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The Saree - The Very Essence of Indian Womanhood

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A saree or sari is a long strip of unstitched cloth, which is draped by Indian women – it practically typifies Indian women and showcases the vast diversity of Indian culture as a whole. The word "Sari" is derived from the Sanskrit and the Prakrit (pre-Sanskrit language) root, "Sati", which means, "strip of fabric". Interestingly, the Buddhist Jain works, the Jatakas, describe women's apparel, called the "Sattika", which could well have been similar to the present-day saree. Another fact is that the end of the saree that hangs downward from the shoulder is called the Pallav. Experts believe that the name came to be during the reign of the Pallavas, the ruling dynasty of ancient Tamilnadu.



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SAREE CLAD WOMEN FROM INDIA

A saree typically ranges from six to nine yards in length and can be worn in several ways, depending upon the native of the wearer and her outlook on current fashion. Usually, a saree is tucked in at the waist and is then wrapped around the body with pleats in the center, the other end draped loosely over the left shoulder, showing the midriff. This apparel is also popular in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Singapore and Malaysia.

This very feminine garment is worn over a petticoat, also referred to as a lehenga in the North, a paavaadai in the South, a parkar or ghaghra in the West and a shaya in the East. It is worn along with a bodice or blouse, called the choli (in North India) or ravikkai (in South India). The blouse may have varying lengths of sleeves, depending on the wearer's preferences and usually extends only till the start of the midriff. Since it allows this ventilation, this style of outfit is most suited

to warm, humid, tropical climates such as India.

The blouses differ in style as well. While very traditional women prefer to wear less revealing blouses, the more flamboyant cholis usually have short sleeves (they can also be sleeveless) and could be backless or deeply cut at the back or even have a halter-type design. Then you have blouses which have mirrors, sequins and other embellishments, which are meant for party wear and for special occasions.

Origins of the Saree

The origins of the sari can be traced right back to the Indus Valley Civilization, which existed during 2800-1800 BC. Records of this time show priests wearing a similar kind of drape. Ancient Sanskrit and Tamil poetry and literature describe the exquisite beauty and grace of an Indian woman draped in this flowing garment.

This garment also has religious connotations. Lord Brahma is shown seated on a lotus that sprouts from Lord Vishnu's navel. The navel is hence considered to be the creative wisdom of the Supreme Being. Hence the midriff is left exposed by this drape.



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**BRAHMA EMERGES FROM
THE NAVEL OF VISHNU**

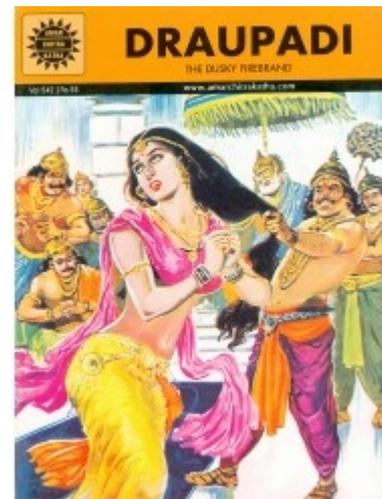


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**SAREE CLAD WOMAN
FROM MEDIEVAL MALABAR**

Ancient sculptures often show women in a lungi(sarong)-like garment flowing down from the waist. While many of these figures are shown bare-chested, some don a type of breast-band called the Kanchuki, Stanapatta, Uttarasanga or Kurpasika. In some parts of ancient India, the saree was meant to cover the entire body and showing the navel was considered to be taboo in these regions.

One of the most prominent female characters from Mahabharata (the epic Hindu mythology) - Draupadi - has an important association with the Saree. Yudhishitira - the eldest of the five Pandava brothers - had wagered Draupadi (five of all five Pandavas) in a game of dice with Duryodhana and lost. Duryodhana, eager to insult the Pandavas as much as possible, ordered that Draupadi be brought in front of him and then be disrobed publicly by Dushasana - Duryodhana's brother. Dushasana proceeded to disrobe Draupadi who was, at that time, wearing a Saree. Draupadi, seeing no help coming forth from her husbands or other elders in the court, started fervently praying to Lord Krishna, who she considered her brother. Krishna, invisible to everyone in the court, ensured that the Saree that Dushasana was trying to pull off Draupadi's body turned into a never ending piece of cloth. Dushasana went on pulling at the Saree and the more and more of the Saree kept coming off Draupadi and Draupadi's dignity remained intact since she remained wrapped in the



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DRAUPADI - THE DUSKY FIREBRAND

Saree. This incident is named Draupadi's Vastraharan.

