



LOOMS OF LADAKH

VOLUME I | ISSUE 1 | JUNE 2022

LOOMS OF LADAKH NEWSLETTER



T A B L E O F C O N T E N T S

1	Luxury Fashion Brand Looms of Ladakh Symbolises Conscious Fashion
6	Looms of Ladakh: What We Stand For
9	Media Coverage
10	NABFOUNDATION and NABARD have joined hands with Looms of Ladakh
13	We want to make Looms of Ladakh a Global Brand
15	With Looms of Ladakh - A Producer Owned Cooperative - We Find More Stability
17	'Perfection Through Perseverance' – Yarn Spinning and Production Practices
19	Socially Embedded ERP System Will Add to Production Efficiency of Looms of Ladakh
21	Building Sustainable Business and Livelihood for the Women of Ladakh
23	New Product Launch

Luxury Fashion Brand Looms of Ladakh Symbolises Conscious Fashion

-Lalit Shastri, Editor, Looms of Ladakh Newsletter



The whole world is geared towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals while the fashion industry has already recognized its importance and have started taking action to maintain balance between social, economic and environmental sustainability.

When the whole world is in the process or is geared to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity, the fashion industry has started recognising that action in one area will affect outcomes in others, and that development must balance social, economic and environmental sustainability.

It is noteworthy that more and more among those leading and giving direction to the fashion industry, besides the discerning and better informed of the masses have started talking of "Apparel and Sustainability" and "Conscious Fashion".

The Conscious Fashion Campaign, an initiative of the Fashion Impact Fund in collaboration with the United Nations Office for Partnerships and the PVBLIC Foundation, highlighted ten women-led organizations advancing fashion industry change in a collective billboard campaign in February 2022 during New York Fashion Week.

The campaign amplified the visibility and helped increase the media representation of women entrepreneurs leading the fashion sector towards a responsible future.

Abhilasha Bahuguna, co-founder of Looms of Ladakh is one of the ten women entrepreneurs showcased by the Conscious Fashion campaign during New York Fashion Week 2022 for the leading role she is playing in shaping the fashion industry and society with innovative solutions.

Along with Abhilasha Bahuguna, the recipients of the first annual Conscious Fashion Campaign are Ayesha Barenblat, founder and chief executive officer, of Remake; Stephanie Benedetto, co-founder, and CEO, Queen of Raw; Mariama Camara, founder, and CEO, Mariama Fashion Production; Hilary Jochmans, founder, PoliticallyInFashion; Anyango Mpinga, founder, Free As A Human Foundation; Ngozi Okaro, executive director, Custom Collaborative; Cyndi Rhoades, founder, Worn Again Technologies; Jessica Schreiber, founder, and CEO, Fabscrap; and Carry Somers and Orsola de Castro, cofounders, Fashion Revolution.

The Conscious Fashion Campaign has described these entrepreneurs as agents of change working for the cause of the vulnerable and marginalized populations “harmed by the unsustainable practices of the fashion sector. It is imperative to champion their leadership and create a diverse media landscape as they shape the industry and communities with innovative solutions.”

Conscious Fashion Campaign: New York 2021 was the first edition of the program and received over 100 applications from 25 countries.

Looms of Ladakh is a luxury fashion brand. Abhilasha Bahuguna, co-founder and chief strategist has built the Looms of Ladakh Women's Cooperative from scratch. She has taken the challenge rooted in the biased belief that rural women will not be able to own and run a fashion brand by involving herself in the journey of hundreds of women of Ladakh.

In Abhilasha's own words: "it was very important for Looms of Ladakh to contemplate on its brand values and put it down in the form of a brand book. So that when the founders and the initial grassroots women leaders exit, manufacturing is carried out not only for profits. We are trying to ensure that Data optimization, which is currently focused on the product mix, continues to be followed. The cooperative seeks to ensure that optimum balance in the region's herd sizes of pashmina, yak, and sheep is factored into its product range as disturbances to such balance have proven to have adverse ecological consequences."

Abhilasha has tried to inculcate among the rural women, ethos, and ideals that were somewhat unfamiliar. At the same time, she has made it a point to keep "the core values true to their cultural and environmental heritage."

