



Pashmina Cashmere Scarf

The name *Pashmina* comes from the Persian word *pashm* (wool) and refers to a type of fine soft wool also known as *cashmere* and the textiles made from it.

Pashmina and Cashmere wool comes from the changthangi or pashmina goat, which is a special breed of goat indigenous to the high altitudes of the Himalayas in Nepal, Pakistan and northern India. Cashmere shawls have been manufactured in Nepal and Kashmir for thousands of years. The test for a quality pashmina is warmth and feel. Whilst they both come from the same type of goat, one distinct difference between pashmina and cashmere is the fibre diameter. Pashmina fibres are finer and thinner than cashmere fibres, therefore, it is ideal for making light weight apparel like fine scarves - alternatively the two fibres are mixed as in this particular example from Nepal.

Some people believe pashmina shawls and scarves from Nepal are the best in quality because of the conditions to which the mountain goats have adapted over centuries. The high Himalayas of Nepal has a harsh, cold climate and, in order to survive, the mountain goats have developed exceptionally warm and fine fibre wool (6 times finer than human hair!) which is considered warmer than cashmere fibres obtained from lower region goats.

Pashmina goats produce a double fleece that consists of a fine, soft undercoat (underdown) of hair mingled with a straighter much coarser outer coating called guard hair. The wool is collected during the spring moulting season when the goats naturally shed their winter coat.

The mixed mass of fine underdown and coarse hair is removed by hand with a comb that pulls tufts of fibre from the animal as the comb is raked through the fleece. For the fine underdown to be sold and processed further, it must first be de-haired. This is the process of separating the fine pashmina underdown from the coarse unwanted guard hair. After de-hairing, the resulting pashmina or chasmere is ready to be dyed and hand spun into yarn, dyed and woven into fabrics and garments.

Below you will find some pictures. From top left we have a photo of the feet of an artisan at his pedal loom, weaving pashmina; colourful pasmina weaving bobbins; a stunning example of a patterned pashmina shawl woven with silk thread and pashmina goats in the Himalayan Mountains of Tibet.

