

Design Resource

## Making of Sungudi Sari - Madurai, Tamil Nadu

Technique of Tie and Dye

by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral and Hariharasudan T.  
NID Campus, Bengaluru

Source:

<http://dsource.in/resource/making-sungudi-sari-madurai-tamil-nadu>



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## Introduction

Madurai is one of the oldest cities in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu and also continuously inhabited cities in the world since 1st millennium BC. The city is referred by many names like Koodal, Malligai Maanagar, Naanmadakoodal and Thiruvalai. The city is also referred to as the 'Athens of the East'. The word Madurai derived from Madhura arising out of the divine nectar showered on the city by the Hindu god Shiva.

As early as 3rd century BC Megasthenes, Greek ambassador to India visited Madurai. Signs of human settlements and roman trade links dating back to 300 BC are evident from excavations by ASI. Madurai is also mentioned in Kautilya's Arthashastra. It is also mentioned in the works of roman historians Pliny the younger Ptolemy, the Greek geographer Strabo and also in Periplus of the Erythraen Sea. Sangam Literature like Maduraikkanci records the importance of Madurai as a capital of Pandyan dynasty.

Various kings like Pandyas, Cholas, Madurai Sultanate, Vijayanagar Empire, Madurai Nayaks, and British ruled the king. After the Sangam age, most of present-day Tamil Nadu, including Madurai, came under the rule of the Kalabhra dynasty, which was ousted by the Pandyas around 590 CE. The Pandyas were ousted from Madurai by the Chola dynasty during the early 9th century and remained under them till 13th century, till the second Pandyan empire was established. After the death of Kulasekara Pandyan, Madurai came under the Delhi sultanate. In 1801 Madurai came under the direct control of British East India Company and was annexed to Madras Presidency.

Madurai is famous for three things Madurai Meenakshi amman temple, Madurai jasmine and Madurai Sungudi saris.

During 16th century weavers from Gujarat migrated to Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and other States, the rulers and the people gave them a warm welcome. Migrated people came to be known as Patnulkarans (silk weavers). To weave something extraordinary for the kings, the weavers came up with the idea of 'sungudi' pattern." Sungudi is a sanskrit word "Sunam" meaning "round" representing circular dots which can be seen on the sarees. "The weavers derived inspiration for the dotted patterns of 'sungudi' from the stars in the sky. And they came up with the idea of tie-and-dye method after seeing women knot their hair. Madurai Sungudi, produced in the Madurai city has been given protection under the Geographical Indications of goods act 1999 by the Government of India.

Mr A K Ramesh from Madurai owner of Saagambari Crafts even to this day practices the traditional method of Sungudi sari making. He acquired the knowledge from his father, and along with his family has taken a lot of initiative to develop the Sungudi sari technology to meet the modern day trends.

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Artisan A.K. Ramesh and his wife R. Vasumathi.



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Knots are getting arranged in various patterns to make interesting designs.



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Artisan adds the required quantity of water and color to the vessel and the tied fabric is dipped into it.



Fine dots in the design are due to meticulous tying of knots.



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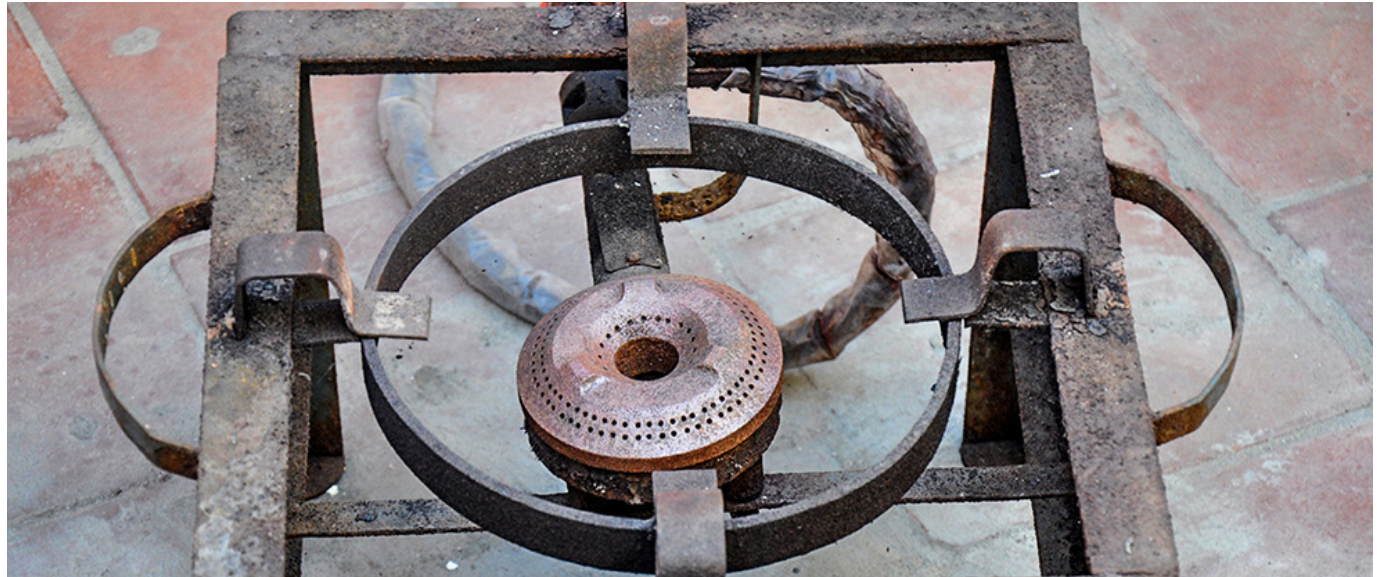
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## Tools and Raw Materials

