

# Exploring the Heritage Craft of Hand-Woven *Kunbi* Saris: Materials, Techniques, and Market Strategies

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## Abstract

The weaving of the Kunbi sari has been a symbol of Goa's cultural heritage. The main purpose of the article is to document the history and weaving technique of Goa's Kunbi sari in order to preserve this craft. A case study approach was adopted to study the processes, techniques, designs, and colours along with an extensive literature review on this weaving craft in Goa using structured interviews with the artisans and field study.

**Keywords:** Documentation; Heritage; Kunbi sari; Textiles; Weaving craft.

## Objectives

This study's objectives centre around documenting and preserving the Kunbi sari weaving craft while understanding its cultural significance and addressing contemporary challenges:

1. Documentation of Kunbi sari Weaving: The primary objective is to comprehensively document the traditional Kunbi sari weaving craft in Goa, including its historical origins, materials, techniques.
2. Cultural Significance Analysis: To understand the cultural and social significance of Kunbi saris within the Goan community, exploring their role in rituals, ceremonies, and daily life.

## Rationale

The rationale of the study is a crucial component that emphasizes the significance of the research and its potential impact on society.

1.      **Preservation of Cultural Heritage:** The Kunbi sari is a cultural symbol in Goa, deeply tied to traditions. This research on its techniques, motifs, and historical significance contributes to preserving Goan culture. As traditional crafts face obscurity, documenting the Kunbi sari weaving process becomes crucial for heritage conservation.
2.      **Economic Empowerment:** Additionally, the study has economic implications, potentially impacting the livelihoods of weavers. By identifying avenues for improvement and marketability, the research aims to economically empower artisans, fostering improved living conditions and stability for weaving communities.
3.      **Cultural Identity and Community Pride:** Understanding the historical context of the Kunbi sari and its evolution over time can foster a sense of cultural identity and pride within the Goan community. When people recognize the value and uniqueness of their cultural heritage, it can lead to a stronger sense of belonging and preservation of cultural practices.
4.      **Tourism and Cultural Promotion:** The findings of this research can also benefit the tourism sector in Goa. The Kunbi sari, with its rich history and vibrant aesthetics, can be a unique attraction for tourists interested in experiencing and purchasing authentic Goan handicrafts. This, in turn, can boost tourism revenue and promote Goan culture on a global scale.
5.      **Academic and Artistic Exploration:** Beyond its immediate practical implications, this research offers an avenue for academic exploration. It can serve as a valuable resource for scholars, historians, and artists interested in the intersection of culture, art, and tradition. It opens doors for further studies and artistic endeavors inspired by the Kunbi sari.

## **1.      Introduction**

Goa is the smallest state in India, comprising of 3,702-kilometre square with 13.44 Lakhs as its total population of natives as per the census 2001, (Census 2011 puts it to 14.59 Lakhs),

Historical records indicate that the 'kols' were the earliest settlers in Goa. (Correia 2006:30). At the time of their settlement, the 'kols' chose to settle on the hilly terrains, from where they carried out farming as a means of

survival and practiced a primitive form of swidden agriculture, that was commonly called the slash and burn cultivation, or 'kumeri' or 'kamot marop' in Konkani, the local language of Goa. This indeed was the oldest form of cultivation known to man. As It dates back to when man first learned to collect seeds and plant them together, close to his place of habitation" (Government of Goa 2004:16). Those who carried out the above form of cultivation were called 'Kulambis' or 'Kunbis'. According to Mr. Devidas Gaonkar and Mr. Vinayak Khedekar, authors of the Marathi books 'Kunbi' and 'Govyatil Adivasi'.

According to the Anthropological Survey of India, communities that originally resided in hilly areas migrated to the plains and settled in inland villages, establishing what is known as 'ganv' or 'gaon,' a Sanskrit term meaning village. As a result, these communities came to be known as 'Gawda,' signifying their role as founders of these villages. The term 'Kunbi,' on the other hand, is derived from the combination of 'kun,' meaning 'people,' and 'bi,' meaning 'seeds.' Together, these terms convey the meaning of "those who cultivate more seeds from a single seed." The Kunbis/Gawdas are recognized as a diligent community, dedicated to their work in the fields throughout the year. (Gomes 2004: 334).

