

#SILK

Understanding Weft and Warp in Gajji and Mashru Silk

The warp threads, made from silk, create the foundational structure of the fabric, while the weft threads (typically cotton) provide softness and comfort



Silk fabrics have always held a revered place in the world of textiles due to their luxurious feel, rich history, and intricate weaving techniques. Among the many types of silk fabrics, Gajji and Mashru are two that stand out in traditional Indian textiles. To understand how these fabrics are made, it's crucial to first understand the basic concepts of weaving: weft and warp.

What are Weft and Warp?
In weaving, the structure of a fabric is created by interlacing two sets of threads: warp and weft. These threads run perpendicular to each other, and the weaving process involves passing one thread over and under the other.

Warp refers to the set of threads that are stretched lengthwise on the loom, running from the front to the back of the loom. They form the foundation of the fabric. Weft refers to the threads that are passed horizontally through the warp threads, typically running from side to side across the fabric. These are the threads that are woven in and out of the warp threads.

The interplay of warp and weft is what gives the fabric its texture, strength, and overall appearance.

Gajji Silk: A Blend of Luxury and Tradition
Gajji silk is a high-quality fabric, often used in making rich, ceremonial garments such as sarees, lehengas, and dupattas. It is made from a blend of silk and sometimes, zari (gold or silver thread), giving it a distinctive sheen. The fabric is known for its delicate texture and smooth finish, making it ideal for festive and special occasion wear.

Warp and Weft in Gajji Silk
In Gajji silk, both warp and weft are usually made from pure silk, though the composition can vary depending on the desired finish. The warp threads are typically finer and are responsible for the overall structure and strength of the fabric. They are carefully stretched on the loom to ensure a tight and even weave.

The weft in Gajji silk, on the other hand, often includes a heavier thread to create a smoother, more lustrous surface. In some instances, the weft may include metallic threads (such as zari) to give the fabric an enhanced sheen and reflective quality. The interplay between the warp and weft threads, combined with the natural shine of the silk, results in a luxurious fabric that is both durable and beautiful.

Mashru Silk: The Fusion of Comfort and Elegance
Mashru silk is another fabric that boasts a rich cultural heritage, particularly in the region of Gujarat and Maharashtra. Mashru fabric is traditionally a blend of silk and cotton, making it more breathable and comfortable compared to pure silk fabrics. It was originally woven for the royal families and elite classes as a versatile fabric for both formal and casual wear.

Warp and Weft in Mashru Silk
Both Gajji and Mashru silks are used in different contexts based on their texture, shine, and comfort. Gajji Silk is typically used in the creation of formal garments, such as sarees, lehengas, and dupattas. Its rich finish makes it a favourite for festive occasions like weddings and religious ceremonies. Mashru Silk is often used for lighter garments such as kurta sets, tunics, and casual yet elegant sarees. It is also popular in making interior textiles, like upholstery and curtains, due to its breathable and comfortable nature.

A Season Without Borders

#SPRING

I grew up between two worlds, one rooted in the poetry of Persia, the other bursting with the colors of India. I have welcomed the Persian New Year with fire-jumping and the Indian spring with clouds of gulal. I have feasted for Nowruz, danced for Holi, and broken bread at a Passover seder. I have laughed with strangers over a pint on St. Patrick's Day in Ireland and stood in awe beneath Japan's cherry blossoms, watching petals fall like blessings from the sky. I have had my past year's bad luck washed away during Thailand's Songkran water festival. And in every festival, in every land, I have seen the same thing, our shared heart, beating beneath different names, different customs, different histories, but always telling the same story.



Mariam Abuhaideri
Writer and Wanderlust

I have always believed that if we truly saw each other, without the borders we've built, without the politics we've inherited, without the visas we struggle to get, without the hate we are fed, we would find that we are all the same, dancing to different beats, singing in different tongues, but ultimately celebrating the same joys of life. And nothing proves this more than spring.

Spring is the earth's way of reminding us that no matter how bitter the winter, pleasantness always returns. Across the world, we welcome this season with festivals, with colours, with music, with water, with food, with fire, with prayers, with offerings, whatever our ancestors deemed fitting to say, "Thank you, we survived the darkness. It is time for renewal."

