



BEGAMBAHAAR

The Begampuri Saree

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NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF DESIGN

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Preface

Begampur, a village situated 25 km away from Kolkata in the Hooghly district, has held a prominent position on the handloom map of West Bengal for many years. It has been renowned for its traditional handloom sarees, skillfully woven by expert weavers who are permanent residents of the village. These exquisite Begampuri sarees are made of cotton, known for their beautiful handwoven texture and are easy to maintain without the need for frequent starching. The distinguishing features of these sarees include their loosely woven and lightweight nature, as well as the contrasting borders that adorn them. The weavers utilize a frame loom to create these masterpieces, and each saree bears the mark of authenticity by being handloom made.

In the present day, the Begampur saree continues to captivate wearers with its vibrant colors and tribal patterns on the pallu, all painstakingly done by hand. While the traditional Mathapar and Nakshapar sarees, characterized by broad borders of two or more colors without specific motifs, are still strongly associated with the Begampuri style, contemporary weavers now experiment with various color combinations and designs. These adaptations have been made to cater to the demands of the modern market and to attract a younger audience towards this indigenous weave. Nevertheless, certain elements such as the serrated edge, stripes, and the broad borders of the Mathapar remain an integral and cherished part of the Begampuri saree's identity.

In conclusion, the documentation offers the promise of multifaceted outcomes that stand to enrich our understanding of traditional crafts and their role in the contemporary world. By addressing the identified gaps in documentation and delving into the complex dynamics of craft ecosystems, the anticipated outcomes could bridge historical traditions with modern realities, ensuring the continued vibrancy and relevance of these cherished cultural practices.



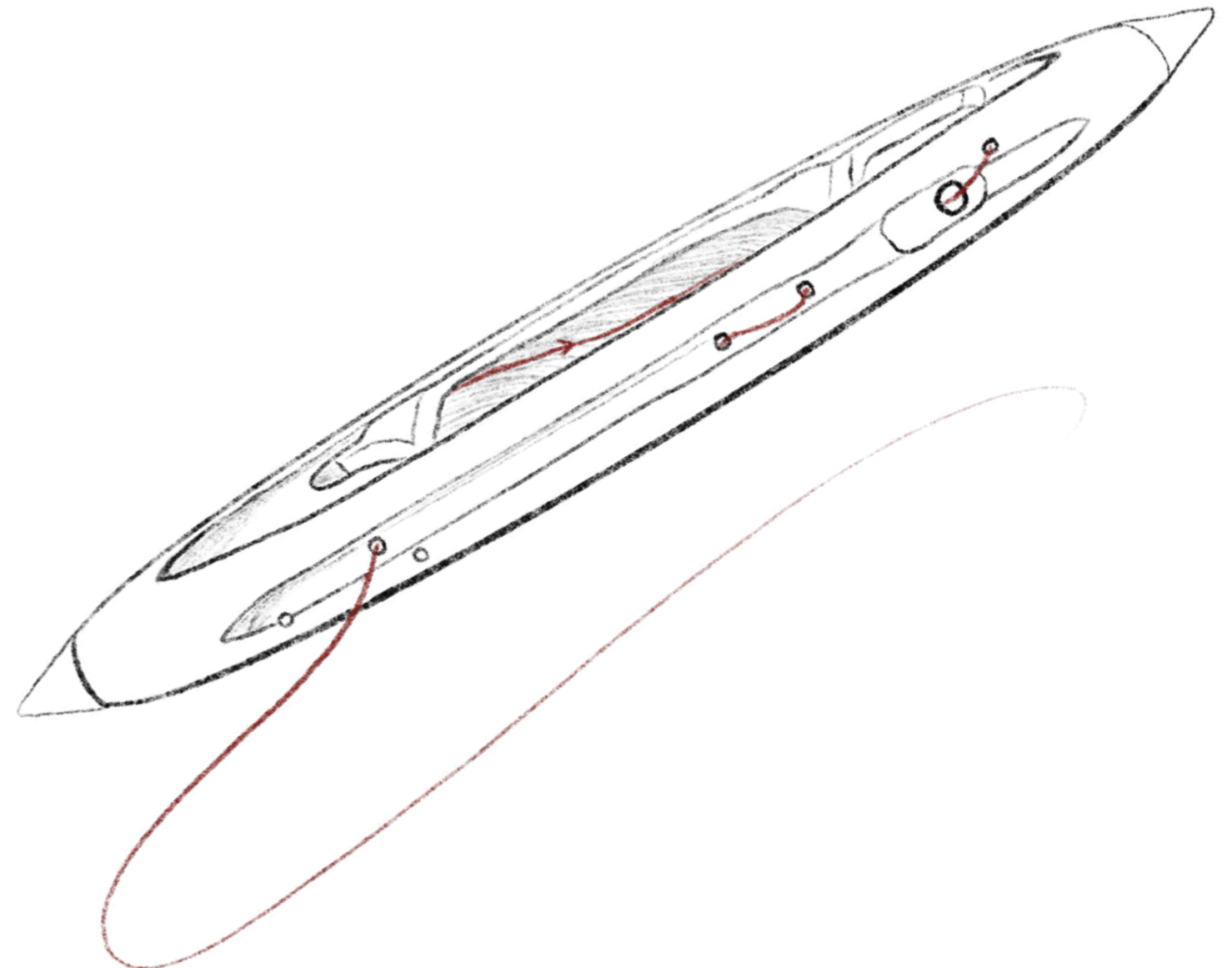
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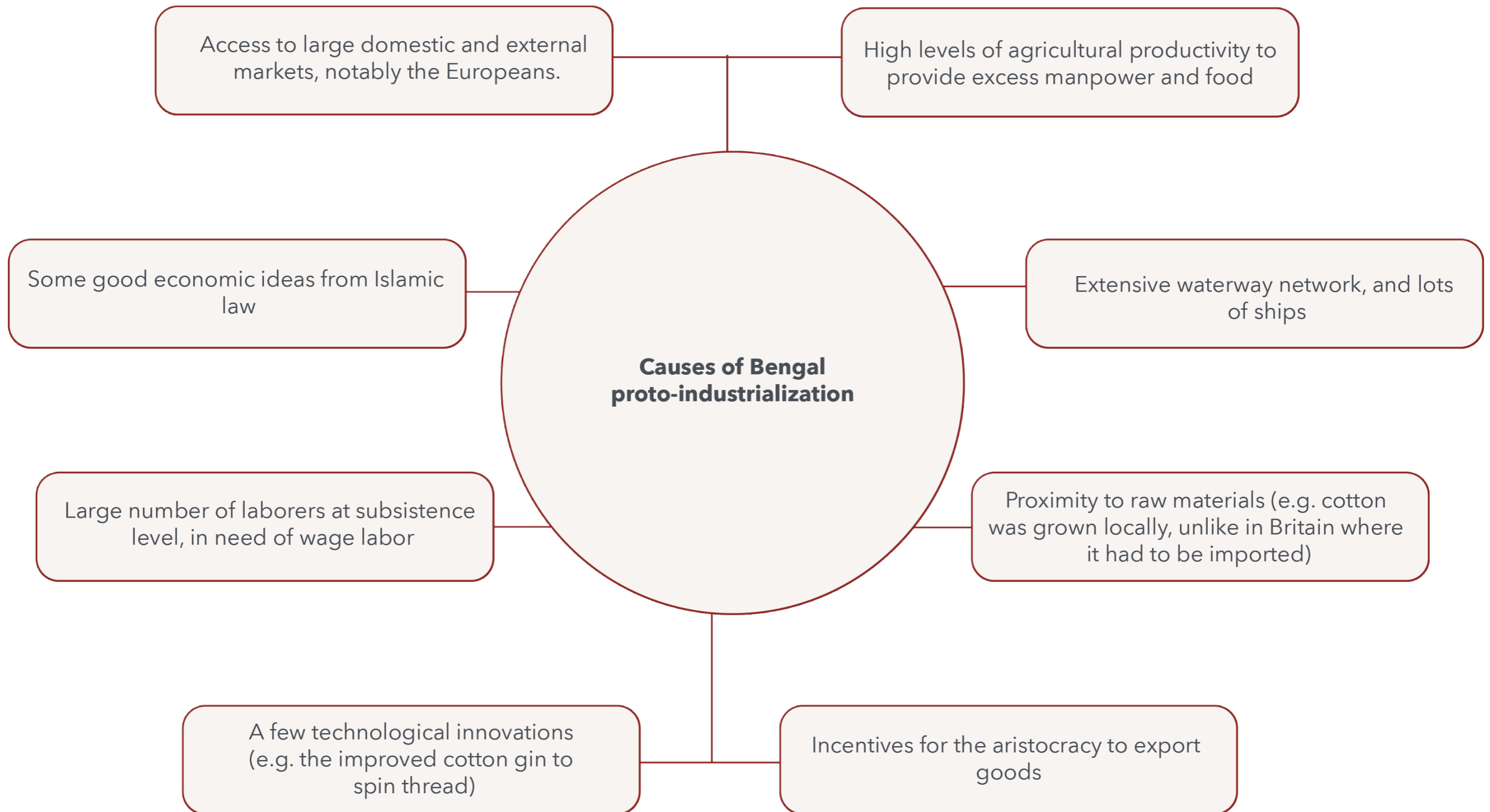


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PAST



The proto-industrialized period of Bengal

In 1769, Bengal had a population of approximately 30 million people, surpassing both Great Britain and France. The region boasted a thriving shipbuilding industry, constructing a total of 223,250 tons of ships annually, far exceeding the North American colonies' output of 23,061 tons during the same period. Bengal played a significant role in Dutch imports from Asia, accounting for 40% of their total imports, including 50% of textiles and 80% of silk. Until 1750, India contributed around 25% of the world's industrial output, a figure that dwindled to just 2% by 1900. Furthermore, India's GDP surpassed that of both China and Europe during this time.

The initial attraction for the Company to Bengal was the prosperity of its textile industry, which ultimately impacted Bengal's weavers the most. Despite not being wealthy, Bengal's weavers had a higher standard of living compared to their counterparts in England due to their autonomy in determining their own terms and conditions. Evidence suggests that Indian weavers earned more than their British counterparts and lived financially secure lives. In India, the weavers held a favored position against the merchants, unlike in England where the state intervened on the side of the employers. This allowed Indian weavers to collectively negotiate favorable prices, especially during a time of strong European demand for cloth in the early 18th century. As a result, Indian weavers experienced a "golden age" characterized by low costs and high prices.



fig 1.1 the port of Calcutta by the Hooghly River. Circa 1903.



fig. 1.2 the Mughal emperor Shah Alam hands a scroll to Robert Clive, the governor of Bengal, which transferred tax collecting rights in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa to the East India Company. Illustration: Benjamin West (1738-1820)/British Library

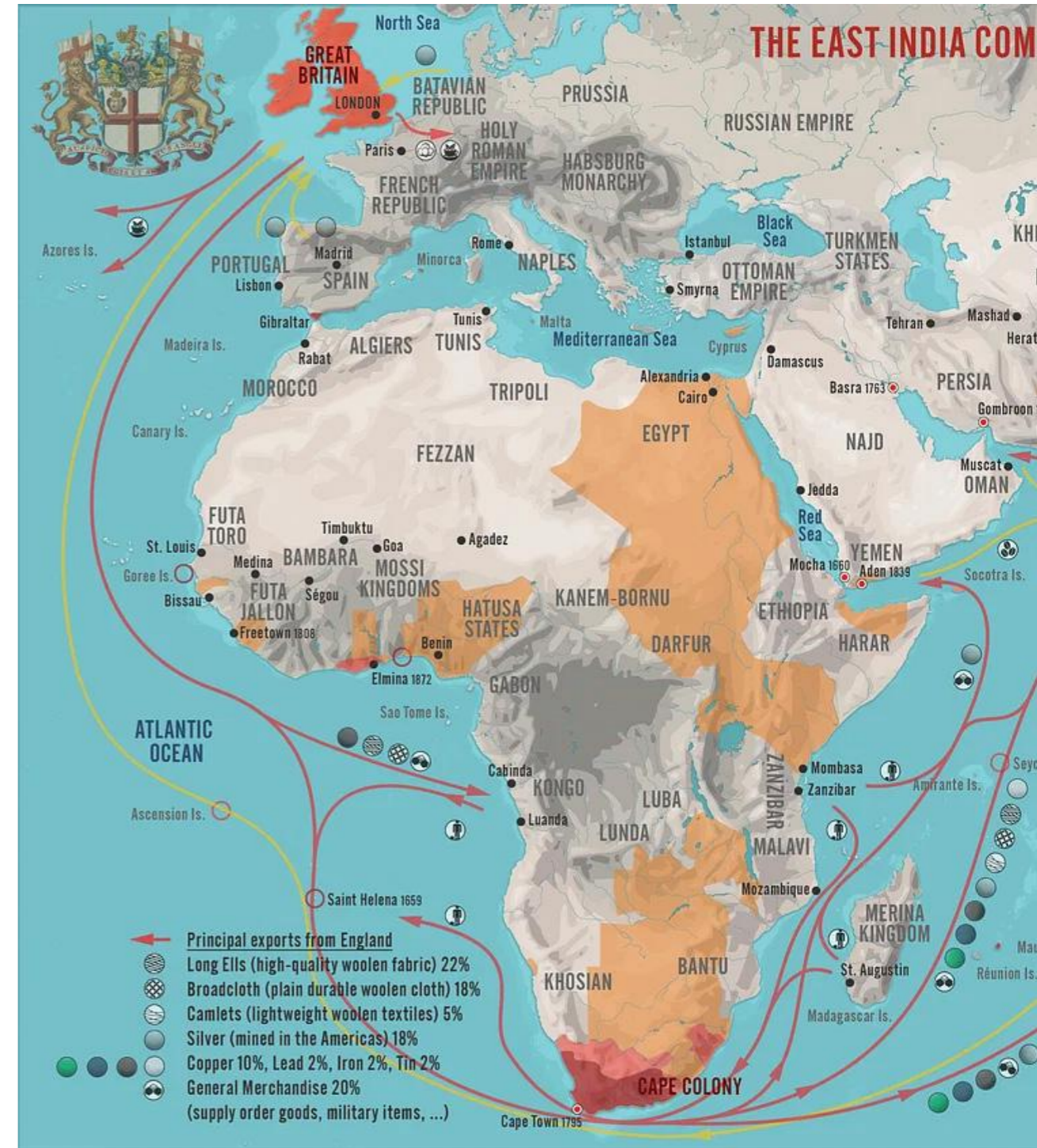


fig 1.3 the East India Company trade map



The East India Company, a British maritime corporation established by Queen Elizabeth I on December 31, 1600 AD, was granted exclusive trading rights in the eastern waters and eventually established a colonial presence in India. The emergence of transoceanic communication during the 15th and 16th centuries coincided with the expansionist ambitions of Western European maritime nations, leading to overseas colonial ventures.

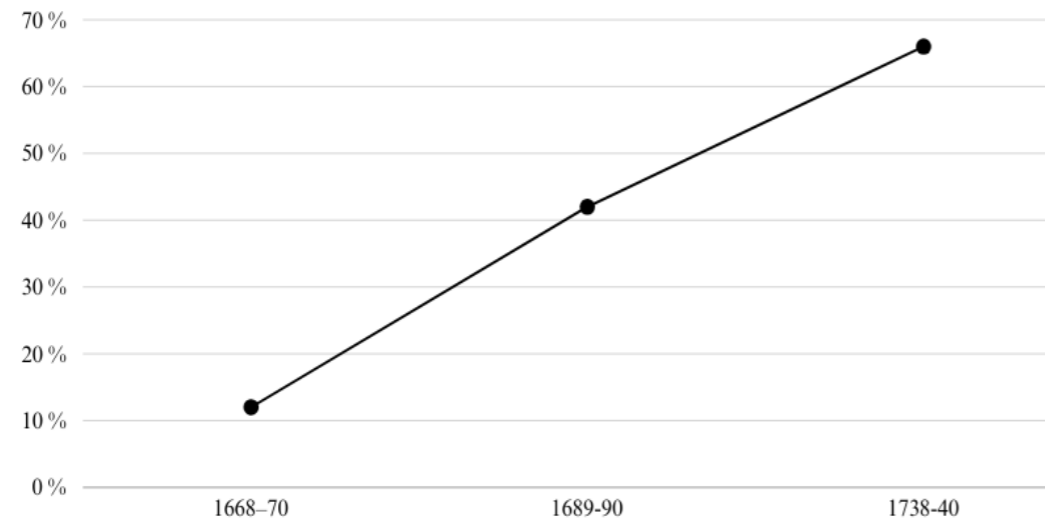


fig 1.4 the increase of settlement at Chunchura on the Hugli river, West Bengal



fig 1.5 Dutch settlement at Chunchura on the Hugli river, West Bengal, by William Hodges (1787)

Colonial Competition in India

The rich history of colonial India is marked by pivotal events and power struggles that have shaped its diverse and complex narrative. From trade disputes to military conflicts, the colonial period was characterized by intense competition and rivalry between European powers vying for dominance in the lucrative Indian subcontinent. In this narrative, the Battle of Hooghly stands as a compelling example of the intricate geopolitical dynamics and economic interests that defined colonial India. The Battle of Hooghly, which took place during the 17th and 18th centuries between the Dutch and British East India Companies, underscores the fierce competition between these two colonial powers for control over the profitable textile trade in Bengal and its surrounding regions. This competition led to not only military confrontations, but also

strategic alliances with local rulers, as both the Dutch and British sought to secure their positions and maximize their profits in the region. The Battle of Hooghly serves as a significant event in the history of colonial India, reflecting the intense rivalry between the British and Dutch East India Companies for economic dominance in Bengal and its impact on the course of colonial expansion in India.

HUGLI OVER BRITISH TIMELINE

1696 TILL 1950

- The Portuguese, the Dutch, the French, the Danes, the English came to this district for business purpose and established "Kuthis". They also settled in the district and utilized the district as the "Window" to the foreign Settlers. Chandernagore was under the French since

After the battle of Plassy, Mirkasim by an agreement donated the Zamindery areas of Burdwan, Midnapur and Chittagang to the British. own rule to administer those areas according to their system.

1760

-

1795

-

For administrative purpose the district of Burdwan was divided into two parts, the Northern Division being called Burdwan and the southern division Hooghly. The Bengal Presidency at that time was divided into 14 districts of which Hugli was one.

Hooghly became a separate Collectorate. Mr. W.H. Belli being the first Collector.

1822

-

1827 - 1829

- The present Collectorate Building was cons to accommodate the British troops.

Dadni/ Contract or Advance System

In the 17th and 18th centuries, the production of cotton textiles in India operated under agreements between merchants, merchant-middlemen, and weavers. These agreements covered important aspects like quantity, quality, price, and delivery dates of the textiles. To support the weavers, a significant portion of the contract's value was given in advance, enabling them to purchase raw materials and meet their family's needs. These advances were typically provided in cash or raw materials. This production system, known as DADNI or CONTRACT or ADVANCE SYSTEM, was widely practiced in India, except in Madras, and had its roots in Islamic law. The dadni payments were made in installments, often in cash, and sometimes through bills of debt. European companies also adopted the dadni system to protect their investments.



fig 1.6 Dadni System: Late Mughal and European Merchants Era



Organization of Cotton Textile Production in the 17th and 18th Centuries

The 17th and 18th centuries were a time of immense transformation in the realm of cotton textile production. This revolution had far-reaching effects on manufacturing techniques and economic systems, leaving an indelible mark on the global economy. The emergence of cotton textile production as a catalyst for the Industrial Revolution was a pivotal moment in history, reshaping the way goods were produced and distributed. The organization of this industry was a complex web, involving a diverse array of participants such as merchants, skilled craftsmen, workers, and consumers. Each of these stakeholders played a crucial role in building a thriving sector that revolutionized production and distribution practices. By delving into the interactions and collaborations among these individuals, we can gain valuable insights into the early stages of industrialization, the intricate relationship between economic progress and social structures, and the pivotal role played by technological advancements.

During this era cotton textile production underwent a remarkable transformation that had a profound impact on various regions, including India, England, and the American colonies. Technological advancements, such as the spinning jenny and water frame, revolutionized the processing and spinning of cotton into thread. This period also witnessed a surge in demand for cotton textiles, which, coupled with the availability of cheap labor and raw materials, fueled the industry's growth in both urban and rural areas. In England, the Industrial Revolution played a pivotal role in establishing cotton mills in towns like Manchester and Liverpool, where mechanized production employed a significant number of workers. Similarly, in India, traditional handloom techniques coexisted with European technologies, resulting in a diverse landscape of cotton textile production methods. Ultimately, the historical context of cotton textile production during this era marked a significant period of change and innovation, laying the foundation for the modern textile industry.

**5 WAYS IMPERIAL BRITAIN
CRIPPLED BENGAL'S
HANDLOOMS**

PRICE FIXING AND BUYER
MONOPOLIES

BRUTE FORCE, VIOLENCE AND
IMPRISONMENT

TAXES, TAXES, TAXES

INDUSTRIAL INNOVATION

STRATEGIC THEFT



fig 1.7 image capturing the process of cotton production in Bengal during the 17th and 18th centuries.

The impact of cotton textile production had a profound effect on society and the economy. It led to the growth of urban centers and the emergence of a new class of wealthy merchants and industrialists. The introduction of factory-based production systems revolutionized the manufacturing and distribution of textiles, increasing efficiency and having significant social consequences. The demand for cotton textiles also fueled the expansion of global trade networks and contributed to the growth of colonial empires. It became a driving force behind economic growth and industrialization, setting the stage for the industrial revolution and shaping modern history. The organization of cotton textile production in this centuries brought about a revolutionary change in the industry, playing a vital role in Europe's economic development. The shift from domestic production to factory-based systems resulted in improved efficiency, higher productivity, and the establishment of a global market for cotton textiles. The introduction of innovative technologies like the spinning jenny and water frame further propelled the industry forward, setting the stage for the Industrial Revolution. Moreover, the organization of cotton textile production paved the way for mass production, which stimulated consumer demand and fostered economic growth. The advancements made during this period had far-reaching implications for Europe's economy, society, and culture



fig 1.8 the cotton export conducted by the East India Company.





The weavers under the East India Company control

The Company employed a range of deceitful strategies to consistently lower prices. One particularly despised tactic involved classifying perfectly fine fabric as subpar and then selling it on the open market at a significantly higher price than what was paid to the weaver, resulting in substantial profits for the Company. As prices continued to decline, weavers faced increasing challenges in covering production costs and repaying the advances they had received from the Company. The Indian market became flooded with inexpensive textiles that were machine-manufactured and produced in large quantities. Surprisingly, these textiles seemed to be on par with Indian textiles. The Company set textile prices so low that weavers found it exceedingly difficult to recover 80% of their production expenses. This created a vicious cycle of poverty and indebtedness, with the corporate buyer being identified as the primary cause of the weavers' impoverishment and detachment from their craft. The extent of economic violence required to drive skilled workers to harm themselves is beyond imagination. Despite the lack of any supporting evidence aside from Bolts' accounts, these incidents or similar ones have attained legendary status as symbols of the physical and psychological suffering inflicted by the Company's control over Bengal.

In the year 1767, a group of weavers, led by Khirpal, decided to take a bold stand against the misuse of power. They took a courageous step by sending a petition to Calcutta, requesting a fairer price for their cloth. To their surprise, the authorities of the East India Company agreed to their demand. However, their victory was short-lived as the local Company Resident chose to disregard the order and even threatened the weavers with arrest if they persisted in fighting for their rights. This act of resistance was quite uncommon, as the Company continued to benefit from their exploitative trade policies. The weavers were subjected to receiving payments that were at least 15% lower than what they would have earned in the public market, and in some cases, the difference was as high as 40%. These unjust price reductions were enforced through brutal means such as fines, imprisonment, flogging, and even forcing bonds upon the weavers, as documented by William Bolts. Consequently, many weavers were left feeling hopeless and powerless in the face of such oppression.

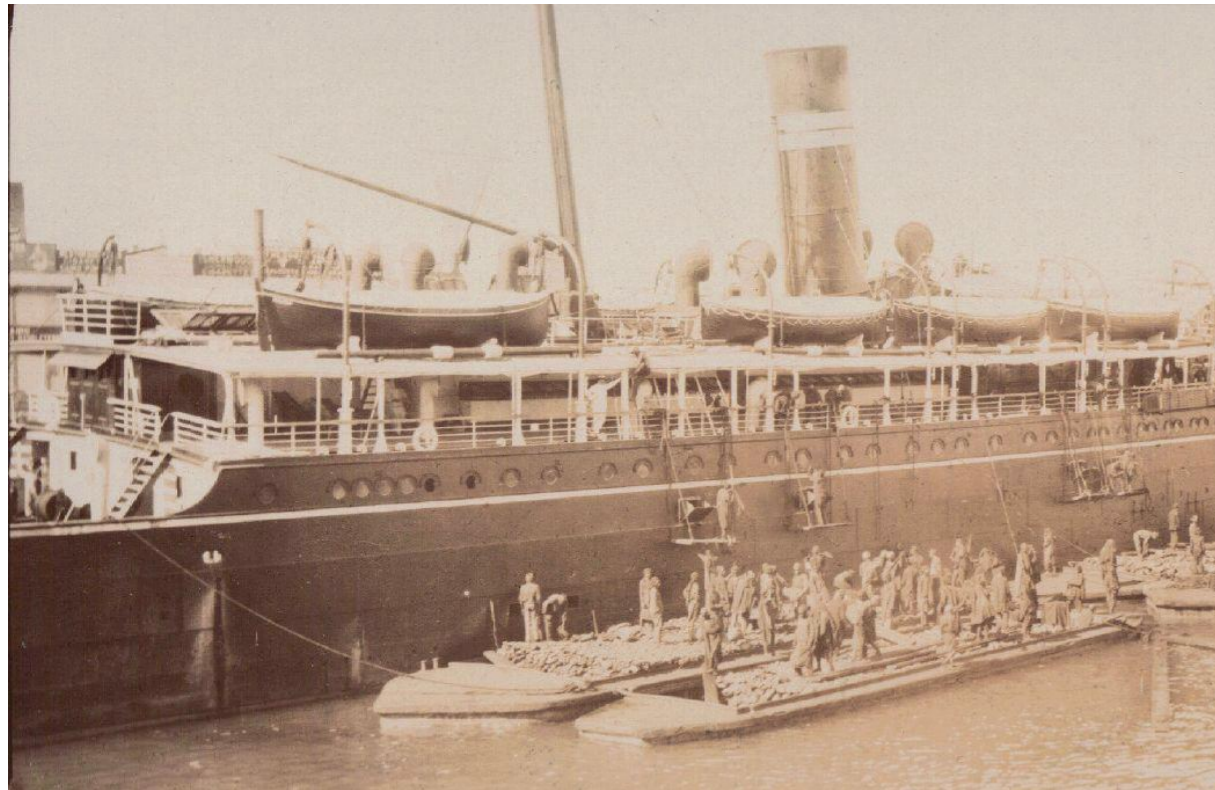


fig 1.9-1.12 the images depict the cotton export tradition of the East India Company in Bengal.(SOUCE : BRITISH LIBRARY)

The impact of British colonial rule on the perception of clothing in India

Throughout the centuries, the fashion landscape in India has experienced a profound evolution. Our present-day attire reflects a fusion of various influences, including the Huns, Greeks, Mughals, and British, who have all exerted their authority over India at different times. While other cultures have played a role in shaping India's diverse wardrobe, it is the British who have left the most prominent mark. Fashion historian Toolika Gupta explains that before the British arrived in India, traditional Indian clothing consisted of three draped garments - the Antariya, Uttariya, and Kayabandh. These garments were worn by both men and women, with the Kayabandh acting as a belt to secure the Antariya. However, during the Gupta dynasty, stitched garments like choli and Ghaghra were introduced for women, which was a significant milestone in India's fashion history. Later, with the influence of Islamic rule in the 8th century AD, men in India started wearing stitched garments like kurta and salwar.

Men's political ideologies influenced their acceptance or rejection of English clothing, but women were not given the same opportunity to make a choice. The way women covered their bodies became a battleground for conflicting cultural ideologies. The British abided by strict moral and respectful principles when it came to their clothing choices, whereas Indians enjoyed a greater degree of freedom in their approach. The British "memsahibs" were frequently the ones who traveled to India in pursuit of a suitable husband, and they were regarded as role models of virtuous women that Indian





women were supposed to imitate. These British women, with their Victorian blouses, layered petticoats, corsets, and hats, epitomized English modesty. On the other hand, Indian women, proudly showcasing their bare breasts and voluptuous figures in sarees, were considered too scandalous by the British. The British influence on Indian clothing was shaped by a multitude of factors, encompassing social, economic, political, and religious aspects. To truly comprehend the extent and impact of this influence, it is imperative to delve into the analysis of how it not only transformed our everyday clothing preferences but also redefined the significance of garments as more than just superficial embellishments and protective coverings.

fig 1.13 the Bengali man and woman in Babu culture

fig 1.14-1.18 (right) the series of images illustrated the progression of draping styles among women from Bengal

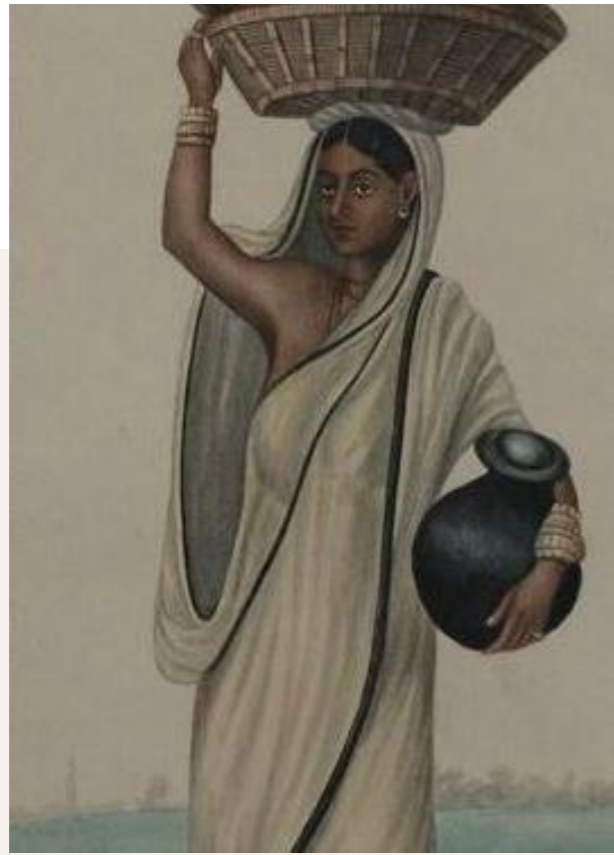




fig 1.19 & 1.20 (above) the series of images showcased the evolving draping style of men in Bengal
fig 1.21 (facing page) the visuals captured the essence of Bengal's Babu culture, beautifully reflecting the influence of Kali Ghat painting.

Introducing of Babu Culture in Bengal

In rural agricultural communities of India, the dhoti is still the primary clothing choice for men, representing a significant portion of the population. It is also embraced by certain religious groups, occupations, and individuals involved in politics as a symbol of national identity. During the 19th century, the emergence of the Bhadrak in Bengal brought about a change in Bengali identity and mindset. These individuals were known for their refined qualities and Western education. The term 'Babu' was used to acknowledge wealthy Indians who supported the British in establishing their presence in India. The Babus, unlike the common people known as 'chotolok', distinguished themselves through their caste, class, education, and esteemed position in society. However, as colonial officials and associates of the Raj, they remained disconnected from the Indian masses. The typical Babu would wear a combination of English and Indian clothing, proudly display their English education, and flaunt their social status. They not only collaborated with Western agencies but also employed Europeans in their own companies.





fig 1.22 the essence of the Swadeshi and Boycott Movement, highlighting the significance of indigenous textiles and the resistance against foreign goods.

Bengal: The Core of The Swadeshi Movement (1903-1908)

The movement known as the Swadeshi And Boycott Movement in Bengal from 1903 to 1908 had a clear objective: to boycott British goods and support Indian products. It emerged as a response to the Partition of Bengal in 1905 and had a profound impact on India as a whole. By rejecting foreign goods and embracing Indian ones, the movement revitalized local cottage industries and handicrafts that had been in decline due to British policies favoring imported machine-made goods. This led to a surge in the production of indigenous textiles, soaps, matches, and other everyday items. Swadeshi enterprises not only promoted Indian entrepreneurship and technical skills but also fostered a sense of pride in local products and craftsmanship among the people. The movement attracted participation from various segments of society, including students, women, peasants, artisans, and the middle class, bridging the gap between urban and rural areas. Although it did not completely dismantle British economic dominance, the Swadeshi agitation laid the groundwork for the development of an indigenous industrial and economic foundation aligned with national interests.

মায়ের দেওয়া মোটা কাপড়
মাথায় তুলে নে রে ভাই,
দীন দুঃখিনী মা যে তোদের
তার বেশী আর সাধ্য নাই।
ওই মোটা সুতোর সঙ্গে মায়ের
অপার স্নেহ দেখতে পাই,
আমরা এমনি পাষণ
তাই ফেলে ওই
পরের দোরে ভিক্ষা চাই
দীন দুঃখিনী মা যে তোদের
তার বেশী আর সাধ্য নাই।

Thick clothes given by mother
Take it to your head, brother
Din Dukhini mother is yours
He can't afford more
Mother with that thick thread
I see immense love,
We are such rocks
So leave that
Ask for alms next time
Din Dukhini mother is yours
He can't afford more

Poem Name: Mayer Deoa Mota Kapor
Lyricist: Rajanikanta Sen



fig 1.23 the ancient art of weaving traditional red and white sarees in Early Begampur , SOURCE : TANAPOREN MAGAZINE

Rise of Indian industries in Bengal under Swadeshi Movement

The emergence of Banga Laxmi Cotton Mills Ltd. in Bengal during the early 1800s reflected the socio-political landscape of the region amidst a decline in specialized crafts and a growing reliance on British manufactured goods. This period saw the dominance of imported textiles from Lancashire and Manchester due to the inability of local industries like handloom and hosiery to meet the demand. However, visionary entrepreneurs recognized the potential to compete globally and established cotton mills across the region to overcome this challenge. Banga Laxmi symbolized the determination of the Indian people to establish local industries amidst tough foreign competition, contributing significantly to the growth of Indian industries during the Swadeshi movement.

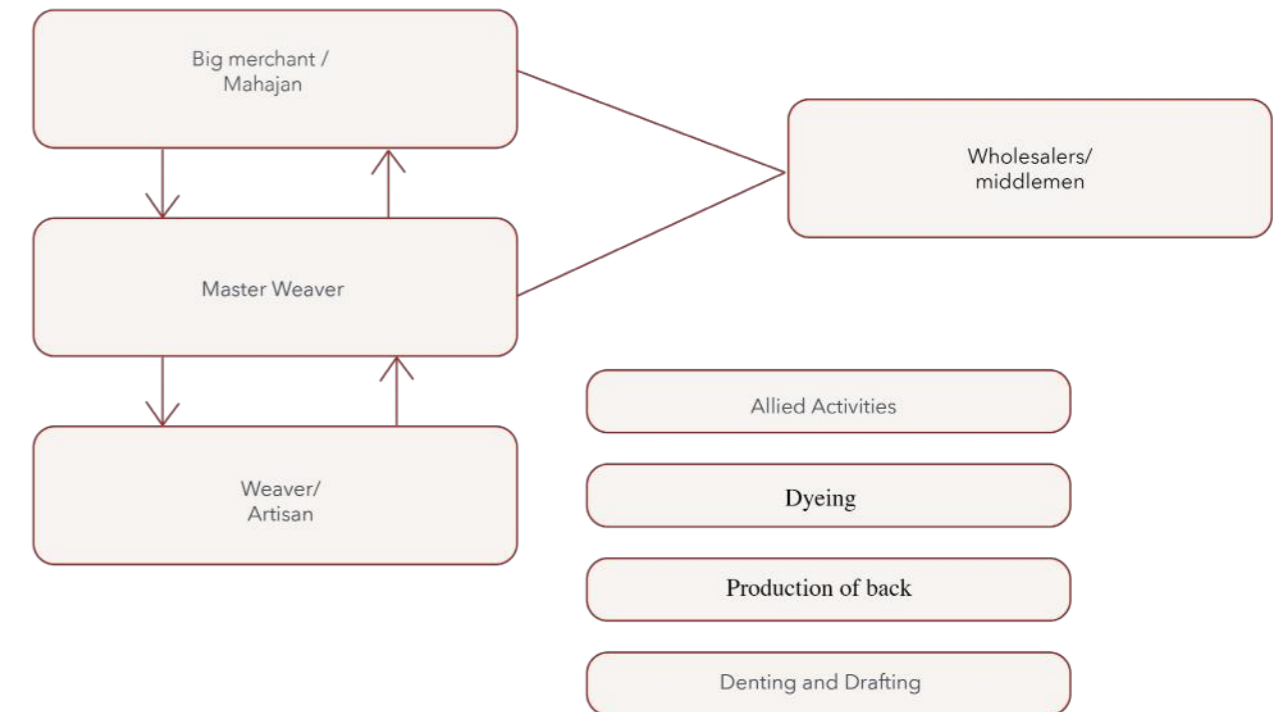


fig 1.24 lady using charkha for spinning

The establishment of Banga Laxmi occurred amidst both favorable and challenging circumstances. The Anti-Partition agitation and nationwide boycott movement created a conducive political environment for the growth of Swadeshi industries. However, competing with foreign imports presented significant challenges for indigenous cotton mills in Bengal. Entrepreneurs had to acquire machinery, produce their own yarn, manufacture high-quality fabrics, offer competitive prices, and inspire confidence in people to invest in the mill's shares and support the cause of Swadeshi. Despite these challenges, their determination prevailed.

One of the initial challenges faced by Banga Laxmi was sourcing yarn at a minimum cost. To address this, they established the Indian Cotton Cultivation Ltd. in 1907, ensuring a reliable and sustainable source of cotton from local cultivators. This not only supported their production needs but also raised employment levels in the area. With their own steady supply of cotton, Banga Laxmi Cotton Mills embarked on a remarkable journey of production and innovation, producing large quantities of sought-after yarn that was previously imported. The locally produced yarn was not only cost-effective but also of excellent quality.

Over time, Banga Laxmi Cotton Mills emerged as a symbol of advancement, continuously adapting to new technologies and methods to improve efficiency and quality. The mill expanded its power looms, managed the entire production process from raw material sourcing to finished products, and became known for its high-quality grey and colored yarns, bed



sheets, twills, and medical supplies. By focusing on mass-market items like dhotis and saris, the mill quickly established a strong reputation in the market, meeting the needs of the general public.

Despite facing challenges such as dependence on imported machinery, Banga Laxmi Cotton Mills remained a prime example of the advancement of Swadeshi industries under Bengali management and local capital. The success of the mill provided employment opportunities and contributed to the local economy, becoming a source of pride for the people of Bengal who supported the Swadeshi movement and indigenous industries. The legacy of Banga Laxmi continues to inspire, symbolizing the progress made during the Swadeshi movement and the determination of entrepreneurs to establish self-reliant industries despite foreign competition.

