

Design Resource

Tibetan Cotton Weaving

The Art of Handmade Tibetan Cotton Clothings

by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral, Divyadarshan C. S. and

Lija M. G.

NID Campus, Bengaluru

Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/tibetan-cotton-weaving>



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Introduction

Norbulingka institute is located in the terrain upsurges and foot hills of Himachal Pradesh that surrounds the Himalayan heights of Zanskar range that borders Tibet and Ladakh. This Institute is about 20 kms away from McLeod Ganj which is a suburb of the Dharamshala of Himachal Pradesh that helps in supporting and safeguarding the Tibetan traditions among the Indo Tibetans who have settled in this place long years ago. The people of this institute has maintained its surrounding with gardens, water bodies that ornate the colorful surrounding by giving the feel of mini- Tibet. With workshops of artisan (craftsmen) working with different crafts (arts) for the preservation of the Tibetan culture.

Cotton obtained from the hairy fibers of the seed head of the semi tropical plant are spun to fine thread or yarn for weaving. The untangled and fluffed loose mass is beaten and plucked by strings of a bow against them. Generally cotton is excellent for densely woven cloth, hard- wearing rugs and famous for its strength and smoothness. Mostly the Himalayan Bhotias live in these areas who are also known as the people from Tibetan origin.

Tibetan cotton, woolen types of jackets, gloves and scarves are some of the products which are been made by the Tibetan refugees which are famous, available at various locations throughout India. Tibetan women learn to weave by hands since their juvenile with woolen, flax fiber and waist bands using locally produced wool and flax. Generally these people prefer the cotton and woolen cloth of grey with stripes of color, white and red color. Traditional ways of making the fabric are always sustainable as each item of these clothing are unique.



Craftsmen working on the traditional Tibetan loom.

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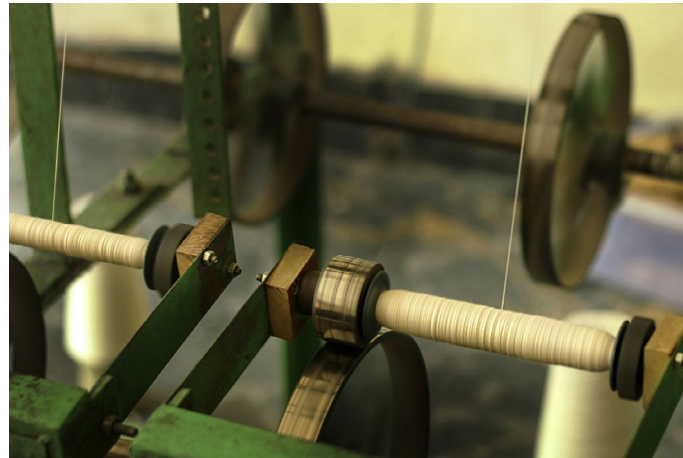
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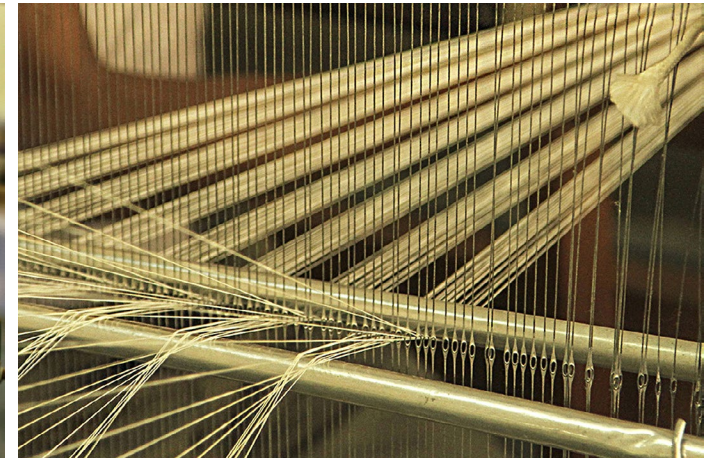
Women craftsmen winding cotton thread to the pirn with charkha equipment.



Yarns are wound to pirns from bobbins.



For large production semi-automatic winding machines are preferred.



Cotton yarns are segregated from the creel through the heddle wires.

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Cotton yarns are passed through the dents of the reed to beam.



Craftsmen observes the passage of each yarn to the warp beam.



Each yarn is drawn through the heddle wire.



