Creating excellent textiles and protecting the heritage of the oldest living city in the world. It is time to present responsible fashion and rediscover pride in our collective heritage...
"No one knows the secret of the weaver who spread his warp through the universe.

He dug two ditches, sky and earth,
made two spools, sun and moon,
filled his shuttle with a thousand threads,
and weaves till today: a difficult length!

Kabir says, they're joined by actions.

Good threads and bad, that fellow weaves both."

Kabir
One of the oldest living cities in the world, for thousands of years Varanasi has been a sacred place in northern India. For more than 1,000 years, this city has been home to the largest number of handloom weavers in India.

Varanasi fabrics were once used to adorn the bodies of royalty and the common man alike. Today, this exquisite art is still considered an essential wedding gift.

“Older than history, older than tradition, older even than legend, and looks twice as old as all of them put together.” Mark Twain
To these artisans, weaving is considered a sacred craft and a connection to the soul. While the textile's rich, ornate identity has been maintained, Varanasi is facing many challenges that are slowly destroying this ancient art.
Today the effects of globalisation have changed the structure of the economy. Thousands of looms in Varanasi have become silent in the last decade; cheap, bad quality imitations have flooded the market and left weavers and traders in despair.
Eighty-five percent of the weavers have wandered away to pursue other livelihood options. India’s largest hand-weaving guild is threatened. The Varanasi weavers need support to prevent their sacred craft from gradually disappearing.

When questioned about their social and economic situation, the weavers were full of self-awareness and dignity:

“We need to adapt to a new way of thinking. The world is changing fast and we need to keep up with the demands of modern life.”
Bestseller Fund and Upasana came together to improve the situation.

13,000 silk scarves were created as a New Year gift in 2006, and a social project was started to help the weaving community.

Weavers are mainly men, so a special women empowerment programme was also initiated in the same villages. Many ladies have been given new livelihood options.
Varanasi Weavers Foundation was registered in Varanasi, and a brand for Varanasi silk was launched to promote the best of Varanasi on the market. New weavers are regularly being incorporated into the project. Upasana and Bestseller Fund have not looked back since then. Now, the Varanasi Weavers brand is completely self-sustaining.

We hope that this dream of preserving an ancient craft will resonate with you. Let us have a piece of Varanasi in our wardrobe…
“God Almighty is also a weaver, 
He weaves unique designs for everyone!” Kabir

The Bindu (dot), the symbol of Upasana, 
is the point at which creation begins, 
where unity becomes the many. 
Keeping the spirit of our symbol in mind, 
our collection, Devayani, 
is an offering to the global woman. 
Psychologically, socially and ecologically conscious, 
she is a woman who reflects her inner realm, 
which becomes a conscious part of her integral being.
Project Leaders: Mandakini & Jitendra
Collection Design: Jyotis, Linda & Uma
Textile Design: Uma & Darshini
Models: Chandra, Vanitha, Renu & Poonam
Photography & Graphic Design: Olivier Barot
Additional Photography:
Coriolan Weihrauch and Upasana Image Bank
Varanasi Ghats Engraving by James Prinsep from "Benares Illustrated" by O. P. Kejariwal

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Upasana Team, Auroville, India
Weavers of Varanasi

For more information on our projects, visit:
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www.varanasiweavers.org
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