

Design Resource

## Dharmavarma Silk Weaving

The making of Silk Threads

by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral and Mr. Antony William

NID, Bengaluru

Source:

<http://dsource.in/resource/dharmavarma-silk-weaving>



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## Introduction

Dharmavaram is located at a distance of 47 KM from Anantapur district in the state of Andhra Pradesh India. Dharmavaram is well-connected by both by rail and road. Dharmavaram Sarees are traditionally woven in the interlocked-weft technique. The design required on the saree is initially drawn in a computer and then this is punched into a card and then these cards are loaded in Jacquard in the loom. First the yarn is loaded as warp and then loaded into the loom. The weavers use their hands and legs to weave the Sari. It requires approximately 4-5 days (depending on the variety of sari and capability of weaver) of continuous efforts of two persons for weaving a sari. Handloom weaving is the largest source of employment in Dharmavaram. Dharmavaram silk sarees are famous for its broad solid colored borders with contrast pallu woven with brocaded gold patterns. The wedding sarees manufactured at Dharmavaram are highly appreciated. Simpler patterns for everyday use have the specialty of being woven in two colours which give an effect of muted double shades accentuated by the solid color border and pallu. The muted colours, the double shades create a total different effect that adds a striking appeal to the saree.

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An overview of the village environment.



The yarn is arranged in loops to organize the thread for further dyeing process.



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The yarns are dyed to obtain the desired color of the saree.



The dyed silk yarns are then wound from loose threads to spools.



This is an illustration of the manual process of spinning the spools to spindles.



The threads are checked for breakages and entanglements while the winding process continues.

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The craftsman working with a fly shuttle on the weaving process of the Dharmavaram Sarees.



The coveted Dharmavaram silk saree that is especially worn at weddings and special occasions.

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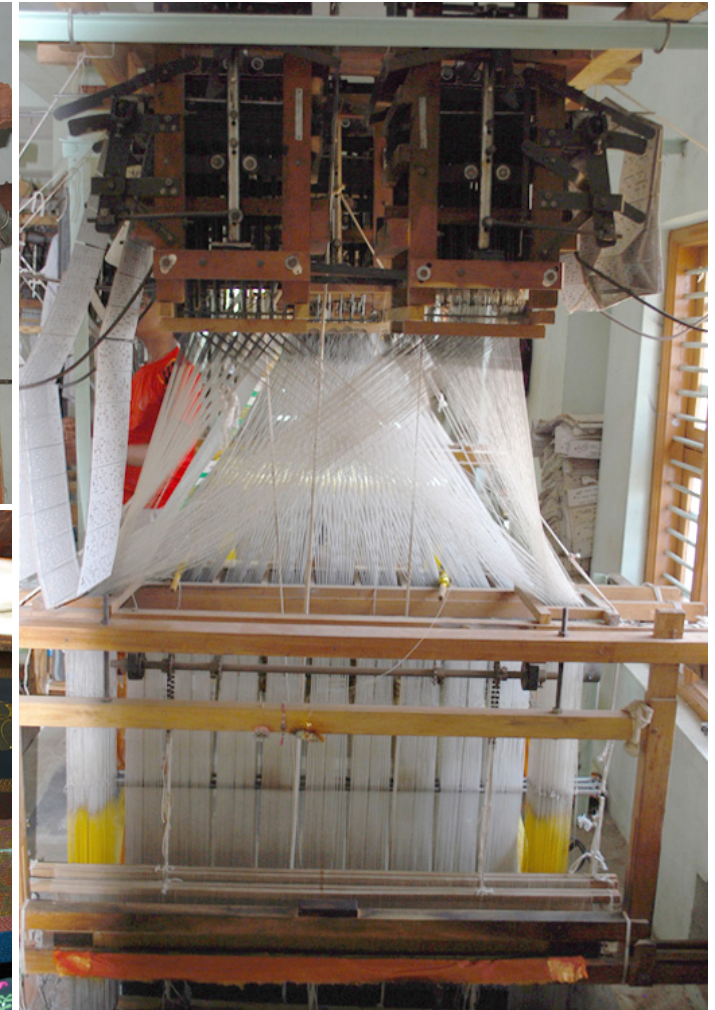
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## Tools and Materials

