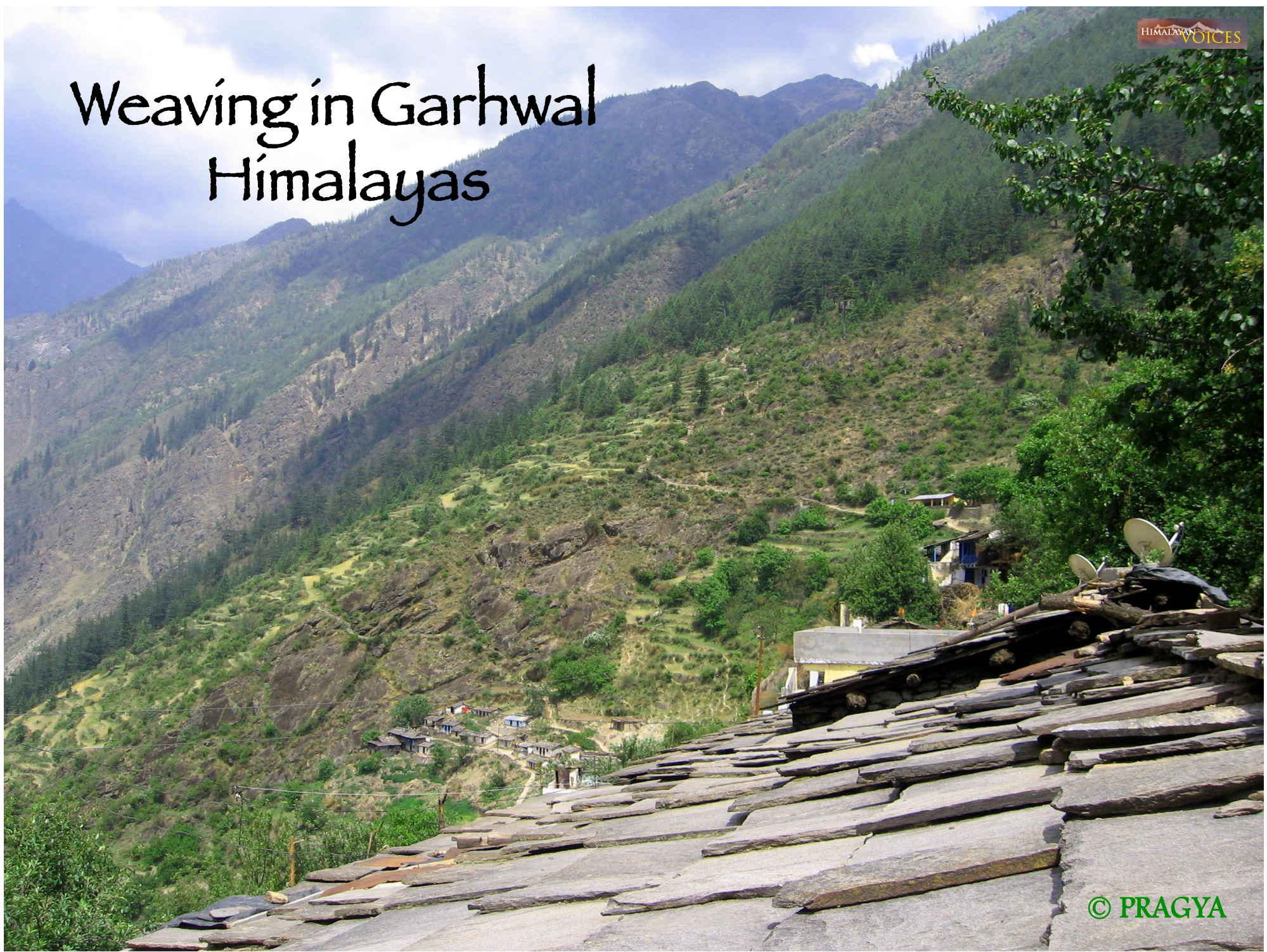


Weaving in Garhwal Himalayas



Wool and its processing



Wool is either bought from the market in Joshimath or is obtained from sheep reared at home. The processing of wool involves cleaning, washing and treating with steam which is followed by carding.

