

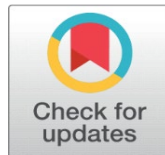
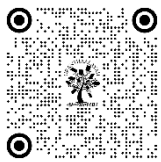
# POCHAMPALLY IKAT AND FASHION: REDEFINING TRADITIONAL TEXTILES FOR THE GLOBAL MARKET

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## ABSTRACT

Indian fashion has been one of the largest contributors to the country's economy with various traditional textiles. Pochampally Ikat is one of the traditional fabrics that is manufactured in Pochampally, Nalgonda District, Telangana. This is an exceptional fabric that is dyed even before it is woven. This fabric weaving follows the tie and dye technique where the yarns are dyed according to the designs and then taken to the weaving process. This uniqueness paved the way for the fabric to make an entry into the global market. After Independence, Pochampally ikat has made enormous growth with the support of various NGOs and the government. This paper will give insights into the history and process followed in weaving the Pochampally ikat. The paper also focuses on the support mechanisms, demand and supply, and its expansion into the global market. This also includes the threats, challenges, and opportunities of the fabric.

**Keywords:** Ikat, Sustainability, Process, Demand, Fashion

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The yarn resist or the tie and dye process that results in identical designs on both sides of ikat creates a fabric with a long global history dating back to the 7th century and is renowned. It comes in a wide range of colors and designs and has been used in clothing, home decor, and fashion. Designers frequently incorporate ikat into the creation of one-of-a-kind and contemporary patterns. Ikat has gained

international recognition and is displayed at exhibitions and trade shows. Ikat must adjust to the needs of the market, the preferences of its customers, and the resources at its disposal to succeed. Ikat's expansion into the global market has been facilitated by collaboration between academic institutions, government agencies, artisans, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). By following the traditional weaving methods, handloom ikat fabrics preserve the legacy of handloom weaving, which contributes to ethically and sustainably produced fabrics, increased job opportunities, and skill development.

Diverse stakeholders contribute to the continued success of ikat by preserving its cultural values and traditions. Ikat's growth has been driven by its ability to strike a balance between its heritage and the ever-changing requirements of the market, ensuring its viability and relevance in the fashion and textile industries' ever-evolving landscape. [Sharma et al. \(2022\)](#).

**Figure 1**



**Figure 1**

Pochampally in the Nalgonda district of Telangana, is known for the production of silk ikat sarees and fabrics. Currently, there are over 5,000 weavers in the village, and this industry provides the majority of their income. Pochampally's weavers have received global acclaim for their masterful art and meticulous craftsmanship. This tradition of Pochampally weaving has developed over time into an essential component of the village's cultural heritage and economic prosperity. Pochampally's reputation as a center for exceptional textile craftsmanship can be attributed to the intricate designs and high-quality products it produces. In addition to sustaining their community, the weavers' dedication to their craft has earned them respect and admiration from all over the world. This traditional handloom product is evidence of the ability of artisans to create masterpieces that transcend borders and cultures and the long-lasting legacy of traditional weaving techniques [Savithri et al. \(2014\)](#).

## **2. POCHAMPALLY IKAT: A TRADITIONAL TEXTILE WITH GLOBAL APPEAL**

The word ikat has its origin in the Malay-Indonesian word "Mengikat" which means to "tie" or "bind" referring to the resist dyeing method of the tie-and-dye process. In the 1950s, Bhoodan Pochampally was the birthplace of Pochampally sarees, also known as Pochampally ikat. They were introduced by the head of the village to increase the profits of the laborers involved and gained popularity due to their distinctive fabric. This method had a quick spread throughout Pochampally, making it a major rival in the silk industry. Pochampally, being referred to as the

“Silk City of India”, has produced exceptional silk textiles creating competition with other ikat weavings in India. With the increasing demands, the zari (thread made from pure gold or silver used in traditional garments) was obtained from Surat in Gujarat, and the silk from Bangalore, made the pochampally silk ikat to draw attention and became more affordable and accessible. Intricate designs were created by skilled artisans which took them months to complete one saree. Today, Pochampally ikat is followed and created in the Yadadri Bhuvanagiri locale, to save this artistic expression. Pochampally ikat offers a variety of resist dyeing methods, including warp ikat, weft ikat, and double ikat [History, Influence and Making of Pochampally Sarees. Mandakini. \(2020\).](#)