Looms of Ladakh is a brand that -

- Balances between value-driven social entrepreneurship and world-class design
- Redefines stakeholders' position and ownership in fashion
- Is the future of luxury - committed to creating ethical and sustainable products
- Represents true luxury - When you buy from Looms of Ladakh, you own a piece with a powerful story woven into it

- Its rooted in socio-cultural heritage, and strives to preserve and reimagine heritage arts and honor the culture of a community
- Is an excellent illustration of the potential of “Made in India”
- Is empowering, inclusive, and sustainable development

The brand positioning for Looms of Ladakh is essentially that of design-led luxury underpinned by a strong story and set of values. Looms of Ladakh is a farm-to-fashion sustainable, luxury, artisan-owned brand, at the intersection of design and heritage from Ladakh. It aims to provide a blueprint for the ecological and ethical challenges faced by the global fashion industry.

The USP of Looms of Ladakh rests on -

Luxury- Exquisite design meets handmade heritage arts. Each piece is numbered and unique.

Values - The brand has created a model of ownership that emphasizes ethics and upliftment and supports a Ladakhi community and its women via employment generation and leadership skills training. Women of the community and their empowerment are at the center of its reason for existence.

Materials - A key point of focus should be on original and high-quality material and the three exclusive natural fibers that Looms of Ladakh works with - Pashmina, Yak, and Bactrian Camel Wool.

Transparency-One of the key conversations in the global fashion world, outside of ethics and sustainability, is about transparency. By acknowledging artisans and weavers by name alongside the designer and by giving as much information as possible about the product being produced and sold.

Looms of Ladakh is setting standards and plugging into this vital global narrative. Looms of Ladakh is not a development NGO. It is a social experiment and a movement to work on what could be the solution to the woes of the Indian handloom textile clusters. It is an autonomous, and democratic global brand that believes in and follows the practice of profit sharing between the Designer and the Artisan clusters. It is neither an NGO nor a Government Cooperative. Skill development is one of its important agendas, unlike most other brands. Also, it is not just a fashion brand or manufacturing factory being run with a profit motive. It is a design house. It is the future of luxury. It is a pioneering cooperative luxury brand.

Looms of Ladakh is teamwork and producer-owned. Few of its elected women have become leaders and efficient managers. Under the rules, they have to face elections every three years. They will have to take the brand ahead taking the mantle of leadership by rotation. In this way, all members of the organization are in a position to perform the role of leaders.

After the first election was conducted under one roof in May 2017, the members themselves asked for the second election in August/ September 2020 during the pandemic. This election was originally scheduled to be held in May but was postponed due to COVID lockdown.

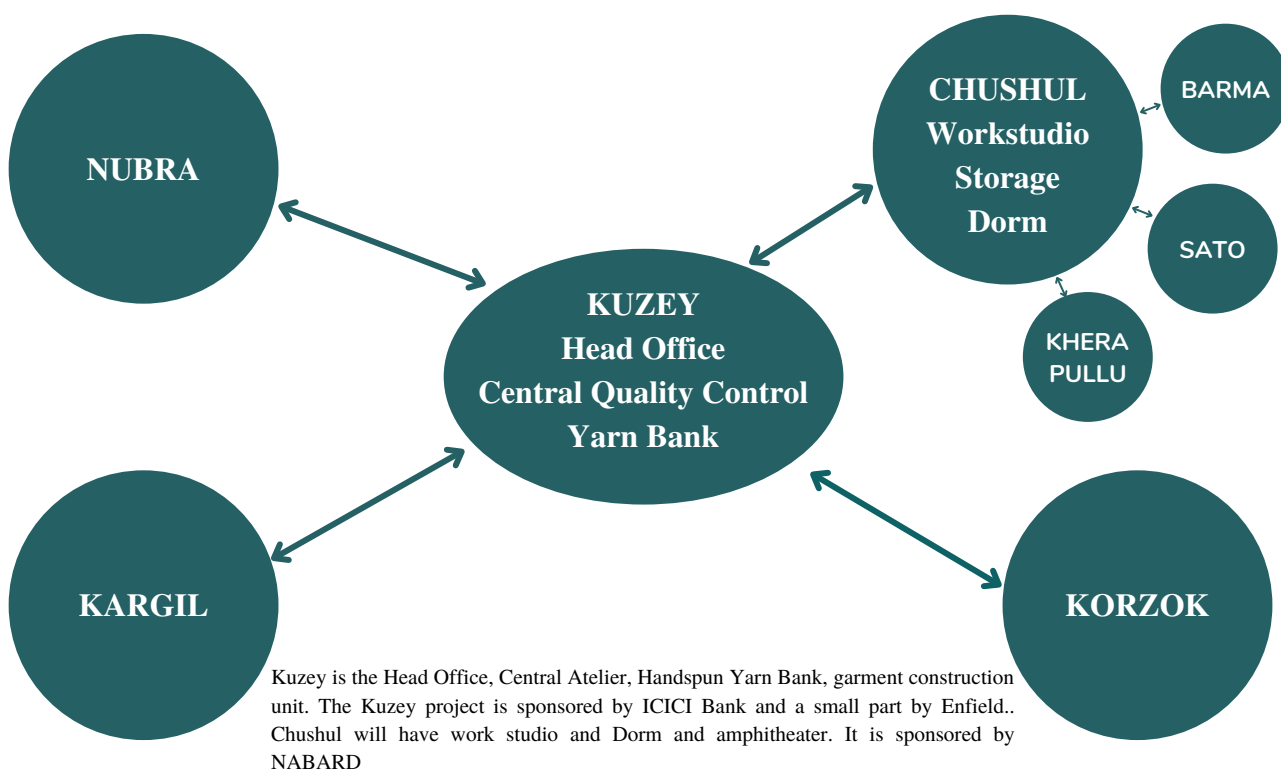
- The story of Looms of Ladakh began in 2015 when Prasanna Ramaswamy, IAS, the then Deputy Commissioner of Leh, came across a self-help group of women in the remote and troubled Chumur village during one of his routine tours. The group displayed their collection of hand-made woolen products hoping to make a modest sale.