The tools and machinery used in Dharmavaram ranges from the ancient to the modern technology of weaving silk sarees. Different types of tools are used during the various stages of the weaving process, beginning from the dyeing process, to making of the thread, spinning and finally the weaving process. The main implements needed for the dyeing process are the dyes, a huge container for boiling, and iron rods for drying. The spinning wheel helps in turning fiber into thread or yarn. The fly shuttle and the paddle are the key instruments which help in the designing and weft formation. The weaving process begins by plotting of the design on a graph paper and by punching them into a perforated card called Jacquard, which is linked in a chain as per the design. It helps in punching the designs in the required sequence and desired pattern. The design required on the saree is initially drawn in a computer and then this is punched into a card and then these cards are loaded in Jacquard in the loom. First the yarn is loaded as warp and then loaded into the loom. The weavers use their hands and legs to weave the Saree.

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The front view of the weaving loom locally known as 'Maggam'.



Weights are suspended to the Zari (gold thread) keep the zariwarp taut on the loom.



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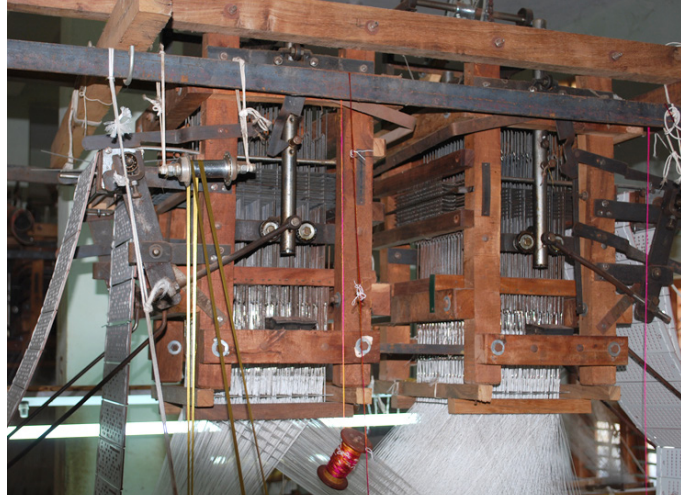
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The wooden frame locally known as 'Donu' is used to wind the prepared weave at regular intervals.



The Jacquard machines that enable codification and replication of the pattern on the weave.



One of these machines is used to make design pattern for the sari while the other is used to produce borders.



These threads (Vallu) are connected to the Jacquard machine and loaded to the loom which helps in forming the design while weaving.



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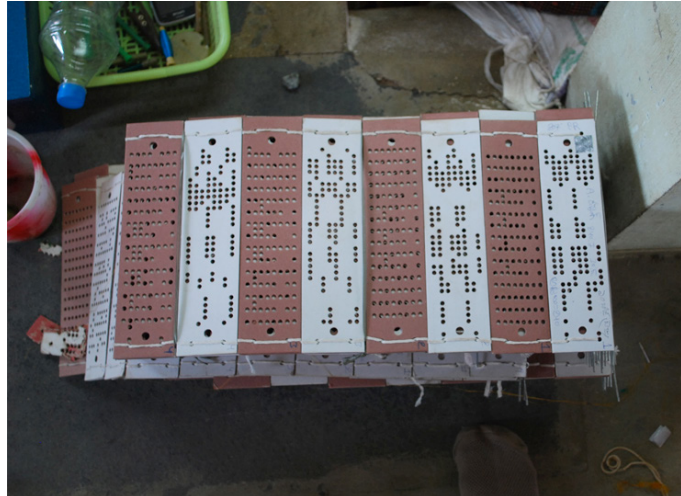
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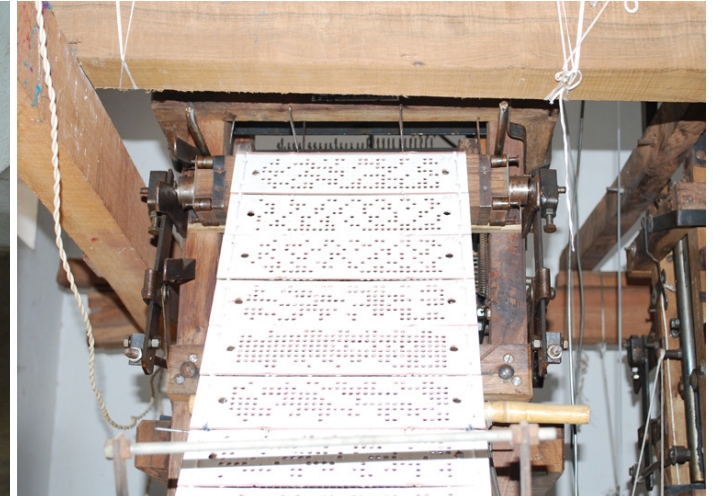
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These are perforated punch card readers ('Jacquards') play a key role in obtaining the sari design.



