directly / indirectly in the weaving and preparatory activities.

**Dyers:** Dyeing is basically carried out in the dyeing unit. The yarn traders employ the large and medium scale units for dyeing, whereas the small-scale unit does the job work for the master weaver.

**Designers:** Lack of education and limited thoughts have restricted their main role in the cluster to do costing for the master weaver, and supply them the punch cards for only the tradition based *Jacquard*.

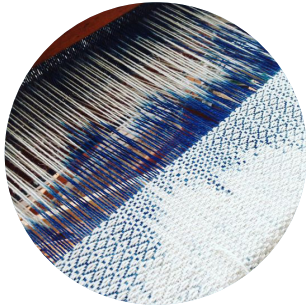


Map of the handloom cluster distribution

Handloom has a complex history and this shapes the contradictions and strengths of the industry. It is decentralized in nature where the weaver operates from his house. The strength of the community in the village supporting in pre-loom has dwindled and the weaver family has become nuclear. The markets have moved away and the immediate markets became weak. In the face of all these adversities the industry survives, though in reduced numbers. Weaving has always been a community activity located in a specific group / caste in each geographical area. Handloom production is mostly carried out in the village. The loom is located in the weaver's home. The weaver almost always operates with the help of his family. Traditionally, pre-loom activities like dyeing & warping were outsourced and sizing, attaching the warp, weft winding & weaving activities were carried out by the weaver. This has changed over the years due to the breakage in traditional linkages; pre-loom activities like sizing are now also being outsourced.

## Weaving Elements

Weft in a fabric is a yarn which passes across the fabric width. Weft yarn is passed through the warp yarn to create the fabric.

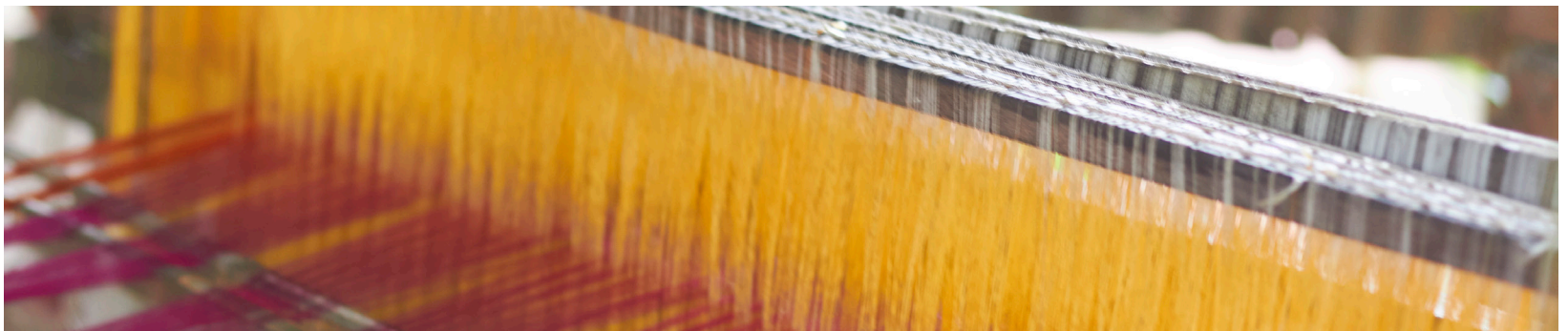
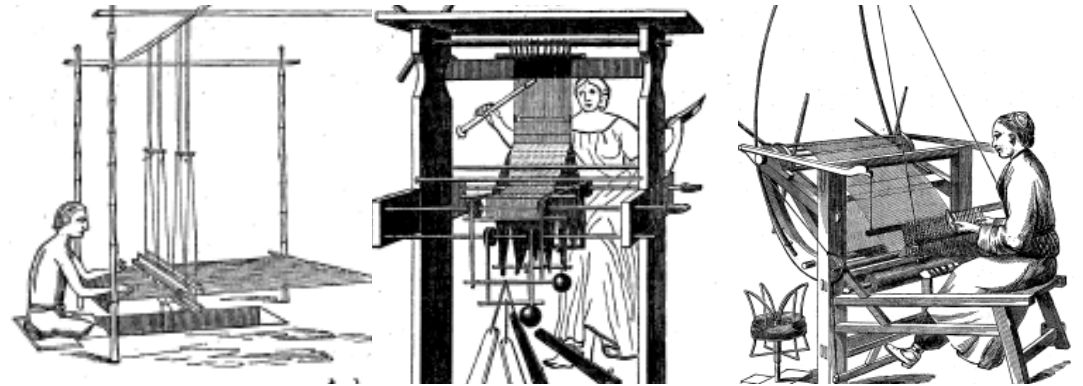


Shuttle is a wooden instrument, which is used to carry the weft yarn for weaving the fabric.



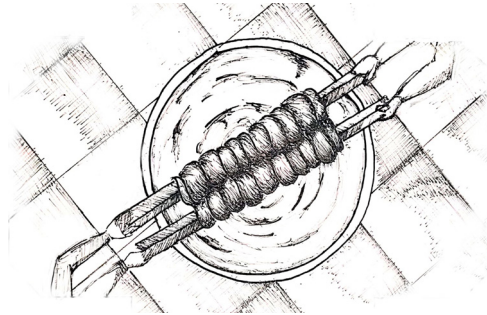
## Types of handlooms

Pit loom, stand looms and frame looms are the three kinds of looms used by the weavers. The pitloom is a loom situated in the ground /floor with a pit having two pedals set in the pit for the weavers to operate. These pit looms were used by most of the weavers.



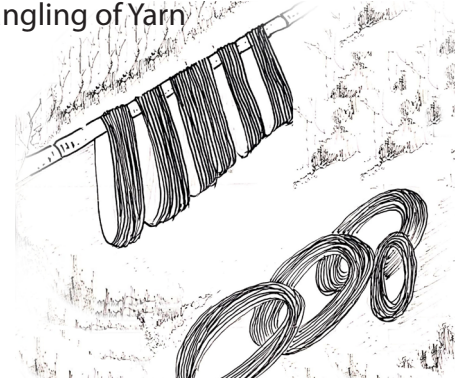
# PROCESS INVOLVED IN WEAVING

## Squeezing process



The dyed threads are now hung on a wooden log and the threads are squeezed to remove the excess water present in them.

## Untangling of Yarn



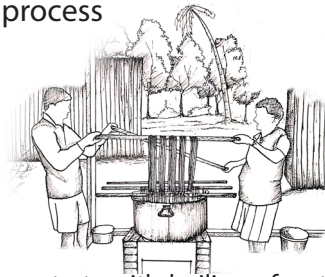
Before the threads dry completely the sized yarns are untangled.

## Opening of Yarn



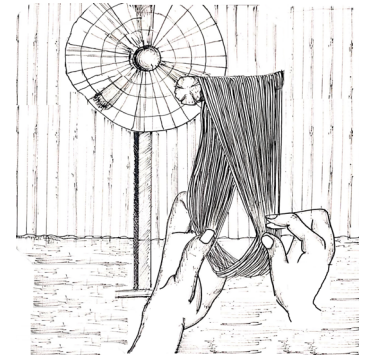
The procurement of raw materials and verifying their usability is the first and very important step. The cocoons which are obtained are first sorted and are heated in boiling water to obtain raw silk.

## Dyeing process



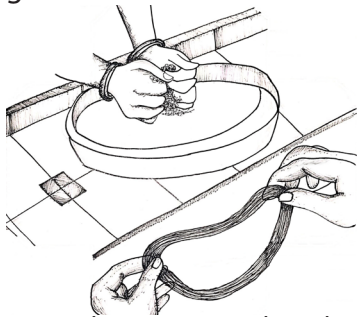
The process starts with boiling of water to its maximum temperature. The dye is then added to the boiling water and the dried yarns put in it with the help of bamboo sticks. The dried yarns are turned inside the water and kept in it until the yarn absorbs the colour.

## Drying process



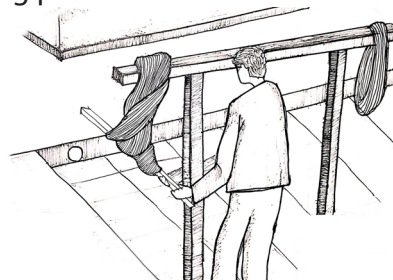
After squeezing, these threads are kept in the sun for two to three hours to dry and further dry using the fan.

## Sizing of Yarn



The wrapped yarn is mixed in the paste of cooked rice. Starchy water. The sized yarn stiffens after being sized, the yarns are now left to dry on bamboos.

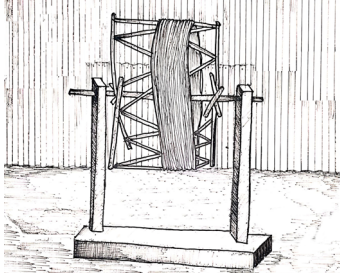
## Winding process



The thread is wound on to bobbins for easy wrapping. The sized threads are put on the spinning wheel (swift) and transferred on to the bobbins. The thread must be perfectly wound and should be tight.

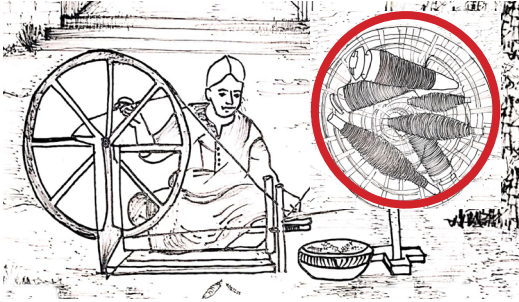


## Spinning process



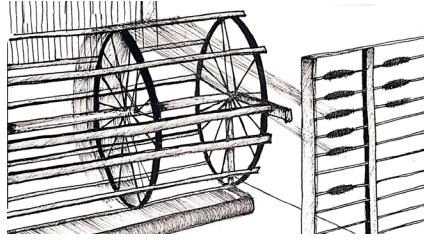
In this process, the threads are separately mounted on the reeling machine. For the warp the yarn is rolled on the shuttle. It is first mounted on the *charkha* and then rolled on the bobbins.

## Bobbing process



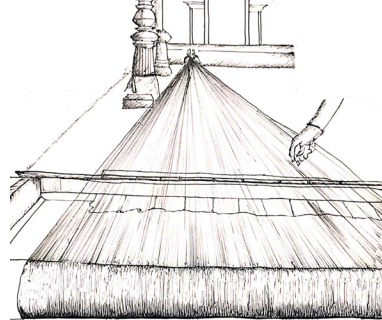
A bobbin is a cylindrical or a cone shaped thing, that holds the thread or yarn that is used in the weaving process of any handloom sari using *charkha*.

## Damming process



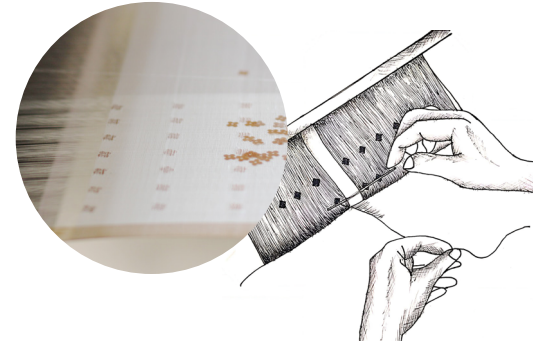
It starts with the bobbins being put on the reel according to the distribution of colours in the wrap. They are passed through the reed and attached to a hook on a wrapping drum. The drum is rotated by the wrapper till the required length of warp is ready.

## Combing process

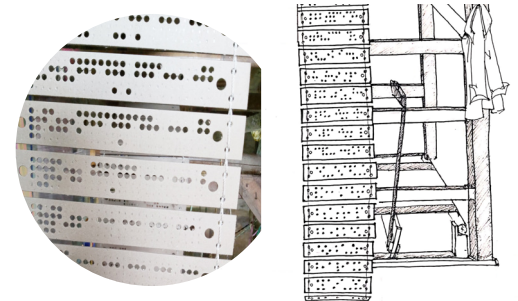


The yarn is passed through a long comb which dis-tangles the yarn. This process is hand done by the workers.

## Design Making

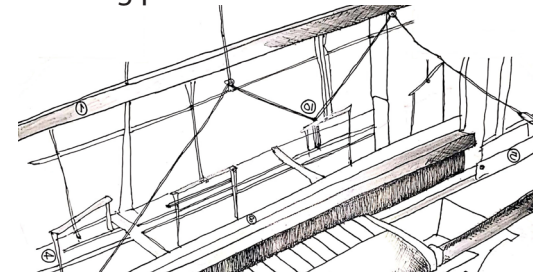


Here the weaver inserts small designs called *tikkis* between the threads to create patterns.



The most important and creative process in weaving is designing a sari. Once a design has been chosen, the designer or the *nakshabandha* first works out the design of the fabric and the design is hand punched onto the stencils known as *nakshapattas*.

## Weaving process



Weaving process includes 10 steps: 1. Frame, 2. beater, 3. cloth beam, 4. warp beam, 5. shuttle box, 6. reed, 7. wooden socket, 8. shafts, 9. treadles and 10. picking cod and the final product is done. (sari.)



## WEAVING IN SHANTIPUR

The earliest record of the handloom sari weaving in Bengal can be traced back to the 15th century in Shantipur (in the Nadia district of West Bengal). The art continued to flourish during the Mughal rule (16th – 18th centuries), when it received extensive royal patronage along with Muslin and *Jamdani* weaving. While the fine Muslins adorned the royal class, cotton saris or *tants* were used for draping by the common folks. This weaving tradition continued during the British rule and the decades prior to independence witnessed an inflow of modern weaving techniques in Shantipur such as improvements in the handloom, and the introduction of the jacquard loom that is still used today. One can find the patterns and colors found in the ancient times still reflected in the garments produced in the vast textile belt of Shantipur.



### Family members of the master weaver:



As a part of the study we visited this weaver family house in which every member was an active participant of the weaving process. All the ladies were involved in the pre-loom activities while the men were all on the looms. The weaving process is usually a community effort which is now undertaken by nuclear families in which most of the members are involved from pre-loom to the completion of weaving and drying process. Several such weavers' families are identified by the master weaver and they are being assigned with the weaving jobs based on individual sari wages.





### Dyeing process:

This dyeing unit is a small scale unit which does the yarn processing activities and supplies the same to individual master weavers. They provide them with the exact matching shade with their dyeing skills as per colour of the fabric which is provided to them by the designer who in this case is the master weaver himself.



3

### Pre-loom process:

Once the yarn is provided by the dyeing unit the ladies of the house start with the spinning and bobbing process. The bobbins are further connected to the damming unit which in this case was within the loom shed.



8



9

### Loom process:

The warp beam from the drum of the dammer is then connected to the handloom (*tanth*) and the beautiful saris are weaved by the skilled weavers which is further washed and dried in open areas for it to be packed and delivered to the mahajans. The weaver family receives Rs. 200/- to Rs. 400/- max. for their hard work of making one sari depending on the design intricacy.



7



5



plan of the dyeing area visited by students



plan of the master weavers house visited by students

### legend

1. fresh water open washing area
2. store area for the dyes.
3. boiling and dyeing area -semi open space
4. drying area
5. final drying area in an open space
6. waste water disposal area
7. handloom unit sheds
8. bobbin area mostly verandah/frontyard of the house
9. damming area within the loom shed
10. family house of the master weaver



Section-AA

## WEAVING IN BISHNUPUR

Bishnupur is a town known for its temple made from terracota. Bishnupur was the capital of the Hindu Mallabhum Kingdom, which was founded in the 18th century. Bishnupur is not only famous for its temple but also home of weavers of exquisite silk saris, known as 'Balchuri'. *Baluchari* saris were once patronized by Murshid Quli Khan, the first nawab of Bengal. *Baluchari* saris are very popular and are expensive due to its exclusive design and fabulous weaving technique.