All-in-all, it is a known and acknowledged fact that this garment had been worn by women centuries ago and had evolved in drape and style over the past several hundreds of years.

Styles of Saree Draping

There are at least a hundred ways a single saree can be draped. While the most common style is the one mentioned earlier in the article, there are numerous other types, which are as follows:

- The Nivi style of Andhra Pradesh is similar to the most common style of draping in India. The Kaccha Nivi has the central pleats passing through the legs and tucked at the back, in order to allow free movement.
- The Bengali and Oriya styles have no pleats, but look graceful when a woman drapes herself in it.
- The Gujarati and Rajasthani styles tuck in the central pleats in the opposite direction and the loose end is draped across the right shoulder, one edge pulled across the left and tucked behind at the waist.
- The traditional Maharashtrian and Konkani Kashta consists of nine yards and is tied very much like the kaccha nivi, which tucks at the back.
- The traditional Tamil nine-yard podavai, also called Madisar, requires an elaborate procedure, starting off with a set of pleats behind, at waist level. The loose end is draped from the right shoulder and is then draped around the waist, to tuck itself in front on the left side.
- Ladies from Karnataka use the Kodagu style, which also involves pleats created in the rear.
- Women in Kerala wear a two-piece saree, called the Mundum Neriyaathum. The Mundu part is the sarong wrapped around the waist, while the Neriyaathu wraps itself around and then hangs on the left shoulder. This ensemble is also called the Set-Saree.
- Tribal women often wear a longer sarong, crossed around the shoulders and knotted tightly at the nape of the neck.



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BENGALI WOMAN WITH PUJA THALI



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GUJARATI STYLE OF DRAPING SAREE



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BRIDAL COUPLE FROM MAHARASHTRA

Modern Draping Styles

Typically, one end of the saree is tucked into a petticoat, with the flap facing the right hand side in front. The fabric is then wrapped once around the lower body and is then pleated evenly with the hand. These pleats are neatly tucked into the petticoat at the level of the navel. It is again taken round the body and is draped across the torso, the other end hanging loose from the left shoulder.

This loose end, called the Pallav, can be of varying lengths, depending on the wearer's preferences. Some like to tuck the pallav round the body, into the waist on the left side. Some women also pleat the pallav and pin it on neatly to the left shoulder.

While some women prefer not to reveal the midriff and navel, others like to wear a "low-rise" saree, which starts really low at hip-level, thereby revealing considerable midriff and the navel. The saree is very highly versatile, since it can be worn to expose to the minimum, while also reveal to the maximum, if the wearer wants it that way. Either way, it looks graceful and elegant, showing off the woman's curves in the right places.

Fabrics Used in Sarees

While the undying and evergreen favorites in saree materials include silk and cotton, one can now find Sarees made in a wide range of materials. Synthetic Sarees are now a rage and include fabric types like georgette, chiffon, nylon, polyester and so on. Maharani Gayathri Devi, who practically redefined saree fashion, was known for her elegant collection of chiffons and silk chiffons.

The latest craze among fashionistas of this generation is the net or the jaali saree, which is embellished with rich sequins and borders. The other new trend is to drape a half-saree-type garment over slacks or tights, as the famous Bollywood actress, Sonam Kapoor had worn at an event a few months ago.



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**WHITE GEORGETTE SAREE
WITH PARSII EMBROIDERY**

Formal Saree Draping

Many companies insist on their women employees wearing saree uniforms to work. Such sarees look the same and are also draped in the same way by all women. The garment is draped in such a way that it looks neat and tidy, with every fold and pleat perfectly held in place. The fabric is also pleated and pinned at the shoulder and is worn with a high-neck blouse and longer sleeves, in order to give it a formal, professional look.

Female politicians in India also drape the fabric in a formal manner, with the entire body covered, taking care not to expose the midriff or the navel.