In this study, an attempt has been made to examine and analyse the clothing of this community with a focus on the weaving technique of the Kunbi saris. Documenting the technique of weaving the Kunbi sari would serve as resource material to academicians, researchers, weavers, art lovers, historians, and fashion and textile designers interested in the field of traditional textile.

## 1.2 Review of Literature

The rich history of the Kunbi sari in Goa is deeply entrenched in the cultural tapestry and age-old traditions of the two native tribes of Goa: The Kunbis and the Gawdas. (Textiles of Goa | Indian Culture, n.d.). The origin of the Kunbi sari can be traced back to the collaborative efforts of this distinctive sari derives its name from the Kunbi tribe and holds profound significance within their cultural heritage (The Rich Heritage of The Goan Kunbi sari 2023, n.d.). Originally, the sari was draped in a distinctive manner – loosely encircling the waist and without the accompaniment of a blouse. The drape was skillfully fashioned into a narrow knot that graced the right shoulder. This distinctive draping technique, known as "Dethli," reflected the sari's traditional essence. (K for Kunbi saris - the Goan Heritage sari., 2022)

As mentioned in the book 'Sari - Traditions and Beyond' by Rta Kapur Chishti, the Kunbi sari in Goa carries a significant narrative of the community's challenges and transformations, including their attire and values. The author explains that during the two-century-long Portuguese rule in Goa, a prohibition was imposed on the production of Kunbi saris. This measure aimed to promote the sale of imported fabrics and the adoption of Western-style dresses.

Following Goa's liberation in 1961, concerted efforts were initiated by both the government and the Kunbi tribe to resurrect this treasured piece of their cultural heritage (K for Kunbi saris - the Goan Heritage sari., 2022). However, despite these earnest endeavours, the sari did not experience an immediate resurgence in popularity (The Rich Heritage of The Goan Kunbi sari 2023, n.d.).

In the present day, a noticeable transformation is evident as women embracing Kunbi saris opt for the inclusion of blouses, attesting to the evolving fashion sensibilities while still preserving the unique legacy of the Kunbi weave. Beyond saris, the iconic chequered Kunbi pattern finds utility in crafting loincloths, handkerchiefs, gamcha (cotton towels), and an array of other articles (K for Kunbi saris - the Goan Heritage sari., 2022). Regrettably, however, this weaving tradition has encountered a decline in recent years, gradually metamorphosing into a fading craft (Kunbi: Unearthing the Clothing of Goan, Kunbi & Gowda Tribes, 2023).

The late fashion designer and museum director Mr. Wendell Rodricks introduced the Kunbi sari of Goa to the majority. In order to resurrect the nearly extinct traditional sari that was formerly worn by the Goan Kunbi ladies, Mr. Wendell Rodricks addressed Goa College of Home Science in 2009 about putting up a Handloom weaving and training Centre. (Kunbi: Unearthing the Clothing of Goan, Kunbi & Gowda Tribes, 2023)

### **1.3. Characteristics of the Kunbi Sari**

The Kunbi sari is characterised by its striking chequered pattern, predominantly dyed in vibrant red hues and its various adaptations (Textiles of Goa | Indian Culture, n.d.)

It was handwoven by the tribe itself from 100 percent cotton. The sari is shorter than a typical sari of 5–6 yards. As a result, it partially exposes the legs when worn and also to facilitate movement when working in the fields or even at home, (Kunbi: Unearthing the Clothing of Goan, Kunbi &

Gowda Tribes, 2023). Because of the firm and thick weave, it resists fading quickly. Instead of the typical left, the sari skirt's folds extend out to the right. (Kunbi: Unearthing the Clothing of Goan, Kunbi & Gowda Tribes, 2023)

What makes this sari even more extraordinary is its unique dyeing process, which incorporates elements like iron ore and rice kanji (starch) (Ballikar, n.d.). Initially, this sari boasted a colour palette of red and black, featuring both small and large checks (Ballikar, n.d.). The sari's checks are coloured in just a few colours, including Yellow (Kesari), Red (Tambdo), White (Dhavo), and Green (Hirvo). Black, purple, and maroon are also utilised in deeper hues. A real Kunbi sari uses only these colours; the rest of the palette is conventional. The colours are said to represent several life stages, including youth, marriage, old age, and death (Kunbi: Unearthing the Clothing of Goan, Kunbi & Gowda Tribes, 2023)