Following are the tools and raw materials required for Making of Sungudi Sari:

- **Sari:** The fabric to be dyed.
- **Thread:** Its used for tying the knots which refrains the fabric from getting colored.
- **Natural Colors:** Its used for dyeing the fabric.
- **Stove:** Its used to heat the water for dying.
- **Scale and Measuring Tape:** Its used to measure on the fabric to draw designs.
- **Marker:** Its used to make marks on the fabric.
- **Thermometer:** Its used to measure the water temperature during dying process.
- **Rubber Gloves:** Its Worn during the dying process to protect the hands from heat and color.



Stove is used for boiling water.

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A reel of thread used to knot on the cloth.



Glove is used during the coloring process.



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Indigo used for making blue color.



Soap solution used for washing cloth before dyeing.



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Myrabolan fruit, soap nut, yellow elderflower, sourkudi are used for natural colors.

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## Making Process

The saris woven are brought in for tie and dying. The design is marked on the sari by measuring and marking the design. The points are identified which are to be tied in the design. Artist holds the point with help of his fingernails and starts to wound the thread around that tightly enough to cover the cloth from getting dyed. Tying process takes anyway around 8-10 days for a single sari. Once the tying is done, it is checked for any damages.

The tied sari is taken for dying process, Dying is a little elaborate process and method followed is natural dying, where all dyes are obtained from herbs and plants.

The tied sari is soaked in water for ten minutes so that when color is added it spreads evenly to all places.

The soaked sari is washed using a soap nut powder to remove any stains in the sari. If required it can be soaked in warm water up to 20° centigrade to absorb more color.

Required color is measured and taken accordingly to number of saris to be dyed and added in the tub for dying. Initially the sari is rinsed by hand, a couple of times and then kept on the stove for heating the colored water for approximately 30mins.

Once the water reaches a temperature of 70°- 80° centigrade, 200ml of color retaining agent is added and again heated for another 15mins.

After cooling for some time, it is washed with soap nut water. At last it is washed in cold water and allowed to dry in shade. Once the sari is completely dried, the knots are removed to reveal the design pattern.