The artistic designs of *Baluchari* saris are mostly depicting mythological stories similarly to that commonly found on temples of Bishnupur and Bankura of West Bengal. *Baluchari* saris are mainly distinguished for their elaborate borders and fabulous *pallus*. The borders are ornamental and surround *kalka* motifs within it. The most popular colours of *Baluchari* sari designs include red, green, blue, and yellow. The theme of *Baluchari* saris remain focused on depicting mythological stories and folk tales on *pallus*. Some designs of Ramayana and Mahabharata motifs show flowering bunches, animals, architectural scenes etc.

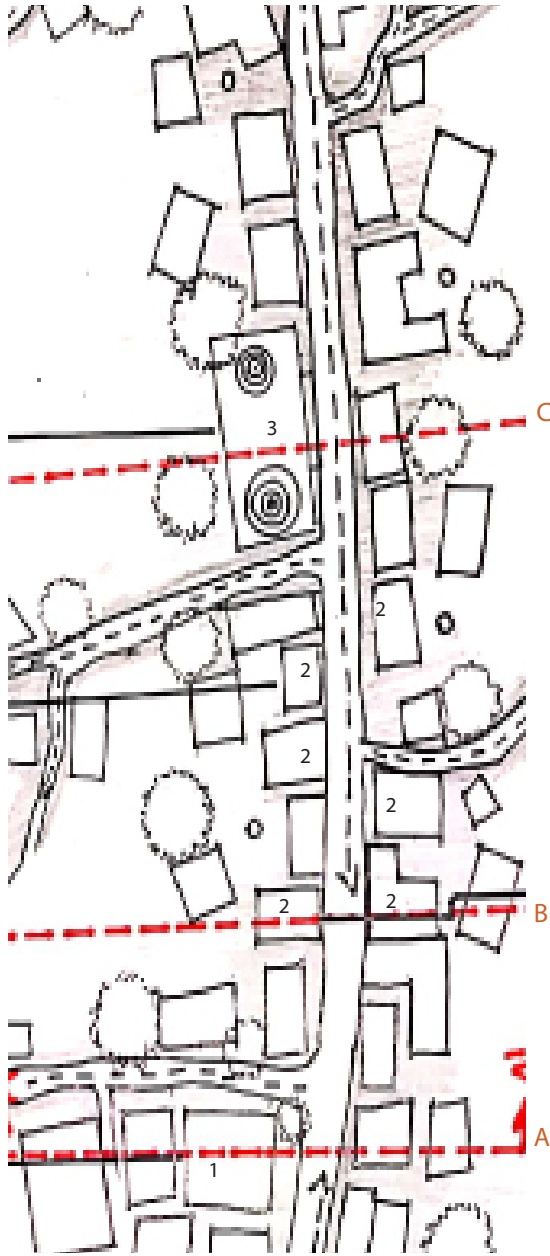


Artistic designs of *Baluchari* saris



Terracotta Temples of Bishnupur



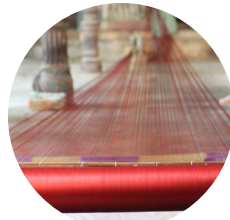


plan of the *Baluchari* weavers street

**legend**

- 1. weavers family house
- 2. handloom units
- 3. temple

We visited a famous *Baluchari* weaver family who have been weaving export quality exclusive *Baluchari* saris. The business is run by twin brothers who have a handloom that fits within a compact space in their house just enough to accommodate one handloom, however, the pre-loom processes are carried out in community spaces like temples where there are large spaces to carry out activities like combing. Their housing lane has many skilled weavers who are associated with them in this business. A *Baluchari* sari requires a minimum time period of one month to be woven.



3. temple space used for combing activity.



2. pit looms

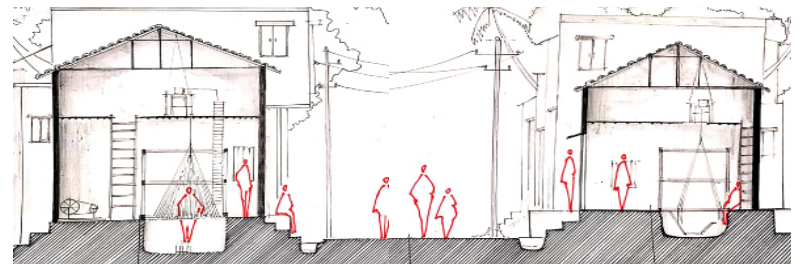


Lalu the Entrepreneur weaver who buys raw material on his own, works on his own designs and then markets his products through a variety of local channels, traders etc.



3.

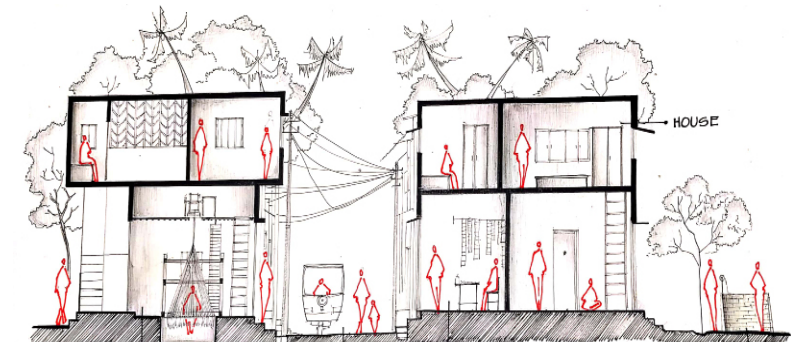
Section-CC



2.

2.

Section-BB



1.

Section-AA





## PRESENT DAY SCENARIO

There are problems nagging the weaving community that have grown over the years. Some of these are listed below regarding production of saris, marketing them and the fluctuating nature of wages.

**Production:** The power looms are successful in illegally capturing the handloom market by flooding it with a large number of duplicate copies and varieties of cheaper price cloths replicating the famous weaves of Bengal saris. Handloom products are unable to compete with these excess quantities of power loom varieties. The government is unable to check and stop this illegal weaving sector thus further damaging the opportunities for traditional handloom products.

**Marketing:** There are various issues in creating a stable market for the handloom products as they are greatly dependent on the private traders for their marketing and distribution. However, very recently the Department of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) and Textiles of the Government of West Bengal have promoted the Biswa Bangla Marketing Corporation to improve the quality of life of Bengal's handloom weavers by providing selling platforms for their products throughout the country and the world. The organisation's unique business proposition is to plough the operating profit back to the artisans and weavers whose entrepreneurship has been pivotal to Biswa Bangla's success.

**Wages:** The low weaving wage rates have generated disinterest among the skilled weavers and they are in search of other jobs to earn a better living.

On the one hand there are affluent, market savvy weavers who have many looms and a number of weavers working under them. However, lack of awareness and education are the major stumbling blocks in their way of success. The Government should take emergent steps to fill up these lacunae. On the other hand, there exists a large number of self-help groups attached to this sector. They are almost marginal with few or no assets to their names and what unites them is their fabulous weaving skill. The Integrated Handloom Cluster Development Programme promoted by the Ministry of Textiles, Government of India is expected to fulfil the hope for these struggling weavers.



# BHUJ

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## INTRODUCTION

Exquisite, intricate, vibrant and shimmering are just some of the descriptions that one uses to describe the rich abundance of Kutchi craftwork, in particular its textiles. What makes Kutch such a special destination is the sight and feel of the textiles as also the experience of observing the traditional artisans - including National Award Winners - at work in their homes and villages. They have been doing it for generations and the visitors can also participate in the weaving process. Textiles are quite literally the fabric of Kutchi culture. It's a basic unit of identity, associated with dowry rituals, social hierarchy and festivals. The inter-dependence between farmers and herders with dyers and weavers, as well as potters and leather workers, traces back to the Indus Valley civilisation, some 5000 years ago.

# BHUJODI



## History

Bhujodi is one of the oldest and biggest artisan villages in Bhuj. This village is more than 500 years old and is called the weaver village of Bhuj as there is one loom in every home here. Men, women and children are all involved in the process of weaving.

The history of Bhujodi is as glorified as its textiles. It has two communities—*Rabari* and *Vankar*.

*Rabaris* comprise 80% of the total population of Bhuj. Most women in the village wear black clothes embroidered with lavish colourful designs. The *Rabari* women still cling on to this trademark costume about a century old. The tribes which populate Bhujodi village today are nomadic tribes who originally were from Afghanistan, the *Vankars* are a part of *Meghwal* community who migrated from Rajasthan. This is a unique example of the communal harmony and the brotherhood between Hindus and Muslims in Bhujodi.

## Handloom and Handicrafts

Bhujodi is the weaving village of Bhuj and is a leading producer of cloth for all kinds of work including embroidery and block printing. Apart from this they are well trained in creating local and traditional handloom pieces like shawls, sarees, carpets, etc. These are valuable products in the market sold to leading brands like FABINDIA. The monthly turnover of a family having two handlooms and all allied equipment with a workforce of 3-5 people is upto 3-4 lakhs. However, the local traders with small businesses are unable to make profits despite having a high demand for their manufactured products.

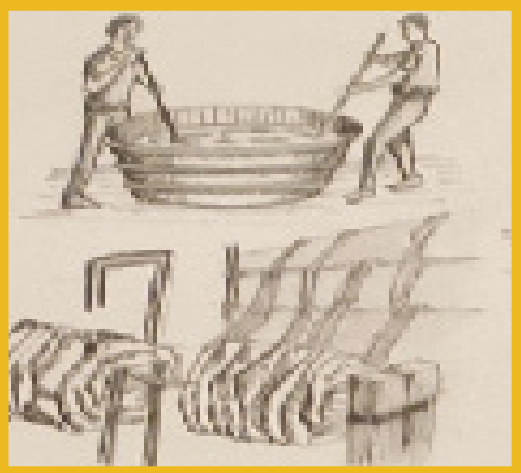






Raw material is obtained from the domesticated sheeps.

Raw material is then soaked and cleaned with water.

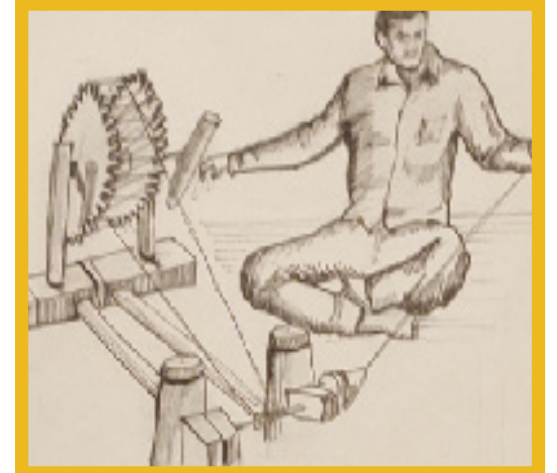


The threads are then set up for dyeing in naturally obtained colours.



The thread is then transferred on to the *CHARKHA*.

Bobbing separates the thread which is transferred on the reel which is then used in the loom.





Colours obtained from natural elements such as turmeric, indigo are mixed in water into proportions to get different shades of colours.

After drying the threads are sent for bobbing where the threads are rolled upon a reel which is further used in the loom.



Threads are dipped into the boiling colorful dye until the desired colour is obtained.



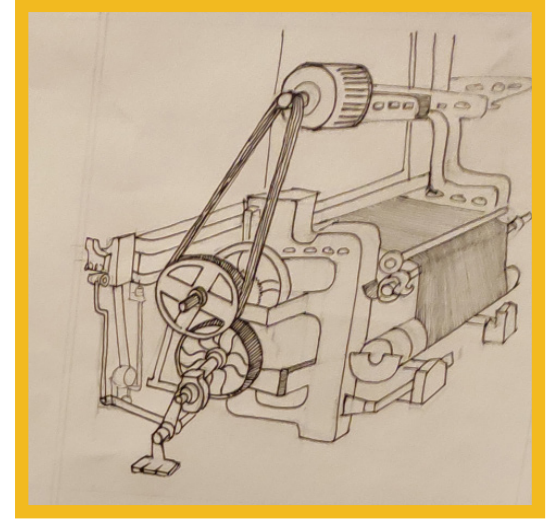
Removing excess of dye from the threads by squeezing and then sun drying.

After bobbing is done the threads are aligned on a wooden block which will be later placed into the handloom.





One person passes all the threads from one end to another through a loom comb  
It takes almost 1 to 2 days for this process.

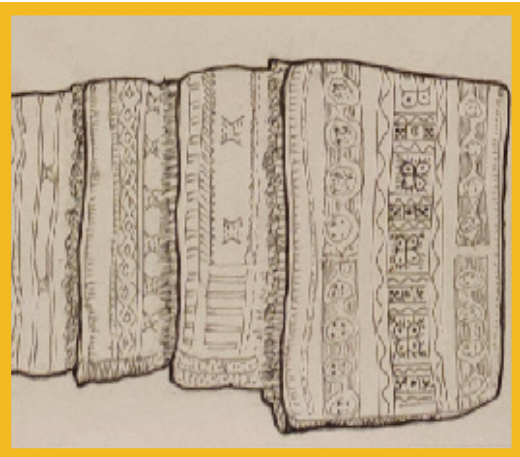


Power loom.



Sarees are available in various patterns and can also be customised.

Sari Draping style of local gujrati women.



The weaver then starts the process for weaving of the sari .A single sari on a hand loom takes upto 4 to 5 days.



# AJRAKHPUR

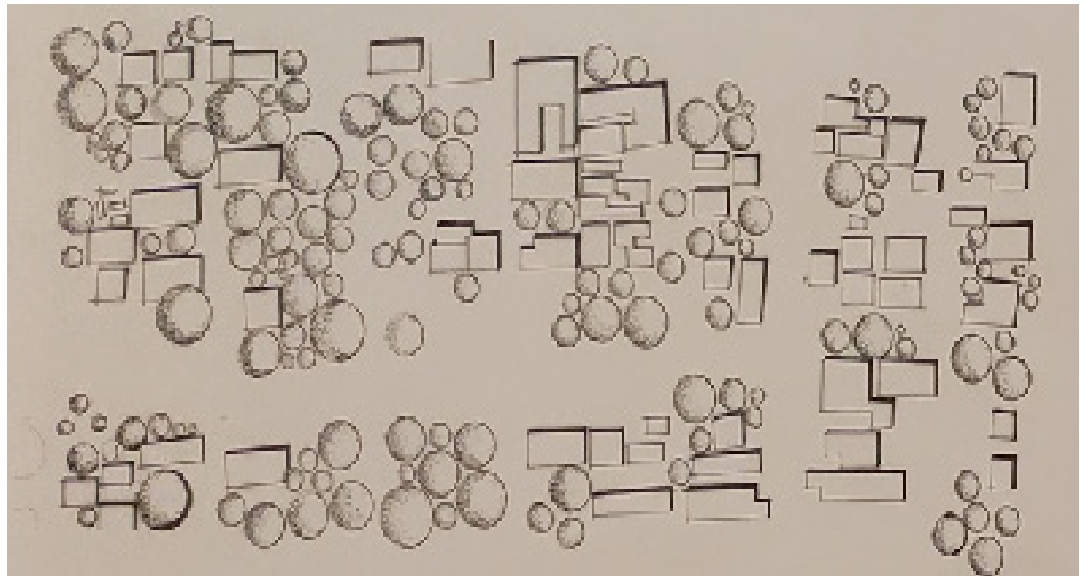
*Kutchi* artisans and craftsmen live and work on block printing in Ajrakhpur. The village derives its name from the art known as '*Ajrakh*.' The word denotes the slow and painstaking process in which the artisan proceeds step-wise. They print one colour of a design and wash the cloth till they get the colour right before printing the next colour. The process literally translates to '*Aajke din rakh*' or keep it for the day, till the colour fastens. It also means INDIGO in Arabic as that is the colour used in abundance in dyeing the textiles.

