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A-B

#1911

She didn't cry She plotted

She worked the backrooms. She twisted arms. She used her charm and her steel-trap mind to draft legislation that was bulletproof



The sidewalk trembled with a sickening, wet thud.

New York City. March 25, 1911.

Washington Square Park.

Frances Perkins was enjoying a cup of tea in a townhouse when she heard the fire engines.

She ran outside.

She looked up at the Asch Building.

Smoke was billowing from the upper floors of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory.

But it wasn't just smoke.

Frances watched in horror as young women, some no older than 14, climbed onto the window ledges to escape the inferno behind them.

The fire escape had collapsed. The doors were locked from the outside by managers who wanted to prevent "theft."

There was nowhere to go.

So, they jumped.

Frances stood frozen on the pavement as 146 workers died.

She heard the sound of their bodies hitting the stone.

Most people saw a tragedy.

Frances Perkins saw a crime scene.

In that moment, the polite social worker died, and the most dangerous woman in American politics was born.

She didn't cry. She plotted.

She realized that charity wasn't enough. Kindness wasn't enough.

She needed power.

She spent the next two decades climbing the political ladder, fighting toe-to-toe with the corrupt hallucinations of Tammany Hall.

She became the expert on worker safety.

Then, in 1933, the phone rang.

It was President-elect Franklin D. Roosevelt.

He wanted her to be his Secretary of Labor.

It was an impossible offer. No woman had ever served in the U.S. Cabinet.

The press called the idea "sentimental." The unions were skeptical. The business tycoons were terrified.

Frances went to meet FDR.

She didn't just say yes. She walked in with a piece of paper.

She looked the President in the eye and issued an ultimatum.

"I will take the job," she said, "but only if you promise to back me on these demands."

She read from her list: A 40-hour workweek. A minimum wage. Unemployment compensation. Worker's compensation. A ban on child labour. Social Security.

It was a wishlist of "radical" ideas that had never existed in America. FDR smiled and said, "I promise."

She took the job.

Then, she walked into a buzzsaw.

For 12 years, she was the most hated person in Washington. Conservative Congressmen tried to impeach her.

Newspapers mocked her tricorn hats and her "mannish" demeanour.

Business leaders called her a communist for suggesting that children shouldn't work in coal mines.

She ignored them all.

She worked the backrooms. She twisted arms. She used her charm and her steel-trap mind to draft legislation that was bulletproof.

When the Social Security Act was stalled in committee, she locked the door and refused to let the men leave until they found a solution.

She didn't care about being liked. She cared about the girl on the sidewalk.

She kept a copy of the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire investigation on her desk every single day.

It was her fuel.

By the time she left office, she had rewritten the social contract of the United States.

She took a country where old age meant starvation, and created a safety net.

She took a country where weekends didn't exist, and gave us Saturday and Sunday.

She is the reason you have a fire exit.

She is the reason you get overtime pay.

She is the reason your 10-year-old is in school, not a factory.

Frances Perkins died in 1965.

She is rarely the face on the posters. She isn't on the currency.

But she is the architect of the middle class.

She proved that the government isn't just a referee for the rich, it is a shield for the vulnerable.

She saw the worst of humanity on a sidewalk in 1911, and she spent the rest of her life forcing America to be better.











The Secret of Banarasi Kadwa And Fekwa

People usually visit Varanasi out of belief, out of doubt or out of curiosity and the city has always served to convert those beliefs into doubts, those doubts into beliefs and the curiosities into indifference. Situated by the banks of River Ganga, the city gets its name from the river's two tributaries, 'Varuna' flowing north of the city, and 'Asi' (or Assi), now barely a stream flowing in the south part of the city near Assi Ghat. Other well-known names of this city are 'Benaras' and 'Kashi.' The word Kashi is derived from the Sanskrit root word kas, which means 'to shine,' the reason why it is also referred as the City of Light.



Anjali Sharma
Senior Journalist & Wildlife Enthusiast

A saree becomes special when it is handed down from one generation to another, weaving love and memories.

The vibrancy and admiration of Benarasi saree need no introduction. It has always found its unique admiration in the trousseau of a lady and has been as much a fashion statement as an obeisance to tradition. Its glory has rung the bells of all the couture of fashion aficionados, from big-ticket to celebrities in India to fashionistas in Europe.

The 'city of temples,' the 'holy city of India,' 'the city of lights,' or 'the cultural capital of India,' it has been bestowed numerous names. But apart from it being the undeniable apex of the Indian religious cosmos, its lineage, and grandeur, the city of Banaras also is a remarkable source of premium sarees. Banaras is not merely a city that beholds multiple things at once, it is the emotion that brings people together.

