



The Stories of Bridal Fashion Wear “The Benarashi Sharee”



Ismat Zerin*

Department of Textile Engineering, National Institute of Textile Engineering and Research, Bangladesh

***Corresponding author:** Ismat Zerin, Faculty of Textile Engineering Department, National Institute of Textile Engineering and Research, Nayarhat, Savar, Dhaka-1350, Bangladesh

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Abstract

Benarashi sharees have reached the most sophisticated functions of the market, both home and abroad. Now these are the hallmarks of the today's bridal fashion wear. Bangladesh is famous for its most ancient itemed traditional textile called Benarashi since Mughal era. This small-scale industry brings its fame due to its gorgeous, soft, sophisticated, exclusive heavy work and takes attention in bridal costume. Not only bride but also each woman in subcontinent especially in Bangladesh and India has desire to have one for her. In this article about the historical Benarashi sharee, its materials, manufacturing technology, price and some present difficulties regarding weaver's condition and possible solutions are illustrated.

Keywords: Benarashi sharee; Weavers; Weave; Pit loom; Mirpur benarashi palli; Bangladesh

Introduction

Sharees are woven fabric made by interlacement of warp and weft yarn where the ends are concealed by two long decorative borders running the complete length of it. And, Benarashi sharees are fabric origin from Varanasi a city of India made out of silk and zari (gold thread) which is worn by women in the subcontinent especially women in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Benarashi sharees are used mainly by affluent society during special occasions [1].

These Sharees are made of finely woven silk and are decorated with intricate design like gold/silver brocade with opulent embroidery. Their special characteristics are Mughal inspired designs such as intricate intertwining floral and foliate motifs, kalga or kidney shape pattern and bell or ring like pattern, a string of upright leaves, and edge of border is a characteristic of these sharees. Other distinctive features are heavy gold work, compact weaving, and figures with small details, metallic visual effects and net like pattern and mina work. Because of these engravings, these sharees are relatively heavy. These traditional but elegant Benarashi sharees have long been possessed its pride and becomes an inevitable part of bride's trousseau in Bangladesh. This wedding attire brings to mind a gorgeous sharee studded with motifs of gold/silver adding grace to the radiant bride, makes her elegant, sober and sophisticated. It is popular not only in Bengali weddings but in rather every woman regardless of social status or religion desires these types of gorgeous shares.

Background story

Since the Mughal era Benarashi sharees have been immensely popular among women because of its fusion of aesthetics

properties. During the Mughal regime, this industry flourished in the subcontinent and by the 1930s, Dhaka set up its own Banaras silk industry in the old town. The market was developed by people migrated from Indian city of Banaras. Most of the weavers there are also from Indian state, Bihar. Due to 1940's political changes, the movement for independence from the British and for have a separate homeland for Muslims a large number of population from one region of India packed up their looms in 1946 and came with high hopes to Dhaka to start a new life. Their second and third generation families are now residents in Mirpur and Mohammadpur areas, located at the northwestern edge of the capital of Dhaka city. These two areas still remain the hub of Benarashi producing activities in the country. This age-old traditional attire has impressed the fashionable lifestyles and they bring into the present, the treasures of the past, these are also a formal wear, as popular as ever. Later more people became involved with this handloom industry and it spread, and the whole area came to be known as Mirpur Benarashi Palli.

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in Mirpur Benarashi palli located in central of capital Dhaka, Bangladesh in the year of 2017. The sample is collected from about 50 weavers from 35 fabrication unit. A self-structured plan was administered to perform the study by personal interview method.

Results and Discussion

Material used

Various types of yarn such as silk, polyester, nylon, silk-cotton blend, silk-nylon blend, polyester-nylon blend, polyester-viscose

blend etc. are used for producing the Benarashi sharee. The workers collect yarn from the yarn dealers. Yarns are collected from different countries such as Indonesia, Japan, India, china, Pakistan etc. It is said that in pasts Benarashi Sharees used to have designs with original gold and silver thread. Still now the designers use zari work (metallic yarn) to make it appear as original gold or silver threads.

Fabrication of benarashi

It is the most important process of making Benarashi that since the beginning, it was woven on pit-type handlooms where a weaver sits with his legs in the pit and weaves the basic texture of the sharee on the loom. The weavers are working on pit looms fitted with jacquard systems operating with punch cards. In weaving the warp acts as the base, which runs into 24 to 26 meters. There are around 5,800 warp yarns in 45-inch width. It is woven by transfixing the pattern thread between a varying numbers of warp threads in proportion to the size of the design and then throwing the shuttle

to pass the regular weft. By repeating this process, where in the size and placing of the cut-thread is in accordance with the character of the pattern, the weaver produces Benarashi arranging of intricate designs. Benarashi has its own special character of binding in the figured designs on ground fabrics using extra weft thread for the ornamentation of the sharee. During weaving in loom, three people work. One weaves, the other works at the revolving wrap reel to make hanks and another person initiated designing the motifs. Depending on design these sharees have various names like, Jangla sharee, Tanchoi sharee, Tissue sharee, Cutwork sharee and Butidar sharee etc.