## History

Ajrakhpur is a featureless village in the middle of an endless, open, flat Kutch territory. There are remote outlines of hills and other elevations. A thousand or more villagers live here. Eighty-four are block-printing craftsmen. All of them came here by way of resettlement after the Gujarat earthquake of 2001. They moved collectively from the ancestral village of Dhamadka, 50 kilometres from Ajrakhpur, which was devastated by the tremors. Some still remain there though after rebuilding their houses.

The *Khatri*s residing currently in Ajrakhpur have a glorious past. *Ajrakh* printing blossomed in India in the 16th century with the migration of the *Khatri* community from the Sindh province to the Kutch district. The king of Kutch recognised this intricate textile art and invited the *Khatri* families practising *Ajrakh* printing to populate uninhabited lands in Kutch. Some families eventually migrated to Rajasthan and settled primarily in and around Barmer.

*Ajrakh* printed products created by the *Khatri* community have traditionally been donned by the *Maldhari* community. The *Maldharis* are, an ethnic community of semi-nomadic herdsmen from Gujarat and Rajasthan have since settled in the *Banni* Grasslands reserve of the Kutch district. This tradition still continues today and exemplifies the customary interactions of India's myriad ethnic cultures.



## PRINTING PROCESS

Artisans diligently prepare the fabric before beginning the complex printing process. The fabric is first washed to get rid of starch and impurities. It is then soaked in a mixture of camel dung, seed oil and water, which not only softens the fabric but also acts as a bleaching agent. The fabric is then tied together and stored for 5-10 days, depending upon the weather conditions. The fabric is then laid out in the sun to dry before undergoing a second treatment of a mixture containing oil and sodium carbonate. The fabric is then stored overnight before being washed - traditionally, this was done in the Indus river - before being soaked in *sakun*, a mixture of dried lemon, castor oil, molasses, tamarisk gall and water. Multiple treatments ensure that the fabric is able to consistently absorb and stain thoroughly.

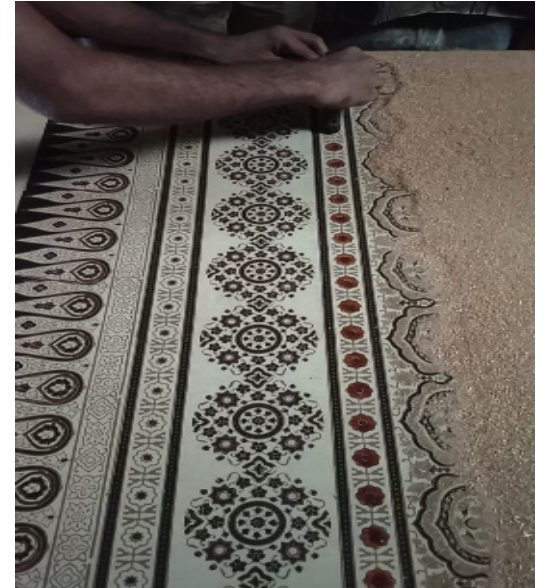


Dyeing with natural colour



During the monsoon season, the blocks are soaked in mustard oil to prevent expansion that affects the designs that were painstakingly carved by artisans.

Usually wooden blocks, known as *bunta*, used in the first stage of printing are carved out of shisham, more commonly known as Indian Rosewood, and wooden blocks used in the later stages of printing are carved out of teakwood.



Artisans repeat this elaborate process until the entire piece of fabric is complete with *Ajrakh's* signature deep colours illuminating through the intricate patterns. The fabric is laid out on a flat surface for artisans to accurately align the wooden blocks before covering the entire piece of fabric. After each application of the resist, artisans dye the fabric in a single colour before washing and drying it for the next dyeing stage using a different colour.

Unlike block printing, which sometimes uses wooden blocks to print dye onto fabric, the use of these blocks in *Ajrakh* printing is to apply a resist that outlines the design.



# SUMRASAR

Sumrasar is an artisan village inhabited by people who are famous around the world for their handiwork.

## **KALARAKSHA**

Kalaraksha project began in Kutch in 1991. It was formed to preserve all the rich techniques and heritage embroidery styles from different parts of Bhuj. This project mainly deals with artisans working on embroidery, in the village of Sumrasar where it is located. *Suf* and *Ahir* are main styles. 25 such styles are recognised by the project. They provide artisans with raw material and they are expected to give embroidered piece which is then finished in workshops and sold in exhibitions all across India. They are also linked with high end brands which export the products to USA, JAPAN etc.

## **HODKA**

The name Hodka is derived from the gujarati word '*Hodi*' which means boat. Hodka is first believed to have inhabited around 300 years ago. This village is believed to have been setup by the '*Halepotra Clan*' from Sindh who were cattle herders in search of pastures. The village is famous for its crafts like decorative mirrors, lamps, hand fans, letterboxes, wall hangings, especially the exquisite silver jewellery. Artisans sell their goods directly from their artistic huts which are popularly known as *Bhungas*.

## **DHORDO**

Dhordo village is an important place in Bhuj due to the rich handicrafts produced by the villagers. The women are ingenious with needle and thread, creating an extremely fine style embroidery called *Mutwa* that is patterned around tiny mirrors.



**Heritage embroidery styles from different parts of Bhuj.**









## PRESENT DAY SCENARIO

Bhuj has grown into an extensive textile industry with weaving, embroidery, *Ajrakh* printing, *Batik*, patchwork as well as pottery and leather-works. In the peak season Bhuj has a footfall of around 4000 visitors per week. The government has proposed many tourist attractions like Vande Mataram museum as an effort to bring in more people and economy in the region. In this era of industrialization many NGOs are working together to strengthen and promote the traditional handicrafts and allied cultural practices to preserve their community and local environments. NGOs like Khamir, Srujan and Kalaraksha have not just preserved their livelihood but have also given them exposure to the world, access to education and financial independence. These opportunities have hugely alleviated their social conditions.





## **POCHAMPALLY**

### THE MAGIC WEAVE OF *IKKAT*

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Telangana is a state in South Eastern India. This Indian state has a cultural history of about 5000 years. The *Nizam* of Hyderabad transformed Telangana into a unique multi-cultural region with their patronage and interest for arts and culture. In its capital city Hyderabad, a charismatic 16th century mosque known as Charminar with towering arches and minarets overlook the city's long-running *Laadbazaar*.

## WEAVING TRADITIONS OF TELANGANA

Telangana is famous for its weaving and dyeing techniques as its cotton producing units are world famous. Women dress in colourful saris and dresses. The most common apparel worn by women is sari along with *langavoni*, *salwarkameez* and *churidar*. The famous saris made in Telangana include *Pochampally* sari and *Gadwal* sari. Men's clothing include the traditional *dhoti* which is also known as *pancha*. The Hyderabad *sherwani* used to be the dress of choice of the *Nizam* of Hyderabad and other Hyderabad nobles. Nowadays, a *sherwani* is usually worn by the groom during the wedding ceremonies.

Bhoodan Pochampally, a *mandal* in Nalgonda District, is known for its *Ikkat* style of saris and material. Pochampally weave is commonly called *Ikkat* or tie-and-dye weave. The *ikkat* cloth has various patterns and designs all over. The traditional hand woven intricate *Ikkat* saris are exquisite. *Ikkat* is in high demand both locally and is readily exported internationally. The process of *Ikkat*, having been taught to every new generation, is practiced at home by all the family members. Apart from the *Ikkat*, there are two other typical kinds of saris prevalent in this region – the *Gadwal* and the *Uppada* silk.

*Gadwal* saris are a beautiful and ornate part of the rich Indian textile heritage and were originally used as *puja* or prayer saris. A *Gadwal* sari is known for its rich look, brilliant colours and simple yet ornate *zari* work. The specialty of a traditional *Gadwal* sari is that the body is woven in cotton threads while the border and pallu are made of silk. This is done using a special weaving technique that manoeuvres the weft thread.

*Uppada* silk is named after a small beach town of Uppada in East Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh, India. Also known as *Uppada Pattu* (silk in Telugu), these saris are made by the age old *Jamdani* method. Known for the unique designs, *Uppada* saris are usually made with cotton warp. Using only non-mechanical techniques, *Uppada* Silk saris are defined by the length and breadth count of threads. The artisans also use a lot of *zari* work in the exquisite designs of *Uppada* silk saris.



# THE MAGIC BLUR OF THE IKKAT WEAVE

*Ikkat* inspiration board from the studio of a textile designer



*Ikkat* is a dyeing technique used to pattern textiles that employs the resist dyeing process on the yarns prior to dyeing and weaving the fabric. A characteristic of *Ikkat* textile is apparent “blurriness” to the design. This ancient style of weaving uses a resist dyeing process similar to tie-dye where the warp and/or the weft yarns are dyed before the fabric is woven on the loom. The result of this process is a motif which is ‘blurred’ in appearance. This ‘cloudy’ look comes from the slight bleeding of the dyes into the resist areas. The blurriness that is so characteristic of *ikkat* is often prized by the textile collectors. The classic patterns of *ikkat* are back in vogue. These patterns are now seen not only on exclusive *zari* saree but also in variety of garments like *kurtas*, skirts, jackets and even bags. The designs are now spotted on home furnishing, adding an ethnic touch to the interiors.

The word *ikkat* probably comes from the Malaysian word ‘*mengikat*’ (to tie, bind or wrap around). It was introduced into the European textile vocabulary in the early 20th century, when Dutch scholars begin to study the rich textile traditions of the East-Indies archipelago (presently Indonesia). The history of textile is chequered – scholars have so far been unable to determine from where exactly the technique of *ikkat* originated.

*Ikkat* (or *ikat*) is a universal weaving style common to many world cultures and is likely to be one of the oldest forms of textile decorations now. It is extremely difficult to determine from where the technique originated. It probably developed in several different locations independently. For instance, during the 19th century, the Silk Road deserts of Bukhara and Samarkand were famous for their fine silk *Uzbek Ikkat*. India, Japan and many South-East nations such as Cambodia, Myanmar, Philippines and Thailand have weaving cultures with long histories of *Ikkat* production. In addition, these designs were also common in Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador, Guatemala and Mexico.

*Ikkat* designs are influenced from various elements like the flowers and vegetation, animals and jewellery among other elements. The designs on a young woman’s clothes depict the symbols of fertility. Two especially strong nature motifs are the buds and the leaves which are the imagery of fertility. People believed that an animal horn were a protective motif. Hence, they believed that using the motifs of a ram’s horn on their garment would protect them from danger. The exact origin of the symbol is not known, but is said to be rooted in the pre-Islamic history of the region. Another strong influence on the *Ikkat* designs was the rich jewellery traditions of Central Asia. The triangular silver amulets with multiple long tassels known as *moska* are a symbol of protection often appear in *ikkat* designs.

## TYPES OF IKKAT WEAVING:

There are three different *Ikkat* weaving techniques: the warp *Ikkat*, the weft *Ikkat* and the double *Ikkat*. It depends on whether the warp or the weft or both are dyed to create the desired pattern.

**WARP IKKAT:** The warp yarns (lengthwise or longitudinal yarns) are *Ikkat* dyed and in this the pattern is clearly visible when the threads are wound to the loom. The weft yarns are dyed a solid colour. The *Ikkat* pattern is clearly visible in the warp yarns wound onto the loom even before the weft is woven in.

**WEFT IKKAT:** The weft yarns (transverse yarns) are solid dyed and the pattern is formed as the weaving progresses. Therefore, the pattern only appears as the weaving proceeds. Weft *Ikkats* are much slower to weave than warp *Ikkat* because the weft yarns must be carefully adjusted after each passing of the shuttle to maintain the clarity of the design.

**DOUBLE IKKAT:** This is the most complicated process of the three processes. Both the warp and the weft threads are resist-dyed prior to the weaving. This technique requires advance skills, takes time and hence is the most expensive of all. This is produced only in India, Indonesia and Japan. The double *Ikkat* made in Patan, Gujarat, is called '*Patola*' and is made using fine silk yarns and many colours. It may be patterned with a small motif that is repeated many times across the length of a six-meter sari. The *Pasapalliikkat* sari, made in Odisha is much like the *Sambalpuriikkat*, and has some form of chequered design.

WARP IKKAT



WEFT IKKAT



DOUBLE IKKAT



## PRE-WEAVING PROCESS – DYEING:

The dyeing technique is used to create a distinct style of textile patterns on *Ikkat* fabrics. *Ikkat* is done by resist dyeing sections of the yarns prior to weaving the fabric. The resist is formed by binding individual yarns or bundles of yarns with a tight wrapping applied in the desired pattern. The yarns are then dyed. The bindings may then be altered to create a new pattern and the yarns dyed again with another colour. This process may be repeated multiple times to produce elaborate, multi-coloured patterns. When the dyeing is finished all the bindings are removed and the yarns are woven into cloth.

A master weaver first ties bundles of warp threads in precise patterns to prepare for coloured dyes. A more intricate resist-dyeing technique like tie-dyeing, tied patterns must accurately match the planned fabric design.



Dyeing the tied up bundles.

Stages of tying the warp.



The weaver secures the dyed warp threads to the loom and checks for accuracy. The fabric motifs are seen in the dyed threads.



A dyed sari weft.



Double *Ikkat* textiles requires better skills to be woven. For these, the weaver also bundles and dyes the weft thread in patterns. He then weaves the weft and warp to cross precisely so that colours match up and form the planned motif.



Because of the handcrafted weaving process, *ikkats* have distinctive feathered edges (like blurs) on the coloured areas.



When the weaver weaves the weft thread through, the fabric design emerges





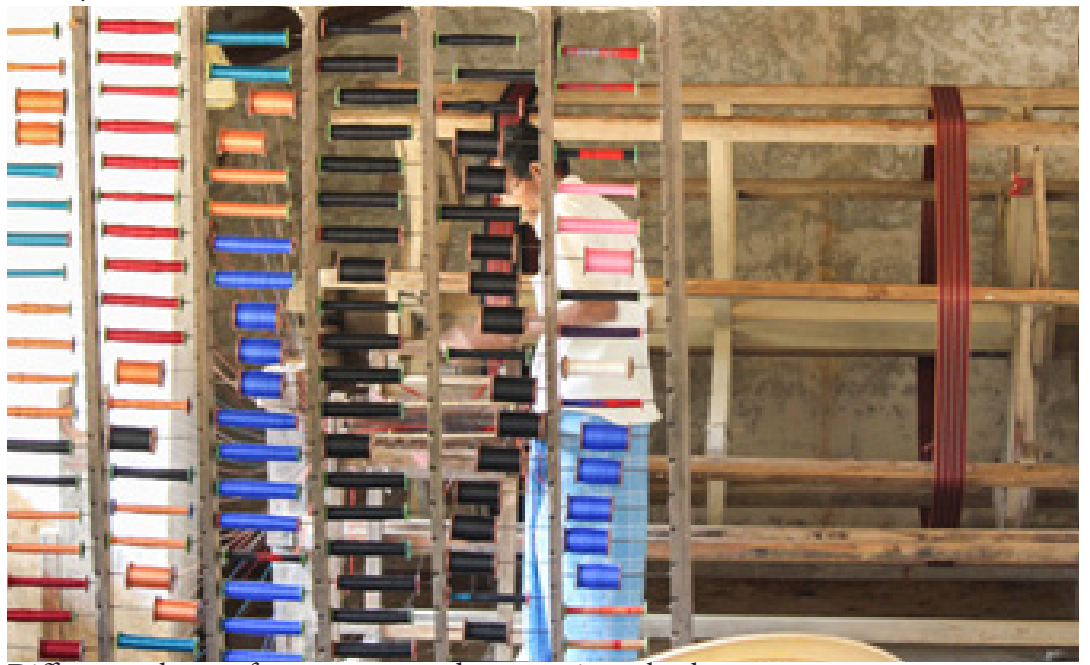
A small wooden stick is used to wind yarn on it.