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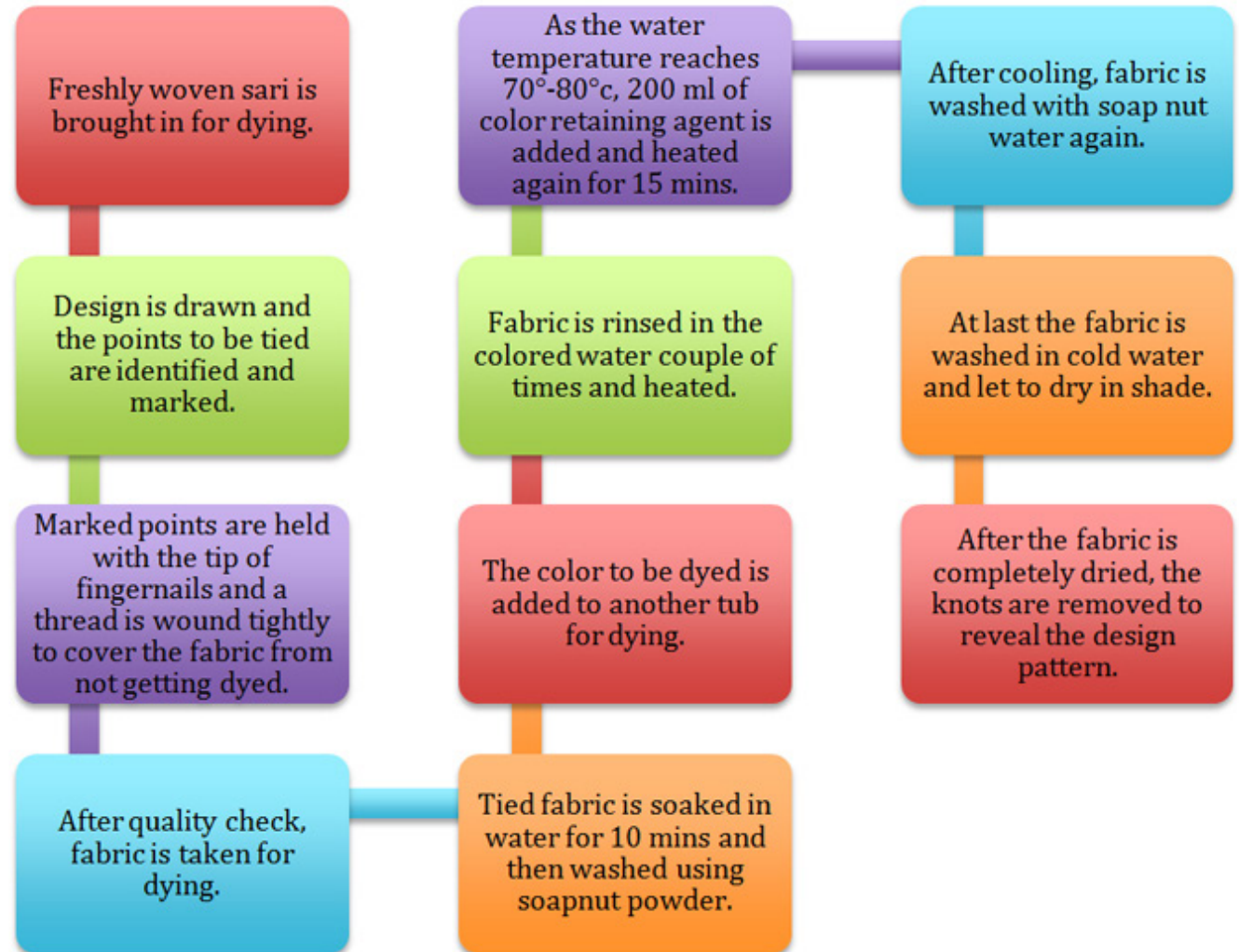
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Flow Chart:



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Artisan is preparing cloth for marking.



Measuring tape is being used to mark the cloth.



Measuring tape is used for marking.



Scale is used to connect markings.



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The threads used are usually cotton or synthetic nylon.



The marked areas on the cloth are pulled up and tied tightly with thread into a knot.



The thread is continuously wound from knot to knot without cutting.



The tying process is done meticulously following the pattern printed on the cloth.

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Liquid soap is being mixed in water.



White cloth is washed in soap water to remove the stains.



Artisan using thermometer checks the temperature.



The cloth is dyed using various colors.

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Indigo color used in dyeing process.



Once the color is made then they dip cloths into it for around 15 minutes per cloth.



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Once dried, the knots are carefully removed so as not to damage the cloth.



Finally the cloth is washed with plain water.



Once dried, the knots are carefully removed so as not to damage the cloth.



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Dry process takes around 2 -3 days, sometimes depending upon the weather.



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## Products

Basically using the technique of tie and dye, any piece of cloth can be dyed. Using the dyed cloth any products can be made out of it. Mainly Saris are made. Nowadays they have started making shirts. Sungudi sari price ranges from INR 1700 to INR 10000 with a standard size of 6 to 9 yards.



Beautifully enameled, multicolored Orian wooden toy.

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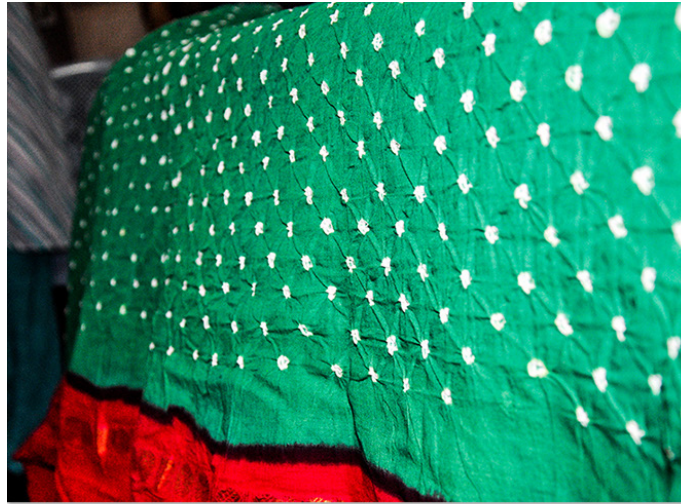
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Sungudi saree with attractive color and ring pattern.



A traditional cotton sungudi saree.



