

## Speciality of Banana Yarn on Ilkal Handloom Sarees Woven with Murgi Motif

Jyothi Kordhanyamath<sup>1</sup>, Dr.S. Kauvery Bai<sup>2</sup>

1- Acharya Institute of Graduate Studies, Bengaluru

2- Smt. V H D Central Institute of Home Science, Bengaluru.

Email:[jyothis@acharya.ac.in](mailto:jyothis@acharya.ac.in), [kauverybai@gmail.com](mailto:kauverybai@gmail.com)

### Abstract

Banana fibre is a natural fibre extracted from the pseudo stem of the banana plant. Banana fibres have the advantage of being extracted from agricultural residue. Fabrics made from banana are soft and supple, as well as breathable and a natural sorbent. They have a natural shine and are often compared to silk. Considering the goodness, banana yarns are selected along with regenerated cellulose yarns to develop the traditional Ilkal sarees. Two sarees are developed: one with cotton\*modal and another with cotton\*bamboo. Banana yarns are used as an extra set of weft yarns to weave kasuti murgi motifs. The sarees are woven in a handloom with a jacquard set up. The study was undertaken with two purposes. On the one hand, banana yarns are implemented to weave kasuti murgi motifs in Ilkal sarees so as to achieve sustainability in the fashion field. On the other hand, handlooms are used to retain the traditional form of loom and also to retain the traditional technique of weaving Ilkal sarees. A slight contemporary twist is given to Ilkal sarees with the usage of new yarns and colours.

**Key words:** Banana yarns, Handloom, Ilkal, Murgi motif, Jacquard, sustainability.

### I. INTRODUCTION

Mankind is giving more importance to organic and eco-friendly products. In earlier days, natural fibres served a crucial role for everyday needs across a wide range of uses. But in recent years, the arrival of synthetic products is dominating the natural due to the low cost. However, synthetic fibres are non-degradable and cause serious pollution problems. Banana is one of the earliest and important fruit crops cultivated by man in tropical parts of the world. Banana fibre is not a recent innovation. People have been making fibres out of banana stems since the early 13th century, in Japan. But, using banana plants as a source of fibre to make textiles declined as other fibres such as cotton and silk from China and India became increasingly popular.

Banana is a bast fibre that possesses good mechanical and chemical properties. They are widely used for making handicraft items and composite materials. A smaller quantity is used for making apparels. The remaining is dumped as waste that is causing environmental hazards and resulting in imbalance of the ecosystem. In order to achieve sustainability, the usage of banana yarns should be promoted for manufacture of apparels.

Banana, cotton, regenerated cellulose yarns such as modal and bamboo are selected for developing traditional textiles of Ilkal using handloom. Indian handloom sector of the textile industry is ancient and has served the economy well in terms of employment. It needs to be strengthened by increasing its range of products. Nisha Rani (2014) reported in her study that handloom industry is one of the most important industries as it generates employment for the weaker sections of society being second to the agriculture industry in India in terms of employment generation.

Two sarees are designed: one with cotton\*modal and other with cotton \*bamboo. The traditional kasuti murgi motifs are woven in handloom with jacquard set up using extra set of weft yarns.

**AIM:** To implement banana yarns for weaving murgi motifs on Ilkal handloom sarees.

### OBJECTIVES:

- To select and implement Banana yarns and regenerated cellulose yarns in Ilkal sarees.
- To select the traditional murgi motif and to encourage traditional handloom weaving.
- To digitise kasuti murgi motif for jacquard weaving technique.
- To weave traditional kasuti murgi motifs on Ilkal sarees in Handloom.
- To receive acceptance from the target customers.

### SCOPE:

The research is a humble attempt to revive handloom and traditional textiles. With the adoption of cotton and silk fabrics in the making of sarees, the traditional textiles suffered negligence. The power loom and its convenience increasingly relegated the handloom sector to the darker alleys. However, one cannot deny the fact that both Ilkal sarees and handloom industry are an integral part of traditional weaving culture of India and have beauty and grandeur. It was, in fact, one of the fields that facilitated itself as a means of livelihood for many. In due consideration to the aforesaid and taking heed of the contemporary fashion world, an attempt has been made to blend the traditional and modern to suit the tastes of the current generation. Ilkal sarees are traditional sarees

that are generally woven using cotton and art silk. The current research has utilised banana fibres in the making of Ilkal sarees with the aid of handloom. The research aims to revitalise the making of Ilkal sarees in contemporary colours and shades.