Their enterprising spirit in such difficult terrain inspired him to seek a way to help them further their work and earn a respectable and sustainable income from their traditional economic activity.

Separately in 2013, Abhilasha had become aware of the dwindling interest of Pashmina artisans in Kashmir despite Pashmina being the forebear of a highly profitable global Cashmere industry. The seed to help the people, rearing and crafting these timeless objects of luxury, earn a fairer price in the global marketplace for their hard work, was planted in her head. Inspired by the legendary Amul story, Abhilasha felt, the only way they could do that was if they banded together the rural women and ensured they had greater ownership in the industry, as active participants in the craft as well as its business, rather than being valued only for their labour.

In 2017, Abhilasha and Prasanna - the husband-wife duo - founded Looms of Ladakh together, combining their past experiences and vision to create a sustainable, democratic institution within the nascent handloom and handicraft industry of Ladakh. The international dream for a homegrown, conscious luxury brand, owned by the herders and artisans, only came about in the subsequent year. Abhilasha recounts how during her personal encounter with Ermenegildo Zegna in Ahmedabad, she was inspired by his family's story of starting from humble beginnings to creating a luxury apparel empire, and more importantly resonated with their brand values that never solely focused on personal gains but also on ways to actively engage a whole community of stakeholders to benefit and uplift themselves from the enterprise.

With their mission and vision finally in sync with one another, Looms of Ladakh has been driven to realize the goal by empowering the local women herders and artisans of Ladakh through advanced skill development and capacity building in spinning uniform count yarn, natural dyeing, advanced weaving and industrial tailoring.



Besides the traditional looms, the organization is continuously incorporating state-of-the-art machinery and equipment, and also there is a centralized quality control atelier and yarn bank backed by the best production, raw material stock, and finished stock management. For long-term sustainability of the brand as well as the region, the brand has now diversified from Pashmina to include other animal fibers of Ladakh – sheep wool and the rarer yak and Bactrian camel hair, thereby striking a balance between ecology, culture, and economy. Importantly, care is taken and animals are not harmed in any way in the hair collection process.

What is most significant is that Looms of Ladakh is a producer-owned global luxurious fashion brand. When you buy any product from them the profit goes straight to the rural women who are not only in the workforce but are running the show. They are not working behind the scene - they are leading from the front to ensure the sustainability and success of their brand in the world of fashion. They are contributing to India's "Vocal for Local" initiative especially set in motion by Prime Minister Narendra Modi by promoting Indian products globally. Don't forget, when you buy our product, you make a herder-artisan's belief stronger.

“We are honored to support the showcase of these trailblazing women who are changing the face of fashion. Our Conscious Fashion Campaign: New York partnership illustrates the important role of media in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals and its ability to empower the diverse voices of women social entrepreneurs transforming fashion.” - Sergio Fernández de Córdova, executive chairman of the PVBLC Foundation

-Lalit Shastri, Editor Looms of Ladakh Newsletter and Editor-in-Chief Newsroom24x7, is a seasoned journalist, conservationist, wildlife film maker and author.