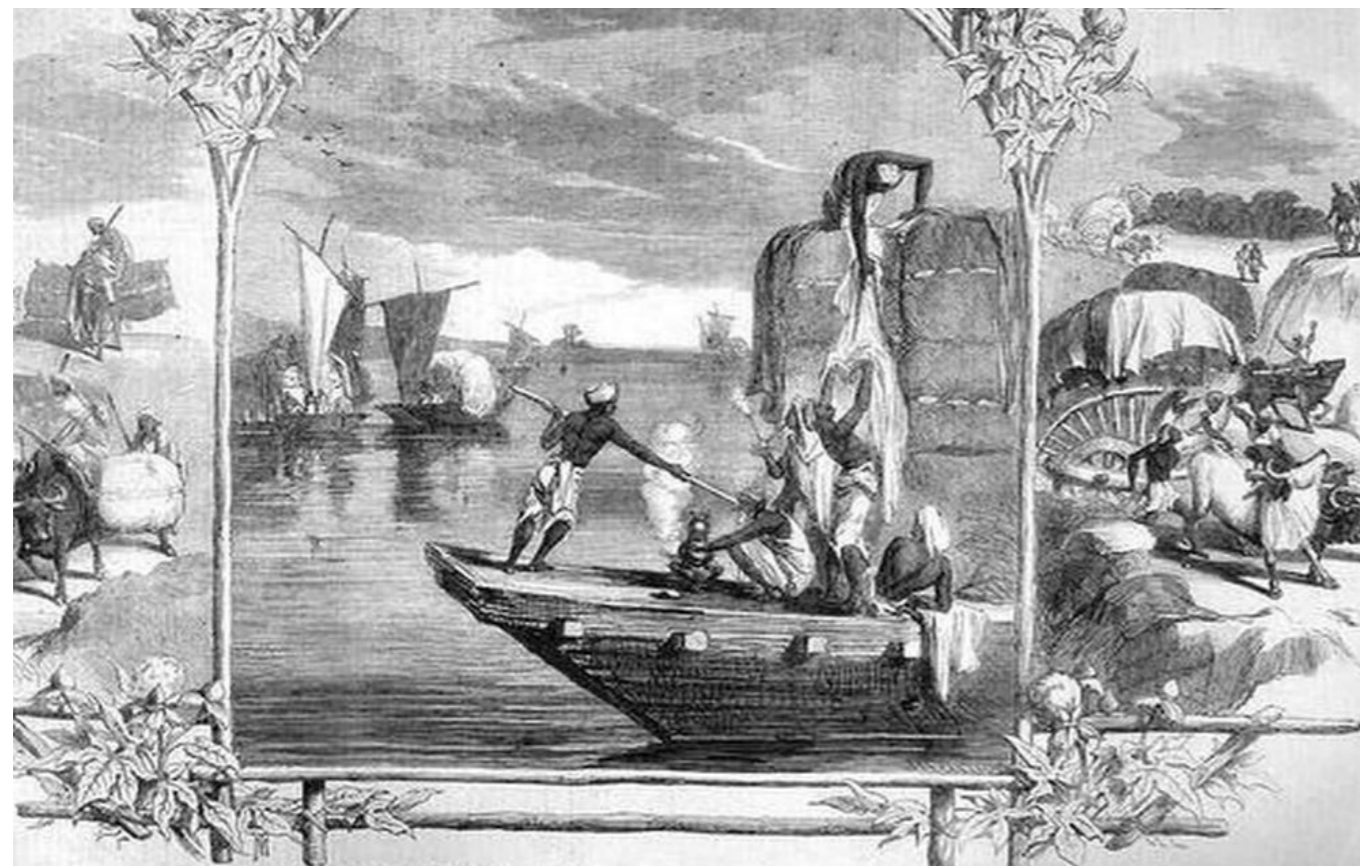


fig 1.25 antiquated stakeholder chart for the cluster



Influences that shaped the culture, aesthetic & craft heritage of Bengal

Bengal's rich cultural heritage, shaped by ancient Buddhist and Brahmanic customs, Islamic rule, and the colonial era, is evident in its diverse artistic expressions. Skilled artisan communities, including painters, potters, metalworkers, carvers, weavers, and shell engravers, thrive due to abundant raw materials like clay, bamboo, grass, shola pith, and wood. West Bengal, with its natural beauty and history of invasions and dynasties, remains a hub for traditional crafts and a melting pot of cultural traditions. Calcutta, once the capital of the British Raj, still features colonial architecture. Over time, Muslim influence transformed Bengal into a Muslim state, blending Hindu folklore with refined Muslim art traditions.



fig 1.26 begampuri sarees are known for their rich colors and fine texture, making them a timeless and elegant choice for any occasion.



fig. 1.27 a traditonal matapar saree

Handloom weavers in Early Twentieth-century in Bengal

The handloom industry in West Bengal has displayed a distinct pattern over time, with the highest number of handlooms in India in 2010 and minimal decline from 1988 to 2010. Interestingly, there was even an increase in the number of looms between 1988 and 1996. However, the non-household handloom sector in West Bengal has experienced a greater decline compared to other states, particularly in relation to the household sector. Among commercially focused handloom producing states in India, West Bengal has the lowest percentage of non-handloom sector. Notably, it is the only state with commercial production that witnessed a growth in the number of weaver households between 1996 and 2010.

A smaller percentage of weaver households in the state use yarn up to 60 counts, while the majority utilize higher count yarn. This suggests that weaver households may be aiming to differentiate themselves from competition by producing superior quality cloth that cannot be easily replicated by mill and power looms. This marks a significant development compared to previous years when the usage of higher count yarn was much lower.

In 2010, only a very small percentage of handloom workers in West Bengal were employed under co-operative societies or other formal institutions like National or State Handloom Development Corporations, or reported being members of co-operatives. This is in contrast to other major handloom-producing states with commercial production. More than 85% of the workers in West Bengal are under the employment of master weavers or private traders. In 2010, the average annual income of handloom worker households in West Bengal was Rs. 26934, surpassing states like Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Uttar Pradesh, but falling short of Odisha and Andhra Pradesh. These figures encompass weaver households and allied workers, including income from weaving and other sources.

PLACE



fig. 2.1- 2.3 images capturing the essence of the village known as Begampur in the Hooghly district of West Bengal



About the place

Begampur railway station is a Kolkata Suburban Railway station that serves the Howrah–Bardhaman chord line under the Eastern Railway zone of Indian Railways. It is situated in the Hooghly district of West Bengal. It is a major centre for regional travel and is located next to Chanditala-Serampore Road in Purba Tajpur.

The village of Begumpur has a rich history that dates back several centuries. According to Sudhir Kumar Mitra's book "The history of Hooghly district and Bengali Society," the village's handloom industry first emerged in Begumpur and gradually spread to the surrounding villages. There are different theories about the origin of the village's name. One theory suggests that it was named Begumpur during the Pathan era, when Hazrat Sahsufi established Muslim dominance in the area. Another theory proposes that the village got its name when the 'Peer' family of Furfura Sarif migrated from Delhi to Furfura, bringing along seven hundred Muslim families who eventually settled in the area. Regardless of its true origin, Begumpur has a long-standing history of at least 200-250 years, with its handloom industry playing a significant role in its development. During the British rule, Begumpur was under the governance of local zamindar families.

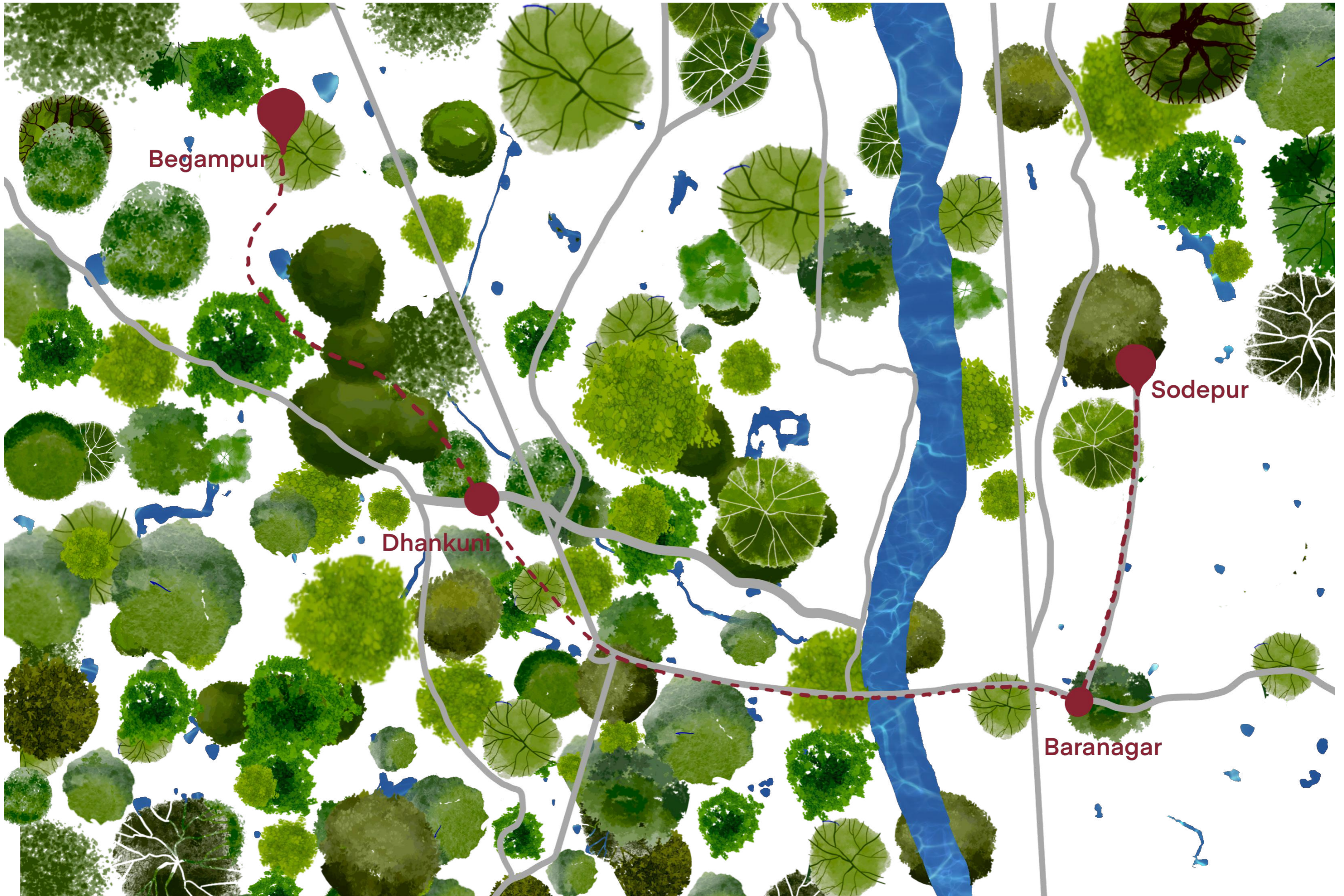
However, despite the changing political landscape, the occupation and economic conditions of the people in Begumpur remained relatively unchanged. The handloom industry continued to thrive, providing livelihoods for the villagers and contributing to the local economy. The skilled artisans of Begumpur were known for their craftsmanship and produced high-quality textiles that were in demand both locally and beyond. The village became renowned for its handloom products, attracting traders and buyers from far and wide. The legacy of Begumpur's handloom industry continues to this day, serving as a testament to the village's rich history and the resilience of its people.



Hooghly, a city in Eastern India, was initially established by the Portuguese in 1537 as a replacement for the declining commercial center of Satgaon. However, their presence was short-lived as the Mughal armies expelled them from Hooghly in 1632. Subsequently, in 1651, the English established their first settlement in Lower Bengal in Hooghly, but it was eventually abandoned in 1690 in favor of the now renowned city of Calcutta, which is presently known as Kolkata.

fig. 2.4-2.5 in begampur, the affluent houses showcase a contemporary urban design and a lively range of colors, mirroring the prevailing architectural trends. On the other hand, there is an old house influenced by traditional Dutch architecture, which carries the rich history of the place
 fig. 2.6 (facing page) situated in the center of the village, the bazaar serves as a meeting point for locals from surrounding areas. Its layout includes a central marketplace, surrounded by small shops, temporary stalls, and vendors showcasing their wares on the ground. In the scene, vendors are shown packing up their products as the bazaar gets ready to close for the afternoon, leading to the shutdown of all village shops post lunchtime.







Territorial Coverage

Begumpur is a town in Chanditala II CD Block in Serampore subdivision of Hooghly district in the state of West Bengal, India. It is located at 22.7368°N 88.2518°E. The geographical area of Chanditala Block . It is approximately 92.16 Sq.K.H.,Chanditala Block II is 81.7 Sq.K.H.and Singur Block is 174.7 Sq. K.H.

It's around 30 kms away from Kolkata. One can reach begumpur from Kolkata either by road or train. The train route to Begumpur falls on Howrah-Bardhaman chord line for which one has to catch a local train from Howrah station along that way. Begumpur railway station is situated 23 kilometres from Howrah and is part of the Kolkata Suburban Railway system. Moreover, bus service from Srirampur to Domjur connects this place with subdivision.

The area is surrounded by villages like Kharsarai, Chhhotatajpur (in the North), Borotajpur (in North-East), Jaykrishnapur, Panchgrara (in the Eastern side), and Adan, Baksa, Madhabpur, and Monirampur (in the Southern side). Besides Begumpur, the handloom products of the weavers of the neighbouring villages go by the name of Begumpur Arang or Begumpur handloom.

POPULATION OF BEGUMPUR

PARTICULARS	TOTAL	FEMALE	MALE
TOTAL POPULATION	1,971	999999	972
LITERATE POPULATION	1,432	755	677
ILLITERATE POPULATION	539	244	295

BEGAMPUR DATA

PARTICULARS	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE
TOTAL NO. OF HOUSES	1,568	-	-
POPULATION	6,923	3,558	3,365
CHILD (0-6)	854	448	406
SCHEDULE CASTE	472	250	222
SCHEDULE TRIBE	9	4	5
LITERACY	75.19 %	79.36 %	70.80 %
TOTAL WORKER	2,224	2,017	207
MAIN WORKER	1,638	-	-
MARGINAL WORKER	586	494	92

Demographics

In the 2011 Census of India, Begampur had a total population of 10,487, with 52% males and 48% females. The population below 6 years old was 802, and the total number of literates was 8,504, accounting for 87.81% of the population over 6 years old. 2. In the 2001 India census, Begampur had a population of 9545, with males making up 51% and females 49%. The average literacy rate was 75%, higher than the national average, with 53% male literates and 47% female literates. 9% of the population was under 6 years old.

Municipal corporation

Begampur is under the municipal corporation's jurisdiction, despite being far from the village. Communication between villagers, the municipality, and local administration is limited. Heavy rainfall often causes drainage system blockages despite the area's low elevation. The narrow lanes have been neglected for quite some time.

Transport

Begampur railway station, located in the Hooghly district of West Bengal, is a Kolkata Suburban Railway station that operates on the Howrah–Bardhaman chord line under the Eastern Railway zone of Indian Railways. Situated at Purba Tajpur, beside Chanditala–Serampore Road, it serves as an important transportation hub in the region.

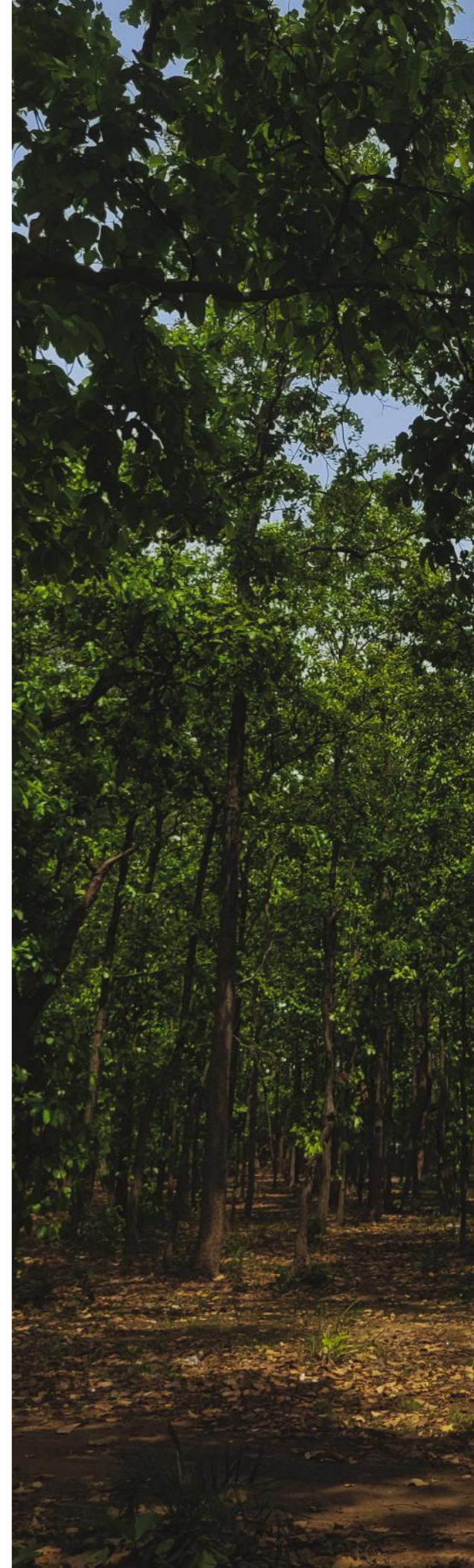
BEGAMPUR - VILLAGE OVERVIEW	
GRAM PANCHAYAT:	BAGJOLA
BLOCK / SUBDIVISION:	BADURIA
DISTRICT:	NORTH TWENTY FOUR PARGANAS
STATE :	WEST BENGAL
PINCODE :	743235
AREA :	210.44 HECTARES
POPULATION :	1,971
HOUSEHOLDS :	526
ASSEMBLY CONSTITUENCY :	BADURIA
PARLIAMENT CONSISTUENCY :	BASIRHAT
NEAREST TOWN	BADURIA (10 KM)

Agriculture

In the study area, it was found that most farmers rely on sources other than farming for their income, indicating a decline in agriculture as the main source of livelihood in rural areas. The nearby region is predominantly occupied by small and marginal farmers who face numerous challenges due to the high population pressure on land, resulting in land subdivisions and fragmentation. This situation makes it extremely challenging for them to make ends meet. Moreover, the increasing prices of agricultural inputs, uncertain prices of perishable agricultural produce, inadequate market infrastructure, and the distress sale of produce by small and marginal farmers further jeopardize the sustainability of the farming sector. Additionally, the proximity to the river in this area makes it highly vulnerable to flooding during heavy rainfall, adding to the hardships faced by the farmers.

Villagers cultivate only a limited variety of vegetables within their personal properties, which are deeply integrated into their dietary practices. These vegetables are predominantly seasonal, reflecting the region's agricultural patterns.

In this region, bamboo and sal wood are widely utilized for constructing looms, boats, houses, and more. The primary framework of the loom is typically crafted from sal wood, while bamboo is employed for the supportive components. Additionally, local carpenters utilize sal wood to create maku. This natural resources plays a significant role in providing livelihood opportunities for marginalized indigenous communities. However, it is essential to equip them with the necessary skills and connect them to the market.





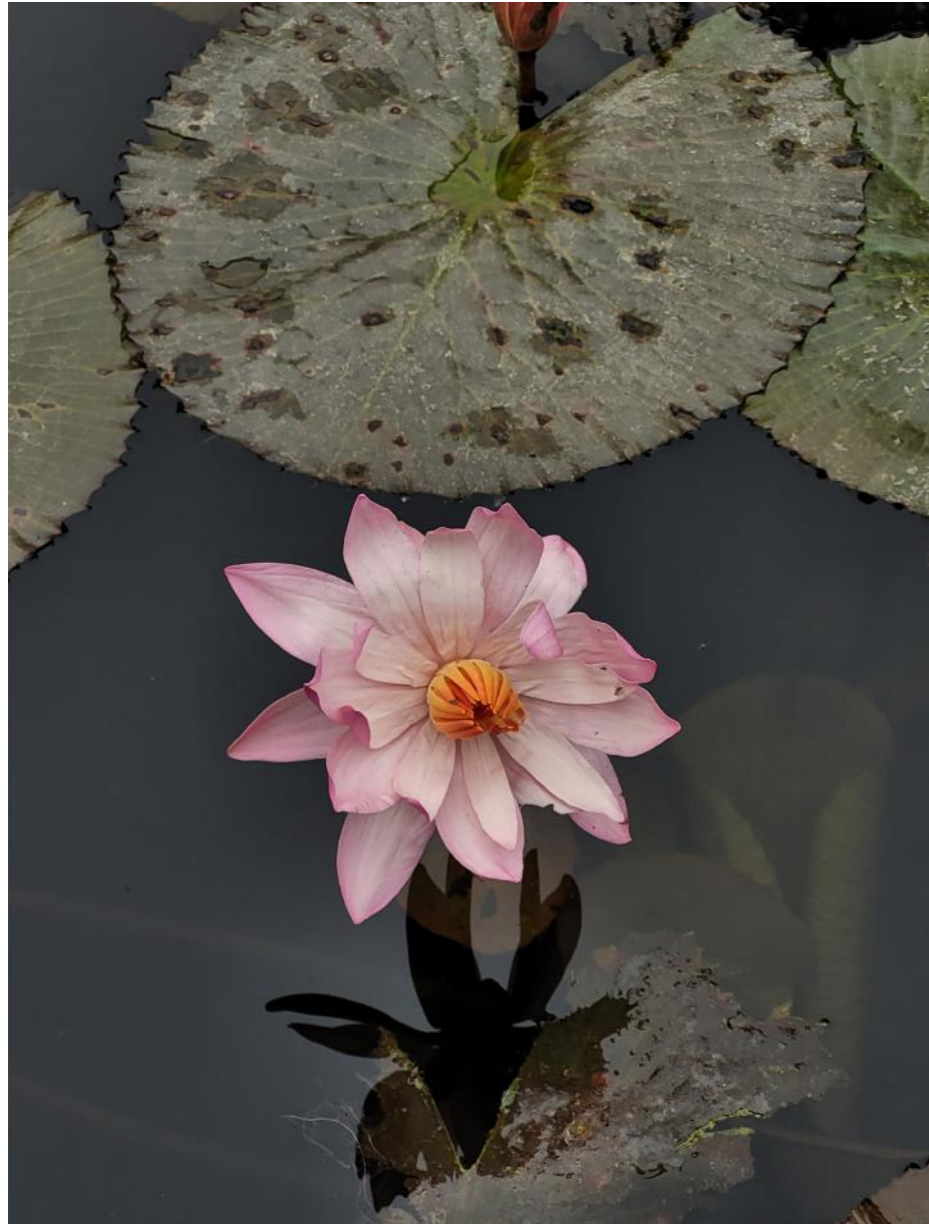
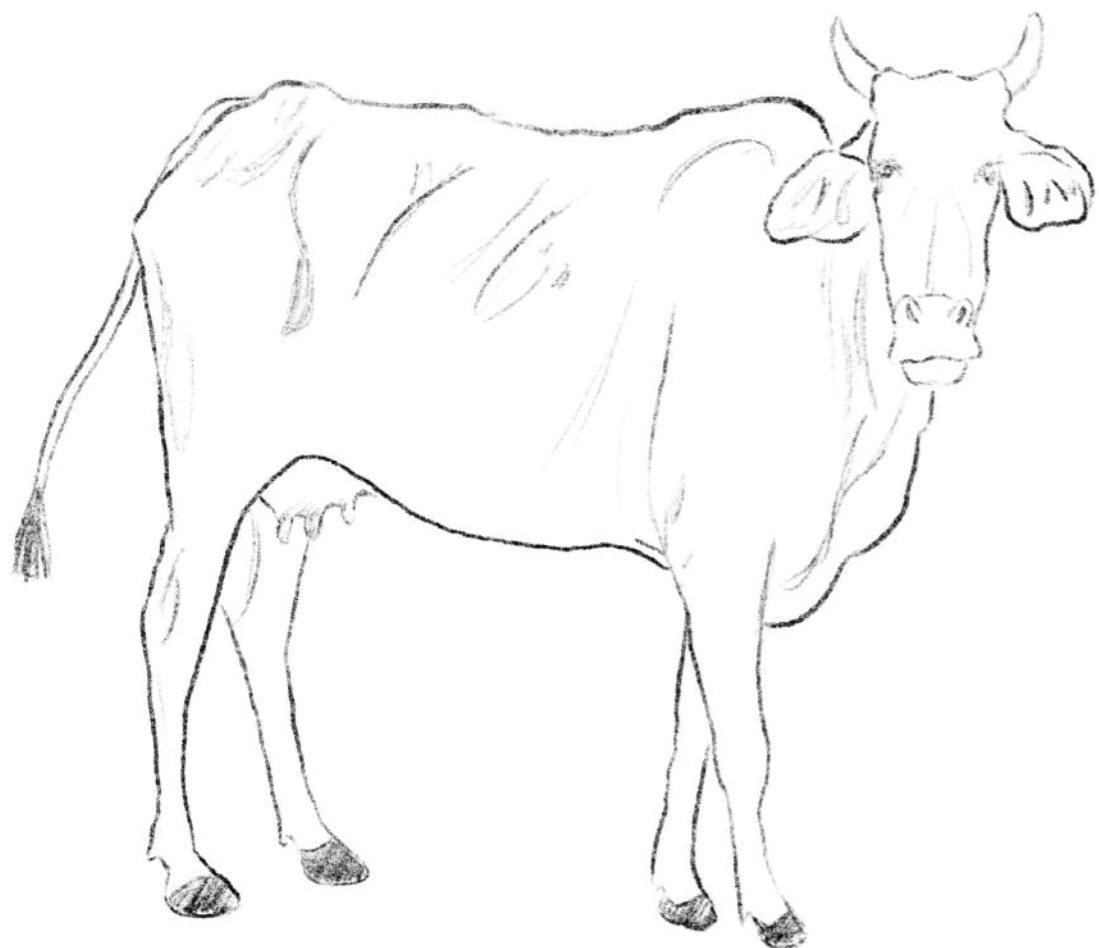


fig 2.7 the region of Hoogly is known for its lotus farming, which takes place in various water bodies. Farmers lease ponds to cultivate lotus, as there is a high demand for it during the festival season. The process begins in April with the planting of lotus roots, and the flowers are ready for harvesting by July. This continues until October. Careful attention is required to protect the lotus plants from damage, as even a single damaged plant can harm the entire crop. Additionally, regular clearing of wild bushes is necessary to prevent any waste material. However, farmers are concerned about the unpredictable rainfall patterns, which either result in prolonged dry periods or heavy rainfall that can wash away their hard work.



Fishing

The region of Bengal is closely tied to its rivers, which has influenced both its geography and food culture. Fishing is a prominent occupation in this area, and boats are essential for transportation. In Bengali literature, especially in novels and stories about riverside life, one can easily recognize the presence of fishing communities. These communities can be identified by the sight of boats docked by the riverbanks, nets spread out on the ground, simple shelters made of bamboo or house sheds, and clay vats filled with gaav resin and tar-stained pits. In the courtyards, fishermen and women can be observed engaging in various activities such as spinning yarn using distaff and spindle or spinning wheels, as well as weaving fishing nets using net needles. In Bengali literature, particularly in narratives depicting life along the riverside, the presence of fishing communities is a recurring theme, characterized by boats along the riverbanks, nets laid out, and simple bamboo shelters. These communities are easily recognizable by the sight of clay vats filled with gaav resin and tar-stained pits, as well as fishermen and women engaging in activities like spinning yarn and weaving fishing nets in the courtyards.



Animal Husbandry

Animal husbandry is a crucial aspect of rural life in West Bengal, providing income and employment opportunities for landless laborers and small-scale farmers. The mixed crop-livestock farming system is widely practiced in the region, ensuring sustainable livelihoods. The livestock sector contributes around 4.41% to the state's Domestic Product, with the rearing of various animals like cows, buffaloes, pigs, poultry, goats, and sheep to meet the demand for milk, meat, and eggs. The dairy sector focuses on milk procurement and processing through cooperatives and dairies. West Bengal is renowned for its superior breed of goat, the Black Bengal Goat, known for its high-quality meat and skin. Poultry production has also seen significant growth, thanks to advancements in livestock and poultry products. The state supports animal husbandry through the establishment of fodder farms and the organization of animal health and entrepreneurship development camps.

Food

Panta Bhaat , also known as weaver 7 farmer's food , a beloved dish in rural Bengal, is a time-honored delicacy cherished for its refreshing and medicinal qualities, especially during the scorching summer season. To prepare this dish, leftover cooked rice is soaked in water overnight, undergoing a gentle fermentation process. As a result, the rice becomes tender and mildly tangy, and it is best enjoyed when served cold the following day.

Panta Bhaat is traditionally accompanied by salt, green chili, onion, crispy fish, or vegetable fritters, along with a delightful chutney to complete the meal.

The reason behind the tradition of soaking rice, known as Panta Bhaat, lies in its ability to enhance the nutritional value and digestibility of the grain. By allowing the rice to absorb water, it undergoes a transformation that not only softens the texture but also breaks down the complex carbohydrates, making it easier for our bodies to digest and absorb the nutrients. This age-old practice has been passed down through generations, ensuring that every meal is not only delicious but also nourishing for the body.



Socio-economic dynamics

As we ventured into the landscape, we were greeted by a captivating array of houses, each telling a unique story. From the humble mud and brick structures, held together by sturdy bamboo pillars and topped with thatched roofs, to the more modern cement buildings adorned with tin roofs, the architectural diversity was truly mesmerizing. It was evident that these houses were not just mere structures, but rather a reflection of the economic disparities and cultural influences that shaped the community. For generations, skilled weavers had called this place home, passing down their craft from one family member to another. The houses stood as a testament to this heritage, with looms and colorful



fig 2.8 the typical layout of a house involves multiple structures surrounding a square courtyard enclosed by a tall wall. Each structure serves as a separate room. In a joint household, each married member is allocated one room, and additional rooms can be constructed within the courtyard or outside the walls.

threads peeking through open windows. However, as we explored further, it became apparent that neglect had taken its toll on these dwellings. The walls showed visible signs of damage, and the air inside felt damp and unhealthy. Some paths were paved, offering a smooth and comfortable ride, while others remained unpaved, making navigation a challenge. This mix of surfaces mirrored the complexities of the community, where socioeconomic inequalities and cultural diversity coexisted. In this dynamic environment, the houses stood as silent witnesses to the intricate tapestry of society. The affluent houses in begampur exhibit a modern approach to urban design and a vibrant color palette, reflecting the current architectural trends.

They represented the distinct identities and traditions of various communities, showcasing the beauty and challenges that come with such diversity. From the grandeur of luxurious mansions to the simplicity of modest dwellings, these houses painted a vivid picture of the socioeconomic disparities and cultural richness that thrived within the landscape. The distribution of houses within the village is not consistent. Each caste tends to reside in their own distinct neighborhoods, which are named after the castes residing in them. However, there is no strict rule governing this arrangement, and it is possible to find members of the same caste living far apart if it is more convenient for them. Additionally, lower caste individuals may choose to settle near high caste houses, particularly if they are renting from them.



In the traditional design of a home, you will find various buildings positioned around a central square courtyard that is protected by a high barrier. Each building is designated for a specific purpose, acting as its own individual room. In a communal living arrangement, every married individual is assigned their own personal space within one of these buildings, and if needed, extra rooms can be added either within the courtyard or outside the protective walls.

Architectural perspective

Bengal's architectural design showcases a blend of innovative elements that cater to the region's specific needs. To combat the frequent flooding, buildings are constructed on raised foundations, ensuring safety and stability. The architects also prioritize ample ventilation and rain-resistant walls, protecting the structures from the region's unpredictable weather. Local materials like brick, wood, black basalt, and granite are utilized, reflecting the essence of Bengal's rich resources. Initially, mud flooring was prevalent, but as time passed, a distinctive typology emerged in the Bengal delta. This typology is characterized by simple, rectangular, and standalone structures, each with its own unique features. These features include the Bhita, which refers to the site, the Bera, which represents the wall or enclosure, the Chala, symbolizing the roof, and the Uthan, signifying the courtyard.



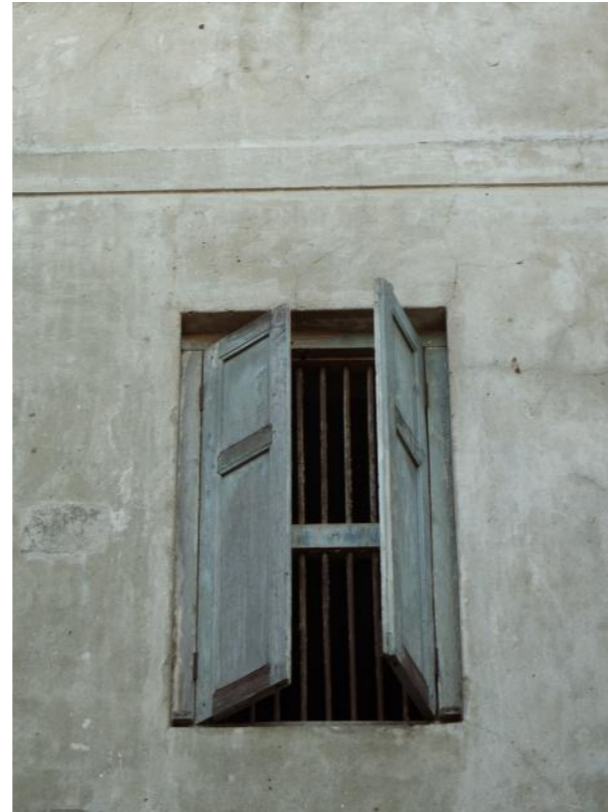
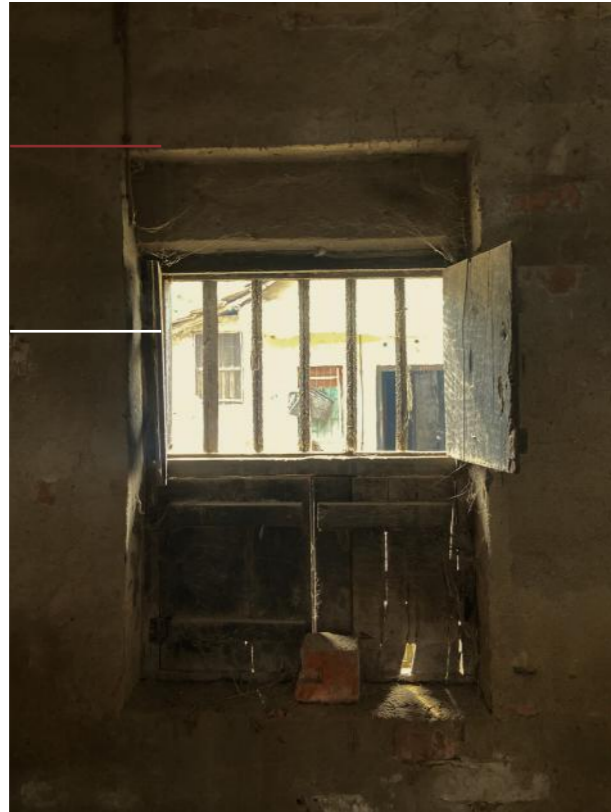


fig. 2.9-2.12 during the later colonial era (18th to 20th centuries), houses in Bengal were frequently constructed by blending elements of traditional Bengali architecture with European influences. These houses featured spacious windows with multiple panes and wooden shutters or louvres that could be adjusted to control the airflow. This particular type of window was designed to facilitate the passage of air, allowing individuals to open or close it partially based on their requirements.

Furthermore, due to the agricultural significance of the region, it was common to find crop storage structures resembling tent-shaped 'dhaner gola' near the houses, showcasing the harmonious integration of functionality and aesthetics in Bengal's architectural design. In the later colonial era, which spanned from the 18th to the 20th centuries, houses in Bengal were built by combining traditional Bengali architectural elements with European influences. These houses boasted large windows with numerous panes and wooden shutters or louvres that could be easily adjusted to regulate the flow of air. This unique window design

was created to enable the circulation of fresh air, giving people the flexibility to open or close it partially according to their needs.

The vernacular entrance veranda has its roots in the need for a cooler outdoor space in contrast to the indoors. This area provided a sanctuary from the scorching heat, where individuals would spend a considerable part of their day. Moreover, it served as a multipurpose space, catering to a wide range of activities such as morning chores and educational sessions for the local children.

The rowak, commonly known as 'rock', originates from the rural vernacular architecture of Bengal. Historian Dipesh Chakrabarty suggests that it may have been influenced by the wraparound verandas found in traditional mud huts in rural Bengal. This architectural element is also present in Bengal's temple architecture. However, the rowak has become an integral part of Kolkata's urban development, playing a significant role in shaping the city's modern identity. The rowak culture of Bengal has seamlessly integrated into the youth culture and political landscape of the region throughout history.



fig 2.13 the indigenous potters locally craft clay idols of the gods, utilizing the clay from the nearby Ganges River as a traditional or convenient base material.

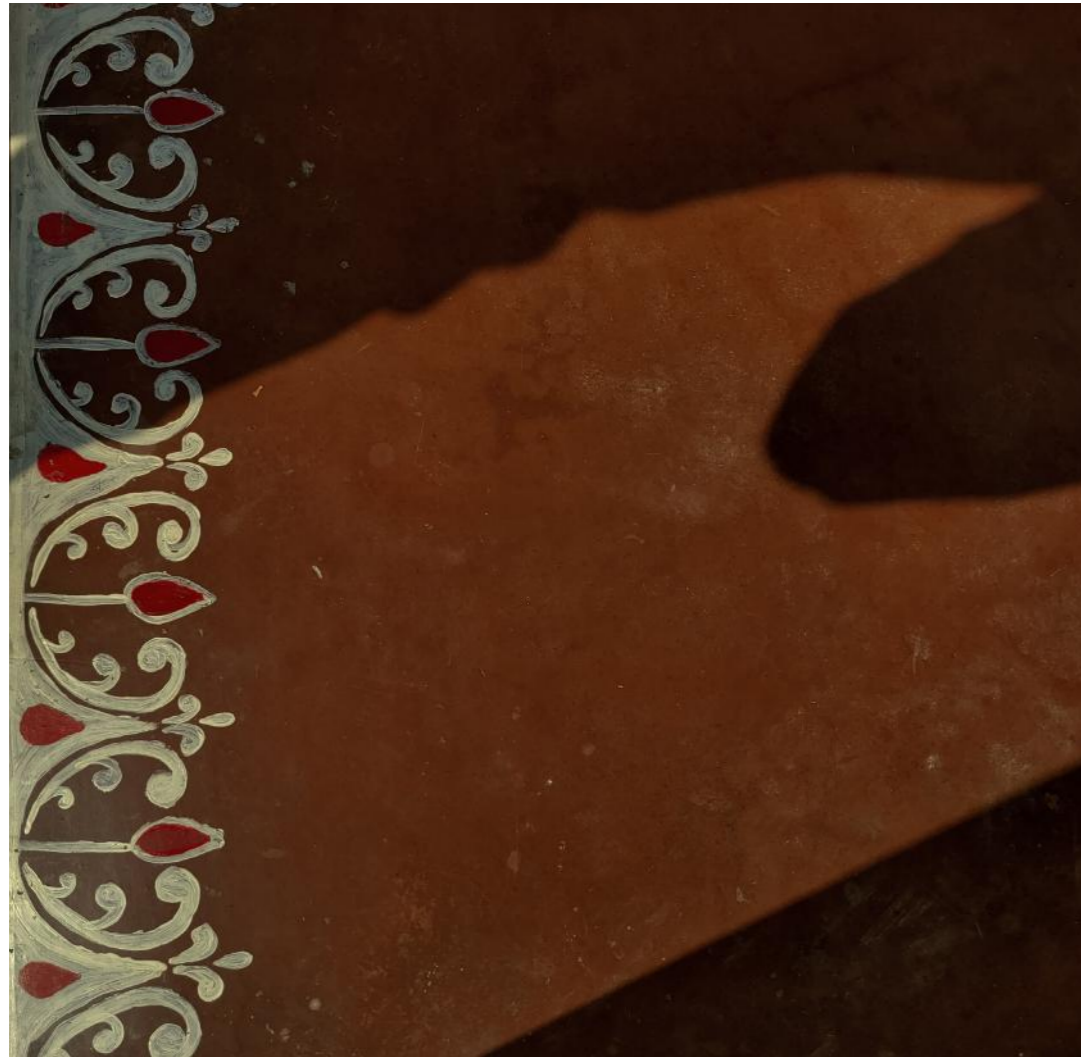




Cultural perspective

God of looms , Lord Vishwakarma

The Vishwakarma idol stands out due to its unique feature of having only two hands instead of the usual four. As the loom is set in motion, it produces a rhythmic sound resembling a horse's hooves, known as 'khata khat', which is similar to the sound of a razor. This association with the horse makes it the chosen vehicle of Lord Vishwakarma. The loom is operated with two hands, symbolizing the two-handed form of Vishwakarma. One hand of the deity holds a kite and a loom, while the other hand is raised in a gesture of blessing. During the Vishwakarma Puja, which occurs on middle of September or in the month of Bhadra, weavers are engrossed in weaving clothes for Ashwin's Durga Puja. Consequently, they are unable to fully enjoy the puja. Hence, the weaver community historically decided to organize their own puja on Shukla Navami, three months after Durga Navami. This puja involves placing a sepoy on a shola horse and a paddy grain near the tail on each loom, followed by the performance of the puja. In the Begumpur, Khorasrai, Chhoto Tajpur region, approximately 35 pujas are conducted.



Alpona

Originating in Bengal, India, Alpona or Alpana is an ancient art form deeply intertwined with ceremonial and religious rituals, revered in the region for its cultural significance. The name Alpona can be traced back to two Sanskrit words - 'Alimpana' and 'Alipana', with the former meaning 'to plaster or coat with' and the latter referring to an old art of making embankments. The mesmerizing patterns of Alpona exude an enchanting aura, often used as symbols of prosperity and success during the Lakshmi Puja ritual. Created using a liquid mixture of fine rice, Alpona is typically drawn on a base of clay mixed with cow dung. While traditionally white in color, artists have the creative freedom to incorporate various hues by using turmeric paste for a golden tint and red clay mixed with vermilion paste for a deep crimson shade. Beyond its aesthetic appeal, Alpona holds

ecological significance as well, as the rice flour used in its creation serves as a source of nourishment for small creatures like ants and insects. The intricate designs of Alpona have also inspired patterns in Bengal textiles, becoming a powerful expression of the region's rich art.



fig 2.14 the rowak, also known as the 'rock', has its roots in the rural vernacular architecture of Bengal. Historian Dipesh Chakrabarty proposes that it might have been inspired by the wraparound verandas seen in traditional mud huts in rural Bengal. This architectural feature can also be found in Bengal's temple architecture. However, the rowak has now become an essential component of Kolkata's urban development, playing a crucial role in shaping the city's contemporary identity. Over the course of history, the rowak culture of Bengal has seamlessly merged with the region's youth culture and political landscape.

BEGAMPUR HIGH SCHOOL (H.S.)
GOVT. SPONSORED  **ESTD-1962**
BEGAMPUR



Education

In Begumpur, the weavers' families consist of elders with education up to primary school level, while the younger generation enjoys better educational opportunities. The community, including the weavers, acknowledges the harm of illiteracy and is advocating for education. Boys and girls are seen attending school regularly, showing the success of this effort. State government schemes are also in place to enhance educational support.

In the village, a small Muslim community resides, facing social limitations akin to castes, yet maintaining a cordial relationship with the other residents. The Muslims are primarily engaged in agriculture and trade, specializing in dyeing, spinning, and weaving. Their neighborhood is marked by a mosque and a burial ground nearby.



Begampur Handloom Cluster Development Society

The establishment of the Begampur Handloom Cluster was intended to generate enthusiasm and uplift the spirits of the weavers. Its objective is to enhance their earnings by involving them in this traditional craft and utilizing techniques such as Jacquard and Dobby devices and multi treadle technique to create a variety of intricate designs that are in demand. This initiative also aims to explore new marketing opportunities for their products. Recognizing the importance of blending traditional practices with contemporary knowledge, it was strongly believed that the cluster should be well-prepared to contribute significantly to the economic development of the region. It is evident that numerous generations of weavers have called this place home.