But in today's world, we look at a festival that isn't ours and say, "That festival is foreign culture. We shouldn't celebrate it." Foreign? What is foreign about joy? What is foreign about dancing under cherry blossoms, being drenched in water fights, or having colours thrown upon you? What is foreign about lighting fires to welcome renewal or gathering loved ones to mark freedom? What is foreign about celebrating survival, about honouring the simple, universal truth that after every winter, spring must return?

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Spring, in every culture, is a rebirth, the victory of warmth over cold, light over darkness, life over death. The Greeks told it through Persephone, the goddess of Spring, the Hindus through the

The Eternal Story of Spring

Before we talk about our festivals, let's talk about our story. Because at the heart of every spring festival is the same tale, the battle between darkness and light, winter and warmth, despair and hope.

The Greeks tell it through Persephone, who was taken to the underworld by Hades, leaving the earth barren. But when she returns, the world bursts into bloom. The Hindus tell it through Holi, where the evil Holika is burned, and Prahlad, the true devotee, survives the flames, proving that light always wins. The Persians have Nowruz, which brings the return of Siyavash, the prince who was burned in a trial of fire but later returns in the spring blossoms, reminding us that no matter how cruel the world may be, goodness will always come back. The Christians tell of Easter, where Christ is crucified and rises again, death and rebirth, darkness and light, just like Holi, just like Nowruz. And then, there is Passover, where the Jews celebrate their escape from slavery in Egypt, a journey from suffering to freedom, from night to day. Even in Ireland, St. Patrick's Day, which seems like an excuse for



a pint of Guinness today, is rooted in a story of survival. St. Patrick himself was once a slave, taken from his home, only to return and bring light to the land that once oppressed him.

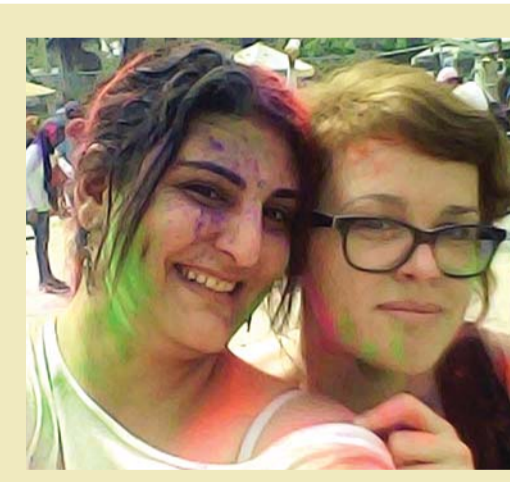
This is our story. Humanity's story. We suffer. We survive. We celebrate. And every spring, we remind ourselves of that.

where we saw the fire of Nowruz and thought of the bonfires of Holi. Where we heard the story of Persephone and recognized Easter. Where we watched the Jews mark their liberation at Passover and remembered our own struggles for freedom. Where we looked at the cherry blossoms in Japan, the water fights of Songkran, the feasts of Eid and Easter, the full-moon dances of the Celts, and instead of saying, "This is not mine," we said, "This, is so familiar!" Because spring, like love, like kindness, like hope, was never meant to belong to just one kind of people. I wish more people understood this.

Holi has spread far beyond India, made famous by Bollywood songs, the intoxicating thrill of bhaang, and the riot of colours that paint the streets. Holi has travelled far beyond India, its riot of colours, the intoxication of bhaang, and the infectious joy of Bollywood songs make it a global spectacle. But somewhere along the way, we have let its true meaning fade. More and more, I hear Muslims say that participating in Holi is a violation of their faith. And I can't help but wonder, how, then, can they expect our Hindu

neighbours to accept their festivals? Can we set aside religion for a bit? Can we? I have thought of the fires of Nowruz, the Persian New Year, when people leap over flames chanting, "Zardi-ye man az toh, sorkhi-ye toh az man", "Take my sickness, give me your warmth. Like Holi, Nowruz welcomes renewal, the shedding of misfortune, and the courage to step into the light. I have thought of Siyavash, the just prince of Turan (present-day Central Asia), who was

falsely accused of betrayal and subjected to an ordeal by fire. If he was innocent, the flames would not harm him. Siyavash walked through a blazing wall of fire, and emerged unscathed, a symbol of truth prevailing against deceit. I have thought of the story of Passover, when the enslaved Israelites fled Egypt, escaping tyranny and crossing into freedom. The fires of Passover, like Holi's bonfire, are not just flames but beacons, guiding people away from oppression and into renewal. Holi is not just a festival of laughter and mischief, it is a festival of justice, defiance, and survival of good over evil. Across continents and centuries, we have lit fires to burn away fear and injustice, to welcome new beginnings, to honour those who stood against power and cruelty. We may call it Holi, Nowruz, Passover, Easter, but the message is the same: No tyrant lasts forever. No winter is endless. And no force, no matter how dark, can withstand the fire of truth. Different names. Same story.



