

Original Research Article

Handcrafted Silk and Zari Sarees: Heritage of Banaras

Agrawal, Eashverya

Department of Home Science, Shrikrishna Institute of Management & Science, Chandausi, Uttar Pradesh

Corresponding Author: eash12.ag@gmail.com**ARTICLE INFO**

Received: 12 January 2018 | Accepted: 22 April 2018 | Published Online: 15 August 2018

DOI: 10.31786/09756272.18.9.SP1.155

EOI: 10.11208/essence.18.9.SP1.155

Article is an Open Access Publication.

This work is licensed under Attribution-Non Commercial 4.0 International

[\(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

©The Authors (2018). Publishing Rights @ MANU—ICMANU & ESSENCE—IJERC.

ABSTRACT

Banarasi saree, this is the ultimate choice of women who wanted to dress-up in saree on special occasions. This breath-taking art of weaving saree with silk and zari can surely be seen only in Banaras. Doubtless, the weavers of Banaras are specially blessed with this marvellous skill as the secret of designing lies in the combination of warp and weft weaving only. These sarees are the errorless unified reflection of their tradition and the magnificent art they have. A vast variety of Banarasi sarees are designed and here they are Katan, Organza, Georgette, Shattir, Cutwork Sarees, Banarasi Silk Jamdani, Jamwar Tanchoi Sarees, Jangla Sarees, Tissue Sarees and Butidar Sarees.

KEY WORDS

Saree | Silk | Zari | Handcrafted | Brocade | Motif

CITATION

Agrawal, Eashverya (2018): Handcrafted Silk and Zari Sarees: Heritage of Banaras. ESSENCE Int. J. Env. Rehab. Conserv. IX (1): 25—28.

<https://doi.org/10.31786/09756272.18.9.SP1.155> <https://eoi.citefactor.org/10.11208/essence.18.9.SP1.155>

Introduction

Banaras also known as Benaras, Varanasi, Kashi, is one of the seven holy cities known as the “giver of liberation”. It is very popular for its ancient textile designing especially for its gold & silk woven brocades of unique designs. This art is almost as old as the time itself. This incredible skill of the weavers of brocade weaving is known as *Kinkhabs*.

In Banaras, silk weaving was done on throw shuttle pit loom with jacquard attachment. Silk saree, furnishing fabric, dhoti, turban, silk odhani and brocade fabric for dress material were the main products of Banaras silk industry. Silk and/or zari used for extra weft designs. The silk saree weaving involved skill and took lots of time because of its elaborate intricate designs. Two weavers worked together for weaving one brocade saree (Dhamija and Jain, 1993).

The designs are their own tradition & creation and are in huge variety. These intricate designs are even impossible to imitate as the loom is very intricate in construction. The designs having border patterns are constructed with supplementary weft threads with highly decorated end piece.

Banaras brocade is India's fabric of dream; a cloth of gold. In olden days very fine and delicate gold and silver wires were interwoven instead of yarn. The saree ultimately glittered with a metallic sheen. However, the silk yarns used in weaving were purchased from Bangalore, Kashmir and Malda and tested zari from Surat. The varieties of Banaras silk sarees are Brocades, Jangla, Tanchoi, Satin border, Organza, Resham butidar and Cut-work woven with a harmonious combination of plain, satin and twill weaves to create interesting floral, fruit, animal, bird, geometric patterns and human figures. Colors used were the shades of pink, red, blue, green, yellow and purple (Thomas, 1985).

The history reveals that the oldest city was famous for weaving cotton sarees & dress materials but in 14th century a change happened that the weavers switched over to silk weaving using gold & silver threads.

Banarasi silk sarees are famous for their exquisite beauty, splendid and ethnic designs. The marketing of these silk sarees is as complex and intricate as that of its production. The article deals with ‘Satti’ - the traditional pattern and practice of buy-

ing and selling continuously is the backbone of the merchandising Banarasi silk sarees. (Tandon, 1997).

Motifs & Colors

The designs majorly consist of *floral* and *foliate* motifs. These motifs are woven with zari threads and rest of the saree is constructed with silk, dyed in variety of colors.

Banarasi sarees are designed in huge variety of colors and its gold & silver zari work is its embellishment.

Varieties

On the basis of variety Banarasi sarees can be classified into four categories:

Pure Silk (Katan) In ancient times handlooms were used to produce these pure silk sarees with beautiful patterns. Now a days, powerloom & rapiere looms have replaced the handloom.