According to Rta Kapur Chishti's book, the saris typically measured 7.40 by 1.05 metres and were woven with a relatively high reed and pick using count cotton in the 1950s and 1960s. These saris showcased a unique blend of influences from Maharashtra and Karnataka, featuring a simple border known as 'sada Phaati' in the local language. (Ballikar, n.d.) Additionally, they incorporated an arrowhead twill border called 'saru palli/pulla' that transitioned into a four-petal flower motif called 'aboli phaati.' Other locally known flower motifs like 'sevanti, mogri, chafa' were also utilized. (Ballikar, n.d.) Some saris showcased a wavy line or criss-cross border referred to as 'Toda.' In the Christian community, the flower motif was transformed into a cross design called 'kuris' in the extra warp of the borders. The saris were adorned with intricate multicolor stripes and checks known as 'palo' and 'poli' in vibrant shades such as Green 'hirwa,' Blue 'neela,' turmeric Yellow 'haldi,' Indian Pink 'rani,' and Red 'lambda.' These distinct colour combinations gave the saris a unique character, distinguishing them from those found in Ichalkaranji (Maharashtra) and Belgaum (Karnataka)(Chishti and Singh 2010, 63)

The saris evolved from a simple six-end design to a more intricate twelve-end pattern, with two coloured ends and two white ends, commonly known as 'sada.' The end piece, known as 'palvan,' is typically plain without any pattern elements on it. (Chishti and Singh 2010, 63). The saris were predominantly worn by women belonging to labourers, Konkani local, Koli fisherwomen, and Kunbi tribes. In contrast, men from these communities traditionally wore a square piece of cloth called 'Kashti' or 'Langot.' This cloth was chequered in pattern and secured around the waist

with a cord or belt. It was passed from the front to the back, between the buttocks, and tucked in. Sometimes, the excess fabric at the front would hang loosely or be passed between the legs to cover the buttocks (Gune 1979:234). A coarse woollen blanket called 'kambol' was casually thrown across one of the shoulders. When they moved outside the village, they would wear a half shirt or a banyan (Phal 1982:38). According to Sakhardande, the Kunbi women wore a red and white chequered eight-yard sari called 'kapod' and decorated their heads with flowers. (Sakhardande 2000:4). The favoured method of wearing this sari, known as 'kapod/lugade,' involved forgoing a blouse or 'choli' and using the sari to cover the chest. The sari would be draped in a manner where the back pleats were tucked at the waist in the centre back, and the decorative end of the sari, known as 'palu,' would be passed under the arm from the back and drawn across the chest over the left shoulder..(Gune 1979:234) However, in 1940, the Portuguese Government, under a decree, prohibited these ladies to attend the bazaar or to move in public places without wearing a choli (bodice) or blouse" (Gune 1979: 234)

#### **1.4. Significance of the Kunbi Sari**

**Symbolism of Vitality:** The core colour spectrum within the Kunbi sari carries profound symbolic significance. The Kunbi sari plays a significant role in various ceremonies, such as weddings and other important life events. (K for Kunbi saris - the Goan Heritage sari., 2022).) It is a preferred choice for brides, symbolising their connection to their roots and cultural heritage (Kunbi sari The Traditional Attire of Tribal Women in Goa, n.d.) young widows wore blue and lilac saris, while the elderly wore black. Young people wore scarlet and maroon saris during festivities.

The vivid crimson shade symbolises fertility and the exuberance of life itself. In harmony with this vibrant red, tones of yellow, hailing from turmeric (haldi), and lilac, convey a nuanced range of emotions. (Kunbi: Unearthing the Clothing of Goan, Kunbi & Gowda Tribes, 2023) These naturally derived dyes not only imbue the sari with layers of symbolism but also offer the wearer skin-friendly comfort (Kunbi sari Goa - Craft Documentation | Research Indian Handloom, n.d).

**Tailored Artistry:** Kunbi saris are artfully handcrafted to cater to individual preferences and dimensions. While the Maharashtrian Nauvaari, a resplendent nine-yard marvel, suits a multitude, adaptations like Dahvaaris and Chavaaris cater to the needs of shorter individuals. Women who enveloped themselves in these saris radiated an aura of grace, bedecked with floral Venis, adorned with bindis or tilaks on their foreheads, and

bedazzled by exquisite gold jewellery (Kunbi sari Goa - Craft Documentation | Research Indian Handloom, n.d.)