#### Collection of Data

- Primary source of information on Ilkal traditional textiles was traditional weavers of Ilkal.
- A survey was conducted through interviews with traditional weavers of Ilkal and getting them to fill in questionnaires to know the details and innovation in the field of Ilkal traditional textiles.
- Information was collected from different retail units of Ilkal and Bengaluru to know the availability, production, materials and products in Ilkal textiles.
- Literature on Ilkal traditional textiles was collected from books, journals and the Internet.

## II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

### 2.1 Materials

- Cotton yarn - 1 kg was used for body warp, border warp and pallu warp.
- Modal yarn - 650gms was used for weft body, weft pallu.
- Banana - 200gms used for weaving kasuti murgi motif.
- The above listed quantity was used for one saree. Similarly, the same quantity of yarn was used for another saree, but modal is replaced by bamboo yarn. So, totally two sarees are developed: one with cotton\*modal and another with cotton\*bamboo in two different colours. Banana yarns are used for extra weft to weave the murgi motif for both the sarees.

**2.2 Selection of dyes:** Vat dyes are selected since they have good colour fastness property.

**2.3 Selection of colour:** Vat dyes: Maroon-P.n-19-1617, Black-P.n-19-3911.

**2.4 Border selection:** Chikkiparas is the traditional border used for Ilkal sarees. Chikki means dots or stars. This border gives an ethnic look to the sarees.



Fig. 1. Chikkiparas border

**2.5 Motif selection:** A traditional Murgi motif - Elephant is selected for weaving. Elephant motif is widely used in Indian textiles. It is a traditional motif used for kasuti embroidery. Elephant is a symbol of good luck, happiness and longevity. It is a sign of wealth, power and influence denoting royalty, inner strength and nobility. In India, it is used in richly decorated form in their printed, painted and embroidered textiles to depict war scenes and royal extravaganza.

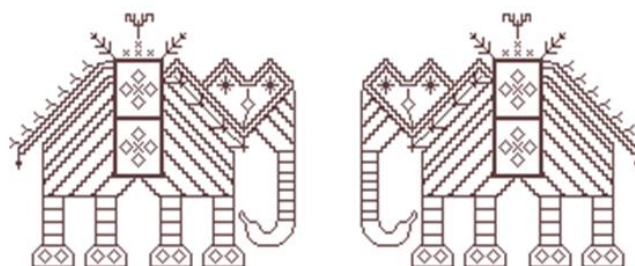


Fig. 2. Elephant motif (Mirror Image)

### 2.2 Methods

**2.2.1 Digitizing the kasuti murgi motif:** The motif to be woven is first conceptualized and drawn on a graph using SOFTWARE JASC PAINT SHOP PRO 9. The motif is made of a particular size to suit the jacquard needle capacity of 256 hooks. The graph acts like a guide to understand the placement of warp and weft yarns to get the desired pattern.

**2.2.2 Punch card preparation, lacing:** The graph helps in preparing the punch cards to obtain the design. Holes are punched in the jacquard cards using conventional card cutting machine. The punch cards are serially placed

and tied with a cord. The first card and last card are joined and secured together by a knot that helps in repeating the design.

**2.2.3 Jacquard set up:** Handloom with jacquard 256 needle capacity is set to weave kasuti murgi motifs in Ilkal sarees. 256 hooks jacquard is mounted on a wooden square box on top of the loom. The laced jacquard cards are fixed on top of the loom in connection with needles. The jacquard needles are connected to warp threads wherever the design is required. 240 needles are utilised to form the design. A complex series of threads are arranged in such a manner that lifting of a particular set of threads results in the lifting of a particular set of warp yarns which results in the formation of draft and peg plan required for a single repeat.

**2.2.4 Pirn winding:** Pirn winding is done for modal, bamboo and banana. The hank is mounted on the wheel and the pirn is mounted on the shaft. The yarn from the hank is transferred on to the pirn by rotating the wheel and bobbin.

**2.2.5 Preparation of warp yarn:** Body of the warp is prepared by peg warping method. All the ends of warp are used in 2 ply and the length is 2.5 metres, which is equal to half of the required length of body portion of one saree leaving the pallu portion. The total number of ends in the warp is equal to double the number of ends required as per the width of body. Looping method is followed where the pallu warp and body warp are attached. 2.5 metres of 2 ply cream colour body warp is prepared. Maroon yarns that form the pallu are passed through loops of cream ball warp and tied to the pegs; first looping of blue yarn is made between the pegs by moving the first loop of cream yarn. First loop of cream yarn gets interlocked with the first loop of maroon end. With this process, kondi warp is prepared with 2.5 metres length of cream warp fully interlocked with 1 metre length of maroon warp. Warping is done for only one saree; the same process is repeated for another saree after completion of the first one.

