
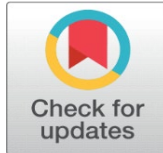
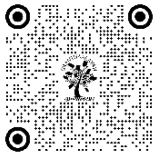


HOW DID SARI COME INTO EXISTENCE

Vishali Bansal  

¹ Assistant Professor, Faculty of Visual and Performing Arts, Guru Kashi, University, Talwandi Sabo, Bathinda, Punjab, India



Corresponding Author

Vishali Bansal,
vishalibansal974@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The origin of the sari, a traditional Indian garment, can be traced back to ancient civilizations, with its roots deeply embedded in cultural and historical significance. The sari's existence can be dated to as early as the Indus Valley Civilization (around 2800-1800 BCE), where archaeological findings depict draped fabric resembling the contemporary sari (Ranavaade, 2023). Over centuries, the sari evolved in style, reflecting the diverse cultural influences across regions in India. Historically, the sari was not only a symbol of modesty but also a canvas for artistic expression. Various weaving techniques, intricate patterns, and vibrant colors emerged, signifying regional traditions. The sari's draping style also evolved, adapting to social and cultural changes. As India experienced invasions and trade interactions, the sari incorporated diverse elements, resulting in a rich tapestry of styles. Throughout the centuries, the sari has transcended its functional purpose to become a symbol of cultural identity and femininity. Modern times have seen a fusion of traditional and contemporary designs, showcasing the adaptability and timelessness of this iconic garment. The journey of the sari from ancient civilizations to its present form reflects the dynamic nature of Indian culture and its ability to preserve tradition while embracing change.

Keywords: Sari, Traditional, Styles, Indian, Draping

1. INTRODUCTION

In Sanskrit, a sari is a "strip of cloth." But for the millennia-old Indian women—and a few men—wrapping themselves in silk, cotton, or linen, these vast swathes of fabric represent more than just basic clothing. They are emblems of pride in the country, representatives of both traditional and modern craftsmanship and design, and a shining example of the rich diversity among India's 29 states (Mathur, 2007). The sari is one of the world's oldest garments and may be the only unstitched garment from the past. Over the millennia, it has not only become a sensuous, glamorous all-season garment for women, but also a 'canvas' for weavers and printers to create artistic weaves, prints, and jewelled or gold-silver embellishments. With its allure and capacity to both hide and reveal the personality of the wearer, the sari has filled the imagination of the subcontinent," says Rta Kapur Chishti, a textile historian based in Delhi. She is also the co-founder of Taanbaan, a

fabric company committed to preserving and resurrecting traditional Indian spinning and weaving techniques.

One of the greatest handicraft cultures that still exists is India. At least one of the approximately 30 regional sari varieties showcase the region's prowess in dyeing, printing, and silk weaving. Weavers bend over antique wooden looms in the Ganges riverfront city of Varanasi to create the silk garments known as Banarasi silks, which are highly valued by brides and typically come in bright red with metallic zari thread trimmings. Primarily made of white, sett mundu saris, the tropical state of Kerala reflects fashions that were popular prior to 19th-century industrialization, which introduced vibrant aniline dyes and Crayola-box brights that are now seen throughout the subcontinent (Anoo et al., 2011).

2. THE SARI'S EVOLUTION AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Rig Veda, a collection of Hindu hymns that dates back to 3,000 B.C., is where the word "sari" (sometimes spelt "saris") first appears. Indian sculptures from the first to the sixth centuries also feature draped clothing. The "magical unstitched garment," as Chishti refers to it, is perfect for India's intense heat and the modest clothing traditions of both the Muslim and Hindu populations. In Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Nepal, among other South Asian nations, saris are still customarily worn by women.

The Indus Valley Civilization, which flourished from 2800 to 1800 BCE, is where the sari's history begins (Sharma and Pahuja, 2017). Based on historical evidence, women in ancient India wrapped a length of cloth around their bodies in a style that predated the modern sari.

The sari first took on its distinctive shape during the Vedic era (1500–500 BCE), when it was a long piece of cloth wrapped around the body with pleats and a pallu (a decorative endpiece) draped over the shoulder (Bhandari, 2015).

The sari changed over time to incorporate various draping styles and techniques, influenced by South Asian regional and cultural variances. For instance, Andhra Pradesh is where the Nivi drape, the most popular sari style today, first appeared in the early 1900s.

In South Asia, women from various social and economic backgrounds have worn saris throughout history. It has also been incorporated into a number of literary works, artistic creations, and media, and it has greatly influenced South Asia's sense of national identity. The sari is still a timeless representation of femininity and tradition in today's world, but it has undergone constant evolution and adaptation to shifting fashion trend.