**Diversity in Aesthetics:** The intricate patterns that grace Kunbi saris serve as a vivid reflection of the diverse tapestry of Goan culture. Varied communities boast distinct and culturally embedded designs. For instance, Christian Gawda women favour saris bedecked with prominent squares, while other tribal groups opt for smaller square motifs, thereby showcasing the splendid cultural mosaic that is Goa (Kunbi sari Goa - Craft Documentation | Research Indian Handloom, n.d.)

**Religious Significance and Rituals:** Kunbi fabric holds a central role in religious ceremonies, embodying concepts of purity, sanctity, auspiciousness, and strength. It stands as an essential element in rituals like the annual Veerabhadra ceremony during the Shigmo festival. Moreover, dances such as Dhalo and Fugdi are performed while adorned in these treasured cherry-red Kunbi saris. These saris seamlessly integrate into daily life, infusing vibrancy into both everyday routines and special occasions, including festivals (Kunbi sari Goa - Craft Documentation | Research Indian Handloom, n.d.)



**Figure 1.**

*Figure 1. Tribal women wearing an eight-yard sari called 'lugat' credits: (Fernandes 2018,)*



**Figure 2.**

*Figure 2. Render (toddy tapper) wearing a 'kashti' (loincloth) credits: (Fernandes 2018,)*

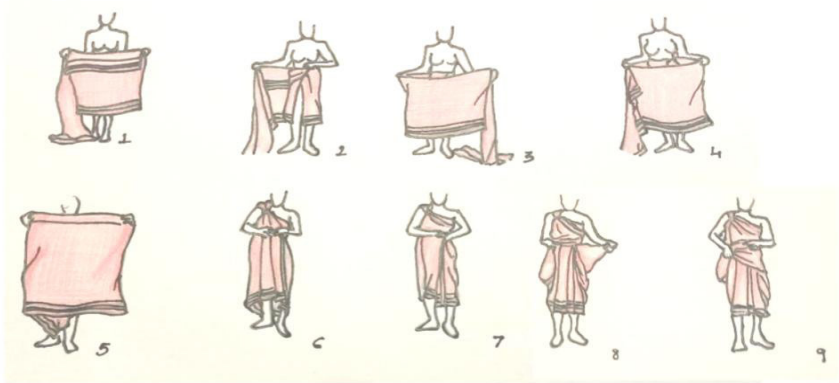


Figure 3: Draping of the Kunbi sari. (Hand illustrated by author)



Figure 4: Draping of the Kunbi sari on a dress form.

2. Methodology

**2.1 Pilot Study:** A pilot study was conducted as an initial step in this research to explore the weaving tradition of the Kunbi sari in Goa. This preliminary investigation was crucial in refining the research framework, understanding the craft’s intricacies, and identifying key informants for the main study.



**Objectives of the Pilot Study** The pilot study aimed to:

- Provide a foundational understanding of Kunbi sari weaving techniques and cultural significance.
- Familiarize the researcher with the weaving process and terminology.
- Establish initial contact with weavers and artisans to facilitate a broader investigation.
- Test the effectiveness of the data collection tools before the full-scale study.

**Engagement with Artisans** The study employed a purposive sampling method, supplemented by snowball sampling, to identify and connect with traditional Kunbi sari weavers. The initial group of six weavers was identified through local craft organizations and referrals. Through snowballing, the sample size expanded to thirty-eight weavers across different weaving clusters in Goa. These artisans provided in-depth insights into their craft, challenges, and weaving techniques.

**Government and Institutional Engagement** In addition to working with artisans, the researcher engaged with two key government bodies: the Ministry of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) and the Department of Arts and Crafts, Goa. These interactions provided an understanding of policies, government support, and economic challenges faced by weavers. Interviews with government officials helped assess the impact of state and central initiatives on Kunbi weaving.

## **2.2 Data Collection Methods**

To ensure a rigorous qualitative analysis, the study utilized multiple data collection methods:

### **1. Structured Interviews with Weavers**

- A structured interview schedule was designed, focusing on themes such as weaving techniques, material sourcing, economic viability, and generational knowledge transfer.
- The final study included thirty-eight weaver interviews, conducted in their homes and workplaces.
- The interviews, lasting between 45 to 60 minutes, were

conducted in Konkani and later transcribed for analysis.

## **2. Field Observations and On-Site Visits**

- A total of seven weaving units across Goa were visited.
- These visits facilitated direct observation of the weaving process, loom setup, dyeing techniques, and workspace conditions.
- Detailed field notes captured insights into the weaving workflow, tools used, and the weavers' daily routine.

