

Design Resource

Silk Saree Weaving

The Craft of Salem Saree Making

by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral, J. Antony William, Susanth CS, and Amruthalakshmi Rajagopalan
NID, Bengaluru

Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/silk-saree-weaving>



1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Contact Details

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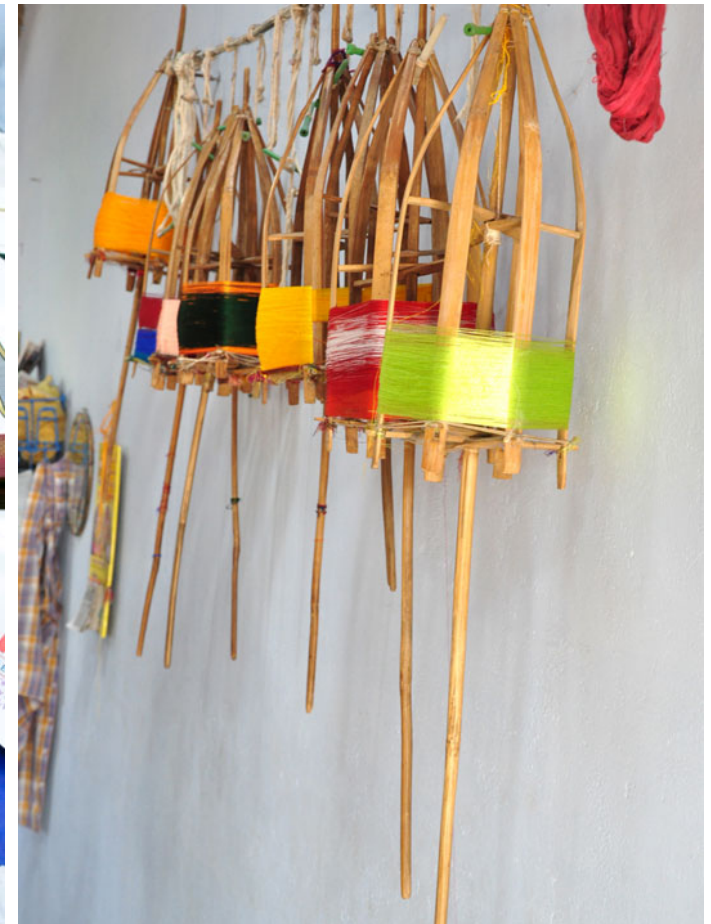
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Introduction

Saree is a traditional wear all over India. A traditional garment, saree is worn in different styles depending on the region and occasion. Silk saree of Salem is famous for its work in all over India. Salem district is one of the largest manufacturers of Silk sarees in Tamil Nadu. With change in time many artisans have started making cotton saree. Both silk and cotton silk are produced here. Salem silk sarees are renowned for their intricate work and added value addition through Zari work. The major community which is engaged in weaving is Vanniyar. It is from Elampillai. Silk Sarees are sent to Tirupathi temple to be used as attires for deities during different puja occasions.



Sarees are made in bright colors with zari borders.



Thiravattam: It is used for winding yarns.

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Silk sarees of vibrant colors.



A typical temple border made on the saree, made by the interlocking weft technique.

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Tools and Raw Materials

The tools and raw materials that are used for silk saree weaving are:

- **Pattu/ pasathu:** Silk yarn
- **Paav/ Thani:** warp
- **Adai:** Weft
- **Kanji:** Rice starch
- **Kondhupassai:** Gum arabic
- **Padamaram:** Cloth beam
- **Thiravattam:** It is used for winding yarn
- **Valathadi:** It is used to hold the opened up hank of yarn for winding
- **Taarsuthurairattai/ reto:** Bobbin winder
- **Naada:** Shuttle for passing the weft through the shed
- **Taarkuchi/ Rithakando or kando:** The plastic weft winding pin to be used inside the shuttle



Zari, as brought from the market.



Silk yarn colored in desired colors.

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Plastic weft winding pin to be used inside the shuttle.



Yarn are winded/ coiled on the bobbin.



A typical loom in the weavers house.

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Yarns to be winded on the plastic pin.



Colorful yarns are used to make various designs.



Sarees on display.

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Making Process

Warping: The yarn is bought by the weavers or given by the cooperative societies. It is dyed in desired colors and then sent for warping.