Looms of Ladakh: What We Stand For

-Abhilasha Bahuguna, Founder Director & Strategist Looms of Ladakh

Looms of Ladakh is a rural women's cooperative movement working to establish Ladakh's textile cottage industry. The farm-to-fashion initiative is working towards giving due recognition to the pashmina, yak, sheep, and Bactrian camel wool-raising communities while empowering these local women by giving them employment opportunities while building Ladakh's textile industry for future generations.

Looms of Ladakh is a rural women's cooperative movement to establish the textile cottage industry of Ladakh. It is a farm-to-fashion initiative committed to extending due recognition to the pashmina, yak, sheep, and Bactrian camel wool rearing communities and their artisans. The cooperative encourages women's empowerment by allowing unemployed women from remote villages to develop their skills in making organic and designer products to sustain themselves financially and also patiently build the textile industry of Ladakh for future generations.

At the outset, we had faced the challenge of coordinating the training of women by qualified master trainers and keeping the women motivated enough to complete the training over a couple of months. Another challenge was linked to bringing about convergence in the efforts of different public and private agencies. Our efforts bore fruit as we succeeded not only in training many women, but a couple of them also had learned enough to become master trainers themselves.



The artisans go through basic training in hand-spinning, natural dyeing, knitting, weaving, and tailoring. Thereafter, they are initiated into the basics of textile, garment construction, and knitwear designing - mostly through hands-on training. The cooperative has been focusing especially on maintaining uniform standards in sizing and product quality - something that takes effort in the case of regions lacking traditionally organized clusters. In the normal course, the skills were mostly utilitarian and for domestic consumption and there is no evidence to suggest that the master craftsmen were passing down their skills to the new generation for the market.

We observed as we took off that there was very little effort on fiber quality improvement in all the locally available wools, i.e, pashmina, yak, and sheep. The elected artisans and Design and Production Heads have started grading their member spinners according to their count. This will be discussed in the article by Nishant Raj. They are also undergoing various capacity-building programs in natural dyeing, weaving, and garment production.

Most importantly, we are constantly on the lookout for managerial and leadership potential within the organization. This is important to us because we wish the brand to be truly led by the members. I recently met a tenant of one of our elected artisan leaders from six years ago who was amazed to see her work-related travels across Ladakh and India. She told us that earlier our members did not step out of their homes even to buy vegetables. On hearing this, the Design Head, the elected artisan leader and I exchanged proud glances, and the Design Head quipped, " She has found her passion through Looms of Ladakh".

Quality control is an area of intense focus for all of us. Our work is carried out by hand and in remote villages at altitudes ranging from 9000 feet to 18000 feet. We have come up with a system of standard practices and replicable processes and are working on improving the production supply chain. This will be discussed in the upcoming issues. We are also in the process of seeking managerial assistance to put long-lasting systems in place to address such issues. We had earlier explored the Enterprise Resource Planning system with team Dhvani but could not take it forward due to the paucity of funds in the initial years. Thanks to SIDBI Swavlamban Challenge Fund, this is being developed in the next 15 months. The technical team for this is Kosha Technologies, Bangalore. We learned about them through Tata's Taneira team and are grateful. Milee will be discussing the objectives and process of developing the ERP in her piece in detail.

So far, the Looms of Ladakh flagship showroom in the main market of Leh has been the main source of sales and marketing. The COVID pandemic has affected global travel and therefore the tourist footfall in Leh was negligible for a long period. This has hit the sales significantly, but we are not very concerned because we have used this time to improve our organization and conduct the second round of the election to ensure the democratic functioning of our organization. We were doubly motivated to get the demand for holding the election from the member-owners when it was due in May 2020, that too when the first wave of COVID was at its peak.

Looms of Ladakh members from the Eastern Ladakh centers have innovated on traditional backstrap looms to weave rugs and home furnishing products. The women also make table-runners. What has remained neglected in Ladakh is the need to improve the quality of sheep wool fiber that is used for making these traditional rugs and carpets. The ratio of effort that goes into making these items to the economic return is very high. To address this issue, Looms of Ladakh has been engaging with its members in Eastern Ladakh to work out a solution for improving the quality and market of these traditional crafts. From the interviews of our elected artisan leaders Mrs. Lobzang Lamo and Mrs. Dolma Chonzom, we will learn about their craft roots and their zeal to take Looms of Ladakh forward.

