
“AN OVER VIEW ON THE GROWTH OF KANCHIPURAM SILK INDUSTRY”

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Abstract

Kanchipuram silk sarees are the pride of south India from times immemorial. South Indian marriages are incomplete without a kanchipuram saree for the bride. Kanchipuram sarees are also called as kanjivaram and kanchi sarees. Pure kanchi sarees are produced only in Kanchipuram. Kanchipuram has a reputation that dates back to few centuries as a silk weaving centre. Government of Tamilnadu has given Geographical Identification for these sarees, which has given the global significance for these products. Therefore Kanchipuram is rightly called as ‘SILK PARADISE OF SOUTH INDIA’.

People from length and breadth of the country come to Kanchipuram to purchase pure kanchi sarees. The climatic condition is the boon to this place to produce these sarees. This paper throws light on the history of kanchipuram sarees, its growth, modernization, modification, competition, sustainability, challenges and issues faced by this industry.

Keywords: Kanchipuram, Sarees, Tradition, Growth, Weaving, Industry, Silk, Jari.

Introduction

Silk is a symbol of luxury and class where no other fabric can match it in glow and elegance. The touch of silk reminds the very thread of history, a shimmering fabric of unparalleled grandeur.

India has a glorious silk tradition of its own, which no other country in the world can share. Tamilnadu occupies fourth position in silk production in the country and silk weaving is a long standing tradition here. Kanchipuram is world renowned for the gorgeous handwoven silk sarees of myriad rich colours, famed for their luster, finishing and their matchless beauty. Kanchipuram is a town which has been established and flourished during the reign of Krishnadevaraya. It is one of the India’s seven sacred cities which was the historical capital of the Pallavas and Cholas. It is also known as ‘SILK CITY’ as the main profession of the people living in and around the city is, weaving silk sarees. The silk weavers settled here for more than 400 years, have given it an inevitable reputation as the best silk sarees in the

country.75% of population in the city are dependent on the silk saree weaving either directly or indirectly.

In those days weaving silk clothes and wearing it was a sign of custom and tradition, which is continued even today. The people who migrated from AndhraPradesh, settled in Kanchipuram and started their hereditary profession, who were famously called as Devangas and Saligars, who recognised themselves as descendants of sage Markanda, the master weaver for gods.

Kanchipuram is called as temple city which is known for its rich heritage and weaving industry. The sarees wove in this town famously came to be known as Kanchipuram sarees, which is called as “Queen of all sarees” in India and all over the world. It is an extraordinary type of saree with the rich and traditional look. It is also expensive, because of its superior manufacturing quality and glow.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ramanathan (2014) **Consumer Patronization Through Effective Category Management in Silk Saree Retailing at Kanchipuram Town**, has opined that Kanchipuram silks have built a brand value and attract customers from all over the world.

Kalaiyarasi (2014) **An empirical study of the preferences and buying behavior of silk Sarees among women consumers in vellore town** has stated that, Kanchipuram silk sarees are very desirable and gracious among silk sarees which are preferred by women, because of their shining borders, contrast colours, uniqueness, and finishing.

Babu Rao (2004)**Development of X-ray fluorescence-based methodology for quality control of zari used in silk saris** has opined that, Kanchipuram sarees maintain a very high market share and distinguished position in the minds of customers because of its bright colours, borders and jari which is made up of gold coated silver thread.

Aartikawlra (2013) **Kanchipuram Sari as Heritage: Artisanship and the Politics of Culture and Technology**. The author has determined that Geographical Indication (GI) given to Kanchipuram sarees has created the awareness of the brand among the customers to identify and differentiate it from other type of sarees. The author has mentioned that Kanchipuram sarees are also used in creating suitable dance costumes.

B. Bowonder, S. V. Sailesh (2005) **ICT for the renewal of a Traditional Industry: A. Case Study of Kancheepuram Silk Saree**. The author has stated that adoption of information and communication technology (ICT) in Kanchipuram silk industry has opened the new opportunities for weavers to develop innovative computer-aided designs in weaving and attracting customers from all over the world.

KumarguruKasinathan (2001) **Sustainable Synergy of Traditional and CAD Based Silk Saree Designing/Production**. The author has stated that adoption of new computerised jacquard technology called CAD/CAM, in the production process of Kanchipuram sarees has increased the production and also demand in the market. The author has also explained the process work flow of Kanchipuram saree industry South India heritage.

Jyoti Bhasin. (2009). **South India heritage. Kanchipuram Sarees of Tamil Nadu.** The author in this study has determined that, the rich weave and feel of Kancheepuram Sarees hold women in their wave for the past 150 years. These sarees with a tremendous instigation of the craftsmen, represent the heritage of South India.

Production Process

China is the largest producer of silk in the world, but the silk used for world famous Kanchi sarees is mulberry silk which is grown in Karnataka and Tamilnadu. Jari (a gold coated silver thread) used for borders and pallu is from Gujarat, which gives metallic look and brightness to a saree. It consists of 57% of silver and 0.6% of gold.

Weaving a Kanchipuram saree is very different from any other saree. The skill of weaving kanchipuram saree has flown from generation to generation, with great care and elegance. It is an art that was inherited, taught by the elders and honed by practice, creativity and vision. Weaving a kanchipuram saree is tedious but has a stamp of splendour and durability.