Winder is used to wind yarn appropriately



The manual spinning wheel is used to wind yarn on a small wooden stick.



Different colours of yarn are wound on warping wheels.

## THE WEAVING PROCESS:

The various tools and raw materials used for *Ikkat* sari are as follows:

Raw silk or cotton yarn: the main element to weave an *Ikkat* sari.

Colours: Chemical or organic colours are used for dyeing process.

Firewood: used to heat up the dyeing container

Water: used for immersing silks.

Plastic pirns: these are used for winding yarns

Winding machine: used for winding silk yarns.

Spinning wheels: used to wind yarns to the pirns.

Bobbin is a tool on which the the dyeing yarns are wound for warping.

Throw shuttle: used for inserting weft yarns while weaving.

Creels: a stand like structure on which the fully wound bobbins of silk yarns are placed as per pattern of warping.



The yarn is wound on the pirn.



Pirn is placed in the flying shuttle for weft process.

## Steps employed in the weaving process:

The yarns are segregated for warp and weft process.

The yarns are measured and individually tie-dyed.

This process is repeated several times till the desired colour/ pattern is achieved.

Once the threads are dyed, they are detached from the bindings.

These dyed yarns are spun into bobbins and pirns.

Then they are loaded on to the beams.

The beam is placed on the handloom and yarns are knotted to the previous ones.

The weave is done as per the desired pattern of the *Ikkat* sari.

Keeping the design in mind a proper chart of warp and weft are visualized on a graph paper for this particular style of weaving.

Later as per the chart, the design is carefully transferred on weft and warp. In *Ikkat* the thread of warp and weft are measured carefully and the resist is formed by binding individual yarns or bundles of yarns with a firm wrapping applied in the preferred pattern.

To keep the dyes from penetrating tightly bound bundles are covered with wax.

These yarns are then dyed. This process may be repeated several times. The pattern is visible to weaver when dyed yarns are used as warps.

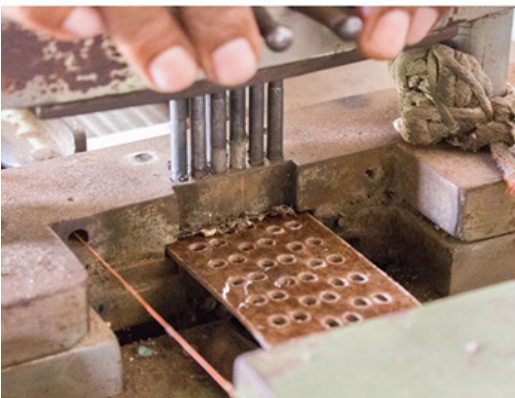
Once the dyeing process is completed, the yarn is dried and all the bindings are detached.

These yarns are spun using winding machine. Thus required length of yarns are spun and cut-off which are then woven into fabric.

Cards are placed in the Jacquard to obtain the design on the sari.



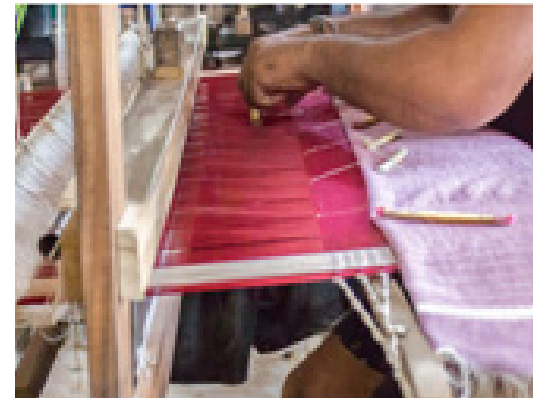
A pedal is used to move the frame in the loom up and down.



Design patterns are punched on cards using a punching machine.



The cards are stitched together to obtain the desired design.



Skilled manual work is required to ensure that the sari is woven correctly.

## TYPES OF LOOMS:



### **Frame Looms:**

Frame looms are made up of rods and panels fastened at right angles to construct a form similar to a box to make it more handy and manageable. This type of loom is being utilized nowadays due to its profitability and ease of working.



### **Pit Looms:**

On a pit loom a weaver sits with his legs in a pit where there are two pedals that open the warp threads allowing weft shuttle used for shuffling the thread to pass through freely. Pit looms are more popular as little wood is required to construct it. On a pit loom, the weaver's hands are required to pass the weft shuttle from side to side and to compress the weaving as they go. The speed of a pit loom is perceived to be relatively more as compared to a frame loom.

## PEOPLE AND THEIR OCCUPATIONS

Telangana had once been the most important handloom hub in the country. After agriculture, weaving and handloom is the most important livelihood for most families in the region. However, over the past few years this occupation has been on a decline because of the increasing rise in power looms. Children of the weavers are not ready to take up the same occupation as they have seen their parents living in abject poverty over the years.

Bhoodan Pochampally is the registered IPR centre for Indian *Ikkat* handloom fabrics and sarees. It is located about 46km south east of Hyderabad. It got its name in 1951 when the noted Gandhi follower Vinobha Bhave started the *Bhoodan Yagna*(Sacrifice of Land Donation), urging rich landlords to gift their excess land to the *Bhoodan* movement. Typically, the cotton and silk weavers of this region imported their raw materials from Dharmavaram and their products were sold through the cooperative society located in the village itself, and exported to other parts of India and the world.

A tourist complex housing a local handloom museum, vocational training and a cultural centre, has been started to boost local rural tourism. The architecture of this complex is traditional, using vernacular building materials, and planned around a large central open air courtyard flanked by rooms housing various types of looms and exhibits disseminating the history and present status of handloom and handloom weavers of Pochampally. It organizes local textile *bazaars* and exhibitions too. It is situated by the side of a picturesque lake known as Peddacheruvu, with greenery all around it, showcasing the pristine rural character of the village.





## **HOUSING SETTLEMENTS OF THE WEAVERS**

### **Traditional housing of Koyalagudem**

Koyalagudem village is located about 10 km from Pochampally on the National Highway NH9. It is an excellent representative of the architectural tradition of this region. This village is famous for its weaving looms, hence the houses of the weavers living here are designed, built and equipped with spaces required for the handloom process.

Their house plans have developed from the basic livelihood needs of the inhabitants. The house primarily houses weaving pits, built into its floor during the construction of the house, for the placing of the weaving looms. Every member of the family is involved in the process of weaving and most of the time is spent in the large weaving room.

**1.Backyard** - Sometimes, one enters into a large front room then perhaps, into an open space which is in the backyard and more importantly the working area for making of the dyes.

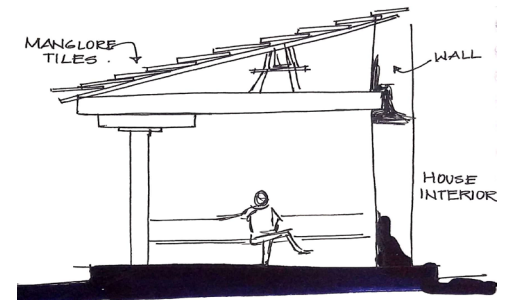
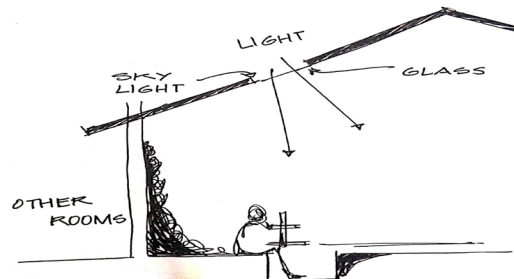
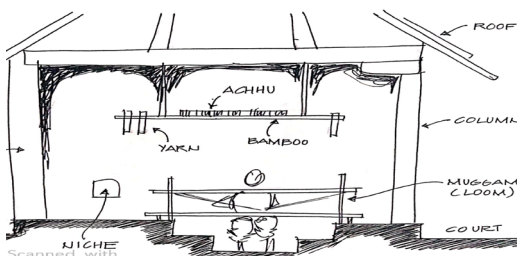
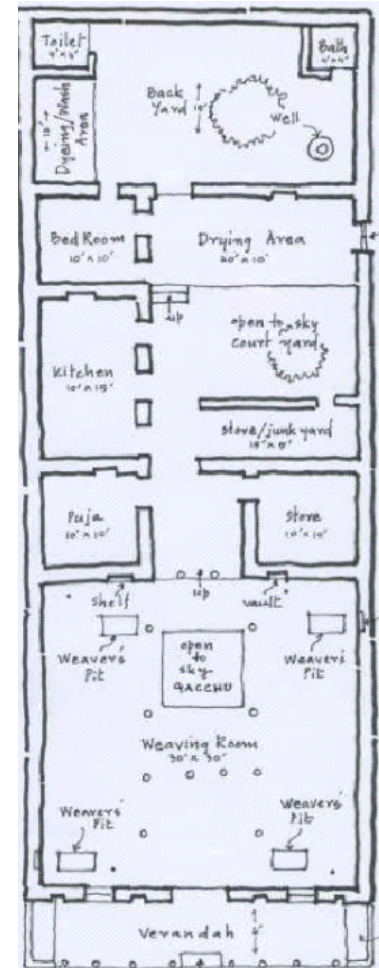
**2.Store room** - This room is used for storing unprocessed yarn, coloured yarn, woven fabric, etc. It is a small room with weaving material stacked against the wall.

**3.Verandah** - One enters the house from the street through verandah. The verandah opens directly into the weaving room, which is the largest of all the rooms.

**4.Puja room**- This room is used both for as a praying space and also as a store room.

**5.Kitchen** - The weavers' family uses both the traditional ways of cooking that is the stove and also the LPG gas stove. The kitchen is provided with places for storing utensils and for other needs.

**6.Bedroom** - The bedroom usually has a cupboard and a wooden cot, sometimes without a mattress.



## MATERIALS AND CONSTRUCTION TECHNIQUES

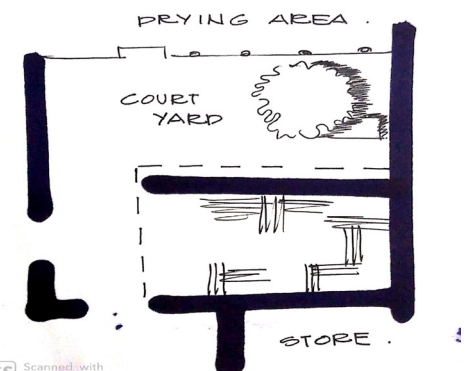
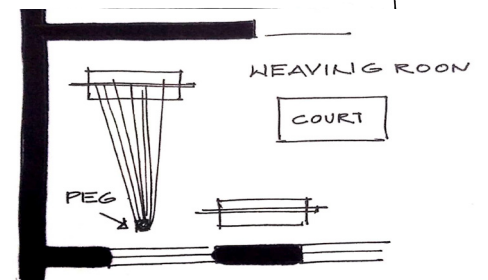
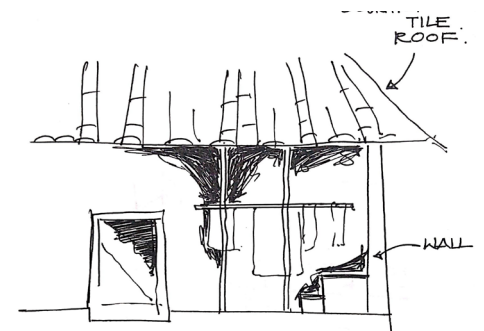
Building materials used are clay bricks for walls, a lime plaster, tapering stone columns that are again plastered with lime mortar for smooth finish. Doors and windows are in timber and are usually painted in bright colours.

**Walls-** The walls of house are made of mud using the rammed earth technique. Thickness of the walls vary from 2' for the inner walls to 2'-6" for the outer walls. Both the inner and the outer walls are white washed. Sometimes, portions of the walls that are worn out are repaired using cement or patched up with mud mortar.

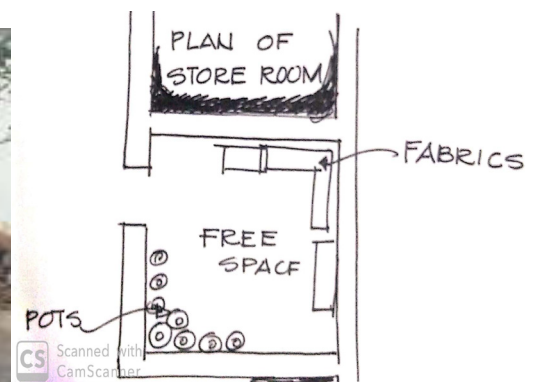
**Flooring** - In the past, flooring was done in mud and patched over with cow dung. Nowadays, floor of the weaving room is made up in Shahabad stone. The kitchen floor is usually finished with mud and cow dung while cuddapah stone flooring is used for other rooms. The verandah and backyard have stone flooring.

**Roofing** - The houses have sloping roofs made up of red clay tiles over timber. Roof tiles are supported on battens that rest on roof trusses. The main or primary rafter is usually made of teak wood or country wood. Houses also receive natural light from its roof opening.

The present condition of many houses is not very satisfactory and in dire need of repair.



CS Scanned with CamScanner



CS Scanned with CamScanner



## PRESENT-DAY SCENARIO

The traditional hand woven intricate *Ikkat* saris are exquisite but still do not bring much wealth into these homes of proficient weavers. The weaving community is a dwindling lot.

The average income of a weaver of cotton saris is estimated INR 10,000/- per month, while a weaver of silk saris makes just about INR 12400/- per month. Generations are not keen to pass it on to their children as they see no future prospects in it. This shrinking community needs our support and patronage to keep this beautiful art alive.