These punch card readers are attached to the jacquard machine.



The holes are punched on each card to compose the design of the textile that are strung together in order.



The weaver operates foot pedals to shift locomotive parts of the loom to enable efficient weaving.



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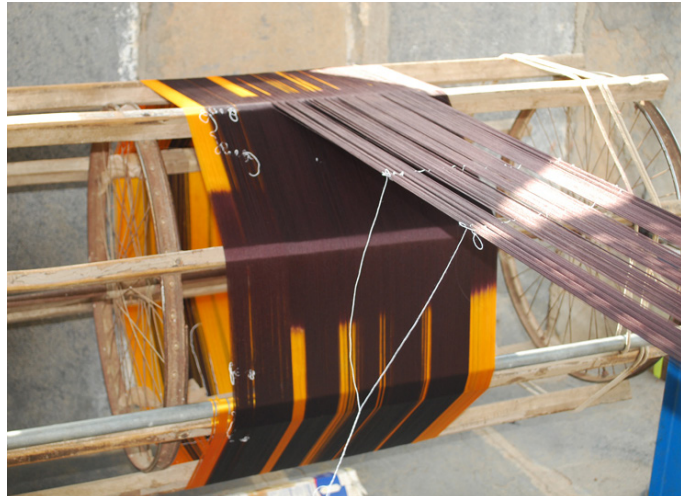
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A cylindrical wooden frame used in warping process to unwind the threads.



The machine used to roll the warp in warping process is locally known as 'dolu'.



The winding machine, locally called the 'Resham machine' is used to spin the yarn.



Another warping machine, 'ratam' is used to wind the zari spools to zari warp for the embellished borders.



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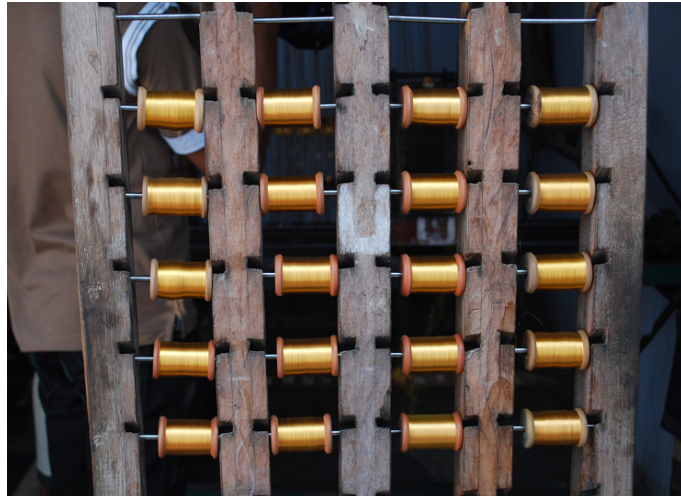
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Zari spools are exclusively used for ornamental borders and designs in the sari.



'Kanti', the spinning wheel that is used to wind the yarn to form spools.



This machine (Motor Ratam) used to fasten the spinning process using electricity.



The cost effective manual spinning wheel 'Ratam' is used in smaller units.



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These Spindles 'botlu' are used in weaving process.



"Kommu" (Fly shuttle) is the main tool used while weaving to form weft.



Modern technology of spinning the thread into the spindle using advanced machinery.