Types of Sarees Across India

India being a culturally colorful country, each region in this vast nation has its own unique type of saree and draping style too, that it can practically be identified with. Here is information on the major types of sarees, along with the description of their fabric, printing or weaving style, draping style, colors usually used and so on.

Bengal Sarees

Bengal has been acclaimed for its silk and cotton sarees for centuries. Let us discuss some of the most important types of Bengal Sarees.

Baluchari



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**ROYAL PURPLE BALUCHARI SILK SAREE
WITH ALL-OVER BOOTA**

The Baluchari sari is known for its fantastic quality of material, usually containing depictions of mythological scenes on the pallav part. Predominantly woven in Murshidabad, one sari takes about one week or more to create.

During the 18th Century, Murshidkuli Khan, the then Nawab of Bengal, patronized the rich weaving tradition of this district and encouraged this industry to flourish. This industry then flourished in the Bishnupur village of Bankura district. However, it started failing during the British Raj and soon became a dying craft. Later, Subho Thakur, a renowned artist, resurrected the craft to bring it back to its previous glory.

These silk sarees follow a long process, wherein silk cocoons are first cultivated so as to use the filament that transforms them into yarn. One the soft cloth is made, it needs to be dyed and motifs prepared for the pallav. Then the weaving takes about 5-6 days for

completion. The material is then polished and sent for sale. Due to its adherence to quality, the Baluchari is considered a status symbol; a pride for its owner.

Dhakai/Jamdani

The Dhakai or Jamdani saree is made of cotton and originates in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The technique of weaving was called jamdani, while the weave itself was called Dhakai. The patterns of this weave are inspired by life itself and could comprise portrayals of things such as plants, animals, nature, the stars and so on. It could also contain geometric and symmetrical design patterns. Using the finest muslin, jamdani comes in grey and white colors, also containing a mixture of cotton and gold threadwork.

This craft too showed a decline in the 19th Century, but thankfully, the Government has now intervened and is trying to do away with middlemen and is trying to contact weavers directly, so that the craft is revived yet again.



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**WEAVED BLACK, GREEN AND GOLDEN
DESIGN ALL-OVER ON WHITE DHAKAI
SAREE WITH BORDER AND PALLU**

Tangail



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**BLACK TANGAIL SAREE WITH GORGEOUS
GOLDEN YELLOW BORDER AND PALLU**

Tangail is yet another very famous saree type of Bengal. The Tangail saree is made of handloom, containing both cotton and silk threadwork. This saree is rich in texture and design and looks classy and impressive on the one wearing the drape.

Kantha Stitch

Kantha embroidery, which Bengal is famous for, is also used in quilt-making and many other garments such as dupattas, stoles, shawls, men's shirts and so on. Many women in Bengal wear Kantha sarees, filled with richly embroidered patterns on sarees made of soft cotton or silk material. Kantha is also the most popular craft practiced by women in rural Bengal, especially in Bolpur. Depending on the type of embroidery done on them, these sarees were known as Lepkantha or Sujni Kantha.

Design themes include intricate motifs of flowers, birds, animals or geometrical shapes. The rich stitch gives an impression of the soft cloth being slightly crumpled, which adds to the general attractive, artsy look of the garment.



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**BLACK WITH RUST SILK SAREE WITH
KANTHA STITCH EMBROIDERY ALL-OVER**

Printed and Hand-Painted



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**HAND PAINTED OFF-WHITE TANGAIL
SAREE WITH BORDER AND PALLU**

Bengal is also famous for its printed silk sarees, as well as hand-painted and block-printed cotton and silk sarees. The printed silks from this region of India are especially worth the mention, as they lend a beauty and a touch of class to the one wearing the saree.

Hand-painted and block-printed sarees, available in both cotton and silk, are also very much sought after, especially by tourists wishing to take back home a beautiful souvenir from Bengal.

Orissa Sarees

Bomkai

Bomkai or Sonepuri sarees, which can be found in both silk and cotton, are crafted by the Bhulai community residing in the Subarnapur district of Orissa. Bomkai sarees are the veritable wealth of Orissa. This style uses extra weft, woven on a pit loom, making use of ikat and other extra thread work, called kapta jala. Originally worn only by Brahmins and the rich elite, Sonepuri sarees and paatas are today even part of several international fashion shows.

