

How To Make Pashmina

Making the beautiful, luxurious pashmina involves a painstaking process done completely by hand. The origins of the pashmina date back to ancient times. Then as now, the pashmina is made by hand. When, before, the pashmina was mostly made for the comfort and protection of the pashmina makers themselves, the pashmina products became gradually sought after by royal families, kings and emperors. The precious fabric then came to be known as the royal fibers. Today, pashmina is practically a household name, a definite staple in every fashionable woman's closet.

The wool from which the pashmina is made is collected every spring from the mountain goat "chyangra," which lives in the freezing mountain regions of the Himalayas. These Himalayan goats have warm winter coats which they shed during the summer, revealing two different types of wool: the fine, soft inner coat which is called the pashmina, and the thick, outer layer. The wool is then gathered by local woman, who must comb it thoroughly to separate the pashmina from the thicker outer wool. Each goat actually produces only about 80 grams of pashmina, so just one woven pashmina shawl would need about three to four goats.

Each shawl is carefully spun by hand, with yarn spun on a spinning wheel known as the "charkha". After being spun, the pashmina yarn is ready for weaving. Pashmina yarn is too fragile for power looms, so the weaving of authentic pashmina shawls is done on hand-looms. Spinning by hand is more complicated than it sounds. Prior to spinning, the raw material is stretched and cleaned to remove residue print. Afterwards it is soaked for a few days in a fusion of rice and water to make it softer. Hand-spinning is an extremely painstaking task. It requires immense patience, dexterity and dedication and is amazing process to watch. It is a laborious and time-consuming task, requiring tremendous dexterity, dedication and patience even from expert weavers. The weaving process, therefore, can be considered an art and a science. It is also a tradition handed down and preserved from generation to generation. Before, in the days of the Mughal Empire, pashmina making was the territory of women. Today, pashmina making is a craft shared by men and women alike.

The fringe and design of the pashmina is one of the most intriguing parts of shawl. It takes no less than a few hours to fringe each pashmina shawl, stole, scarf or blanket. Dyeing or coloring the pashmina is also done by hand. Because this involves a more thorough and meticulous process, the job is assigned to more experienced pashmina makers. The smallest negligence or the slightest mistake can spell the difference between a quality pashmina and a poor pashmina. Dyeing is done at a temperature just below the boiling point for approximately an hour, in water found beneath the surface. The wool of the pashmina is especially absorbent, dyes deeply and easily. Only natural, organic dyes such as metal and azo-free dyes, are used, which gives the pashmina an eco-friendly characteristic, not to mention a more lasting hue. With this last process, another beautiful, artful and luxurious pashmina is made.

About the Author

Brenda Reese love writing, often found lazily applying [lipstick](#) in a Kyoto bar. [Beauty Catalog](#)

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