Sari recycling has always been practiced by Indian women. Disused saris are either redyed, chopped up and sewn into quilts or pillowcases, traded in for stainless steel cookware, or given to obedient servants. Occasionally, children's dresses feature gold borders that have been removed. But according to custom, a deceased woman's clothing are typically burned or given to servants rather than being left for her children to inherit. Vintage clothing is not considered a family heirloom and is instead valued highly as a symbol of renewal in custom.

3. MUSLIM INFLUENCE AND ITS IMPACT ON SARI

The Muslims' invasion brought about a change in Hindu clothing. The bare chest was eliminated by Muslim influences, and women began to wear garments that covered their shoulders and chests everywhere (Parshall and Parshall, 2003).

Additionally, the stitched garment was introduced during this period. Hindu customs held that the stitched garment was unholy, especially when one was cooking or engaged in religious ceremonies. This custom may be one of the reasons the sari has endured for so many centuries in some regions of the nation.

4. BRITISH INFLUENCE ON SARI

The British had arguably the biggest influence on the sari. Indian women still wore six yards of fabric wrapped around their bodies without a blouse or petticoat when British women first arrived in India (Tarlo, 1992). These women's influence helped to popularise the current sari wear trend, which includes a blouse and petticoat.

5. THE MEANING AND SYMBOLISM OF THE TRADITIONAL SARI

Though the sari has become a fashion statement in today's world, its traditional meaning and symbolism remain significant. Numerous customs that date back centuries are associated with the sari. Stitched fabric was thought to be unclean in the past. Worn on auspicious occasions like religious ceremonies, weddings, festivals, childbirth rituals, etc., the one-piece sari was and is considered auspicious in Hindu culture. Since the navel and the midriff were thought to be the source of life (because they connect to the umbilical cord), this particular sari draping style originated from this belief. The *Natya Shastra*, an old South Indian text from about 200 AD, contains a description of this (Das, 2015). A sari was the most appropriate garment to represent the ancient belief of the ideal Indian woman, which is reflected in numerous sculptures and consists of a small waist, a large bust, and flaring hips. The pleated fabric of the costume flatteringly defined the female's hips, emphasized her waist, and emphasized her bust.

6. THE SARI AS CLOTH

Two long decorative borders that run the length of the sari, one plain end (the end hidden inside the wrap), and a one-to-three-foot section at the other end that elaborates and continues the lengthwise decoration are the three types of weaving used to make saris. The end thrown over the shoulder in the Nivi style of draping is called the pallu (Kaikobad et al 2014).

Silk or cotton were once used to weave saris. Finely woven, dainty silk saris, which could supposedly be passed through a finger ring, were only accessible to the wealthy. The poor wore saris made of cotton with coarse weaving. A significant amount of money or time was invested in each handwoven sari.

The basic saris made by hand by the villagers are frequently embellished with woven-in checks or stripes. Cheap saris were also embellished with tie-dying, or block printing, which is called bhandani work in India and involves using carved wooden blocks and vegetable dyes.

Expensive saris featured intricate floral, geometric, or figurative embroidery that was woven into the fabric. Occasionally, ikat patterns were created by tie-dying warp and weft threads before weaving them. A rich pallu, an ornate border, and frequently tiny, repeated accents were woven into the fabric itself, incorporating multicoloured threads into the base fabric in patterns. These accents are known as bhutties or buttis (various spellings). These patterns could be woven—a process

known as zari work—using gold or silver thread for elegant saris. (Raheja and Bhagat, 2022).

Saris were occasionally embellished with additional embroidery after they were woven. Stitching with coloured silk thread is known as resham work. Occasionally, pearls and precious stones are used in zardozi embroidery along with gold and silver thread. Fake pearls and Swarovski crystals are used in inexpensive contemporary zardozi designs, along with synthetic metallic thread (Apfel and Menkes, 2019).

Modern saris are increasingly made of synthetic fibres that don't need to be starched or ironed, like rayon, polyester, or nylon, and are woven on mechanical looms (Singer, 2010). They are either machine printed or woven across the back of the sari in straightforward designs created with floats. This can give the front an ornate appearance, but the back will look hideous. Tassle trim that is cheaply manufactured by machine is used to mimic the punchra work.

Naturally, hand-woven and hand-decorated saris are far more costly than their machine-made counterparts. Even though the overall market for handicrafts has collapsed, causing immense anxiety for Indian handlooms, hand-woven saris remain a popular choice for formal events like weddings and other social gatherings.