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## Dyeing Process

Dyeing is the coloring process by dipping the yarn in the boiled color water in very high temperature, higher the temperature durability of color is also higher. The art of dyeing silk is the story of transforming raw silk to yarn and further enhancing the weaving process with customized designs with the warps and wefts. The dyeing process should be cautiously undertaken, as it involves boiling of the yarn in the high temperature. Repeated boiling and cooling of the yarn helps in the uniformity of the dye application. The process of manufacturing a Dharmavaram Saree starts with dyeing the silk / cotton yarn. Dyeing of the yarn is done ensuring that the color is spread uniformly throughout the yarn and it doesn't affect the quality of the yarn. The coloring process is a very crucial step in obtaining a good saree. The colours are applied as per the specifications of the designers and also some times as per the orders from customers who orders for a designer Saree. After coloring the silk yarn is dried in shade. Drying yarn in sun can be harmful to yarn. After the silk yarn is dried, it is rolled over small sticks. After dyeing and drying the yarn it is converted to thread and is loaded as warp and then it is loaded into the loom for actual weaving.

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The core half-white yarn (Resham) can be dyed to any color.



The desired dye color is added to the boiling water.



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The colored water is stirred well for a while for the solution to reach homogeneity.



The arranged yarn is dipped in colored solution for dyeing.



The yarn is dipped into the solution at a very high temperature.



The colored solution seeps in the yarn to facilitate dyeing.



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Repeated dipping and rotation ensures enhanced luster and uniformity.



The colored yarn is ready to be removed from the container once the process is complete.



This dyed yarn is wrung out and allowed to dry in shade.



The yarn allowed to cool at room temperature for one to two days.



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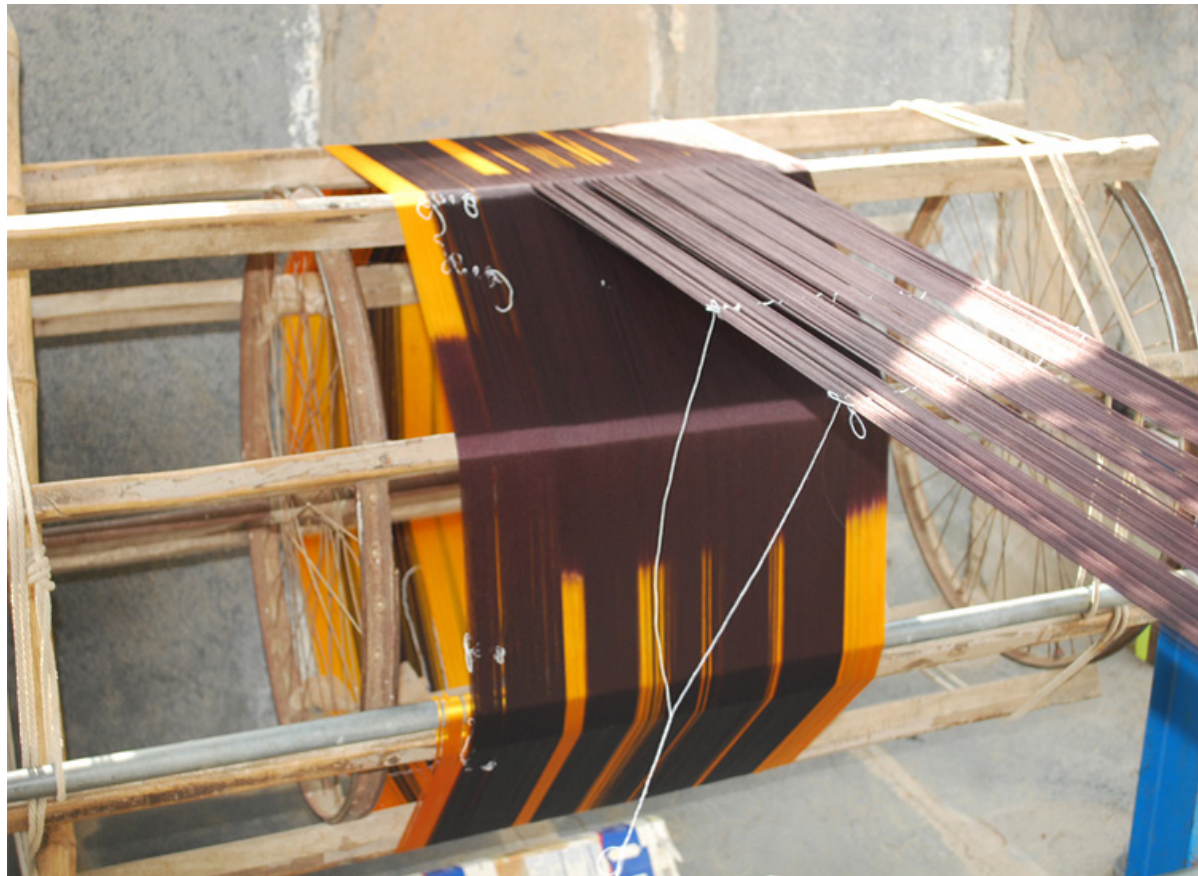
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## Warping Process