The weavers here create bright colored panels with motifs standing out from a contrast background. These motifs are created from natural flower and vegetable extracts, which lend their color to the fabric. The fabric undergoes a tie-and-dye process, which lends it the beautiful finished effect.

In the end, the two contrasting colors are used in the warp threads, which are twisted with the help of starch and attached to the point where the body of the saree meets the pallav or border.



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**AZURE BLUE SOUTH SILK SAREE WITH
WOVEN BOMKAI DESIGN
IN YELLOW PALLU**

Ikat



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**GREEN WITH SAFFRON IKAT WEAVE
DESIGN ALL OVER IN COTTON
SAMBALPURI SARI**

Ikat or Ikkat is a unique dyeing technique, which uses the resist dyeing process very similar to the tie-and-dye technique. The word "Ikat" is derived from the Indonesian word, "mengikat", which means, "to tie".

This process results in uniform, multicolored patterns. Once the dyeing is done with, the bindings are removed and the threads are then woven together, to form the fabric. This is where ikat differs from tie-and-dye. In the latter case, the fabric is first woven together and then dyed. The contrary occurs in the former case. Ikat hence becomes more complicated, as the weaving needs to be done with great care, so as to maintain the uniformity of pattern on the fabric.

There is also a technique called double Ikat, where both the warp and weft are previously resist-dyed and then woven together. Incidentally, the Pochampally Saree, which is an offering from Andhra Pradesh, also follows the ikat style of weaving. One of the most ancient techniques of weaving, it is carried out only in

India, Indonesia and Japan.

Sambalpuri

Sambalpuri is also an Ikat-style saree, wherein both the warp and the weft are tie-and-dyed prior to weaving. Predominantly manufactured in the Sambalpur, Sonepur, Bargarh, Balangir and Kosal regions of Orissa, these sarees mainly use motifs such as the Sankha (conch), Chakra (discus) and Padma (lotus), all symbols of Lord Vishnu.

The specialty of Sambalpuri sarees is that the Baandha technique which it uses, gives it an almost identical print on both the sides of the saree. This craft thrived from the 12th Century, right up to the mid 20th Century, when it faced a steep decline. These sarees were then made globally popular by the former Prime Minister of India, late Smt. Indira Gandhi. In order to protect the art, it was included in the Government of India's Geographical Indications registry.

Today, this style of weaving is used on silk, cotton and mercerized cotton cloth. Sambalpuri textiles include dress materials and sarees, furnishing materials and wall hangings and so on.

A noteworthy name responsible for the resurrection of the craft is Radhashyar Meher, who established the Utkal Parada Agency and contributed immensely for the growth of the Baandha technique. Becoming a member of the All India Handloom Board, he was also the member of the Sambalpur Municipality till the day of his death.

Late Padmashree Krutarth Acharya was another such individual, who established the Sambalpuri Bastralaya Handloom Cooperative Society Ltd. Recognized by the Orissa Government in 1954, this organization provides invaluable marketing support to the members of the co-operative framework.

Banarasi Sarees

Banarasi Sarees

Banarasi sarees, as the name suggests, are made at



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**MAUVE PASHMINA SILK SAREE WITH ALL-
OVER DESIGN FROM BANARAS WITH
BROCADE BORDER AND PALLU**

Banaras or Varanasi. These saris are historically considered to be among the best and most sought-after in India. They are famous for their fine silk material, the gold and silver brocade, zari or embroidery work on them. The intricate work on them makes these sarees very heavy to drape and carry.

Banarasi sarees are characterized by the Mughal-inspired designs on them, as also their delicately patterned floral motifs of kalga and bel on their outer border. Other characteristics include filled work all over the body of the saree, metallic effects on the body or pallav and a net-like pattern called jal. Owing to their rich work, they are most ideal for bridal wear or as part of bridal trousseau. These sarees usually take anywhere between 15 days and six months to create, depending on the work done on them.

Today, mechanized pattern-making has resulted in huge losses for the Banarasi saree industry as a whole. The material used today is also compromised and the manufacturers often use synthetic silks, making these duplicates much more affordable.

Banarasi sarees come in 4 varieties, namely, pure silk or Katan, Organza or Kora with zari, Georgette and Shattir. The chemical dyes used in them, however, caused an environmental concern, which in turn polluted the Ganges. Hence, the current effort is to use natural dyes in the manufacture of these sarees.