Figure 1

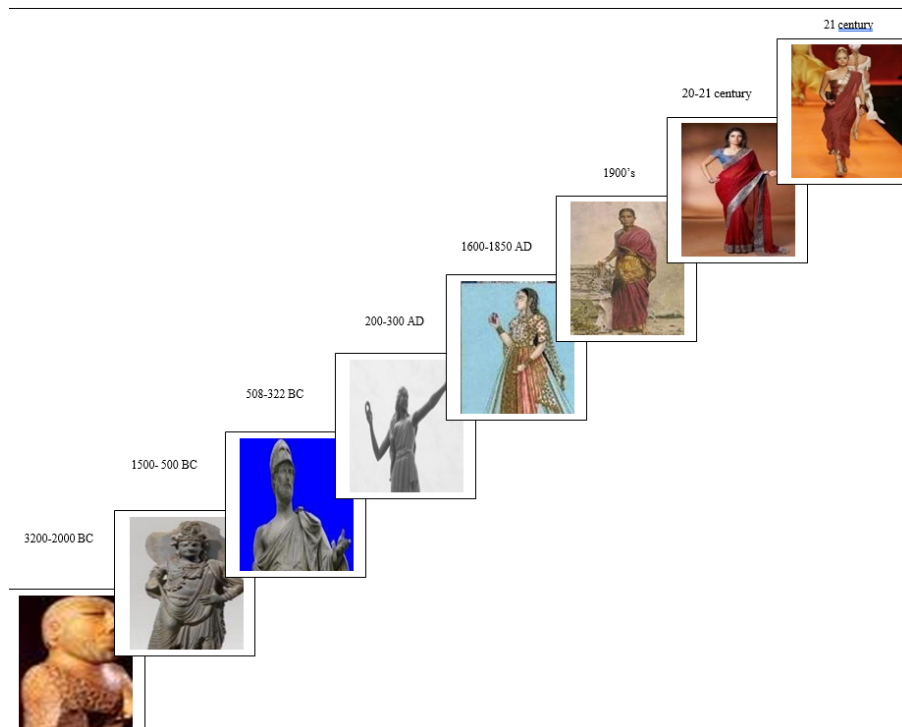


Figure 1 Evolution of The Sari Drapes

7. DIFFERENT STYLES OF SARI

In addition to the plethora of colours, weaves, textures, and patterns available, India's diversity is evident in the entire range of saris, each with their unique geographic and ethnic origins (Ranavaade, 2023). Each region is distinct and easily identifiable, and they all drape the sari in a different way. Additionally, styles are linked to various Indian regions. The charm of India's diverse saris not only lies in

their vibrant colors, weaves, and intricate patterns but also in the art of draping, which varies across regions. The way a sari is elegantly worn reflects the cultural nuances and traditions unique to each part of the country. In the graceful folds of a Banarasi sari, one can witness the regal drape of Northern India, while the distinct pleats and pallu of a Kanjivaram exemplify the traditional South Indian style. The free-flowing, artistic drape of a Bengali tant sari, on the other hand, echoes the cultural ethos of East India.

Moving westward, the elaborate pallu of a Patola sari from Gujarat is meticulously draped to showcase its intricate patterns, while the Rajasthani and Gujarati women masterfully wrap the vibrant folds of a Bandhani sari. The breezy elegance of the Nauvari style, where the Maharashtrian sari is draped like a nine-yard dhoti, adds a unique flair to Western India.



Table 1

PATOLA, AJRAKH	GUJRAT
POCHAMPALLY	TELANGANA
BOMKAI	ODISHA
KHANDUA	ODISHA
SAMBALPURI	ODISHA
BENARASI	VARANASI, UP
BEHRAMPURI	ODISHA
BARGARH	ODISHA
JAMDANI	ORIGIN: BANGLADESH
TANT	BENGAL
MANGALGIRI, GUNTUR	ANDHRA PRADESH
NARAYANPET	MAHARASHTRA
CHANDERI, MAHESHWARI	MADHYA PRADESH

NUAPATNA	ODISHA
TUSSAR	BENGAL, BIHAR
KODPAD	TRIBAL ODISHA
MANIPURI	MANIPUR
BANDHANI, BAGRU, LEHERIA	RAJASTHAN
SUNGUDI	TAMIL NADU
KOTA	RAJASTHAN
KALAMKARI	ANDHRA PRADESH (Antique art)
BALUCHARI	BENGAL

8. THE FACTORS THAT CAUSED SARI TO EMERGE

- **Climate:** People had to dress comfortably loosely because of South Asia's hot and muggy weather. An excellent option was offered by the sari's flowing fabric and adaptable draping style.
- **Social and cultural norms:** The sari became a significant component of South Asian culture and tradition, with various regions creating their own distinctive looks and iterations of the garment. It was frequently worn on festivals and special occasions and was also regarded as a symbol of femininity and grace.
- Due to their accessibility and low cost, natural fibres such as cotton, silk, and others were frequently used to make saris.
- Influence of migration and trade: Movements and trade amongst South Asian regions resulted in the sharing of concepts and customs, including dress codes. As an article of clothing, the sari's richness and diversity were enhanced by this.
- Colonialism's influence — The British colonisation of South Asia had an effect on sari design and manufacture. With the advent of new weaving techniques and the growing need for fabrics that were more comfortable and lighter, sari styles and designs continued to evolve.