The Festivals That Unite Us

Nowruz: The Persian New Year

In my home, Nowruz has always been sacred. On March 21st, the air is filled with the aroma of sabzi polo-fragrant herbed rice, while the Haft-Sin table stands as a tribute to renewal and hope.

Each item on the table tells a story: wheatgrass for rebirth, garlic for health, vinegar for patience, a mirror for self-reflection, coloured eggs for fertility, and goldfish for life and movement. Candles glow with the promise of enlightenment, while the pages of *Hafez's Divan*, the *Quran*, or the *Shahnameh* whisper ancient wisdom. Among them, the pomegranate, the fruit of paradise, reminds us of abundance and love. Apples shine with beauty, and hyacinths fill the air with the scent of spring. Red tulips stand bold for love and strength, while daffodils, roses, and jasmine weave in the joy of renewal. We jump over fire on the eve of Nowruz which is



marked by *Chaharshanbe Suri*, the festival of fire. People leap over flames, chanting, "Give me your redness, take my paleness!" which is a plea to the fire to burn away sickness and misfortune. It reminds me of the Hindu ritual of *Holika Dahan*, where bonfires are lit the night before Holi to cleanse away negativity. Across cultures, fire

serves as a purifier, a symbol of transformation. But when I first celebrated Nowruz outside of Iran, I realized something, when Persians leap over fire, we are not alone. The Hindus do it for Holi. The Celts do it for Beltane. The Jews light the menorah. The Christians light the Paschal fire for Easter. The fire is the same. The message is the same.

Songkran: A Thai Holi?



Families gather to pour scented water over Buddha statues and the hands of elders, seeking

blessings for the new year. But outside, in the streets, it's a free-for-all, where strangers become

Holi: India's Festival of Colours

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friends, and the worries of yesterday are washed away. Different origins, different customs, but the same spirit. Whether it's Holi's water balloons, Songkran's soaking streets, or even Cambodia's *Chaul Chnam Thmey* and Myanmar's *Thingyan* water festivals, the message is universal: let go, cleanse, rejoice, and step into the new year with laughter and light. And let's not forget the gathering of loved ones and dressing up in brand new clothes! Because in the end, no matter where we are, we all celebrate survival, renewal, and the joy of our past!

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Passover: A Festival of Freedom



The first time I was invited to a Passover seder, I was fascinated. The table was set with unleavened bread, a reminder of how the Israelites fled Egypt in such haste that their dough had no time to rise. Bitter herbs to recall the pain of slavery. A lamb bone, symbolizing the sacrifice made on the eve of their escape, when blood was smeared on doorposts to protect them from the final plague. Salt water, representing the tears shed in bondage. Every item on the table told a story, not just of oppression, but of liberation, resilience, and faith. Passover commemorates the Exodus, when the Israelites, led by Moses, broke free from slavery under Pharaoh. It is a festival of deliverance, just as Holi celebrates freedom from Holika's cruelty and Nowruz marks the end of winter's oppression. Everywhere in the world, spring is about freedom. The earth awakens, shedding the cold and stepping into warmth, just as humanity, time and again, has shed oppression and stepped into hope.

Saint Patrick's Day: The pub-holiday

At first glance, St. Patrick's Day seems out of place in this list. But if you've ever been in Dublin on March 17th, you'd know it is a festival of survival, defiance, and joy.

Saint Patrick, the man behind the celebration, wasn't Irish. He was a Roman-British boy kidnapped by Irish raiders and enslaved for years. When he escaped, he could have left Ireland behind, but instead, he returned, not for revenge, but to spread light. He became the patron saint of Ireland, converting people to Christianity and, according to legend, driving out the 'snakes,' a metaphor for the old pagan ways.