We launched a garment range of Looms of Ladakh in November 2018 at Nehru Centre, Mayfair London with the hope of attracting attention to Looms of Ladakh being more than just stoles or yarns supplier. We were more than elated to get the interest of Okhai to work on a farm to fashion pashmina and sheep wool garment collection in February 2021 and it will be launched in this newsletter.

We have studied closely the pashmina goat, the sheep and yak in the herd of the Changthang shepherds and its speculated negative impact on the grazing pastures as witnessed in Central Asia. We have also tried to understand the merits of skill development and craft revivalism respectively. It was also observed that the pashmina trade in Ladakh might eventually be concentrated in the hands of a few. Hence, we decided to work on this idea in an effort to find the intersection between nature, culture, and economy and to set industry standards.

The idea driving Looms of Ladakh is a sense of ensuring continuity. The infrastructure for the hub and spoke model of Looms of Ladakh also keeps SDG 15 in mind and passive solar heating local earth material construction technology is being used for it. I am humbled that my vision of building a centralized quality control atelier and head office near Leh; and a prototype that spoke for a decentralized work studio in Chushul has started taking shape. Honorable Chief Executive Councillor Shri Tashi Gyalson laid the foundation stone for the first and Nabard Chairman, Government of India Shri G.R.Chintala laid the foundation stone for the second in May 2022. These two events marked a new phase in our journey in which our struggles see participation and encouragement from others translating it into a movement. We are also grateful to our team of believers – especially Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council, NabFoundation and its CEO Shri Sanjeev Rohilla, Fashion Impact Fund, ICICI Bank, EXIM Bank, Usha Silai Schools, Royal Enfield, Major Gen. Akash Kaushik, the General Officer Commanding 14 Corps of Indian Army, Chief Engineer Brigadier Rajesh Karen who provided logistics support for the construction of the Workstudio in Chushul, and Newsroom 24x7.

We are creating a common structured platform for people working in silos and trying to reduce duplication of efforts. We have a long-term commitment to the true realization of the potential of the stakeholders involved in the project. Looms of Ladakh products reflect the rich heritage of the hardy and creative people of Ladakh, and to that extent, the designs are a very important media.

Ladakh CEC lays foundation stone of head office of Looms of Ladakh.

Media Coverage

Ladakh CEC lays foundation stone of head office of Looms of Ladakh

Leh Ladakh: Tashi Gyalson, Chief Executive Councilor (CEC) of the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council, on Friday 13 May 2022, laid the foundation stone for construction of new office building for Looms of Ladakh at Kuzey, Chushot. -Newsroom 24x7

NABARD Chairman lays the foundation stone of Looms of Ladakh Workstation and Training Centre at Chushul.

Chushul, Ladakh: Chairman NABARD, Dr GR Chintala , laid the foundation stone of the Workstation and Training Centre of Looms of Ladakh here on Monday 30 May 2022. -Newsroom 24x7

Meeting with Lieutenant Governor.

Leh, Ladakh: A delegation from Looms of Ladakh led by its Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Lobzang Lamo and founder director Abhilasha Bahuguna called on the Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh, RK Mathur, at Raj Bhawan on Monday 23 May 2022 -Newsroom 24x7

NABFOUNDATION and NABARD have joined hands with Looms of Ladakh

-Sanjeev Rohilla, CEO NABFOUNDATION and Harsh Deshmukh, AVP NABFOUNDATION



The project with Looms of Ladakh Women Cooperative (LLWC) gave NABFOUNDATION an opportunity to understand the significance of Pashmina in Ladakh and the livelihood options revolving around it.

NABFOUNDATION derives its core philosophy of development from its parent organization “NABARD” and its experience of four decades in the sector of agriculture and rural development. In the 3rd Year of its establishment, NABFOUNDATION has projected itself as an entity to take up the project in the most challenging and remote areas of the country and serve the most neglected and deserving sections of the society. Since its establishment, NABFOUNDATION has ventured into projects like the promotion of Producer Organizations, WASH, Skill Development, Capacity Building, Livelihoods, etc. through convergence and collaborations with the entities having synergy with our vision.

For an outsider, someone not exposed to Ladakh, the image that comes to mind is that of a clear blue sky, snow-capped mountains, meandering roads, beautiful lakes, Monasteries, and barren landscapes but never the Pashmina and Yak Wool. One used to relate Pashmina, only with Kashmir and not even 1 percent with Ladakh.