In recent times, power looms are also used but it does not produced a soothing, sophisticated looks those created from on handlooms in terms of designs and even production processes. A normal sharee takes around 15 days to one month and sometimes six months to complete. It all depends on the complexity of designs and patterns to be created on the sharee.

Flow-chart of benarashi fabrication:

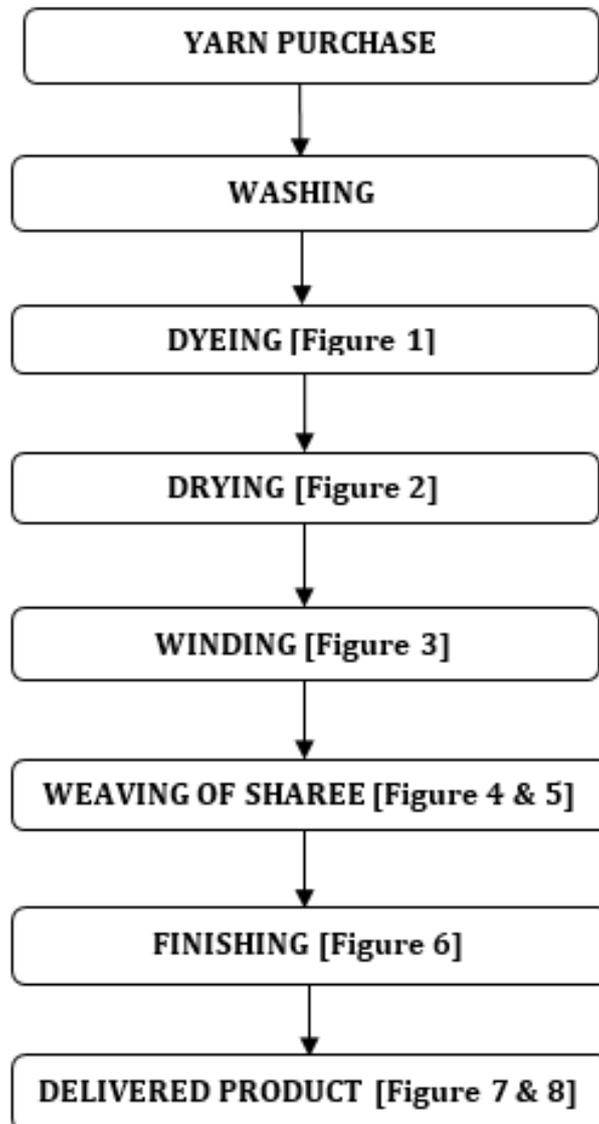




Figure 1: Manual dyeing of silk yarn.



Figure 2: Drying of dyed yarn under sunlight.