The warping process is done after dyeing the yarn, weaver now prepares the warp, to make the sari. For this purpose he uses a 'Dolu' or warping machine. The thread rolls are put on the vertical frame of the warping machine. This is a movable frame. The ends of the thread are taken from the rolls and are wound on the big wooden cylinder of the machine. This process starts from one end of the big octagonal cylinder and goes on till the entire cylinder is covered with yarn. The tightly wound yarn on this log is then provided to the weaver to use it for the warp on the loom frame. The entire length of the warp is a stretch of 75 meters long which can make 10 saris at a time.



The 'dolu' or warping machine that rotates on its axis and a horizontal frame on which a number of thread rolls can be attached.



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A cotton thread is inserted in a zigzag manner to help examine breakages and to avoid entanglements.



Repeated examinations are done to check for the Knots and breakages.



Sizing of the warp to ensure the quality of the threads.



The ends of the thread taken from the rolls are wound on the big wooden cylinder of the machine.



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Minimum of two people are involved in warping process.



Spreading the warp evenly across the machine for rolling the warp.



This process of rolling warp gives maximum uniformity and tension to the warp.



The density of the thread in the warp determines the quality of the sari.



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While rolling the warp into an iron rod a thick layered paper is inserted to avoid entanglements.



Finally, the prepared warp is attached to the loom frame to weave the sari.

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## Thread Making Process

A bundle of yarn goes through the thread making process to be finally wound into a spindle. The yarns are classified by their number of parts. A single yarn is made from a cluster of filament or staple fibers twisted together. A yarn consists of numerous strands of material twisted together. Each bundle of yarn consists of 1400 strands, with a length of 74 meter each. These short fibers are spun into longer filaments to make the yarn. These spun yarns are used during the process of weaving to form warps and wefts.



The dried yarn is ready to be transformed as thread.



The thread is looped from the winding machine to the spool.



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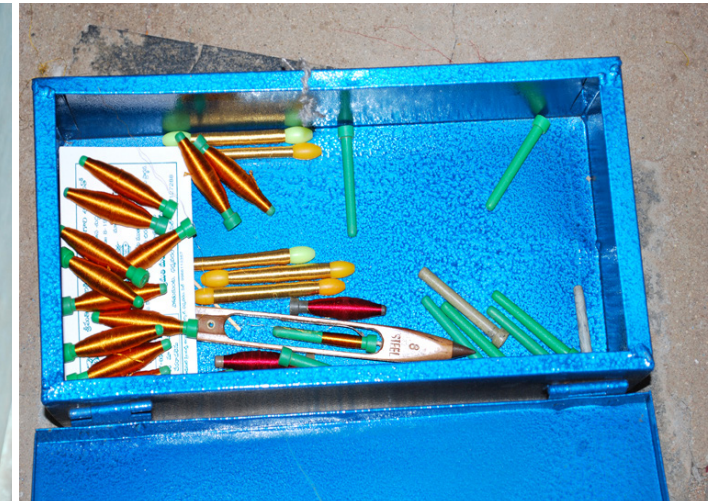
A manual winding process is still employed where motorized equipments cannot be afforded.



The spool is sequentially attached to wooden posts in the prescribed order.



Hand cranking 'Ratam' to form spindles from spools.



The thread is ready to be inserted into the fly-shuttle for further processing.

