



International Journal of Home Science

ISSN: 2395-7476

IJHS 2020; 6(2): 375-377

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www.homesciencejournal.com

Received: 12-03-2020

Accepted: 16-04-2020

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A royal representation of Indian culture

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Abstract

“There is no better way of industrializing the village of India than spinning wheel”-Mahatma Gandhi Saree, a nine yard fabric where a craftsman gets freedom to express his thoughts and his imaginations, has become an integral part of Indian outfits. It has become a symbol of woman pride, beauty and dignity which maintain the essence of Indian culture through handloom. Maheswar is such a place in Khargone district of Madhya Pradesh where one of the most beautiful fabric and exquisite saree designs are made and known as Maheswar saree. Maheswar saree owes its origin to the Holkar dynasty of Madhya Pradesh when Rani Ahilya Bai insisted weavers to weave something unique which could be given as royal gifts. Initially, Turbans for the Royal house were weaved, and later this style was used in silk sarees where the borders were embellished with the designs taken from royal fort walls, tall gates, ceilings and river Narmada.

During Ahilya Bai's rule, the state used to purchase a large number of the weaved sarees. The fame of Maheshwar sarees slowly spread all over the country; currently they are in demand globally. The material used in making these sarees includes silk of different qualities which is brought from Bangalore. China silk, cotton fabrics, Kosa, Jari of different types and Khadi fabric are also used in making the sarees. These handloom sarees are unique and beautiful as each and every piece is weaved by the artists in their own style, and imagination. The process of making Maheshwari sarees starts with the *Bana* which is the first step to entangle silk in its raw form to winding on to the reel. This raw silk on a reel is then rolled over a metal rod which is called *Tana*. This wrapped raw silk is fixed on the loom by specially trained weavers, through a process known as *Jodi*. Before starting the process of *Jodi*, the artisans need to visualize the design pattern and make a graphical pattern of design-this is the most crucial part. After fixing the design pattern in the loom, work resumes on new saree with new design. Each saree takes about a week to weave.

Keywords: Handloom, natural fiber, geometrical motif (influenced by fort), weaves

Introduction

The beautiful Maheshwari sarees are among the most popular sarees produced in India. These sarees are in demand not only in India, but also in international markets. This article aims at studying the origin of the Maheshwari saree, the motifs and colors used and the other special features of the saree.

History of the Maheshwari saree

These sarees are largely produced in the town of Maheshwar in Madhya Pradesh. The origin of the Maheshwari sarees dates back to the 18th century, when the state of Indore in Madhya Pradesh was ruled by Queen Ahilyabai Holkar.

According to legends, Queen Ahilyabai ordered craftsmen from Surat and Malwa to design special 9-yard sarees to be gifted to royal guests and relatives. The sarees that were produced by these craftsmen became popular as Maheshwari sarees. It is believed that Queen Ahilyabai herself created the design of the first saree. These sarees were originally worn by the ladies of royal status, but nowadays, they are available in both national and international markets.

Designs

The designs in the Maheshwari sarees were inspired by the detailing on the walls of the Fort of Maheshwar. The popular designs used in these sarees, which were inspired from the designs on the fort walls are the Chatai pattern that is the Mat pattern, the Chameli ka phool pattern that is the Chameli flower pattern, the Eent pattern that is the Brick pattern as well as the

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Heerapattern that is the Diamond pattern. These designs are found on Maheshwari sarees even today.

Material used

Originally, the Maheshwari saree was made of pure silk. Then in course of time, these sarees began to be made in pure cotton and with a mixture of silk and cotton (silk yarn in the warp and cotton in the weft). Nowadays, wool is also being used in the production of Maheshwari sarees. These sarees are extremely light in weight and present a sharp contrast to the Kanchipuram sarees of South India.

Colors

Maheshwari sarees were initially made only in dark shades like red, maroon, black, purple and green. Today, these sarees are also being made in lighter shades and gold and silver threads are being made use of. In local dialect, the most popular colors used in Maheshwari sarees are Angoori (grape green), Dalimbi (deep pink), Gul Bakshi (magenta), Jaamla (purple), Tapkeer (deep brown), Aamrak (golden), Rani (deep pink), Dhaani (green) and Kaashi (light purple). Usually, vegetable dyes are used in the preparation of these sarees.

Varieties

These sarees usually have a plain body or have stripes or checks of different varieties. Some of these varieties are highly popular and are known by different names. The

Chandrakala and the Baingani Chandrakala are examples of plain Maheshwari sarees, while the Chandratara, the Beliand the Parbi are examples of striped and checked ones.

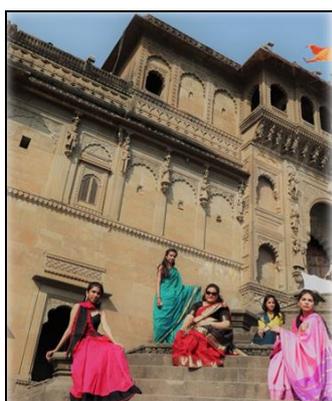
Special features

The unique feature of a Maheshwari saree is its reversible border. The border is designed in such a way that both sides of the saree can be worn. This is locally known as Bugdi The cotton that is used in these sarees is brought in from Coimbatore in South India, while the silk is from Bangalore and the wool is imported from Australia. The processing of the raw material is undertaken in Kolkata and the saree is woven by the women of Maheshwar.

An original Maheshwari saree can cost anywhere between Rs. 1500 to Rs. 20000.

Conclusion

To Conclude, I went to maheshwar to explore weaving and its various technique used in Maheshwari sarees and capture the Beauty of Maheshwari saree in Different drapes. There i got more knowledge about sarees and new innovations like jute fibre, Double border Sarees, new colour Design based on Fort geometrical motifs, Nakashidar jali adopted in sarees zari. I got to know one more aspect of weaving centers that they give seprate workspace to female weavers for weaving. Some worker's came all way long from Banaras to Maheshwar. Government of Madhya Pradesh trained many weavers and helped them financially by providing them loans.



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