Tibetan cotton cloths are generally are thick fabrics.

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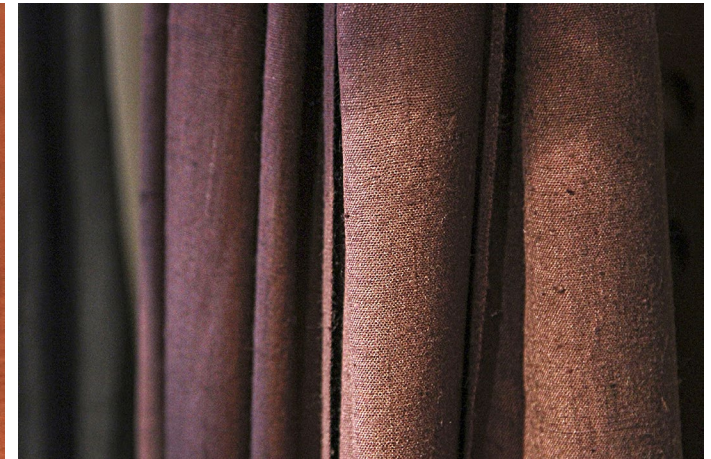
Well cleaned dyeing machines are preferred for dyeing.



Tibetan cotton shawl with check pattern.



Plain shawl with golden color borders.



Plain cotton shawl with single shade of color.

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Tools and Raw Materials

Some of the tools and raw materials used for weaving Tibetan cotton fabric are as mentioned below:-

- **Cotton Yarns:** are the main raw material used for making the fabric.
- **Winding Machine:** are used to wind the yarns into pirns or bobbins.
- **Bobbins:** are used for holding the yarns which can be transported easily.
- **Creels:** are used for placing the bobbins of yarns for warping.
- **Warping Machine:** are used to place the cotton yarns from the bobbins to the beam.
- **Traditional Looms:** are generally preferred for weaving.
- **Fly Shuttle:** are used in the weaving process.
- **Dyeing Machine:** are used to apply the color on the cotton yarn or fabric.
- **Scissors:** are used to cut/trim the yarns while weaving.
- **Measuring Tape:** are used to measure and mark the length of fabric.
- **Common Salt:** are added while dyeing for color uptake.

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Plastic pirns are generally preferred for winding process.



Cotton yarns are wound on plastic bobbins which are used for the warping creels.



Wooden creels are generally used for warping.

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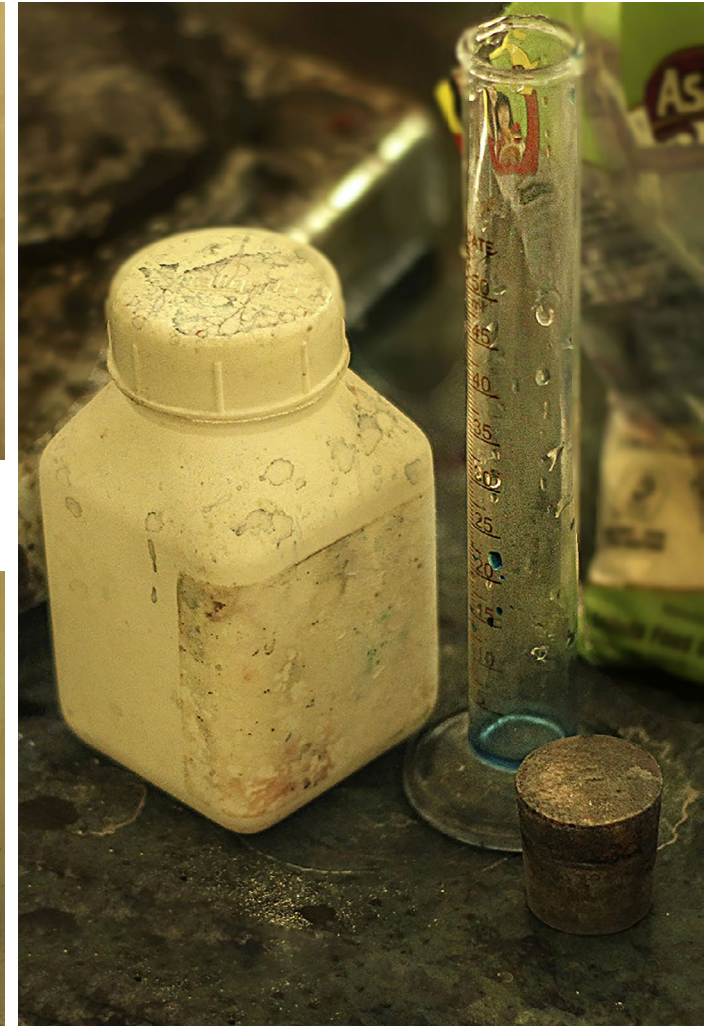
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Warp beam made with wood is preferred for warping.