## **3. Textile Artifact Documentation**

- Descriptive documentation techniques were employed to record the sari-making process comprehensively.
- High-resolution photography (5.0 MP camera) was used to document the patterns, colors, and weaving textures.
- Specialized tools such as measuring tape, pick glass, and magnifying glass ensured precision in capturing dimensions and weaving intricacies.

## **4. Questionnaire Survey**

- A separate questionnaire was designed to collect data on market trends, pricing structures, and consumer preferences.
- This was administered to 15 textile retailers and 10 consumers interested in handloom textiles.

## **5. Document Analysis**

- A review of historical records, government reports, and existing literature on Kunbi saris was conducted.
- Data from sources such as the Textile Committee of India, CEIC economic reports, and Goa Handicrafts Rural & Small Scale Industries Development Corporation were examined to understand industry trends and the economic positioning of Kunbi textiles.

### **2.3 Ethical Considerations**

- The study adhered to ethical guidelines by obtaining informed consent from all participants.
- Identities of weavers and respondents were anonymized where necessary.

- Participants were informed about the study's objectives and given the option to withdraw at any stage.

## 2.4. The Weaving of the Kunbi Sari

### Craftsmanship and Evolution of Kunbi Sari Weaving

The art of crafting a Kunbi sari is an intricate and deeply rooted practice that has traversed through generations. According to Lynton's seminal work (2002, p.13), the sari, in its essence, can be understood as an uncut piece of fabric divided into three distinct sections: the longitudinal borders, the end piece, and the field. At the heart of this art form lies the weaving process, a meticulous endeavour that involves the interlacing of warp and weft yarns at right angles. This harmonious interplay of threads gives birth to the fabric, transforming it into the iconic Kunbi sari that embodies the cultural tapestry of Goa.

### Historical Evolution and Market Dynamics

Initially, the weavers of Kunbi saris were predominantly focused on producing textiles to meet the needs of their local communities or for their personal use. (Kunbi sari The Traditional Attire of Tribal Women in Goa, n.d.) However, as time unfolded and with advancements in transportation and communication systems, the market for handloom products, including the exquisite Kunbi saris, expanded both domestically and internationally. This transformation reflects not only the mastery of the weavers but also the evolving demand for these traditional textiles on a global scale.

### Dyeing and Color Palette

One of the distinguishing features of the Kunbi sari is its unique and vibrant colour palette. In an interview with Mr. R. Kamat, the sole surviving Kunbi sari weaver, he revealed that the dyeing process involved specific dyes obtained from a supplier named Asgaonkar in Belgaum. These dyes were referred to as RC base for red, RB base for maroon, ASG for yellow, Inandrine Blue for blue, and Inandrine Green for green. To achieve various colours, these primary dyes were combined, along with the use of Hydrochloric acid and sodium nitrite powder. It's interesting to note that this differs from some newspaper articles that claimed natural flowers and tree barks were used for dyeing Kunbi saris.

To further enhance the visual appeal, additional colour stripes, including shades of white, green, purple, and indigo, were sporadically incorporated near the pallu. Along the dobby border, which typically measured two

to three inches in width, intricate white or gold stripes adorned the sari, adding to its aesthetic charm. This diverse colour scheme not only lent vibrancy to the sari but also conveyed deeper symbolism.

**Distinctive Characteristics of the Kunbi Sari**

The authentic Kunbi sari boasted several distinctive features that set it apart. With a higher thread density compared to standard saris, it typically measured approximately 4.5 metres in length. (Kunbi sari Goa - Craft Documentation | Research Indian Handloom, n.d.) The choice of earthy tones in weaving further accentuated its unique appeal. One notable characteristic was the method of securing the pallu, a corner of the sari. Unlike conventional saris where the fold flares out towards the left side, the Kunbi sari featured folds that gracefully extended to the right side. These saris were worn at knee level, allowing for ease of movement, particularly while engaged in fieldwork—a testament to the practicality deeply embedded in their design.