Conclusion

The cluster serves as a reflection of the historical and political transformations that have influenced its enduring legacy. The loom echoes tales of vibrancy and strength, safeguarding a cultural heritage. Expert hands meticulously craft narratives with lively colors, allowing the fabric to absorb the essence of time. Delicately woven strands dance in rhythmic elegance, culminating in a masterpiece of textile art. Despite facing social and economic challenges, they persevere in upholding the weaving tradition through dedication and respect.

PEOPLE

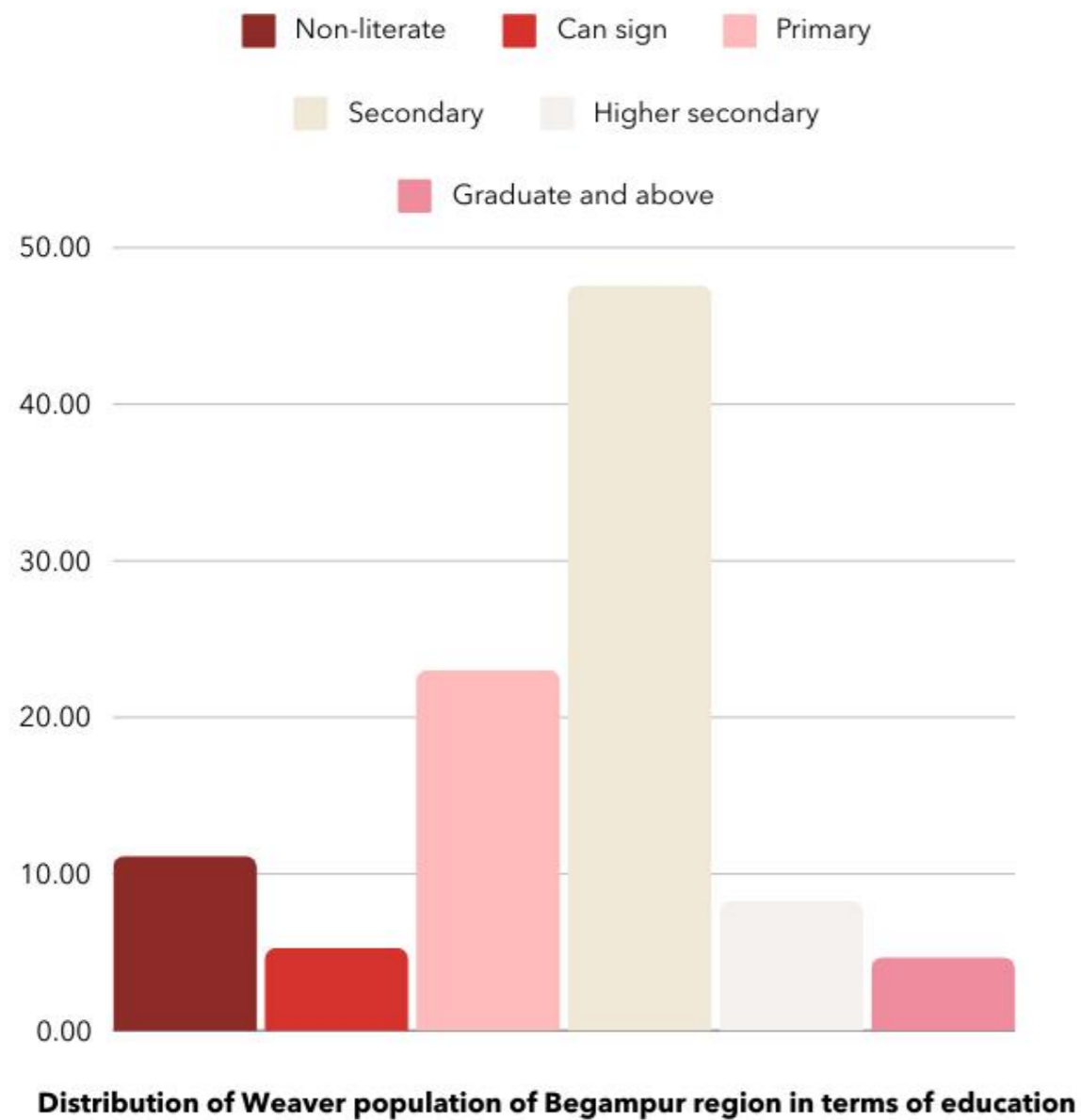
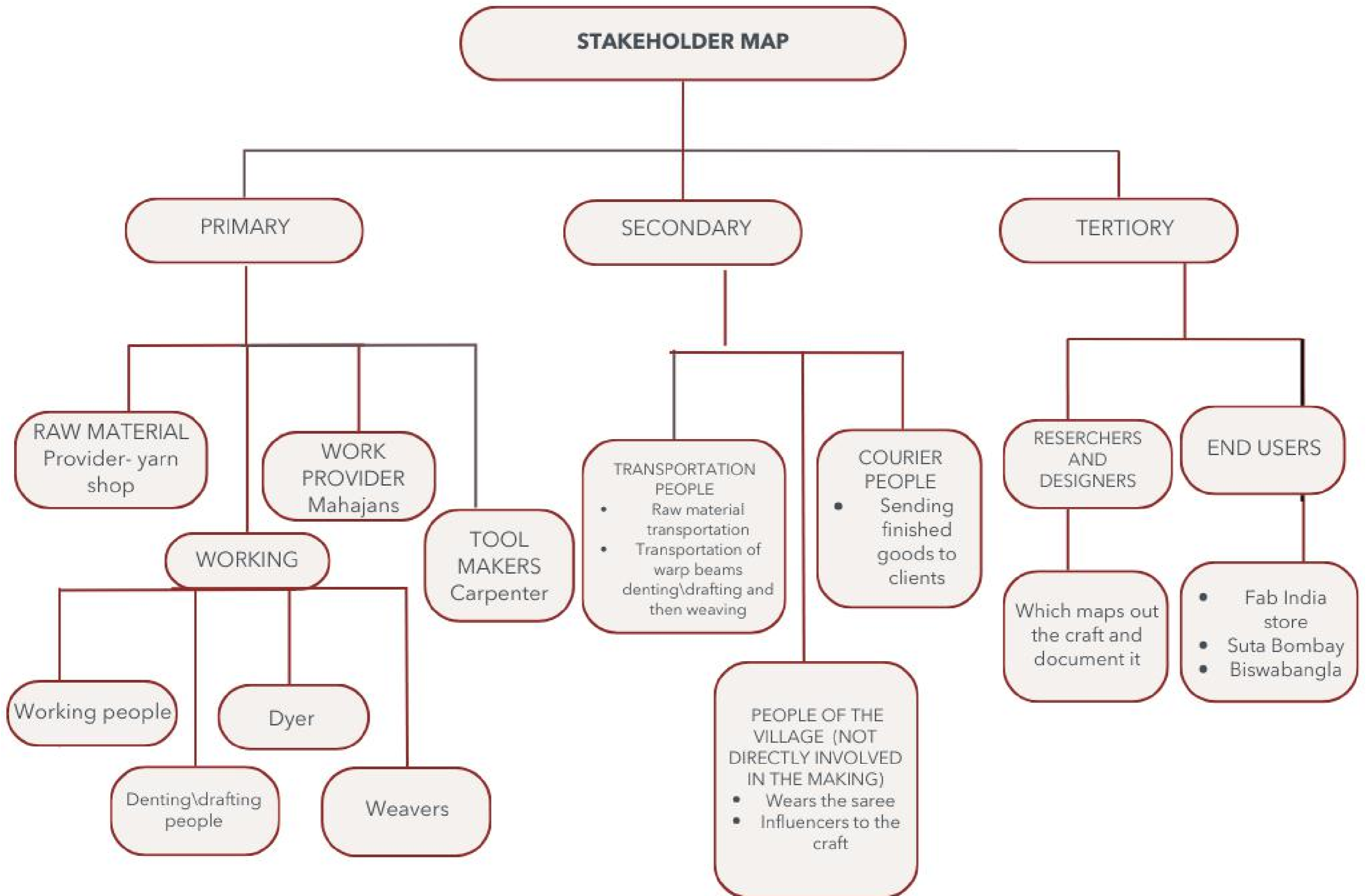


Fig 3.1 Distribution of Weaver population of Begumpuri region in terms of education
 Fig 3.2 (facing page) Stakeholders Involved, Flowchart

Welcome to Begampur, a place where vibrant culture meets rich history, nestled in the heart of West Bengal. As you step into the community, you're greeted by the warm embrace of tradition and the bustling energy of modern life. From the colorful festivals that fill the streets with joy to the echoes of ancient tales whispered by the walls of heritage sites, Begampur invites you to embark on a journey of discovery and wonder. The unique spirit of the people, where every smile tells a story and every corner holds a treasure waiting to be uncovered. Journey to Begampur, where the past dances with the present, and every moment is an opportunity to create new memories in woven tales.

It has been approximated that a single loom can directly employ 2.5 individuals in the handloom industry. These direct workers consist of the weavers themselves, who perform the actual weaving, as well as those involved in pre-weaving and post-weaving tasks. Additionally, numerous individuals, particularly women, play a significant role in the pre-loom and post-loom processes. On the other hand, the indirect workers encompass raw material suppliers, merchants, traders, go-down-keepers, carriers, and laborers. The indirect employment generated by each loom is estimated to be an additional 2.5 individuals. Consequently, a handloom provides a means of livelihood for a total of 5 individuals.



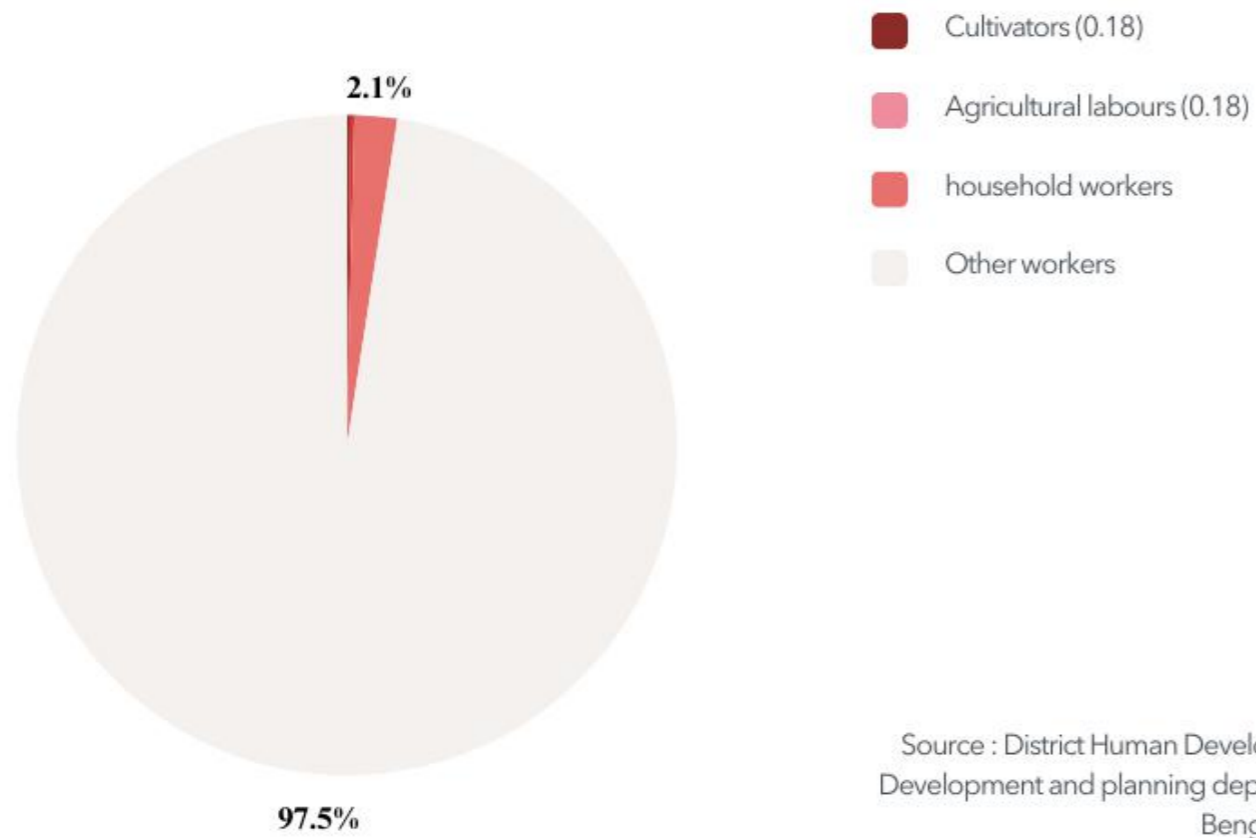
The Weavers of Begampur

Several experienced weavers have dedicated their lives to the craft, starting from a young age and continuing for over 50 years. Their perspective on weaving is deeply rooted in a sense of belonging and attachment. Despite the challenging market conditions and low wages, they remain committed to their practice. Interestingly, they may not be inclined to pass on their knowledge to the next generation, as they do not want them to struggle in today's fast-paced world.

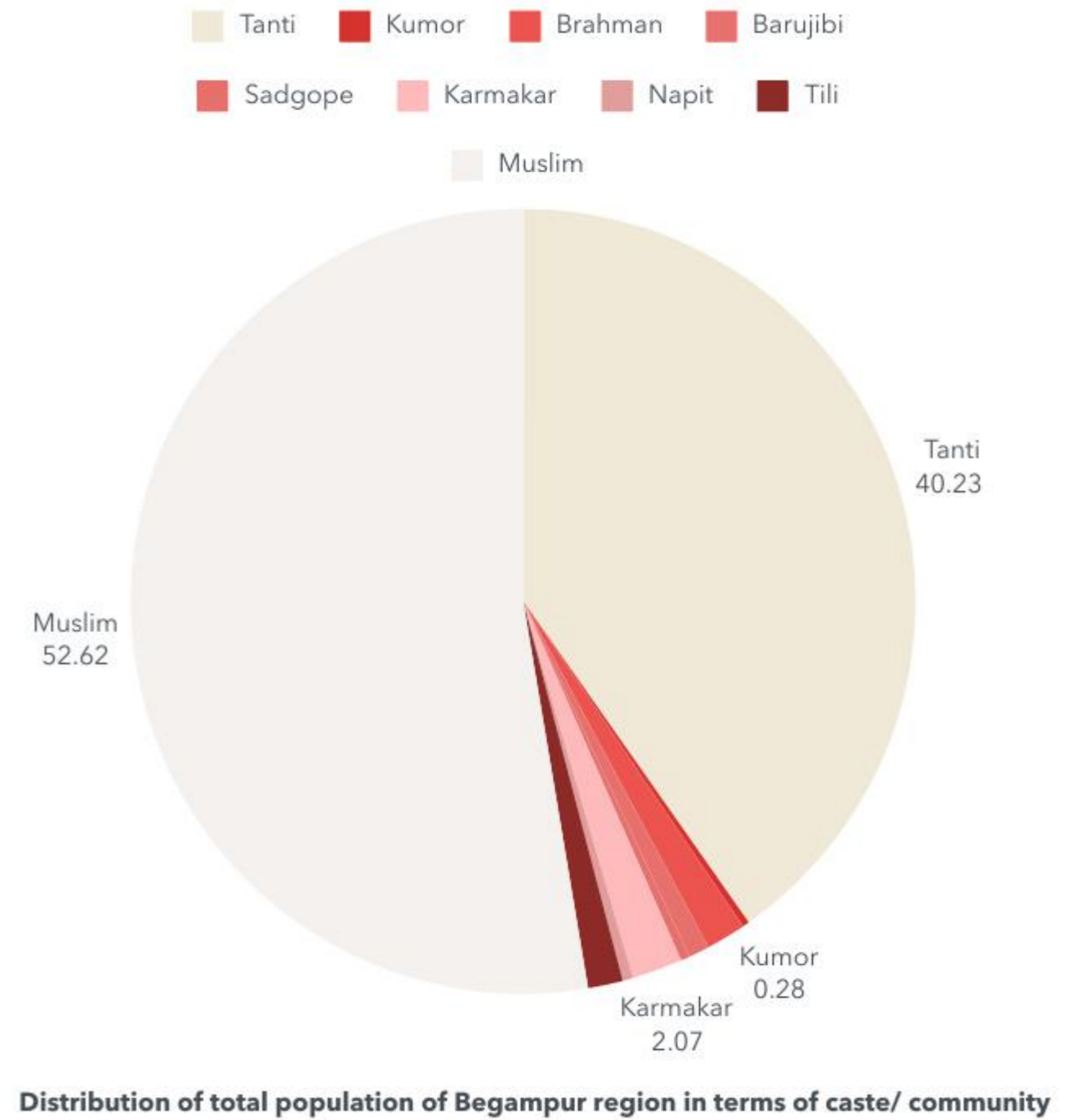


Fig 3.3, 3.4 People involved in weaving, and their simple way of living life.

Sectoral Distribution of labourers Begampur



Source : District Human Development Report Hooghly by Development and planning department Government of West Bengal



Distribution of total population of Begampur region in terms of caste/ community

Fig 3.5 Sectoral Distribution of Labours of Begampur

Fig 3.6 Distribution of Total Population of Begampur region in terms of cast and community.

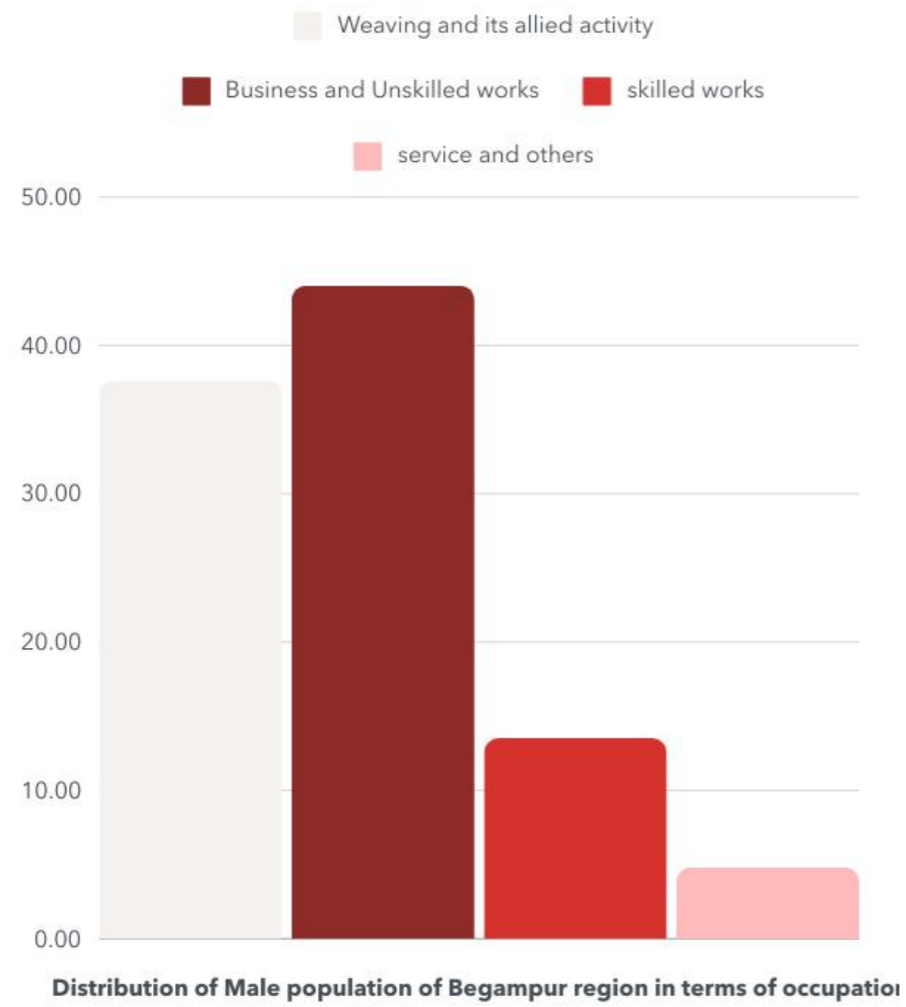


Fig 3.7 Distribution of Male population of Begampur region in terms of occupation

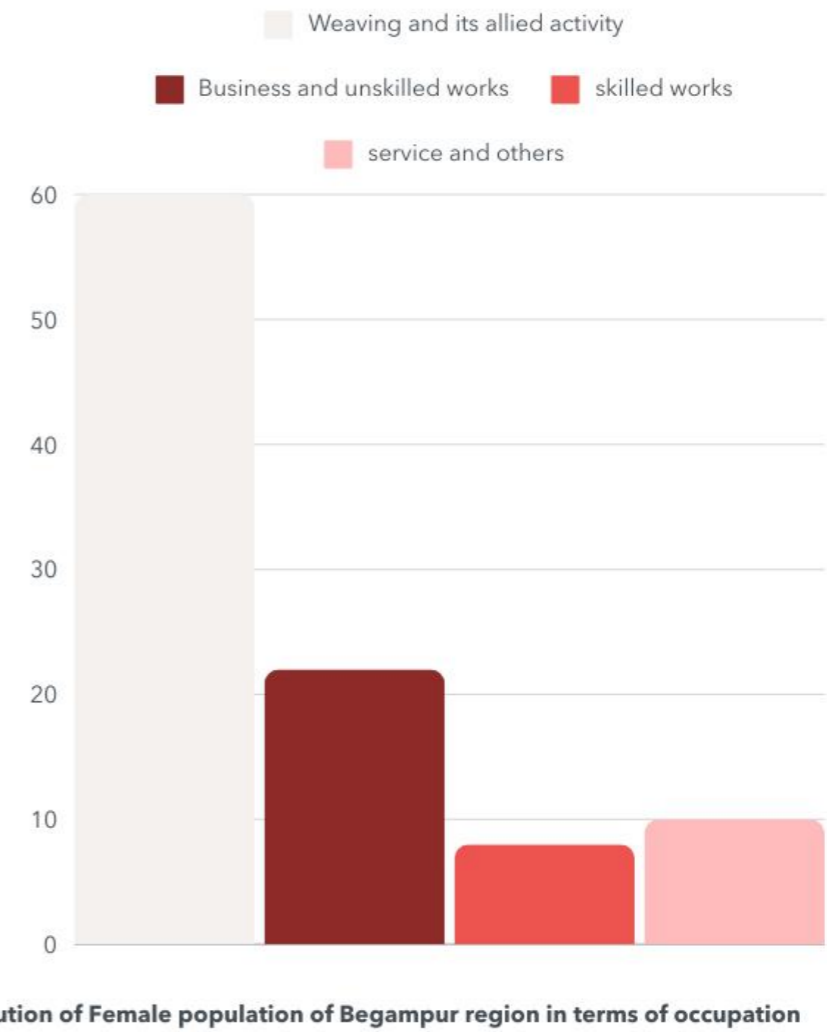


Fig 3.8 Distribution of Female population of Begampur region in terms of occupation



In the village of Begamampur, there used to be a loom in almost every household. However, after the COVID-19 pandemic, many people in the village abandoned their weaving professions. As a result, most of the looms in the village now lie abandoned. Occasionally, we come across a few individuals who reminisce about their past profession, but it remains nothing more than a nostalgic memory for them. They often engage in discussions with us about the local economy, the rise of powerloom, and its dominance in the market. They also shed light on the challenges of low wages and the difficulties faced in supporting their families.

Fig 3.9, 3.10 People of Begumpur, Sharing their stories and narratives about their lives and weaving traditions.



Till the last breath of saree



Fig 3.11-3.13 Women wearing Begumpuri Saree, Young and Married women prefer wearing bright colors where as elderly and widows prefer whites or pastels colors.

The saree continues to be a beloved choice for daily wear in Bengal, despite the decline of traditional clothing caused by modernity and urbanization. The saree's popularity and usability remain unaffected, thanks to changes in production methods, draping styles, and designs. This enduring preference for the saree has played a crucial role in sustaining the local handloom industry and the overall ecosystem of the production process. Each village contributes its own cultural impact on the saree, influencing the draping techniques and materials used. Additionally, personal style determines the flow and placement of the saree on the body. In Begampur, we discovered a few unique variations in draping styles. Generally, the local people wear daily sarees priced between 250 to 650 rupees, but occasionally they opt for much valuable one .

The local community's economic situation is evident in their preference for powerloom sarees as their daily wear, although handloom sarees are also commonly worn. Rather than discarding old or discolored sarees, they adopt a sustainable approach by continuing to use them until they are no longer wearable. In our study, we discovered that once the sarees become distorted, they are sometimes repurposed as curtains for windows or storage boxes. When it's time to change the curtains, the old sarees are then used as paposh or daily cleaning fabric. Additionally, old sarees are often transformed into kantha, an embroidered slim blanket, which is specially made for newborn babies and passed down as a cherished heirloom. When these kanthas are no longer usable, they are cut into small pieces and repurposed as heat-resistant fabric in the kitchen.



Fig 3.14-3.15, Understanding womens perspective of weaving and roles and responsibilities of women in the activity



Fig 3.16-3.18
People of Begumpur, Women Flaunting Sarees and Men In Dhoti

दिनांक और पैटर्न

The role of Weavers' Service Center

The weavers are facilitated with field/campus training from time to time where they are provided with latest information of dyeing techniques and weaving. Apart from that they also arrange exhibitions, seminars, workshops, focusing on new and improved design, equipment and processing techniques. They assist in implementing various Govt. Schemes in handloom sector & also give assistance and interaction with State Govt. handloom agencies.



Clients



Fig 3.19 (facing page) Weaver's Service Centre, Kolkata
Fig 3.20 Clientel of Begumpuri Saree.

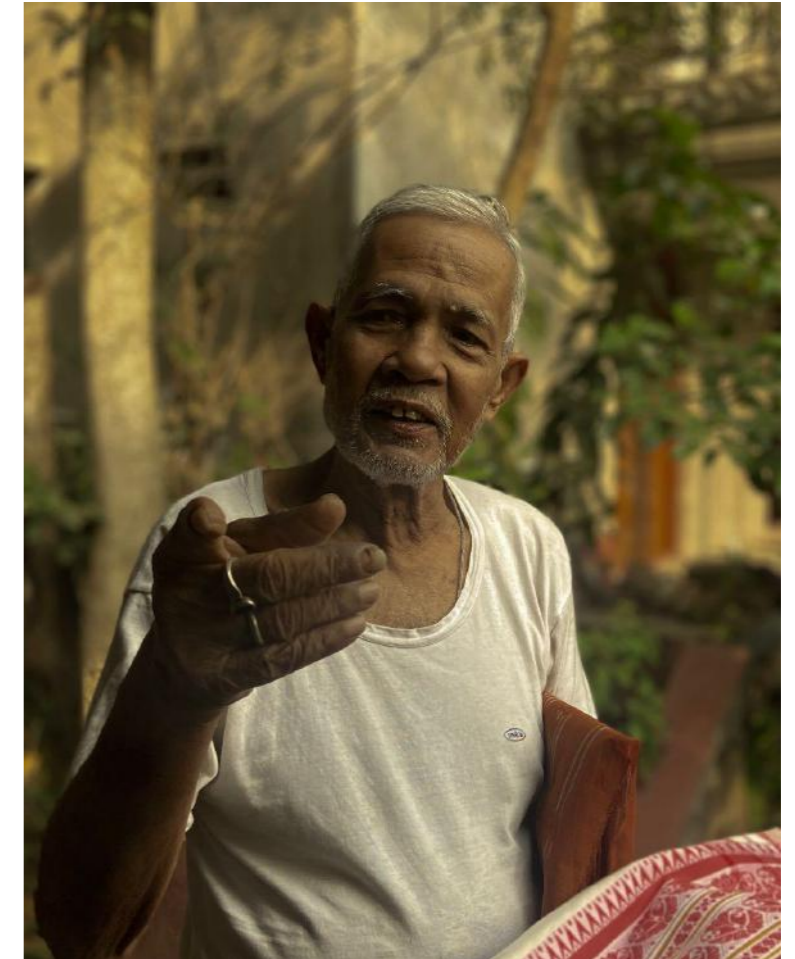
Artisan Directory



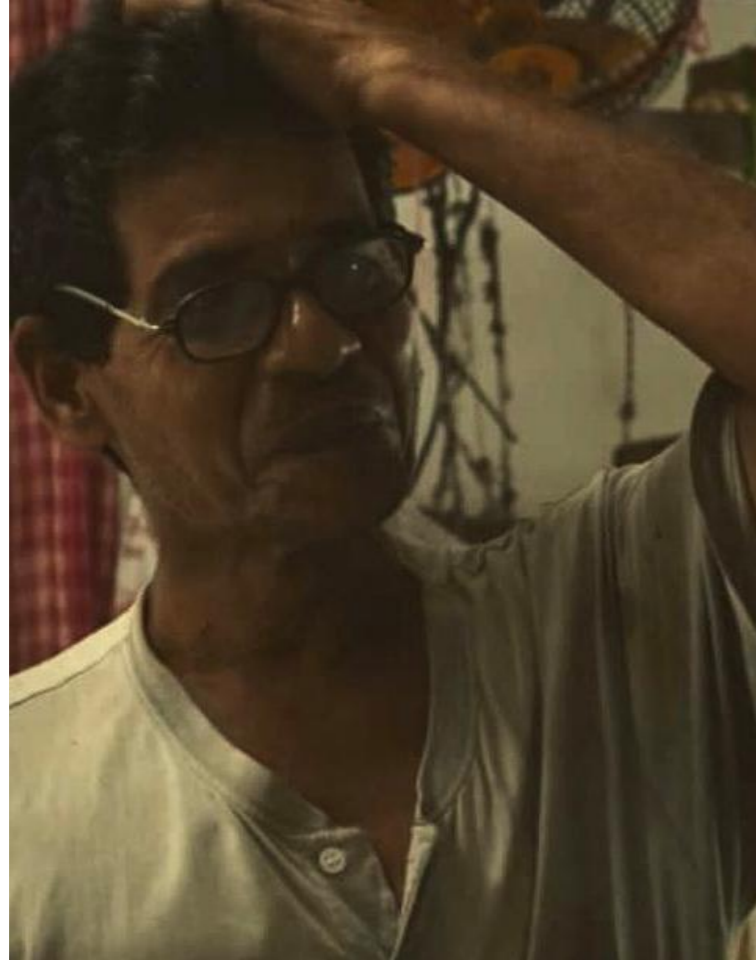
Name- Nripen Sil
Age- 68
Gender- Male
Address- Kharsarai, Madhyampara
Caste- General
Members in family- 6
Education- till standard 5
Primary income (annual) per capita- 40,000
Generation of weavers- 5th



Name- Anitosh Bhar
Age- 42
Gender- Male
Address- Kharsarai, Madhyampara
Caste- OBC
Members in family- 4
Education- till standard 5
Primary income (annual) per capita- 1 lakh
Generation of weavers- 4th



Name- Bibhuti Bhusan Dhar
Age- 54
Gender- Male
Address- Kharsarai, Sastitala
Caste- General
Members in family- 3
Education- till standard 6
Primary income (annual) per capita - 48,000
Generation of weavers- 2nd



Name- Saira Kumar Kundu
 Age- 60
 Gender- Male
 Address- Kharsarai, Silpara
 Caste- General
 Members in family- 3
 Education- till standard 4
 Primary income (annual) per capita- 96,000
 Generation of weavers- 4th



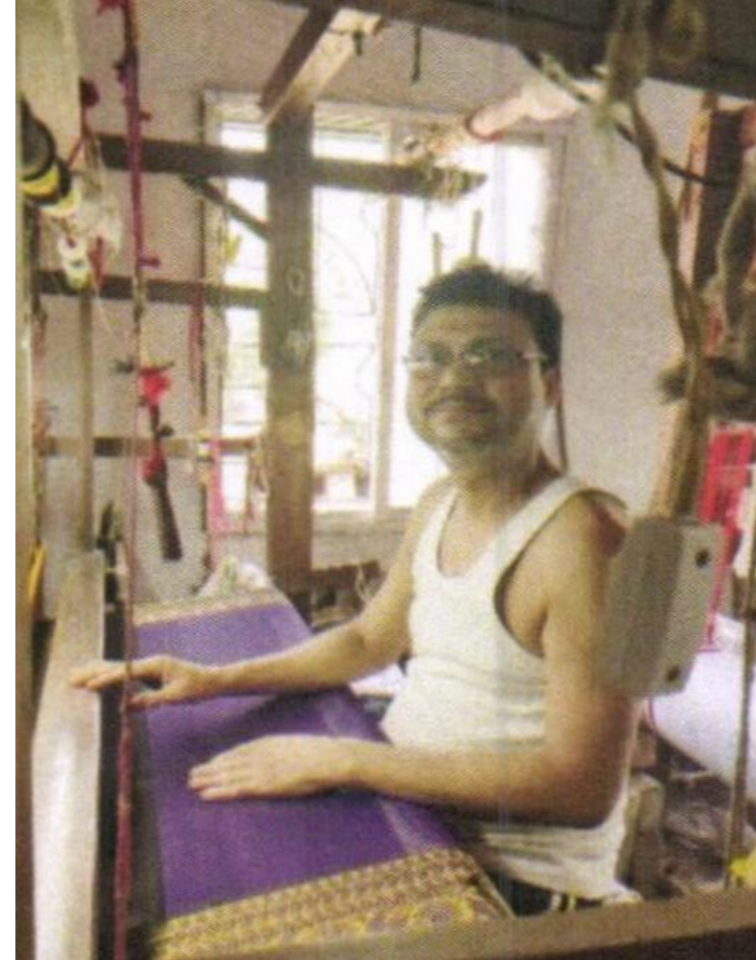
Name- Jayanta Sil
 Age- 52
 Gender- Male
 Address- Kharsarai, Silpara
 Caste- General
 Members in family- 3
 Education- till standard 5
 Primary income (annual) per capita- 96,000
 Generation of weavers- 4th



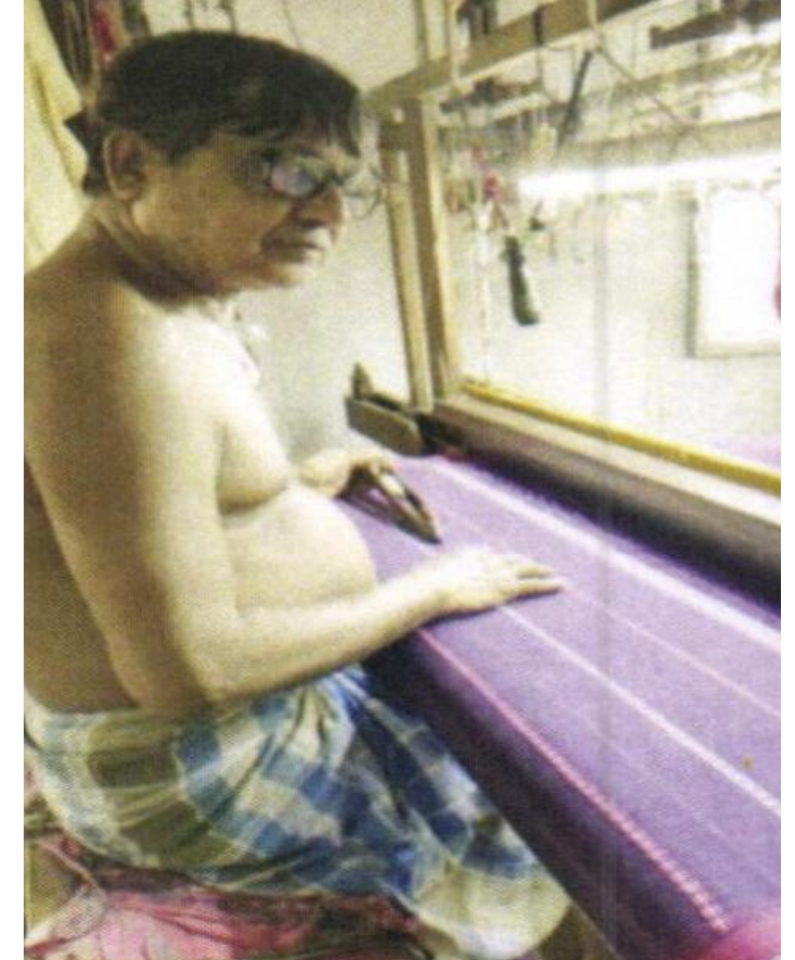
Name- Ranjan Das
 Age- 51
 Gender- Male
 Address- Kharsarai, Chanditala
 Caste- OBC
 Members in family- 4
 Education- till standard 3
 Primary income (annual) per capita- 1.20 Lakhs
 Generation of weavers- 5th



Name- Subrata Dey
 Age- 37
 Gender- Male
 Address- Kharsarai, Madhyampara
 Caste- OBC
 Members in family- 5
 Education- till standard 6
 Primary income (annual) per capita- 90,000
 Generation of weavers- 3rd

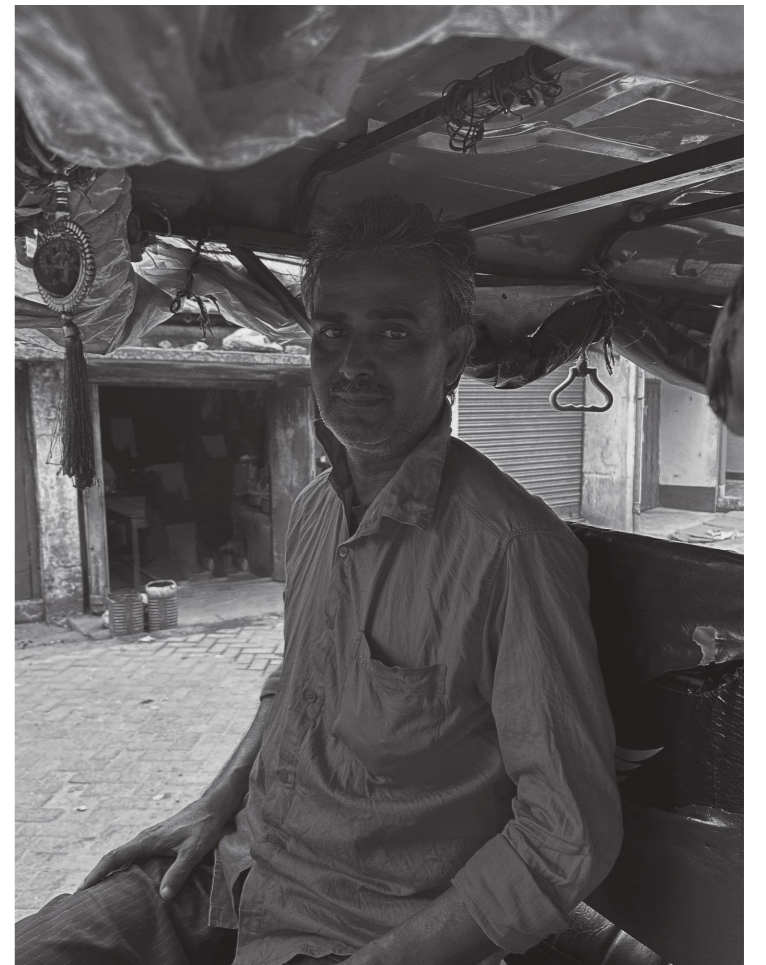
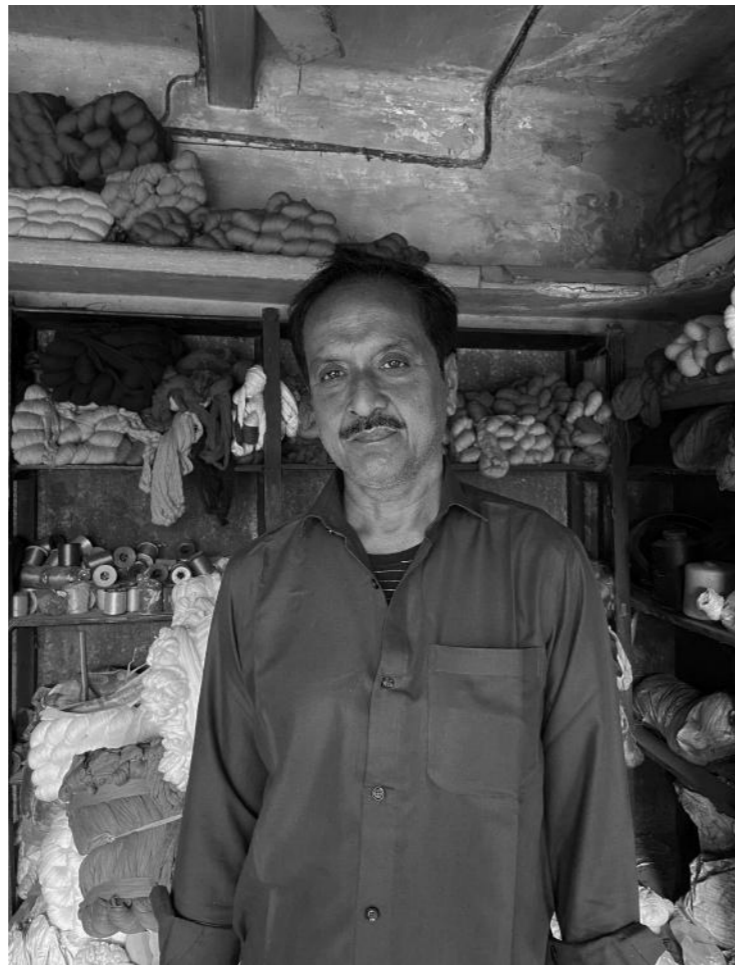
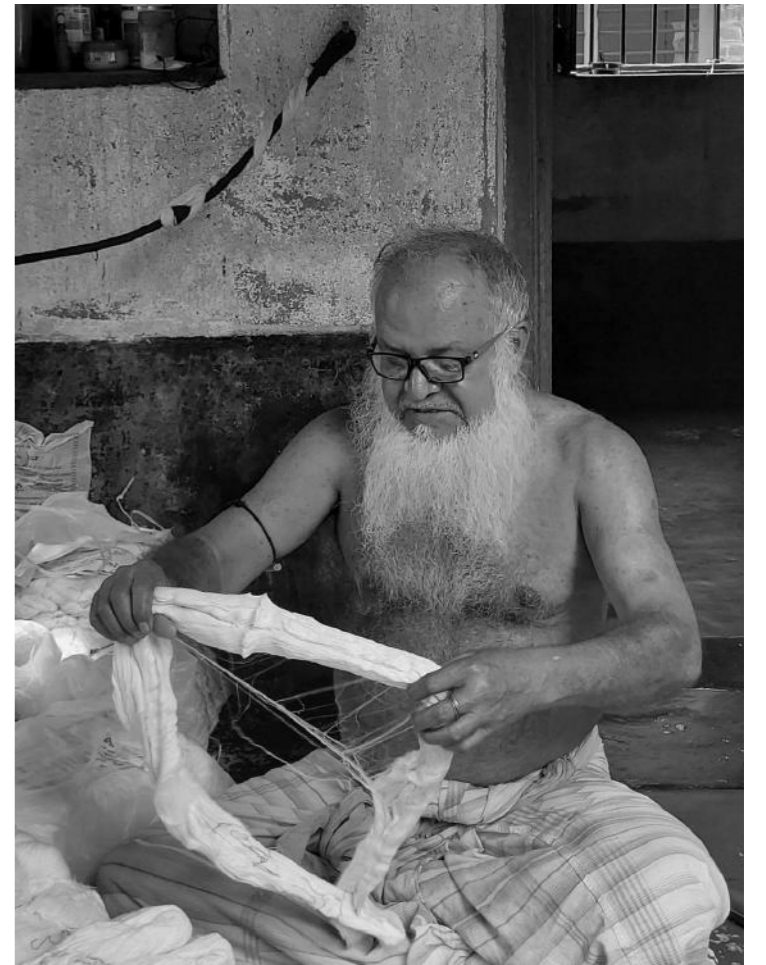


Name- Milan Dey
 Age- 46
 Gender- Male
 Address- Kharsarai, Madhyampara
 Caste- General
 Members in family- 4
 Education- till standard 4
 Primary income (annual) per capita- 1.5 Lakh
 Generation of weavers- 2nd



Name- Joydeb Dey
 Age- 66
 Gender- Male
 Address- Kharsarai, Silpara
 Caste- General
 Members in family- 6
 Education- till standard 4
 Primary income (annual) per capita- 66,000
 Generation of weavers- 4th

Fig 3.20-3.21 Dyeing Unit Rakshitpara, Dyers, Fig 3.22 -3.23 Dyeing Unit Kaikala, Dyers, Fig 3.24 Mahajan, Private Business Man , Fig 3.25 -3.26 Yarn Suppliers , Fig 3.27 Local Guide (facing page - top to bottom)



PRODUCT

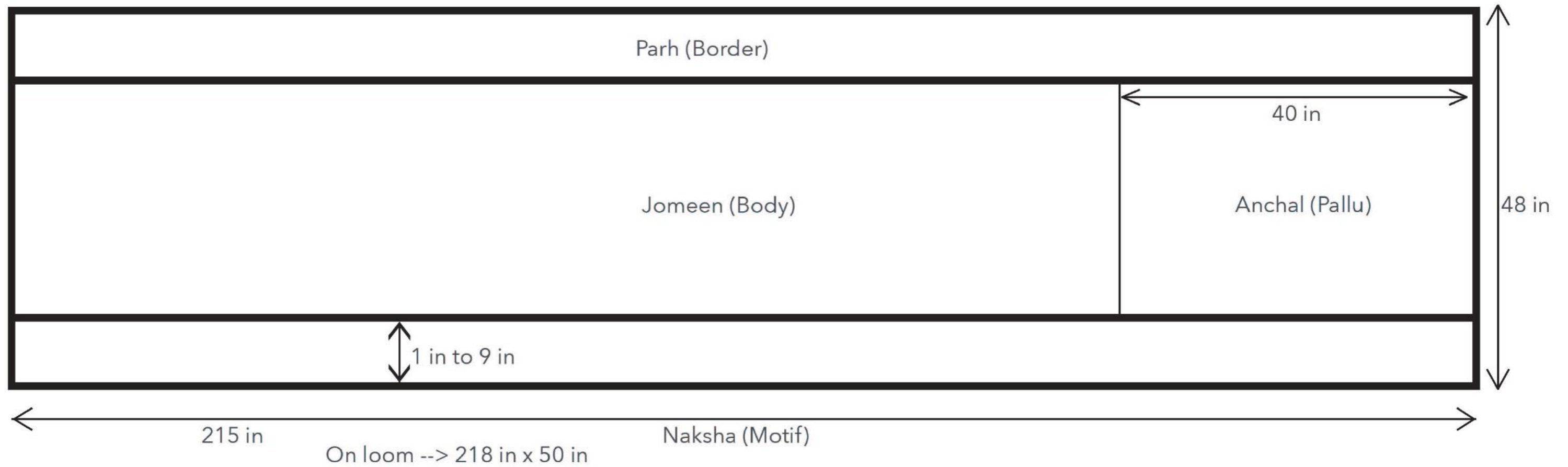


fig. 4.1 the anatomy of a begampuri saree

The artisans of Begampur view the saree as a metaphorical representation of a river, with the main part of the saree symbolizing the serene current and the pallu signifying the expansive ocean. The saree's borders depict the surrounding land, outlining the river's boundaries. This distinct perspective has inspired them to create the mathapar saree, drawing inspiration from this customary folklore portrayal of the saree.