**2.2.6 Weaving process:** The loom is ready for weaving with kondi warp technique. First, the pallu portion of the saree is woven. Topeteni seragu is created by using 3 shuttles. The pallu is maroon in colour, except the two solid portions that are cream in colour. The pallu portion is woven slowly for 1.5 inches in the looping place as there are 4 ply cream ends for every 2 ply maroon ends in the body. Out of each 4 ply cream ends, 2 ply is separated and cut at the fell of the cloth. 50% of the cut layer is removed from the healds and reed; this doubles the length of cream warp. The length of cream warp which was 2.5 metres long during kondi warp process has become 5 metres in length. The body of the saree is woven with chikkiparas and traditional kasuti murgi motifs are woven above the border on either side of the saree with a banana as an extra set of weft yarn. The same process is followed for the next saree, but weft yarn modal is replaced by bamboo yarn with a different colour combination.

**2.2.7 Acceptance phase:** Assessment of sarees is carried out with interview schedule and a questionnaire. Acceptance is taken from 50 women of age group (25-30).

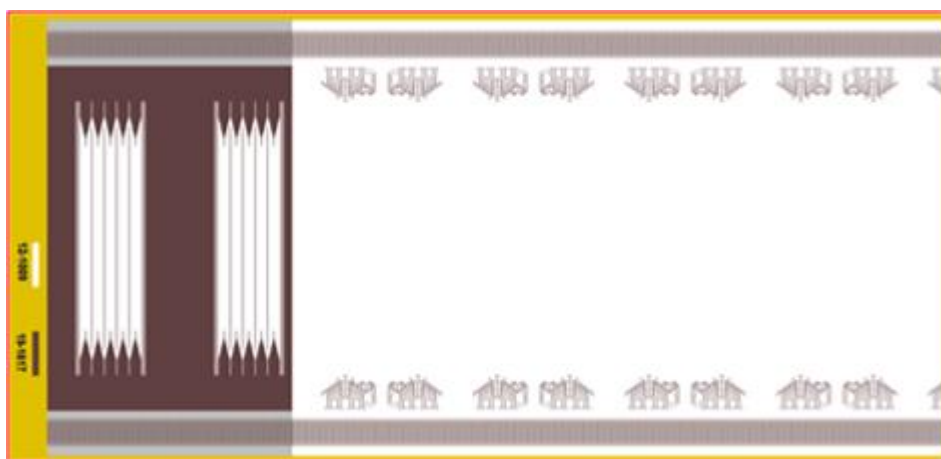
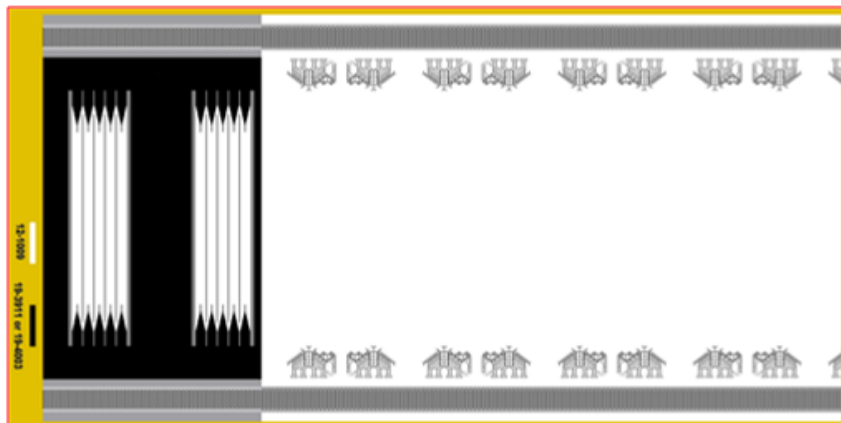


Fig. 3. Design of saree (cotton\*modal)



**Fig.4. Ilkal saree in cream-maroon combination, hand woven with cotton warp and modal weft for the body**

The elegance of the saree lies in the implementation of kasuti murgi elephant motif woven with banana yarn. Chikkiparas border and Topeteni seragu is the signature style of Ilkal sarees.



**Fig.5. Design of saree (cotton\*bamboo)**



**Fig. 6. Saree in a handloom - visibility of the wrong side of the saree-elephant motif and border**



Fig. 7. Complete view of the saree, Chikkiparas border, elephant motif, looping technique, Topeteni seragu

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data collected for the research study through interviews and questionnaire is tabulated and analysed. From the tabulated data frequencies, percentages are calculated to know the opinion and acceptance level of designed sarees. The results are discussed below based on different factors.