Kunbi saris	Contemporary Kunbi saris
Warp 2x80s or 2x100s premium quality double combed yarn	Warp 20s premium quality double combed yarn
Weft 40s or 60s premium quality double combed yarn	Weft 20s premium quality double combed yarn
Reed counts -60	Reed counts -60
Picks/inch 60-64	Picks/inch 60-64
Length of the sari 4.20 Mtrs	Length of the sari 6.20 Mtrs
Width of the sari 48.0 inches	Width of the sari 48.0 inches
Weight of the sari 550 grams	Weight of the sari 650 grams
Layout details Pallow 28 Inch and Border 4 Inch on each side	Layout details Pallow 28 Inch and Border 4 Inch on each side

Table 1 presents a comparison between the traditional Kunbi sari and the modern interpretation of the Kunbi sari.

**2.5. The Weaving Process**

**1. Pre loom processes of Revived *Kunbi* Sari**

Sizing: In the pre-loom stages of crafting the revived Kunbi sari,

the process begins with sizing. This involves working with naturally dyed cotton and mercerized yarns, which are typically obtained in bundles weighing 5 kilograms, known as “moote.” Each moote consists of 840 yards of cotton yarn, referred to as “Bali.” Five balis are then combined to form a unit known as “ladi.” Furthermore, five ladies are required to create a “Gude,” and finally, ten gudes are assembled to make up a “moote.” This intricate sizing process ensures that the yarn is prepared and organised effectively before it is ready to be woven into the exquisite Kunbi saris.

The primary objective of warp sizing is to enhance the yarn’s suitability for weaving by imparting a comprehensive set of physical and mechanical properties required for the weaving process. During sizing, a size substance is applied to the yarn, and upon drying, it forms a protective film that binds the individual fibres together.

## 2. Sizing

Sizing is a critical phase in warp preparation, as unsized yarn would be unable to endure the tensile stress and excessive friction encountered in the weaving process, particularly from the shedding harness, reed, and shuttle race-board. To address this, a natural sizing material called maida is commonly used. Maida is not only cost-effective but also readily available locally and is devoid of any unpleasant odours.



**Figure 5: Sizing**

### 3. **Bobbin-winding**

Bobbin winding is carried out by using Charakha called bobbin winder. 312-320 bobbins are required for preparation of each warp beam to weave saris



*Figure 6: winding the spools.*

After completing the spools, the spinning wheel, or chakra, is set aside, and the bobbins are organised on a locally termed creel known as “Sidi.” From these bobbins, the threads are threaded through the eye of the creel and then wound onto the warping drum.

In the warping process, the individual yarns from each bobbin, which have been arranged on the creel according to the desired design, are passed through tensioning devices and a leasing section as demonstrated in Figure 7. Subsequently, they are guided through a reed, which serves as a means to identify any broken yarns. The yarn is wound onto the warp beam in approximately 14-metre sections, and this is repeated eight times to achieve the required width for the body of the sari



*Figure 7: bobbins arranged on a creel*

#### 4. Denting-in

To weave a sari of forty-eight inches, one needs to pick forty-eight threads from the *sidi* one at a time for an inch, depending on the design of the fabric, and pass each one through a different notch of a giant comb.



*Figure 8: Denting in & drawing operation.*





*Figure 9: Threads passed through a giant comb*

## 5. Beaming

The ends of these forty-eight threads are tied into a knot before being arranged on the warping drum. (a large cylindrical wheel) which is then rotated. As illustrated in Figure 9, the previously prepared warp yarns are moved onto a warp beam equipped with discs or flanges on both sides. This arrangement ensures that the width of the warp sheet is maintained, safeguarding and preserving the selvedge ends. During the transfer of the warp yarns onto the beam, meticulous attention is given to placing each yarn parallel to the others, all under consistent tension. Each rotation of the warping drum provides a length of 3.5 metres to the cloth. So, for thirty-five metres, the warping drum is rotated ten times.



**Figure 10: Tying the threads to the warp beam.**



To obtain a width of forty-eight inches, the above procedure is repeated forty-eight times, each arranging an additional inch of thread, side by side on the warping drum as demonstrated in Figure 10. All these threads are then collectively wound around a short wooden pole called the warp beam. The beam is then transferred to the handloom, locally called (Haat-maag).



**Figure 11: weaving on the loom. (sari without the dobby border)**

The warp thread and then interwoven with the weft thread using a shuttle containing the weft thread. If the sari has two different colours using the weft threads then two shuttles using two different threads are used. Once the beams run out, the process ends.



**Figure 12: shuttle**

Cutting and doffing: after weaving the ready length of the sari an extra length approximately an inch was woven and was separated from the cloth beam with the help of a knife or scissor. This helped to prevent the slippage of yarns through the dents. The completed sari was folded on the loom itself.



