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## Study Of Aesthetics In The Woven Heritage Of Banarasi Saree-A Review

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**Abstract:** The Banarasi saree, a culturally significant and beautiful garment, faces challenges due to technological changes and global fast fashion. This has affected local artisans, craftsmen, and entrepreneurs, who must adapt to current market trends to promote handlooms and handicrafts. The proposed paper aims to identify traditional aesthetics and the need for contemporary design in the Banaras saree, highlighting the gap between traditional and modern design aesthetics. The paper evaluates whether design intervention can revive the craft and explores innovative ways to generate livelihoods in this struggling craft.

The paper will be a review article, analyzing secondary data and suggesting an innovative approach for craftspeople to expand their craft vocabulary and access contemporary market trends.

**Index Terms** - Indian culture, Banaras handloom, Banaras saree, Design aesthetics, Materials & Techniques, Trends In design, Contemporary design, Sustainability, Design intervention.

### I. INTRODUCTION

The Indian handloom and handicrafts industry is an ancient cottage industry with an unorganized sector after agriculture. This is a major source of livelihood for millions of people in India and contributes a major part towards employment next to agriculture. The tradition of handloom weaving is the most vibrant Indian culture. The handloom sector has the advantages of less capital investment, minimum use of power, eco-friendliness, adaptability to market requirements, etc. The woven textiles of India are widely recognized in the world, and their existence was seen in India more than 5000 years ago. The length of the craft is found in the Ramayana & Mahabharata. Historically, a few famous hand-woven textiles of India were the brocade saree of Varanasi, the Bandhani of Kutch, the Chanderi sari of Madhya Pradesh, the Georgettes of Mysore, the Sambalpuri sarees of Odisha, the Jamdani saree of Bengal, the temple silk saree of the south from Kancheepuram, and others. Providing direct and indirect employment to more than 30 lakh weavers, the handloom industry is the second largest economic activity in India, next only to agriculture. Uttar Pradesh, one of India's northern states, is well known for its wonderfully crafted traditional silk sarees. "Uttar Pradesh is the rainbow land where the multi-hued Indian culture has blossomed from time immemorial," renowned writer Ruskin Bond. It is gifted with a wide range of natural terrain and a vibrant cultural scene. Uttar Pradesh's silk sarees are distinguished by their yarn type, weaving, color, theme, texture, and finish. Indian silk sarees are the priciest type of woven sarees; the "Banarasi saree," which symbolizes the Hindu wedding saree, is the best example in the world. (<http://www.toursthindia.com>).

Indians are known worldwide for their amazing craftsmanship and create beautiful hand-spun and hand-woven textiles. European royalty loved Indian fabrics for their detailed and intricate weaving. Creating designs on the loom was perhaps the earliest method of decorating the fabric, followed by dyeing, printing, embroidery, and appliqué work (Vastrad, J.V., 2003). Banaras is a holy city in India, known as Varanasi, in the Vedas known by the name of Kashi. Kashi, the city of Moksha for Hindus, is known for its fine-quality

silk saree, 'Paan,' Banaras Hindu University, etc. Banaras is the most famous pilgrimage place for the Hindu religion in the seven holiest cities. It is also a place of Shakti Preetha and one of the twelve Jyotir Linga sites in India. The city is situated on the bank of the Ganga River and is called the city of Lord Shiva. In Hinduism, it is believed that those who die and are cremated in Varanasi gain instant liberation from the cycle of birth and rebirth, and the Ganga River is thought to wash away all sins. (<https://varanasicity.com>).

The Banarasi silk or brocade saree is an antique piece of historical work of Varanasi weavers from 4000 years ago. The weavers have produced mostly handloom sarees for the past many years. The weavers have developed different styles & techniques of the brocade; Kimkhab, Tanchoi, cutwork, Gethua, Gaysarr, etc. are the most popular techniques. The Jamdani is the most expensive product of the Banaras handloom, popularly known as "Figured Muslin & Woven Breeze". They weave with the use of extra thread on a transparent and light-colored background. Traditionally, motifs were woven on a cotton base with Zari threads, but silk became popular for weaving on the silk surface with silk, and Zari threads also came into the trend due to fast global and technological changes; understanding the current market and consumer needs became important for promoting handloom & handicraft products. The change in the consumer's attitude and behavior effect may be seen in local weavers/craftsmen and entrepreneurs for a long time. The weavers/artisans developed designs and products for a longer time as per their skills and the availability of various resources. The handloom art & craft has gradually declined for many years. The weavers should create the product as per today's needs of the consumer and current market.

**Thomas (1985)**, in a review article on 'Banaras textiles,' reported that Banaras brocade is India's fabric of dreams, a cloth of gold. In the 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 Banarasi silk sarees are brocades, jangla, tanchoi, satin border, organza, resham butidar, and cutwork, woven with a harmonious combination of plain, satin, and twill weaves to create interesting floral, fruit, animal, bird, geometric patterns, and human figures. The colors used were the shades of pink, red, blue, green, yellow, and purple.