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## Setting The Loom

The pit loom, which is locally called 'Maggam' by the weavers in Dharmavaram, is identified by the heavy wooden frames. The loom is controlled by punched cards with punched holes, each row of which corresponds to one row of the design. Multiple rows of holes are punched on each card and the many cards that compose the design of the textile are strung together in order. And then the warp is loaded in to the loom by attaching each strand of warp to the loom. This process is locally called 'achhu'. After setting the warp the weaver enters into the loom to starts weaving, it takes nearly 5 to 6 days to complete one sari.



The loom is placed in such a way that light from a door or window will fall from the weaver's side for better vision.



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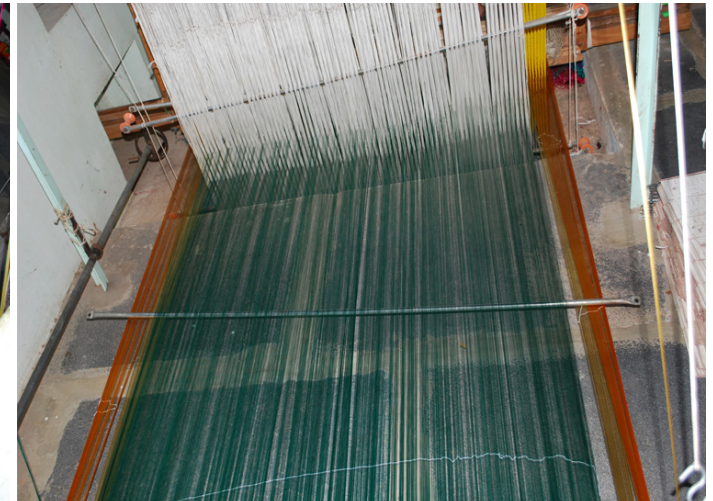
The process of joining warp to the loom called “achhu” locally.



Each strand of the warp is attached to the loom by gumming and twisting.



The warp is loaded to the loom to go through the weft process.



10600 strands of yarn is used in the width of warp.

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Before weaving, the jacquard is placed to the machine to obtain the desired pattern.



The zari is surmounted and used for the ornate saree borders.

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## Weaving Process

The weaving process has advanced from manual to hi-tech motor machines resourcing high production of silk products. It is the most basic process in which two different sets of yarns are entwined to form a fabric or cloth. One of these sets is called a warp which runs from the rear end to the front of the loom lengthwise. The other set of crosswise yarns are the filling, called the weft or the woof. The weave varies depending on its pattern, tautness, the number of threads per inch of cloth, and the colours and thicknesses of the different threads used.

Dharmavaram Sarees are traditionally woven in the interlocked-weft technique. Pure silk versions of Dharmavaram sarees are also available. The design required on the saree is initially drawn in a computer and then this is punched into a card and then these cards are loaded in Jacquard in the loom. First the yarn is loaded as warp and then loaded into the loom. The weavers use their hands and legs to weave the Saree. It requires approximately 4-8 days (depending on the variety of saree) of continuous efforts of two persons for weaving a saree.



Initial adjustments are made before the process of weaving begins.

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The weaver uses a number of shuttles 'kommu' in making one sari & one shuttle for each different color.



Weave will be formed by pulling the wooden frame towards the weaver.



The fly-shuttle is sent across the wooden frame to process the weft.



Zari spindles are directly passed through the warp to form zari design while weaving.



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The zari design weaving requires an immense dexterity to manifest the desired design.



The pedal movement helps the frames to move up and down.



The weaver usually makes the changes and repeats the process in case any mistake is spotted.



The unwoven thread is removed out cautiously.

