

RESEARCH PAPER

## Marvellous motifs and colour combinations of silk sarees of Molakalmuru

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(Received: May, 2020 ; Accepted: November, 2020)

**Abstract:** Handloom industry in India is heritage based industry reflecting the richness and diversity of Indian culture. The handloom textiles of our country are of typical in terms of its traditionalism, distinctive style, motifs, colour and colour combinations. Hand woven silk sarees of Molakalmuru are known for their richness, beauty and elegance with spiritual motifs and traditional colour combinations. A sample of 30 weavers was randomly selected and interviewed personally to collect the specific information of motifs, colour and colour combination of the silk sarees. Handloom weavers of molakalmuru are engaged in production of two types of silk sarees viz., traditional and contemporary silk sarees. The traditional sarees are designed with ethnic motifs all along the saree border, pallav and body viz., *gandaberunda*, *alilu balli*, *rudrakshi*, *naveelu kannu*, *bugudi* etc. However contemporary silk sarees are embellished with natural, stylized and geometrical motifs along with traditional motifs. The common colour and colour combinations used for the Molakalmuru sarees are red, green, navy blue, pink, maroon, yellow, peacock green, red, sky blue, grey, violet, cream, shocking pink and so on. Majority of the weavers obtained designs from master weavers followed by professional designers and elderly people. Market demand was the major influencing factor for designing the motifs as stated by cent percent of the weavers followed by orders placed by the consumers fashion and ease of weaving.

**Key words:** Contemporary silk sarees, Dobby motifs, Jacquard motifs, Traditional motifs

### Introduction

India is world famous for production of most stunning handspun and handwoven textiles with wonderful workmanship. Indian handwoven fabrics and madeups are famous for their exquisite art of interlacement with intricate and elaborate designs produced by dobby and jacquard attachment followed by dyeing, printing, embroidery and appliqué work.

India has become renowned for saree manufacturing centres and each centre is known for designing and production of traditional sarees which have acquired their names not only from the cities of their origin, but also from the weaving or printing techniques, specific motifs, colours or designs utilised in their sarees. Though centuries have passed, the saree was conceived as the Indian woman's hereditary costume, the charm of this beautiful and extraordinary feminine garment suited to the youngest of girls or the most elderly among woman has not been waned. Since time immemorial the saree or a yardage of cloth has been interlaced by a magic threads with exquisite designs and colour combinations woven on simple handloom to complex multi shed air jet looms. Among the looms, handloom is the most preferred machine for silk saree weaving. Handloom sector is an important cottage industry in India and is a very old profession and this sector of India is an important part of the country's economy as well as socio-cultural tradition. Handloom weavers are known for their knowledge, in weaving intricate fabric with a innovative motifs with brilliant colour combinations.

The motifs which are being used in indian textiles are practised since ancient times and are handed over from one generation to the other generation and can be described as

traditional motifs. These motifs are deeply influenced by religious belief, culture, environment, architecture, history, ruler, activities of day to day life and many more. Every motifs represent over poetic expressions, devotional characters and mythological significance. Since time immemorial Indian kings have favoured the natural and mythological motifs as a symbol for adorning the clothes, jewellery and paintings<sup>[3]</sup>.

Designers are the backbone of the silk weaving sectors for creating new designs and revival of old designs to meet the market demand and makes the product niche among the consumer. The traditional sarees of India are always recognized by intricacy of the motifs used in the sarees tells the glory of its evolution and place. The designers specially created the motifs by combining both the living as well as spiritual aspects. The most common motifs used to embellishing the silk sarees are birds and animals. However, flower motifs are considered to be highly auspicious and presented with a simplistic outlook thereby enticing the women consumers hailing from all walks of life.

Colour has always been a special significance in Indian textiles, costumes, traditions and culture being invested with all kinds of social, sacred and ritual meanings. Every social and religious group has its own norms regarding the colours, designs, textiles and costumes which reflect unity in diversity of the country. Colour symbolism in traditional sarees of any part of the country explains its historical significance and rituality. The Indian artisans createing beautiful saree with intricate designs are keeping colour symbolism as a factor<sup>[8]</sup>.

