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## Ilkal Saree - Ilkal (Bagalkot), Karnataka

Traditional Styles of Sarees by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral, Divyadarshan C. S. and Lija M. G.

NID Campus, Bengaluru

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### Introduction

The people of Ilkal send with their children and family members the Ilkal saree to the places where ever they make their livelihood. It is generally given as a gift or sold to their friends or neighbours in the city of Bengaluru and Maharashtra saying that these are the handmade sarees from their hometown. Ilkal word is said to have got from the place itself where it originates, it is located at the Bagalkot district of Karnataka in India. It is one of the centers for education, trade, commerce and industry.

Ilkal is surrounded by the levelled surface and small hills in certain directions that has abundant resources of granite stones there by leading to the name Ilkal from the Kannada word lakallu which means slope. Ilkal saree generally have distinct pattern and are usually made from cotton as it is best suited for the weather conditions that which prevails in this particular area. Weaving is wide spread in this area where some years back most of the houses had their own loom that made the sarees for themselves and others. As this area was dependent unstably on agriculture these led the people to take up weaving to add-on their living.

Ilkal saree weaving is found more in and around the villages of Kolhar, Ilkal, Kamatgi and Nidagundi located at the Bijapur district of Karnataka. The special aspect of this is the pallu part of the saree that is specially woven in red and white. These sarees usually have a characteristic shade of dark indigo, purple, red and green with their traditional styles of pallu's. The pallu and the body are joined in a technique called as kondi. Other features are it has the traditional patterns with motifs of centipedes, dots and triangles. Pallu has a cross border design in white across the width between the two borders.

The pit loom is generally referred to as kuni magga where traditional gomi or chikiparas borders of the saree are generally woven. One of the distinctive features of this saree it is fine, in some cases with delicate kasuti embroidery that is as usually done an embellishment. Pallu is given special importance as it is worn on the head, saree worn on special occasions are generally woven with silk which is generally made with the interlocking technique called tope-teni.

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White silk yarns are usually preferred for weaving.

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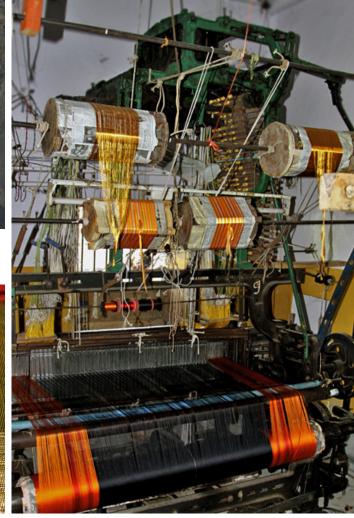
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Dyed silk threads available in various colours.



Weaving of Ilkal Saree.



Dobby Loom allows the manufacture of complex patterns.

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Beautifully woven Ilkal silk sarees.

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### **Tools and Raw Materials**

Ilkal Saree in olden times were woven more with silk due to the high rate of silk, the use of silk is comparatively lesser. Also usage of art silk became a part and addition of cotton, nowadays these type of Ilkal saree are commonly found. The Tools and raw materials commonly used in the making of these saree are as follows:

- Silk Yarns: Are one of the main materials used for weaving of the Ilkal sarees.
- Art Silk Yarns: Art silk or artificial silk yarns are specially made from the synthetic fiber.
- Cotton Yarns: Cotton grown in the neighbouring places made to yarns are generally preferred.
- Mud Pots: Specially used for colouring the hank of yarns.
- Fly Shuttle: Used to insert the weft thread as per the pattern.
- Phirki (bamboo swift): Are mostly preferred for winding the silk yarns.
- Bobbins: Are mostly used for winding the yarns for additional process.
- Charkha: It is equipment where the yarns are wound on the pirns.
- Plastic Pirns: Are used for winding the yarns for weaving.
- Brush: Used to spread the yarns for colouring.
- Scissors: Are generally used to cut the unwanted threads.



Flying shuttle loaded with pirns.

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Orange silk thread twirled on spool.

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A cylindrical drum where thread in spun which acts a spool.

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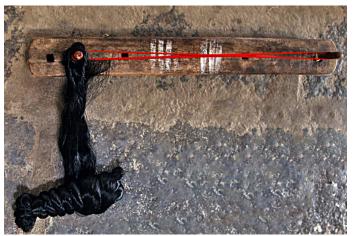
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Empty Pirns winded manually with silk thread.



Pirns spun with black silk thread for the weaving process.



The tool where two different shades of thread are joined together.



Silk yarns of different shades.

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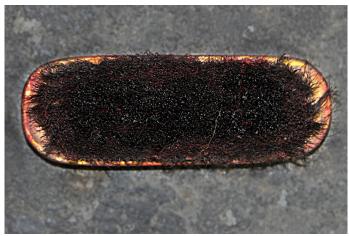
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Spools twirled with green silk threads.