Traditional pedal loom is used for weaving the thick Tibetan fabric.



Measuring jars are used for mixing the right quantity for color and chemicals.

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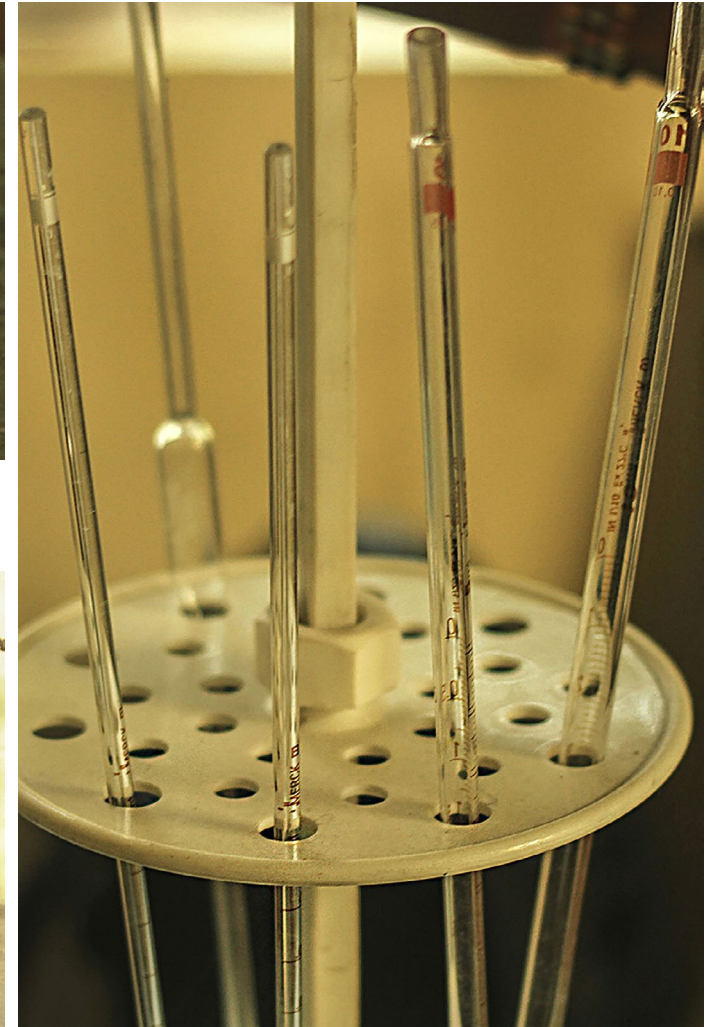
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Sample color mixtures are stored to obtain the proportions of color.



Dyeing machine with handle that operates the flow of the fabric.



Burette are used to measure and mix the right quantity of chemicals.

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Making Process

Generally thick cotton yarn is preferred for making (weaving) of these clothing. Yarn in the hank form are wound on to pirns or bobbins which is either taken for the warp or weft part of the loom. Bobbin of about 104 numbers are fixed on the creels to prepare the warp beam of the loom. Each yarn is passed through the heddle shaft wire as per the pattern of the design to be obtained.

Color yarns are inserted (if required) in the pattern of design to the required portions in the beam and the load- ed beam is fixed to the loom with a four foot pedal which has separate passage. Each pedal is connected to the four heddle shaft where the design is inserted as per the pattern of design. With the help of heddles, foot pedals fly shuttle is passed through the warp shed for continuous weaving. Locks and weights are fixed for balancing the movement of the loom at the back of the loom to balance the load and the yarn is inserted through the warp shed it is beaten with the beater through a handle.