- 1) **Warp Ikat:** The simplest form of constructing the ikat fabric, where the warp yarns are dyed according to the design before inserting the undyed weft yarns [Waldek \(2020\).](#)
- 2) **Weft Ikat:** In this type of ikat the weft yarn or the weaving yarn carries the design or the dyed patterns making the weave process a complicated one. The weaving yarn has to be adjusted every time the shuttle is passed to maintain the clarity of the design. This makes it quite complicated compared to warp ikat [The Craft Atlas \(n.d.\).](#)
- 3) **Double Ikat:** the most complicated weaving structure and produces the most intricate designs among the three ikat types. This process involves the method of both warp and weft ikat, where both the warp and weft yarns are tied and dyed according to the designs before weaving [Singh \(2021\).](#)

Figure 2



Figure 2 Source [www.etsy.com](http://www.etsy.com)

Figure 3



Figure 3 Source <https://www.lookandlearn.com/history-images/YM0077871-003/Patolu-with-Elephant-Design>

Ikat sarees from Pochampally are renowned for their bold and vibrant designs. Colorful and contemporary Pochampally ikat sarees have emerged as a result of artisans' embrace of contemporary motifs, abstract designs, and geometric patterns. The warp and weft yarns are stretched on special blocks during the weaving process, then dyed and woven. The yarn is colored before winding around, differentiating Pochampally ikat from other saree winding around methods. Due to their unique designs and use of contemporary synthetic colors, these ikats have gained vast popularity [History, Influence and Making of Pochampally Sarees. Mandakini. \(2020\).](#)

The double ikat textiles, which are the intricate designs and colors that are transferred onto the warp and weft threads, are what make Pochampally Ikat unique. Natural colors and blends are used in addition to cotton, silk, silk-cotton blends, and exquisite silk-cotton combinations. The method of individually dyeing each thread and weaving them into the fabric in a pattern is what distinguishes these ikat designs. The finished product is identical on both sides of the fabric thanks to this time-consuming and complicated procedure. [Savithri et al. \(n.d.\)](#)

Designers, fashion enthusiasts, and celebrities all recognize Pochampally ikat for its intricate weaving technique and vibrant colors. Pochampally ikat stands out because of its unique tie-dyeing process, which highlights its rich cultural heritage and produces mesmerizing patterns. The rising demand for ethically and sustainably produced fabrics adds to the textile's popularity. Pochampally ikat is a handwoven fabric that supports local artisans and supports fair trade practices. It also has an eco-friendly appeal due to the use of natural dyes and fibers like cotton and silk. Pochampally ikat has been enthusiastically adopted by the fashion industry, with numerous brands and designers including it in their collections. Because they have been seen sporting Pochampally ikat attire at high-profile events, celebrities have also contributed significantly to the global spread of the garment [Rao \(2016\).](#)

Pochampally has been named one of the "Iconic Saree Weaving Clusters of India" by UNESCO due to its distinctive weaving methods and precise craftsmanship. Marketing efforts for the fabric are carried out by Pochampally-based cooperative societies and organizations. Since its inception in 1955, the Pochampally Handloom Weavers Co-operative Society Ltd. has received numerous accolades and honors for its significant contribution to the promotion and sale of renowned ikats throughout India [Handlooms of India – Pochampalli Ikat. \(n.d.\).](#)

### **3. FASHION DESIGNERS AND IKAT**

Ikat fabrics have become popular among both fashion and interior design as well as both national and international designers. These designers incorporate traditional ikat patterns and motifs into contemporary clothing making it more appealing to a wider audience. They can experiment with color palettes by combining the traditional ikat colors with trending hues to create a unique look. Not only as a garment, ikat can also be incorporated into accessories showcasing its versatility. Customization of the garments by designers allows the customers to have personalized preferences which promotes the collaborations between designers and traditional artisans and to preserve the authenticity of the fabric with contemporary twists. Presenting the ikat collections on runways enables the designers to reach out to the global audience and embrace ethical production and socially responsible aspects of ikat production.

Allen Solly, pioneers in cutting-edge workwear, are set to revolutionize urban Indian fashion. They are co-creating one-of-a-kind ikat shirts by hand weaving them together in a strategic partnership with the Pochampally Handloom Weavers Cooperative Society and launched their collection in December 2016. The famous "Pochampally ikat," which is a Registered Geographical Indication of India, is the source of the fabric [Allen Solly crafts a new fashion story with Pochampally Handloom \(n.d.\)](#).