Brush with synthetic hairs helps in separating each threads during the dyeing process.



Wood ash and natural gum used during joining of two different threads together.



Cloth used to apply dye colours to threads attached to the loom.

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Wax is used to smoothen the weaving process.



Soap oil is used to watch the bundle of yarns.



Dye Powder.



Iron vessel used for boiling water the hot water dyeing process.

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Mud stove is used to boil the solution.

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## **Making Process**



Dyeing



**Packaging** 



Weaving

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## **Dyeing**

Before the weaving of the Ilkal saree the cotton yarns are dyed into desired colours in the process of Cold water dyeing and Hot water Dyeing.

### **Cold Water Dyeing:**

It is the process where the natural silk yarns or cotton yarns are separated from the bundle and firstly dipped into a soap solution then required dye is mixed into the soap solution and the yarns are further dipped into the dye solution to absorb the colour and are kept for some time. Then the yarns are taken out and with a rod the excess of water is squeezed out from the dyed yarn. The dyed yarns are kept under the sun to dry. The cold water dyeing is completed.



Natural cotton yarns in a bundles.



Each bundle is separated and suspended on an iron rod to ensure the threads.

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The soap solution is prepared for the yarns to be dyed.



Golden colour is poured into the soap solution.



Yarn is dipped fully with bare hands into the solution.

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The white yarn changes into yellow and is pulled out of the solution.



The excess of solution is squeezed out from the dyed yarn using a rod.



Dyed yarns are spread on the bamboo by the worker.

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Dyed yarns are placed under the sun to dry.

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Dyed yarns collected and kept aside.

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### **Hot Water Dyeing:**

In this process liquid dye is mixed with water to from a thick solution where the bundle of yarn is soaked into the solution and taken out and are kept aside for further dyeing. Hot water is boiled in a vessel and dyed powder is added to the hot water to make a solution. The dyed yarns are further dipped into the boiling vessel and kept for two hours to absorb the colour. The dyed yarns are taken out of the vessel and the water is squeezed out and again the yarns are soaked in cold water and further squeezed and kept under the sun to dry.



Liquid dye is mixed with water to form a thick solution.



Water is poured to the thick solution.

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Bundle of cotton yarns are soaked into the solution.



The dyed yarn is taken out and squeezed.

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Few bundles of dyed yarns kept for the hot dyeing process.

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Water is boiled in a large vessel.



The hot water is collected in a vessel for further process.

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Dye powder is added to the hot water to make a thick solution.



The solution is equally mixed with the help of an iron rod.

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And the solution is heated up to a given temperature.



The already dyed yarns are dipped into the large vessel with the help of a bamboo.

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Two workers with the help of a bamboo turns the yarns to dip them fully into the solution.



The yarns are fully dyed and covered.



The dyed yarns are kept in the boiling solution to absorb the colours.

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The coloured yarn is then twisted with the help of a rod to squeeze out the excess water.



The dyed yarns are placed aside to cool.



The dyed yarns are again soaked in cold water.

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Then again the yarns are further squeezed with the iron rod.



After this process the dyed yarns are kept under sun to dry.

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## Weaving

### **Handloom Weaving:**

Ilkal saree is woven in cotton along with art silk, with a border and a pallu of art silk or in mixed art silk and cotton. It is also woven with a silk border and pallu or even a body of silk and cotton with a silk border and pallu. Saree's with a pure silk body, border and pallu with silk, art silk or cotton are later introductions. Gomi border and chikki paras' border are the two types of borders observed in the Ilkal saree. Chikki means dots or stars and kaddi, kondi means small or big, dots or stars. The two borders look similar except that the triangles are smaller in the kaddi chikki and can be used in more number. Silk yarns basically brought from Bengaluru, silk along with cotton and art silk are generally preferred for making of the saree with either pure or combinations are chosen as per the weaver/ craftsmen. As per the craftsmen, in about 2000 people living in this village previously all the people were involved in the weaving, nowadays only about 1200 people have stayed back in continuing this craft. The coloured yarns brought in the hank form are wound on the bobbins/ pirns, which are later taken to the loom as the warp or weft. Piecing is the process where the warp yarns are knotted with the locally available substance called Minusari to knot the yarns firmly together to each other. In Ilkal saree making also follows the looping method where the pallu warp and body warp are attached. Some craftsmen follow the pallu weaving first and then the body part of the saree weaving.



The loom is placed in an arrangement from which the spindles are spun.



Artisan loading the pirns with silk thread with the help of the Charkha.

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The process of joining two different threads together.



With the help of wood ash and natural gum the threads are linked with one another.



The yarn is set up on the handloom for the weaving process.

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Loaded pirn is inserted into the flying shuttle.