Reed making: The artisan communities make bamboo reed and denting of the reed. The reed setup is a vital part of the loom that controls the way the threads are lifted.

Heald making: After the reed is made, silk yarn is twisted to make leases and dented in the slots of the reed. Once the denting is done, 8 bamboo rods are positioned for the 4 shafts and healds are tied by threading through the warp ends. Plucking each warp end and looping the heald eye around it from both the face and back makes the eyes of the healds.

Piecing: Piecing is a process where the existing ends on the reed-heald setup is joined with the ends from the new warp by twisting. This pre-weaving process is undertaken by older women.

Adding leases: Once the piecing is done, the weaver unrolls the warp out on street on stilts to insert lease rods and to mark out the length of each saree. The leases are inserted and marking is done using a bamboo stick and damp kumkum. The warp is then rolled on the metal cylinder that acts as the warp beam. The setup is then taken indoors to be fitted onto the loom.

The loom: The loom used for silk saree weaving is a raised-pit loom. A cement seat is constructed for sitting and the local wood craftsman makes all the parts of the loom and assembles it. Teak wood is used to make looms. The warp beam is fixed in its position on the loom and the warp stretched out. The border pattern warp ends are hung using vertical nylon threads and connected to the patterning box on top.

Winding weft: Weft yarn is wound on a metal cylinder from the hank and allowed to soak for two hours. Soaking the weft yarn ensures dense packing of weft and a smooth finish. The weft yarn is wound as the weaving progresses. This is done mostly at home by family members in their free time.

Making saree: The body of the saree is woven in a plain weave and the cross border is woven in a rib weave. The saree is soaked in water overnight and woven wet. This prevents the saree from coiling on itself or tangling. After every few inches of weaving, a solution of gum Arabic is applied to the saree to stiffen it.

Folding: Once the sari is made beam is removed and the kept in sunlight for a while to stiffen the starch and gum. Once dried, the saree is folded in a set pattern. It takes two people to do this task. It is usually the husband and wife who do this and tie it. The sarees are then stacked and covered with fabric, ready to be taken to the cooperative or private dealer.

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The bundle of yarn are hanged/ hung from the metal rod and dipped in a tank with boiling water and color.



Two artisans work together to rotate/roll the yarns systematically so that the color spreads evenly.



Once colored the yarns are rinsed properly and dried in sunlight.



Women wind the plastic cylinder to be used as weft.

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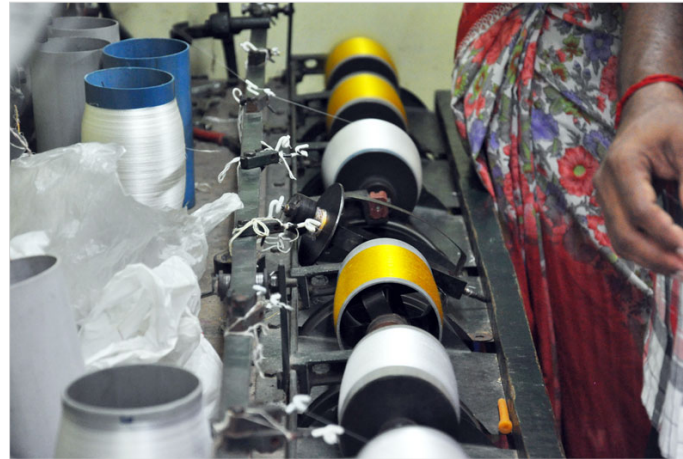
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Winding on metal hank is done with the help of machines.



Women also do winding manually.



Sometimes jacquards is also used to carry out production or to make complex designs.



Artisans setting the loom.

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Silk sarees are woven on a raised pit loom.



Artisan is making intricate patterns using zari on the sarees.



Women are also involved in the weaving.



Various vibrant colors and patterns are made on the sarees.

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Once the saree is made it is taken out from the bean.



Saree is folded in a definite pattern. After folding they are tied and packed.



Two people are involved in folding the saree.

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Products

Artisans make saree with vibrant colors and zari border. Silk sarees are worn for weddings and festive occasions. The handloom silk weaving industry suffers from stiff competition from the power loom industry as the production rate is faster in power looms.



Silk saree with broad zari borders.



The sarees are quite costly and the cost increases with the intricacy of designs.



Various colorful saree made in handloom.



Saree stacked in the shop of co-operative society.

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Contact Details

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