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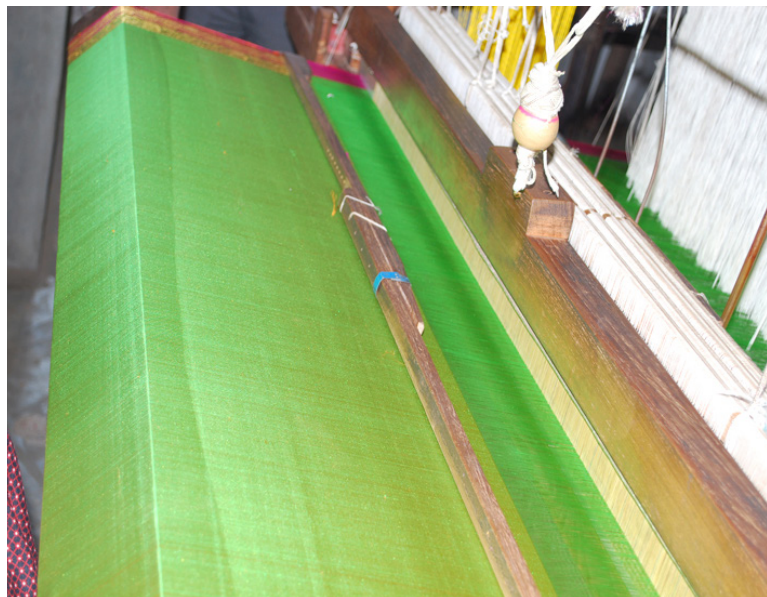
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Gum is applied for stiffness and shine of the sari and the excess gum is wiped out.



The woven fabric is appears with taut sheen yielding an attractive look.



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## Finishing

Dharmavaram silk sarees are a benchmark in traditional craft industry. They are very famous for their striking color combinations with contrast pallu and border woven with exquisite brocade gold patterns. It caters to the needs of the customers. The designs are decided by the designer according to the market demand. The peak season is the marriage season, more than half of the production and sales takes place in this period. The additional design can be added to silk saree using kundans, chamkies, and stones and also opposite colours. Depending on the elaboration of the saree design, the cost varies.



The woven Dharmavarm saree is set for after the process.

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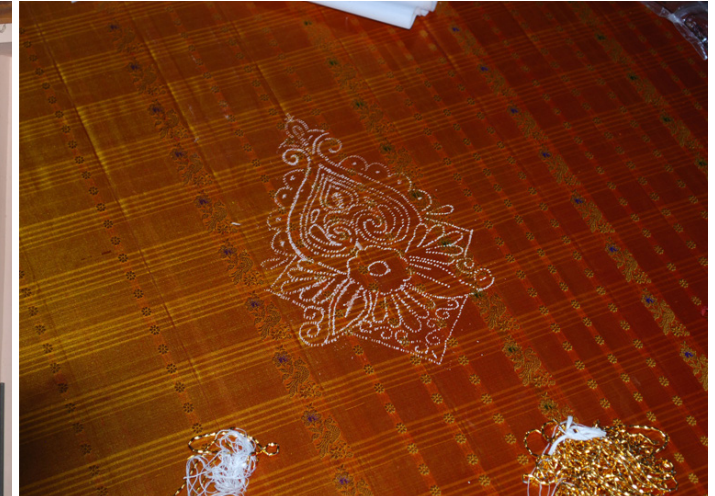
Source:

<http://dsource.in/resource/dharmavarma-silk-weaving/finishing>

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The prepared pieces of woven splendor in the weaver's possession.



An additional design element of hand embroidery may be added to create aesthetic design appeal.



Occasionally, precious and semi-precious stones are used to ornate the saree.



The magnificence and grandeur is the exceptional feature of the Dharmavaram Sarees.



Design Resource

## Dharmavarma Silk Weaving

The making of Silk Threads

by

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NID, Bengaluru

### Source:

<http://dsource.in/resource/dharmavarma-silk-weaving/links>

## Links

- [Craft Design in India](#)
- [Online Infomation Centre for Crafts](#)
- [Handmade in India](#)
- [Crafts Council of India](#)
- [Craft Mark](#)
- [Arts and Crafts - Handicrafts and Handlooms](#)

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## Contact Details

This documentation was done by **Professor Bibhudutta Baral** and Mr. Antony William at **NID, Bengaluru**.

You can get in touch with Professor Bibhudutta Baral at **[bibhudutta\[at\]nid.edu](mailto:bibhudutta[at]nid.edu)**.

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

### Helpdesk Details:

Co-ordinator  
Project e-kalpa  
R & D Campus  
National Institute of Design  
#12 HMT Link Road, Off Tumkur Road  
Bengaluru 560 022  
India.

Phone: +91 80 2357 9054

Fax: +91 80 23373086

Email: **[dsource.in\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:dsource.in[at]gmail.com)**

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