There are two options in dyeing, either the yarns are dyed in the yarn stage or it is dyed after the fabric is made only on requirement. If colored pattern of fabrics are required, it is sampled with cotton cloth of about 5 grams and then heated with common salt and dye powders of the required color for about an hour to which soda ash is added for color uptake. If the dye color is as per the requirement it is proceeded if not trial and error method is followed till the required color is obtained. Then dyeing is proceeded to the roll of fabric of the required length and width.

As the people living in the hilly region of Himachal Pradesh, prefer very light colored clothing of grey, white and red color. Cotton shawls are mostly preferred at summer times and woolen shawls in colder seasons.



Yarns are generally wound on pirns by Charkha equipment.

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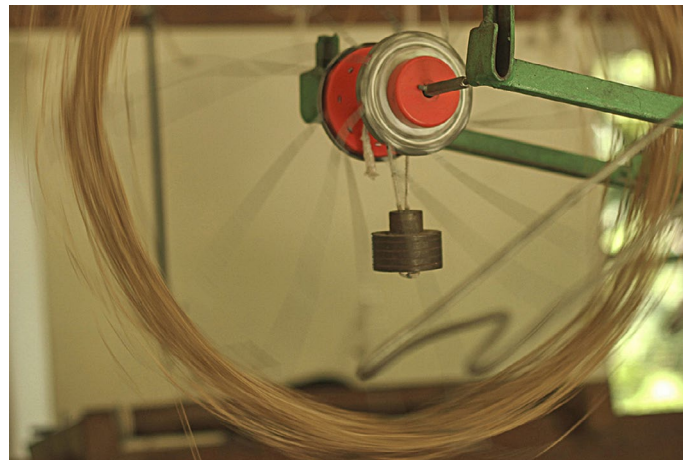
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Pirns fully wound are knotted for locating the end.



Generally for smaller production yarns in hank form are used.



For bulk production, yarns in cone form are preferred.

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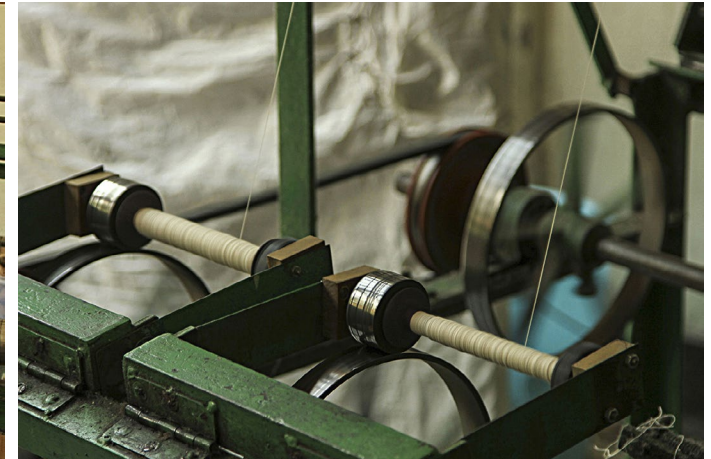
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For bulk production semi-automatic winding machines are used.



The plastic pins are fixed to the machine on which the threads are wound.



Craftsmen take special care in counting each yarn while inserting.



Each yarn is segregated through the eye of heddle wire.

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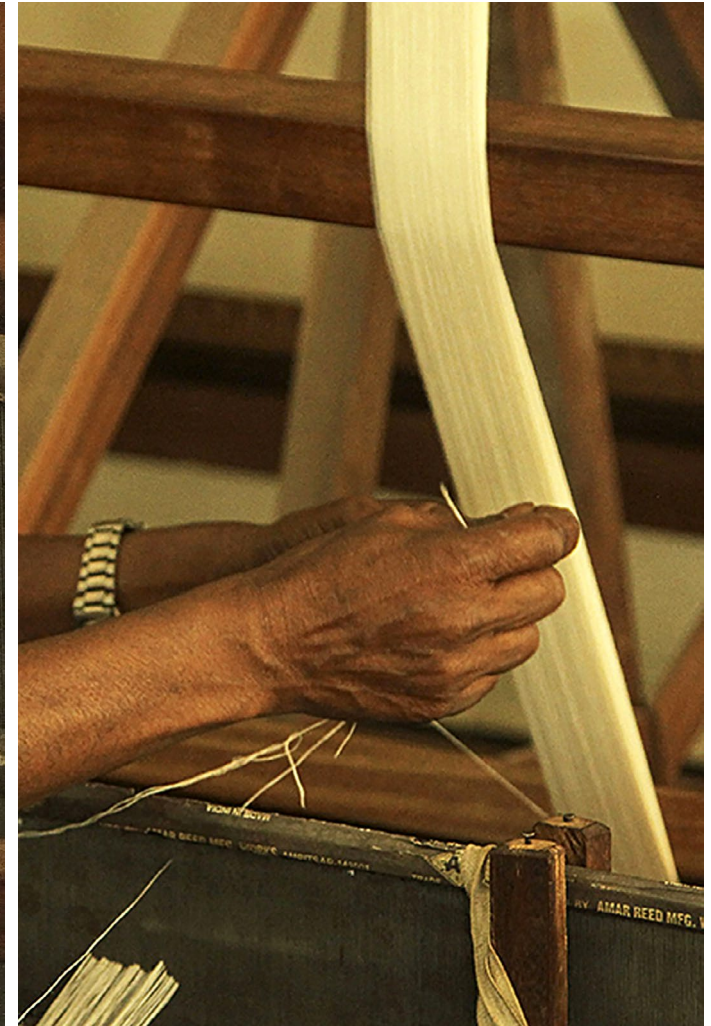
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For easy passage of yarn through the reed craftsmen hold the threads with his hand.