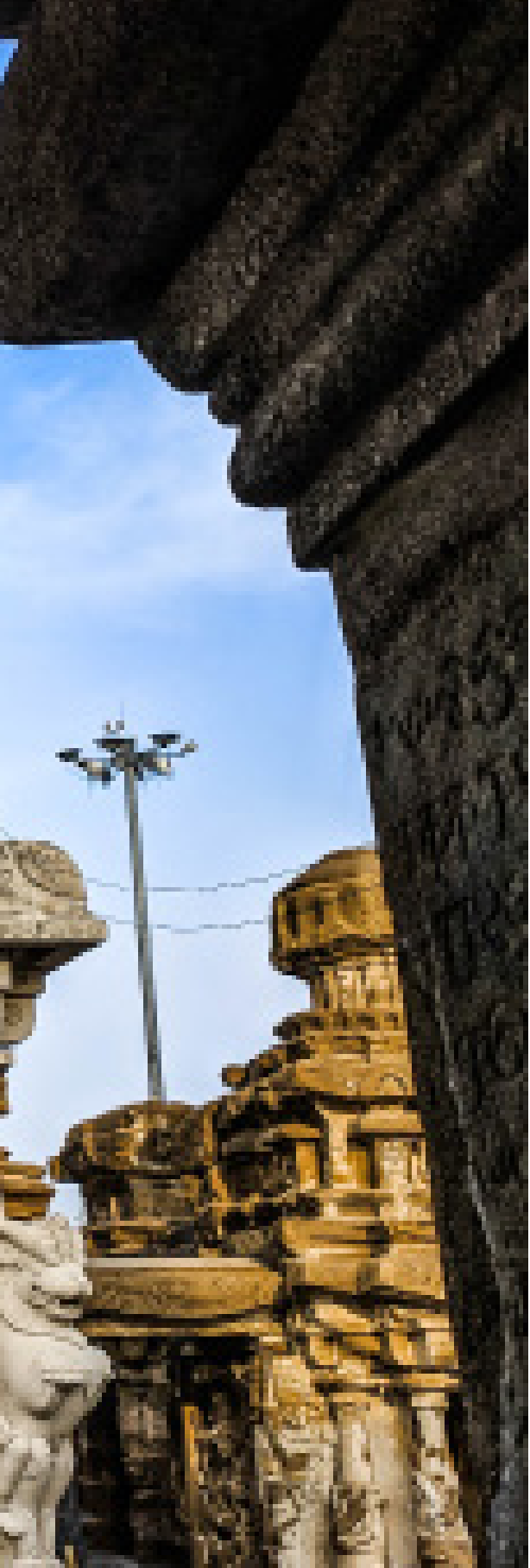
In accordance with the WTO framework, the Indian parliament has passed the Geographical Indication (GI) Act in 1999. The Act provides guidelines for Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) protection of unique products of different sectors like textiles and clothing, agriculture, handicrafts, horticulture, etc. Pochampally has been accorded GI under IPR for Pochampally *Ikkat*. The much needed protection will help the genuine producers to protect them from the counterfeit goods for their own advantage. The textiles committee has facilitated the GI registration of unique textiles products of Telengana, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu.

Today, *Ikkat* has captured the imagination of designers the world over, as the handloom textile has a play of vivid colours and traditional patterns that accord it a statement of elegance and ethnicity. Seen on ramps, adorned by models, used in designs of big names in the fashion world, sported by fashionist as, the contemporary *Ikkat* is now considered as eternal.

The Internet has thrown open countless doors for the handloom industry in Pochampally. Social media platforms like Instagram are throwing a new lease into the dying family handloom business and acting as a powerful stimulus into generating better profits for the weaver families. The educated new generation is combining internet and their entrepreneurial spirit through digital marketing and reviving sales on unusual venues like the photo-sharing media application, Instagram.

This new platform has brought many other village youth back to their traditional business. With no physical store, there is less investment thus encouraging direct customer contact. The families get much better profit margins with no resellers and middle agents in between. Digital marketing has also transformed the lives of many women allowing them to take on the entrepreneurial roles making them financially independent.

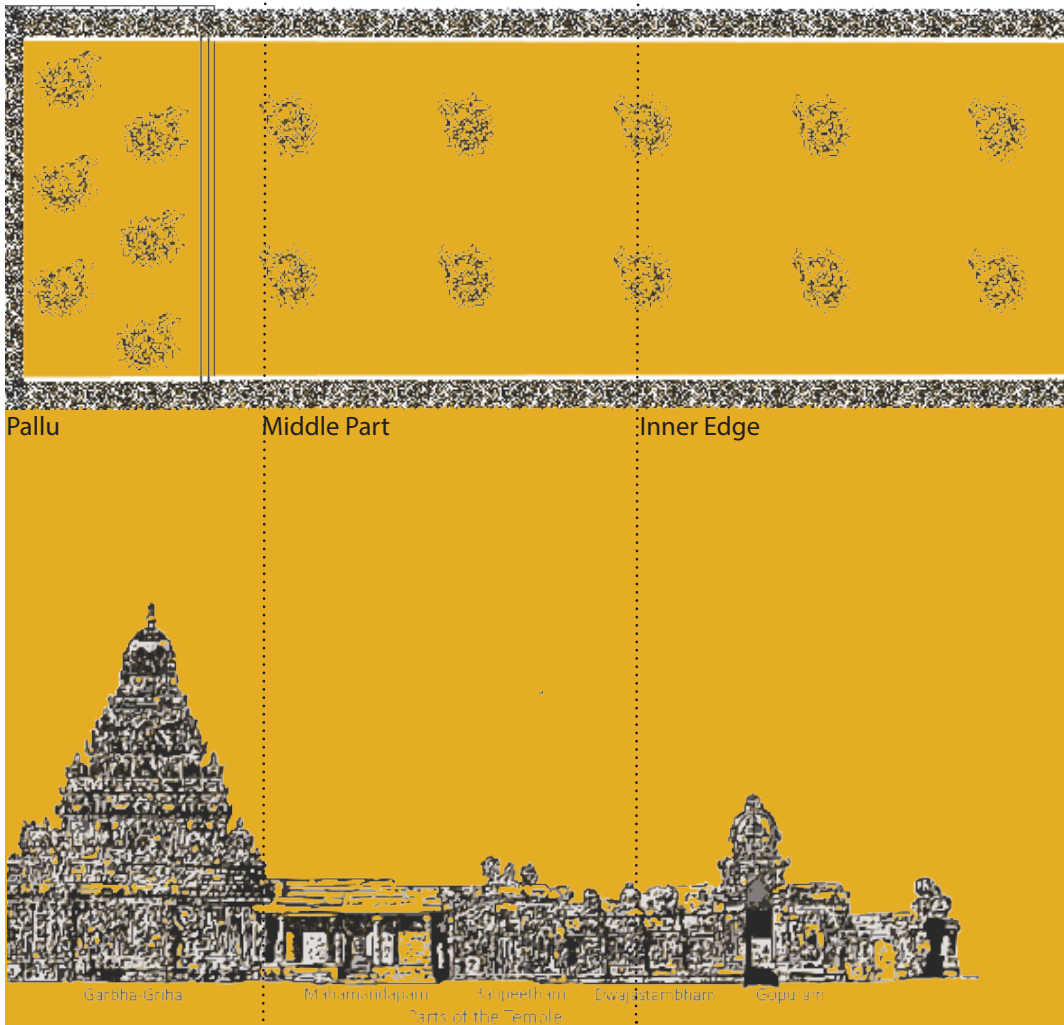
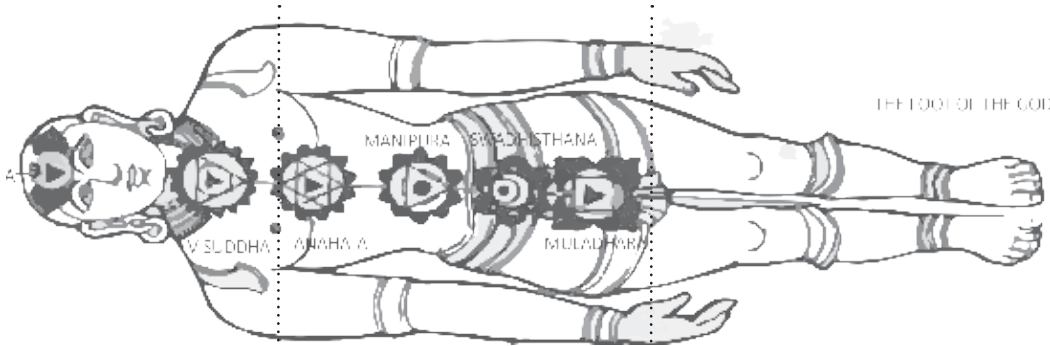




# **KANCHIPURAM**

THE SCULPTED STORIES OF SILK

# INTRODUCTION



## Devalaya Vastu & Relation to Structure of The Sari

The inter-relation of Temple Architecture and a sari are bound with multiple elements such as the motifs, structure and parts of the sari being complemented with the comparison of human body to planning of a temple known as Devalaya Vastu. A sari and the temple architecture are linked by the following :

**Pallu :** The fanciest part of the sari is the end piece that shows intricate work and is draped over the shoulders. The work and spanning of the pallu adds to the value of the sari.

This is often compared with the combination of Ajna and Visuddha, an integral head part i.e. Garbha-Griha of the temple.

**Middle Part or the main body :** The middle part which is wrapped around and pleated in to form patterns is correlated to Anahata, Manipura, Swadhisthana and Muladhara of the human body which are the Mahamandapam Bali Peetham and Dwajastambham of the temple.

**Inner Edge :** The inner layer of the sari that makes human contact and is tucked in relates to the Gopuram or the entrance to the Temple complex.

# THE WEAVER'S PLACE IN MAKING



## Migration and The Weaver's Settlement Pattern

Kanchipuram has turned into an unusual commercial handloom hub and become one of the important districts of Tamil Nadu. Various existing settlements here became major activity points in the process of weaving; engaging into silk dyeing, silk sorting, weft & warp and weaving.

Some settlements evolved with internal migration, and with change in ruling dynasties took weaving for a living. These migrations scarcely affected the sustainable lifestyle of the weaver community. The vernacular building styles and settlements reflected the sustainable, cultural, social as well as climatic aspects of the people in Tamil Nadu. While analysing the settlement pattern, one can see the sacred lifestyle of the weavers interwoven with culturally rich values, an understanding of economics and their lifestyle which exhibit the culture of their community. Over the years, the weaver community has developed a prototype that responds to the local needs to be carried forward.

# WEAVING COMMUNITY

Iyengarkulam ,the oldest Weaver's settlement of Kanchipuram



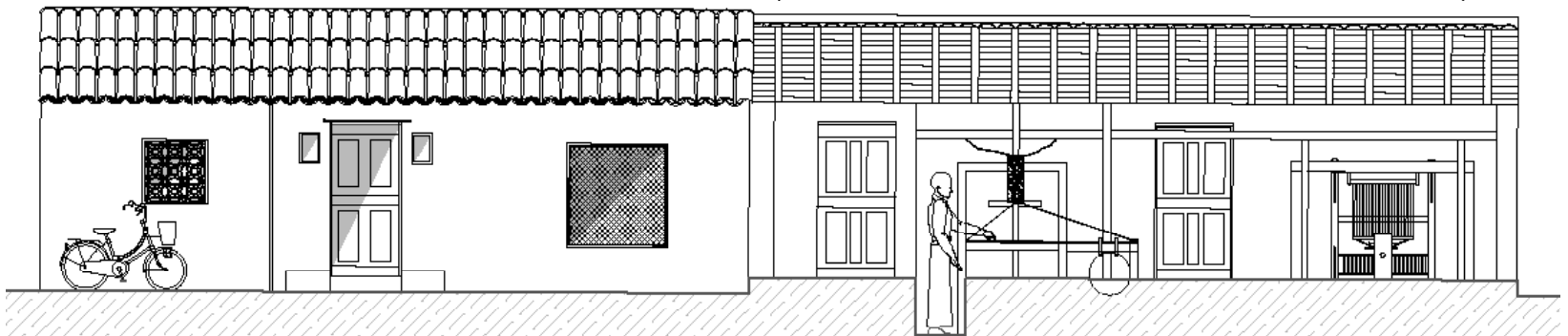
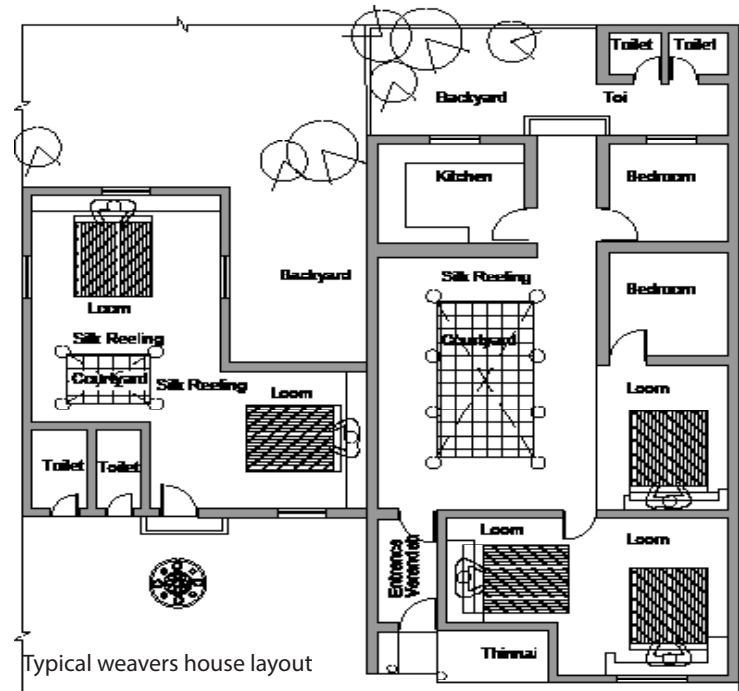
The internal spatial planning reflects the interconnection between the weaving and the architecture. In a typical weaver's house, one can locate the looms placed in the living room attached to the truss of a sloping roof with intermediate glass panels that allow day light focus over the saree woven underneath. The pedestal placed at sill level of the window is ergonomically cast to match the level of the loom helps the weaver.

Handlooms are quite big and tall therefore usually houses either have pits or tall ceilings of 3.5m for the handlooms to fit in. A small wooden plank is attached to the truss where smaller things like reels and jacquard are kept. Almost 60% area of the room is covered by handloom, therefore leaving very little space for any other furniture and at times even for movement within the room. A *setti* or seating, usually accomodating a small storage cabinet is placed in the living room. People believe in having the best area for weaving since it is their sole source of income.

Usually, bedroom and kitchen are combined in a single room and they have a courtyard in between them. Small storage cabinets are used to maximize the usable space. Toilets are generally located outside the house setting hygiene as priority. A courtyard is placed either in front, centre or rear end of the house. It acts as a multifunctioning space for water tanks, drying clothes, silk reeling and for passive cooling effect through the house. Smaller doors and windows also keep the internal spaces well ventilated and cool from the Kanchipuram heat. Use of specific materials like mud, bricks and clay tiles for roofing and cow dung flooring is preferred as is planting trees on both sides of verandahs. Certain daily acts like splashing verandas with water every morning and evening to cool down the place are carried out.



# INTERNAL PLANNING



# JOURNEY OF SILK WORM TO SCULPTED MOTIFS



## Silk Worm, Reeling and Sari

The Kanchipuram sari unites various parts of India. Pure mulberry silk used in the sari is from Bangalore and various parts of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh while pure gold and silver *zari* are brought from Surat and other areas of Gujarat.

These silk threads are distributed to various weaver settlements, National Weavers Service Center and Weaving societies where they get processed, dyed and woven to final products. The sun dried silk thread is then reeled into little bundles. This segregates and keeps it knot free making it easy for weaving. The Silk threads are then dipped in rice water and sun dried. This helps to increase their thickness and stiffness. The *pallu*, border and the body are generally woven separately and then are interlocked together. The joining of the three is done with such precision that even if the sari tears, the body will not detach from it.





## 'NEYTHUKARAN' AND GROWTH OF WEAVER'S SOCIETY



The fame for Kanchipuram sari saw a sudden rise and fall. The silk sari went beyond the royal liking. The demand in the Indian market increased, and the weavers could not cater to this demand. Eventually with the British rule and introduction of cotton into the market completely lowered the earlier demand for silk saris.

This shift made a huge impact in weavers' lives. Competitive markets and a greater demand for saris led to the use of power looms. Many weavers joined large factories and worked for power looms. They are much more efficient in terms of production, as weaving complex designs and patterns is much simpler on power looms. They are more profitable as well. However, some weavers continued the traditional weaving techniques despite being left in a poor state of living. Although urbanization has shaken the handloom industry, there are people working to keep the weaving traditions alive. In 1958, a weavers' society was formed by the government with a philosophy of helping weavers with their skills, product designing and technological upgradation. This society works on a motto of three pillars i.e. Excellence, Facilitation and Promotion. Their vision is to keep the industry alive and also help it grow to its glory. They are committed to provide all possible technical assistance in terms of design input, technical advice in weaving, dyeing and printing.