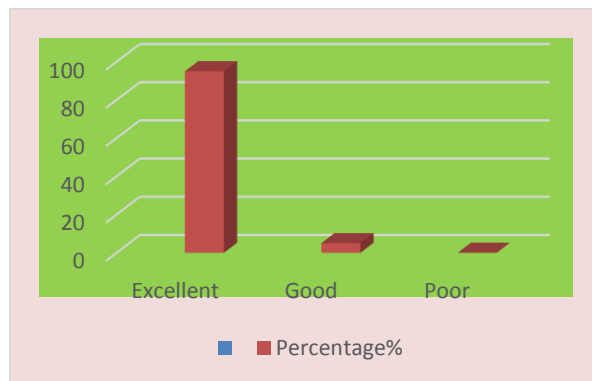


Fig 3.1 Opinion about the concept of weaving kasuti murgi motifs in Ilkal sarees

Figure 3.1 reveals that 95% women believed that weaving of kasuti murgi motif in Ilkal sarees is an excellent idea; the remaining 5% of women felt it's a good concept that gives new variety in Ilkal sarees.

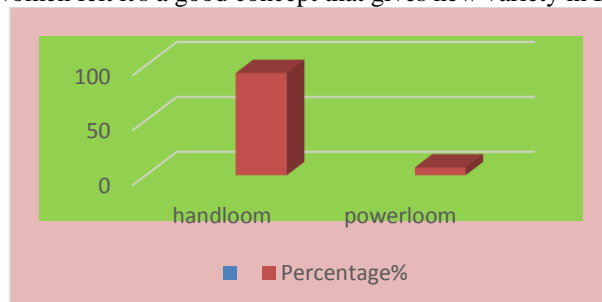
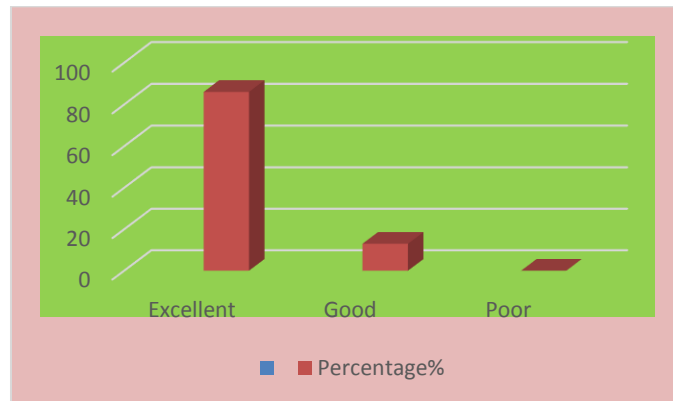


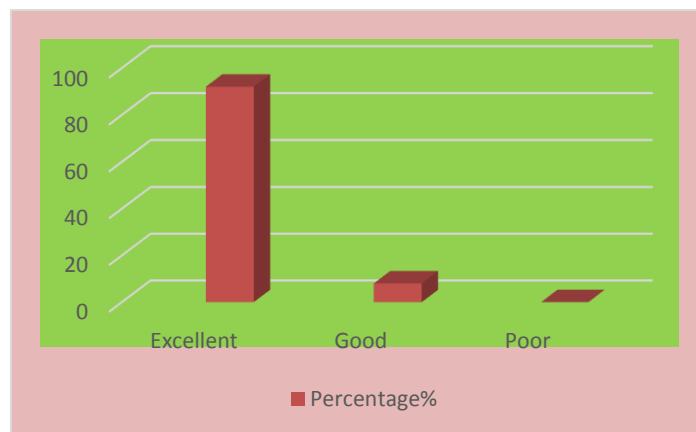
Fig 3.2 Preference of fabrics in traditional sarees

Figure 3.2 reveals that women prefer handloom fabrics more than power loom. Women stated that handloom fabrics have their own beauty and comfort that cannot be compared with power loom.



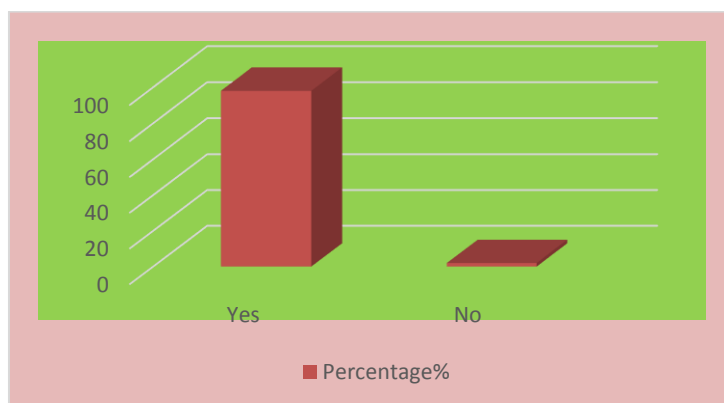
**Fig 3.3 Idea of introducing banana yarns and regenerated cellulose yarns in Ilkal sarees**