The length of the saree when woven by Tanti on the loom is 218 inches, and its width is 50 inches, which is frequently preserved by (maintains the saree's edges at one width). The saree is 215 in x 48 in off the loom when it is done.

Product Demographics

- GENDER- Female
- LOCATION- PAN India
- INTERESTS- Appreciation for arts and crafts, Values handmade, Values Nature & Sustainable living, Slow living value for craftsmanship & investing sensibly in sophisticated products

CONSUMER IDEOLOGY

- Value For Craftsmanship
- Investment Sensibility
- Sophistication

RANGE OF PRODUCTS

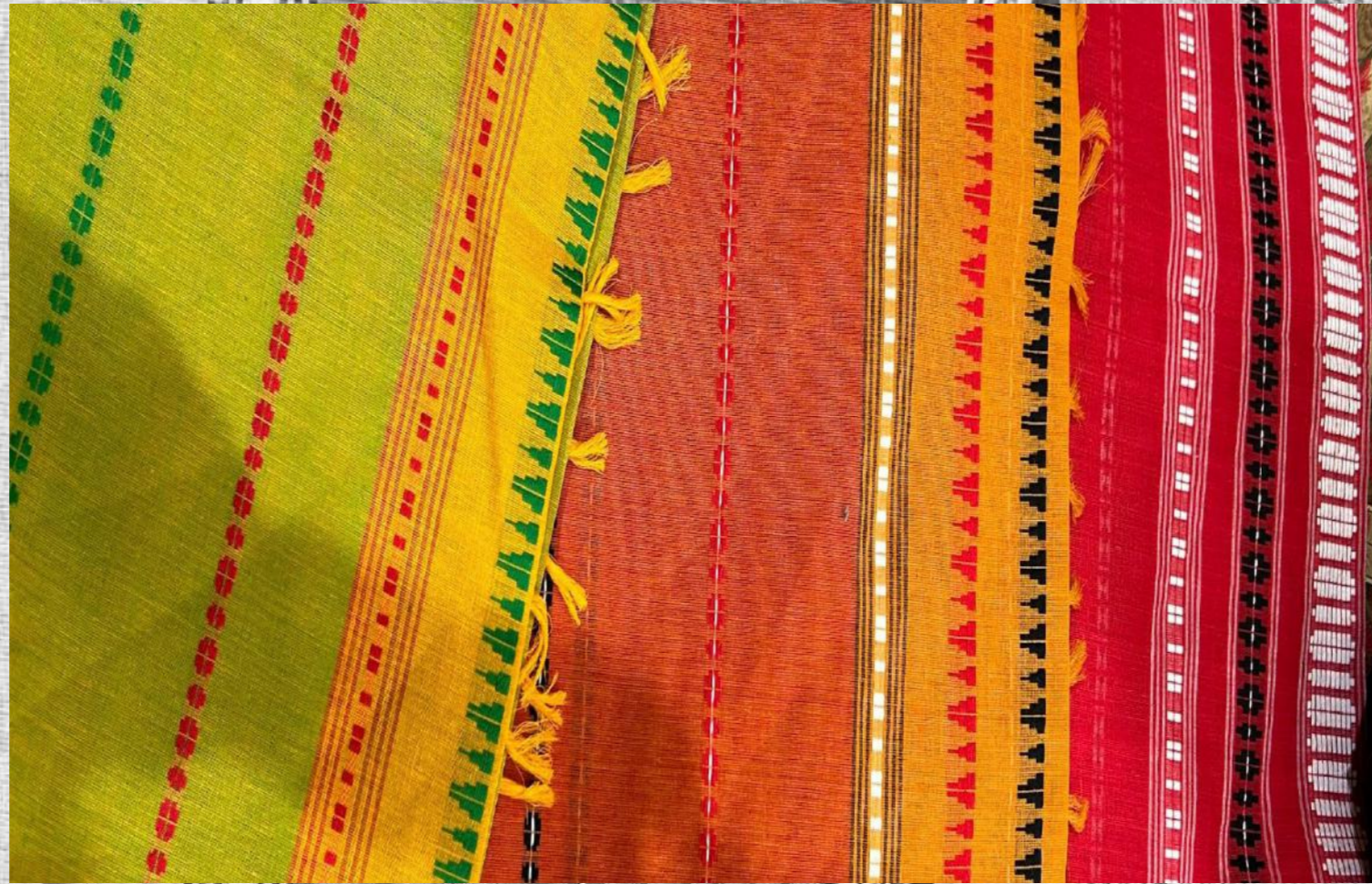
- Apparels - Sarees
- Purpose- daily wear , occasion wear , cultural festivals
- Price Range - 230 -3200
- Market Availability : National
- Market Placement :
 - Local & government exhibitions
 - B2B Export
 - National Retail (through co-operative & governmental organizations)

PROMOTION

Through social media , government events & personal connect

	HANDLOOM (500 LOOMS)	POWER LOOM (100 LOOMS)
Yarn	mill, mercerised cotton 2/100, 2/80, 100	mercerised cotton 2/60, 2/80
Ends	1800-2000	1500-1800
Epi/Ppi	84/88	62/66
Reed	68-88	50-60
Production time	2-4 days (per saree)	1-3 hours (per saree)
Starching	Only warp starched	weft and warp starched
Production rate	250-330	90-200
Texture	Soft, fine, compact weave	Stiff, coarse, loose weave

fig. 4.2 the difference between handloom and powerloom begampuri



Begampuri sarees from West Bengal are renowned for their texture and artistic appeal. Woven in Begampur village, these sarees showcase unique patterns and vibrant colors. They hold cultural significance as traditional wear, reflecting the heritage of Bengal's handloom industry and contributing to the state's rich textile legacy. Cotton sarees hold significant importance in Bengal, epitomizing comfort and grace. Woven with intricate designs and often embellished with threadwork, these sarees are ideal for daily wear and traditional occasions. Bengal's hot and humid climate makes cotton a preferred fabric, and the lightweight comfort of cotton sarees aligns seamlessly with the cultural ethos, symbolizing simplicity, tradition, and a timeless elegance.

The Bengali Way



fig. 4.3 the traditional way of draping a begampuri saree

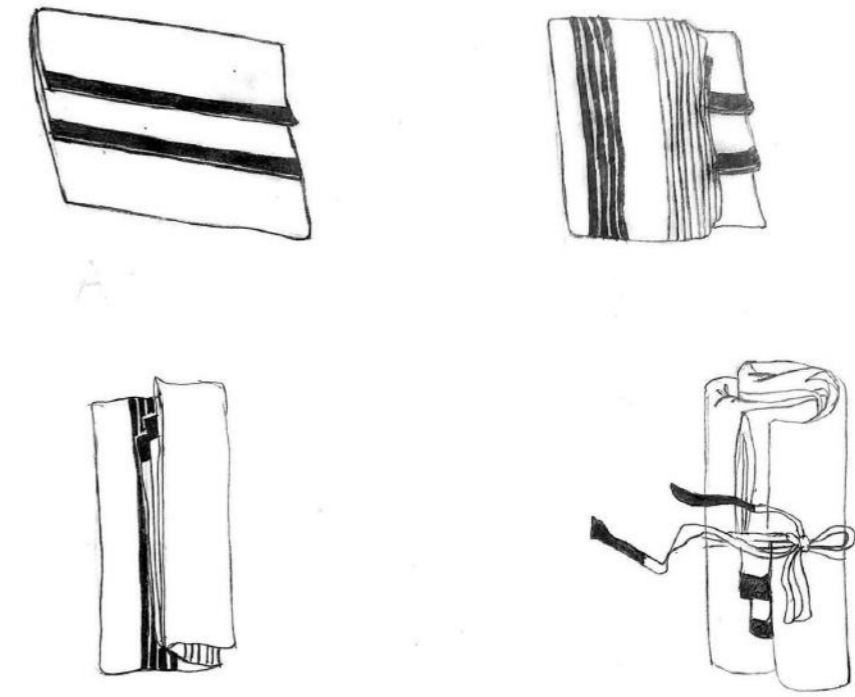


fig. 4.4 the way of folding and storing a begampuri saree

The traditional method of folding sarees in West Bengal is known as "guti bhaaj." This technique involves halving the length of the saree, then quartering it, and finally folding it into one-eighth. The width of the saree is not completely halved, ensuring that the borders do not overlap. Similarly, the width is not fully quartered, allowing the edge of the first fold to remain slightly above the second border. The saree is then folded lengthwise and sometimes secured with a string. In addition to this there is another flat-folding system used for Dhonekali and Begumpuri sarees. This technique aims to minimize wrinkles and involves a broader flat fold.

The Draping of saree

In Bengal, the traditional draping of the saree is known as “Bengali style” or “Nivi style.” The distinctive feature includes pleats at the front, with the pallu elegantly draped over the left shoulder. Typically worn with a keyhole-shaped blouse, this traditional style reflects Bengal’s cultural heritage and adds a touch of grace to women’s attire.

The country’s national garment, the saree, has numerous regional variations. The picture on the right shows an everyday use saree, while the picture on the left shows a traditional saree drape from the region of Bengal where it is made. Modern saree draping often emphasizes experimentation with styles, including innovative pleat patterns and pallu placements. In contrast, Bengali draping adheres to the traditional “Atpoure” style, featuring front pleats and the pallu draped over the left shoulder. While modern draping may incorporate diverse fabrics and unconventional techniques, Bengali draping preserves a cultural legacy with specific attention to the elegant aesthetics of cotton and silk sarees and the distinctive keyhole blouse. Both styles reflect the dynamic evolution of saree draping, blending tradition and contemporary fashion.

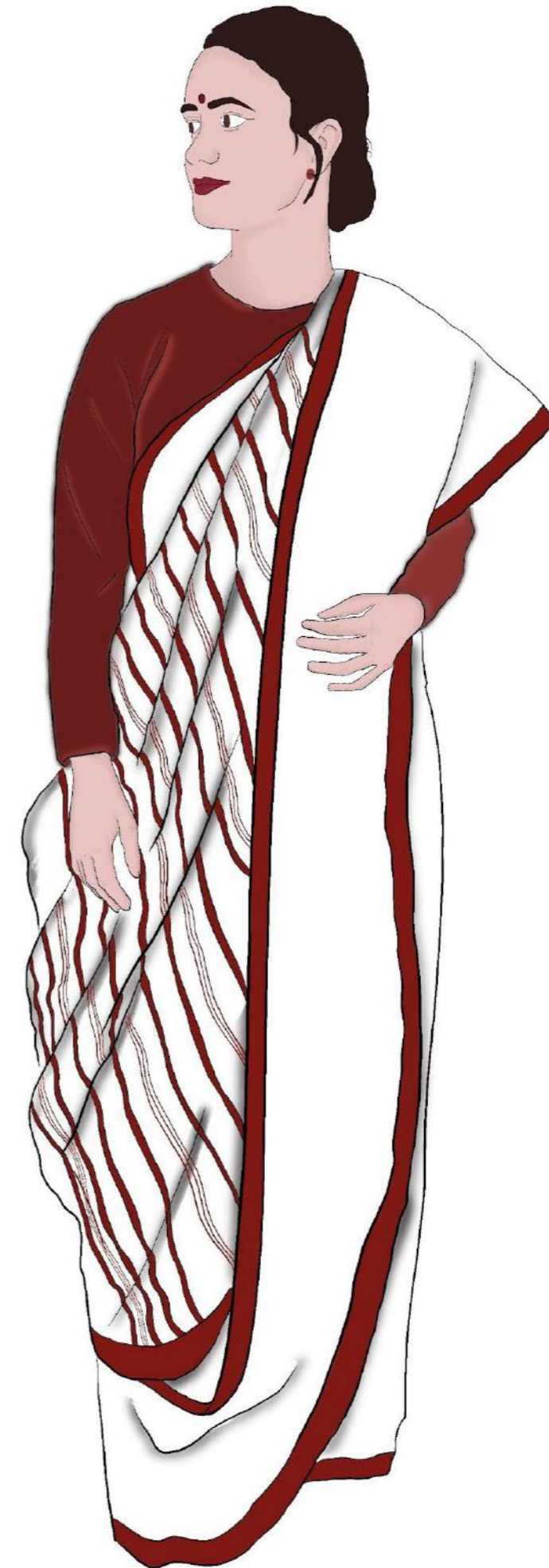
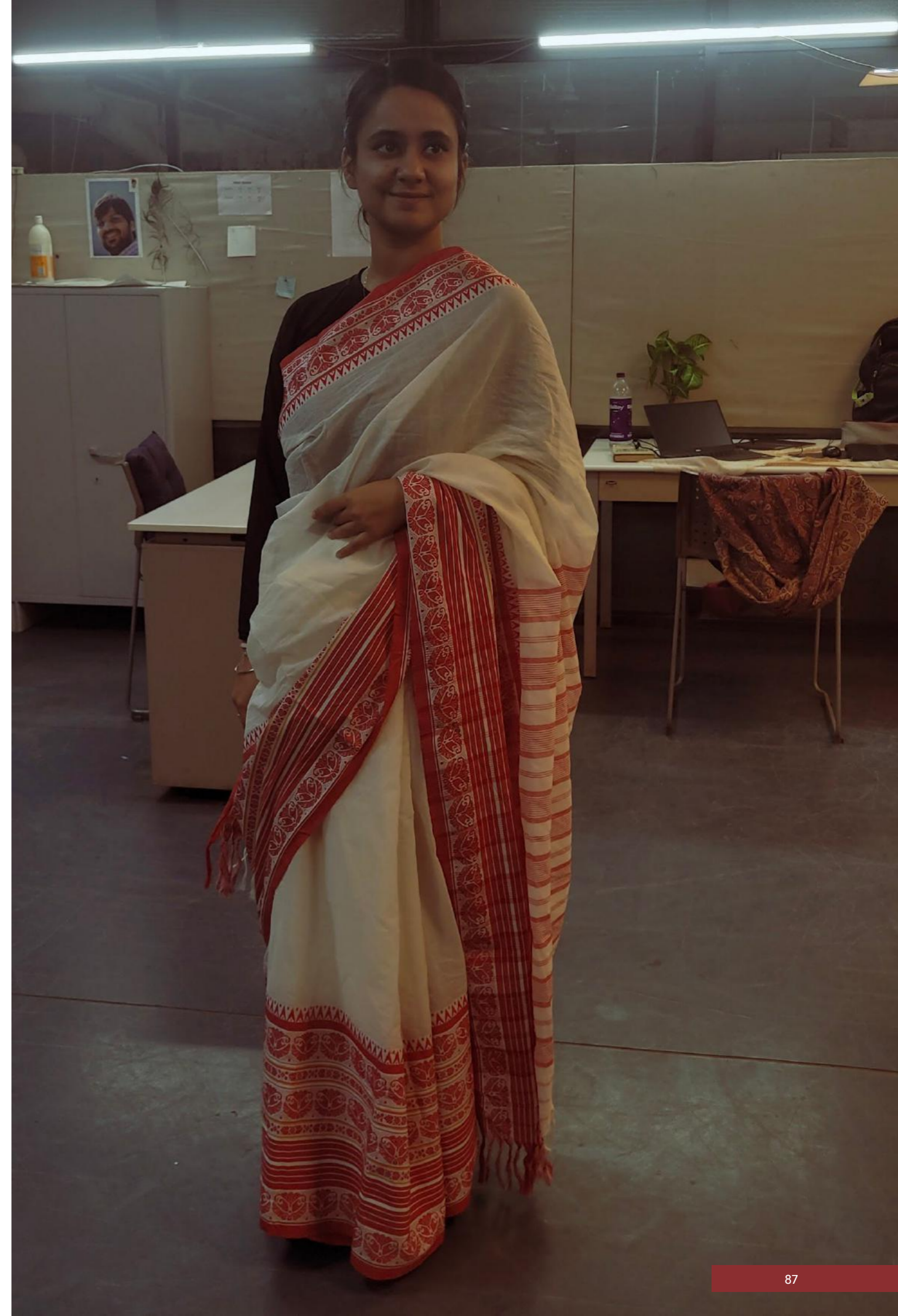


fig. 4.5 the bengali drape



fig. 4.6 (above) display of begampuri saree in WSC Kolkata
fig. 4.7 (right) begampuri saree draped on a student





Handloom Mark

Products Identified for Branding:

- Based on Geographical Indication registration and their unique characteristics, the following products have been identified for branding under the India Handloom Brand.
- Specified standard quality parameters for all products are available at www.handlooms.nic.in.
- A permissible tolerance of +/- 5% on quality parameters like count of yarns, ends/picks per inch and size is allowed.

The Handloom Mark on Begampuri sarees is crucial as it assures authenticity, quality, and supports the handloom industry. This mark signifies adherence to traditional weaving techniques, ensuring consumers receive genuine handcrafted products. By promoting the Handloom Mark, the significance of Begampuri sarees is elevated, safeguarding the livelihoods of skilled artisans and fostering a sustainable ecosystem in West Bengal's rich textile heritage."

fig. 4.8 a roll of the handloom mark used in the saree to establish authenticity

The Products



Length: 5.5m
Width: 1.2m
Warp & Weft: 100/100s
Extra weft: 60s
Reed count: 80
Picks per inch: 68-72
Weight: 370gm

Description: Colour-blocked striped saree with no border
Extra striped pattern Mathaparh (Solid Colour)



Length: 5.5m
Width: 1.2m
Warp & Weft: 2/100 gassed mercerized
Reed Count: 72
Picks per inch: 56
Weight: 590gm

Description: Bishwa Bangla Creation
Dobby hand patiachiur
Hand butik with border doobby naksha



Length: 5.5m
Width: 1.2m
Warp & Weft: 100/100s
Extra Warp: 2/74 gassed mercerized
Reed per Count: 80
Picks per inch: 72-76
Jacquard: 200 hooks
Weight: 450gm

Description: Striped Pallu with plain body
Karcha and diya motif, Flower and leaf motif with jacquard design, Morich pattern in border



Length: 5.5m
 Width: 1.2m
 Warp and Weft: 100x100s
 Extra Warp: 2/72 gassed mercerized
 Reed Count: 80
 Picks per inch: 76
 Jacquard: 100 hook
 Weight: 432gm

Description: Handwoven Jacquard naksha, Broad and contrasting border, Flower and barfi motif



Length: 5.5m
 Width: 1.2m
 Warp & Weft: 100x100s
 Extra Warp: 2/74 gassed mercerized
 Reed Count: 80
 Picks per inch: 70-74
 Dobby: Pattiya design
 Weight: 424gm

Description: Dobby design, Mina design with flower and star motif inspired from Char Bangla Temples, Murshidabad, Gharana design



Length: 5.5m
 Width: 1.2m
 Warp & Weft: 2/100 gassed mercerized and 60s
 Extra Warp: 2/74 gassed mercerized
 Reed Count: 72
 Picks per inch: 58-60
 Dobby: Geometric Lines
 Weight: 560gm

Description: Extra Warp Teeth naksha border, diamond based traditional Begampuri Saree



Length: 6.5m with Blouse piece
 Width: 1.2m
 Warp & Weft: 100x100s
 Extra Warp: 2/74 gassed mercerized
 Extra Weft: 2/83 (3ply)
 Reed Count: 64
 Picks per inch: 52
 Dobby: Patiachur
 Weight: 565gm

Description: Patiachiur design flower motif with extra weft and arrow design triangle naksha



Length: 5.5m
 Width: 1.2m
 Warp & Wefts: 2/100 x 2/100s gassed mercerized
 Extra Weft: 2/83 (3ply)
 Reed Count: 72
 Picks per inch: 56-58 J
 acquard: Hand patia
 Weight: 540gm

Description: Hand butty Bishwa Bangla Creation, Contrasting colourful threads, Chiur and gutti design



Length: 5.5m
 Width: 1.2m
 Warp: 60s cotton
 Weft: 40s cotton
 Extra Weft: 2/80s (3 ply)
 Border Warp: 2/60s cotton
 Extra Border Warp: 2/74s
 Picks per inch: 48-52
 Weight: 520gm

Description: Ganga Jamuna border Contrast MathaPaar All body chiur

PROCESS



fig. 5.1 vessels used for dyeing yarns for the saree

fig. 5.2 two ways of twisting the cotton hanks

Once upon a time, in Begampur village, the art of dyeing raw materials for weaving sarees was a symphony of nature's hues. Artisans, akin to alchemists, concocted magical dyes from indigenous elements like indigo, turmeric, and various botanical wonders. This ancient craft not only bestowed upon Begampuri sarees a kaleidoscope of unique colours but also nurtured sustainable and eco-friendly practices within the region's handloom tapestry. However, as time waltzed forward, the melody of tradition intertwined with modernity, leading to a shift towards synthetic dyes. Enterprising artisans now delve into a palette of direct, naphthol, vat, and sulphur-based dyes to infuse life into cotton yarns of varying counts—60s, 80s, and 100s. Yet, amidst this evolution, the vessels used for dyeing remain steadfast witnesses, albeit with subtle modifications, ensuring a seamless transition from raw yarn to vibrant fabric.

In the heart of handloom clusters, dyeing vessels stand as guardians of colour consistency and textile excellence. Crafted from noble metals like copper or stainless steel, these vessels orchestrate a ballet of temperature and dye concentration, ensuring each yarn emerges adorned in its designated hue. The rhythmic rotation of the dyeing rod by skilled hands ensures uniform saturation, elevating the quality and allure of handwoven marvels. These vessels are not mere cauldrons of colour but guardians of integrity, minimizing dye wastage by reclaiming excess pigment within the bath itself. Thus, dyeing becomes a painter's brush, enriching the canvas of handloom craftsmanship with vibrant strokes of tradition and innovation.

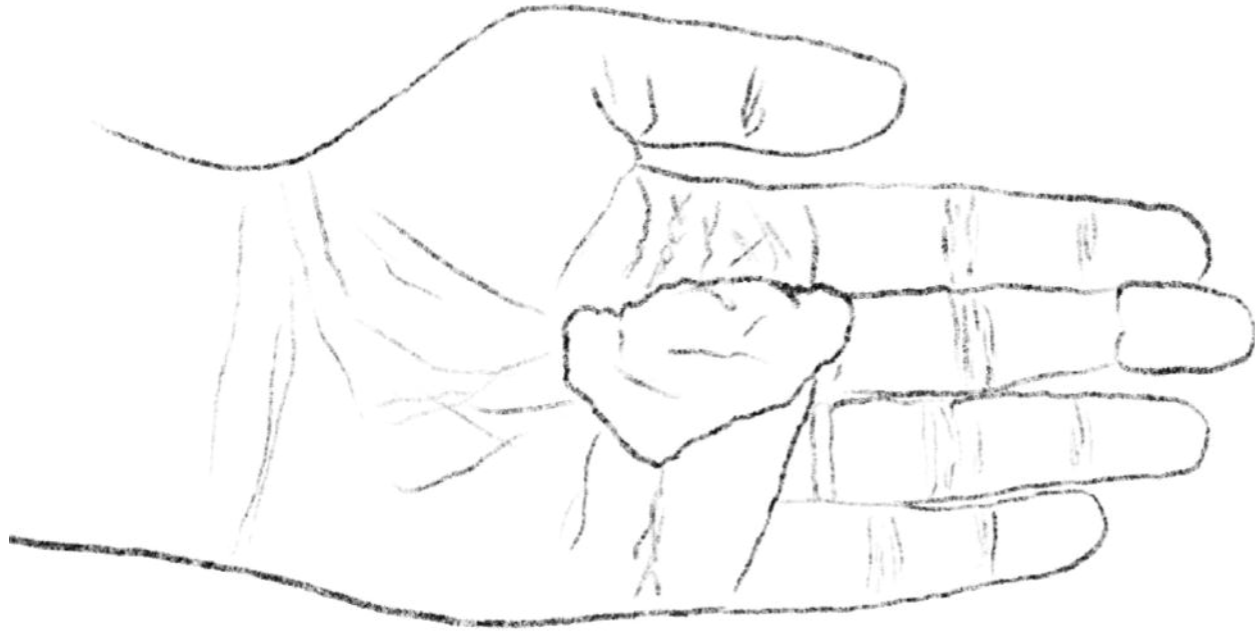


fig. 5.3 a block of alum used during the process of dyeing



fig. 5.4 soap used during the process of dyeing



fig. 5.5 a basket which contain the dye pigments



fig. 5.6 cotton yarn hanks used for dyeing



fig. 5.7 the dye bath and its colour



fig. 5.8 a man opening the hank for dyeing



fig. 5.9 vessels used for dyeing yarns for the saree

The endeavors of Dyeing

At the dawn of each dyeing endeavor, bundles of hank yarns, akin to eager canvases, await their transformation. With meticulous care, artisans unwrap these bundles, tenderly separating the hanks for their chromatic voyage. Each hank unfurls like a story waiting to be told, its fibres primed for the alchemy of colour. Through a precise ritual of opening and stretching, the yarns breathe, preparing themselves for the embrace of vibrant hues that await.

The journey of yarn from raw fibre to dyed splendour is an odyssey of purification and preparation. Initially, the raw yarn undergoes a baptism of sorts, cleansing away impurities and natural oils. It is then delicately wound onto cones or bobbins, readying itself for the transformative embrace of colour. Pre-treatment follows suit, where the yarn undergoes scouring or bleaching, rendering it receptive to the forthcoming infusion of hues. Bathed in the soft embrace of Koshiki River's waters, the yarns find solace before encountering the chlorinated baptism of sodium hypochlorite, where they dance for five minutes, ensuring even bleaching under the watchful gaze of artisans.

Within this realm of dyes, VAT reigns supreme, bestowing upon yarns a symphony of vibrant hues. Unlike its counterparts, VAT dyes promise longevity and resilience, their colors resisting the ravages of time and wash. Through an intricate dance of oxidation, yarns immerse themselves in vats, where water, dye, and reducing agents converge to weave tales of color. Stirred and aerated, the yarns embrace their pigments, forming insoluble bonds that withstand the test of time. Through cycles of oxidation, washing, and drying, these yarns emerge as vibrant testaments to the artistry of vat dyeing, their hues echoing the vibrant tapestry of Begampur's heritage.



fig. 5.10 cotton hank bleached



fig. 5.11 cleaning of cotton hanks



fig. 5.12 cotton hank bleaching process in H_2O_2



fig. 5.13 drying of bleached yarns



fig. 5.14 cotton hanks being dyed



fig. 5.15 & 5.16 (above and below) cotton hanks being dyed



Different types of dyes for specific colours

NATURAL VAT	DIRECT	NAPHTOL	SULPHUR and VAT
<p>Indigo Yellow</p> <p>Vat dyes are used very rare because of costing. Done by customised order.</p>	<p>Brown Muddy Brown Steel Bottle Green Yellow Violet Orange Grey Sky Blue Rubine Navy Blue</p>	<p>Red Maroon Golden Occur yellow Sea green , Blue - green Firoza Crimson Red Red orange Rusty Red</p>	<p>Magenta Turquoise Royal Pink Baby Pink Hot Pink Bronze Avocado Lilac Peach Teal Scarlet</p>

The VAT Vessels

From vat to vessel, the dyed yarns embark on a journey of fixation and finessing. Immersed in dye baths, they drink in the essence of color, ensuring a harmonious union between fiber and pigment. Through steaming or washing, the colors are locked in a tender embrace, sealing their bond for eternity. Finally, rinsed and dried, the dyed yarns stand as vibrant testaments to the artistry and precision of their creators, ready to be woven into the fabric of tradition.



fig. 5.17 & 5.18 (above and below) checking of the colours of dyed yarns



fig. 5.19 dyed yarns and the man behind it



fig. 5.20 drying of dyed yarns

The Process of Drying

As the dyed bundles sway gently in the breeze, suspended from sturdy wooden poles sewn from local bamboo and sal trees which are approximately 7m in length and can hold up to 30 bundles on one stem. These bundles take up to 4-5 to 8-9 hours depending upon the weather conditions, they undergo a transformation akin to a caterpillar's metamorphosis into a butterfly. Time becomes fluid, stretching across hours dictated by the whims of weather and nature, as the yarns bask in the sun's gentle caress, absorbing the essence of their newfound colors.

With the dyeing complete, the yarns are carefully wound onto spools or cones, their vibrant hues shielded from the world by layers of protective packaging. Safeguarded against color bleeding and damage, they begin their journey to the weavers' looms, destined to be woven into the rich tapestry of Begampur's textile heritage.

The Looms

In conclusion, the art of dyeing and weaving textiles in Begampur is a testament to the ingenuity and creativity of the human spirit. The artisans of this region have managed to strike a delicate balance between tradition and innovation, creating textiles that are not just beautiful but also sustainable and eco-friendly. As we move towards a more conscious and sustainable future, we can learn a lot from the handloom industry in Begampur and the artisans who have dedicated their lives to preserving this rich textile tradition.

Dobby is a woven fabric produced on a doobby loom, characterized by small geometric patterns and extra texture in cloth. The warp and weft threads may be the color or different. A Dobby Loom is a type of floor loom that controls the whole warp threads using a doobby head. A doobby loom is an alternative to a treadle loom, where multiple heddles (shafts) are controlled by foot treadles one for each heddle. The Jacquard loom, which was invented earlier, applies the same idea differently.

The Jacquard loom is a mechanical loom, invented by Joseph Marie Jacquard, that simplifies the process of manufacturing textiles with complex patterns such as brocade, damask, and matelassé. The loom is controlled by punched cards with punched holes that correspond to specific patterns. These holes control the raising and lowering of the warp threads, allowing for intricate designs and patterns to be woven into the fabric.



fig. 5.21 & 5.22 (above and below) packaging of dyed yarns





fig. 5.23 the dobby attachment on the loom

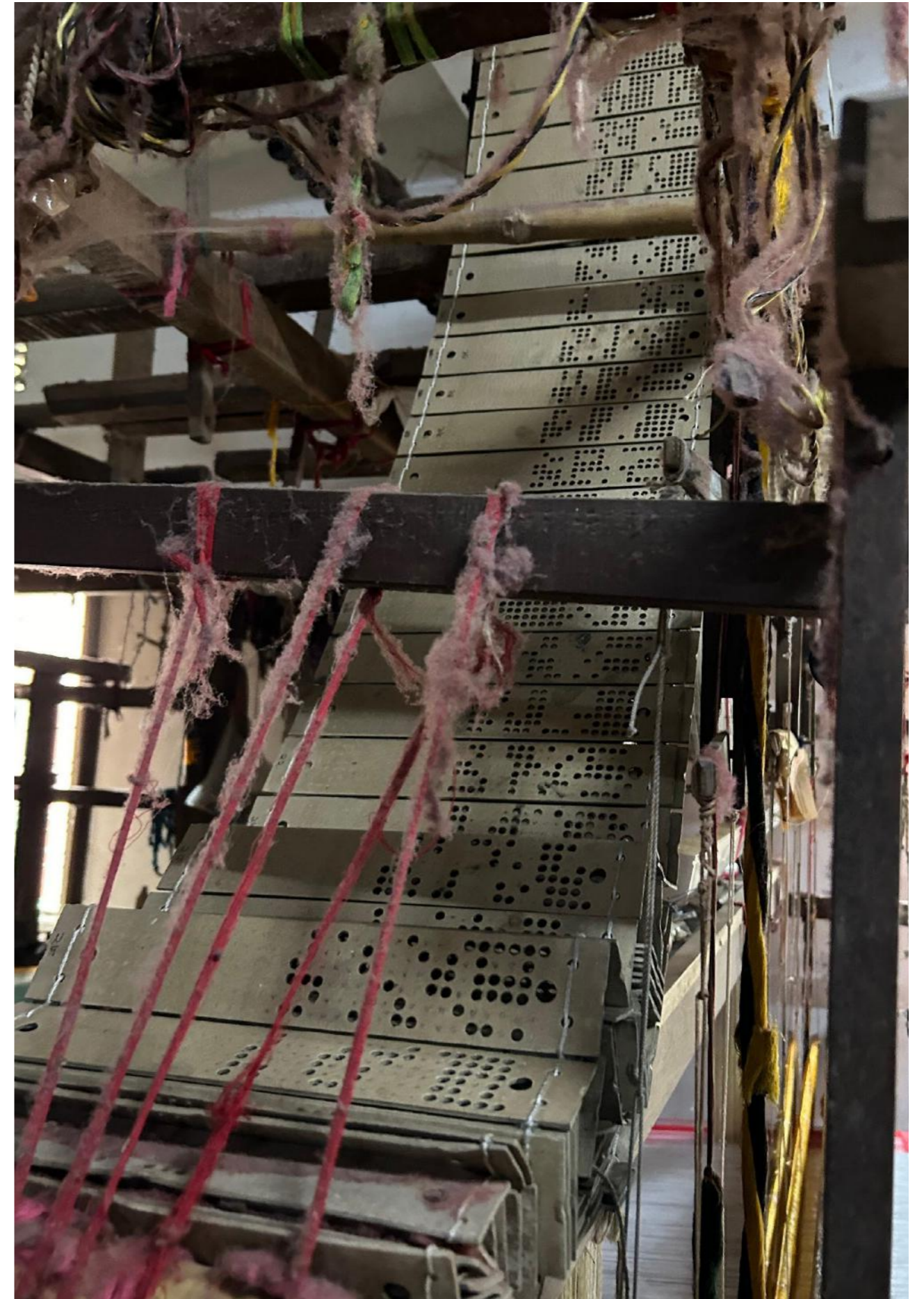


fig. 5.24 jacquard attachment on loom





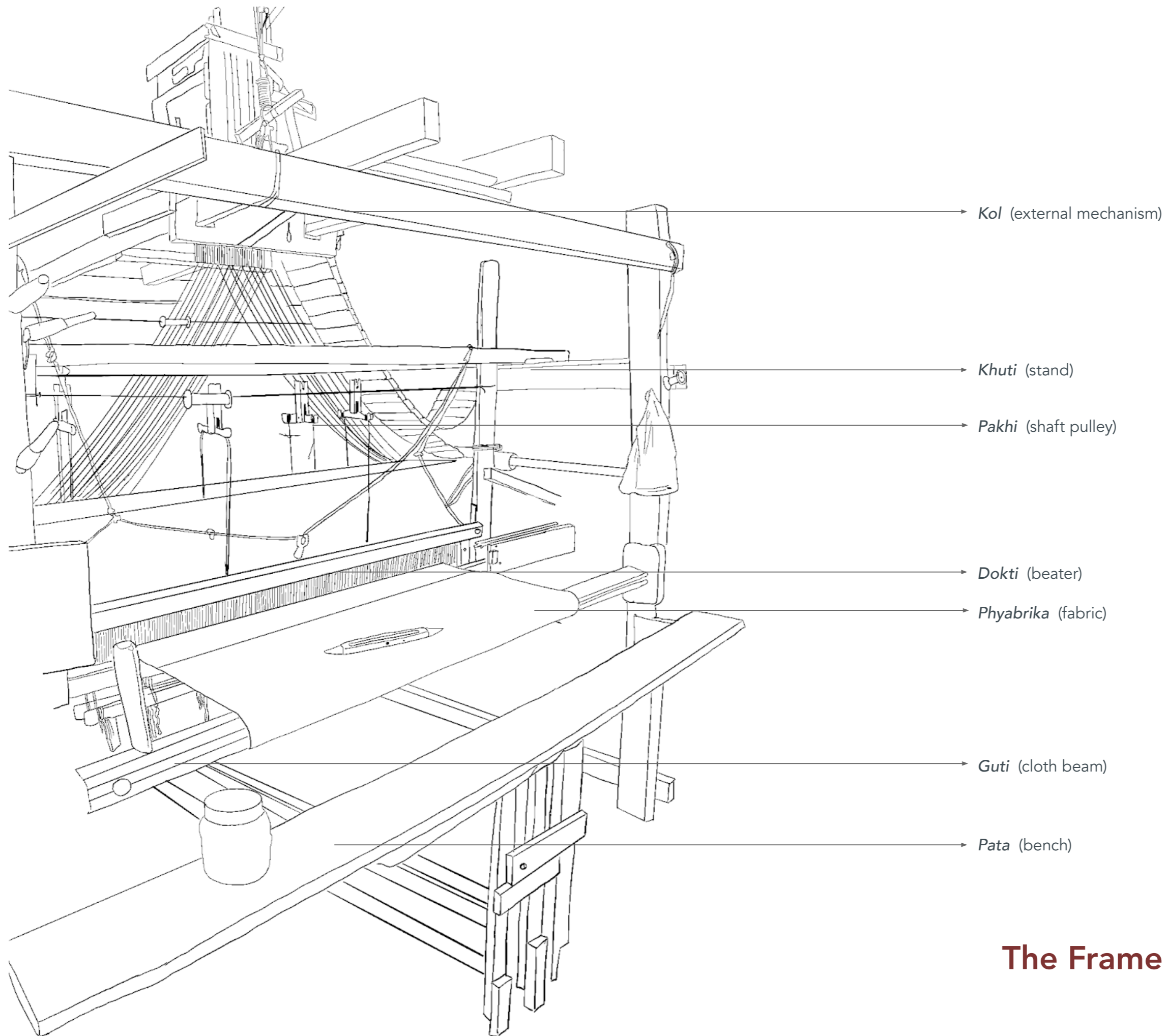


fig. 5.25 the frame loom used and its parts

The Frame Loom

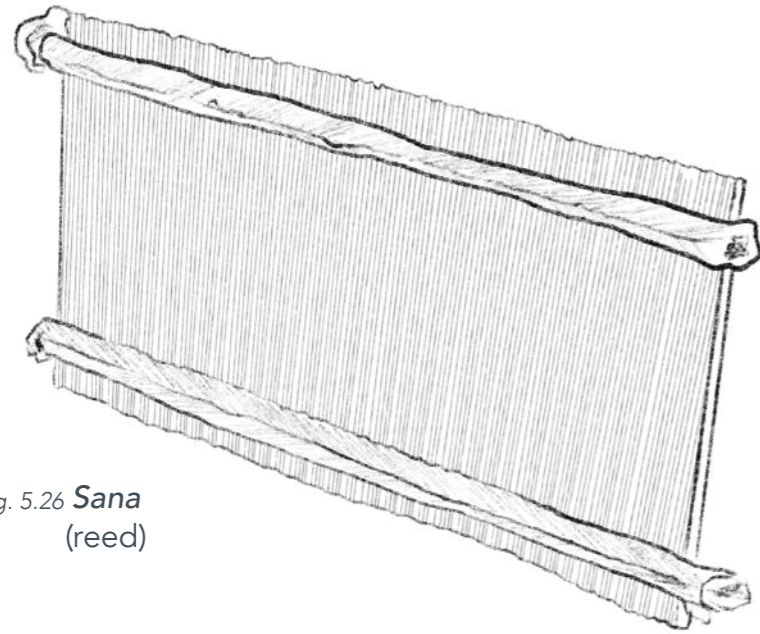


fig. 5.26 *Sana*
(reed)