## **PAST TO PRESENT**

Kanchipuram has always been a great sacred place and has seen many kingdoms eventually turning into a weavers' village. Throughout the study, it has been clear that the weaving has been playing a big part in the lives of weavers and has shaped their lives in every aspect. Weavers in Kanchipuram believe it to be a gift from their forefathers and take pride in continuing it as worship. Due to the advancement in newer technologies and people opting for other occupations have started making handlooms lifeless, they shall always remain to be a part of the golden history of Kanchipuram.



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# LUCKNOW

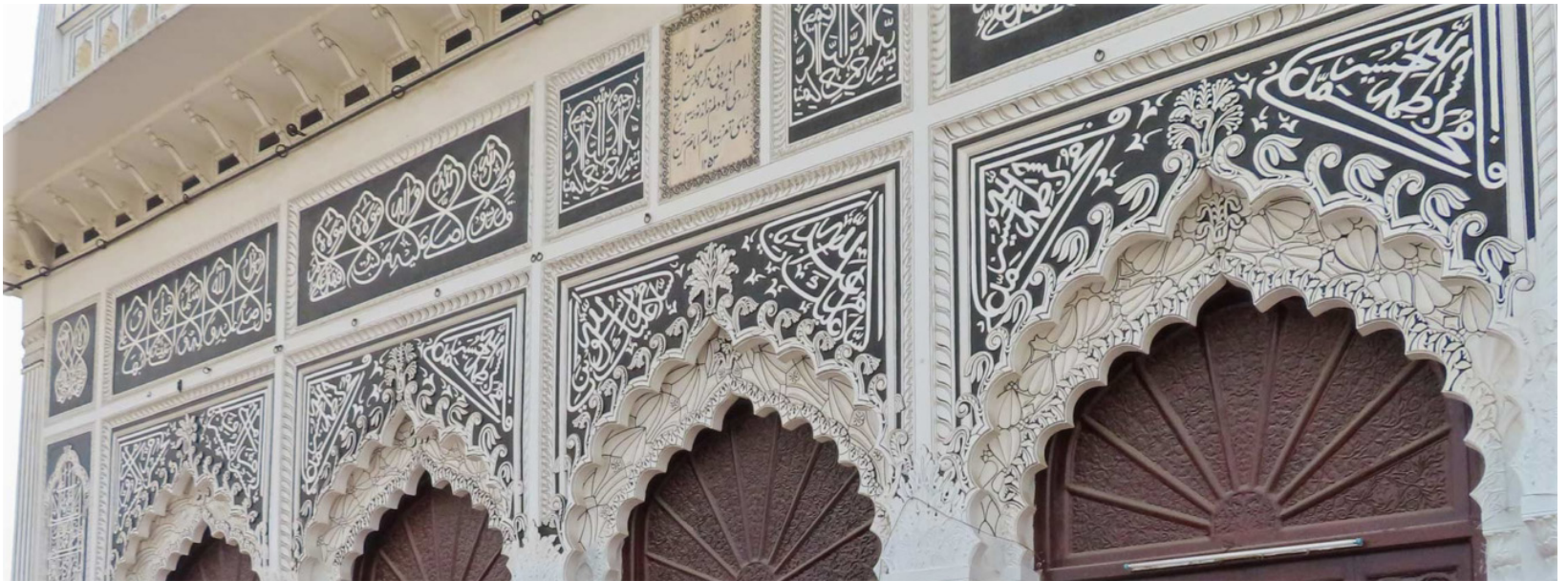
## INTRODUCTION

The city of Lucknow is the embodiment of '*Tehzeeb*'- an Urdu word meaning culture and etiquettes. The rich '*Nawabi*' history bestowed Lucknow with the culture of refined sophistication and courtesy as well as gorgeous textiles. Lucknow has perfected the art of '*Mehmaan Nawaazi*' which literally means the art of gracious hospitality. The era of the *nawabs* bestowed Lucknow with the courteous cultures as well as for the textiles for which it is renowned today. *Chikankari* is a pure and delicate form of embroidery and has stood the test of time. It's technique represents the quality of *Tehzeeb* in many ways as it flaunts the grace, elegance, and transparency of the culture. *Chikankari* and *Zardozi* are two beautiful embellished crafts representing the grandeur of Lucknow. *Chikankari* is white floral embroidery work, done pretty intricately with needle and raw threads on different types of fabrics like cotton, muslin and silk while *Zardozi* is gold trimmings and vibrant colours.

## RELATION BETWEEN ARCHITECTURE AND TEXTILES

Lucknow is considered as one of the paramount cities of India. It has been populated since ancient times located on the bank of river Gomati and is also well known for its Indo-Saracenic Architecture. Several types of filigree embroideries are famous in Lucknow, but *Chikankari* is most well-known for its elegant features. Its Indian origin goes back to the days of *Noorjehan*, who brought the *Chikankari* tradition from Persia to India. There is a great influence of architectural patterns and motifs on *Chikankari* clothes. There is a magical relation between the architecture and the textiles of Lucknow.

The shapes of arches and *chattris* are quite similar to the neck patterns in *Chikankari* dresses. *Jaali* stitches show a resemblance of *Jharokha* from the monuments. There is also a relation of the reflection of light in the architecture and its idea in embroidery. There are number of designs, ornamentations, motifs and colour combinations to be seen both in the Architecture and the *Chikankari* fabrics. The basic theme however remains same in both cases that design flows on the surface with a rhythmic movement to give the impression that carries this movement to infinity. Ahilyabhai's vision was to cross-fertilise the weavers distinct weaving styles to create uniquely exquisite textiles to gift to the Peshwa Kings and visiting dignitaries as well as the royal women. Thus, the *Maheshwari* sari was conceived, originally completely made in cotton having the finest of counts (ranging from 80s to 300s) which lent the sari its signature simmering gossamer elegance. This sari was nine-yards in length, and hence was called the *nauvari*. These sarees were initially made of pure Silk, but with the passage of time, Cotton was also one of the major fabrics used for these exquisitely designed saris. The fabric has geometrical motifs and borders in *zari* and *resham*, designs inspired by stone carvings and detailings from Maheshwar fort.





The white on white *nakkashion* the walls and white on white embroidery or, tint shaded embroidery on white cloth look similar to each other.

The floral patterns on the architecture and embroidered cloth.

The *karigars* of Lucknow are use motifs taken from the old buildings in a new style and new material. There are many current designs of *Chikankari* which are taken from the framed traditional buildings.

The '*Nakkasi*' and the *Mihrab*' of the architecture are very close to *Chikankari* border motifs. One may feel an embroidered cloth is covering the wall while looking at the outside view of architecture.



## TEXTILES OF LUCKNOW

### ***Chikankari* :The royal art from Lucknow**

There are different stories narrated by the workers themselves about how *Chikankari* work originated. *Chikan* designs have been inspired from various Mughal buildings with floral designs. A thread which unites with fine cloth to contour *Chikankari* was the cord of love between the Mughal Emperor Jehangir and his queen Noor Jehan. The craft of *Chikankari* is quite distinctive and forms an integral part of life in Lucknow. The artisans captured the beauty of intricate little patterns of Marble *jali* and inlay work from the Mughal monuments and created this form of artistic embroidery. It includes some simple and complex stitches resulting in simple, gentle, delicate and elegant designs.







## Process of *chikankari* making:

The *Chikankari* technique can be easily broken down into two parts: The Pre and Post preparation stages and the 36 types of stitches that can be used in its embroidery phase.

The basic three stages of embroidery are as follows:

### **BLOCK PRINTING:**

This is the initial phase where the design is made on the fabric. The fabric is cut according to the garment it will form and using multiple wooden block stamps, designs are imprinted in the blue ink on to the fabric.

### **EMBROIDERY:**

The fabric is then set within a small frame, part by part as the needle work begins to trace the ink printed patterns. Due to the strong influence of the Persian aesthetics on this craft, flowers have been a staple in *Chikankari* designs. Different types of flowers including their stems, *buti*, leaves and paisley motifs are used.

### **WASHING :**

Once the embroidery work is complete, the fabric is soaked in water to remove the pattern outlines. After this it is starched to obtain the right stiffness depending on the fabric. Usually there is a combination of different stitches used within one whole pattern. These include *makra*, *kaudi*, *hatkadi*, *sazi*, *karan*, *kapkapi*, *dhaniapatti*, *jora*, *bulbul* and many more.



## **Zardozi: the Shahi artistry**

The craft of *Zardozi* embroidery originated in Persia. 'Zar' literally means gold and 'Dozi' means embroidery, which refers to the process of using metallic bound threads to sew embellishment on to various types of fabrics. It is a type of heavy and ornate metal embroidery on silk, satin and velvet fabrics. The designs are created using gold and silver threads incorporating pearls, beads and precious stones.





## Process of zardozi making:

The basic techniques to create *Zardozi* are four fold and they are all the same across India.

### Designing:

This is the first stage of the process, wherein the entire design is drawn on to a tracing sheet and holes are made along the traced pattern using a needle. The traditional patterns comprise of complex natural, floral and leaf motifs, whereas the contemporary patterns are more geometric stylizations of the same motifs.

### Tracing:

Papers with patterns are placed on a flat table with the fabric underneath in order to trace the design on to a fabric. A kerosene and Robin Blue solution is made and wads of cloth are dipped in it and wiped against the tracing sheet. This facilitates the ink from the sheet to seep into the fabric.

### Setting the frame or "Adda":

The design imprinted fabric is stretched over a wooden frame. The size of the frame can usually be adapted to the size of the fabric. Using bamboo or wooden spars, it is then stretched out and tightly held to give the cloth uniform tension. The artisans then sit around this frame to begin the embroidery work.

### Embroidery:

A crochet-like needle that is fixed to a wooden stick called 'Ari' is used to carry out the embroidery. The *Ari* greatly speeds up the work as the artisans can pass the threads both above and below the fabric compared to a regular needle and thread. Depending on the intricacy of design and number of artisans working on a piece, this phase can take anywhere from a day to 10 days. A lot of emphasis is placed on the stable hands of the artisans.



### ***Fardi kaam:***

*Fardi* is a form of embellishment work in which strips of metallic wire are inserted into the fabric and then twisted to create metallic embroidery. This type of embroidery involves twisting thin metallic threads to create patterns all over the fabric. Real silver and gold were traditionally used for this work. However, a variety of threads and metals are now being used.

### ***Chapaayi:***

The first step is the *chapaayi* of the design on the fabric to be embroidered. *Chapaayi* is the process wherein the design to be embroidered is transferred from a perforated paper stencil or block printed onto the fabric. The design is first printed on the fabric using a mixture of gum and neel.

### ***TAKAAYI:***

The metal that is being used in the *mukaish* work is usually in the shape of a wire. The metal is first stretched into strips and then passes through the fire so that metal takes on different hues. The metal is then cut into wires of finer breadths and beaten using a small hammer so that the density is achieved wherein the wire can be weaved in and out of the delicate fabric.

### ***GHUTAAYI:***

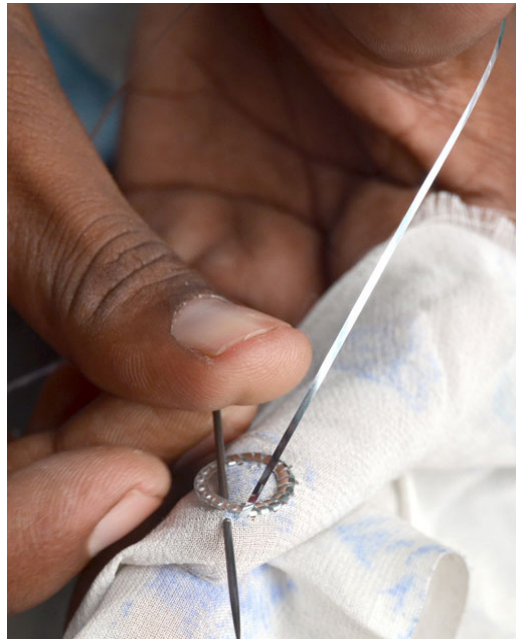
Once the embroidery work is complete, the fabric is spread out flat. The embroidery is then flattened and brightened thoroughly over with a glass bottle or cowrie shells. This is done to work out any lumps in the embroidery. It also burnishes the metal and leaves it brighter and shinier.



Silver colored metallic strips for *Fardi*.



'*Challa*' or ring being stitched.



'*Fardi*' or dots being embroidered.



'*Tikki*' or flat sequins being stitched.



'*Fardi*' or dots being embroidered.



Pattern created with '*Fardi ka kaam*'



## Carving *Badla*

*Badla* is a metal work technique in which a flattened metallic wire called *Badla Taar* is pierced through the cloth or threaded with a needle and twisted to create patterns. 'SACCHA KAAM', real silver and gold were used for this work. However a variety of threads and metals are used now.

### **Chapaayi:**

After the pattern is traced onto the cloth using a mix of neel powder and gum, the flattened metallic wires or *badla* begin.

### **TAKAAYI:**

The *fardi ka kaam* stitches are primarily used to create *tikki* or dots which most people relate to as *mukaish* work and *challa* or ring shape. Another kind of work that is popular is called the *Vasli ka kaam* or *Dhok ka kaam*. This is done to create a slightly raised effect to the embroidery, using different names for the different patterns that are created .

### **GHUTAAYI:**

Once the work is finished, the right side of the fabric is turned facing down and then smoothed by rubbing with a cowrie shell. This step ensures that the metallic work is set in the fabric and is smooth enough for the wearer.





## TEXTILES AND ECONOMY

Lucknow has been a centre for textiles since 5000 BCE. The textile industry represents a rich cultural heritage of Lucknow with wide variety of fabrics, techniques, colours and hues that reflect its people, their lifestyle and traditions. The *chikan* embroidery of Lucknow is the biggest artisan based occupation in India. The number goes to 250,000 artisans working on hand embroidery. *Chikankari* provides a large domestic market to both artisans and traders of craft materials. It also has a huge foreign market through high end designers sourcing embellishments on their designs. Unfortunately, the contemporary *Chikan* industry is an informal organisation of labour in which people work for wages from the traders. Low wages persist due to lack of a structured agency of artisans and workers.

Various Central and State government schemes are created for the benefits of artisans. This empowerment has also increased the scope for innovation and modernization. Some major innovations in *Zardozi* like replacement of gold and silk threads with copper and synthetic wires have made it pocket-friendly. With the help of modular machines and substitute material blends, *Zardozi* works are now accessible far more commercially than ever before. It is enjoying major commercial popularity with simpler and more economic designs. *Zardozi* is more easily available and accessible to a wider customer base, while still maintaining its traditional legacy.







# MAHESHWAR

## INTRODUCTION

Maheshwar is a historic fort- town located on the banks of idyllic Narmada in the heart-land of Madhya Pradesh in Central India. It's a sleepy little town with the fort complex rising against its flat landscape of stone and mud houses on a sweeping hillock. Narmada is affectionately referred to as '*MaaRewa*' by the locals. She flows in her ethereal pristine clear waters cutting across two towns, Maheshwar on the north bank and Mandleshwar on the east. Broad ghats and stepped bathing places surround the fort, temples and the palace of Queen Ahilya Bai, who chose Maheshwar as her state capital in 1767.

The town is famous for its handloom sarees popularly known as '*Maheshwari*' weaves in the textile industry.