And why somebody will link Pashmina to Ladakh when more than 95 percent of raw Pashmina is supplied outside Ladakh to different textile clusters. There is a lack of adequate processing and value addition facilities for Pashmina in Ladakh. Hence, the traditional Ladakhi Art of spinning and weaving Pashmina is dying due to migration and reluctance on the part of the younger generation to take it forward.

This project with Looms of Ladakh Women Cooperative (LLWC) gave us an opportunity to understand the significance of Pashmina in Ladakh and the livelihood options revolving around it. Under this project, NABFOUNDATION with the support of NABARD aims to help in establishing a complete value chain of Pashmina and other wool in Ladakh.

During our field visit to Ladakh in April 2021, we found that LLWC is working very closely with the local women artisans to revive the dying art of spinning and weaving in Pashmina. And the effort is not limited to only spinning and weaving, but equal stress is also being given to dyeing, designing, tailoring, branding, marketing, etc. The members put in their heart and soul to craft each and every apparel and these are sold through a retail outlet of Looms of Ladakh located in Leh and a small portion of sales do also happen through social media outreach/marketing.

LLWC is owned and managed by its members and is currently putting stress on improving the skills of the members so that they can design modern and contemporary apparels that attract customers. NABFOUNDATION with the support of NABARD is helping LLWC in mobilizing more members, improving the skills of members through professional training and capacity building, providing necessary human resource support, and construction of Work Studio & Training Centre in Chushul, Branding, and Marketing, etc.

Through training and capacity building of members, NABFOUNDATION will be helping Looms of Ladakh in developing a cadre of A-Grade Spinners, Weavers, Industrial Tailors, Natural Dyeing Experts, and Apparel Designers within LLWC. These professionals will help in meeting the goal of completing the pashmina value chain.

The Changra Goat from which the Pashmina is collected is predominantly reared in the Changthang Region and the producer groups of Changthang are the prime source of the finest Pashmina. Chushul acts as the hub for the members of villages of this Region.

The women members of Chushul have a concrete work shed, wherein they spin, weave and stitch the apparel. The concrete workshed affects their knees and health due to cold temperatures in the severe winters. To provide a warm and comfortable workspace to the members, a Passive Solar Heated Work Studio-cum-Training Centre is being built by NABFOUNDATION. The Centre will facilitate the members of LLWC in and around Chushul and improve their productivity.

The Centre will also act as a Nodal Training Centre for the members. The professional trainers, faculties, and experts will be visiting this Centre to train the members in various disciplines of the textile industry.

Chushul is also symbolic as the Pastoralist Changspa tribe halts in Chushul near the water bodies for a fortnight during their transhumance each year. The proposed center in Chushul near a flowing stream also has the potential to host the nomads and engage in the exchange of knowledge through various means without disrupting their way of life.

The whole Team of NABFOUNDATION is very optimistic and confident that the project will play a crucial role in strengthening and broad-basing pashmina and other wool value chains in Ladakh.



We want to make Looms of Ladakh a Global Brand

-Lobzang Lamo, CEO and Member Looms of Ladakh in Conversation



Lamo Lobzang, CEO of Looms of Ladakh has been with looms since its inception in 2017. She was first introduced to knitting during her 6th standard through her mother. After she had kids she started full-fledged knitting to make caps and socks for her kids.

When were you introduced to knitting for the first time in your life?

I started when I was in fifth or sixth class. My mother used to knit at home to make caps and socks for the family. I used to try my hand on what my mother used to knit but she would also stop me by saying that I would be ruining things. After that, I started knitting toys and dolls using the leftover yarn. After I had kids, I started knitting and making things like caps and socks for them.

As a child, when I didn't know about weaving, I used to like the tak-tak sound of other women working on the looms. So when I used to sit with them, the women gave me the first lessons about weaving. That was rudimentary training. It was only in 2019, after a 3-month training conducted by Looms of Ladakh, that I started weaving in the real sense.

Do you know backstrap loom weaving?

No, I don't know that - but my grandfather used to make chali and phatsa.

How did your grandfather learn backstep weaving?

My grandfather learned it from his father and my great grandfather from his father. Earlier the family used to teach essential skills to their children. After my grandfather, it all stopped

You don't know backstrap weaving then how you could complete a backstep design at a workshop at Jamshedpur recently?

We were given a motivational theme in Jamshedpur and asked to weave a flower. I thought of an apricot flower as it was the apricot season in Ladakh. So I drew a rough drawing and made a graph. This helped me wave the design into the carpet. I also designed a leaf and wove it into the carpet.