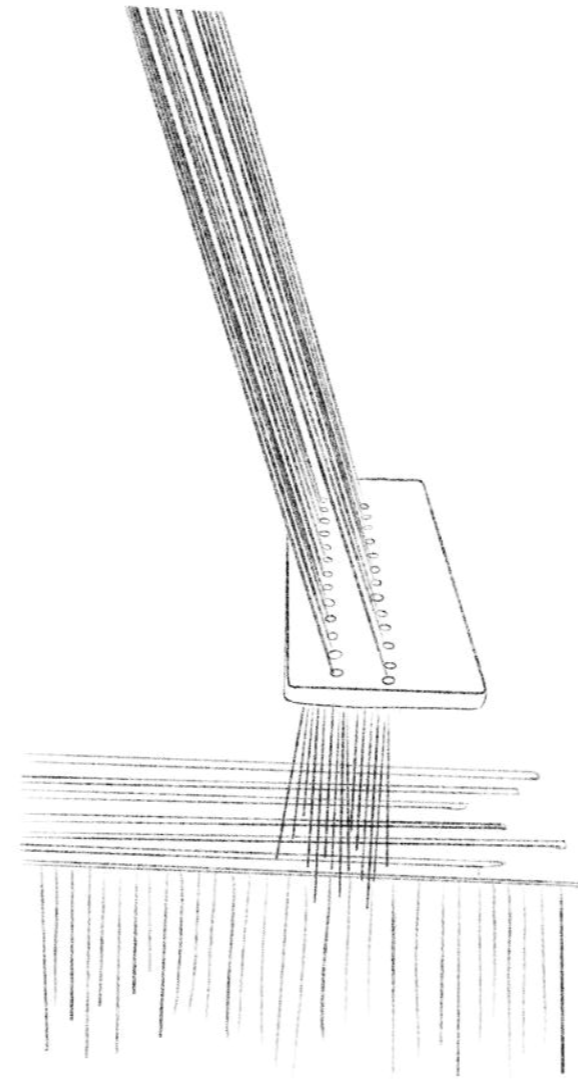


fig. 5.27 *Hata*
(comber board)

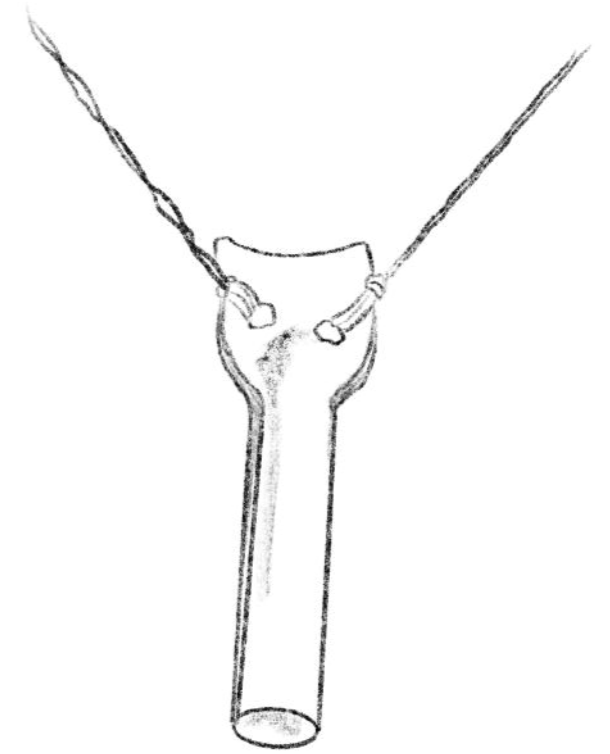


fig. 5.28 *Katar*
(fly shuttle pulley handle)

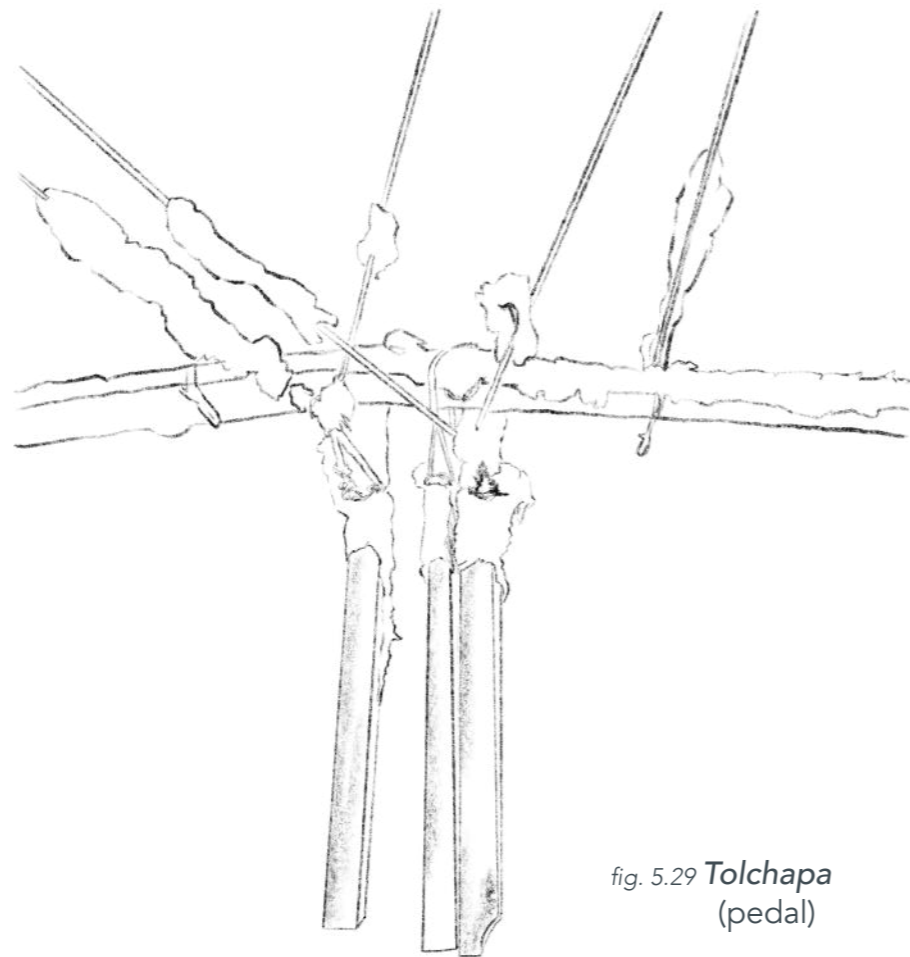


fig. 5.29 *Tolchapa*
(pedal)

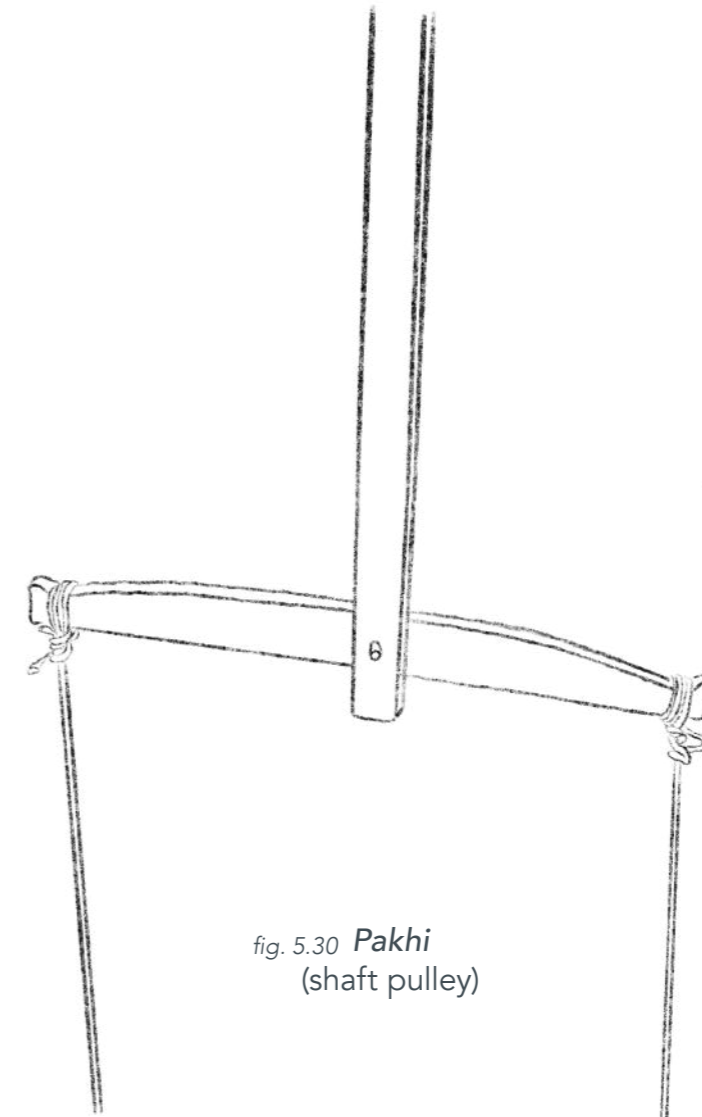


fig. 5.30 *Pakhi*
(shaft pulley)

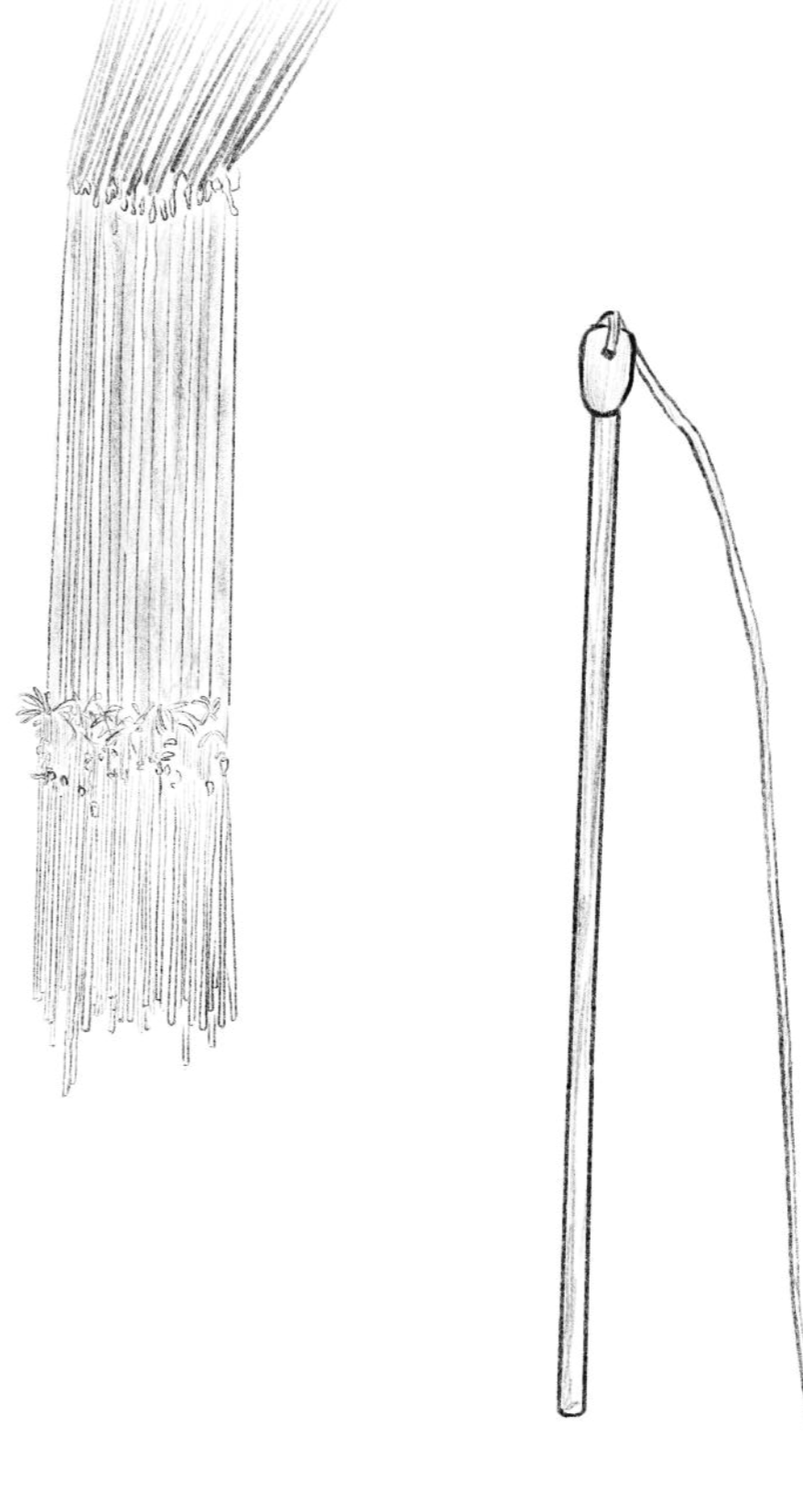
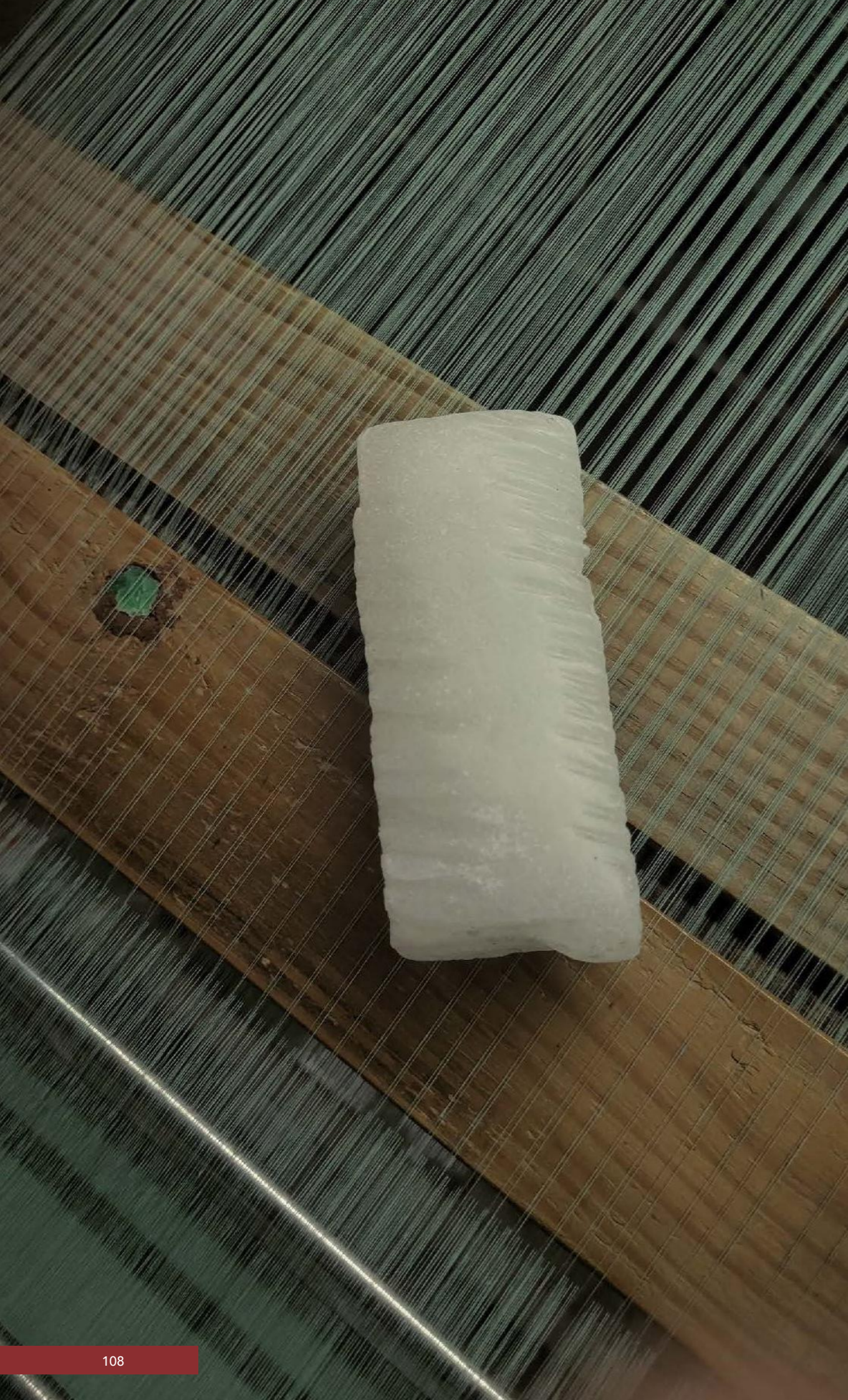


fig. 5.31 *Dangi*
(dead/weight on the
jacquard attachment)

The art of weaving on a dobby loom or a jacquard loom requires skill, patience, and attention to detail. The weaver carefully interlaces the warp and weft threads to create intricate designs and patterns that are unique to the region's textile traditions. The resulting fabric is not just a product of the weaving process but also of the dyeing process that came before it. The vibrant hues and colorfastness of the yarns are essential to creating textiles that will last for years to come.

fig. 5.32 wax bar used in weaving



fig. 5.33 different kinds of shuttles used in both handloom and powerloom

fig. 5.34 *Boga Kata*
(reed hook)

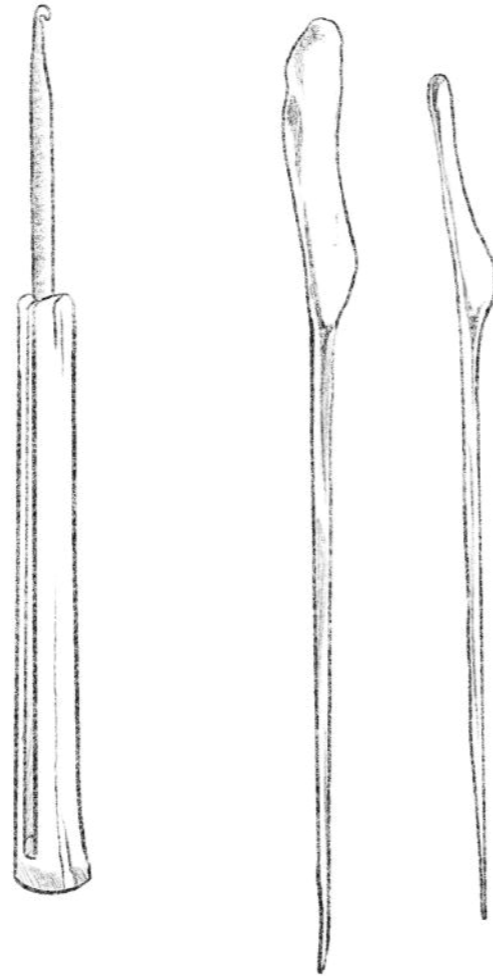


fig. 5.35 *Machko*
(needle to adjust threads)

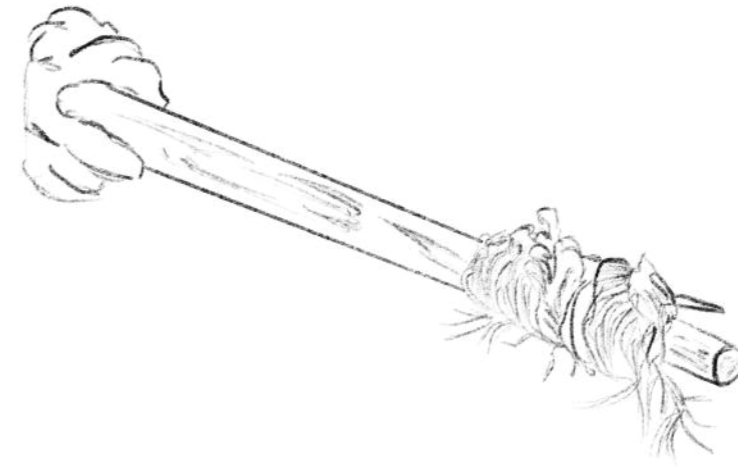
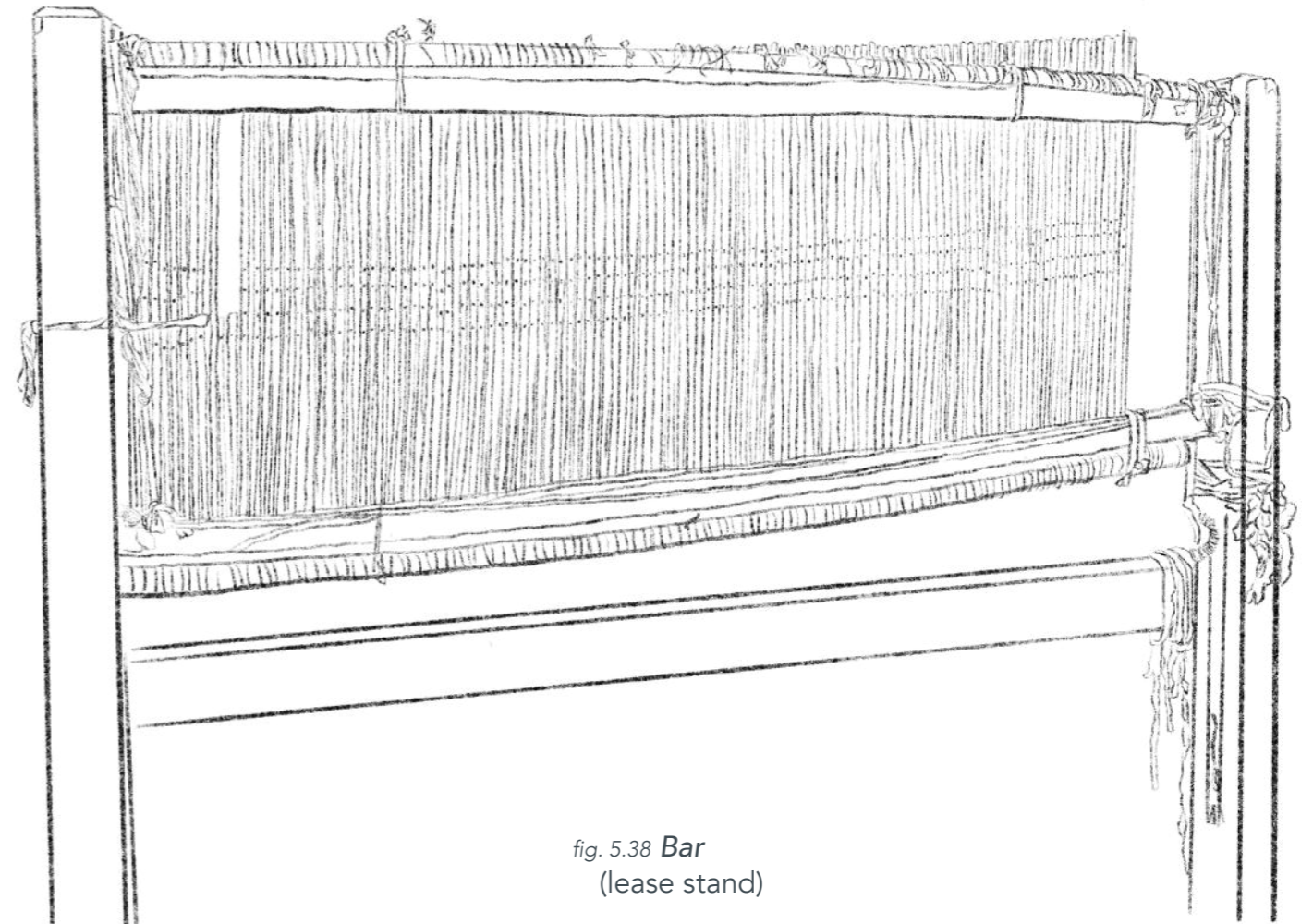


fig. 5.36 *B*
(needle and rod to maintain
the fabric's width)

fig. 5.37 *Moti*
(hook for maintains the
width of the fabric)



fig. 5.38 *Bar*
(lease stand)



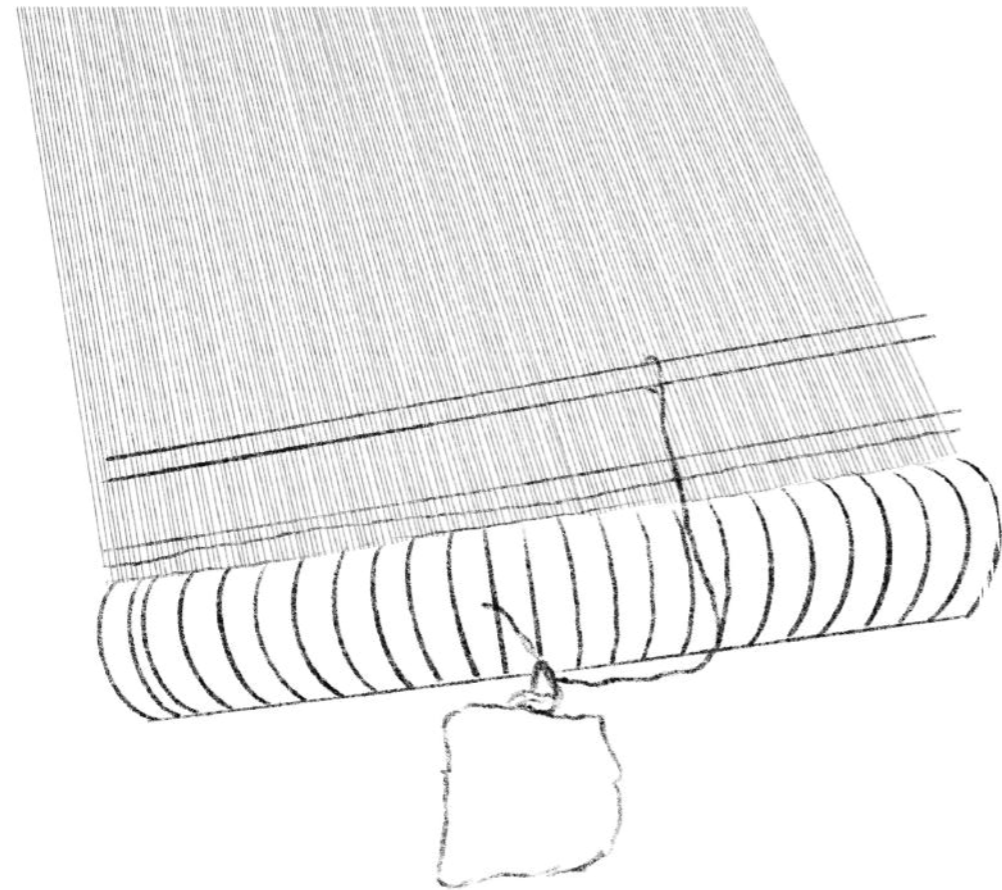


fig. 5.39 **Jo Bara**
(weight for lease rods)

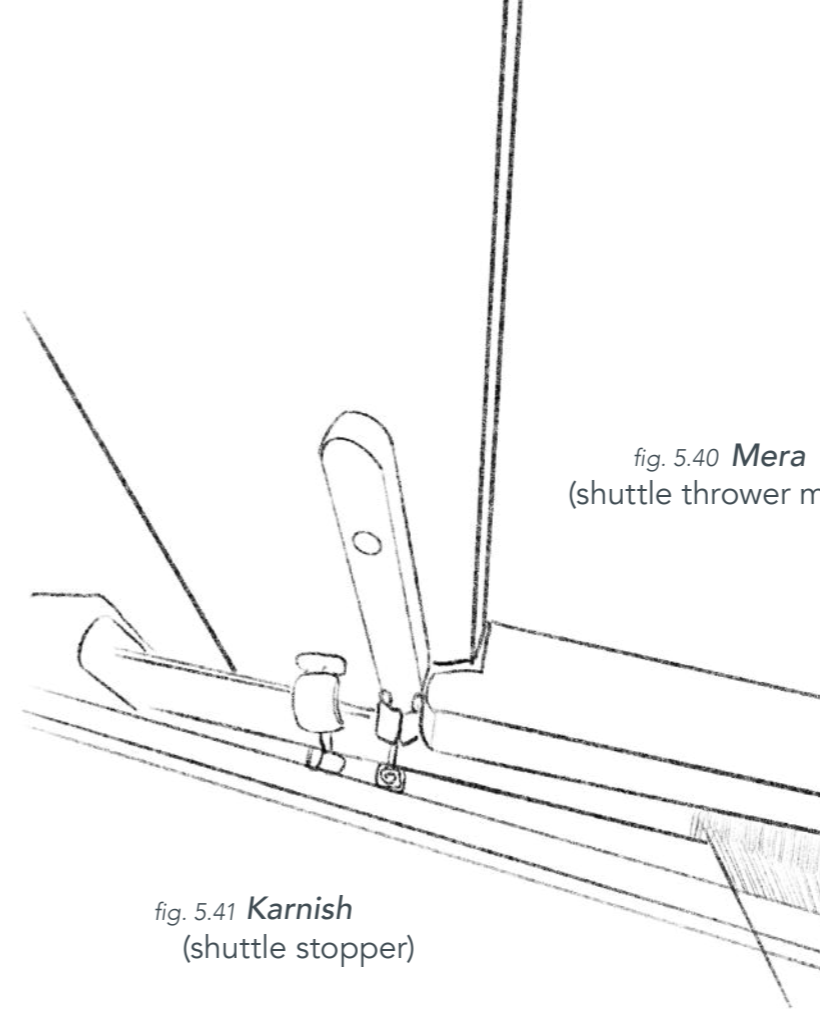


fig. 5.40 **Mera**
(shuttle thrower mechanism)

fig. 5.41 **Karnish**
(shuttle stopper)

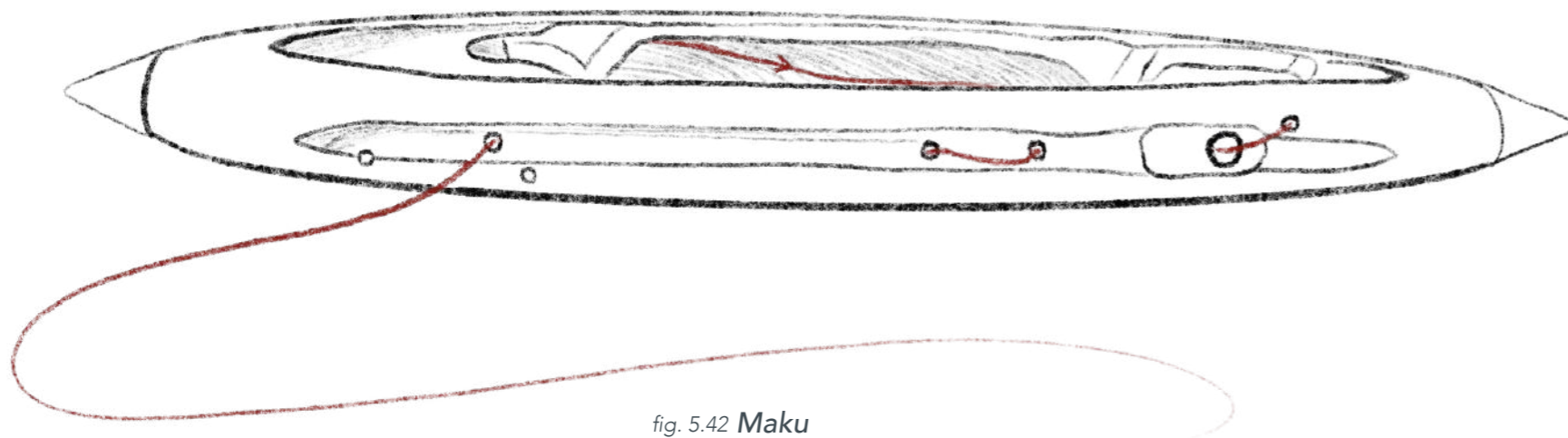


fig. 5.42 **Maku**
(shuttle)

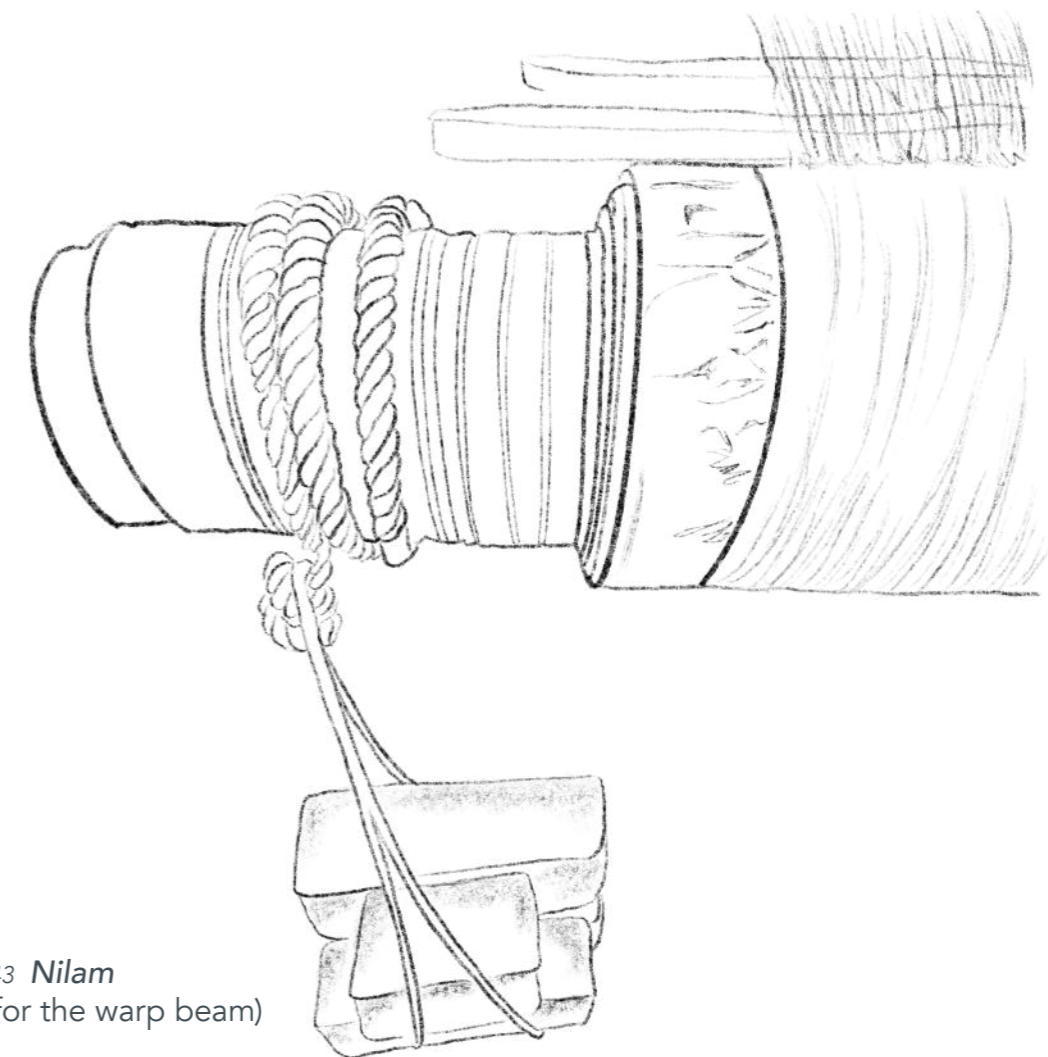


fig. 5.43 **Nilam**
(weight for the warp beam)

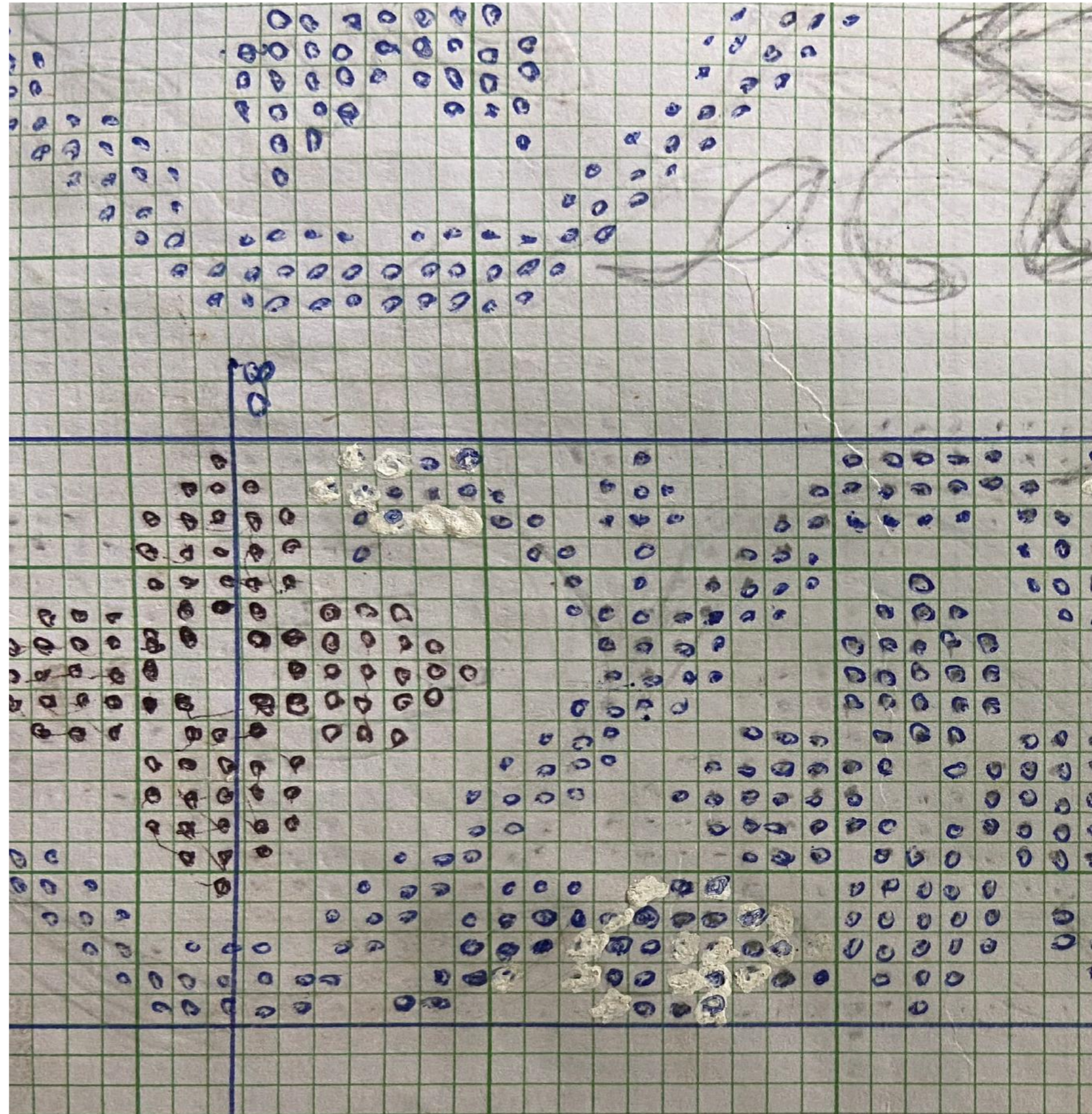


Different parts of a loom-

- Pick-up Stick The pick-up stick is used to lift up the warp threads, the yam attached to the loom, so that the shuttle with the weft yam can be woven through.
- Heddles: A heddle is a set of parallel cords or wires in a loom that are used to separate and guide the warp threads and make a path for the shuttle.
- Reed: This tool is used to keep the warp even and to push the weft, the woven yam, down to tighten the weaving. They are rectangular frames with narrow metal strips called dents.
- Combs and beaters: Made of wood or metal or both, weaving combs and beaters push the weft down towards the beginning of the weaving. The teeth of this tools are wide enough to fit in between the strands of the warp.
- Shuttle:It is easier and faster to use shuttles made for working with different kinds of yarns. Ski and raag shuttles are made to handle thicker yarns, which are usually wrapped lengthwise around the shuffles. Boat shuttles work more quickly owing to the presence of bobbin in the bobbin's centre. The bobbin's hold yams of medium and fine thickness.
- Spool Rackspool rack allows to keep the fibres organised while weaving. It prevents unwanted knots while keeping each thread of fiber separated from any other threads while being fed into the loom.

