

DANYAH · BANARAS

PRE-DRAPED HEIRLOOM SAREES · VARANASI

The Saree Draping Guide

8 timeless drapes for the modern woman

A 24-PAGE FIELD GUIDE FROM OUR ATELIER

danyahbanaras.com

FROM OUR ATELIER

A note before you begin

A saree is six yards of memory. The first time you wear one, it teaches you patience. The hundredth time, it teaches you grace. This little book is a friend for both.

We made it because so many of you wrote to us asking — "How do I drape this properly?" "What blouse with this Banarasi?" "Will this Kota hold a Bengali drape?" Every question deserved an answer that didn't live on YouTube for thirty seconds and then forget you. So we wrote one down.

Eight drapes. Photographs from our own atelier. Notes from our weavers. A blouse + petticoat sizing chart. And the care instructions that turn a beautiful saree into a fifty-year heirloom.

Wear it well. Wear it often. And when you need a fresh one — we're in Varanasi, weaving.

— *Danyah Banaras*

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DRAPE STYLE

01. The Nivi drape

The Nivi is the saree as the world knows her — born in Andhra Pradesh, codified by Jnanadanandini Tagore in the 19th century to bring sarees into the offices and salons of modern India. Six yards, pleats forward, pallu over the left shoulder. If you only learn one drape, learn this.

WHEN TO WEAR

Every occasion — work, weddings, festivals, your first saree photo. The Nivi is the universal "yes."

BEST FABRIC FROM OUR ATELIER

A 6.3m Banarasi katan silk drapes the Nivi most beautifully — the weight sits the pleats, the silk gives the pallu its drop. Our katans are woven on pit looms in Pillikothi, Varanasi.

Step by step

- 1 Tuck the plain (non-pallu) end into your petticoat at the right side of your navel, just below the waistband.
- 2 Wrap the saree once around your waist from right to left, bringing it back to the front. Tuck this round in.
- 3 Hold the pallu end (the decorated end). From the front, fold 7 pleats into the body of the saree — each pleat about 4–5 inches wide.
- 4 Tuck the pleats neatly into the petticoat at the centre of your navel. They should fall straight to the floor.
- 5 Take the remaining saree to the back, wrap once more, bring it around to the front under your right arm.
- 6 Drape the pallu over your left shoulder — about waist length at the back.
- 7 Pleat the pallu lengthwise (3–4 pleats) and pin at the shoulder with a small safety pin.

Stylist tip

"Pin the centre of your pleats to the petticoat with an invisible safety pin before you tuck — they will sit flat for ten hours, not five." — The Danyah atelier

DRAPE STYLE

02. The Bengali drape

No pleats. Two passes. A pallu that comes from the back, across the right shoulder, and falls in a soft loop over the left arm — often held with a fan of keys in old film. The Bengali drape is by far the most graceful, and the easiest once you stop trying to pleat.

WHEN TO WEAR

Pujo, family weddings, "aabhijatya" occasions where pleats would feel busy. A red-and-white Garad on Mahashtami is the original look.

BEST FABRIC FROM OUR ATELIER

A crisp Bengal cotton, a Garad silk, or our Banarasi tanchoi — anything with enough body to hold its shape without pleating.

Step by step

- 1 Tuck the plain end into the petticoat at the right of your navel.
- 2 Wrap around your waist once, left to right, and bring the saree back to the front under your right arm.
- 3 Bring the saree up across your chest and over your left shoulder. No pleats yet.
- 4 Take the pallu around your back to your right side. Bring it forward under your right arm.
- 5 Drop the pallu over your left shoulder again — this time the front of the pallu should fall in a wide loop near the waist.
- 6 Optional: tie a tiny knot at the corner of the pallu and slip a set of household keys through it (the traditional Bengali statement).

Stylist tip

*"The Bengali asks for a shorter petticoat than the Nivi — let your ankle show.
The drape is meant to move when you walk." — The Danyah atelier*

DRAPE STYLE

03. The Gujarati drape (Seedha Pallu)

The pallu in front, not behind. Originally a north-Indian invention — Rajput, Gujarati, Marwari — it shows the embroidered face of the saree where it can be admired. Worn at every Gujarati wedding to this day.

WHEN TO WEAR

Weddings, sangeets, garba nights, any occasion where the pallu is the most beautiful part of the saree (which, for our Bandhej-tanchoi sarees, is most occasions).

BEST FABRIC FROM OUR ATELIER

A Bandhej, a heavy Banarasi with kadhua border, a Patola — anything where the pallu deserves the spotlight.

Step by step

- 1 Start exactly like the Nivi — tuck and wrap once around the waist.
- 2 Make your 7 pleats and tuck them into the centre of your petticoat, falling straight.
- 3 Now take the saree to the back, wrap once more, and bring it forward over the RIGHT shoulder (not the left).
- 4 The pallu now falls down your front, across your chest, with the decorated face visible.
- 5 Pleat the pallu lengthwise into 4–5 pleats and pin it on the right shoulder.
- 6 Spread the pallu wide across the chest — the decorative border should sit just below the chest.