Yarns from the reed are tied firmly to the warp beam.

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At the beginning wooden warp beam is rotated manually.

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Breakages are rectified by the craftsmen and continued warping.

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Wound warp beam ready to be inserted to the loom.



Minimum of two craftsmen are required to insert the yarn into the heddle wire.

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Each yarn is segregated and drawn through separately.



As per the pattern of design, yarn is drawn through wires.

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Each yarn is drawn through the eye of the heddle wire separately.



Yarns are tied together after drawn through the eye of heddle wire.



Before the loom begins, passage of the yarn is checked.



Missed yarns are located and knotted.

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Fully wound pirns are inserted into the fly shuttle for weaving.



In Tibetan cotton weaving beater with handle is used to hold the yarns together.

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Both the hands and foot of the craftsmen are in action during weaving.



Women weavers can also handle the Tibetan traditional loom.

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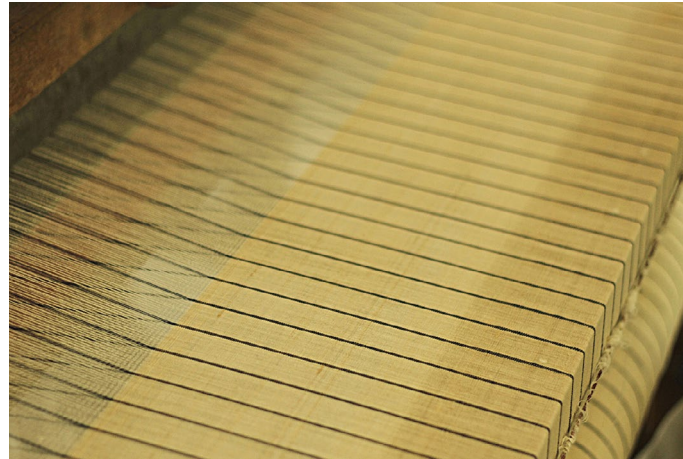
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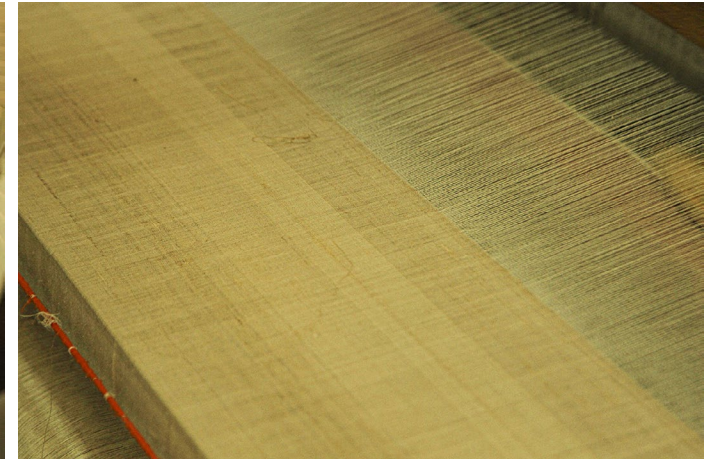
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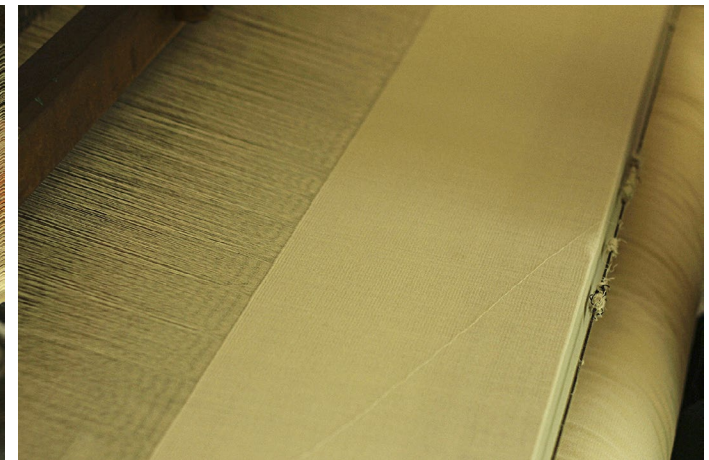
Woven fabric with black stripe pattern.