fig. 5.44 (left) different parts of the loom
fig. 5.45 (right) the planning table at WSC for design development

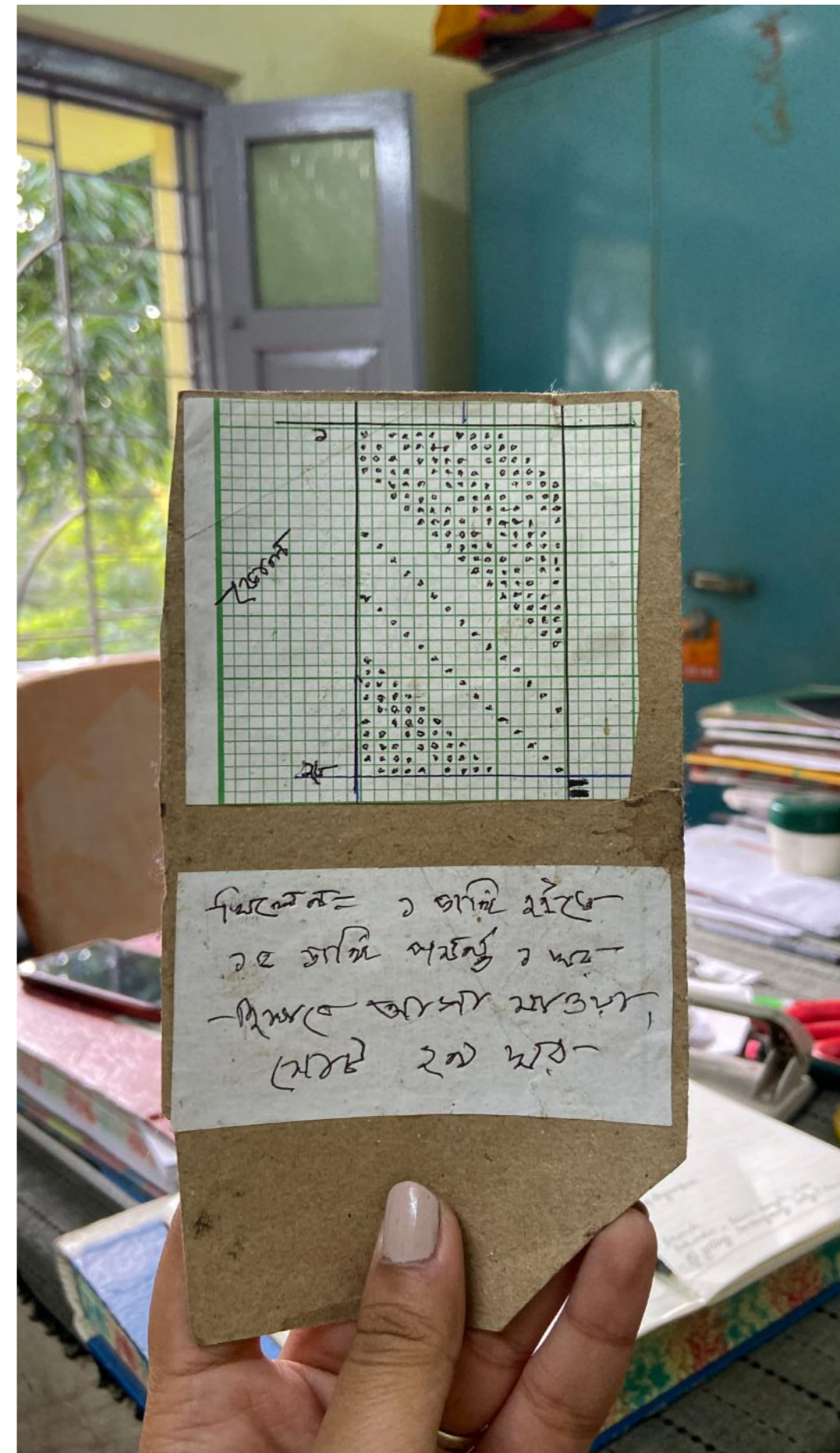




The Graphs

Graphs are very integral part of the weaving process as it helps the drafting person to identify the order of threads in the shaft and the draft in which they should arrange it. These graphs have not been part of the weaving process for a long time but has helped the artisans to develop simple to complex design on the saree. The mechanisms which have aided these designs are doobby and jacquard boxes.

fig. 5.46-5.49 graphs of design of begampuri saree



Sizing of the yarns

Sizing is a process of applying an adhesive size paste to yarns to facilitate weaving. Its main function is to improve the weavability of the warp yarn, increase its tensile strength, smooth the yarn surface, and reduce electrostatic charge formation. In Begampur, most people make size with 'saabu' and blue vitriol. These two ingredients are mixed together in a container and stirred continuously. Once the size is prepared, it is rubbed continuously onto the ball of yarn for a long period of time to ensure all areas are covered properly. Then the yarn is passed first through a charkha and then a warping drum for winding onto a bobbin.

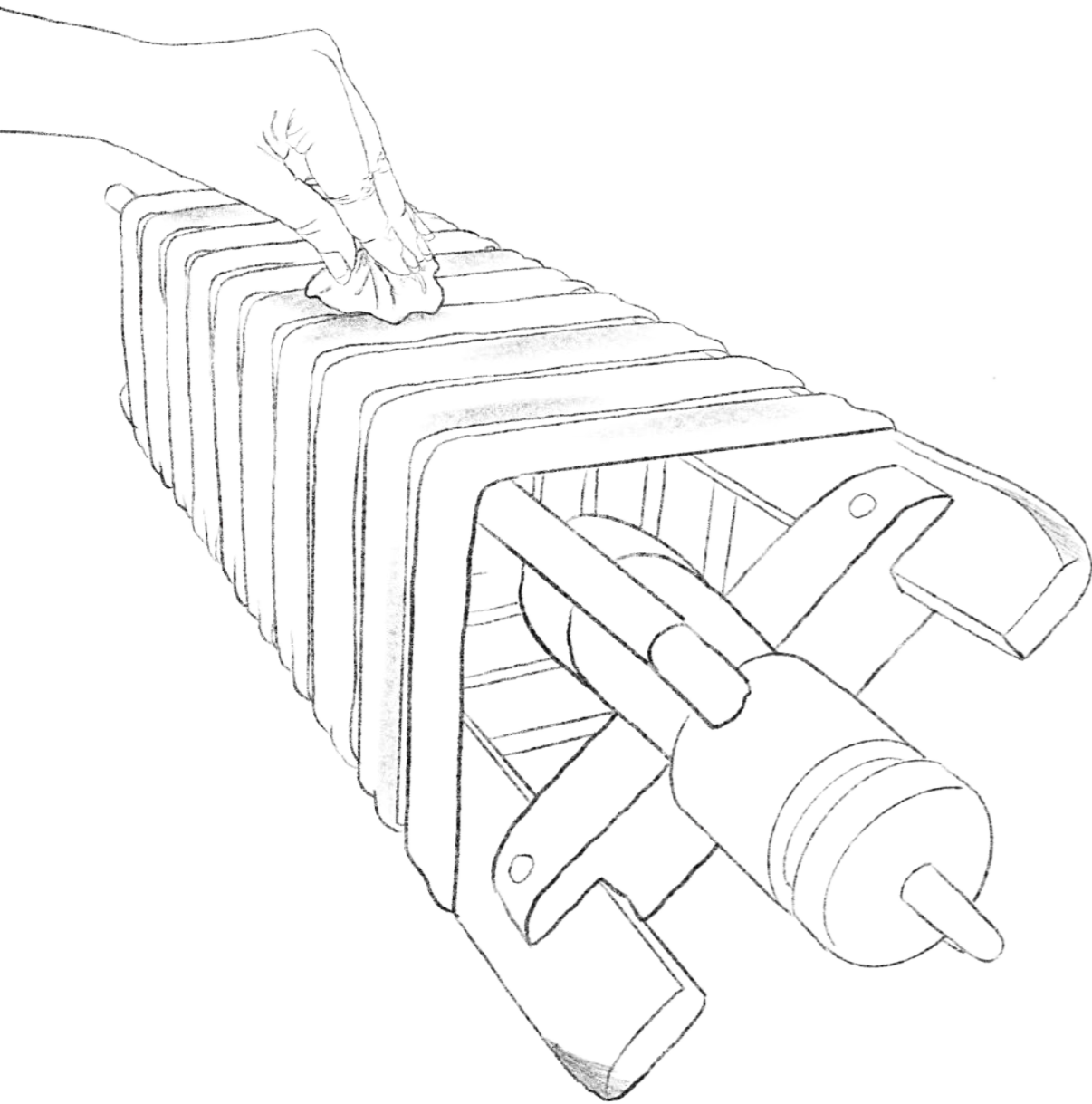


fig. 5.50-5.52 sizing process with its raw material



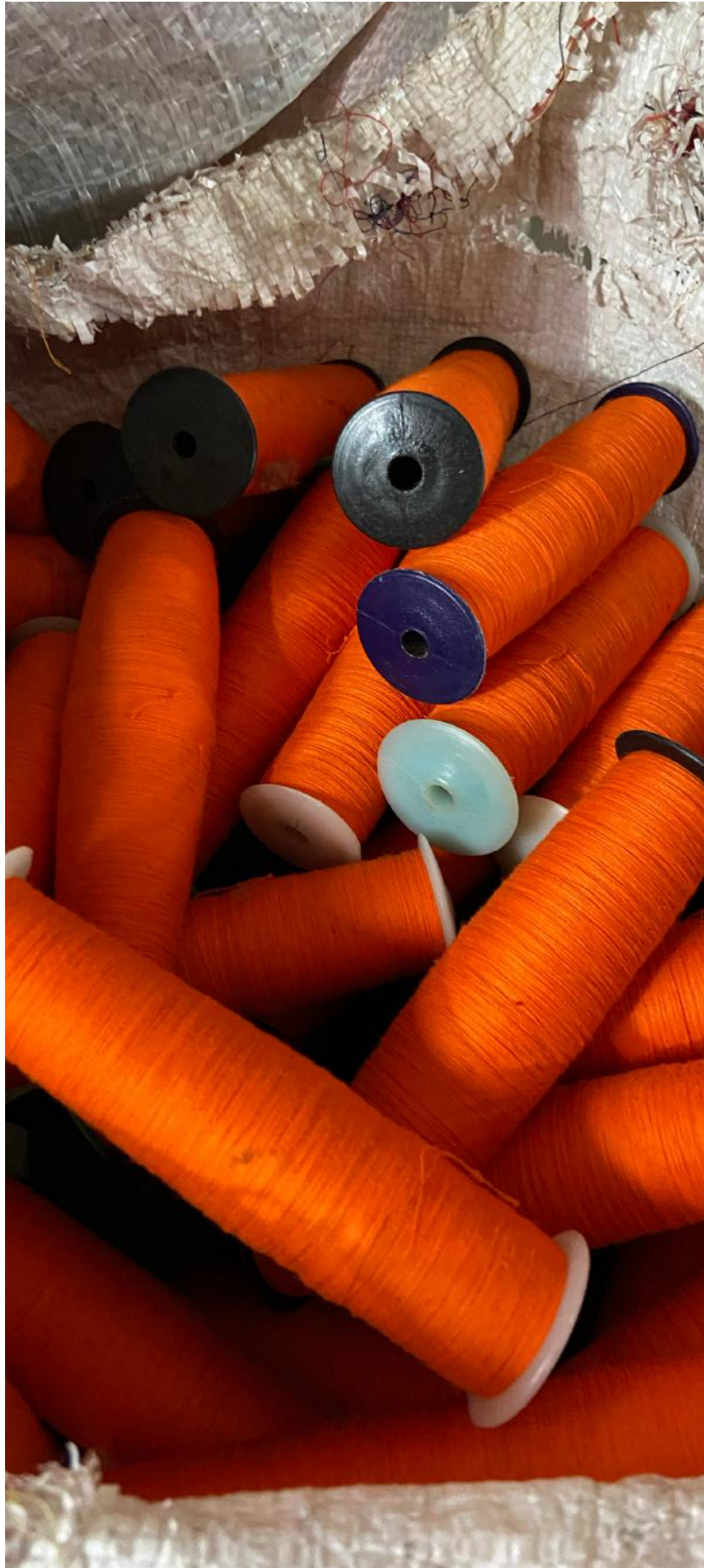
fig. 5.53 a lady used spinning wheel to make bobbins

Spinning

The core process, such as spinning, has always been a female-dominated procedure since the cluster's weaving process. Since she was thirteen years old, Sushma Sen has been making bobbins, and she still does so in addition to her other household duties. She said that because the strands are fine, making bobbins requires a great level of dexterity and concentration. She normally needs an hour to wind a bobbin, which brings in about seven rupees. She can only complete seven or eight of those in a day.



fig. 5.54 spinning wheel to make bobbins



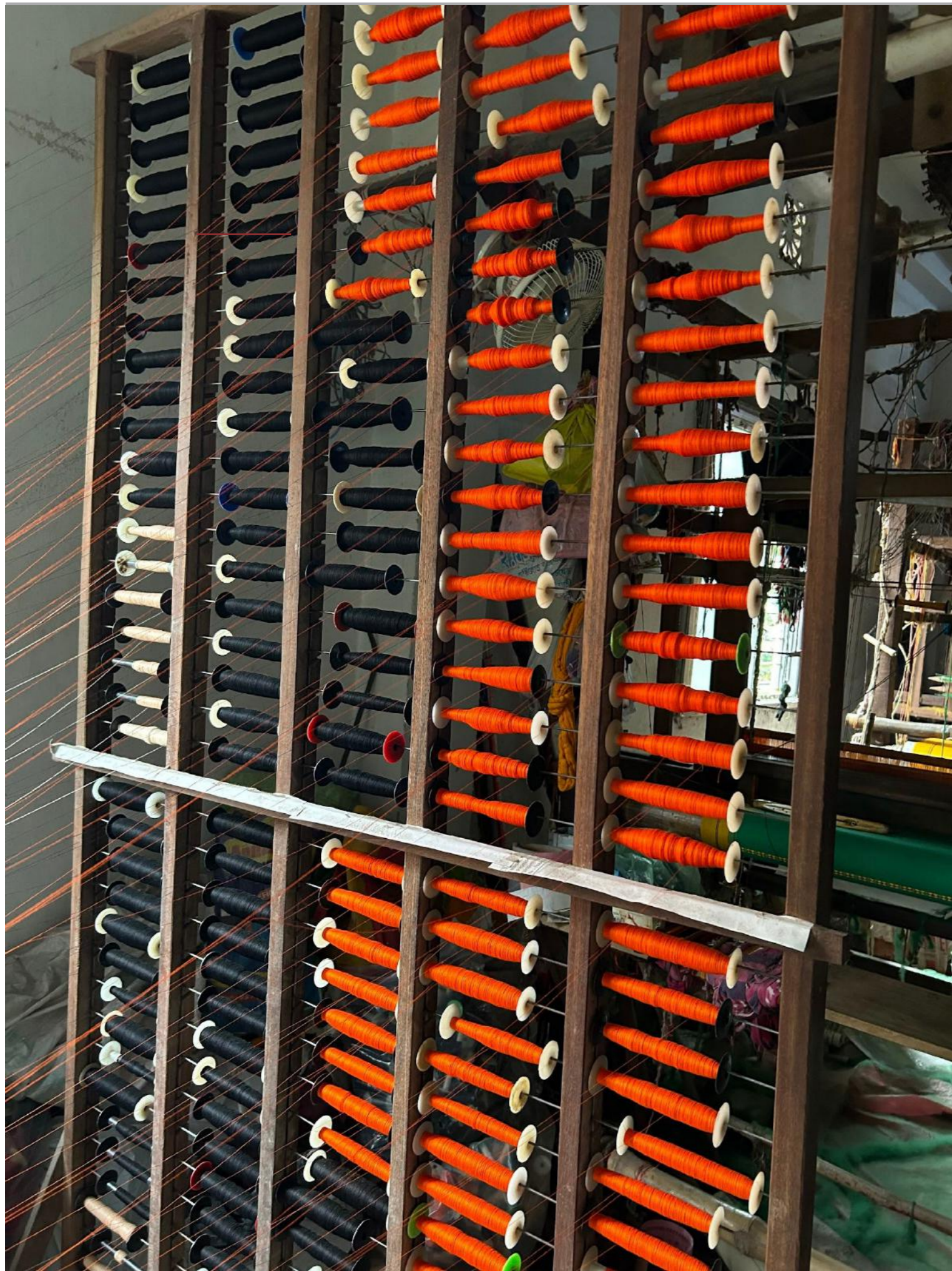


Making of the bobbins

Bobbins ranging from one color to eight colors can be seen in the Reel Stand to make the warp on the warping drum. These bobbins are prepared by the females of the cluster and are starched before they are being utilized in the racks for warping. These methods are very effective in sectional warping and warping for large quantities of sarees.

This comprises inserting lease cords between the warp yarns to separate groups of warp yarns. A lease is needed to separate the individual threads in a warp sheet from one another or to precisely define the thread sequence. This process establishes the warp end in the required sequence.

fig. 5.55-5.57 electric spinning wheel to make bobbins and final bobbins



The Warping

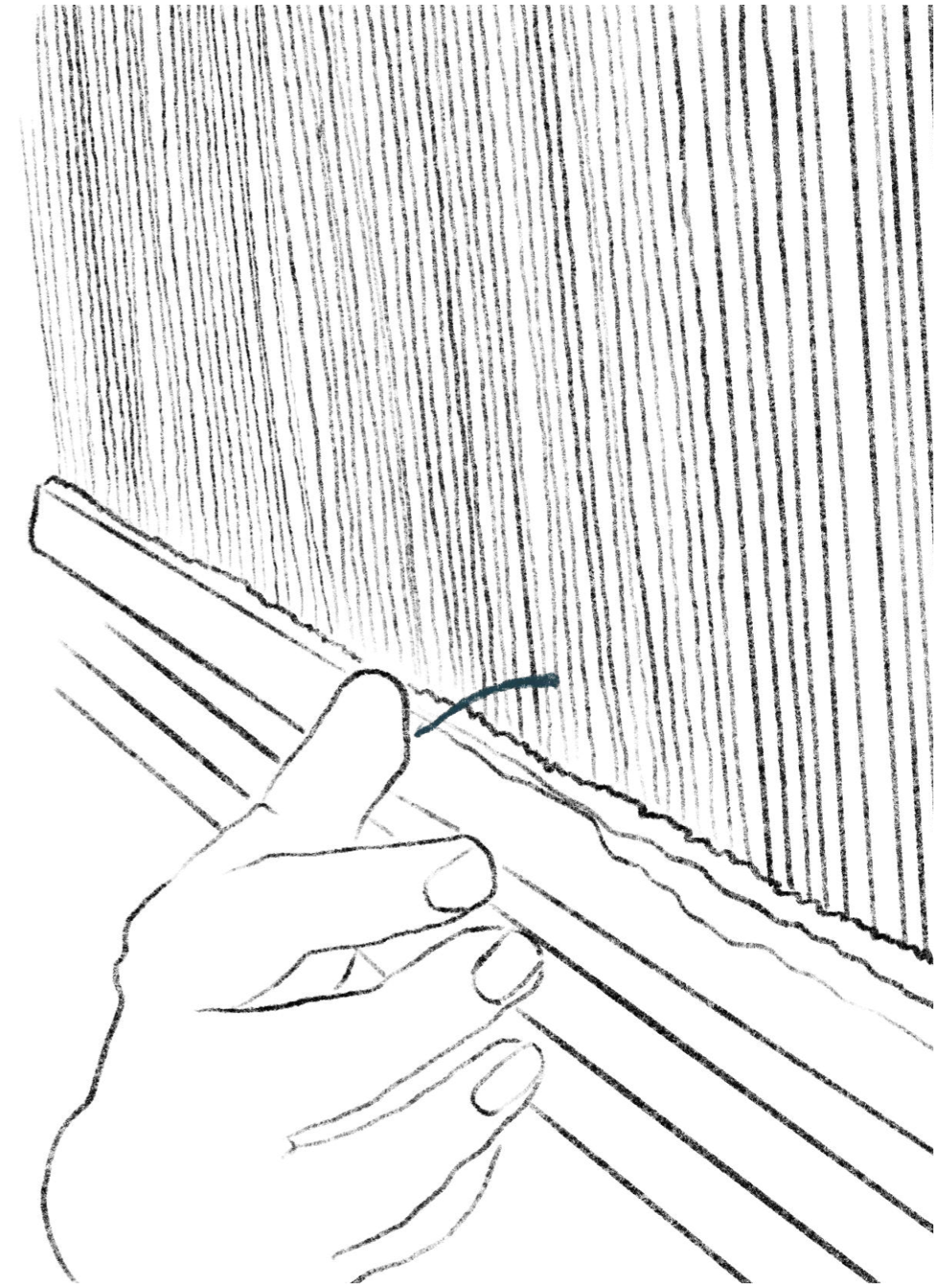
Lease stands are crucial in handloom weaving, serving as a foundational element in maintaining warp thread tension. They ensure uniformity, precision, and consistent weave patterns, enhancing the overall quality of handwoven textiles. These stands contribute to the stability of the weaving process, allowing artisans to create intricate designs with accuracy. The lease stand's role in maintaining the integrity of the warp threads underscores its significance in preserving the traditional artistry and craftsmanship of handloom weaving.



fig. 5.58 & 5.59 bobbin stand



fig. 5.60 & 5.61 process of making a lease and warp rhythm





The pictures show the formation of sectional warp where the borders are striped and then making bundles of them for easy identification. Warp making is a fundamental step in handloom weaving, involving the meticulous arrangement of parallel threads on a frame called a warping board or reel. Artisans carefully measure and wind these threads, known as warp yarns, ensuring uniform tension and length. This preparatory process sets the foundation for the weaving process, influencing the fabric's strength, pattern, and texture. Attention to detail in warp making is essential for achieving precise and consistent results, reflecting the craftsmanship and skill of the weaver.

The warping if sectional has been calculated by the warp drummers and according to that number of bobbins are used in the rack. One section of the repeat can range from 0.5 inches to 3 inches on which 90 sarees are done in one go (18,000-22,000 inches).

fig. 5.62 & 5.63 process of making a lease and warp rhythm



The making of warp on drum

This comprises winding parts of the warp yarns, normally from bobbins, on a warping beam, whereby sequential parts are wound next to each other until the full weaving width is covered. The warping beam is then normally in a next step of warp preparation used for beaming. Beaming comprises winding the full width of the warp yarns in a single winding operation on the weaving beam. The warp yarns can be wound from a creel or a warping beam.





fig. 5.64-6.68 process of making a lease and warp beam through a drum roller

In Begampur handloom weaving, the preparation of heddles for shafts using nylon thread involves a detailed and skillful process. Artisans typically follow these steps:

- **Material Selection:** Nylon threads are chosen for their durability and flexibility, ideal for creating heddles that can withstand the repetitive movements of the loom.
- **Stringing the Heddles:** The nylon threads are carefully strung through the eye of each heddle, ensuring precision and consistency. This process is critical for creating a reliable system for lifting and lowering the warp threads during weaving.
- **Knotting and Securing:** Skilled artisans tie knots at specific intervals to secure the heddles in place. These knots are essential to prevent slippage and maintain the proper spacing between heddles.
- **Arrangement on Shafts:** Once the heddles are strung and secured, they are arranged on the shafts according to the desired pattern or design. This arrangement is crucial for achieving the intricate weave structures characteristic of West Bengal handloom textiles.
- **Quality Check:** A thorough quality check ensures that each heddle is in its correct position and that there are no irregularities in the arrangement. This step is vital to maintain the integrity of the weaving process.

The use of nylon threads in heddle preparation enhances the longevity of the handloom components, contributing to the overall efficiency and sustainability of the traditional weaving practices. The craftsmanship involved in this process reflects the rich heritage and skill of the local artisans.



fig. 5.69 preparation of heald shafts



fig. 5.70 preparation of heald shafts



Weaving Preparations

The technique of cleaning reed (Sana) which is made of metal and the reed space is 60 inches. The brush is made up of aluminum spokes which helps in cleaning unwanted dust or material. This kind of reed was introduced in the cluster during the introduction of jacquard and doobby mechanisms; earlier bamboo and cotton dori (strings) were used to make it.



fig. 5.71 preparation of beater



The warp threads pass through the dents after going through the heddles and prior to woven cloth. The number of dents per inch determines the fineness of the cloth. One or more warp threads go through each dent depending on the warp, and it is possible that the number of threads in each dent is not constant for the whole warp. Then the weaver's beam is mounted and weaving is started.



fig 5.74 denting of the yarns



fig. 5.72 (left) setting of the warp beam for drafting
fig 5.73 (above) denting of the yarns





fig 5.75 (left) denting of the yarns
fig 5.76 (above) weaving of the saree

Weaving can be summarized as a repetition of these three actions, also called the primary motion of the loom.

- Shedding: The ends are separated by raising or lowering heald frames (heddles) to form a clear space where the pick can pass.
- Picking: The weft or pick is propelled across the loom by a shuttle. The weft is pushed up against the fell of the cloth by the reed.
- Beating: The warp is divided into two overlapping groups, or lines (most often adjacent threads belonging to the opposite group) that run in two planes, one above another, so the shuttle can be passed between them in a straight motion. Then, the upper group is lowered by the loom mechanism, and the lower group is raised (shedding), allowing the shuttle to pass in the opposite direction, also in a straight motion. Repeating these actions forms a fabric mesh but without beating up, the final distance between the adjacent wefts would be irregular and far too large.



The importance of Wax

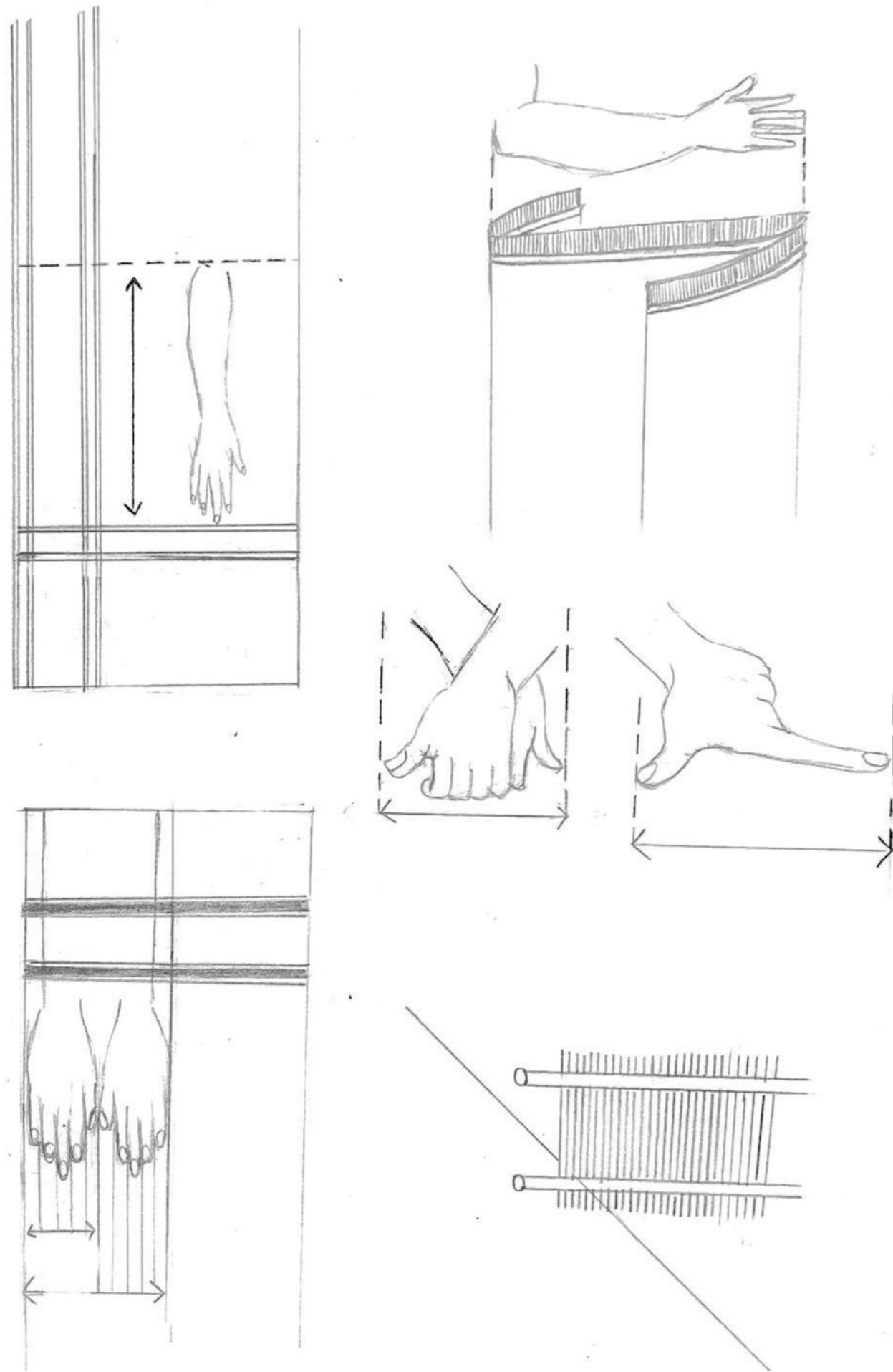
Wax is used during weaving on warp threads, and in many weaving traditions globally, for several important reasons:

- **Friction Reduction:** Waxing the warp threads helps reduce friction between the individual threads. This is especially crucial during the weaving process, where the warp threads are repeatedly lifted and lowered. Reduced friction allows for smoother movement of the threads, preventing breakage and ensuring a more efficient weaving process.
- **Thread Strength and Durability:** Waxing imparts a level of strength and durability to the warp threads. The wax acts as a protective coating, making the threads less prone to wear and tear during the weaving process. This is particularly beneficial in handloom weaving, where the warp threads undergo significant stress and tension.
- **Ease of Handling:** The waxed surface of the warp threads makes them easier to handle during the warping and threading processes. It prevents tangling and ensures that the threads glide smoothly over each other, facilitating the precise arrangement of threads on the loom.
- **Enhanced Shine and Finish:** Wax can impart a subtle sheen to the warp threads, contributing to the overall appearance of the woven fabric. This can be aesthetically pleasing and is often desired in traditional handwoven textiles.
- **Prevention of Static Electricity:** In certain weaving environments, static electricity can build up on the threads, leading to difficulties in handling and weaving. Waxing helps mitigate the effects of static electricity, creating a more controlled and stable weaving process.

In Begampur, where handloom weaving is a significant part of the cultural and economic heritage, the use of wax on warp threads is a traditional practice that has been passed down through generations. It showcases the attention to detail and craftsmanship inherent in the region's weaving techniques.

*fig 5.77 the wax block used on warp yarns
fig 5.78 & 5.79 (left) weaving of the saree*





The way of measuring while weaving

The lexicon used during colonial times to measure various sections of a saree differed significantly :

Ek Khi/Ek Ghor: number of dents in the reed

BORDER WIDTHS :

Ek Aangul: one finger-width
 Do Aangul: two finger-widths
 Teen Aangul: three finger-widths
 Chaar Aangul: four finger-widths
 Paanch Aangul: five finger-widths
 Dosh Aangul: ten finger-widths

SARI LENGTHS :

Ek Haath: one arm length
 Ek Kheel: (approx. 27 inches or 1.5 cubits)

fig 5.80 different ways of hand measuring the saree's components



fig 5.81 different weights to manage extra warp

The weaving often involves a lot of extra warp. When the weaver doesn't have a beam to separate it, they often resort to using different methods to employ the weight on the warp to differentiate between the body and patterning warp. These weights can range from bottles to rocks to the ceramic roof tiles of the house. These are mostly tied by the weaver himself with the drafting person before setting up the loom.



Weaving

The secondary motion of the looms are:

- Let-off motion: The let-off motion delivers the warp to the weaving area at the required rate and at constant tension by unwinding it from the weaver's beam. The secondary motions are carried out simultaneously.
- Take up motion: The take-up motion withdraws the cloth from the weaving area at a constant rate so as to give the required pick-spacing (in picks/inch or picks/cm) and then wind it on a cloth roller.

Once the saree is made beam is removed and kept in sunlight for a while to stiffen the starch and gum. Once dried, the saree is folded in a set pattern. It takes two people to do this task it is usually the husband and wife who do this and tie it. The sarees are then stacked and covered with fabric, ready to be taken to the involved organisation (WSC).

fig 5.82 weaving of the saree

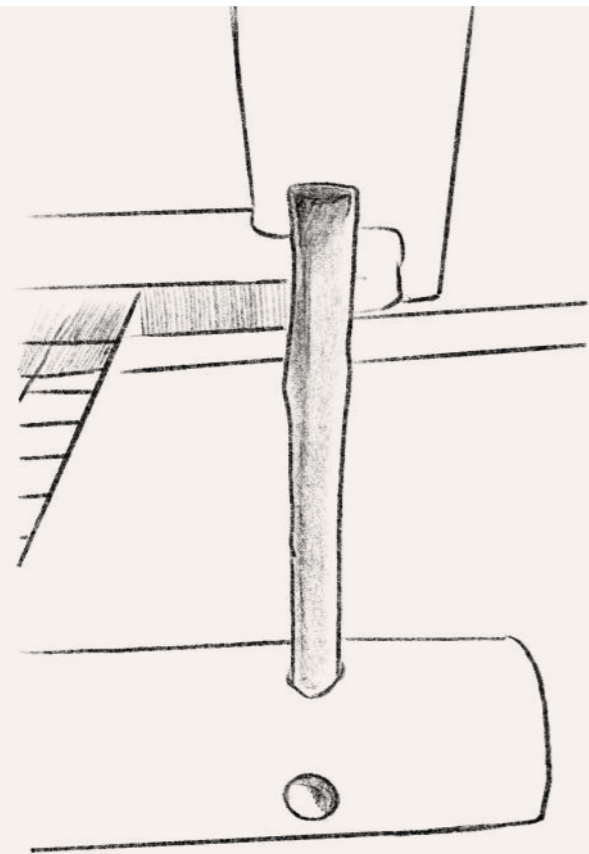


fig 5.83 the stopper of warp beam



fig 5.83 the finished cloth beam of sarees



fig 5.84 fixing of broken yarns



fig 5.85 starching of the cloth weam



fig 5.86 drying of the starched sarees



Finishing and Packaging

- Saree Production in Begampur: Begampur is a location known for its production of sarees, which are traditional Indian garments typically worn by women.
- Packed for Couriering to Headquarters of FabIndia, Suta Bombay, or Biswa Bangla: The sarees manufactured in Begampur are packaged in a specific manner to be sent to the headquarters of various companies. FabIndia, Suta Bombay, and Biswa Bangla are all prominent names associated with the fashion industry in India. They likely source sarees from places like Begampur to sell them in their stores or online platforms.
- Packing Method: The sarees are packed together, usually in stacks of 10. This method of packing ensures efficiency in transportation and handling. By bundling them together, it's easier to manage and transport a larger quantity of sarees at once.
- Including an E-Way Bill: An e-way bill is a document required for the movement of goods worth over a certain value within India. It contains details such as the type of goods, their value, the destination, and the transporter. Including an e-way bill with the packed sarees ensures compliance with legal requirements and facilitates smooth transportation without any regulatory issues.

fig 5.87 packaging of the saree for courier



fig 5.88 sarees in the stock room



fig 5.89 packaging of the saree for courier

PERSONALITY



The Begumpuri saree, renowned for its fine count and exceptional craftsmanship, is crafted using cotton yarn in both the warp and weft, resulting in a fabric that is not only comfortable but also breathable. Traditionally, this saree boasted a solid border in a single color, typically red, against a white body, exuding elegance and simplicity in its design. Despite being named after the city, the Begumpuri saree emanates a subtle recognition when worn. For generations, local weavers have been producing the well-known “Matapar” sarees, characterized by a plain border devoid of any embellishments and woven with coarse cotton yarns. However, faced with a decline in sales, the Begampur Handloom Development introduced training programs in designing and dyeing to revitalize interest in these sarees, blending traditional charm with a modern appeal.

The evolution of the Begumpuri saree design over time is evident in the contemporary weavers’ experimentation with various color combinations and patterns, infusing a modern twist into this traditional attire. While the popularity of the Begumpuri saree had waned, the intervention of the Weavers’ Service Centre (WSC) in Kolkata in 2010 led to its resurgence. Recognizing the weavers’ skills in the cluster where these sarees are traditionally made, the WSC identified the need to revamp the demand for the ‘Matha Par’ sarees, a process that took three years of motivation and inspiration to achieve, ultimately restoring the Begumpuri saree to its former glory.

This iconic color combination, known as the “Lal Par saree,” holds great importance in Bengali culture and symbolism. The white color represents purity and auspiciousness, while the red color symbolizes love, passion, and celebration. The harmonious blend of these two colors in the laal paar saree is highly revered by Bengali women, as it embodies the essence of a married woman’s identity. Additionally, the cotton saree has played a significant role in the history of freedom movements, particularly during the Indian independence movement. As the boycott of foreign fabric gained momentum, cotton sarees, especially khadi cotton sarees, became a popular choice among Bengali women. This historical association with the freedom movement adds to the elegance and socio-political significance of cotton sarees. Over time, the Begumpuri saree has evolved with the introduction of new colors and design interventions, while still maintaining its traditional essence. Various styles of borders have emerged, influenced by neighboring saree weaving traditions, yet the foundation of the saree remains intact.



Fig 6.2 - 6.4, At Rakshitpara, Dyeing unit near the Handloom weaving unit. Different counts are dyed here.



Count

The range of counts used in creating a Begumpuri saree is quite diverse, with various options available to cater to different preferences and requirements. For the warp yarn, counts such as 2/60s, 2/80, and 2/84s are commonly used, while the weft yarn counts include 60s, 80s, and 84s, as well as 2/60s, 2/80s, and 2/84s. This wide range of counts allows for flexibility in design and ensures that each saree is unique in its own way. 3. To achieve the desired color for the yarn, a shade card is used to select the appropriate dye, ensuring that the final product meets the expectations of both the weavers and the consumers.



Fig 6.5 At Kaikala, another dyeing unit where natural dyeing also takes place and Neelam shade card is used for color matching.

Color

Currently, Kora yarn is obtained from mills and subsequently dyed in nearby dyeing units. A wide range of colors is utilized in the production of behumpuri sarees. In order to achieve the desired color, assistance from neelam shade card or eco-friendly cotton shade card is sought. Various dyes such as direct, naphthol, vat, and sulphur-based dyes are employed to attain different colors in the hank yarns. The dyeing process predominantly takes place within the village area known as Rakshit Para, as well as in another village called Kaikala. This localization of the dyeing activities within the village area not only ensures convenience but also promotes a sense of community involvement in the production of these vibrant and colorful sarees.

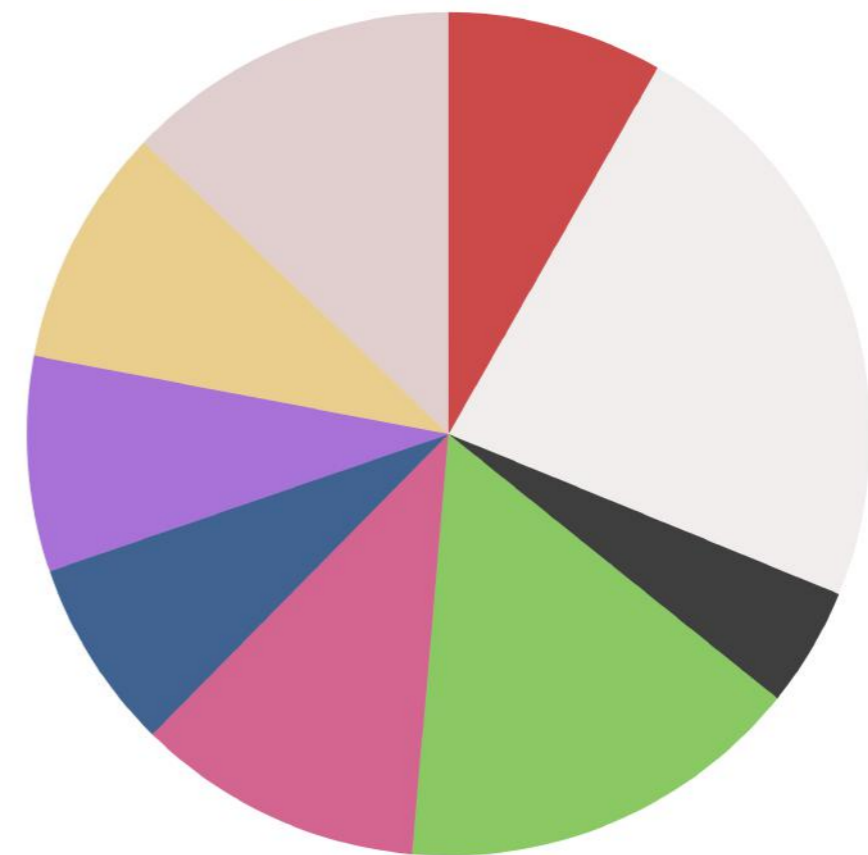


Fig 6.6 Most Popular Colors used with comparative ratio.