Katan saree

Organza(Kora) with zari & silk: This kind of brocade use certain number of gold/silver/cotton weft threads in place of regular weft passing warp. Designs may be regular/irregular based on which end appearance of fabric varies. Use of only gold/silver threads in sarees will result in heavy weight which can't be wearable. So to eliminate the weight zari is prepared by polishing the silver threads with gold & then wound very closely around the silk thread.

Georgette: Generally plain weave is used to construct a fine, light weight & open texture fabric. They are made from crepe yarns usually two S twisted and Z twisted yarns in both warp & weft direction.



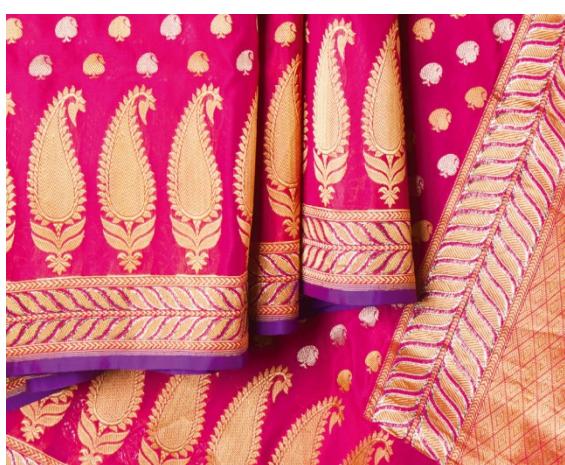
Organza saree

Georgette- Generally plain weave is used to construct a fine, light weight & open texture fabric. They are made from crepe yarns usually two S twisted and Z twisted yarns in both warp & weft direction.



Georgette Saree

Shattir- This creates exclusive and modernized Banaras sarees.



Shattir saree

Banarasi sarees are also classified on the basis of design, they are:

Banaras Silk Jamdani- This traditionally woven saree is considered to be the finest saree of Banaras. Here silk fabric is brocaded with cotton &

rarely with zari threads. Some of the traditional motifs of Jamdani includes Chameli(jasmine), Panna hazar(thousand emeralds), Genda buti (marigold flower), Pan buti(leaf form), tircha (diagonally striped), etc. The most attractive design feature is konia or a corner motif having a floral mango buta.



Jamdani saree

Jangla saree- In this silk threads are used to make a colorful saree with intricate patterns of vegetation motif. These are supposed to be the oldest in Banaras brocades. This old rose saree is embellished with gold creepers and silver flowers of jangala motif makes it graceful. Mena work is also used for the decoration of the fabrics.



Jangla saree

Jamwar Tanchoi Saree- This saree is designed by using extra colorful weft silk yarn for pattern making. It is brocaded with elaborate motifs from the Jamwar Shawl tradition from Kashmir, the characteristic feature of which was paisley motif.



Jamwar Tanchoi Saree

Cut work saree- Cheaper version of Jamdani variety is called Cut work saree. Motifs like jasmine, marigold flower, leaf form, etc. are used in cut work. The effect of Jamdani is given by cutting extra-weft thread that are hanging loose and this pattern is made to run from selvedge to selvedge.



Cut work saree

Tissue saree- The material which is woven by this technique looks like golden cloth. These sarees are lustrous as zari is used in weft. The patterns are made dense with golden lotuses floating in a glimmering pond by adding a combination of zari & silk in extra weft and silk in warp. Borders & panels has a diaper of diamond patterns enclosed by a border of running “Paisley” motif.



Tissue saree

Butidar saree- The most striking feature of this dark blue silken saree is that it is brocaded with pattern threads of gold, silver & silk. The brocade pattern is known as Ganga- jamuna due to gold dark shade & silver light shade, indicating these two river waters believed to be dark and light respectively. The end panel has a row of arches, in each of which a bouquet of flowers is placed.



Butidar saree

References

- Banaras and its impressive history in textile weaving. www.weaverstory.com
- Brocade fabrics. www.thebanarassilkemporium.com
- Department of District Administration of National Informatics Centre (NIC). Banarasi sari. Varanasi.nic.in
- Dhamija, J. and Jain, J. (1993): Handwoven fabrics of India. Mopin Publishing Pvt. Ltd., Ahmedabad.
- en.wikipedia.org/wiki/varanasi
- Mehta, Kiran. (2017): Banarasi sarees. A journey along the silk route of India. www.craftsvilla.com
- Sargunamani, D. Overview of Banaras fabrics. www.fibre2fashion.com
- Tandon, P. (1997): Marketing of Banarasi silk goods. Indian Silk, 35(10): 17.
- Thomas, A. (1985): Banaras Textiles. The Indian Textile Journal, 95(8): 53-57