As a child, I remember being utterly besotted by the richness of the silk saree. Since then, I have fallen in love a thousand times. Benarasi silk saree is known for its extremely finesse, softness, gleam, super easy to drape, yet has grandeur and luxurious look. The breathtaking Benarasi opulence never ceases to amaze.

Benarasi (or Banarasi) is a generic name for sarees from Varanasi. What we commonly refer to is actually called Benarasi Brocade saree. There are various distinct saree names like Brocade, Jamdani, Tissue, Jamawar Tanchoi, Jangla, Shikargah for sarees made in Banaras. Each type is defined by the quality and weight of the silk yarn, the gold yarn and the overall design of the saree. Benarasi textile common vocabulary includes names like Katan, Kadhua, Jangla, Alfi, and many more.

I found myself mesmerized by the grandiosity of it all. Galaxy of design patterns, quality and distinctive names make Benarasi stand out among all the other weaves in Indian textile. Besides the beauty and elegance of this unmatched work of weaving, these sarees also possess traditional importance in India. Benarasi sarees straddles tradition and innovation, pushing boundaries of their craft repertoire.

History and Tradition

Firmly rooted in Banaras, this ancient melting pot of culture, tradition and history is also an age-old center of philosophy, theosophy, medicine and learning. The name of this ancient city is also famous with some of the oldest temples, most exquisite pans (betel leaf), finest fabrics and various ghats situated on the river Ganga. Banaras is synonymous for its legendary delectable street food.

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One of the ancient names of the city is Kashi, from nearly 3000 years ago. Sanskrit word, *Kash*, translating to "to shine, to look brilliant or beautiful." Carrying forward the basis of this foundation, the city is also called the 'City of Light,' which illuminates liberation, 'moksha.' Varanasi is another ancient name with its origin dating back to the Buddhist Jataka tales and the Mahabharata. Varanasi was the name given to the sacred city as part of the independent India

Banaras, in the first millennium BC, rose to the status of an important center of art, culture and education. But, apart from it being the undeniable apex of the Indian religious cosmos, its lineage, and grandeur, the city of Banaras also is a remarkable and important center of weaving. In 5th and 6th century BC, exquisitely woven cotton fabrics from Kashi became the most sought after commodity all over the world. In the ancient time, Banaras was famous for the weaving of cotton saree and fabrics, but slowly switched over to silk weaving, during the Mughal period around 14th century. Weaving of brocades with intricate designs using gold and silver threads was the specialty of Banaras. Silk weavers from Gujarat migrated to Kashi in the 17th century after a famine in 1603. Development of brocade and zari work in the city saw new heights during Mughal period, especially in the reign of emperors such as Akbar. What we see today is amalgamation of Mughal and Hindu, motifs, technique with Indian style of weaving was created by a confluence of Hindu and Mughal aesthetics.

The city has seen many changes in preferences of colours, patterns, motifs, borders and styles over the years. Between 350 AD to 500 AD, floral patterns, animal and bird depictions gained popularity. By the 13th century, 'Bootidar' designs were excessively in demand. Banaras was a thriving sector of cotton textile industries in the sixteenth century. With the advent of Mughals and following cultural concoction in the 16th century, patterns like florals and 'Jali' or 'Jaal' came in vogue, giving a new flavour to Indian fashion trends. Soon, in the 19th century, Indian designs started showing a close resemblance to Victorian style wallpapers and Geometrical patterns (a carry forward of the Mughal Lattice work). The Benarasi silk saree gained prominence only during the 19th century CE. A single look at the motifs will give you an idea about how complex and varied the influences have been. In fact, weaves have developed a hierarchy within them that makes this specialization possible.

Like old wine in new bottles, the real Zari and Brocade Benarasi sarees, that are a specialty of the city, have reinvented themselves with every era without losing out on their original charm. Jacquard technique also went through a variety of changes during Italian Renaissance along with Chinese, Indian and Persian influences in motifs over time.

Benarasi silk sarees are produced in cottage industries known as *karkhanas*, scattered in districts around Varanasi. The artisans, colloquially referred to as *karigars*, traditionally weaved the brocades on a drawloom known as 'jalla' and the entire supplementary design on the silk was done by hand, with heddles called 'naksh.' During the 19th century, jalla drawlooms were replaced with a jacquard mechanism, which was simpler to operate.

Handloom silk industry of the region around Varanasi encompassed Gorakhpur, Mirzapur, Chandauli, Bhadohi, Jaunpur and Azamgarh districts. Only brocade made in the six identified districts of state of Uttar Pradesh, namely Varanasi, Mirzapur, Chandauli, Bhadohi, Jaunpur and Azamgarh districts, can be legally sold as Banaras brocade.