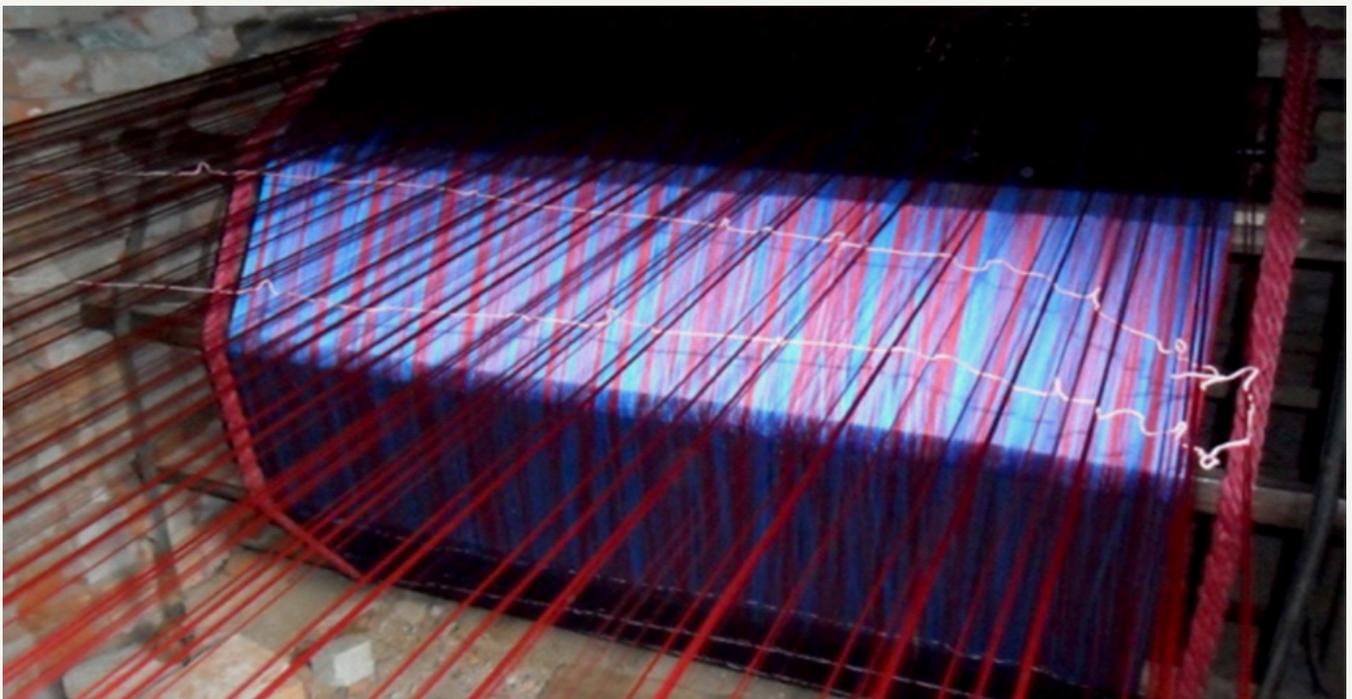


Figure 3: Winding of yarn in beam.



Figure 4: Manufacturing of benarashi sharee in pit loom.



Figure 5: Production of benarashi.



Figure 6: Karchupi is a special kind of intricate gold thread work to make dress material more attractive.



Figure 7: Bridal red benarashi with brocade design, which radiates dazzling hues [2].



Figure 8: Benarashi with various kalga, leaf and brocade design [2].

Price

Benarashi sharees are holding their own competing with foreign goods due to its aesthetic properties. Benarashi that has thread work costs more i.e. the price increases in proportion to the amount of the thread work (Figures 9,10). If the sharee has metallic yarn inside it, the cost will be higher again. The simple Benarashi

silk sharee price ranges from 80 USD onwards. The simplest exquisite thread worked Benarashi sharee begins at around 190 USD and it ranges from 2000 USD depending on how intricate and exclusive the artwork is. Benarashi sharees are much more affordable allowing its true beauty. As far as upper price limits go for sharees, the amount can easily extend more.



Figure 9: Bridals fashion the most traditional benarashi [3].



Figure 10: Bridals and party wear the benarashi [3].

Workforce and annual sales volume

According to the traders, there are nearly 130 shops at the Benarashi Palli. Some 20,000 weavers and salespersons are involved with the business directly. The manufacturers and traders said that the annual sales of the 130 shops would be 45 to 50 billion.

Present difficulties

Presently, a number of elements are daunting the existence of the Benarashi industry.

- i. This industry in Bangladesh is still dependent on handlooms and it languishes due to lack of technological advancement, lack of patronage and other social as well as economic factors.
- ii. Most of the weavers are dependent on master weaver or co-operative society and there are very few the master weavers. They have lag of owns loom, cannot buy raw materials self though they are being skilled in this job.
- iii. There is a weakness in marketing strategy. The weaver takes order from middleman called "Mohajon". Where the weaver manufactured the product but they hand it over to Mohajon by getting a minimum rate, while Mohajon sell it out to the wholesaler and also in showroom in huge profit. Here remains a gap and discrimination. Sometimes the Mohajon does not pay the full wages to the weaver and make delay in payment.
- iv. On consequence of this, many of the skilled artisans are now engaged in other jobs. Some have even become rickshaw-pullers; some have joined garment factories while some have become sales clerks.

- v. Most of the children in Benarashi palli are engaged for supporting their family as child labor because the family could not afford their education due to poverty. But the children are willing to start and continue their education.

Recommendation and Suggestions

- a) For the sustainable development of Benarashi crafts, establishment and revitalization of trade union and workers cooperative organizations are truly essential.
- b) Special selling shop, like "directly from weavers" need to be established, which seek attention of consumer and also ensure much better price to weavers.
- c) Government support should be a dire need where the weavers get loan, they purchase raw materials solely, manufactured and sales by themselves; which bring more profit margin.
- d) On consequence of this more weavers will be inspired to fabricate Benarashi who were being left to weave Benarashi. For sustainability of this industry establishment of workers trade union is truly required.
- e) Child labor must be banned as each child has right for education. Government may adopt a policy like remuneration against children who started for education. It will also encourage parents to continue the study of their kids.
- f) Occupational health and safety measure should be practiced.

Conclusion

The Goal of this study is to discover Benarashi Palli, its innovation and finally noticed the existing problem of the Benarashi

weavers. Through the study of such small-scale industry, its elegant output the Benarashi, its production sequences, the living condition of weavers and regarding this some recommendations have been significantly illustrated. The Benarashi goods have already market both at national and international level. Furthermore, it's a duty for all try to work for betterment of weaver's lives. This industry needs immediate attention of state Government to ensure the better socio-economic condition of Benarashi weavers [2,3].

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