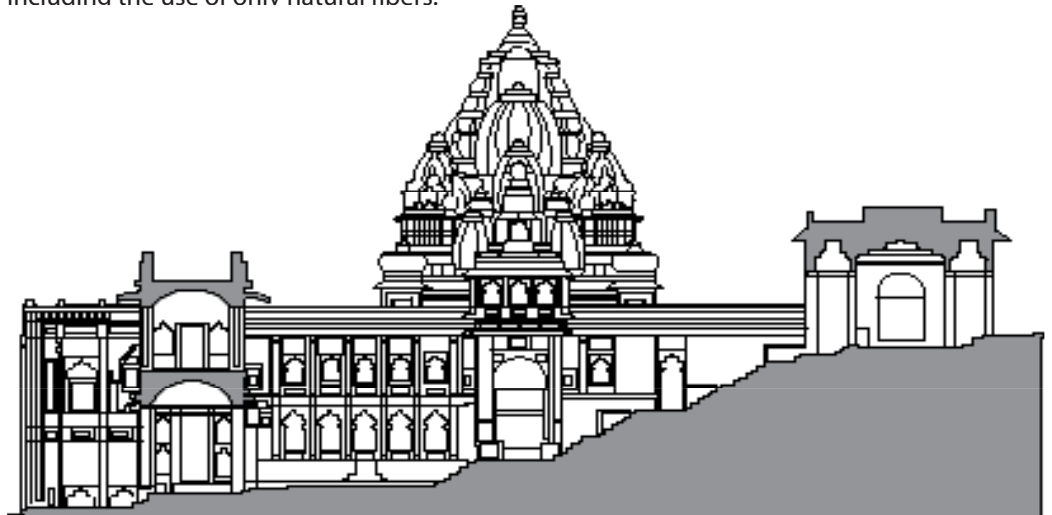


## HISTORY OF MAHESHWARI HANDLOOMS

*Maheshwari* handlooms owe their name to *Maharani* Ahilyabai Holkar. Her reign is considered a golden age for Maheshwar's cultural, social and economic development and she remains a revered figure amongst people till date.

In the late 1700's, in order to find them a better livelihood, the *Maharani* invited the weaver communities to come teach her people the craft of weaving. The community of weavers that settled in Maheshwar due to her efforts were originally known to be from Mandu- weaving for the Mughals, what was then known to be the finest fabric of Madhya Pradesh. She gifted the beautiful, light textiles that were created to royal dignitaries and Peshwa Kings as welcoming presents. The craft slowly found royal patronage and thus, the handloom weaving tradition in Maheshwar began.

Ahilya Bai also invited the weavers from various princely states like Hyderabad, Mandav and many more to settle in Maheshwar. Three primary weaving communities came to settle here at Ahilyabai's behest. Of these, the Mahru was the largest, originally from Surat. The Salvis also came from Surat and the Salvi women provided the services of brush sizing cotton yarn for the weaving community as a whole in Maheshwar. The Momins (*Ansaris and Julahas*) are the second largest group who came via Burhanpur. They were perhaps originally from Varanasi. From this blend of weaving styles, the iconic *Maheshwari* sari was born and became a vital part of Maheshwar's economy for the local community. She supported these enterprises by purchasing a lot of their products for herself as well as for gifting to visiting dignitaries, a move that took the reputation of *Maheshwari* handloom to distant parts of India. The weavers were asked to follow the designs inscribed on the walls of the fort. Even today these designs can be found on the borders of *Maheshwari* saris. Thus, the handloom operations adopted since are being followed till date, including the use of only natural fibers.



SECTION OF AHILYA BAI TEMPLE

Ahilyabhai's vision was to cross-fertilise the weavers distinct weaving styles to create uniquely exquisite textiles to gift to the Peshwa Kings and visiting dignitaries as well as the royal women. Thus, the *Maheshwari* sari was conceived, originally completely made in cotton having the finest of counts (ranging from 80s to 300s) which lent the sari its signature simmering gossamer elegance. This sari was nine-yards in length, and hence was called the *nauvari*. These sarees were initially made of pure Silk, but with the passage of time, Cotton was also one of the major fabrics used for these exquisitely designed sarees. The fabric has geometrical motifs and borders in *zari* and *resham*, designs inspired by stone carvings and details from Maheshwar fort.



SECTION THROUGH FORT COMPLEX

## NARMADA AND AHILYA FORT AS SOURCES OF INSPIRATION

*Maheshwari* saris were traditionally made in colours like peacock blue, bright yellow, forest green and an Indian red dye called *Aal*. The *pallus* were designed with stripes of red, white and gold *zari*. Borders like *Leheriya* (wave), Narmada (the sacred river), *RuiPhul* (cotton flower), *Eent* (brick), *Chatai* (matting), *Heera* (diamond)-were all drawn from the fort and the adjoining river and woven seamlessly into the fabric . Originally, the classic *Maheshwari* saris were only woven in pure cotton, 9 yards long, and with *pallus* at both ends- so when they frayed, the sari could be reversed and worn some more. That is the uniqueness of a *Maheshwari* sari, its elegant versatility and durability.

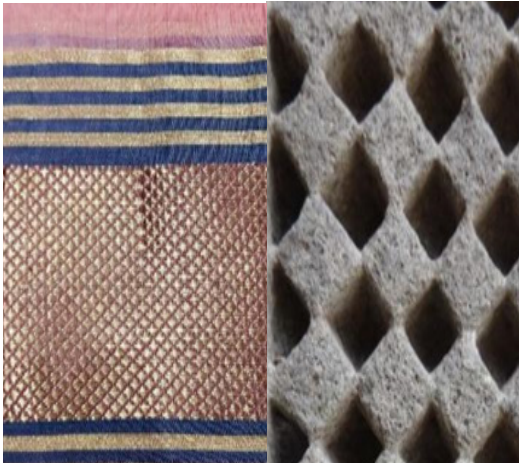
**Some of the motifs inspired from the carvings on Ahilya fort are as follows:**



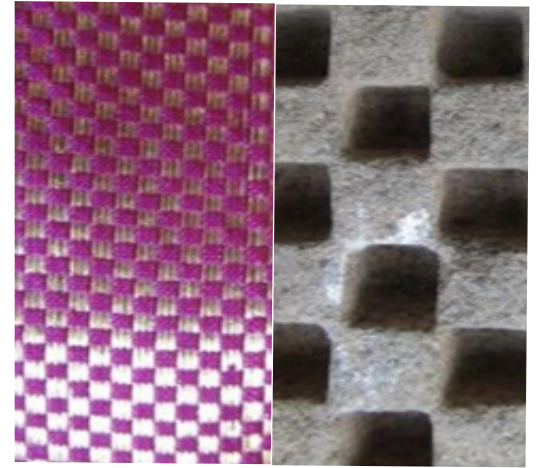
### **Varieties of Maheshwari Sarees**

The beauty of the *Maheshwari* saree is that each kind of Sari under this style has a name or a term of its own, which marks its distinctness. The saris are either plain in the center with exquisitely designed borders, or have checks and stripes in different variations. There are five major categories, which are namely *Chandrakala*, *Baingani Chandrakala*, *Chandratara*, *Beli* and *Parbi*. The *Chandrakala* and *Baingani Chandrakala* are the plain kind, whereas the *Chandratara*, *Beli* and *Parbi* fall under the striped or chequered designs.

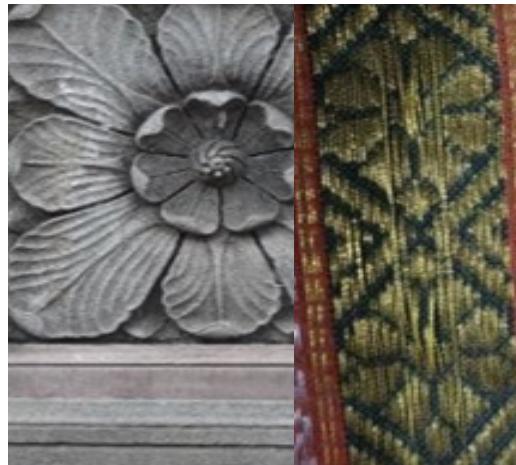
**V-border-** The local name of this motif is not known, however as the weavers now call this motif 'V' *kinar* or 'V' border because of its resemblance to the English letter V.



**Shakkar dana-** Also called 'Mohiniya' taken directly from the Maheshwar fort. The name *Shakkardana* literally means sugar crystals/ cubes. This motif is very densely woven creating a very fine and delicate chess board design. This delicacy of the design is the reason behind the name *Mohiniya*, meaning feminine and bewitching in Hindi.



**Chatai Kinar-** *Chatai* or mat border is directly taken from the Maheshwar fort. This border design can be seen in the architectural elements of both the temple and the fort. The name '*Chatai*' is given to the motif because of its resemblance to a mat.



**Ruiphool-** A commonly found motif in Maharashtrian weaves, *RuiPhool* literally means 'cotton flower.' This is one of the earliest motifs woven since the time of Devi Ahilya Bai Holkar.

**Heera-** This motif is found on the walls of Maheshwar fort. *Heera* literally meaning diamond, is a diamond shaped motif.

**Jaali-** *Jaali* motif, unlike the other motifs of Maheshwari sari, is used in the *pallu*. Taken directly from the Maheshwar fort, the *jaali* motif resembles a net like structure.



**Chameliphool-** Another popular design inspired from the jasmine flowers found a plenty in Maheshwar.

**Kamal phool-** *Kamal phool* or lotus design is very popular with the Maharashtrian users and were largely bought by them for wedding festivities. The lotus motif widely used in Indian textiles is associated with fertility, wealth and prosperity.







## PROCESS OF MAKING A MAHESHWARI SARI

A *Maheshwari* sari is light and airy to wear, has elasticity and fine thread count leading to a glossy finish, making it a perfect wear for all seasons. The colors are made using natural vegetable dyes. *Rangai Ghar* located within the vicinity of the weaving community provides a variety of dyes, yarns and colored threads to the weavers.

The raw material for Maheshwar handloom, mainly cotton, silk and *zari* (golden wire), comes from different parts of the country notably from Bangalore, Coimbatore and Surat.

-Cotton: Cotton yarn for the weft is purchased from Coimbatore. The specifications are: No. 80 for the normal weft and No. 2/120 for the border. In one kilogram there are 250 *lacchis* (bundles) of thread.

-Silk: 20/22 Mulberry Silk purchased from dealers in Bangalore is used as the warp. The rates of silk are very high. There are three bundles in 1 kg of silk.

-*Zari*: *Zari* is used mainly in weaving the beautiful borders of *Maheshwari* saris and is procured from Surat (Gujarat).

Various tools used in the making of Maheshwari handloom are as follows:

### 1. *Taana* or Warp Machine:-

The warp machine is made of two basic parts. One is a big octagonal cylinder that rotates on its axis (which is very different from other warp machines in the sense that this cylinder is vertical), and the other is a vertical rack on which a number of thread rolls are placed. The rolls pass to the cylinder of the machine through hooks under a constantly moving frame that helps wind the cylinder in a criss-cross manner.

### 2. *Charkha*:-

A *charkha* is used for making the rolls of thread. In case of warp, it is a big motorized one, which prepares big silk rolls. In case of weft, it is the smaller wooden one which prepares thin rolls called bobbins. These are put inside the shuttle to form the weft.

### 3. Dyeing Apparatus:-

These mainly include various types of dyes and the tubs in which the dyeing is carried out.

The process of sari making is a collaborative task and is divided in three stages described below.

## (a) Pre loom activities :-

### 1.Dyeing:

Dyeing is an important part of the whole process. Both cotton and silk require dyeing before they can be used on the loom. The process is normally carried out by the weavers themselves or specialized dyeing technicians who charge for their services depending on the material and the kind of dyeing required.

There are different kinds of dyes for colouring silk and cotton. For colouring cotton thread, three types of dyes are used—naphthol, wet dye and procion dye. In case of cotton, dyeing is done not with a single dye but with a combination. For coloring silk, special dyes called *Sando Silk* are used, which are readymade dyes and do not need to be mixed with others.

The process of dyeing starts by dipping the raw threads in TR Solution (a combination of Turkish oil and bleaching powder) for at least four hours for bleaching.. This is followed by the actual process of dyeing. First, the dyes are mixed in warm water in big metal tubs to obtain the desired colours. The threads are dipped in the tubs for a while and then dipped in the tank containing naphthol to provide stability to the colour. They are then washed in other tanks containing plain water and then put in tubs containing solutions of detergent and soda in warm water. Thereafter, the threads are washed again and are hung on bamboo poles for drying. Once the threads are dry, they are sent back to the weavers for further processing.





## 2. Yarn Opening for Weft and Warp:

After dyeing, the yarn is normally received by the weavers in the form of bundles. Both in the case of the weft and the warp, the thread needs to be freed from tangles and stretched in order to make them tighter. They are then taken through a process of reeling by using a *charkha*, to convert the bundles into small rolls. Thus, the preliminary tasks of dyeing yarns and then spinning them on bobbins to be further fitted in handloom machines is completed before the actual weaving of fabric takes place.



## (b) Loom process :-



### 3.Warping:

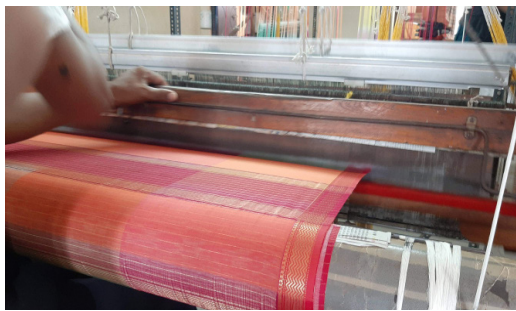
The master weaver carries out the process of making the warp. Since the silk fiber used is very delicate, the warp machine for the process is radically different from the one used in case of cotton thread. The silk warp machine comprises of an octagonal metal cylindrical frame that revolves vertically on the machine axis and a metallic rack on which the thread rolls are kept.

The fibers from these rolls pass through the hooks fixed on the rack on to a double metallic frame that moves up and down with the motion of the machine, and are wound on the cylinder in a criss-cross manner that facilitates the detection of breach in the fiber, if at all one exists anywhere. This process starts from one end of the cylinder and goes on till the whole of the cylinder is covered with the thread. Using this machine, the master weaver converts the raw silk into single or double fiber warp, depending on the requirement of the loom. Once this has been achieved, the *taana* threads in the shape of bundles are taken to the loom where they are used as warp.

### 4.Weaving:

For weaving, one end of the warp is bound on the main beam of the loom. The other end (in the form of a bundle) is taken under another horizontal beam parallel to the main beam and then across the overhead beam. Weights are hung on the other end of the beam to keep it tight, giving the warp a Z-shape. There are up to 4,000 strings in a single warp. The length of warp is 50 meters and the width of the weft is 48 inches. As the warp proceeds, the bundle needs to be opened up. The movement of the string that controls the shuttle (in which the roll of weft thread is kept) takes the yarn of the weft across the threads of the warp. With the motion of the pedal, the heavy frame sets the yarn of the weft along the thread of the warp.

The weaver uses the *zari* threads and other colored threads across the warp depending on the desired design. The motion of the loom provides movement to the overhead jacquard-like punch card mechanism called *dobby* (although smaller than the jacquard looms, these have a similar function of putting forward particular hooks that are required for a particular border design) and helps in designing of the border of the sari. The process of weaving is very difficult and tedious in case of saris that have more design work. Therefore, the resulting products are also proportionately expensive.



## (c) Post loom process:-

### 6. Finishing:

Once a sari is completed, it is taken off from the loom and sent for cutting. The normal length of such a sari is about 11 feet. It is then folded properly and packed. No ironing or further printing is required. Once packed, they are ready to be marketed.