The international Indian designer Rahul Mishra has been a vocal supporter of Pochampally Ikat. To support the weavers and their handicrafts Rahul Mishra launched his ikat collections in 2011 which gave the age-old tradition a contemporary spin in his collections featuring Pochampally Ikat fabrics with intricately woven patterns for his new collections including sarees, dupattas, jumpsuits, skirts, and jackets. Rahul Mishra's inventive designs have contributed to bringing Pochampally Ikat's versatility and artistic appeal to worldwide attention [Hindusthan Time. \(2012\)](#).

Shilpa Reddy showcased her collection "Floral Geometry" in March 2015 at Lakme Fashion Week highlighting the beauty of geometric patterns of Pochampally ikat collections paired up with the blossoms of spring [Spotted: Taapsee Pannu in Shilpa Reddy's New York collection \(2015\)](#).

Belgian fashion designer Dries Van Noten used ikat fabrics in his collections. Known for his intense and diverse plans, Van Noten has used ikat materials to make energetic and outwardly striking pieces of clothing, consolidating customary craftsmanship with contemporary style. Dries Van Noten created a loose-fit silk ikat blazer in his High Summer 2022 collection as a celebration of Indian handicraft techniques [High Summer 2022. Dries Van Noten. \(2022\)](#).

Famous American fashion designer Oscar de la Renta has also used ikat fabrics in his creations. De la Renta's collections frequently include opulent pieces with intricate designs. He has used ikat fabrics to give his designs depth and texture, capturing the essence of this traditional fabric.

Giorgio Armani, an international designer, featured silk and velvet ikat fabrics in his "Crossing Colours" collection inspired by the flourishing weaving traditions of Central Asia [Uzbek Journeys Art, Craft & History Tours to Central Asia. \(2016\)](#).

Designer Rina Singh's Label Eka collaborated with Telangana State Handloom Weavers Cooperative Society Ltd (TSCO) and created a collection for Lakme Fashion Week's Sustainable Fashion Day. The collection showcased double and single ikat clusters of Kovalagudam, thigh-reeled tussar silk where the yarn is reeled in the thighs of the women from the cocoon and tussar silk sarees from Mahadevpur, cotton weaves from Narayanpet, and merchandise of Pochampally. Additionally, the Pochampally handloom park developed ikat accessories made of pure merino wool for the collection. These revamped traditional fabrics have a denser construction and are made with a focus on improving weavers' skills and using lighter yarns [Indukuri \(2020\)](#).

## **4. SWOT ANALYSIS – POCHAMPALLY IKAT**

### **1) Strengths**

- Unique and traditional weaving produces fabrics that are lightweight with intricate designs and bright colors.
- Traditionally made out of cotton and silk or a combination of both adding to its appeal and having a unique design structure.

- The geographical indication (GI) recognition of the product gave it a certification of authenticity, distinctiveness to origin, and quality.
- Pochampally ikat involves 5000 handloom weavers who produce the product in traditional methods.

## **2) Weaknesses**

- Expensive products since it is a time-consuming and labor-intensive process.
- Production of the power loom imitations creates stiff competition for the traditional weavers.
- The weavers face challenges in marketing and distribution of their products because of the lack of awareness.

## **3) Opportunities**

- Pochampally ikat has gained a growing market both domestically and internationally.
- As handwoven is the traditional practice of making Pochampally ikat it can be promoted as a handicraft product, as handicrafts are slowly gaining popularity and can attract sustainable consumers.
- Collaborating with national and international designers can help popularise the Pochampally ikat.
- The products can be launched in e-commerce and online markets.

## **4) Threats**

- The Pochampally weavers face competition because of the introduction of machine-made limitations.
- The weavers face challenges in marketing and distributing their products globally limiting their reach to potential customers.
- The Pochampally weavers face challenges in retaining or attracting skilled laborers.

The challenges that the weavers of Pochampally face threaten the craft's ability to survive. Their number has decreased due to low wages, despite their skill. In addition, power looms offer less expensive alternatives that mimic their designs, and the availability of silk from China affects the market. Even though handwoven ikat saris are exquisitely beautiful, weavers struggle to make a living, which discourages younger generations from entering the industry. The Pochampally weaving community's survival and the preservation of this remarkable art form depend on the community's patronage.