However, Karnataka state is famous for production of various silk sarees, viz., Mysore silk, Ilkal silk and Molakalmuru

silk sarees. Mysore silk saree woven with pure mulberry silk has soft feel, lustrous and very good drapability. The beauty of this saree is largely a result of intricate *zari* work done on the border and *pallav* and is the pride saree of the Karnataka.

Ilkal sarees are interlaced with combination of cotton, silk and artsilk threads and the body warp is woven with finest cotton threads and boarder is interlaced with silk yarn for richness and pallav is glittered with lustres artsilk using three solid portions of red and white combinations commonly called as *Tope Teni Seragu* in kannada. The saree boarder is designed with *Chikki, Gombi, Jari, Gadidadi* and modern *Gayathri* are exclusive designs in ilkal sarees. These sarees are manufactured at weaving clusters of Ilkal town of Bagalkot district of Karnataka state.

Molkalmuru sarees are known for thier beauty, elegancy and solid colours with galaxy of traditional motifs, colour and colour combinations. The handloom clusters of Molakalmuru are mainly engaged in production of traditional and contemporary silk sarees. The traditional silk sarees (*gattipeta, varalaxmi, gattipeta checks, rudrakshi*, temple border saree) were interlaced with 20/22d 2 ply filature silk of 105 tpi as warp and 18/20d 3 ply filature silk of 20 tpi with 120 reed, 5.5 mts length and 48" width. However, contemporary silk sarees (self saree with brocade designs, soft silk with small fold, soft silk butta, and tape border sarees) interlaced with 20/22d 2 ply filature silk of 105 tpi as warp and 18/20d 2/single ply filature silk of 20 tpi with 90-120 reed, 6.20 mts length and 48-52" width. The molakalmuru silk saree, also resembles Kancheevaram sarees to some extent with respect to motif and texture except the cross pallav and korvai system of weaving <sup>[7]</sup>.

In recent years the weavers are slowly changing their saree designs for production of traditional and contemporary silk sarees. However, the preloom and postloom techniques remain same for production of both the silk sarees. The traditional motifs, colour and colour combinations are slowly fading from the niche market due to contemporary desings and colour combinations. Hence, the present study was focused on motifs and its symbolism, colour and colour combinations used in traditional and contemporary silk sarees of molakalmuru.

## Material and methods

### Selection of the sample

A sample of 30 handloom weavers was randomly selected from the Molakalmuru city to elicit the information on specific features of variegated traditional and contemporary silk sarees of Molakalmuru and to find out the traditional and contemporary motifs, colours and colour combinations in silk sarees of Molakalmuru.

### Tools used for the data collection

A self structured schedule was administrated to elicit the required information from the weavers by personal interview method.

The traditional motifs and their symbolic meaning were collected from master weavers of Molakalmuru town. The traditional and contemporary silk sarees of Molakalmuru and

motif images were captured with the help of cannon camera for documentation.

## Results and discussion

### Collection of design/motifs by the weavers

Table 1 shows that majority of handloom weavers obtained their design from master weavers (60.00 %), followed by professional designers (36.66 %) and elderly people (20.00 %). The local weavers by virtue of their long association in silk business have assumed the status of master weavers who are masters in designing and manufacturing of sarees. While adopting any changes *i.e.* input use pattern, design and colour combination in the sarees is considered as important element for success of any business. A great experience and expertise is required in these aspects. Hence, most of the independent weavers collected designs and other input use patterns from the master weavers followed by professional designers. These results are in line with the results of Dalia (2016) who stated that majority of the Odisha weavers collected motifs from master weavers.

### Factors considered by the weavers while designing the saree

Demand was the major influencing factor for designing the motifs as supported by cent per cent of weavers, followed by other factors like orders placed by the consumer (36.66 %), fashion (20.00 %) and few of the weavers stated that cost of the production (16.66 %) and ease of weaving (13.34 %), were also deciding factors for designing the sarees (Table 2). Majority of the weavers preferred to weave a sarees based on the market demand and order by the consumer may be because of market is the key deciding factor for selling any goods. When the manufacturers supply their goods based on the market demand and fashion trend, then only the products are sustained in the market for long time and become classic in fashion cycle (Table 2).