## Types of Handloom Machines:

Two types of handloom machines are used by the weavers in Maheshwar- Pit looms and Frame handlooms.

1. Pit Looms: These are the type of looms originally used for the *Maheshwari* weaving since historical times. These heavy, wooden looms are installed inside a pit, about 3 feet deep. The weaver has to sit on the wall of this pit, with his legs inside. The looms are permanently installed in these pits and have hardly moved from their place for many years.

2. Frame Looms: These looms are the newer ones, with lightweight metal frames that constitute the main body. They require less effort and are easily detachable. They have now been adopted by a large number of weavers. They are purchased from Malegaon in Maharashtra.

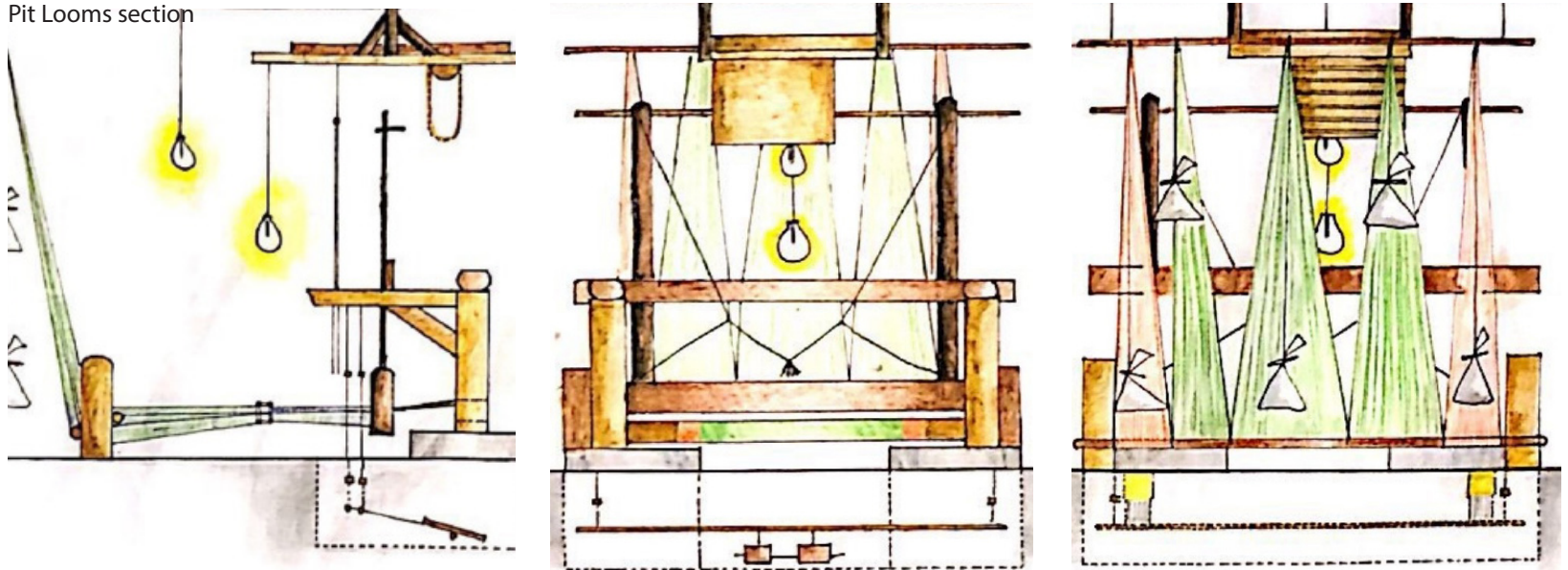
This loom is superior to the older pit looms in the following ways:

Lightweight, requiring less effort by the weaver;

Detachable and therefore can be shifted for rearrangements etc.;

Have a pulley arrangement that gives better finishing to the borders of the sari.

Pit Looms section



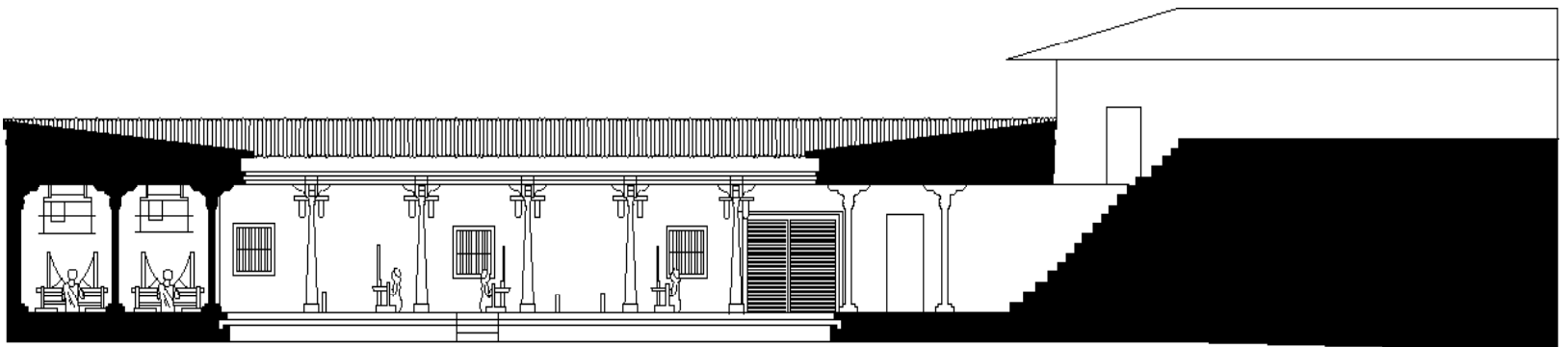
## Rejuvenation of *Maheshwari* Handlooms

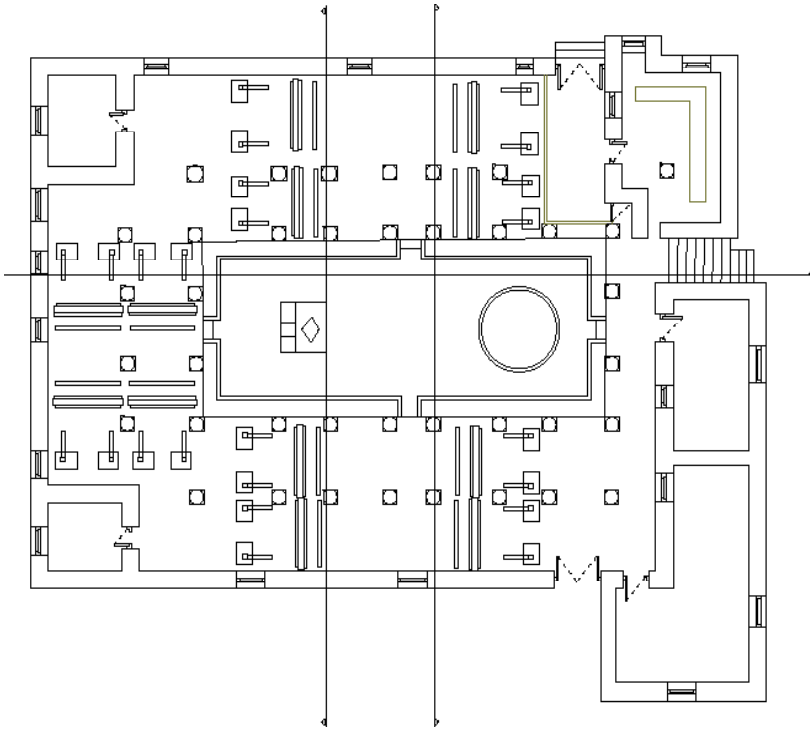
Post Independence with the advent of Mill manufactured clothing, the *Maheshwari* sari making industry witnessed a major decline in productivity and popularity. It was then in the '70s that the descendent of the Holkars, Mr. Richard Holkar along with his American wife, Sally Holkar breathed a new life into the handloom industry by setting up REHWA SOCIETY- a non- profit organization for the weavers.

In 1979, with a grant from the Central Welfare Board and an investment of 79,000 rupees to train weavers REHWA Society was established as a non-profit organisation. Currently, under REHWA, the market value for *Maheshwari* saris has increased a great deal, especially in cities like Delhi and Mumbai. In addition to that, there is a major export market in France, U.K, and Germany.

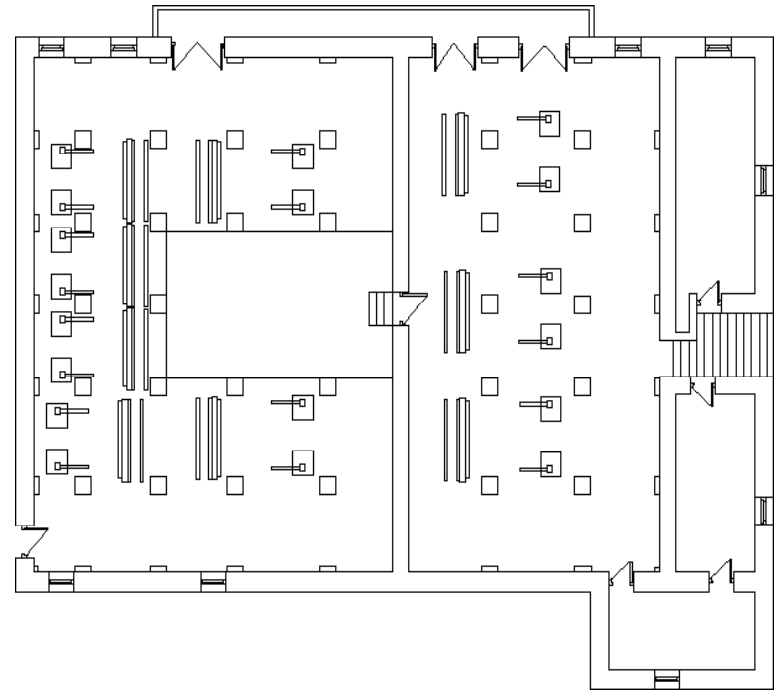
Sally Holkar has been actively involved in helping empower the women of Maheshwar since 1978. She has established Women Weave Charitable Trust that supports the female weavers in and around Maheshwar through its activities. Established in 2002, Women Weave train and employ women to be weavers, and also offer them benefits like healthcare, day care for their kids and micro loans. While this, in itself, is a magnificent work, what's really unique about this organization is its focus on women. The handloom industry in India is traditionally male dominated. Most master weavers are men, and even though women do a lot of the pre-loom work and sometimes more, they are rarely recognized as weavers. WomenWeave is one of the few organizations which almost exclusively invests in training women and giving cognizance to them as weavers, thus making the work WomenWeave is doing all the more path breaking.

Ms. Holkar has extended her involvement with the handloom across India, through The Handloom School, established in Maheshwar in 2015. They have trained over 100 young weavers from many different weaving regions of India. They are one-hundred percent dedicated to support slow and sustainable growth; to create a sensitive awareness of the handloom's potential; and to continue to build a bright future for the weavers by unlocking the enormous potential of handloom's in both local as well as global markets.

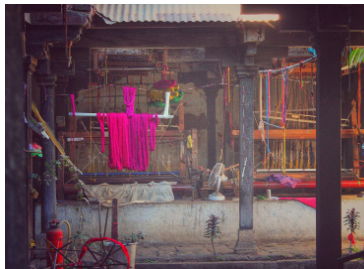




REHWA SOCIETY GROUND FLOOR PLAN



REHWA SOCIETY FIRST FLOOR PLAN

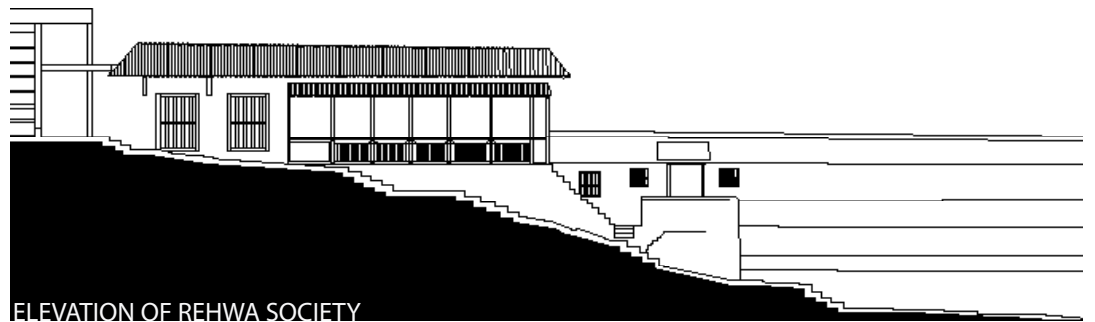




COURTYARD VIEW OF REHWA SOCIETY



## PRESENT DAY SCENARIO



Non-profit organizations like Rehwa Society, WomenWeave, The Handloom school have created a vast market for *Maheshwari* handlooms in national and international markets. Their success has generated interest and revived the weaver families back into the profession. With the current advent of technology and digital domains, the weavers are selling their designed products with profitable market margins.

# STUDY TOUR



**BENARES** - (Faculty -POORVA  
PULKIT) ADITYA **ICHCHHA** SIDDHI  
MRUNMAYI SUSHRUT **DARSHEET**  
ABHISHEK **AARYA** RUTVIK **ARTI** PRATHMESH  
SHARDUL SUMEDH **SAGAR** KAVYA **VINEET**  
PRACHI CHANCHAL





**WEST BENGAL** - (Faculty- **SANGEETHA PARVATHI**) **BHARGAVI NRUPA PRANIT ANIKET ROHIT GRATIS HEENAL AMRUTA YUKTA YASH MAYURI RHUTWIK SIDDESH YASHASVI RAUSHAN SHRISHA NISHANT UJWALA**



**BHUJ** - (Faculty-**SHUCHI SARATH**) **LALIT SHALIN SOHAM AMEY AJAY JUILEE KSHIPRA RHUTWIK RIDDHI SAMPADA SHRAVANI TEJAS VAISHNAVI VIVEK PRACHI SHAMIK TANIKA AKSHAY HRITHIK SOURABH KUNAL SHREYA DEEPTI KHYATI RIYA SHUBHAM HARSHAL VEDANT SNEHA VAISHNAVI PRATIK MINAL**



## STUDY TOUR

**LUCKNOW** - (Faculty-  
KAMLESH **SUKESHA**) JOSHUA  
**ROHIT SHUBHAM TEJAS ROHIT PRATHMESH**  
SARVAGNEE **RUTUJA** SAKSHI **MANAS**  
SHUBHAM **KUNAL** DARSHAN **SIDDHARTH**  
HARASHDA **PRITI** PRADNYA **SHRADDHA**  
MANTHAN **UTKARSH** SANIKA



**MAHESHWAR-** (Faculty - SHARAYU  
AMIT) AKASH HIMANSHU KETAN MRUDULA  
PRANITA **SARA** SIDDHI **YUKTA** ZAID  
NISHANT AQSA **RITIKA** SAYALI **SANKALP**  
TUSHAR **SAHIL** YUTIKA **PRAGATI**



**POCHAMPALLY** - (Faculty - GEETA JOYDEEP) NITESH KISHORI STANLEY PIYUSH SIDDHANT SHUBHAM NIDHI HIMANI ADITI TRISHA TEJAS SAHIL ADVAIT NISHANT KASHMIRI LAVESH CHETAN SUNIDHI AFREEN RUSHABH



**KANCHEEPURAM-** (Faculty - POOJA ASWATHY) MANISH ABHISHEK KETAKI AKHILESH SRUJANA ONKAR SHRUTI PRANALI VAISHNAVI SANDEEP MANAS NIKHIL AKASH BHUSHAN VIVEK SHRITEJ NISHANT JOGINDER



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