Graph

The process of creating intricate designs for textiles in Begampur involves drawing the design on graph paper, coloring it, and then punching the design onto cards. These cards are then sewn in order and fixed into the jacquard machine for weaving. The designs themselves are inspired by the flora, fauna, architecture, and objects found in and around Begampur, with popular motifs including Phul and Matsya (fish), with Matsya being one of the most favored designs due to its popularity. The rich cultural heritage of Begampur is evident in its unique motif language, which has evolved over time. Originally, sarees from this region featured simple solid borders, eliminating the need for complex graphs and punch cards.

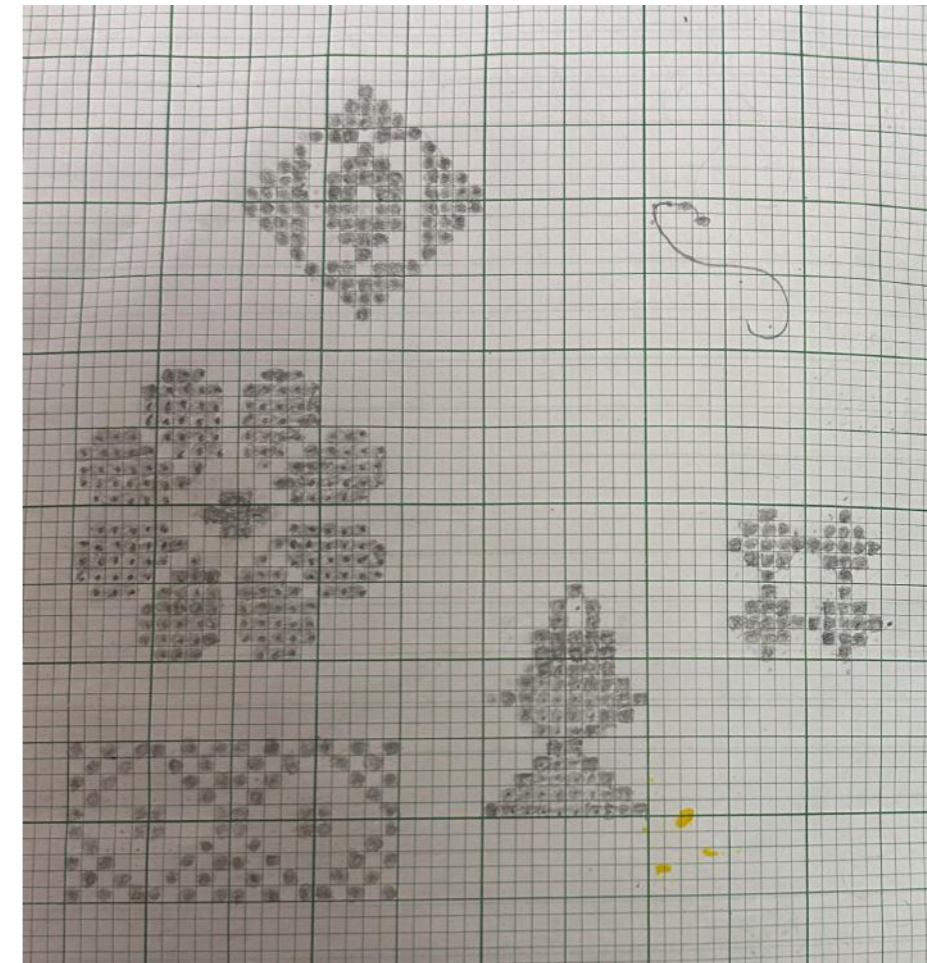
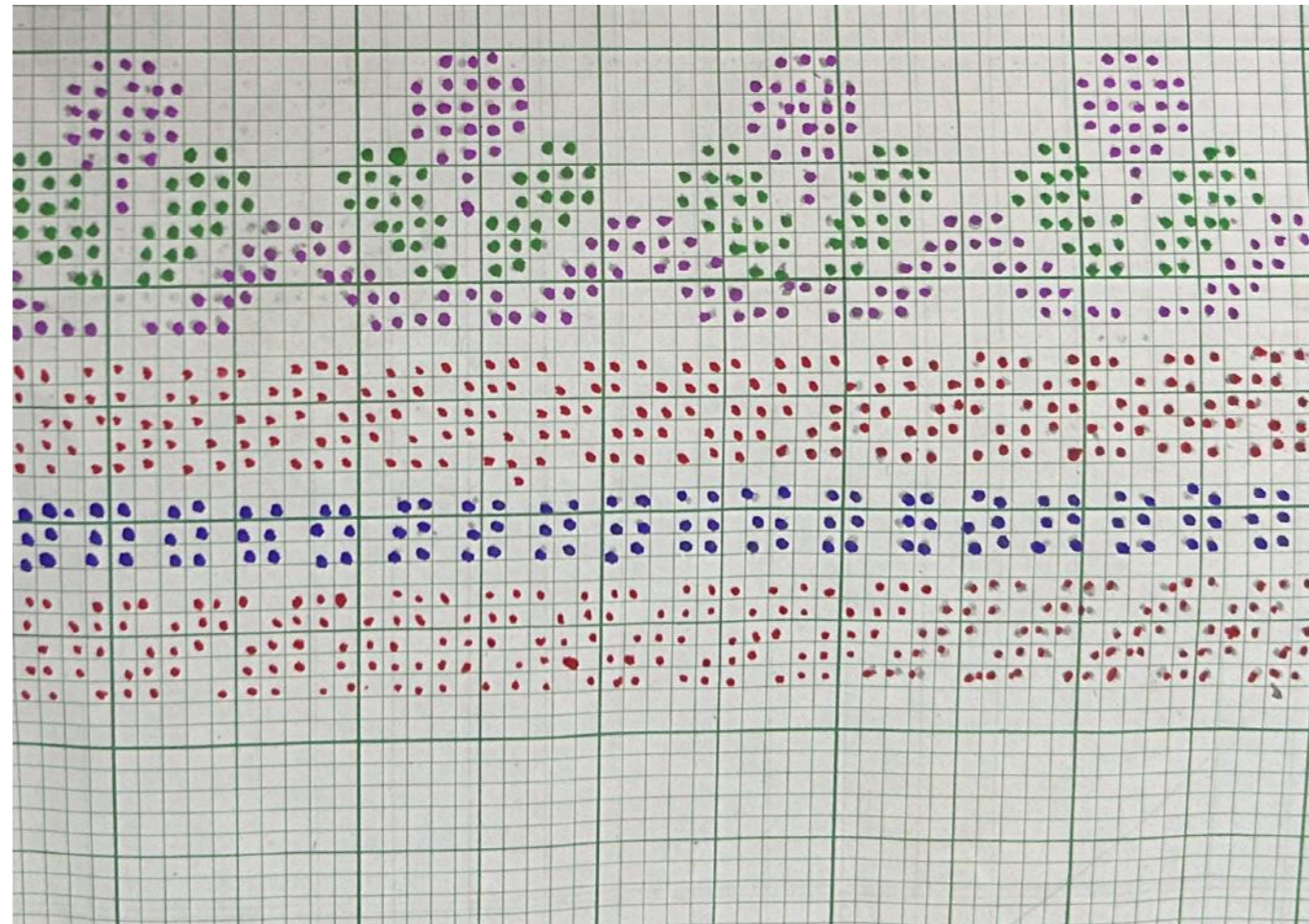
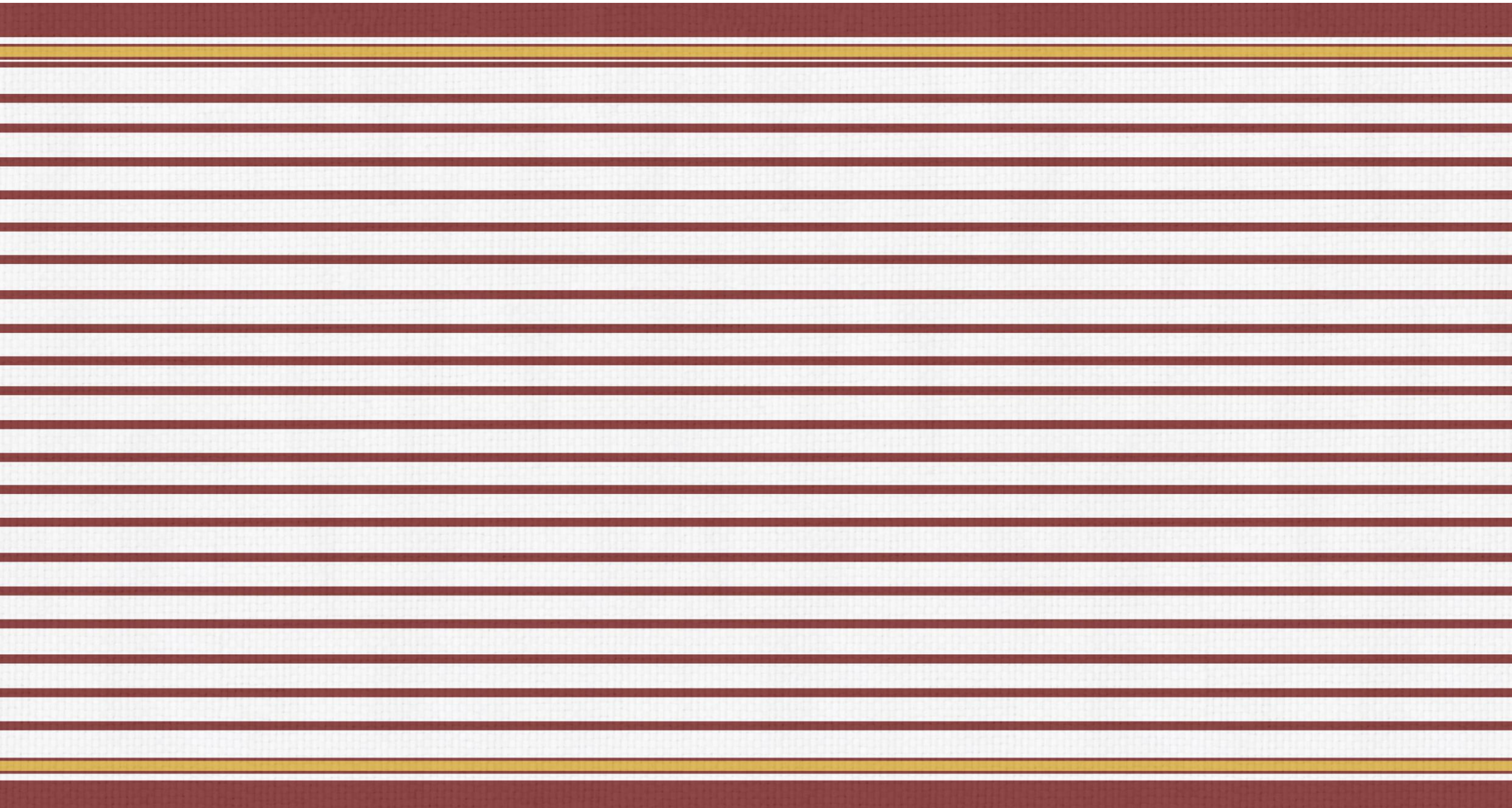
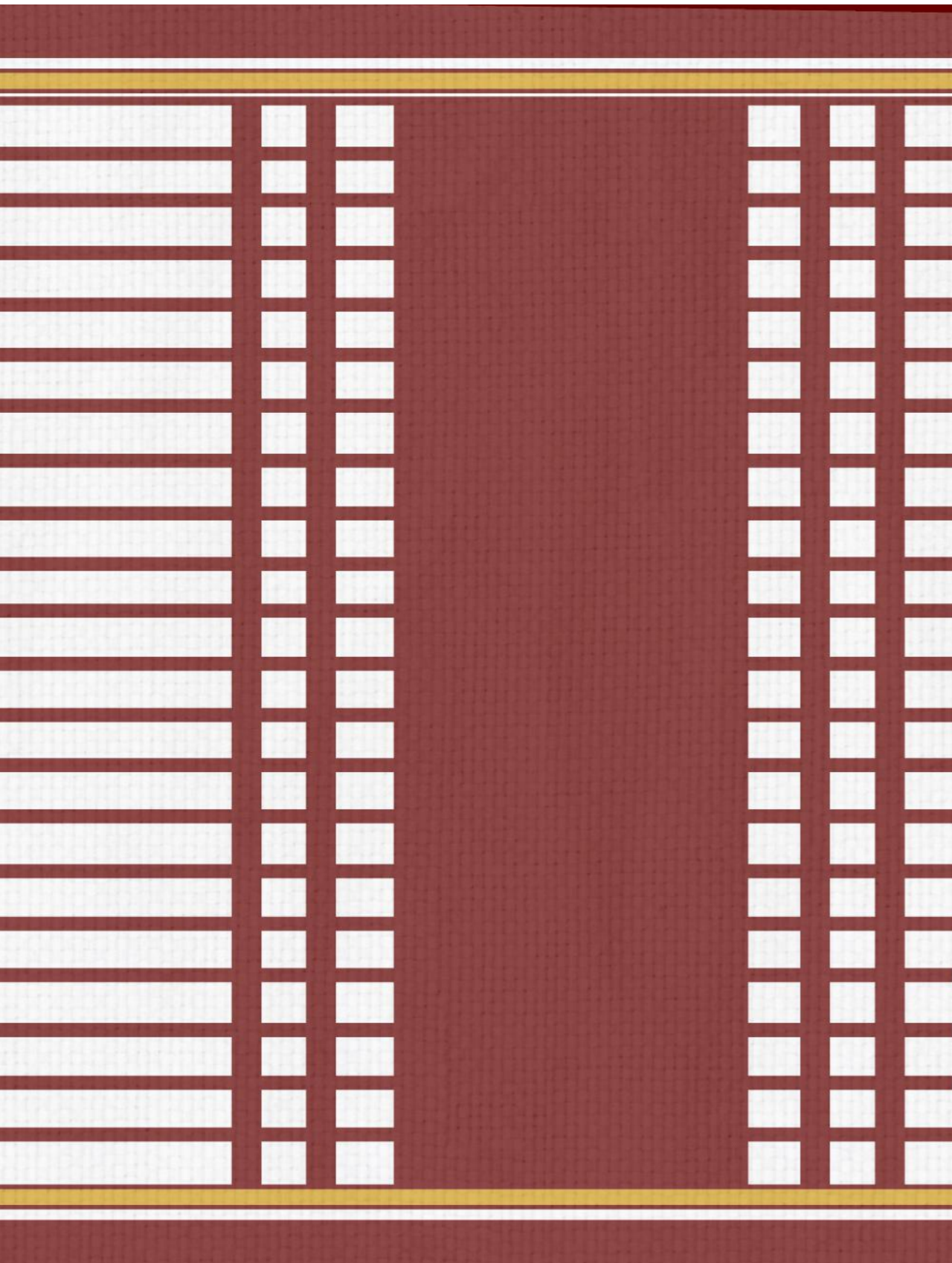


Fig 6.7 - 6.8 Designs from Archive of the Handloom Weaving Unit. Designs by Sovendu Bhar.





Pallu

The Begumpuri saree is known for its distinct pallu, which features a unique element called the 'Khejurchuri'. This pallu is adorned with a two-ply twisted yarn, consisting of red and white threads twisted together. The concept of the 'Khejurchuri' is derived from the traditional Dhanikhali saree, where it is also prominently used. The pallu of the Begumpuri saree showcases the exquisite 'Khejurchuri', which is a double-colored Dori. This intricate design, originating from the renowned Dhanikhali gharana, adds a touch of elegance and charm to the overall appearance of the saree. The 'Khejurchuri' is woven into the saree as a weft, and the length of the pallu typically ranges from half meter to 1.2 meters. designs, the development of graphs became essential to guide the weaving process.

Fig 6.9 Over the time Begumpuri Saree has been adorned with different designs in Pallu. One of the classic Pallu Layouts

Solid Border



introduced by the Weavers Service Centre in Sarees Sarees with a solid colored border, known as 'Mathapar', have a historical significance in the Begumpuri saree tradition. Originally featuring a red border and white saree, the Mathapar design has evolved over time to include various colors, border sizes, and patterns such as stripes and checks. The solid border sarees come in a range of hues, with similarities to the traditional Begumpuri saree layout. While the sarees were originally made in red and white, they are now available in vibrant color combinations. These sarees were traditionally stiff due to heavy starching, but modern versions are soft and delicate to the touch, with intricate khejuchuri designs on the anchal. Variations of the traditional Mathapar saree included popular patterns like stripes, particularly Bengal stripes with evenly spaced stripes of the same width. Although this pattern is not as common today, it is still woven on powerlooms in the region. In the past, heavy starching was a symbol of elegance for these sarees.

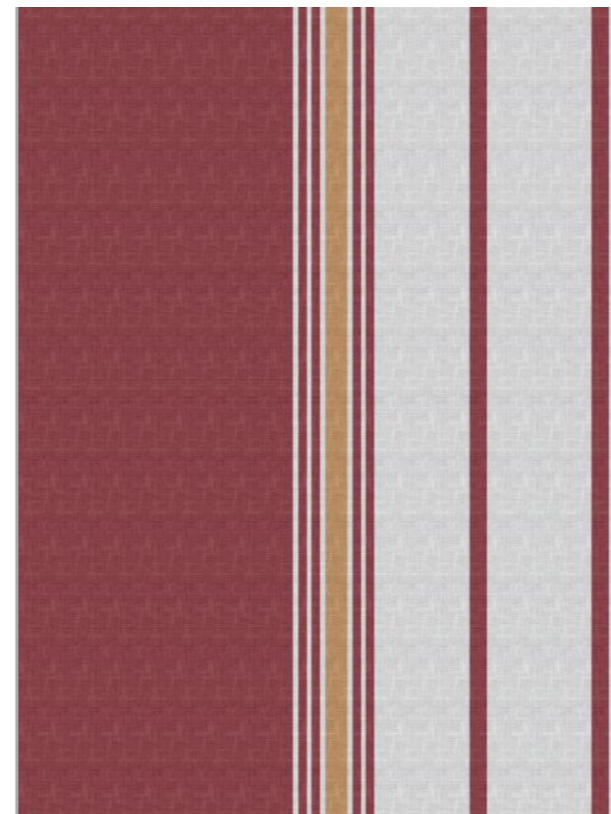
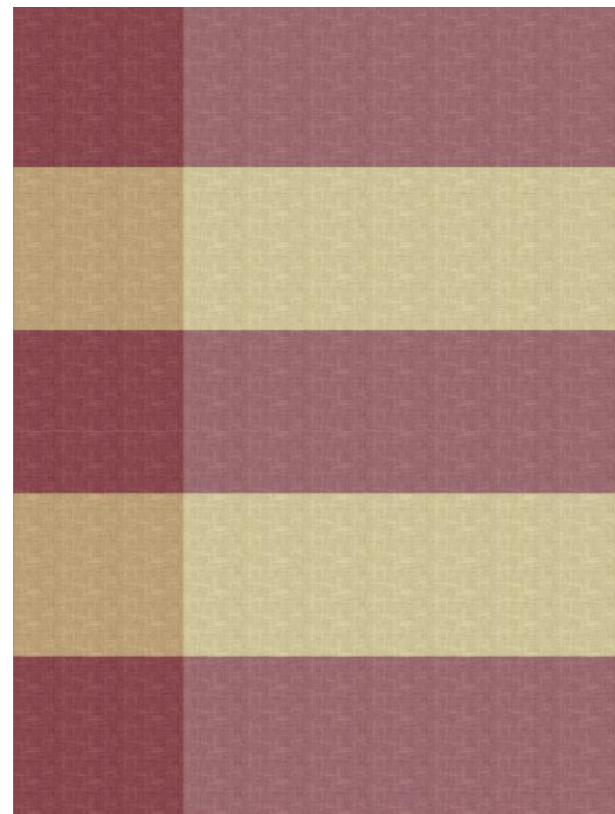
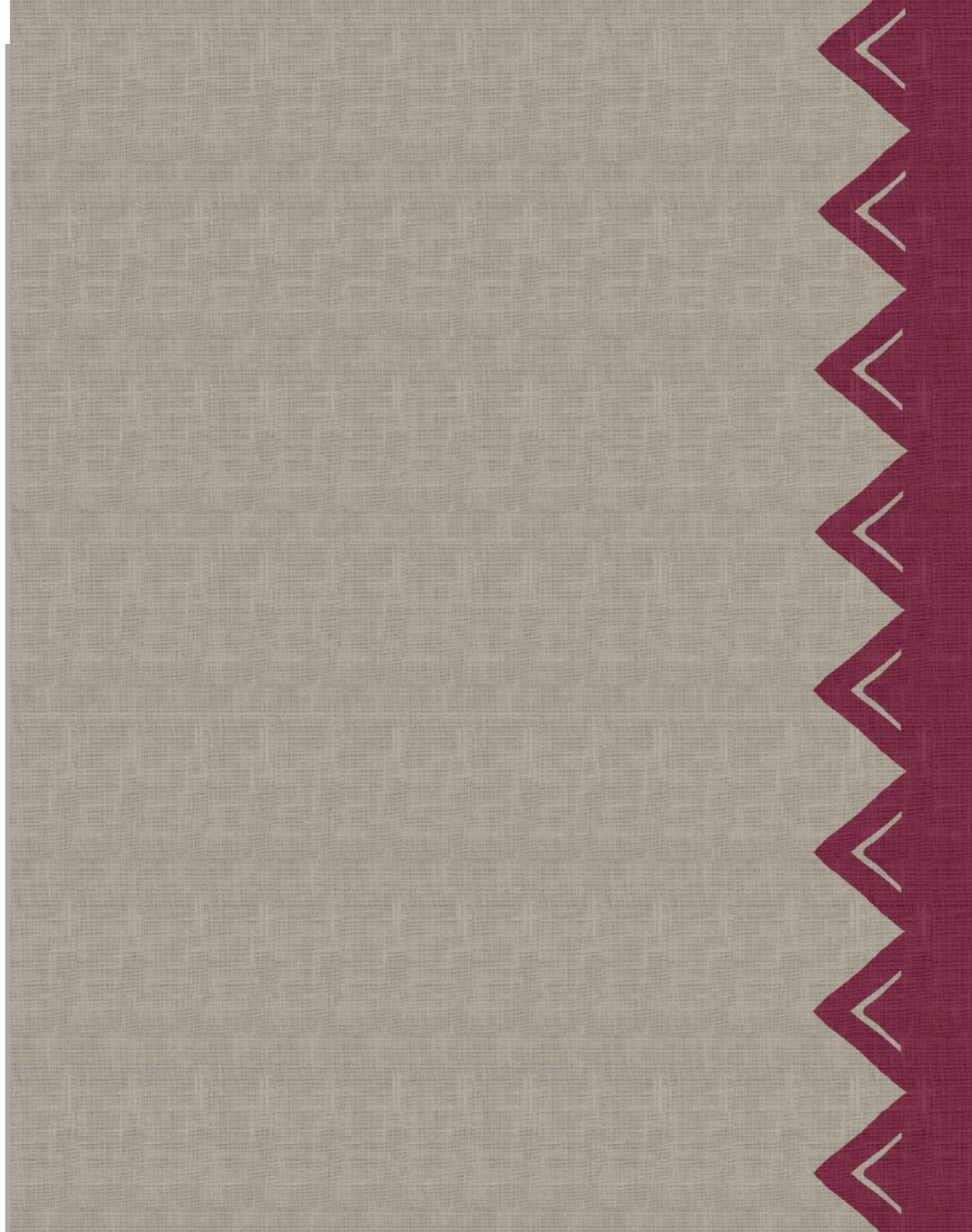


Fig 6.10 - 6.12 Traditionally Woven Begumpuri Saree had solid border which evolved over time with addition of thin stripes and colored stripes



Dobby & Jacquard Borders

Dobby & Jacquard Borders

The begumpuri saree is known for its unique border design called 'Daant'. This border design comes in various variations, with some borders solely featuring the daant pattern, while others combine it with other flower motifs for a more intricate look. On the other hand, jacquard borders are the epitome of ornate beauty, measuring around 9-10 inches in width. These borders showcase a blend of traditional and contemporary designs, catering to different preferences. One traditional design that stands out is the butterfly design border, which is typically created using traditional colors. The process of creating this design involves first sketching it on a graph, then punching the design onto a card. Once the jacquard loom is set up, the skilled weaver begins weaving the saree, bringing the intricate design to life.

Fig 6.13 'Daant' Most Popular Design in Begumpuri Saree



Bengal Stripe

The tale of the Bengal stripe fabric commences in the 19th century, when the British East India Company held great influence in India. British officers stationed in Bengal were captivated by the traditional Indian striped fabrics, adorned with narrow, alternating stripes. These fabrics not only proved practical in Bengal's hot and humid climate but also possessed an undeniable aesthetic charm. The Bengal stripe pattern, characterized by its fine, evenly spaced stripes running parallel to one another, swiftly captured the admiration of British officers and was transported back to England. Upon its arrival in England, the Bengal stripe shirt swiftly became a fashion statement, particularly among the upper classes. It was regarded as a symbol of refinement and sophistication. As time passed, the design evolved, offering variations in stripe width and color to cater to diverse tastes and occasions. The timeless allure of the Bengal stripe shirt has endured through the ages, remaining a staple in men's fashion. It is frequently observed in both formal and casual settings, serving as a testament to its enduring legacy. While the Bengal stripe may not be as wide or bold as an awning stripe, it stands as one of the widest-striped fabrics available. It typically features an even 1/4" alternating stripe and can be found in color and white or color and color combinations. Its presence on the bolder end of the stripe spectrum adds a touch of distinction to any garment it adorns.



Fig 6.14 - 6.16 Adaptation of Traditional Bengal stripes, Traditional bengal stripes are evenly spaced out, Width of all the stripes is same. But now combination of thick and thin stripes is popular.

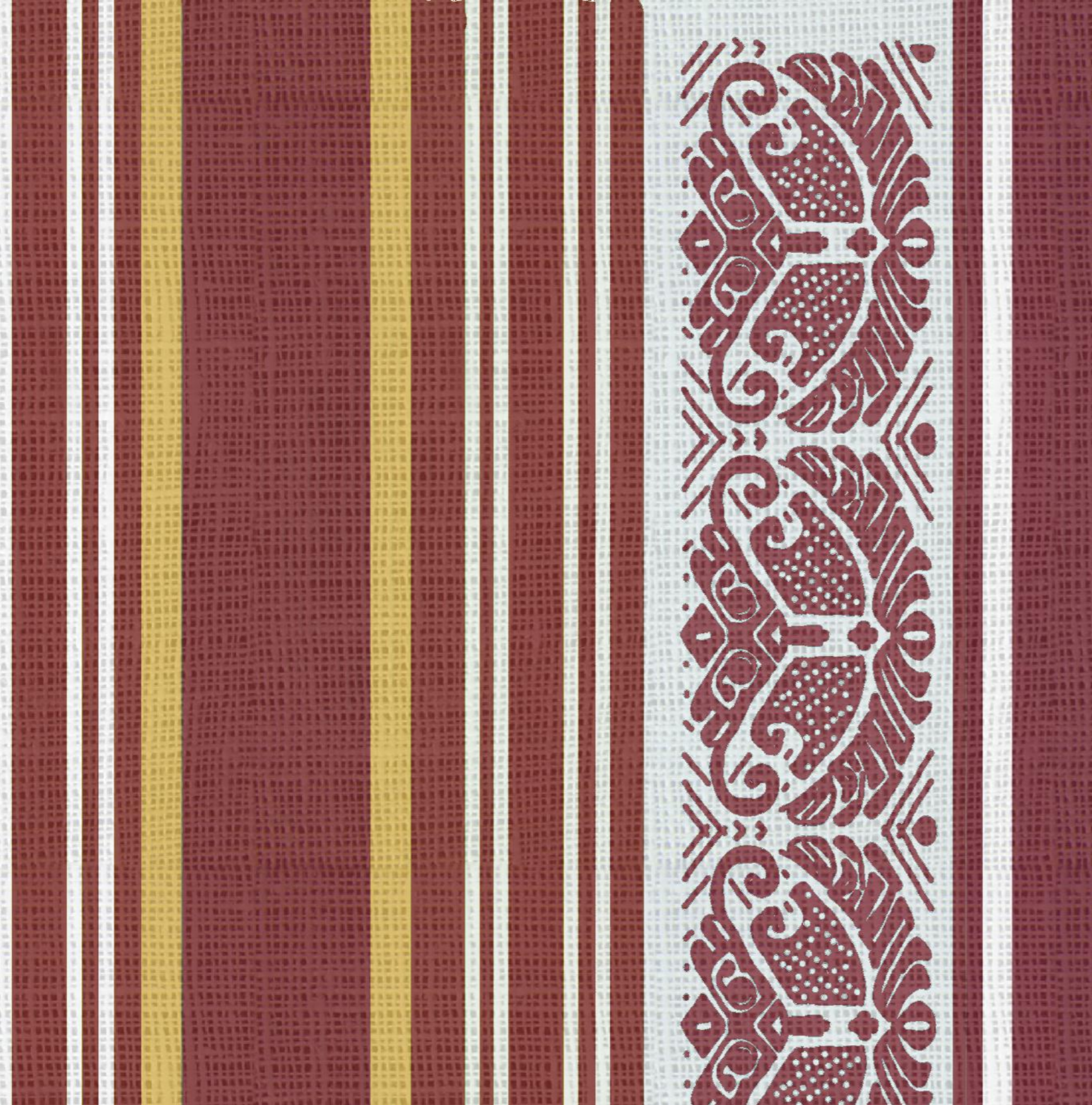


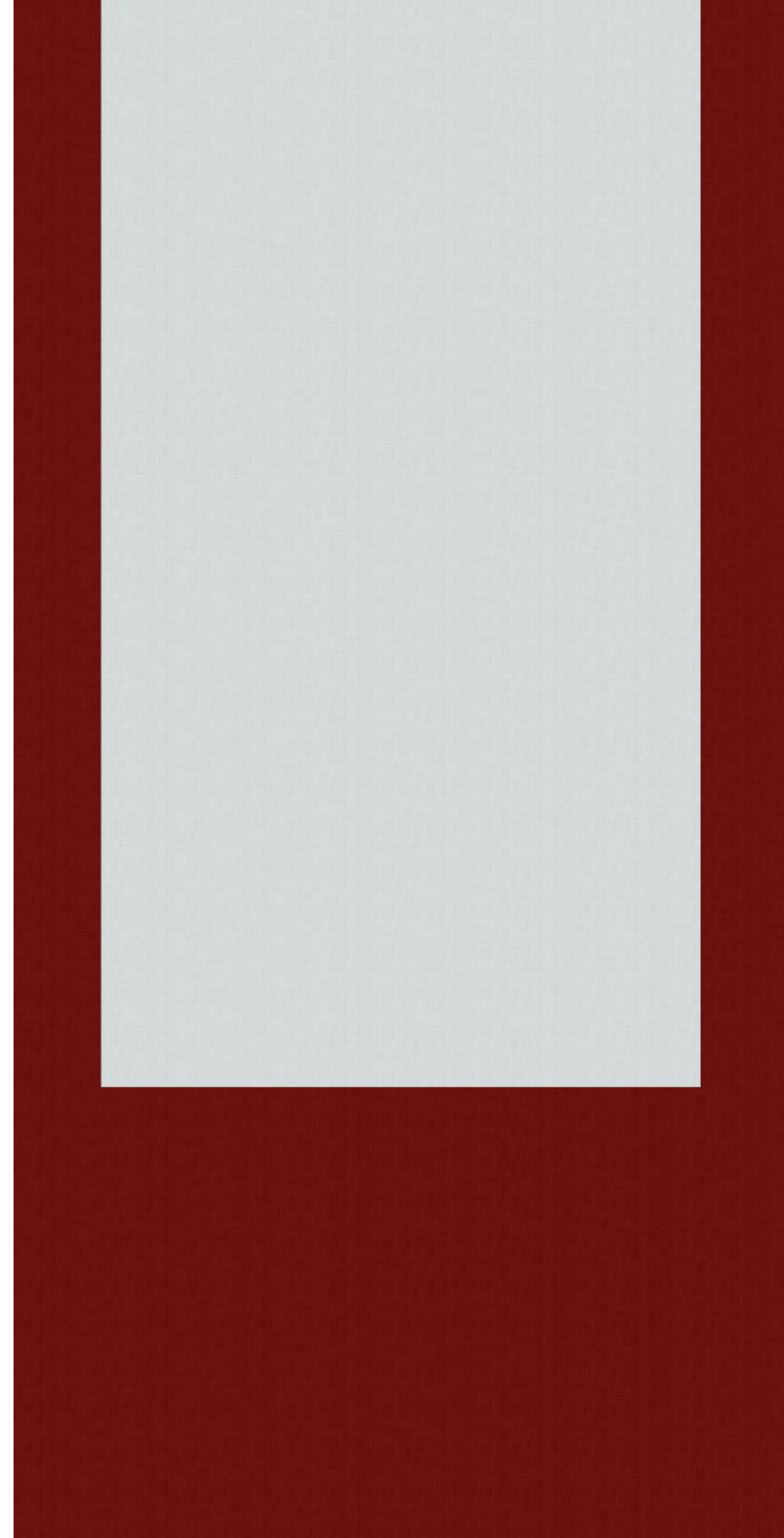
Fig 6.17 Intricate Design like 'Matsya Paar' are made with the help of Jacquard Attachment.



Fig 6.18 One of the key Identity of Begumpuri saree, 'Khejurchuri', 'Dori' Highlighted in the Pallu of the saree.

Design Evolution

The Begumpuri Saree, known as Mathapar, was originally characterized by its plain border and lack of embellishments. The saree featured a vibrant crimson Anchal (Pallu) and border, giving it a striking appearance. Over time, however, the thickness of the red border decreased as the saree evolved from a plain Mathapar to one with a vertical stripe design. To enhance the aesthetic of the red pallu, two additional horizontal stripes were incorporated, adding depth and visual interest to the overall design. The vertical stripes underwent a transformation, becoming more pronounced and eye-catching. Not only did their width increase, but the overall design also took on a more daring and experimental approach. Instead of a traditional solid border, a striped border emerged, adding an intriguing visual element to the fabric. Additionally, a new pattern was introduced, featuring checks that incorporated a third color achieved through a unique visual overlay technique. Lastly, the pallu, a small yet significant element, was embellished with a slender horizontal stripe in a vibrant red hue, elevating the design with a touch of grace.



*Fig 6.19 Traditional
'Mathapar Saree'
Design and Layout*



The Bengal textile industry experienced a significant shift in the late 1824 AD with the introduction of millspun yarn. This innovation revolutionized the production process and allowed for greater efficiency and consistency in yarn production. Additionally, the implementation of the Dobby mechanism brought about a new era of design possibilities. By incorporating simpler geometric and organic motifs, both in the body and borders of textiles, the industry was able to cater to a wider range of aesthetic preferences.

The introduction of the Barrel Dobby in the 1920s marked a transition from the traditional Throw Shuttle to the more efficient Fly Shuttle. This change in technology greatly increased the speed and productivity of the weaving process. Additionally, the implementation of sectional warping and sizing techniques allowed for the production of longer warp yarns, enabling the creation of larger and more elaborate textiles. Dhoniakhali sarees and Kotki are also produced in the area, impacting the design of Begumpuri sarees. The influence of Dhoniakhali sarees is particularly prominent in the strong presence of a two-toned border, featuring gold and red colors, which is an adaptation from Dhoniakhali saree designs.

Weavers in the region started incorporating this locally produced dori into the anchal of sarees, leading to the growth of "Dori" production as another craft. Dori is created by twisting two yarns of varying colors together, becoming a distinctive feature of Begumpuri Saree. This initiative was

Fig 6.20 'Phool' Border made with Jacquard Attachment

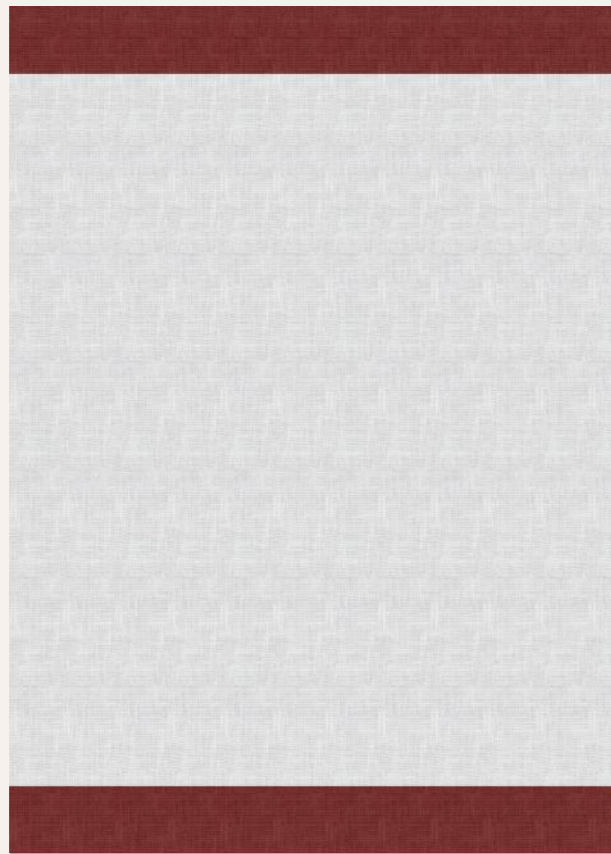


Fig 6.21 Traditional 'Mathapar' Saree

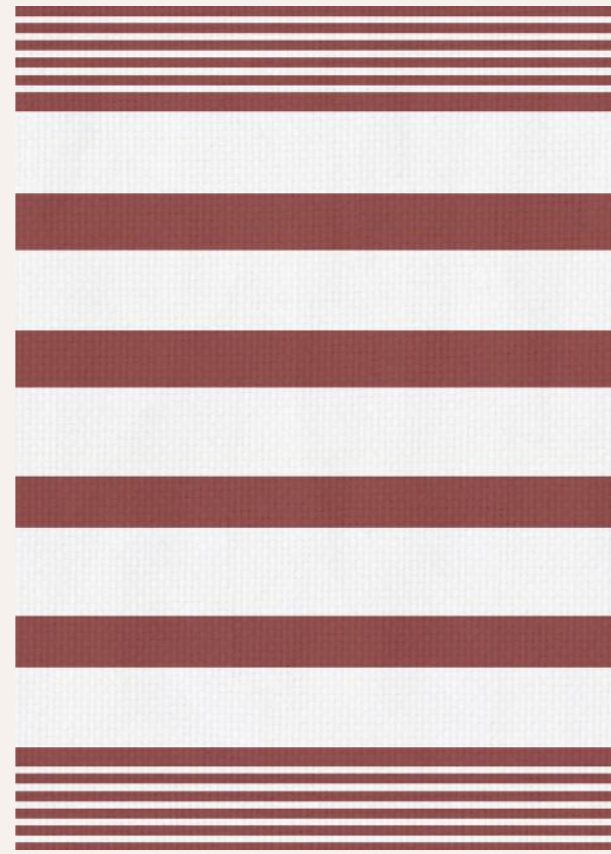


Fig 6.22 'Doore' Stripe Design



Fig 6.23 Variation of 'Doore' Stripe design Weft wise as well

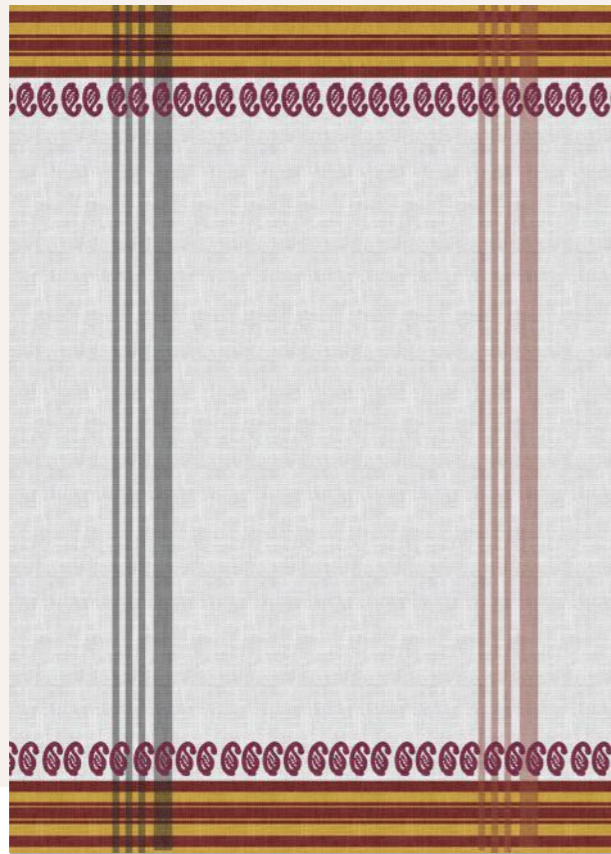


Fig 6.24 Adaptation from Dhonaikhali Saree, 'Keri' Border and Two colored Stripe border.