But how did a religious feast day turn into a global celebration of pubs, parades, and people dressed in green? The answer lies in Irish history and resilience. Ireland suffered centuries of colonization, famine, and forced migration, particularly during the Great Famine (1845-1852), when millions of Irish fled to America. In the U.S., Irish immigrants, often marginalized, used St. Patrick's Day as a way to celebrate their identity and unity. The parades began in America, not Ireland, as a statement. We are



here, we are strong, and we will celebrate despite everything. The association with pubs and drinking? In Ireland, St. Patrick's Day was once a solemn religious holiday; pubs were actually closed by law until the 1970s! It was the Irish in America who embraced the party atmosphere, and over time, it spread back to Ireland and beyond. And the green? Ireland is the Emerald Isle, and green has long been a symbol of Irish nationalism and resistance against British rule. The shamrock, which St. Patrick supposedly used to explain the Holy Trinity, became an emblem of pride.

Wearing green was once a rebellious act. Those caught wearing it in British-controlled Ireland could be punished. But beyond the parades, the Guinness, and the sea green, St. Patrick's Day is about resilience, renewal, and belonging. And as I stood in a pub during my trip to Edinburgh, while I was a student in Northumbria, surrounded by singing strangers, I thought, This is Holi. This is Nowruz. This is Songkran. This is the cherry blossom festival in Japan. Different stories, different lands, but the same human spirit of joy. This is what spring is meant to feel like.

Hanami: The Cherry Blossom Festival, Japan's Celebration of Life

In Japan, when the *sakura* (cherry blossoms) bloom, an entire nation pauses to celebrate. Hanami (literally 'flower viewing') is an age-old tradition where families, friends, and even strangers gather under the pink and white canopies of cherry blossoms to welcome spring. The festival dates back over a thousand years to the Heian period when aristocrats would compose poetry inspired by the fragile beauty of the blossoms. Today, it is a nationwide celebration, marked by picnics in parks, music, food, and night-time illuminations known as *yozakura*. The cherry blossom is more than just a seasonal spectacle, it is deeply symbolic. The fleeting bloom, lasting only about one to two weeks, is a metaphor for the impermanence of life, a key concept in Japanese culture



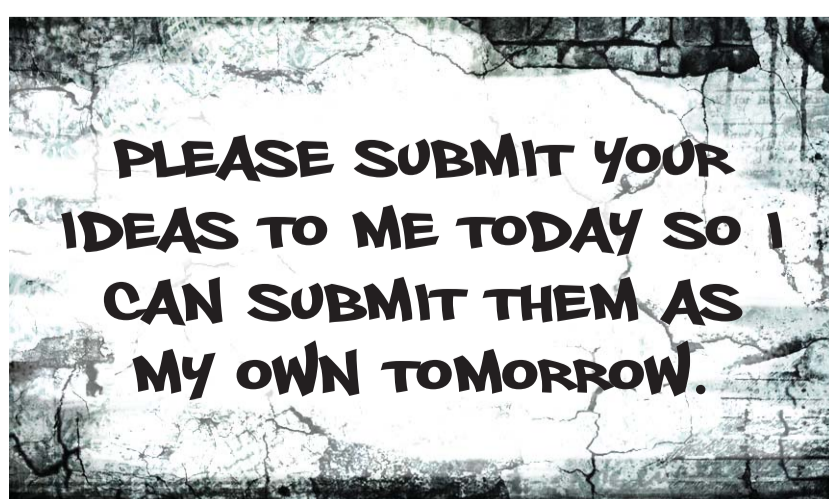
influenced by Buddhism and Shintoism. It reminds people to cherish the present, much like Holi reminds us that joy is temporary but worth embracing, or like Nowruz which marks the triumph of light over darkness. As the blossoms fall, carried by the wind like pink snowflakes, the Japanese bid farewell to another winter. Much like the other festivals I introduced you to above, Hanami is a way of cleansing the past and stepping into the future with hope.

Patrick's Day, Songkran, Hanami, different names, different lands, but all whispering the same message: We made it. We are one. And that is worth celebrating. rajeshsharma1049@gmail.com

A World Without Borders

Maybe, if we remembered that, we wouldn't hate so much. Maybe, if we remembered that, we would see each other not as foreigners, but as cousins in the same human family. Spring is the world's reminder that we have sur-

THE WALL



BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott



ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