**Dhamija and Jain (1993)** mentioned in the book "Hand Woven Fabrics of India" that, in Banaras, silk weaving was done on a throw shuttle pit loom with a jacquard attachment. Silk sarees, furnishing fabric, dhotis, turbans, silk odhani, and brocade fabric for dress material were the main products of the Banaras silk industry. Silk and/or zari are used for extra weft designs. The silk saree weaving needed skills and took lots of time to weave because of its innovative, intricate design patterns. Two weavers worked simultaneously to weave a brocade saree.

The paper illustrates the gaps in traditional and contemporary design of the Banaras saree and evaluates whether innovation in design may help to revive the craft. The paper will be based on a review; secondary data will be collected, and it will be analysed accordingly. The paper will suggest an innovative approach for craftspeople to expand their craft vocabulary, access contemporary market trends, and help revive declining craft traditions.

## II. OBJECTIVES

The major objective of the paper is to study the aesthetics of the Banaras saree.

- To study various design elements used in the Banarasi sarees.
- To study types of dyes used in the sarees.
- To study surface embellishment used in the sarees.

## III. MATERIALS & METHODS

The Banaras brocade sarees are regarded as some of the finest sarees in India, which are known for their gold and silver brocade or 'Zaris.' These sarees are made of finely woven silk and decorated with intricate designs. The researcher reviewed many published research papers, articles, and blogs to find new insights.

### 3.1 Raw Materials:

Brocade can be divided into two major classes. pure silk and cotton blend brocades, as well as Zari, brocades with threads of gold and silver. Silk is the primary material used in brocade weaving. Lovely waves are made possible by their strength, fineness, smoothness, and durability. There are various types of raw silk, but Tanduri, Banaka, and Mukta are the most common types used to make brocades. Malda is one of the places where tanduri is imported. Benga Banaka, a finer and thinner type, is primarily used for handkerchiefs and other soft materials. For kimkhab, Mukta is a coarser, robust silk that works well because fine silk is not strong enough to support large gold motifs.

### 3.2 Fabric types:

There are two categories of cloth of the brocade type. Fabrics with a loom finish include saris, odhani, patkas, pankhas, curtains, and so on. Yardage: Yardage is typically utilized for drapes, upholstery, and dress materials. The most popular brocade textiles were kinkhab or kamkhwab. Varanasi served as their principal hub. Its name, which translates to "something a person cannot dream of if he has not seen it" (Kam: small, khwab: dream; kin: golden in Chinese), comes from its magnificence, elegance, and expense. Its unique quality is in the heavy application of gold and silver thread, making the silk background almost invisible.

### 3.4 Technique:

These designs are made of warp and weft threads of different colors and materials, woven suitably. Additional warp/weft threads or both are woven into the fabric. This pattern is woven with or without connections like jacquard, dobby, or jala weaving techniques. The warp and weft threads can be silk on silk, cotton on cotton, silk on cotton, or zari. The extra thread is used to create brocade with bobbin thread. This extra thread is placed in the weft direction to weave the brocade saree pattern. When this extra thread is taken from the edge of the fabric to the other end, the thread will be visible on the surface of the fabric in the pattern and will float behind the rest of the fabric.

### 3.5 Motifs:

The Banarasi saree was strongly influenced by the Mughal. The motifs like paisley in a creeper (Kalka bel), floral and foliage (Jal), and hunting scenes of animals (Shikargah pattern) are often seen in the traditional brocade saree. The most used motifs are:

- Chrysanthemum Buta
- Keri (paisley) Buta.
- Ganga Jamuna style (half gold and half silver zari)
- Ari jari (diagonal stripes)
- Latifa buta.

## IV. FINDING & INTERPRETATION

Every social and religious group, including the Banarasi silk saree, has certain rules about the hue and pattern of sarees made in different regions. The Gupta period's Ajanta murals feature variegated patterns that are thought to depict certain brocade specimens. The geometric patterns, animal and bird motifs, floral and vegetable designs, and other themes show a strong resemblance to the early brocade motifs. A detailed analysis reveals that the Deccan and western India kept the ancient ornamental forms with a focus on animals and birds, the most common being the parrot, goose, and peacock, which are rich in symbolism in Indian art and culture. (Das Shukla,1992).

The patterns on Banaras brocades show that the Mughals had an impact on the textile sector just like they did on other Indian ornamental arts. Every kind of art, including textiles, used the patterns created by combining Persian, Arabic, European, and Indian motifs as a model. The best examples are the floral forms and the shikargah pattern, which is a hunting scene pattern that was adopted from Persian models. These were so adept at weaving that it was difficult to notice the repetition. The ubiquitous Mughal motif known as the shikargah, which can be found in miniature paintings from the Jahangir era, became the focus of the Banaras' woven designs. These intricate patterns incorporate strewn animal and bird figures among the forest's vegetation and animals. (Rta, C. K., 2013).

## V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data collected through a review of various papers, articles, and blogs were coded, tabulated, and analyzed. M. Gehlot, et al. conducted a study on the existing status of the silk dyeing & printing unit of Varanasi and found that most of the respondents (54.84) used synthetic dyeing e.g. acid dye to dye the silk fiber. The survey was conducted to find the types of designs used for weaving sarees. (n=120) it was found that most of the weavers used a natural form of design in Varanasi sarees and 50% of weavers used stylized design for the sarees.