The carding tool is a two piece broad wooden rectangular base equipment with many fine iron teeth on the inside. The treated wool is opened out with the hands and is kept on one of the carding tool and the other part of the equipment is used to brush it. It is done to make the wool soft and to remove entanglement and impurities.



The spinning of wool



The next step is of spinning the wool by the drop spindle method. The roll of carded wool is wrapped around the hands and one end is taken and tied to the base and is drawn through a small metal hook on top.

The spindle is known as Taku in local language and it has a small wooden stick with a circular disc on one end. The wool is twisted by hands causing a rolling action of the strands which wrap around each other thus making a S twist singles yarn on long end of the stick.



The spinning of wool

The modern method of spinning is on the Bhageshwari charkha which increases efficiency and output to a great extent. The weaving and spinning of wool is primarily done by the women during the winter months.



Spinning on Bhageshwari Charkha



Drop spindle spinning

Dyeing



Local wool provides a wide range of natural colours ranging from pearl white, fawn, camel brown, dark brown, grey and black.

Many a times, natural wool colour is used as the field colour and for motifs.

Traditionally the Gharwali women used natural dyes from tree barks, roots, fruit coverings, flowers and from other natural substances to colour the wool but now they prefer to buy chemical dyed wool from the market. The reason for stopping the natural dyeing they say is that the government has put restrictions on them for taking away the natural resources from the forest and the other reason being that natural dyeing is a long and tedious process which they women are not motivated enough to follow.

Dan / Carpet



The large carpet is known as *Dan* in local language and the smaller version of it is called *Aasan*.

The local people use Dan as bedcover and the Aasan is used as seat covers.



Dan Raanch / Carpet loom



The vertical loom for carpet weaving is called Dan Raanchh.

It is a 4'x4' structure consisting of 2 vertical beams. The beams are mounted on 2 flat rectangular wooden platforms for balance and support. Another wooden rod is used at the base for extra support. There are 2 pairs of holes in the vertical beams to accommodate both the warp and the cloth beam. After placing the beams through their respective holes, they are tightened by means of screw. At one edge of the cloth beam is a small hole for an iron rod which is used to rotate the cloth-beam for winding the carpet.

The process of carpet weaving



Changing the shed for insertion of weft



Tying the weft on the hook to bind edge



Securing the edge binding knot



Inserting the weft

The process of carpet weaving



Inserting the weft



Beating down the weft yarn with Hattha



Leveling the pile with Kainchi



Weaving tools; Kainchi , Hattha

The process of carpet weaving



Two warp yarns are held with one finger of the right hand



2 ply wool weft is twisted under and then over warp with left finger and thumb



Wool yarn is twisted twice around the warp



Extra length of pile is cut using a Chaku

Design and motifs



The designs are made from memory and sometimes by working the pattern on graphs. The placement of the design is such that it usually has a border, 4 corner motifs and 1 to 3 centre motifs.

Commonly used motifs are *Sankli*(chain), *Gyanak boota* (Swastika flower) as border and *bada boota* (big flower) in the centre. Swastika is considered auspicious by the Bhotiyas. The entire surface is not covered with designs but the design is worked into a smaller area and an impression of space is given. Quite often along with the border enclosing the four sides, three circular motifs are worked out in the central field. Sometimes a single pattern is woven in the centre of the field.

- Border is an important element in Bhotiya carpets. It is often wide and can go up to 8" in width.

Carpets as sofa covers for end use



Carpets for use as seat covers are usually made in sets of one long rectangular cover for the sofa and a set of 3-4 coordinated square *Aasans*.



Design and Motifs



Aasan



Graph



Dan



Aasan



Graph

Cost



It takes around 18 to 20 days to weave one carpet.