How can you help in conserving heritage?

There is a region-specific production of raw fiber naturally – for example, wool in Ladakh, and silk and cotton in some other regions. The prevailing trend in Ladakh is that people are undermining the local material and going for clothes that are not produced locally. We have to be mindful of what is good and bad, what is useful and what is not. This should be the thumb rule and clothes are no exception. Preserving heritage is not about holding onto the past but it is a practice that is sustainable that needs to be preserved. The idea is wool is natural. Even if you throw it away, it will decompose and become one with the soil.

What do you think about backstrap weaving?

Backstrap weaving products are almost wool which last longer than any other material and are fire resistant. They do not burn easily like synthetic or manmade yarn. Backstep is traditionally used to make carpets but we should explore other products like doormat, decorative wall piece, sofa cover, etc should be made for the local consumption as well as tourists visiting Ladakh. There is need to explore diverse products using this technique.

Do you feel proud of it?

I had my first experience of backstrap weaving in Jamshedpur. The flower that I wove. The carpet got a lot of appreciation from the artisans, visitors, and experts who came there from different places. Everyone was curious to know how it was made. It was a proud moment for me and my team. Most importantly, it gave me ideas to explore the immense potential of backstrap weaving

Do you know who you are working for in the looms of Ladakh?

All the members who are connected with Looms of Ladakh - whether from Changthang or Leh – all of them are the owners. My purpose in working here is to ensure the members (artisans) get their due recognition as owners of what they are producing.

Do you know you are the owners?

Yes , every member of looms is the equal owner of Looms of Ladakh.

With Looms of Ladakh - A Producer Owned Cooperative - We Find More Stability

-Dolma Chonzom, Product Officer and Member of Looms of Ladakh in Conversation



Chonzom ly, Product Officer of Looms of Ladakh was a shepherd and learned knitting at the age of 15 through her mother. She was first introduced to weaving through 40 days of training by Looms of Ladakh at Kharnakling center.

When were you introduced to knitting for the first time in your life?

I started knitting in Changthang at the age of 15. At that time, I was also shepherding (kharnak). I learned knitting from my mother. In the initial stages, one was making socks and gloves only for family members..

When were you introduced to weaving for the first time in life?

That was when I was introduced to Looms of Ladakh and went for a 40-day training organized by the women's cooperative at the Kharnakling center

Do you know backstrap loom weaving?

I learned the skill from my mother. It is a family tradition and kids are taught to make traditional carpets, skaraks, namboo, at home. As kids, we were even punished if we failed in the task of weaving properly.

What all do you make with backstrap weaving for your home and yourself?

We were making Tsuktul, tsukdan, and bok, but not now

Have you ever sold products made with backstrap loom weaving to a shopkeeper? How much can you earn by selling it? What did they sell? How much did they earn by selling that product?

We sold Tsukdan, tsukthul, namboo – mostly made during winters - to customers who landed at our door through word of mouth publicity but not to shopkeepers. We sold nambu, tsukdan, and tsukthul for a price ranging between Rs. 13000 to Rs. 14000.

Did any of your family members sell your backstep loom woven product to shopkeepers in Leh?

What did they sell? how much do they earn from it?

I have been doing backstep weaving occasionally but my family members are doing other jobs.

Did you ever sell products made on backstrap loom weaving through your brand looms of Ladakh?

Yes, I have sold namboo (spuruk), and khulu shawl.

Can you describe the customers who bought it?

Mainly they were the local customers. Some tourists have preferred to go for backstrap loom.

What was the feedback of customers about those products?

The Customers have shown plenty of interest in Tsukdan (carpet) and tsukthul.

Do you still want to make a product with a backstrap loom? Why?

Yes, it's an alternative livelihood when we do not get sufficient work. Women in the Kharnakling produce on-demand. This gives additional income to many women in kharnakling who are, otherwise work as laborers.

What should be done to improve demand in the market? Do you have any ideas? Can you share an example where you both made an innovative product with traditional weaving? How can you merchandise it?

My suggestion is that there should be a special focus on the quality of what we produce, more stress should be on backstep weaving since it gives better quality and fetches a much higher price. It is also important to put our products on display during festivals. The other groups are using this method much to their advantage.

What do you think about the product? Do you feel proud of it?

In recent years, more and more people have started buying what we have been producing traditionally like tsukdan, tsukthul, and nambu. The demand for customized designs for these products is also on the rise.