Katan Silk



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**OLIVE GREEN AND MAROON
COMBINATION KATAN BANARAS SILK
SAREE WITH MAROON BORDER AND
PALLU WITH HEAVY THREADWORK**

Katan is basically a thread which is prepared by twisting several silk fragments in order to create the background fabric. This is a plain fabric woven by means of using pure silk threads. Usually comprising two threads twisted together, it is generally employed in the warp of light fabrics.

Katan can be classified into the following categories:

1. Katan Butidar - this technique uses warp and weft with buttis or little polka patterns woven in gold or resham or silk.
2. Katan Butidar Mina - this includes Mina work, consisting of zari design work, along with buttis.
3. Katan Butidar Paga Saree - this saree uses warp, resham weft and small buttis all over body, which are closely spaced with each other, along with a wide border and wide pallav.
4. Katan Brocade - this technique uses Katan Warp and Katan weft with figures created out of gold thread, with or without mina.
5. Katrawan - this uses cutwork, including the floating portions of the extra weft at the back of the fabric.
6. Katan Katrawan Mina - this employs the Katrawan style, along with Mina.

Jute Silk

This very impressive-looking fabric uses a very detailed and elaborate method of creation. Jute thread is closely and intricately weaved on pure silk fabric. The jute work has to be carried out with the utmost care, so that the designs appear uniform and elegant on the silk fabric. Jute silk sarees are the present rage among younger women, both in India and abroad. Available in a host of designs, patterns and colors, they lend an ethnic and unique touch to the wearer, becoming a veritable style statement in themselves.



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ALL-OVER WEAVED DESIGN BEIGE JUTE SAREE FROM BANARAS WITH BLACK AND GOLDEN ANCHAL

Valkalam



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LIGHT PEACH HAND-WOVEN VALKALAM SAREE FROM BANARAS WITH RAGINI MOTIFS ON BROCADE PALLU AND ALL-OVER BOOTA

Valkalam sarees usually are pure silk sarees, featuring interwoven pallav and borders, along with extremely delicate and intricate thread work. Expensive due to their detailed work, these sarees are best for bridal wear and for special occasions. Valkalam employs the use of pure silk threads woven into cotton silk or satin silk and can come either with a plain or a dotted background.

The motifs are usually hand-embroidered, lending the saree an overall impressive, royal look. Owing to its richness of texture and appearance, Valkalam fabrics can be used for creating sarees, bridal gowns, evening wear, shirts and so on.

Assamese Sarees

Moonga Silk

Assamese silks predominantly feature three types of indigenously manufactured wild silks, namely, Moonga, white Pat and Eri silks. Moonga silk sarees, which are the most sought-after among these, is created from the silkworm, *Antheraea Assamensis*. The larvae of these moths basically feed on Som and Andsualu leaves.

The silk that they give out is known for its rich, glossy texture, as also its durability in the long term. However, owing to its low porosity, the Moonga yarn cannot be dyed or bleached. The advantage here is that it allows the fabric to retain its original color and glow. This silk can easily be hand-washed and each subsequent wash lends even more beauty to the fabric. Very many times, this saree is passed on to the next generation, as it is capable of outliving one generation or users.

 <p>Buy this Saree</p>	 <p>Buy this Saree</p>
<p>LIGHT BEIGE ASSAM MOONGA TUSSAR SILK SAREE WITH BLACK AND RED WEAVED BORDER AND PALLU</p>	<p>WHITE ASSAM PAT SILK SAREE WITH BOOTA ALL-OVER AND GORGEOUS RED BORDER AND PALLU</p>

Sarees from Madhya Pradesh

Tussar Silk

Tussar silk, also spelled as Tassar and Tushar, is also known as Kosa silk. Tussar is much more textured than cultivated silk, but has shorter fibers. Hence, this silk is not all that durable and is not meant for rough wear. Most of its production occurs at Jharkhand and the Bhagalpur district of Bihar, where it is referred to as Bhagalpur silk.

Having a dull gold sheen, Tussar silks are available in various colors, after dyeing and are combined with hand painter, embroidered or printed designs. While this silk is used mostly in sarees, it could also be used in other apparel. It comes in a wide range of chemical dyes, colors and patterns. The tradition of Tussar weaving is more than a century old and brings in annual trade of over Rs. 100 crores.