A kanchipuram saree is distinguished as body portion, border portion, and pallu portion. It is called as “Korvai”, where body and pallu are woven separately and then interlinked together. It is interlinked in such a way that the joining could not be identified from the front. It is a symbol of identification and differentiation of Kanchi saree from other sarees. The width of typical kanchipuram saree is much broader by 3 inches, where the standard silk saree is 45 inches. Using a double warp for weaving is its speciality, where each thread is actually made up of three single threads twisted together which makes it much stronger and expensive from its counterparts from Banaras or Dharmavaram. Initially, these sarees were woven in 9 yards, but today 6 yards saree is the trend followed every where.

Contrast jari border is a distinguishing feature of this saree. It is a silk thread which is twisted with the silver thread over it and dipped into pure gold to make jari border. However nowadays tested jari is used, where the thin copper wire is electroplated with silver.

The major reason for the consistency in the quality of the sarees is the dyeing process followed from hundreds of years. River Palar which flows across Kanchipuram is a boon to this city. The stiffness of the saree is only because, it is dyed in the Palar river water. In order to bring thick consistency in the saree, silk yarn is dipped in rice water and dried in the hot sun.

Uniqueness of Kanchipuram Sarees

A special technique is used to weave these sarees, where three single threads of mulberry silk yarn is twisted with jari to produce a saree which is not found in any other saree. Its excellency lies in formation of motifs, (design or pattern) by trained weavers. These motif designs are taken from sculptures of temples, which has brought the name to the city as “Temple City”. Some of the common motif designs are peacock, leaves, mango, rudrakshi, stripes, elephants and so on. We can also see motifs from the epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata.

Geographical Indication

To present the traditional Indian heritage kancheepuram sarees has been brought under Geographical Indication act. Kancheepuram sarees are India's alluring exquisite saree originating from the district of kancheepuram Tamilnadu. Only pure kancheepuram sarees are awarded with silk mark by silk board of India and this label on saree is the surity of its genuineness.

Kanchipuram sarees have got (GI) from government of India in 2006, which gives it a distinctive identification and recognition in India and all over the world. This (GI) tag has proved to be a marker to build brand name Kanchipuram. According to this (GI), it should maintain standard weight, quality and Jari mark as it is mentioned in the norms of the act. After implementation of (GI) to Kanchipuram sarees sales has been increased all over the world.

Marketing

Previously Kanchipuram sarees were marketed only through co-operative societies. There are around 60,000 silk weavers in the city, out of them 50,000 weavers work under co-operative fold. Retailers had to register themselves as the member of these societies and purchase only through these societies. Kamatchi Amman, the first Kanchipuram Co-operative society was established in 1942 at Kanchipuram and later extended its branches all over Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. At present 24 co-operative societies are working in India. Slowly the trend changed and weavers started selling their products directly to wholesalers and retailers which brought them reasonable profits.

As the days passed, there are new trends in marketing these silk sarees i.e., online marketing, social media marketing etc have been implemented by the large scale silk saree showrooms. It's price range starts from Rs. 7000 – Rs.2,00,000. Worth of today's Kanchipuram industry is 20 million dollars.

Silk showrooms also provide with customisation of these sarees, by having their own artisans, who hand weave the saree of customer choice. It takes 15-20 days of duration, to complete one single saree depending on intricate designs.

On account of globalisation, kancheepuram sarees are available all over the world. It makes the job of selection quite challenging because of its dazzling colours designs and variety. There are 60,000 looms in kancheepuram and Rs.200crores turnover, with 3croresof exports. They are now shipped abroad to cater to the overseas Indians.

Kancheepuram sarees have crossed the Indian boundaries and have inspired the international run ways. Some of the acclaimed designers like Chanel, Alexanden Mc Queen and Louisvuitton took inspiration from the brocades and silks. Alexanden Mc Queen's , 2008 collection was based upon on the theme of 'British Royalty Meeting Indian Regality'. It was noticed as sovereign master piece in the show. (Kishore Balakrishna- author)

Current Trend

Authentic, unique and handpicked handloom silk sarees from across South India adds elegance and style to woman. The changing consumer tastes, especially from traditional handlooms to fancy light sarees are the signals to the industry to reorient its production plans to suit the changing demand patterns.

Today power looms have overtaken handlooms and made the work easy and fast. Adoption of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) in production and marketing process has increased both demand and supply. Implementation of Computer Aided Design (CAD) / Computer Aided Motif (CAM) has given rise to exploration of new modern designs in borders and pallu.

Times have changed and kancheepuram sarees have also undergone a transformation. Embroidery and crystal works are done on the traditional kancheepuram sarees. Due to the demand in light weight Kanchi sarees, weavers blend cotton and kora while weaving these sarees. In the modern world consumers prefer less costly, weightless, light colours and simple designs.

To cut down the heavy cost of saree and to make it available for all type of customers weavers are producing sarees with single side border, which brings down the cost by half the price.

Implementation of above strategies has badly affected the sale of pure Kanchipuram sarees. Instead of using Pure Jari which would cost Rs3000 and above, tested jari (artificial Jari) of Rs. 300 to Rs. 400 is been used in the borders of saree.

Conclusion

Kanchivaram is the king of Indian silks. It is special with fine texture, soft feel, quality, craftsmanship, superior weaving technique and rare colour combinations. The whole culture of South India can be looked out in a single sari. By taking its birth in small town of Tamilnadu it has proved its worth all over the world. The wardrobe shelf of Indian women is incomplete without one kanchi saree. It has maintained its position in the minds of customers from the decades. Though it has changed its traditional look, it is the symbol of auspiciousness to wear a Kanchipuram saree in festivals and ceremonies.

Even though the industry has changed from traditional handloom to modern power loom, it has maintained its outlook by satisfying the modern customers.

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