Due to the distinct motifs of each karkhana, Benarasi silk sarees have been ordained with various forms within the form. Each cluster of karkhana has recognizable minute decorations, while other variations in weaving processes also occur and lead to variations with style and finesse. Despite the temptation of power looms and bringing in a lot of innovations into their weave, these karigars are keeping the art of hand-woven Benarasi thriving.

"Benares is older than history, older than tradition, older even than legend, and looks twice as old as all of them put together." - Mark Twain.

The Kadwa and the Fekwa

A Banarasi silk saree is not merely a garment. It is architecture in thread, storytelling in silk, and one of the most sophisticated weaving traditions ever developed in India. Behind the shimmering zari, floral vines, and intricate motifs lies a highly technical world of weaving methods that most buyers never see.

Among the many styles of Banarasi weaving, two techniques stand apart for both their craftsmanship and philosophical difference: **Kadwa and Fekwa.**

To the untrained eye, both may appear similar from the front. But for weavers in Varanasi, the distinction is enormous. It determines the time required, the complexity of labour, the texture of the fabric, and ultimately, the artistic value of the saree itself.

The word "Kadwa" comes from the Hindi phrase "Kadha Huya," meaning "embedded inside." The name perfectly describes the essence of the technique. In a Kadwa Banarasi saree, each individual motif, known traditionally as a boota or buti, is separately handwoven into the fabric using multicoloured tillis or small thread arrangements.

Unlike printed patterns or mechanically repeated designs, the motifs in Kadwa weaving are literally built into the cloth itself. The process resembles embroidery, but instead of stitching over fabric, the design becomes part of the weave during the weaving process itself. This gives Kadwa weaving extraordinary artistic freedom.

A skilled weaver can create almost any imagery within the technique. Floral vines, Mughal-inspired patterns, birds, temples, royal processions, and even entire narrative scenes can be woven into the saree. In highly elaborate pieces, stories from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata can appear across the drape in woven form.

The craftsmanship required is immense. Because every motif is individually woven by hand, Kadwa sarees are extremely time-consuming to produce. A single saree may take nearly three months to complete depending on the intricacy of the design. The process demands constant attention, precision, and coordination between threads, colours, and zari work.

One of the defining features of a Kadwa saree can be seen on the reverse side. Since each motif is independently woven and neatly integrated into the structure of the fabric, the back appears clean and finished. There are no loose floating threads surrounding the motifs. The design feels complete from both sides.

Fekwa weaving, by contrast, follows a very different philosophy.

In the Fekwa technique, the motifs are not individually handwoven into isolated sections. Instead, an additional set of threads, extra wefts running across the width of the fabric, passes continuously through the entire saree while weaving. The motif appears where required, but the supplementary threads continue across the fabric regardless of whether the design is visible in that section.

Once the weaving is complete, the excess threads are cut away from areas where they are unnecessary. This makes the process much faster than Kadwa weaving. A Fekwa Banarasi saree that visually resembles a Kadwa design may be completed in as little as two weeks instead of several months. However, the structural difference becomes visible when examining the reverse side of the saree.

In a Fekwa weave, loose or partially cut supplementary threads can usually be seen behind the motifs. Depending on the skill and neatness of the finishing process, these extra warp or weft remnants may appear more or less refined. Unlike the clean backside of a Kadwa saree, the reverse side of a Fekwa saree often reveals the mechanics of its construction.

The use of continuous extra threads also makes the fabric heavier compared to Kadwa weaving. Neither technique is "fake" or inferior in an absolute sense. Both belong to authentic Banarasi weaving traditions and serve different purposes. Fekwa allows more affordable and faster production while still preserving the visual richness associated with Banarasi textiles. Kadwa, meanwhile, represents the pinnacle of weaving artistry, slower, rarer, more detailed, and deeply labour intensive.

In many ways, the difference between Kadwa and Fekwa reflects two philosophies of textile creation.

One builds every motif individually into the soul of the fabric.

The other creates beauty through repetition and efficient structure. Together, they reveal why the Banarasi saree remains one of India's greatest textile achievements, not simply because of how it looks, but because of the astonishing intelligence hidden within its weave.

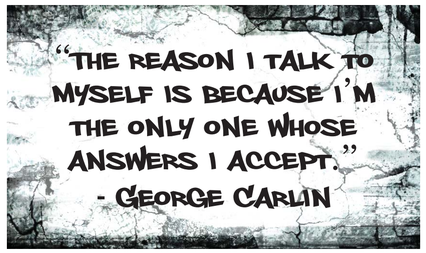
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#BANARASI SILK









THE WALL

BABY BLUES

By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott



ZITS

By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