### Modification and changes made in hand woven silk sarees

From the Table 3 it is observed that all the weavers incorporated few changes in the silk sarees with respect to saree specification and colour combination. The corresponding results revealed that, the changes were made with respect to

Table 1. Collection of designs by the handloom weavers of Molakalmuru

Source	Number of respondents
Master weavers	18 (60.00)
Professional designers	11 (36.66)
Co-operative societies	-
Elderly people	6 (20.00)

Figure in parenthesis indicate percentages

Table 2. Factors considered by the weavers while designing the handwoven silk sarees n=30

Factor	Number of respondents
Fashion	6 (20.00)
Demand	30 (100.00)
Cost of production	5 (16.66)
By order	11 (36.66)
Ease of weaving	4 (13.34)

Figure in parenthesis indicate percentages

motifs (100.00 %), followed by modified saree length (76.66 %) and reed count (20.00 %) respectively. This may be due to the reason that the change/modification is made according to the marketing demand, order by consumer, fashion trend and consumer choice. Majority of them preferred new variety of designs in sarees and varying length of the sarees for comfortability. Banaras weavers change designs according to the consumer's demand and fashion trend (Dalia, 2016).

#### Common motifs used in hand woven silk sarees of Molakalmuru

Designs/motifs are the pride symbol of many traditional textiles of India and depict the culture, tradition, religion of the society.

The most tradition motifs employed in the Molakalmuru sarees are *Hamsa*, *Rudrakshi*, *Vanki*, Lotus, Peacock, Mango, *Gandaberunda*, *Balamani*, *Kalasha deepa*, *Aliluballi*, Temple designs *etc.*, symbolises the historical value, prosperity, wealth, victory, spirituality and path of self realisation. Most of the motifs sourced by the palace architecture gallery, symbols and maharaja costumes shawls of Wadeyar of Mysore dynasty. All the traditional motifs are traced in the form of naturalistic, stylized and geometrical on the point paper and incorporated in the traditional sarees through jacquard and dobby attachment (Plate 1). Patola saree symbolises with wealth, refinement and culture of Gujarat (Singh, 2008).

#### Motifs woven on hand woven traditional silk sarees

Designers are the backbone of the silk weaving sectors for creating new designs and revival of old designs to meet the market demand and makes the product niche among the consumer.

Table 4 indicate that the motifs used in the silk sarees were the gallery of designs of various sizes and shapes which were glamorous, beautiful and sturdy. Geometrical designs, stylized dots, Rudrakshi beads Stripes and other decorative floral patterns, various sizes and stylized pattern of mango, peacocks, parrots, *Hamsa*, lotus, temples, diamonds, half diamond, creeper, pheonix *etc.* are the common traditional motifs used in the silk sarees.

Table 3. Modification and changes made in hand woven silk sarees  
n=30

Changes made	Number of respondents
Motifs	30 (100.00)
Yarn type	-
Saree length	23 (76.66 )
Reed count	6 (20.00)

Figure in parenthesis indicate percentages

Table 4. Motifs woven on hand woven traditional silk sarees of Molakalmuru

Saree Type	Motifs used		
	Body	Border	Pallav
Gattipeta saree	Plain	Rudrakshi, hamsa, diamond, double venki	Stripe, peacock and mango
Varalaxmi saree	Stripe, peacock, mango, buttas	Peacock, diamond, double <i>venki</i> and <i>venki</i>	Stripes and peacock, motifs
Gattiborder checks saree	Checks	Rudrakshi, hamsa, phoenix, banaras	Stripes and peacock, motifs
Temple border saree	Plain	Bugudi (temple motif) strips	Stripes, diamond, mango
Rudrakshi saree	Checks	Rudrakshi, strips	Rudrakshi, small bududi, strips, mango