**Figure 13: creating the pattern for the border**



**Figure 14: dobby border**



**Figure 15 Different types of Kunbi saris available in the market today.**

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### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1 Results

This section presents the findings from the structured questionnaire, highlighting key aspects of the Kunbi sari weaving tradition, challenges faced by weavers, and its evolving significance.

**Familiarity with Kunbi Sari Weaving Tradition:** A significant 95.8% of respondents indicated familiarity with the Kunbi sari tradition, while a small percentage (4.2%) were unsure. This demonstrates strong awareness of this heritage craft.

**Traditional Dyeing Methods:** The majority (70.8%) reported that natural substances like rice water and iron oxide were traditionally used for dyeing, while 12.5% cited vegetable dyes. Interestingly, 8.3% were unaware of the dyeing process.

**Time Taken to Weave a Kunbi Sari:** About 29.2% of weavers stated it takes 1–2 weeks to weave a single sari, while 25% estimated 2–4 weeks. Another 12.5% noted that weaving could take over a month, depending on complexity.

**Significance of the Dethli Knot:** While 41.7% of respondents affirmed that the *Dethli knot* secures the pallu, 29.2% recognized it as a symbol of marital status. However, 20.8% were unaware of its specific significance.

**Participation in Weaving Communities:** A striking 91.7% of respondents stated that they are not part of a weaving community or family tradition, suggesting a decline in hereditary transmission of the craft.

**Evolution of the Weaving Process:** The weaving process has undergone gradual changes, with 54.2% acknowledging a blend of traditional and modern techniques. 16.7% believed it had become more modernized, while 12.5% argued that it remained traditional.

**Patterns and Precision in Weaving:** Almost all (95.8%) respondents identified the chequered pattern as the primary design in Kunbi saris. Precision in these patterns is maintained through careful thread counting (58.3%), while 16.7% noted the use of specialized tools.

**Traditional Color Combinations:** The most recognized colors were yellow

low, red, white, and green (37.5%), followed by red and black (25%). However, 12.5% were unsure of traditional color combinations.

**Challenges Faced by Weavers:** The primary challenges identified were decreased demand (33.3%) and difficulty in finding skilled weavers (25%), with competition from other fabrics also playing a role.

**Changing Market Demand:** Market trends indicate that 29.2% of respondents observed a decline due to modern fashion trends, while 20.8% believed demand had steadily increased due to cultural significance.

**Preservation and Promotion Efforts:** Only 25% of respondents acknowledged active preservation efforts, while 16.7% felt that initiatives have been inconsistent, and another 16.7% saw preservation happening but with weak promotion.

**Ensuring Continuity of the Craft:** The most recommended solutions were education and training programs (45.8%) and marketing and promotion strategies (25%) to revive interest in the craft.

**Cultural and Religious Significance:** While 29.2% recognized the Kunbi sari as symbolic of agricultural heritage, 25% associated it with regional folklore. However, 45.8% noted no religious significance.

**Contemporary Changes and Pricing:** Changes in Kunbi sari design were observed by 41.7%, particularly in border and color modifications. In terms of pricing, 41.7% stated that a Kunbi sari typically costs between ₹1,000 and ₹5,000.

**Traditional Rituals and Unique Motifs:** Only 16.7% acknowledged the presence of rituals, while 33.3% were uncertain. Regarding motifs, 37.5% noted variations in borders, while 25% stated that Kunbi saris had no distinct motifs.

### 3.2. Discussion

The findings highlight a gradual transformation of the Kunbi sari weaving tradition, balancing preservation and modernization. While awareness remains high, fewer weavers actively participate, indicating the risk of decline. Challenges such as dwindling demand, lack of skilled artisans, and weak promotional efforts threaten sustainability.

Revival efforts should focus on skill training, marketing, and cultural rebranding to align with contemporary consumer preferences. Government schemes and NGO interventions must ensure economic incentives for weavers to sustain their craft. Additionally, incorporating Kunbi saris into tourism and heritage programs can foster wider appreciation and economic viability.

#### 4. Conclusion

The Kunbi sari remains a symbol of Goa's rich textile heritage, yet its survival is under threat due to a drastic decline in active weavers. According to the findings, 95.8% of respondents were familiar with Kunbi sari weaving, highlighting strong awareness of its cultural significance. However, despite this recognition, participation in the craft has dwindled, with only 50 active weavers remaining in 2023 out of the 500 initially trained, as noted by Mr. Kanekar, a government official at the Surla weaving unit. The lack of younger artisans, difficulty in sourcing raw materials, and limited market reach have further contributed to this decline.