The flying shuttle is then passed through the divided part of the yarns to interweave and create a pattern.



To position the silk thread in place the heddle shaft of the loom is used.

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After the thread is positioned, the flying shuttle is again pushed through the yarn.



Artisan applying wax to the unweave yarn for smoothing the weaving process.



Flying shuttle loaded with pirn is inserted into the divided yarns to weave them.

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The thread is again flattened with the heddle shaft to its position.



After the Ilkal saree is weaved fifteen centimeters of yarn is left out.



The elderly women then ties knots in a pattern and creates the fringes of the saree.

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She ensures every knot and cuts out the uneven part of the saree with the scissor.

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The fringes are beautifully arranged and the Ilkal saree is completed.

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### **Powerloom Weaving:**

In order to save time power loom is also used for weaving the Ilkal sarees. Few weavers brush the yarns on the loom evenly and apply water to it with the bear hands. Then applies the colour mixture solution on the top, bottom portions of the yarn and allows it to dry, simultaneously weaving process goes on. Earlier natural colours were prepared by the craftsmen themselves and dyed; nowadays they have changed on to the synthetic dyes as it is the tedious process. Between the lengths of each saree about 15 cms of yarn is left and the next saree is woven. Each saree is cut from the loom and given to the elderly women of the house who engages in tying beautiful fringes with the left over yarns. After which the saree is folded neatly and sent for packaging process which is then distributed to the customers in request.



Wooden Charkha is used to hold the yarns in place.

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## Ilkal Saree - Ilkal (Bagalkot), Karnataka

Traditional Styles of Sarees

by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral, Divyadarshan C. S. and Lija M. G.

NID Campus, Bengaluru

### Source:

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Artisan ensuring each charkha from which the spindles are being spun.



To reduce the work pressure the machines are used for the spinning of spindles.



The loaded spindle is soaked in water.

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Spindle is fixed to a machine to start the winding process.



Then the pirns are spun from the spindles.



The warping process is started in the power loom.



Artisan involved in the warping machine to warp the yarns.

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Metallic frames (creels) holds the bobbins through which the threads are passed on to the warping machine.



Artisan cutting out the excess part of the yarn.



The warped yarns are being set on to the Power loom for the weaving.

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Artisan setting up the yarn on the loom as per the pattern required.

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Water is applied to the unweave yarns attached on the loom.



With the help of the brush each thread is separated for the dyeing process.



Required colour is applied to a cloth by the artisan.



Dye is applied to the yarns with the cloth.

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Artisan ensuring and fixing the woven part of the fabric.



A power loom displaying the patterns used in weaving of the fabrics.

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The woven fabric is rolled in place and further weaving is processed.

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## **Packaging**

The traditional Ilkal sarees are then taken to the packaging process. In this process each saree is ensured and packed one by one with the help of a packaging machine. The sarees are packed with brown paper and are tied together with a strong rope and are prepared for sale. Each saree is produced in different length ranging from 6.00 yards to 9.00 yards. Ilkal sarees are famous for their Pallav locally known as "Tope teni".



Packaging is a process where the products are neatly packet.



The products are placed in top of one another in the packaging machine.

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The products are compressed and the tying is initiated.



A strong rope is passed through the compressed products.



All the products are tied firmly in a package.



The patterns and colours are visible in the package kept for sale.

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### **Products**

Saree with red, blue, green are generally preferred with 6 to 9 meters long with the starting rate from Rs. 200 with cotton saree to Rs. 8000 of silk with pit loom and power loom.

A Large number of variations in the size and composition of checks are usually found in the body of Ilkal saree some are mentioned below.

- Ragavali: With simple checks of two and four ends are normally called Ragavali.
- Kaddi Chikki: Pattern of saree with smaller checks.
- Patang Checks: Also known as shirting checks which have more elaborate checks.
- Mandap Checks: The two warp yarns and weft are positioned at certain distance to form larger checks.
- Dapla Checks: Are usually like the Mandap but smaller.
- Jabra Patta: This word is said to originate from the zebra stripes with broad stripes in the body.
- Pancarangi: Checks with generally three or more coloured ends.
- Chandrekali: Saree's with plain bluish black body are known as Chandrekali.
- Basanthi: Saree's with a red and orange combination are known as Basanthi.

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Ilkal sarees are weaved with the combination of three different types of yarns.



Ilkal sarees of Karnataka are famous for the kasuti embroidery.

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Saree woven in checks with three or more colored border.



These sarees are manufactured mainly on pit looms.



These sarees are six to nine yards long with vibrant borders.

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Ilkal sarees woven with the same pattern in different colours.

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### **Contact Details**

This documentation was done by Prof. Bibhudutta Baral, Divyadarshan C. S. and Lija M. G. at NID Campus, Bengaluru.

You can get in touch with

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You could write to the following address regarding suggestions and clarifications:

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