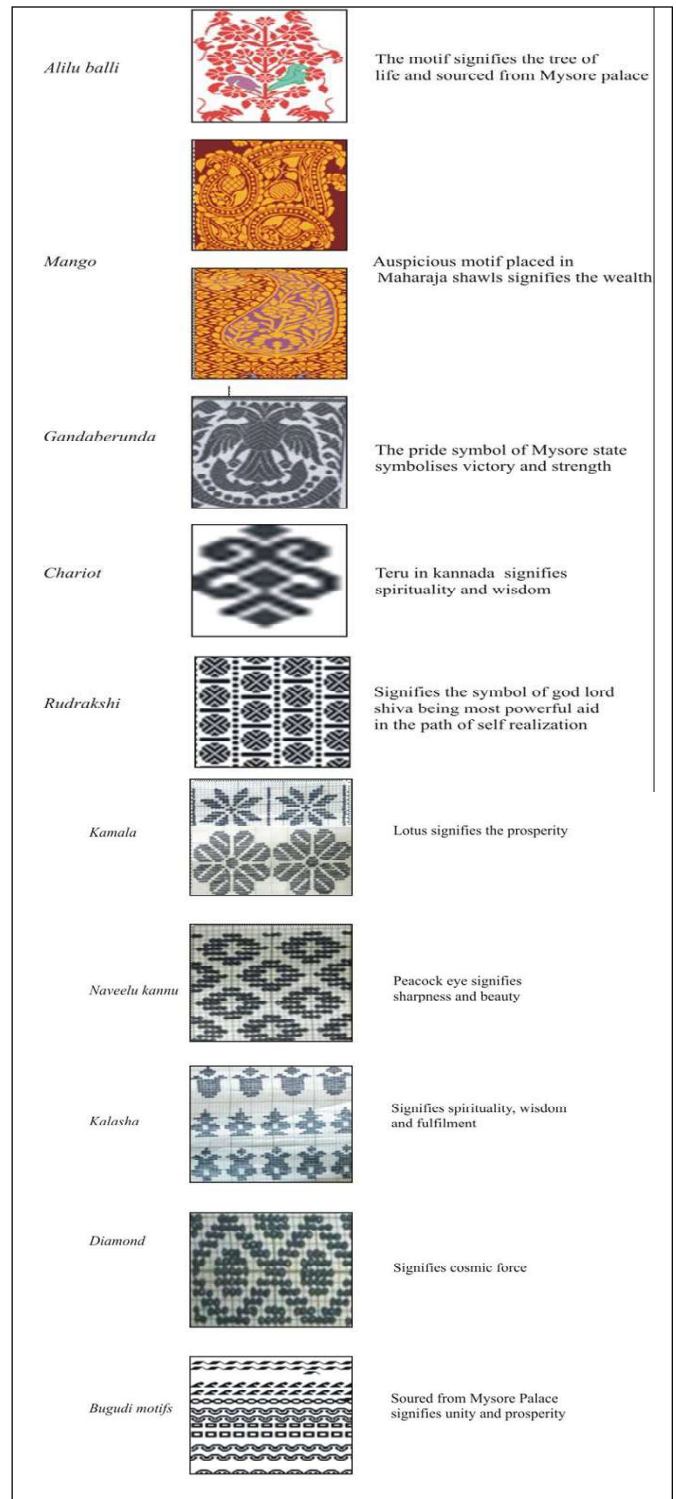


Plate 1. Traditional motifs used in hand woven silk sarees

The sarees of Molakalmuru are named after their motifs employed on the body, border and pallav. Each saree had its own beauty and was called by different names. Gattipeta saree had a plain body with a border having motifs of Rudrakshi, *Hamsa*, diamond, double *Venki* and continuous intricate designs, stripe, peacock and mango used to enhance the richness of the pallav. Gattipeta checks saree was constructed with checks body and border covered with motif of *Rudrakshi*, *Hamsa*, phoenix, Banaras designs, stripes and peacock motifs were employed on pallav portion.

Varalaxmi saree was designed by stripes with buttes, mango, peacock body, border using motifs of peacock, diamond, double venki and *Venki* motifs. Stripes and peacock motifs were used to beautify the pallav. Rudrakshi saree was constructed with plain or checks body and border covered with Rudrakshi and strip designs. The pallav was embellished with Rudrakshi, small *Bududi*, stripes, *Gandaberunda* and mango.