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MAROON TUSSAR SILK SAREE WITH BLACK WARLI PRINT IN PALLU AND BORDER

Maheshwari



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**PEACH PINSTripES MAHESHWARI SAREE
FROM MADHYA PRADESH**

Maheshwari weaving is one of India's most famous industries, which uses the finest silk-cotton handloom fabric, originating at Maheshwari, Madhya Pradesh. The mainstay of this technique of weaving is its delicate work, resulting in sheer gossamer-like fabric, using geometrical designs in its motifs. Maheshwari sarees are made either of pure cotton or silk-mix fabrics. The borders of these sarees are usually narrow, ornamented with zari and solid color, stripes or checks on the body of the saree.

Maheshwari weaving is an ancient technique and has been in existence since the 2nd Century. Light and elegant while worn, this is the perfect drape for Indian summers.

While the original technique used only natural dyes, we also have chemical dyes being used today. Sometimes, gold thread may be used throughout the body of the saree in order to give it a classy touch. One unique feature of these sarees is that the border can be reversible and the pallav is very unique and distinctive from the rest of the sarees.

Rajsthani Sarees

Kota

Kota or Kota Doria sarees are made of cotton or silk and have khats or square patterns on them. This chequered weave is what makes the sari so popular among users. Originally made in Mysore, these sarees came to Rajasthan in the late 17th Century.

Woven on a traditional pit loom, the threads are delicately woven with each other and smeared with onion juice and rice paste in order to make the yarn strong and long-lasting as a finished product. Light and comfortable to wear, these sarees also look dignified on the wearer.



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KOTA SAREE

Chanderi



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**WEAVED GOLDEN DESIGN ALL-OVER ON
WHITE CHANDERI SAREE WITH GREEN
BORDER AND PALLU**

Chanderi is one of the commonest sarees, worn by women hailing from almost all sections of society. Chanderi is a small town situated in the Ashoknagar district of Madhya Pradesh. A town known for its looms, each artisan has about 2-4 looms within his or her house, from where they work on their creations.

Chanderi weaving has been recorded since the 11th Century. However, due to lack of controlled regulation, there are no authorized bodies to oversee the brand, due to which there are increasing instances of counterfeiting today.

Instead of using the regular taana machine used in the handloom industry, the artisans here use much older technology and wooden looms, which makes the process far more tedious and time-consuming. However, that is what creates the distinctive style of Chanderi which cannot be found elsewhere.

The main artisan does the main designing of the body and the motifs and his assistants take over the weaving process. The prolonged dyeing is then carried out by specialized technicians, after which the threads are weaved together to form patterns and designs. Chanderi fabrics are usually used for sarees, but may also include kurtas, dress materials, scarves and dupattas.

Sarees from Gujarat

Gharchola

Gharchola sarees form the regular traditional wear of Gujarati women. This variety of silk sarees is famous all over India as well. In this tradition, the sarees are first woven with silk and zari thread, after which they are tie-dyed or block-printed.

Usually worn at religious and other occasions, this saree is most popularly available in red and white. Containing large zari checks all over the body of the saree, along with golden motifs of peacocks or lotuses in the middle of each check, the border is a rich red with detailed zari work. Popular all over Surat, Jamnagar and Rajkot are the best places to purchase these sarees.



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**TIE AND DYE BLACK GHARCHOLA SILK
SAREE WITH ZARI CHECK, RED BORDER
AND PALLU FROM GUJARAT**

Patola



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**MAROON WITH RED PATOLA SILK SAREE
WITH ALL-OVER WEAVED DESIGN FROM
GUJRAT**

The double Ikat weaving style that Patola uses is what makes it one of the most popular sarees of Indian tradition. Very durable and gorgeous-looking, this saree is regarded as one of the finest among saree connoisseurs. Due to its weaving technique, it has no reverse side and both sides look equally bright and brilliant.

Patola sarees use the intricate Bandhani process of tie-dyeing on both the warp and weft. Traditionally, Patola uses pure silk and natural dyes. But at present, chemical dyes are most commonly used for coloring these fabrics. This very resilient fabric is color fast, hardly ever tears and also never loses its sheen and brilliance.

