

Design Resource

Kullu Shawls - Himachal Pradesh

Handicraft

by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral

NID, Bengaluru

Source:

<https://www.dsource.in/resource/kullu-shawls-himachal-pradesh>



1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
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Introduction

Handicrafts from Himachal have admirers from all around the world; among them, all “Kullu Shawls” hold the best position. Kullu is the capital town of the Kullu district in the Indian state of Himachal Pradesh. It is located on the banks of the Beas River in the Kullu Valley. The valley has many pilgrimage sites for Hindus, Buddhists, and Sikhs; hence, it is known as ‘Dev Bhumi’. Kullu valley is known for Kullu shawls made of many natural fibers, including pashmina, sheep wool, and Angora. The fine woolen fabric and manufacturing quality, bright colours with geometrical patterns make Kullu shawl famous all over the world.

Due to a lack of transportation facilities during the pre-independence era, industrialized products couldn't reach the valley. Kullvi people inhabit the cold temperate Himalayan region which is suitable for sheep and goat rearing, which also fulfills the necessity for woollens. In the beginning, the people of Kullu used to weave ‘Patti’, which means a short width local tweed, protects against snow, rain, and wind. This fabric is woven with sheep wool to fulfill the bare necessity of covering their body and protecting themselves from severe cold. Formerly, Kullvi people were weaving plain shawls, but when weavers from Bushehar (Shimla) came to the valley in the early 1940s, their craft influenced the people of Kullu Valley. The weavers of Bushehar were familiar with the geometrical designs, which they successfully used on Pattus, and the trend of patterned shawls came to rise.

Traditionally, black, white, and brown or natural grey colours are used as the base, and bright colours like yellow, red, green, orange, blue, etc., were used for patterning in Kullu shawls. Nowadays, according to consumers' demand, these traditional bright colours are being replaced by pastel colours. Each design may have one to eight colours. Sheep wool, Pashmina, Yak wool, Angora, and handspun material are used to make Kullu shawls. These yarns are vegetable dyed or chemically dyed. Plain shawl made of single colour without any design or pattern, plain with the border of a traditional pattern or coloured stripes on the four sides, with the traditional pattern on its both ends, with three traditional patterns on two ends, having all over design are few types of patterns used for weaving shawls. Kullu shawls are in great demand among tourists. Every tourist visiting Himachal Pradesh, especially Kullu, buys a shawl to remind their journey to this hilly state. Kullu shawl has benefited globally, but weavers need to be protected to save handloom sector handlooms.

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Women Society of Trishla shawl factory at Kullu.



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Female artisans involved in the weaving process.



Senior Artisan Mukulchand with his co-worker Artisan Palbo.

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Kullu shawl is known for its intricate designs with bright colours.

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Tools and Raw Materials

Tools and raw materials that are used for Kullu shawls are:

- **Wool:** Woolen threads are used for Kullu shawls and stoles.
- **Spinning Wheel:** A device for spinning thread from natural fibers.
- **Handloom:** A loom is a device used to weave cloth and tapestry.
- **Yarn:** Spun thread used for knitting, weaving, and sewing.
- **Flying Shuttle:** A single weaver to weave much wider fabric by mechanized in handloom.
- **Scissor:** It is used to trim the extra threads while weaving.



Spindles ready for use.

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Wool is the primary raw material for making kullu shawl.



Spinning wheel.



Special kind of scissor is used for cutting the yarn in various processes of weaving.



Different colours of threads are used for the weaving process.

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Making Process

The process of shawl weaving begins with the basic raw material like Sheep, Angora, or Pashmina wool. Good quality wool is spun by using a spinning wheel. The extracted yarn is wound into a bundle. The spindles are loaded with woolen threads. These spindles are inserted into a fly shuttle. Artisans follow the same old weaving technique which was practiced by their ancestors. Weavers still use the Pit and frame looms. The designs are embroidered by hand, and weaving is done.



The yarn is extracted from raw wool.



Extracted yarn is wound in to a bundle.



Artisan rolling woolen threads over spindles from yarns.



Artisan inserting the spindle to fly-shuttle.

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The warped yarn is rolled over the handloom beam for weaving.

Artisan involved in the weaving process.

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The embroidery design on the shawl is made by hand with different coloured yarn.



Artisan use pedals to pull the heddle frame up and down.

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The woven shawl is wound automatically on the beam of the handloom.

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Products

Trishla Shawl factory located in Kullu is run by women artists. The government laid a subsidy on the products crafted by women artists for their empowerment. The Kullu Shawls and Stole price range starts from the range of INR 126 to the maximum of INR 6,000.



The price of any shawl depends upon the quality of wool and the number and width of patterns used in it.



Attractive colours are used for Kullu shawls.



Different types of cotton materials like bedspread, towels, and many more.

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This documentation was done by Professor Bibhudutta Baral at **NID, Bengaluru**.

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