Pochampally ikat fashion industry has numerous opportunities for innovation and expansion. Growth can be driven by utilizing technology in design and production, collaborating with international fashion brands, and meeting the demand for sustainable clothing. Intricate patterns can be made with digital tools, and modern dyeing methods can make things work better. It is possible to open up new markets and encourage product innovation by collaborating with global fashion events. By focusing on the eco-friendly and socially responsible aspects of Pochampally ikat, the industry can also take advantage of the growing consumer preference for sustainable and artisanal fashion. Digital platforms can be used for

marketing and brand promotion, allowing Pochampally ikat's craftsmanship and cultural heritage to be shown to a wider audience. The industry can advance and tap into the potential of the global market with the assistance of these strategies [Pochampally Ikat Cluster Development Programme \(n.d.\)](#).

## 5. ROLE OF POLICY AND SUPPORT MECHANISMS IN SUSTAINING POCHAMPALLY IKAT FASHION

One of the major steps taken to achieve this was the "Pochampally Ikat" gaining its GI status in India in December 2004, which resulted in the brand's revival. The Pochampally Handloom Weavers Co-op Society Limited applied for the Geographical Indication (GI) for the Pochampally ikat to protect its authenticity and prevent imitation. A geographical indication is the status or signs given to certain products that have a specific geographical origin and are unique to that particular area. This indication on a product refers to the goods possessing certain qualities and are made according to traditional methods. It gives a guarantee of authenticity and quality to the consumer and protects the producer from exploitation of the design and reputation. The GI tag helps in promoting the product in global markets [Neogi \(2017\)](#).

A comprehensive strategy that encouraged growth, innovation, and quality control has been implemented by the Cluster Development Programme, which is in charge of GI registration. This helps in establishing the prestigious reputation of "Pochampally Ikat." Some manufacturers even registered their own logos, establishing distinct brands such as "Chikat" and "Ikat Art." A Pochampally Weaving Park was also established as a result, with the goal of elevating the brand even further [Misra \(2021\)](#).

IPR protection has significantly boosted the visibility and marketability of Pochampally ikat. Legal action against counterfeit products enhanced the original textile's popularity, resulting in branding and marketing efforts. The unique designs allowed for product diversification, meeting the growing demand. Higher prices encouraged artisans to invest more, while standardized quality and diversification satisfied consumers. GI registration promoted knowledge sharing among weavers, enabling informed decision-making and meeting demand effectively. Consumer surveys revealed a willingness to pay more for authentic products, indicating the potential for higher prices and improved income. Challenges involve raising awareness, balancing tradition with innovation, maintaining quality, and leveraging sustainability. Over 65% of consumers surveyed expressed a willingness to pay more for GI-registered Pochampally ikat if the original quality is guaranteed. Among them, 24.45% were willing to pay 10-20% more, and 43.18% were willing to pay 5-10% more. This indicates the potential for higher prices and improved income and employment for craftsmen in the future [Textile Value Chain \(2012\)](#).

## 6. CONCLUSION

Pochampally is also known as the "Silk City of India" and with its rich history, intricate weaving techniques, and vibrant designs, Pochampally ikat is a traditional textile. The yarn-resistant dyeing process in ikat creates the same pattern on both sides of the fabric, demonstrating the craftsmanship and attention to detail in its manufacture. Pochampally makes tie-dyed sarees and silk fabrics, which provide a livelihood for thousands of weavers in the village. Pochampally ikat owes its success to its ability to adapt to changing market demands while preserving its cultural

heritage. Designers and their fashion brands as well as celebrities have played a major role in popularizing Pochampally ikat by endorsing and using this fabric in their creations.

Despite challenges such as low wages for weavers and competition for looms, there are still opportunities for innovation and expansion in the Pochampally ikat fashion industry. Leveraging technology, partnering with international brands, and meeting the demand for sustainable apparel can drive growth and open up new markets. Political support, including GI registration and intellectual property protection, is crucial to sustaining and promoting Pochampally ikat. The establishment of the Cluster Development Program further strengthens the brand's reputation and facilitates knowledge sharing among weavers. By preserving its cultural values, embracing innovation, and leveraging its unique selling point, Pochampally ikat has the potential to thrive in the global fashion industry. The community's continued support, along with the promotion of sustainable and artisanal fashion, ensures the preservation and growth of this remarkable art form. Pochampally ikat stands as an example of the skill and creativity of its artisans, transcending borders, and cultures, and leaving a lasting legacy in the world of textiles.

### **CONFLICT OF INTERESTS**

None.

### **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

None.

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