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## **Saris**

The word *sari* means “strip of cloth” in *Sanskrit* (considered one of the world’s oldest languages, originating in India). Considered a traditional dress for Indian women, it consists of a 6 to 9 yard length of fabric, with a width of about 45 inches, embellished with any combination of prints, woven designs, embroidery, or sequins. The first mention of saris is in the *Rig Veda* (ancient Hindu scriptures dating to 3,000 BCE). Draped garments show up on Indian sculptures from the first through sixth centuries. This “magical unstitched garment” is ideally suited to [India](#)’s hot climate and the modest-dress customs of Hindu and Muslim communities. Saris also remain traditional for women in other South Asian countries including [Pakistan](#), [Bangladesh](#), and [Nepal](#).

India remains one of the last great handicraft cultures. It’s a powerhouse for dyeing, printing, and silk weaving, all represented in at least one of the estimated 30 regional varieties of saris. Though most saris in India are machine loomed today, over 2.6 million handloomers still ply their craft. There are major differences in weaving, dyeing, and how women wear saris from region to region. Every sari has a story about the society and people around it, reflecting the origins of the fabric, be it silk, cotton, linen, or chiffon, and its decorative thread work or detailed prints.

There are more than one hundred ways to drape a sari depending on region, fabric, length and width of the garment, and what the wearer might be doing that day. The most ubiquitous is the *Nivi* drape: pleated, wrapped around the waist, with the *pallu* (the embellished end of the garment) flung over the left shoulder. Most sari presentations require a *choli* (cropped top), and slender half petticoat with a drawstring at the waist, the latter often helps to anchor all that textile wrapping and fabric manipulation. Some sari folds need to be held with stitches or pins, others are more free form. The sari’s appeal remains its ability to conceal and reveal the personality of the person wearing it.

1. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/article/the-story-of-the-sari-in-india>
2. [www.livehistoryindia.com](http://www.livehistoryindia.com)
3. [www.heritage-india.com](http://www.heritage-india.com)
4. Wikimedia commons



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