Figure 3.3 reveals that 86% of the women felt that the woven kasuti murgi motif and usage of modal, bamboo and banana fibres in Ilkal saree is an innovative idea. 13% of the women felt it's a good concept that brings new variety in sarees. Women appreciated the efforts made to transfer hand embroidery to woven designs in Ilkal sarees. They said that the appearance is as beautiful as hand embroidery.



**Fig 3.4 Selection of elephant motif for Ilkal Sarees**

Figure 3.4 revealed that 92% of women found selection of elephant motif in Ilkal sarees to be an excellent idea; the remaining 8% of women felt that motif has given a good effect on sarees. They also expressed it's a good concept that makes sarees look more elegant. The traditional elephant motif used as a border gives new variety in Ilkal sarees to the consumers who are seeking a change.



**Fig 3.5 Preference of new colours in Ilkal sarees**

Figure 3.5 reveals that 92% of women appreciated the colour combination used for Ilkal sarees; women expressed that use of new colours had given the sarees an attractive look.



**Fig. 3.6 Rating of Sample 1 (Cotton\*Modal Saree) based on various factors**

Figure 3.6 reveals information about the acceptance of the saree based on different factors.

- 90% of the women liked the colour combination used for the saree; women appreciated it as an excellent concept. Weavers expressed that the usage of contrast colour for the saree has given a new look, which is entirely different from the traditional saree. 10% of the weavers felt it's a good concept.
- 93% of the women found the texture of the saree to be excellent, which is soft and comfortable to wear during all the seasons (just like the traditional Ilkal sarees are worn during all seasons). 7% of the weavers felt the texture of the saree is good.
- 90% of the women felt the lustre of the saree is enhanced by using modal fibres; 10% of the women felt the lustre of the saree is good.
- 90% of the women have given an excellent rating for the overall appearance of the sarees; the remaining 10% of the women have rated it as good. Women stated that the new colour and yarn combination in Ilkal saree have given a special look for the saree.



**Fig. 3.7 Rating of Sample 2 (Cotton\*Bamboo Saree) based on various factors**

Figure 3.7 reveals that:

- 95% of the women liked the colour combination; they expressed that black colour looks brighter and more attractive on cream base.
- 93% of the women felt it has given an excellent texture, which is smooth, soft and comfortable; 7% of women expressed that the saree had a good texture with the combination of cotton and bamboo yarn.
- 90% of the women expressed that the lustre of the saree is excellent; the remaining 10% expressed it as good.
- 93% of the women rated the saree as excellent; the remaining 7% rated it as good considering the overall appearance of the saree.

From the above analysis, it is clear that women gave a positive response to changes in the yarn and colour combination used without affecting the traditional Ilkal kondi weaving technique. The women appreciated that the elegance of the saree is enhanced by the usage of elephant motif. Women expressed that the usage of cream colour as the base with contrast colour motif, border and pallu make the saree unique.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The research focused on design and development of Ilkal sarees with woven kasuti murgi motif using cellulose yarns such as cotton and regenerated cellulose yarns - banana, modal, bamboo. The products are developed at weavers' service centre, Bengaluru. The research paper throws light on the techniques employed in the weaving of sarees. The traditional kondi technique is used to develop the Ilkal sarees. Kondi is one of the complicated techniques used for developing traditional Ilkal sarees. The difficulty in the process of weaving the Ilkal sarees with kondi technique in handloom has made the weavers switch to production of sarees without kondi technique in power looms. The boom in fashion today need not leave behind the past and its rich cultural heritage. Textiles, being one of them, is no exception. A peep into the past earns us the knowledge of the intricate techniques, the complexities and the beauty that goes into the production of textiles. Despite the depravities of scientific methods back then, our ancestry boasts of rich and endearing textiles that are eco-friendly and comfortable to wear. Traditional textiles are considered as an integral part of the complex rituals of life. Hence, the responsibility lies on the shoulders of the textile designers to revive the traditional textiles to save them from becoming extinct. Traditional textiles are good enough to suit the tastes of the current generation. The current research has lent a new look to the traditional Ilkal sarees and also presents a plea to retain the traditional kondi technique and handloom that is heading towards extinction. The positive characteristics of traditional textiles and handloom are necessarily understood and deployed in the weaving of Ilkal sarees of a new kind.

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