Types of Design	Frequently	Occasionally	Never
	F %	F %	F %
Traditional	6 5.00	61 50.83	53 44.17
Natural	120 100.00	Nil Nil	Nil Nil
Geometrical	27 2.50	62 51.67	31 5.83
Stylized	60 50.00	30 25.00	30 25.00

**Fig-1: Types of design used in saree.** (Source- S. Massey, R. Mourya., 2012)

The survey was carried out to find the types of motifs used in the weaving of sarees. (n=120) and the study reveals that 100% of weavers use florals in saree manufacturing and the rest are animal, and human figures, geometrical, stylized, and combination of motifs used in very less amount in the saree.

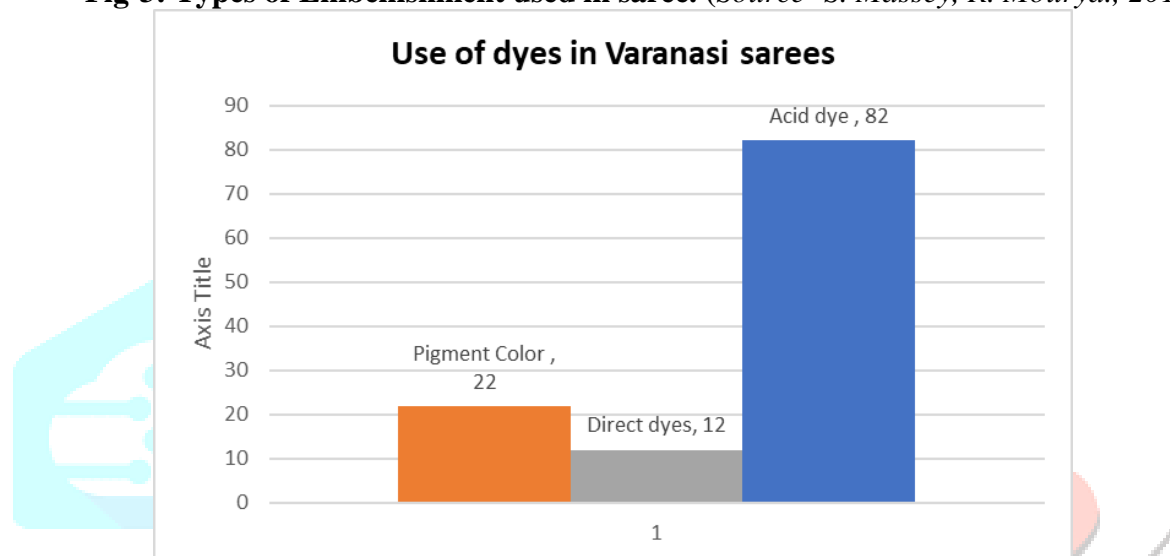
Types of motifs	Frequently	Occasionally	Never
	F %	F %	F %
Floral	120 100.00	Nil Nil	Nil Nil
Animal	4 33.00	70 58.83	46 35.33
Human figure	Nil Nil	56 46.67	64 53.33
Geometrical	30 25.00	62 51.67	28 23.33
Stylized	48 40.00	37 30.00	35 29.17
Combination of two or more types of Motifs.	40 40.83	47 39.17	04 20.00

**Fig-2: Types of motifs used in saree.** (Source- S. Massey, R. Mourya., 2012)

A survey was carried out to find the types of embellishments used in saree. (n=6). It was found that all weavers used Zari (Gold & Silver) as an embellishment in the saree. Meena was a second embellishment used in the saree.

Types of Embellishments	Frequently	Occasionally	Never
	F %	F %	F %
Zari (Gold & Silver)	6 100.00	Nil Nil	Nil Nil
Coils	1 16.67	1 16.67	4 66.67
Meena, Lora	2 33.33	Nil Nil	4 66.67

**Fig-3: Types of Embellishment used in saree.** (Source- S. Massey, R. Mourya., 2012)



**Fig-4: Types of dyes used in saree** (Source- S. Massey, R. Mourya., 2012)

The survey was conducted to find out the dyes used in saree. 82% of respondents used acid to color silk yarn and the second option was pigment color.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Indian heritage (folk arts and textile crafts) is intangible and significant; hence it is essential to preserve it for the next generation. Simultaneously, innovation is needed to capture the taste of the younger generation. The study based on the above found that still, weavers used natural designs as elements inspired by nature, traditional floral motifs, and Zari (gold & silver) are the most popular embellishments, and acid dyes to dye the silk yarn, which is used as a raw material for the Banaras sarees. With the change in time and consumer preference, the weavers of the cluster are also undertaking the need for changes in the design and pattern of the product along with product diversification. The study concluded there is a huge gap in traditional weaver-made products as per the current requirements. There is a need for newness in design and product development as per the current market demands. The Banaras saree is an Indian heritage; it must be preserved for a longer time, but nowadays it is struggling with many things. The designers play an important role in filling the gaps between traditional vs. current trends so that craft may be sustained and rich heritage may be preserved.

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