Maharashtra Sarees

Sholapuri

Maharashtra is known for its food, unique culture and of course, beautiful varieties of sarees. Sholapur is most famous for its textile mills. Besides hand-spinning, steam-spinning and weaving which was already in existence, the Sholapur Spinning and Weaving Company Limited was established in the area in 1877. Managed by Morarji Gokuldas and Company from Bombay, this company generated employment opportunities, also bringing in massive profits. While some workers were paid regular wages, some others were paid on a daily basis.

Gradually, more cotton and silk mills came into existence. The Narsingji Girji Manufacturing Co. Ltd came into existence afterward, followed by Laxmi Cotton Manufacturing Co. Ltd, Vishnu Cotton Mill Ltd and so on.

Today, the entire region is known for its handlooms, dyeing units and vast variety of sarees, including the world-famous Paithani, the traditional Nauvari or 9-yard Kashta in both silk and cotton and a variety of contemporary silks, cottons and other materials.

Tamil Nadu Sarees

Kanjivaram

Kanjivaram or Kanchipuram sarees are traditionally created by weavers residing in Kanchipuram, Tamil Nadu. Considered to be made from the highest quality silks, these sarees are also very expensive, though intricate and very beautiful. Featuring an unending variety in color, shades, contrasts and patterns, these sarees are must-haves for all saree aficionados.

The materials used in Kanchivaram sarees include pure, heavy silk, zari, gold and silver thread. While any motif or pattern could be used in these sarees, the commonest are the mallinaggu, which includes a jasmine bud within each square check or round frame of the saree; and Thandavalam, which has parallel lines running across the entire body of the saree.

While some elderly women prefer to wear plain Kanjivarams on a regular basis, the heavier sarees are meant for bridal and wedding wear and for special occasions. These sarees can usually be hand-washed at home and can last very long, depending upon the level of maintenance.



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MIDNIGHT GREEN KANCHIPURAM SILK SAREE WITH ALL-OVER ZARI BOOTA AND ONE SIDED ZARI BORDER WITH MAROON PALLU

Other Silks

Chennai, originally known as Madras, features many artificial silks and mix silks, which have also gained immense popularity today. These sarees are resilient and look stunning, while also being much cheaper price-wise and more easily maintainable.

These varieties include Aparna sarees, Apoorva sarees, Kalyani sarees, cotton-silk and polysilk sarees. Those of them that come with rich pallavs very closely imitate pure Kanjivarams and also are very affordably priced.

Andhra Sarees

Mangalagiri



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DARK MAGENTA MANGALAGIRI SAREE WITH FINE WHITE CHECKS

Mangalagiri sarees come from Mangalagiri, situated in the Guntur of Andhra Pradesh. Featuring quaint tribal designs, this is one of the most popular types of fabrics, woven from cotton. The design includes borders with closely-woven patterns, embroidered with zari. The pallav is usually ornamented with stripes and gold embroidery.

Like textiles from all the other Indian states, Mangalagiri too has unique characteristics. The material used is pure cotton, with no designs on the body of the fabric. The Nizam borders are the most remarkable part of the saree.

Mangalagiri artisans work with the pit-loom. The yarn is first boiled in water, to clean it of all the oils and waxes. After washing it the next morning, it is rinsed

and then taking for dyeing in any of several chemical dyes and their shades. After drying, begins the weaving process. Then follows the cutting, folding and final packaging of the cotton fabric.

Pochampally

Pochampally sarees or Pochampalli Ikat, which has been very popular since time immemorial, originates from Boodhan Pochampally in the Nalgonda district of Andhra. This fabric uses the ikat style of dyeing and weaving. Weaving intricate geometric patterns on the body, using bright colors, lends these sarees an elegance and grace.

The fabric used here is a wonderful mix of cotton and silk. Natural dyes and colors are used to further beautify the saree. Pochampally is yet another essential in the wardrobe of any true saree lover.