A 6 feet by 2 ½ feet carpet costs around Rs. 3000/-. The price of pure unprocessed sheep wool in natural colour is Rs. 60/- per kilo and the dyed wool which is bought from Joshimath is Rs. 150/- per kilo.

The skill of carpet weaving is passed on from the mother to daughter who weaves these carpets for her parents and husbands families. The women also are responsible for all household activities including helping with farming, bringing wood, feeding the live stock, looking after the family, cooking, cleaning etc.

Pankhi – Woolen shawl



The Pankhi is a thin blanket wrap or shawl which is worn by the local folk of Gharwal.

It is also used as a Bedspread. The colour of this shawl is usually white and is sometimes grey or dark brown depending on the natural colour of wool.

Almost 4 kg of sheep wool is required to weave a *Pankhi* of size 12 feet by 4 feet. The wool is spun into a very thin strand and is then twisted and doubled. The warp is prepared with the help of wooden sticks which are dug into the ground and the spun yarn is wound around them. The number of sticks depends upon the length of the warp.



Frame Loom / Khaddi

The ready warp is then shifted to the loom which has four shafts and the threads are drawn through the healds and reed.

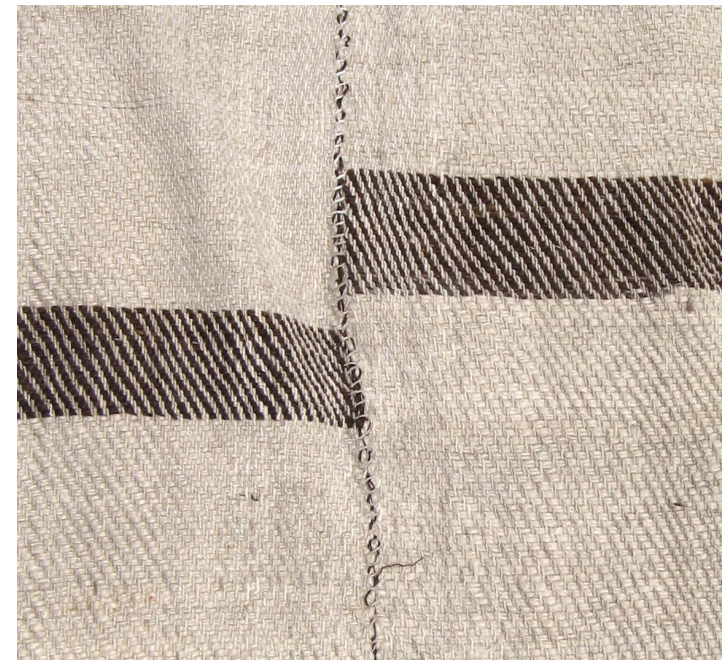
Traditionally the *Pankhi* was woven on back strap looms but now it is made on frame looms and sometimes on pit looms.

The weave is always a 2/2 twill.

Gudma - Bedspread

Gudma is a thick woolen bed spread which is woven on the back strap loom.

The weave construction is always 2/2 twill which has a 2 ply twisted warp and 2 ply of singles weft. Since the width of the back strap loom is narrow (maximum width being 60cms), the *gudma* is woven as strips of cloth and then stitched together to make a full blanket. It is usually white in colour and sometimes weft stripes are inserted with different coloured natural wool.



Chugta - Bedspread

Chugta is another kind of bed spread which has a loop pile weave. This is also woven on the traditional back strap loom. Strips of the fabric are stitched together to achieve the desired width. It takes seven kilos of wool and ten days to weave one 6 feet by 4 feet *chugta*.



The handlooms and handicrafts are integral part of the cultural tradition of Garhwal as well as other parts of the Himalayas. Each area has its own distinct woven products. These traditional handwoven products are rich in colour, design and have more warmth compared to power-loom woven materials. The vibrant natural colours, the intricate designs that characterise the Himalayan woven crafts, are also an expression of the rich natural & cultural heritage of the region.