Regional Variations and Styles of the Sari During Its Emergence

- **Nivi drape:** This Andhra Pradesh fashion involves draping the pallu over the left shoulder and tucking the sari's pleats into the waistband.
- **Bengali style:** This style, which is primarily worn in West Bengal and Bangladesh, has a wide pleat in the front and the pallu is draped over the left shoulder.
- **Gujarati style:** This style, named after the state of Gujarat, entails draping the pallu over the right shoulder and tucking the pleats in the back.
- **Maharashtrian fashion:** This look, which is popular in Maharashtra, entails draping the sari over the left shoulder in a dhoti-like manner.
- **Style in Tamil:** This is a popular style in Tamil Nadu where the pallu is draped over the left shoulder and the sari is draped with the pleats facing the right.

The Materials and Fabrics Used in the Ancient Saris

- **Cotton:** One of the most popular materials for saris was cotton. It was a well-liked option for daily wear since it was reasonably priced and easily accessible.

- **Silk:** Silk was a high-end material that was typically saved for formal gatherings and exceptional occasions. Many kinds of silk, including Tussar, Kanchipuram, and Banarasi silk, were used to make saris with elaborate embroidery and embellishments.
- **Muslin:** Summer saris were frequently made from this breathable, lightweight fabric. Its comfort and softness also contributed to its popularity.
- **Chiffon:** Another sheer, light fabric used to make saris was chiffon. It was frequently employed to make sophisticated, feminine saris for evening wear. In the eastern parts of South Asia, it was widely utilized.

Relevance of the Sari in South Asian Traditions and Cultures

- **Symbol of femininity:** The sari is regarded as one of the world's most exquisite and feminine outfits. Women of all ages and backgrounds wear it, and it is frequently linked to grace, beauty, and charm.
- **Cultural identity:** An essential emblem of South Asian culture and ancestry is the sari. It is frequently worn on festive occasions and festivals and has a strong cultural foundation in the area.
- **Bridal wear:** The sari is a common option for weddings and other joyous events. Bridal gowns are in great demand because they are frequently adorned with elaborate designs and embellishments through embroidery.
- **Religion:** Women wear the sari, which is seen as a symbol of purity and devotion, during religious ceremonies and rituals in Hinduism.
- **Economic significance:** South Asia's economy greatly benefits from the sari industry. For millions of people, it offers work opportunities in manufacturing, design, and weaving, among other fields.

9. CONCLUSION

For centuries, women in South Asia have adorned themselves in the traditional sari. Despite evolving over time to accommodate shifting fashions and cultural norms, it has stayed a vital component of the area's identity and legacy (Pereira-Ares, 2017). Beyond its beauty and grace, the sari is significant as a representation of femininity, cultural identity, and religious devotion. Climate, social and cultural norms, resource availability, trade and migration, and colonialism are some of the factors that contributed to its emergence. The sari is still an enduring symbol of grace, beauty, and tradition, and it is still celebrated and revered throughout South Asia and beyond (DeCaroli, 2015). The sari, an exquisite and remarkable feminine garment that can fit even the oldest women or the youngest girls, continues to captivate even after centuries of being considered an Indian woman's traditional attire. Indeed, it has been widely embraced by the most contemporary women in the subcontinent, even with every new decade of technological advancement. These days, its tumultuous past has faded into obscurity. Despite the garment's limited potential for modification, its continued use to recreate its beauty for each new generation of women gives the impression that it will always have a bright future.

The sari is more than just a piece of clothing; it carries the weight of centuries of tradition and cultural evolution. It transcends fashion, embodying the essence of femininity and serving as a powerful marker of identity. The intricate weaves, vibrant colors, and diverse draping styles tell stories of regions, communities, and individual journeys.

From the opulent courts of ancient kingdoms to the bustling streets of contemporary cities, the sari has gracefully traversed time and space (Amato, 2004). Its significance goes beyond aesthetics, becoming a powerful expression of religious beliefs, regional pride, and even socio-economic influences. The sari reflects the climate and terrain of its origin, the social norms of its time, and the craftsmanship of its creators.

In a world where trends are fleeting, the sari remains a symbol of heritage and cultural continuity. Its ability to adapt without losing its essence makes it a truly remarkable garment. As South Asia continues to embrace modernity, the sari's allure persists, finding a place not just in wardrobes but also in the hearts of those who cherish tradition (Roman, 2010).

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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None.

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