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Traditional mango motif design on the sungudi saree.



Saree weaved in check pattern using unique design.



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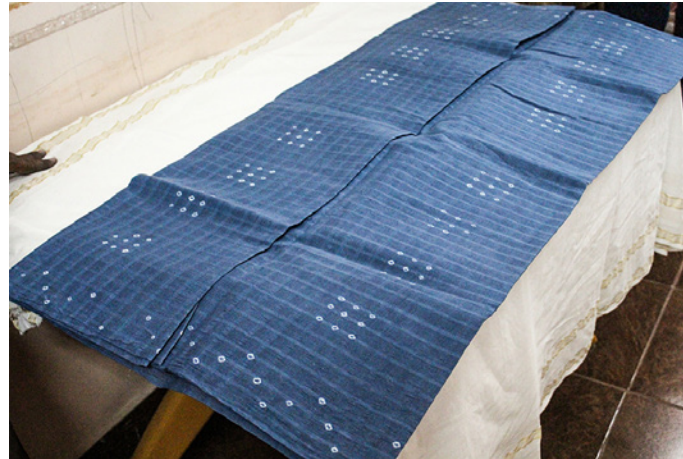
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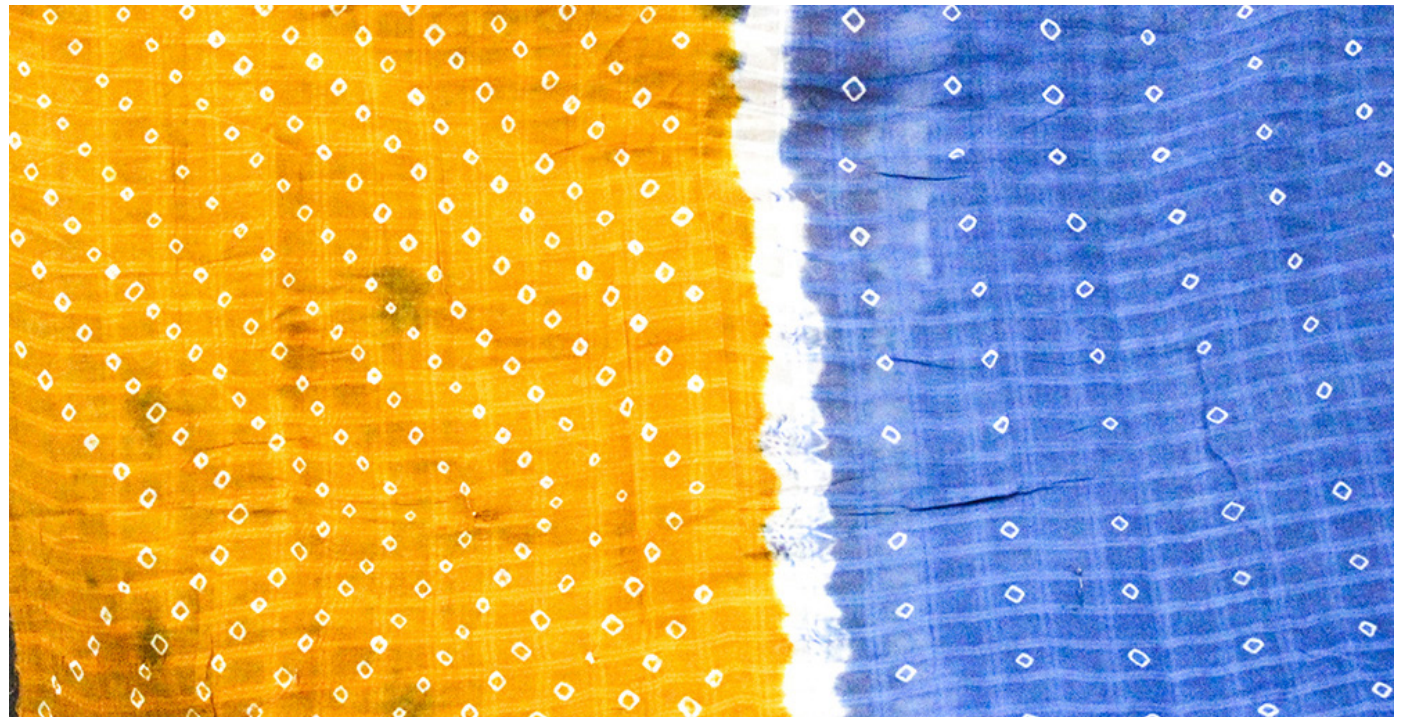


Price of sungudi sarees starts from INR. 400 to Rs.2000.



Sungudi saree with unique color combination.

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Bright and attractive colors are used to make design on saree.

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## Video



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## Contact Details

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