Plain fabric with red are generally worn as their traditional clothing in Norbulingka.



Minor faults in the fabric are rectified by the craftsmen.



Plain thick cotton cloths are preferred by these people during summer.

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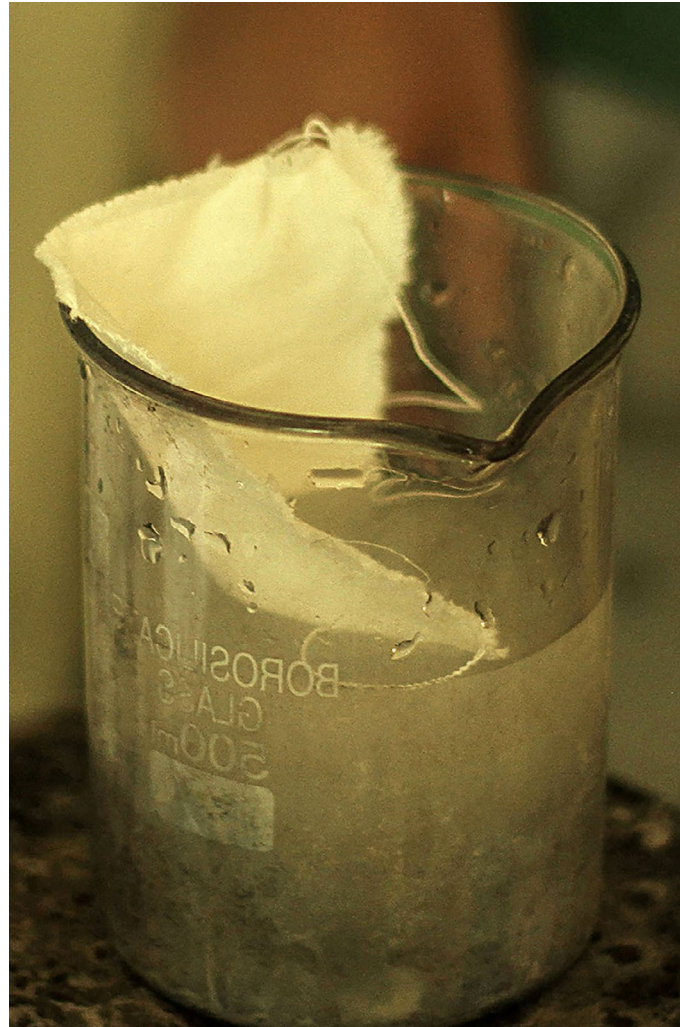
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Trials of dyeing are done on small swatches of fabric to obtain the right color combination.



Measured quantity of chemicals and dyes are mixed to get the right proportion.