Stylist tip

"A Gujarati drape needs a longer pallu (a 6.5m saree, not 5.5m) — every Danyah Banaras saree we sell is woven to 6.3m precisely for this reason." —

The Danyah atelier

DRAPE STYLE

04. The Mumtaaz drape

Named for Mumtaz Madhvani's look in the 1960s Bollywood film "Brahmachari," this drape wraps the saree tight around the body like an evening gown — multiple wraps, no front pleats, a pallu that floats over one shoulder.

WHEN TO WEAR

Cocktails, receptions, anywhere you want to read 'evening gown' without losing the saree silhouette.

BEST FABRIC FROM OUR ATELIER

A fluid silk — our Mashru silk or a soft Banarasi georgette. Stiff fabrics will refuse to wrap multiple times.

Step by step

- 1 Use a slightly longer saree than usual (6.5–7m) — you need the extra fabric.
- 2 Tuck the plain end into the right of your petticoat.
- 3 Wrap around the waist. Continue wrapping — 2 more full turns, each layer 2 inches lower than the last, creating a tapered look from waist to hip.
- 4 After three wraps, bring the remaining saree up across the body diagonally — from right hip to left shoulder.
- 5 Drape the pallu over the left shoulder, letting it fall straight down the back to mid-thigh.
- 6 Pin every layer at the side, hidden under the pallu.

Stylist tip

*"A wide gold-tipped belt over the wraps turns Mumtaz from "drape" to "dress."
A Danyah suggestion: try a thin maroon waist-cord with gold tassels." — **The Danyah atelier***

DRAPE STYLE

05. The Maharashtrian Nauvari

Nine yards. Worn like a dhoti — passed between the legs, tucked at the back. Built for women warriors of Maharashtra who needed mobility without losing modesty. Still worn for Lavani, Ganesh Chaturthi, and Pune wedding kashibais.

WHEN TO WEAR

Maharashtrian weddings, Ganesh festival, a daring statement look that turns every head in a room.

BEST FABRIC FROM OUR ATELIER

A 9-yard Paithani silk is canon. A lighter cotton Nauvari works for daily.

Step by step

- 1 You need 9 yards (8.2m) — half again as long as a normal saree.
- 2 Hold the centre of the saree at your back waist. Take one end forward, between the legs, and tuck firmly into the back of the petticoat.
- 3 Take the other end and wrap once around your waist.
- 4 Bring the saree forward, pleat 6 pleats into the petticoat at the centre.
- 5 Take the saree back, wrap once more, bring forward under the right arm.
- 6 Drape the pallu over the left shoulder, pinned, falling to the elbow.

Stylist tip

"Wear sturdy kolhapuri sandals — the Nauvari is meant to be walked in, not posed in." — The Danyah atelier

DRAPE STYLE

06. The Mermaid / Lehenga drape

A modern hybrid that gives you the silhouette of a lehenga (fitted top, flared skirt) using only a saree. Popularised on Indian runways in the 2010s.

WHEN TO WEAR

Cocktails, sangeets, fashion-forward weddings. Photographs exceptionally well.

BEST FABRIC FROM OUR ATELIER

A heavily-embellished or sequin saree, or a gold-tissue Banarasi.

Step by step

- 1 Wear a fitted petticoat that flares from the knee — this is the foundation.
- 2 Start with a Nivi tuck and one wrap.
- 3 Instead of front pleats, fan the saree out from the waist into 9–10 small pleats spaced around the petticoat — like a skirt.
- 4 Pin each pleat at the waist.
- 5 Take the remaining saree up across the chest like a Mumtaz pallu.
- 6 Drape over the left shoulder, falling to the floor at the back like a train.

Stylist tip

*"This drape lives or dies on its petticoat. We can recommend a Mumbai-based tailor in our concierge WhatsApp if you message us." — **The Danyah atelier***

DRAPE STYLE

07. The Butterfly drape (modern)

A narrow pallu, pleated to look like a butterfly wing across the chest. Sleek, contemporary, photographs slimmer than any other drape.

WHEN TO WEAR

Office parties, cocktail evenings, a modern wedding guest look.

BEST FABRIC FROM OUR ATELIER

A chiffon, a georgette, a soft mashru — anything that pleats narrow.

Step by step

- 1 Standard Nivi tuck, one wrap, front pleats — all as usual.
- 2 Bring the saree forward over the left shoulder.
- 3 Instead of a wide pallu, pleat the pallu into a narrow 2-inch strip running diagonally across the chest.
- 4 Pin tightly at the shoulder, letting just 4–5 inches of the pallu show at the back.
- 5 The effect — a clean, slimming line across the body. The saree reads modern.