Fig 6.25 Introduction of Dobby and Jacquard for Intricate Designs.

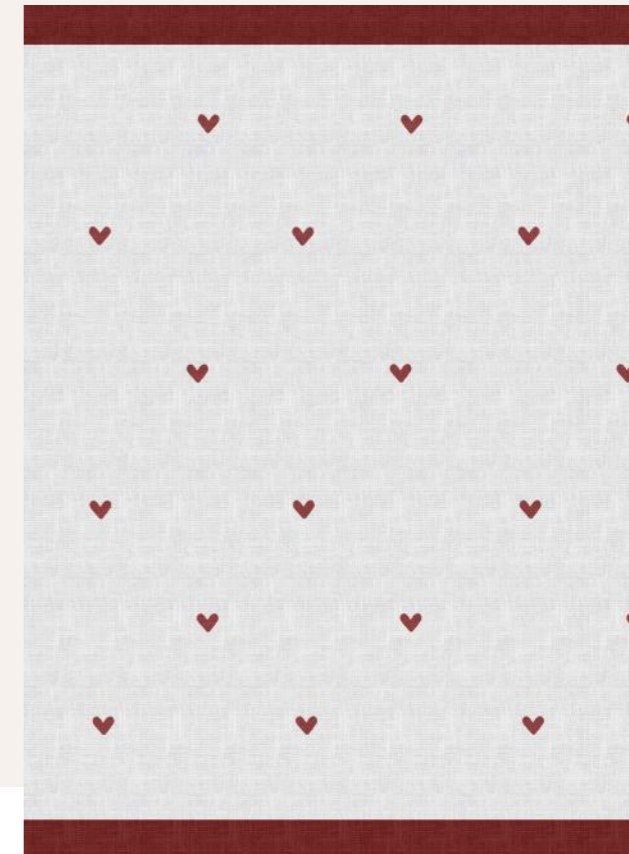


Fig 6.26 Experimentation with Supplementary Weft.



Introduction of Jacquard with wide border identity :

The utilization of Jacquard in the creation of elaborate border designs has been a significant in cluster now days . This technique involves the incorporation of both extra warp and extra weft methods to achieve intricate patterns. Over time, Jacquard has evolved to include skirt borders and interventions in anchal, with specific designs inspired by indigenous nature. One such popular design is the Matsya Border, which draws inspiration from fish motifs, and the Projapati (butterfly) border. The Matsya border, in particular, holds cultural significance in regions like Begumpur, where variations of the fish motif can be observed. This showcases the versatility and adaptability of Jacquard in capturing the essence of traditional designs while incorporating modern techniques.

Introduction of Supplementary Weft:

Over time, the Begumpuri saree has evolved significantly, especially with the introduction of various brands producing in the region. Weavers are now experimenting with new techniques, including the use of 'Zari' thread as a supplementary weft in the sarees. This modern design showcases the incorporation of supplementary weft in a contemporary way.

Fig 6.27 Present Day most of the saree are made on looms with Jacquard Attachment.

Fig 6.28, 6.29 Most commonly made designs on Jacquard



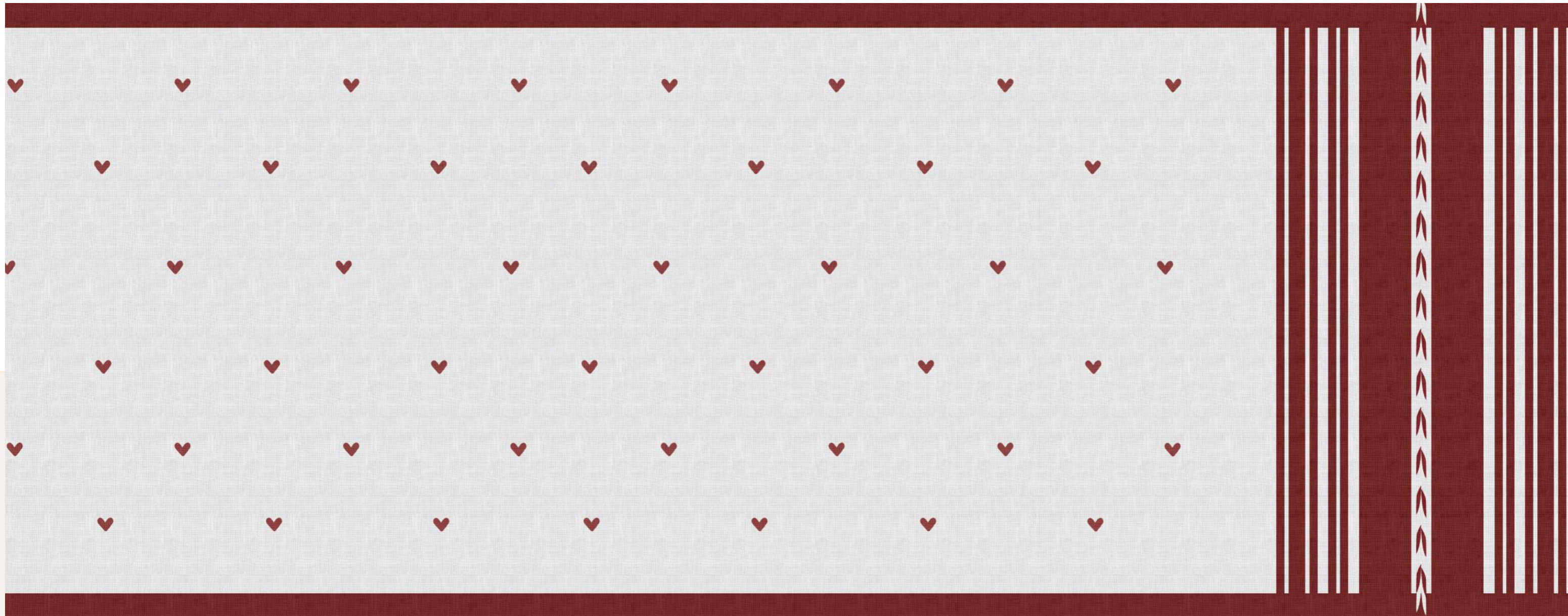


Fig 6.30 'Supplementary Weft' or 'Weft Inlay' in the body of the Saree.



Powerloom

The begampuri saree production process has seen a significant transformation as weavers are now opting to use powerlooms instead of traditional handlooms. This shift is primarily driven by fluctuations in raw material prices, their availability, time efficiency, and labor costs, prompting weavers to adapt to more modern methods of production. Powerlooms, being semi-automated, require human intervention, especially when intricate designs are being created. A single powerloom setup, consisting of four looms, can cost anywhere between 1 to 1.5 lakh rupees, making it a substantial investment for weavers looking to enhance their production capabilities. To finance the transition from handloom to powerloom, many weavers have resorted to seeking financial assistance through loans and government schemes. This financial aid has played a crucial role in enabling weavers to embrace the technological advancements offered by powerlooms, ultimately improving their efficiency and output in the production of begampuri sarees.

Fig 6.31 Powerloom set up in the area

Evolution of Motif Language

The motif serves as the fundamental building block of a specific design, acting as the underlying principle in a composition. Whether it be an artwork, a musical piece, terracotta, jewelry, or an architectural structure, the motif is consistently repeated throughout, creating a sense of unity. Interestingly, the term 'motif' finds its roots in the Latin word 'movere,' meaning 'to move,' as if the unit itself dances from one design composition to another. This is why a saree border, for example, may appear as an infinite repetition of a solitary component or motif.



Fig 6.32-6.34 Variation of 'keri' motif.

In contrast to handloom sarees or clothes that typically feature unchanging designs, handmade art forms offer the flexibility to alter motifs based on the creator's desires. The delicate curves of flowers, leaves, and vines can be shaped into graceful circles, symbolizing the gentle touch of the maker. On the other hand, the presence of geometric patterns showcases the maker's fearless and audacious nature, adding a touch of boldness to their artistic expression.

During the 16th century, Persian travelers brought the paisley motif



to the subcontinent, which was then incorporated into classical paintings and textiles. While it was initially crafted with precious materials like gold and silver threads on silk for special occasions, in Bengal, it became a commonly used design while still maintaining its exquisite quality. As time passed and the 18th century arrived, Bengali artisans not only embraced the paisley motif but also infused it with their own cultural identity. This indigenous touch became evident in the works of Jamdani weavers and embroiderers of 'nakshi kantha.' The 'kalka,' as the paisley motif was known,



took on various interpretations such as an opening bud, a petal, a seed, a bending tree, and even a raw mango. Despite its foreign origins, the 'kalka' has become deeply ingrained in Bengali culture over the centuries, to the point where it is now considered an indigenous design. Through the efforts of Bengal's textile clusters and artists, the paisley motif has undergone significant transformations and experimentation, solidifying its place as one of the prominent motifs in the local fashion scene. The motif's popularity soared as it became a renowned symbol within the art of *apona*.

Lotus

The Indian subcontinent holds the lotus in high regard, considering it the 'seat of the Gods' for deities like Lord Buddha, Goddess Laxmi, Saraswati, Lord Vishnu, and Brahma, symbolizing purity and divinity as its petals gracefully unfold to reveal inner beauty. Through various art forms like textile, architecture, alpana, and weaving, the lotus is portrayed to embody both divine and poetic ideas, representing spiritual enlightenment, rebirth, and the cycle of life with its intricate design and delicate nature. The lotus flower's connection to revered deities and its symbolic importance in art forms underlines its timeless charm and enduring significance in Indian culture, solidifying its powerful and meaningful status in religious rituals and artistic expressions.



Fish is another popular motif in the Bengal region. It is considered to be a symbol of fertility because it bears thousands of eggs. Even today, a pair of ruhi fish is sent to the bride's home from the groom's family on the occasion of gaye holud (pre-wedding ritual). The fish or the matsya is an important motif for the Hindu community as it is an avatar of the God Vishnu. It is revered as an important motif, particularly as an avatar of the God Vishnu, signifying protection, sustenance, and divine presence in the lives of believers. The fish motif thus carries both cultural and religious significance in the region, reflecting the rich tapestry of traditions and beliefs.

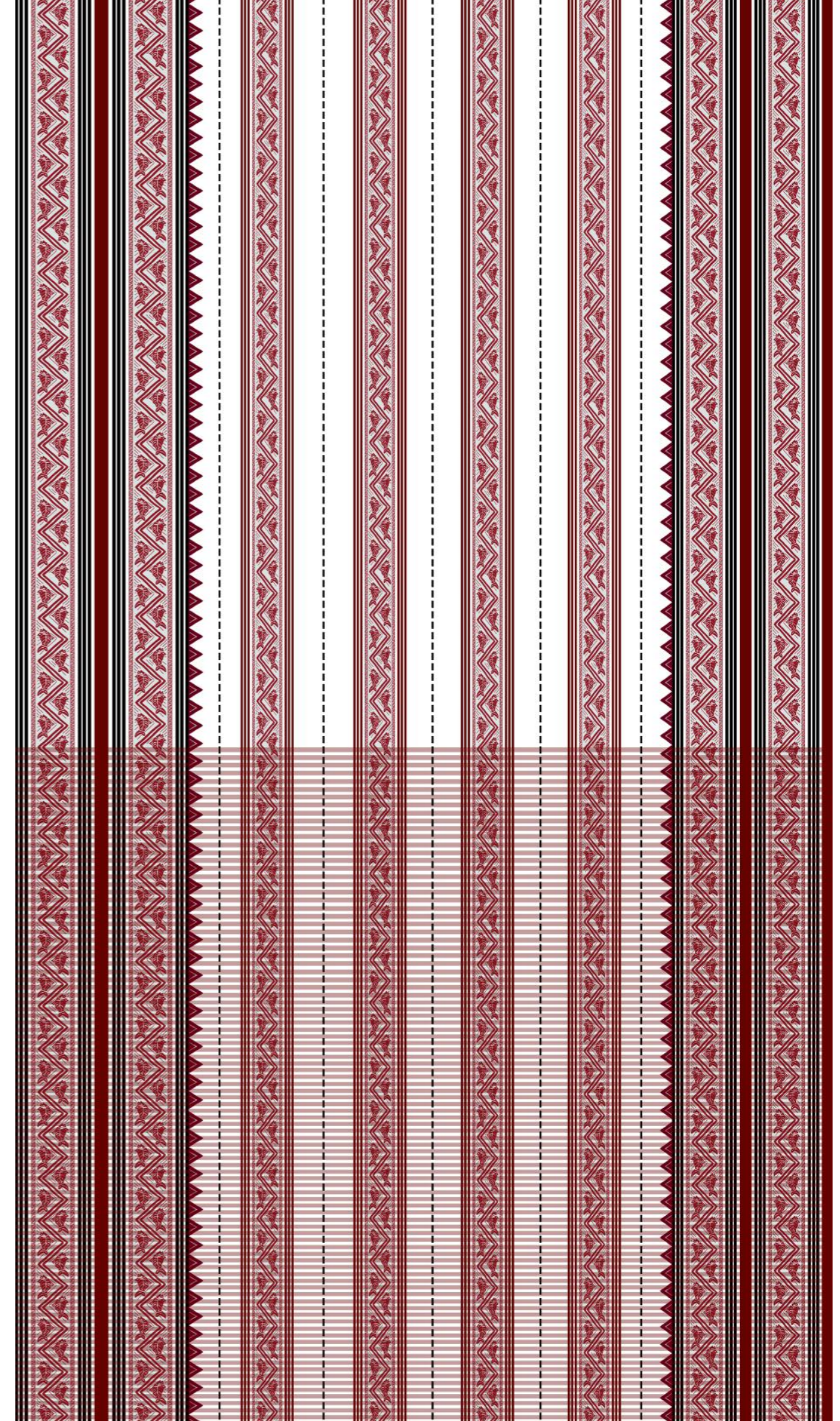
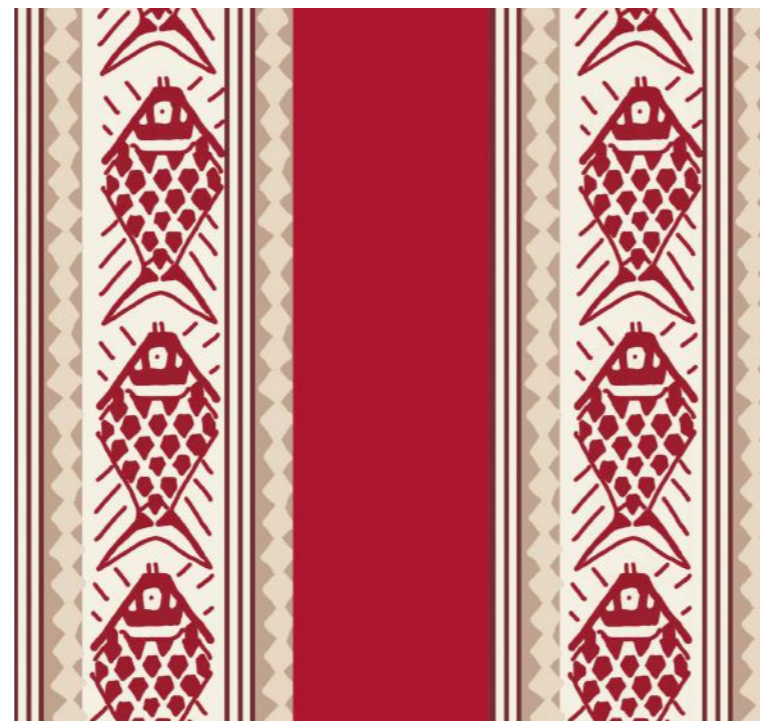


Fig 6.35 - 6.37
Jacquard Designs namely 'Podo Pere' Left
'Matsya Paar' Right.



Fig 6.38 'Buti' Motif

Buti motif:

The Buti motif, a popular design in Bengal, is commonly seen in saris and is known for its intricate floral patterns. These motifs can come in various sizes, ranging from small butis to larger butas, and are often represented as flowers, sprigs, or bushes. The smaller butis are typically woven in repeated rows across the sari field, while the larger butas are usually found along the end piece of the sari, adding a unique touch to the overall design. Interestingly, the terms "buta" or "buti" have their roots in Persian culture but hold special significance for Hindus, symbolizing various aspects of life and nature. The use of Bel and Buti motifs in Indian textiles not only showcases the artistic prowess of craftsmen but also highlights the rich cultural exchange and fusion of influences from different regions. These motifs are not just decorative elements but also serve as a source of inspiration for weavers and embroiderers, adding elegance and beauty to the fabric. The intricate patterns created using the Bel motif demonstrate the skill and creativity of these artisans, making each piece of textile a work of art that reflects the cultural heritage and traditions of India.



Fig 6.39 'Raath' Motif

Raath :

The raath patterns, intricately woven into the borders or pallu of saris, create a beautiful contrast with the solid colors of the six-yard fabric. Inspired by temple sculptures and structures, these mythological characters and architectural panels add depth and narrative to the fabric, which is adorned with classic colors like vermillion red, turmeric, rani pink, grape green, and indigo.

Chiur or Chire:

Chiur or Chire, commonly known as Flattered Rice, is a highly renowned motif in the Begampur cluster. It is predominantly utilized as a decorative element in borders and pallus. This staple food is extremely popular in the neighboring villages, showcasing how the community intertwines their craft with everyday traditions.



Fig 6.40 'Meene' - Meenakari, 'Chuir' - Flattened Rice.

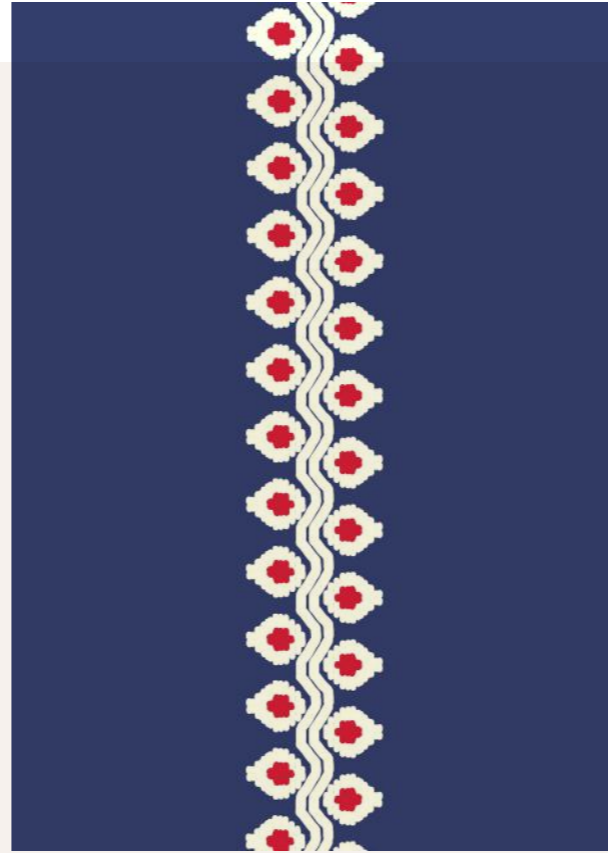


Fig 6.41 'Alpona' Motif

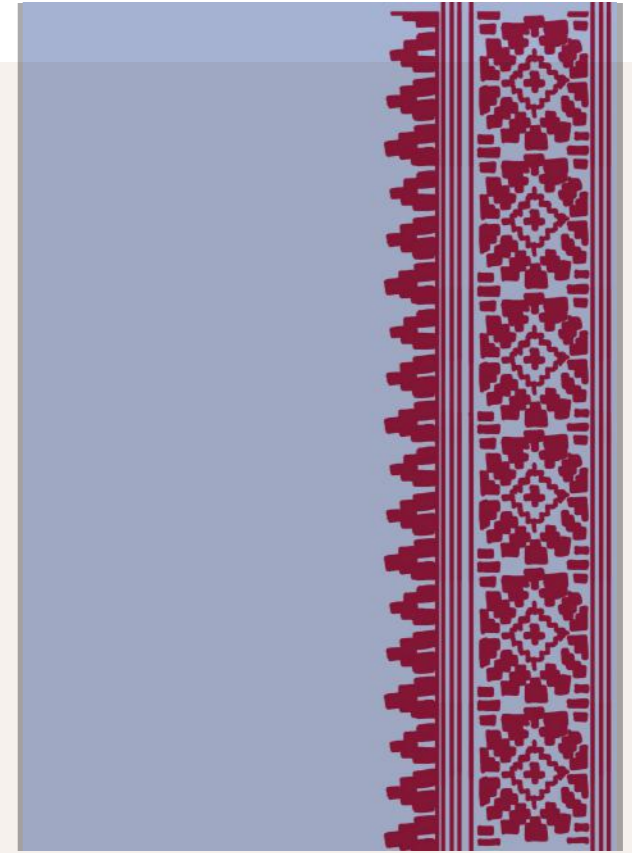


Fig 6.42 'Phool' Motif

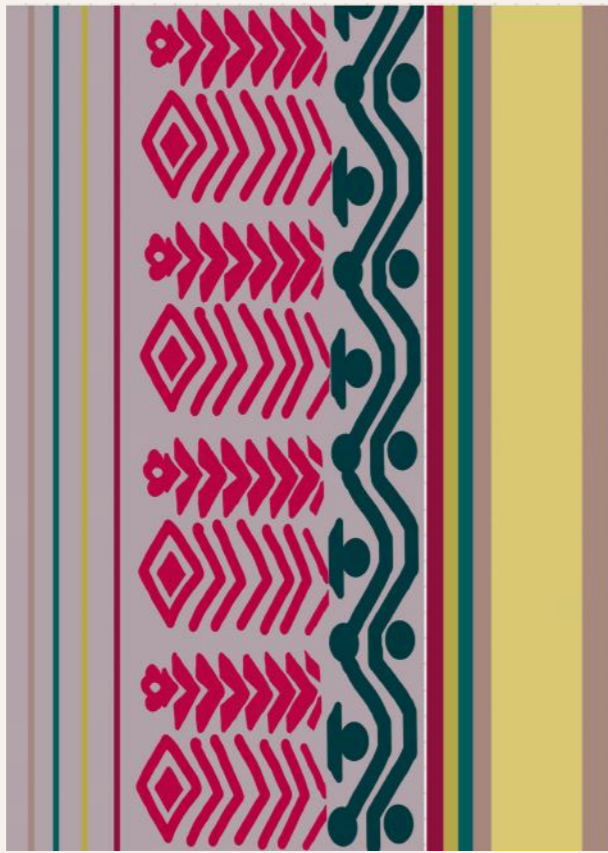


Fig 6.43 'Dhanir Shish' Moti

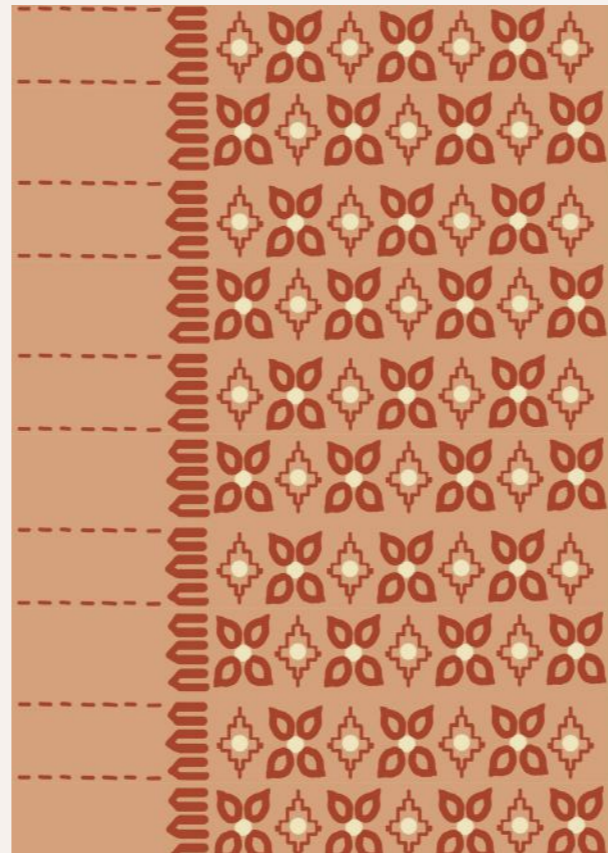


Fig 6.44 'Kantha' stitch on the body

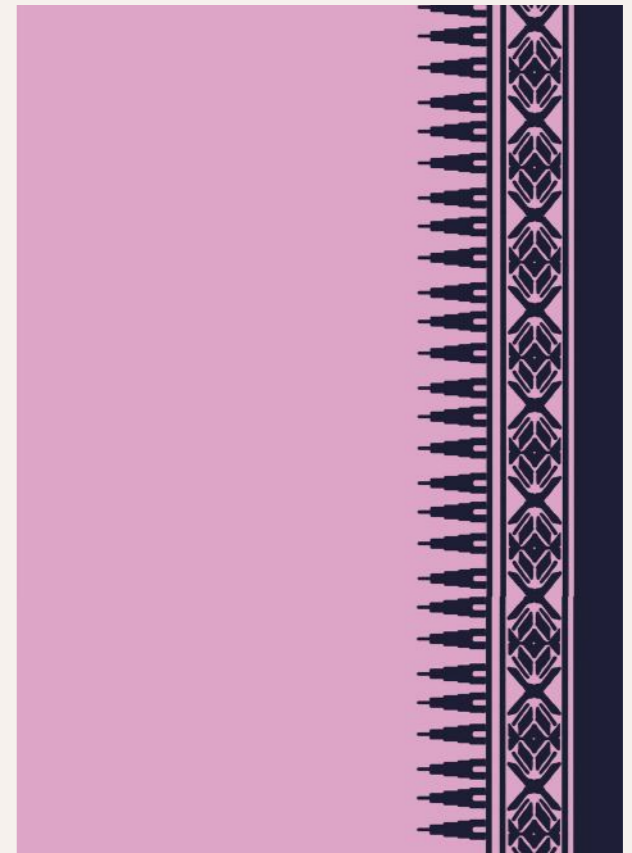


Fig 6.45 'Daant' & 'Phool' Motif

PROSPECT

Pedagogical Concerns

Educational concerns arise for weavers who lack literacy skills, as they may encounter difficulties in accessing and comprehending information pertaining to market trends, pricing strategies, and innovative weaving methods. This dearth of knowledge can impede their capacity to adjust to shifts within the industry, potentially impacting the competitiveness of their merchandise. Additionally, illiterate weavers may struggle to uphold precise records of their transactions, orders, and financial interactions, further complicating their business operations.

The reliance of illiterate weavers on intermediaries or middlemen for various aspects of their trade, including negotiations on pricing, sales, and financial dealings, exacerbates their vulnerability. This dependence on third parties can expose them to exploitation and result in diminished earnings for the weavers, highlighting the detrimental effects of illiteracy within the weaving community.

Over the years, the work culture in the weaving industry has undergone a significant



Transforming the Work Culture

transformation due to various factors such as technological advancements, market forces, socio-economic changes, and governmental regulations. In the past, weaving was a labor-intensive process carried out using traditional handlooms, which required a considerable amount of time and skill. However, the introduction of power looms revolutionized the industry by enabling faster production and larger-scale manufacturing, thereby changing the traditional handloom-centric work culture. Globalization has also played a crucial role in reshaping the work culture of weavers. It has provided them with access to a wider market, allowing them to cater to international demands. This has resulted in a shift in the types of products required and a need to adapt to global trends in order to remain competitive. Additionally, the increased availability of education has had a profound impact on the work culture of weavers. Educated individuals within the industry are better equipped to embrace new technologies, understand market dynamics, and engage in business negotiations, thereby influencing the overall work culture within the weaving community.

fig. 7.1a lady weaving



fig. 7.2 Industrial visits to the cluster by the students

Concerns

Cluster is confronted with a wide range of concerns that are complex and varied, encompassing issues that range from market information to organizational management. The limited availability of market information creates obstacles in making strategic decisions, impeding the cluster's ability to adapt to market demands. Insufficient awareness about product features hinders consumer understanding and appreciation of handloom products. The cooperative also faces difficulties in promoting and advertising its products, which affects its visibility and market reach. Inadequate management of logistics disrupts supply chains and operational efficiency. Despite having significant export potential, the cluster struggles to effectively tap into international markets. Financial constraints, organizational problems, and poor institutional management contribute to

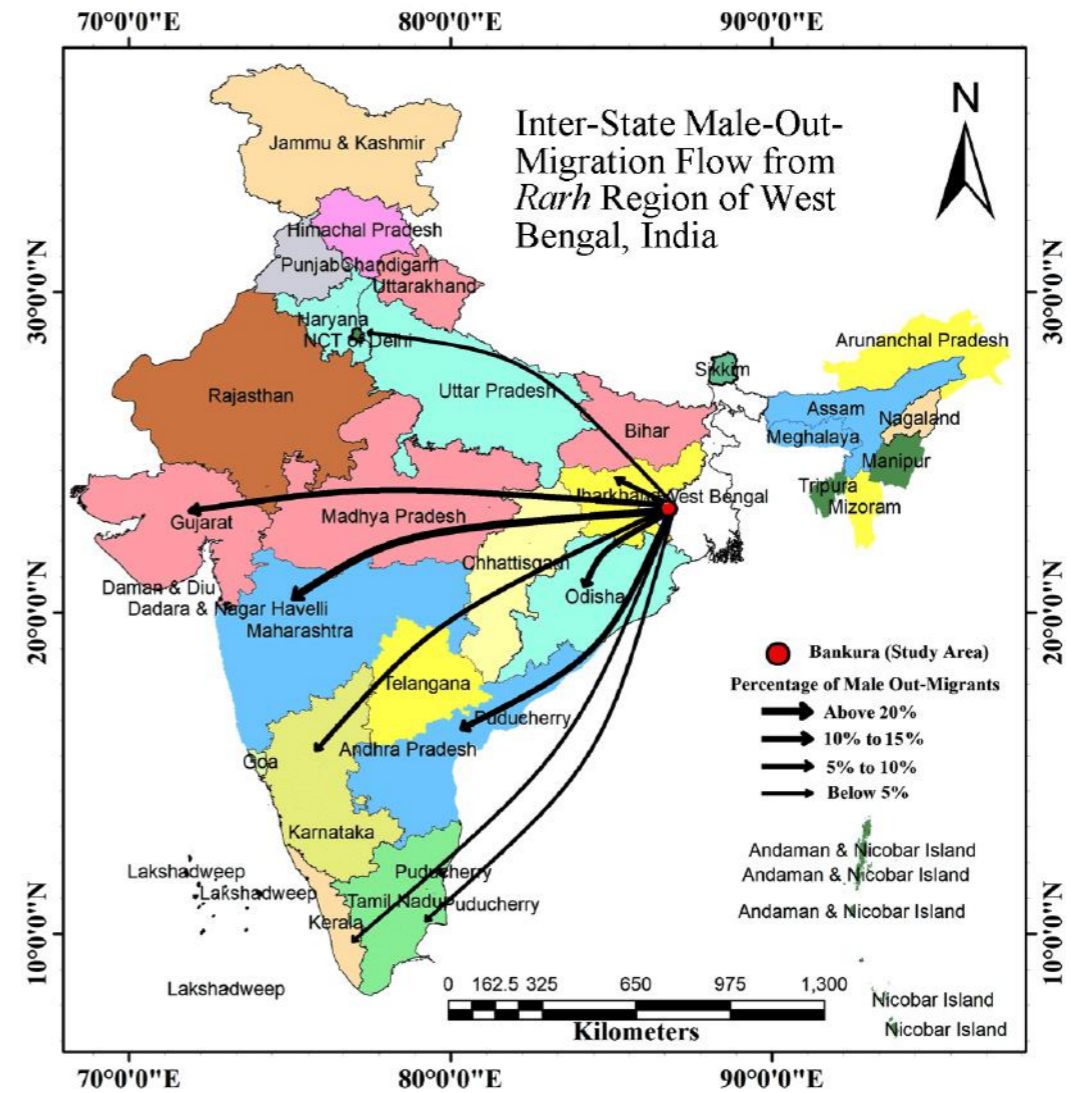


fig. 7.3 migration map

systemic challenges within the sector. Unfair practices of power looms raise ethical concerns, while maintaining cost competitiveness remains a delicate balance. Furthermore, the lack of training hampers skill development and innovation, highlighting the necessity for comprehensive solutions to address these multifaceted challenges and foster sustainable growth within the cluster.

Labor mobility within the cluster

The urban areas are witnessing a shift in occupations as workers are leaving the handloom industry due to low wages. They are now opting for jobs in construction, shop-keeping, and transportation. Younger individuals, depending on the level of urbanization and connectivity to Kolkata, are either choosing local occupations or migrating to states like Karnataka, Kerala, and Gujarat. However, in areas where alternative employment options are limited and commuting to Kolkata is expensive, workers remain trapped in the handloom sector despite declining wages. The decision to move away from handloom production is not solely influenced by external factors such as societal pressure, including marriage. In households where weaving is a family tradition, younger men may struggle to find

Is it Justified?

suitable partners because parents are hesitant to marry their daughters into families where handloom work is expected in addition to regular household responsibilities. To adapt to changing times, weaver households are now prioritizing the education of their sons and daughters, hoping to explore alternative occupations. Previously, children would learn the craft from a young age, but the decline in handloom production has led to a shift towards formal education. As a result, looms are being left idle or sold off to facilitate this transition.

Unfortunately, the handloom weavers in Begampur are still being paid a paltry daily wage ranging from Rs.80-100 for their strenuous efforts, devoid of any extra perks like health coverage or mental health assistance. This situation has led to the weavers being stuck in a cycle of poverty and technological backwardness, hindering their progress and financial stability. 2. Due to their lack of awareness regarding the serious health hazards and their impoverished conditions, workers showing symptoms of illness often ignore them and continue to toil in hazardous work settings. This not only jeopardizes their well-being but also perpetuates the cycle of exploitation and neglect they face in their profession.

Mental Health

The mental well-being of weavers in India is a crucial yet often overlooked aspect within the vibrant tapestry of the country's textile tradition. Weaving is not just a skill for these artisans; it is a deeply ingrained way of life that has been passed down through generations. Despite the rich cultural



fig. 7.4 weaver in deep thought



सत्यमेव जयते

BUYER SELLER MEET CUM EXHIBITION

Weavers' Service Centre, Kolkata

cordially invites you at the exhibition of exclusive products
by

BEGAMPUR HANDLOOM CLUSTER

at

Jamini Roy Gallery

Rabindranath Tagore Centre

Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR)

9A, Ho Chi Minh Sarani, Kolkata - 700 071

on

20th September, 2013 at 12 noon.

Shri Sudip Ghosh

Director

Directorate of Textiles

(Handlooms, Spinning Mills, Silk Weaving
& Handloom Based Handcrafts Divisions)

Government of West Bengal

has kindly consented to inaugurate the exhibition

significance of their craft, weavers face numerous challenges that can have a significant impact on their mental health. Financial instability is a major concern for weavers, as they grapple with economic uncertainties that can lead to chronic stress and anxiety. The pressure to make ends meet and provide for their families can weigh heavily on these artisans, who have dedicated their lives to perfecting their craft. The fear of an uncertain future and the potential loss of a family legacy can further exacerbate feelings of hopelessness and despair among weavers. The physical demands of the traditional weaving process, which often involves long hours of sitting in fixed postures, can also take a toll on the mental health of weavers. The combination of physical health challenges and mental distress can create a vicious cycle, as chronic pain and discomfort contribute to feelings of mental anguish. Moreover, the lack of recognition and support from society can lead to feelings of isolation and marginalization, impacting the self-esteem and overall mental well-being of these artisans.

Within the realm of artisanal skills, there are diverging viewpoints that shape the discourse. The technocratic and teleological perspective attributes the decline of cluster to the encroachment of machines, while the discursive and pluralist viewpoint interprets this decline as a modernist construct that sidelines certain communities. Each perspective offers a unique interpretation of traditional skills, with one associating tradition with immutability and the other highlighting its capacity for evolution. Despite the contrasting perspectives, the begampur cluster continues to grapple with the preservation of existing artisanal skills and the limited sources of employment available. This dichotomy presents a challenge where the preservation of tradition clashes with the necessity for economic growth and job creation. However, our research underscores the dynamic nature of the sector and its historical diversity in terms of labor mobility and skill development, challenging preconceived notions. From a different perspective, handloom can be seen as a crucial component of modern labor narratives. To promote a change in mindset, we emphasize the importance of labor-focused methodologies rather than the traditional-centric approach in the industry, while still acknowledging and respecting our cultural heritage. This approach aims to find a middle ground between tradition and innovation, guaranteeing the longevity and relevance of artisanal skills in the midst of contemporary obstacles.

Exhibition : 12 to 6pm.

Organised by :

WEAVERS' SERVICE CENTRE, KOLKATA

/o Development Commissioner for Handloom

Ministry of Textiles, Government of India

01, Garment Park, Paridhan, 19 Canel South R

Beliaghata, Kolkata - 700 015

Phone : 033-2323 2232/2236, Fax: 033-2323 2

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fig. 7.5 Government pamphlet related Begampuri cluster



fig. 7.6 a female weaver happy with her craft work

Vision and Value Addition

In the cluster, there are deliberate efforts to improve the business environment by simplifying state regulations and enhancing communication between weavers and regulatory agencies through a web-enabled application gateway. The shift towards web-based clearances with specified deadlines aims to increase transparency and expedite approval processes for saree weaving companies. Additionally, the political agenda focuses on enhancing human resources through skill-development programs to help weavers thrive in a competitive market.

Initiatives such as insurance, health benefits, low-interest loans, subsidies, and training programs are implemented to enhance artisans' financial well-being, reduce production costs, and equip them with essential skills for a stable economic foundation, fostering creativity, innovation, and sustainable livelihoods in the industry. Efforts within the cluster's social sphere are dedicated to enhancing the lifestyle and well-being of artisans. Educational programs are implemented to cultivate their skills and promote personal and professional growth. By actively participating in social and cultural activities, the weaver community strengthens their bonds and develops a collective identity. The preservation of weaving traditions through storytelling serves to honor the rich heritage and secure its continuation for future generations. Furthermore, the recognition and appreciation from the community elevate the social status of weavers, fostering a sense of pride in their craft. These various initiatives work together to advance the weaver community and contribute to the cultural fabric of society, establishing a comprehensive and sustainable social framework within the industry.



The cluster's technology is being advanced through a strategic approach that focuses on driving innovation and diversification. By capitalizing on new technical developments, product line extensions introduce unique products to the market, injecting variety. Innovation is fostered through the adoption of new woven techniques, pushing the boundaries of traditional craftsmanship. Diversification initiatives expand the range of offerings in this dynamic industry. The emphasis is on investing in technological infrastructure to directly support development, enabling weavers to leverage modern tools. This roadmap positions the weaver saree industry as a leader in innovation, ensuring its relevance in a rapidly evolving technological landscape.

Currently, many designers opt for the saree because of its simple design and ease of adding embellishments such as block printing and embroidery. The use of different yarn quality & intricate design applying new techniques, enhances the quality but also helps in uplifting the living standards and wages of the weavers, a trend observed prominently in the industry. Sarees crafted from pricier materials may result in slightly higher production costs, potentially leading to increased wages for the workers involved in the process.

fig. 7.7 block printing being used on begampuri saree



fig. 7.8 supplementary weft design



fig. 7.9 double jacquard box loom used in WSC Kolkata for Begampuri saree production



fig. 7.10 experimentation with stripes



fig. 7.11 trail with a rhythmic warp pattern



fig. 7.12 imitation of Kantha in the begampuri saree through weaving

Conclusion

Our investigation unveils a multifaceted landscape defined by both challenges and opportunities. The initial premise of this research centers on the perplexing absence of detailed documentation regarding the on-loom and pre-loom processes within traditional crafts. These processes form the bedrock upon which the entire craft is built, yet they remain enigmatic and elusive. This knowledge gap hampers the transmission of these intricate skills to future generations and risks their eventual erosion. While digital repositories and print resources have contributed to information accessibility, they fall short in capturing the intricate minutiae that characterize these processes. This hypothesis contends that the dearth of documentation is rooted not merely in oversight, but in the intrinsic complexity of articulating these processes in a manner that captures their essence and nuances.

A fundamental facet of our hypothesis pertains to the evolution of design languages and trading systems within the context of traditional crafts. The lack of comprehensive documentation regarding these evolutionary trajectories is striking. While design is at the core of the craft, the narrative arc of its development over time remains shrouded in mystery. This research underscores the assertion that design languages, like spoken languages, evolve through historical, cultural, and societal influences. The absence of a comprehensive narrative hampers our understanding of how design has been shaped by these dynamic forces. Moreover, the interplay between design and trading systems, integral to the sustenance of traditional crafts, remains elusive. This hypothesis posits that the dearth of information on these aspects is a reflection of the intricate and often intangible nature of these systems, deeply enmeshed in the fabric of socio-economic and cultural interactions.

The intriguing case of the Begampuri craft encapsulates a distinctive dimension of our hypothesis. While its cultural and historical significance is undeniable, its relative obscurity within broader discourse becomes a critical point of inquiry. The hypothesis conjectures that the underlying reasons for this underrecognition are multilayered. It proposes that factors such as lack of visibility, inadequate documentation, and shifting cultural contexts have contributed to the Begampuri craft's marginalized status. The challenge lies in unraveling this intricate web of factors and elucidating how they interact to shape the craft's trajectory.



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