Plain or buttas and Stripes were employed on body portion of temple border saree with a border having *Bugudi* (temple motif), Stripes. Whereas, stripes, diamond, mango, motifs were used to enhance the richness of the pallav. The similar motifs are also employed in kanchipuram silk sarees Mili, 2014 and Varanasi silk sarees Sannapamma, 2000.

#### Motifs woven on hand woven contemporary silk sarees

The contemporary sarees were designed with few traditional motifs followed by naturalistic, stylized and geometrical pattern on the body, border and pallav. The motifs were continuously modified with their origin, based on the market demand and fashion trend (Table 5).

Brocade designs of buttas, leaf, flower and floral designs were used for embellishing the body with glitter *zari* and the border was designed with mango, peacock, floral and stylized designs.

Self coloured jacquard designs of stylized and geometrical body designs were used in the embossed saree with mango, peacock, stylized arc, creepers and flowers used in the border and pallav was embellished with mango, flower, small buttas, Soft silk butta saree was woven with stylized flower, leaf, peacock and small buttas on the body, whereas lotus, leaf, peacock, creeper, geometrical designs employed on the border.

Soft silk small fold saree had a plain body with a border having motifs of flower, Mango, *Bugudi*, geometrical designs, and plain *zari*. *Bugudi*, flower, peacock, small buttas, stylized naturalistic designs were used to decorate the pallav. Diamond, small buttas or plain *zari* were employed on body portion of the tape border saree with a border having diamond, small buttas or plain *zari*. The pallav portion was elaborate with peacock, mango, stripes, stylized and naturalistic designs.

#### Colour and colour combinations used in traditional and contemporary hand woven silk sarees

Colour has always been a special significance in Indian textiles, costumes, traditions and culture being invested with all kinds of social, sacred and ritual meanings. Every social and religious group has its own norms regarding the colours, designs, textiles and costumes which reflect unity in diversity of the country.

Colour is one of the important elements in textile and clothing which influences on apparent physical and psychological aspects of the wearer. Every colour has its own symbolical meaning which narrated the cultural and religious rituals of the country. Colour is so subtle and powerful that only a slight change in actual colours of the clothing can bring tremendous changes in the effects of their interactions. This is why clothing colour choice is delightful and necessary for the individuals. Hence, colours and colour combinations used in the traditional silk sarees is considered as important criteria for the selection of sarees or any clothing.

Mainly two types of sarees were woven in Molakalmuru *ie.*, traditional and contemporary silk sarees. Common colours used for traditional saree border and pallav were red, green, navy blue and pink and for the body colours were maroon, yellow, peacock green, red sky blue, grey, violet, cream, shocking pink and so on as shown in Table 6 & Plate 2.

In contemporary silk sarees all the weavers are using various fast moving colours and colour combinations. Weaver should take greater care while selection of colours and colour combinations for saree body, border and pallav to suffice the market demand and to fulfil the moods and perception of dream of Indian women. The contemporary colour combinations used among the silk sarees for border and pallav were red, blue,

Table 5. Motifs woven on handwoven contemporary silk sarees of Molakalmuru

Saree Type	Motifs used		
	Body	Border	Pallav
Self saree with brocade designs	Small buttas, small leaf, flowers, floral designs	Mango, peacock, flower, leaf design, creeper, stylized natural designs	Mango, peacock, stripes, flowers, creeper, stylized naturalistic designs
Embossed saree	Stylized geometrical designs	Arc, creep with flower, mango, peacock designs	Mango, flower, small buttas, peacock, stylized naturalistic
Soft silk butta saree	Stylized flowers, leaf, peacock, small buttas	lotus, leaf, peacock, creeper, geometrical designs	Peacock, flowers, stripes, stylized naturalistic designs
Soft silk small fold	Plain	Flower, mango, bugudi, geometrical designs, plain <i>zari</i>	Bugudi, flower, peacock, small buttas, stylized naturalistic designs
Tape border saree	Flower, stylized designs, floral	Diamond, small buttas or plain <i>zari</i>	Peacock, mango, stripes, stylized naturalistic designs

green, yellow, orange, *zari*, pink. Body colours were blue, green, purple, black, red, light orange, yellow, navy blue, light pink, white, lemon yellow, mehendi green, cream so on (Table 7 & Plate 3). Blending of different coloured yarns in the warp included rani, black, Peacock green, violet, and for weft were orange, shocking pink, magenta, blue, brown and so on.