While the craft has retained key elements—such as the chequered pattern (recognized by 95.8% of respondents) and traditional color combinations like red, black, yellow, white, and green (62.5%)—there have been notable adaptations. The weaving process has evolved, with 54.2% of respondents acknowledging a blend of traditional and modern techniques. Additionally, 41.7% observed contemporary design changes, including alterations in color schemes and the absence of traditional borders.

To revitalize this craft, efforts must focus on enhancing design appeal, integrating modern variations while preserving traditional techniques. Marketing strategies need to be strengthened, as 33.3% of weavers cited decreasing demand as a major challenge. Expanding promotional efforts—both locally and internationally—can create new opportunities for artisans. The government's role in financial and technical assistance is equally crucial. However, only 25% of respondents acknowledged active preservation initiatives, indicating a gap in awareness and accessibility.

Government programs such as the National Handloom Development Programme (NHDP), Comprehensive Handloom Cluster Development Scheme (CHCDS), and Yarn Supply Scheme (YSS) provide essential support, yet many weavers remain uninformed about these resources. Bridging this gap through education and outreach is essential for sustainability.

Furthermore, collaborations with designers and artists can modernize Kunbi textiles, making them viable in contemporary fashion and home decor markets. Expanding product lines beyond saris—into scarves, accessories, and upholstery textiles—can attract a broader customer base while maintaining cultural authenticity.

A multi-pronged approach is necessary for the preservation and revitalization of Kunbi weaving. By combining design innovation, government support, market expansion, and skill development, this craft can not only survive but also thrive, ensuring economic stability for weavers while safeguarding Goa’s textile legacy for future generations.

	Policy name	Policy Objective
NHDP	National Handloom Development Programme	To provide social and economic support to the weavers and for the overall development of the handloom sector
CHCDS	Comprehensive Handloom Cluster Development Scheme	To create clear and identifiable mega clusters in various areas
YSS	Yarn Supply Scheme	To make quality yarn available to the weavers at the fair price
HWCWS	Handloom Weavers Comprehensive Welfare Scheme	To provide health and life insurance schemes for the weavers
SITP	GOVT, Scheme for Integrated Textile Park	To increase investments and export in the textile industry
TUFS	Technology Upgradation Fund Scheme	To help weavers and other stakeholders in the textile industry to upgrade their machinery,

**Figure 2: Govt. schemes and Policies available for the weaving community. (Ministry of textiles, n.d.).**



**Figure 16: Kunbi weaving unit in Devsu in Pedne.**

## **Appendix**

### **Questionnaire**

Introduction: Thank you for participating in this questionnaire. Your insights into the art of Kunbi sari weaving are invaluable. This survey aims to understand the techniques, challenges, and traditions associated with weaving Kunbi saris. Please answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge and experience.

1. Name
2. Are you familiar with the Kunbi sari weaving tradition?
3. What types of dyes are traditionally used for colouring the Kunbi sari?
4. How long on average does it take to weave a single Kunbi sari?
5. What is the significance of the Dethli knot in a Kunbi sari?
6. Are you part of a weaving community or a family tradition of Kunbi sari weaving?
7. How has the weaving process evolved over time, particularly in

terms of material and techniques?

8. What are the traditional patterns and motifs commonly found in Kunbi saris?
9. How is precision and uniformity in the chequered pattern of Kunbi sari obtained?
10. Are there specific colour combinations that are considered traditional for Kunbi saris?
11. What are the challenges faced by Kunbi sari weavers today?
12. How has the demand for Kunbi saris changed over the years?
13. How are the initiatives supporting the preservation, and promotion of the Kunbi sari weaving heritage progressing?
14. What do you think can be done to ensure the continuity of this craft for future generations?
15. What cultural or symbolic significance do Kunbi saris hold?
16. Do specific communities attribute religious significance to Kunbi saris?
17. Have you noticed any contemporary design changes or adaptations in Kunbi saris?
18. What is the typical price range for Kunbi sari in the current market?
19. Are there any traditional rituals or customs related to the weaving of Kunbi saris?
20. Do Kunbi saris feature any unique motifs or patterns that have special meanings?



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