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**PURPLE POCHAMPALLY SILK SAREE WITH
OFF-WHITE IKAT DESIGN ALL-OVER,
BORDER AND PALLU**

Narayanpet



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**CHECKERED CHROME YELLOW
NARAYANPET SILK SAREE FROM ANDHRA
PRADESH**

Narayanpet sarees, which originate in the Mahabubnagar district, feature a distinctly Maharashtrian tradition with their weaves. Using silk and cotton fabric and featuring traditional borders and pallavs, these sarees are characterized by their unique pattern of alternating red and white bands, which are now not too much in use. The body of the saree is usually plain and has one single deep color. The contrasting patti border and broad pallav are the other unique characteristics of this drape. They contain strips of zari in them, which lend a rich look to the saree.

The silk sarees are lightweight, fall beautifully while draped and look regal on the wearer. Cotton sarees, while mostly plain, may also use colored checks on the body, in order to lend them that ethnic look.

Gadwal

Gadwal is a small town consisting of professional weavers. These richly woven silk sarees carry intricate designs on the body as well as the pallav. Interestingly, the designs are inspired by the royalty and sculpture of the past. For instance, one can see unique work on the fabric, such as a representation of the Hamsa, the mythical swan; or the Youli or the stylized Lion. Yet another popular pattern is one that resembles a cluster of tendrils intertwined together.

The Gadwal style of weaving uses a combination of silk and cotton, which makes these sarees ideal to wear for a wide variety of occasions, ranging from small home functions, to religious occasions, party wear, weddings and so on.



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**OFF-WHITE SELF CHECK COTTON
GADWAL SAREE WITH MAROON
FROM ANDHRA PRADESH**

Karnataka Sarees

Mysore Silk



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**GREY MYSORE CREPE SILK SAREE WITH
MAROON BORDER AND PALLU WITH ZARI**

Mysore is famous for its sandalwood, crafts and most importantly, silk sarees, especially the Mysore Crepe silk sarees. The state Government has contributed heavily towards the growth and development of this particular industry.

Though Mysore silks have been in existence since the mid 18th Century, the Maharaja of Mysore set up the Government Silk Factory in the year 1932, in order to clothe the royal family in the finest of silks. This factory is still known for its quality and the use of genuine materials.

The specialty of the sarees available here is that they are most minimalistic in design, are elegant and stand out for their purity. The body is usually made up of one single color, flanked by gold zari borders. The pallav can have anything ranging from a very simple to a very elaborate design. Saree materials include Crepe-de-Chine, Georgette, semi-crepe and so on. Due to its

adherence to quality, these sarees can last a very long time, without getting damaged in any way.

Bangalore Silk

Bangalore too presents vast choices of material, color and texture to the saree shopper. Like in Chennai, one can see a wide variety of silks and artificial silk sarees in Bangalore. The top of the line sarees include digitally printed drapes with pigment dyes, art silks, jacquards and printed silks, featuring modern art, ornamental motifs, embroidery work, appliqué work and so on.

One can also choose from rich satins, organzas, taffetas, dupion silks, poly dupion and many more varieties, depending on one's budget.

Kerala Sarees

Kasavu

Kerala is most famous for its Kasavu Mundus and sarees, which are basically handloom, off-white or ivory pure cotton fabrics, bordered with brilliant golden brocade. The set Mundu, also referred to as the Mundum Neriyaathum, is the traditional apparel of Keralite women. While the lower sarong-like part of this 2-piece fabric is tucked in at the waist, the upper portion is wound around the waist, to cover the torso diagonally and hang loose from the left shoulder, much like a regular saree. In ancient Kerala, women used to tuck in the neriyaathu around the body at chest level.

The gold kasavu is either a pure golden layer or is coated with copper or artificial color. Some sets have ornate designs across the body and border. Today, you can also purchase kasavu sarees, which are the regular 6-yard sarees, with the off-white body, gold border and pallav.

Non-kasavu mundu sets have different colored borders and the wearer may match her blouse with that border color. In the case of a kasavu set too, the wearer can choose between a blouse of the same color or a different contrast color, with or without ornate work on it.



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OFF-WHITE KASAVU SAREE WITH GOLDEN ZARI BORDER AND PALLU

This article was written by Priya Viswanathan, a teacher/performer of Bharata Natyam, Classical Music and Classical Instrumental Veena. A recipient of several awards for both music and dance, Priya is also a freelance writer online. She currently writes for About.com, a subsidiary of IAC - parent company of Ask.com (<http://mobiledevices.about.com>)

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