From the table 6 and 7 it is observed that the traditional and contemporary silk sarees of Molakalmuru were woven with common colour and colour combinations (Plate 4&5) with symbolic significance as discussed below.

**Red:** The colour signifies the celebration, love, weddings and symbolic of dominance, passion and security.

**Yellow:** It is bright, sunny, cheerful, friendly carries the curative qualities allied with warmth, optimism and light which balance the mind.

**Green:** It is one of most popular colour of spring. Green depicts prosperity and love for the environment.

**Pink:** This colour always the colour of femininity and is full of life.

Table 6. Colour and colour combinations used in the hand woven traditional silk sarees

Sl. No	Colour used in border and pallav	Body colour
1.	Red	Green, yellow, blue, cream, peacock green, snuff, grey, olive green, bottle green, violet, black, navy blue
2.	Green	Yellow, red, orange, purple, dark pink
3.	Navy blue	Maroon, yellow, red, green, olive green
4.	Pink	Navy blue, peacock blue, black, grey
5.	Black	Red, cream, pink

Table 7. Colour and colour combinations used in hand woven contemporary silk sarees

Sl. No	Colour used in border and pallav	Body colour
1.	Red	Yellow, cream, blue, bottle green, navy blue, black, red, purple,
2.	Blue	Red, light chocolate, yellow, cream, maroon, navy blue, dark blue, light pink, parrot green green, dark green, lemon yellow, mehendi green
3.	Green	Blue, red, cream, yellow, green light orange, mehendi green
4.	Yellow	Cream, blue, yellow, violet, coffee
5.	Orange	Purple, green, pink, cream, dark maroon, blue, black, orange
6.	Zari (golden)	Blue, pink, red, black, purple, yellow, navy blue, light pink, orange, cream, coffee, dark blue, grey,
7.	Pink	Light coffee, yellow, peacock green, reddish orange, cream, white, black, orange, mehendi green, navy blue

























Border and pallav colour	Body colours
	     
	    
	    
	   

Plate 2. Colours used in traditional hand woven silk sarees of Molakalmuru











































Border and pallav colour	Body colours
	      
	      
	      
	       
	       

Plate 3. Colours used in contemporary hand woven silk sarees of Molakalmuru



Plate 4. Handwoven traditional silk saree



**Blue:** It represents quiet, restful, peace, calm and serenity.

**Black:** It is a neutral and all time favourite colour that represents power, elegance and versatility.

**White:** It is associated with peace, simplicity and purity.

### Conclusion

The Molakalmuru handloom silk sarees are famous for intricate geometry, traditional motifs, colour and colour combinations. Most of the weavers obtained their designs from master weavers, followed by professional designers and elderly people. Cent per cent of the weavers made modification and changes in motifs, saree length and reed count. The motifs used in traditional silk sarees were the gallery of designs of various sizes and shapes which were glamorous, beautiful and sturdy viz., mango, peacocks, parrots, *hamsa*, lotus, temples, diamonds, half diamond, creeper, pheonix etc,. The contemporary sarees were designed with few traditional motifs followed by naturalistic, stylized and geometrical pattern on the body, border and pallav. Molakalmuru weavers are developing designs based on the market demand, followed by orders and fashion for designing the silk sarees. The traditional designs and input patterns are slowly fading from the niche market due to fast moving fashion and digital technology (CATD). The traditional designs have greater symbolic significance and spiritual value therefore; need to be addressed



Plate-5 handwoven contemporary silk sarees

among the weavers for better adaptation in contemporary silk sarees. Incorporating traditional ethnicity in contemporary silk sarees with fast moving colour combinations would suffice the need of the present market, improve the socio economic condition of weavers and sustain the traditional craft of the Molakalmuru.

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