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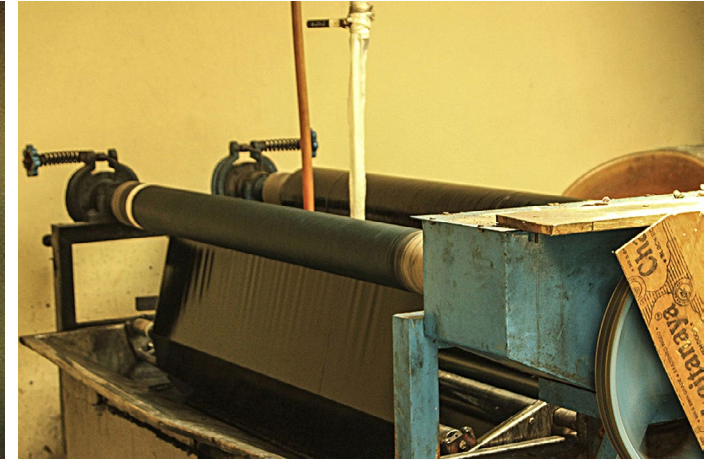
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Color solutions are stirred thoroughly to obtain the right color.



A type of dyeing machine of Norbulingka institute.



Repeated stirring of dye solution enables good coloring to the fabric.

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Dyed fabrics are dried in diffused sunlight.

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Products

As Cotton clothes are warm and comfortable to wear, they have a huge demand in India. Cotton clothes are suitable for all types of weather. The products weaved in Norbulingka institute are usually made of thick type. Mostly grey fabric, white and red colored fabric are made in more numbers. Modern styles and current trend products are also adopted by this institute

Some of the types of products woven here are as follows:

- **Shawl:** Is worn on the upper body, which are weaved with stripes of various colored threads and patterns.
- **Aprons:** The colorful aprons are worn by the Tibetans as a part of traditions.
- **Shirts and Suiting's:** The products are mainly used as a style for younger generation.



Thick cotton fabric with stripes which are commonly used by the people of Norbulingka institute.

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Plain cotton shawls with different color shades.



Checks and stripes pattern shawls.

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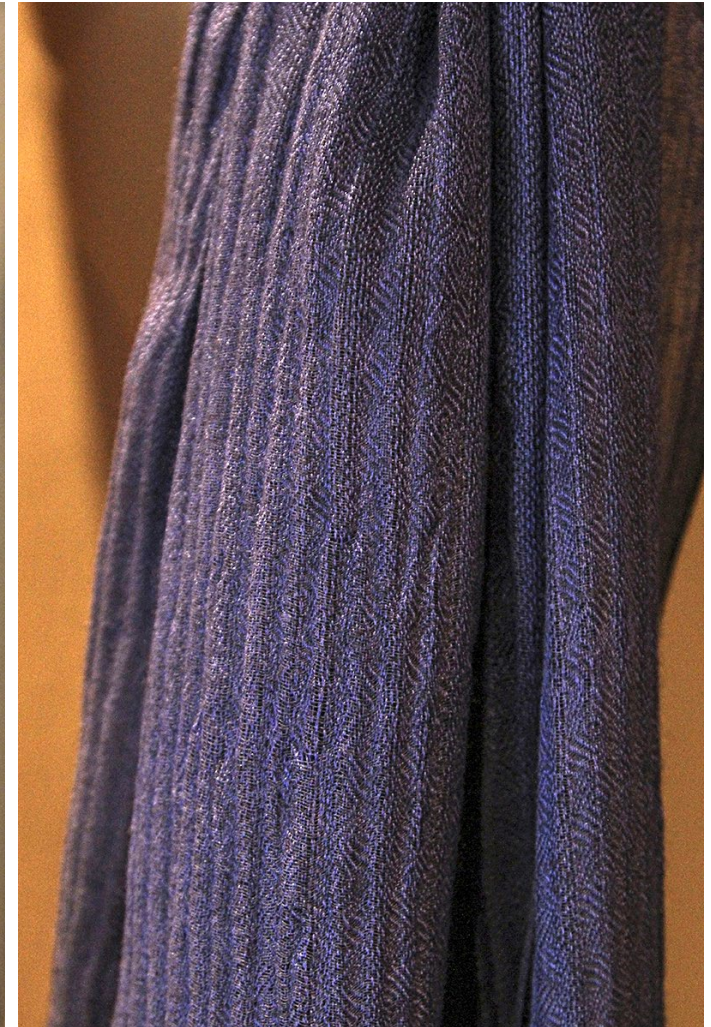
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Shawl with a net patterns.



Diamond pattern design woved shawl.

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Plain shawl with fringes.



Multi color lined shawls.



Cotton tops with plain and stripes patterns.



Vibrant colored cotton pants with simple textures.

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Different designed cotton shawls with mild colors.

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Contact Details

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