Stylist tip

"Pair with a deep-V backless blouse — the Butterfly drape is meant to reveal the spine." — The Danyah atelier

DRAPE STYLE

08. The Pant-style drape (modern)

No petticoat. No pleats. The saree is wrapped over tailored pants like a flowing dupatta. Invented by designer Anamika Khanna for Indian runway, now a Bollywood red-carpet staple.

WHEN TO WEAR

Modern weddings, brand events, when you want to wear a saree without "wearing a saree."

BEST FABRIC FROM OUR ATELIER

A fluid silk, georgette, or chiffon — light enough to drape, structured enough to hold.

Step by step

- 1 Wear tailored, ankle-length pants in a colour that complements the saree.
- 2 Wrap the plain end around your waist once, over the pants. Tuck or belt it.
- 3 Take the saree across the front, up over the left shoulder.
- 4 Take it behind, wrap once more, bring forward under right arm.
- 5 Drape the pallu over the left shoulder again — pleated narrow or wide, your choice.
- 6 Belt or pin everything at the waist for a sharp silhouette.

Stylist tip

"Try our Banarasi tanchoi with cream high-waisted pants — the contrast reads couture." — The Danyah atelier

THE QUICK GUIDE

Which fabric drapes which style

Fabric (from our atelier)	Best drape	Why
Banarasi katan silk	Nivi, Gujarati	Weight holds pleats; pallu drops beautifully
Banarasi tanchoi	Nivi, Pant-style	Fluid yet structured; pallu reads couture
Banarasi tissue (gold)	Mermaid, Mumtaaz	Sheen photographs as evening-gown silk
Kota silk	Bengali, Butterfly	Light enough to float; crisp pleats
Mashru silk (cotton-back)	Nivi, Pant-style	Holds shape, comfortable for all-day wear
Light cotton saree	Bengali, Nauvari	Breathable, ideal for festival wear
Paithani (9-yard)	Nauvari	Length is built for the 9-yard drape
Banarasi georgette	Mumtaaz, Butterfly	Drapes tight without bunching

FOUNDATION

Blouse + petticoat sizing chart

A saree is only as beautiful as the foundation underneath. Use these measurements as a starting point — and pay your tailor what they're worth.

Blouse — basic measurements (inches)

Size	Bust	Waist	Shoulder	Sleeve length	Back depth
XS	32	26	13	5	11
S	34	28	13.5	5	11
M	36	30	14	5	12
L	38	32	14.5	5	12
XL	40	34	15	5	13
XXL	42	36	15.5	5	13

Petticoat — by height

Below 5'2" — 38" petticoat length

5'2"–5'5" — 40" petticoat length

5'5"–5'8" — 41" petticoat length

Above 5'8" — 42" petticoat length

Drawstring + side hook is our preferred closure — it survives a long wedding day without slipping.

AFTERCARE

Care & storage for fifty years

A handwoven Banarasi can last three generations. Here's how to make sure it does.

First wear

Don't spray perfume on the saree. Spray on your wrist, then air your wrists before draping. Alcohol stains real zari permanently.

Wear a slip under the blouse. Sweat damages silk threads at the underarm.

Sit on a sheet, not bare velvet. Velvet pulls zari threads.

Washing

Dry-clean only for any saree with zari, embroidery, or sequins. Ask for "organic solvent" if the dry-cleaner offers it.

Hand-wash light cottons in cool water with a pH-neutral soap (we recommend Genteel or Soak). Never wring — roll in a towel to absorb moisture.

Never iron directly on zari. Use a thin cotton cloth over the saree as a barrier.

Storage

Refold every 6 months. Folding lines weaken if a saree sits unmoved for a year.

Wrap in unbleached muslin, not plastic. Plastic traps moisture; muslin breathes.

Add neem leaves or cedar blocks to your saree drawer. They keep moths away without the chemical smell of mothballs.

Once a year, air the saree in indirect sunlight for 30 minutes. This is how our grandmothers kept their wedding sarees alive for fifty years.

STAY CLOSE

Wear it. Then message us.

Every Danyah Banaras saree comes with a stylist on WhatsApp. Wear yours, take a photograph, and send it to us. We'll tell you which earrings to pair, which bindi shape works best with your face, and which drape suits the occasion you're going to.

Our WhatsApp atelier

+91 78360 96044

Wave to us at wa.me/917836096044

Open Mon–Sat, 11am–8pm IST. We reply to every message — whether you bought a saree or are still thinking about your first.

Online

Shop: danyahbanaras.com

Instagram: [@danyah.banaras](https://www.instagram.com/danyah.banaras)

Email: concierge@danyahbanaras.com

"A saree learns the shape of the woman who wears it. Wear yours often, and it will remember you."

— from the loom in Pillikothi, Varanasi

DANYAH · BANARAS

Woven in Varanasi. Worn everywhere.

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