Do you know for whom you are working in Looms of Ladakh?

We are working for the women's group, i.e., Looms of Ladakh. It is committed to uplifting, empowering, and improving the quality of life of rural women.

Do you know you are the owners?

All the members are the owners. Everyone is working together and the resources belong to everyone

‘Perfection Through Perseverance’ – Yarn Spinning and Production Practices

-Nishant Raj, Design & Production Head Looms of Ladakh



Looms of Ladakh's production work revolves around the creation of yarns. Last year, the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) introduced the New Model Charkha (NMC), a semi-mechanized spinning machine, to increase the production of uniform count Pashmina yarn in Ladakh. Streamlining the production process is also critical to ensuring a consistent supply of products at the retail store and a consistent income from sales for the artisan members.

Spinning yarns is akin to spinning one's destiny, one's own 'Swaraj', for yarn makes the fabric, and the fabric imbued with meaning crafts the identity, and our identity is the fountainhead of all our deeds. This only a spinner will know. Yarn forms the core of all our production work at Looms of Ladakh. More importantly, uniform count yarns are necessary for ensuring product quality and standardization, which are crucial to our brand's reliability and reputation, and which automatically will help build our brand value.

Both in woven and knit product categories uniform yarns will ensure final products with uniform thickness and softness. Separately in wovens, uniform yarns equate to stable weaves and further open us to more high-end tailored apparel segments than our current offering. Otherwise, loosely woven handwoven fabrics are often relegated to loose-fitting garments like scarves, shawls, and blankets.

To increase the production of uniform count Pashmina yarn in Ladakh, Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) introduced a semi-mechanized spinning machine last year – the New Model Charkha (NMC). Pashmina being a delicate fiber can't be spun on its own on the NMC; so, KVIC has blended Pashmina roving with cotton and has trained several women in spinning and operating the machine. Since Looms of Ladakh prides itself on offering 100% pure Pashmina and other wool products, we have been working on alternative ways of standardizing our Pashmina yarn spinning. Meanwhile, the NMC is being explored for spinning other wools in their pure state to help us achieve scale in production. The semi-mechanized scale will help reduce production stress on our spinners and help us make spinning more profitable for them.

Absolute control over the hand spinning process is the hallmark of the master. Hence, last August master spinners were identified and others were graded, based on the fineness and uniformity of the spun yarn. Taking the master yarns as the benchmark, the latter have achieved the desired quality through repetitive practice, close monitoring, and encouragement by the production team in successive months.

Streamlining the production process is also crucial to ensuring a continuous supply of products at the retail store and sustained income for the artisan members from a sale. For this, each member has been given a monthly production target with fixed designs based on their speed, willingness, and the brand's requirement. This allows us to rectify errors, gauge member skills, and strengthen core capabilities in each monthly production cycle. We are a firm believer in 'perfection through perseverance, and our current production system is helping us achieve just that!



Socially Embedded ERP System Will Add to Production Efficiency of Looms of Ladakh

-Milee Parmar, Executive Director Looms of Ladakh in Conversation



Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) is used by organizations looking to manage their business functions within a centralized and integrated system. Looms of Ladakh is aiming to build a disruptive yet socially embedded ERP system that would enable the artisans to access/share timely information to make good quality products resulting in more work and income.

What is an ERP?

Enterprise resource planning (ERP) is a process used by companies to manage and integrate the important parts of their businesses. Many ERP software applications are important to companies because they help them implement resource planning by integrating all of the processes needed to run their companies with a single system. An ERP software system can also integrate planning

purchasing inventory, sales, marketing, finance, human resources, and more.

Where did you first learn about it?

During my Post-Graduation at IRMA, we studied a course on Management Information Systems in which we learned about ERP.

How about examples of successful ERP system implementation in other POs in India. What are your learning takeaways from them?

My first encounter with a running ERP system was with Bengaluru-based organizations named Vrutti & Catalyst Management Services, which had made a web portal & mobile application for the SHGs and Producer Companies promoted by the organizations in Tamilnadu. About three years ago, I got a chance to see another successful ERP system implemented by an artisan-based producer organization named Chitrika in Hyderabad. I learned that such common ERP systems make the operations & information flow smooth and efficient, especially when the work is spread vastly in geography. In rural areas where Internet connectivity is intermittent, having a platform that shares common information with all stakeholders as and when needed, helps in building transparent systems.

How will an ERP system improve the production efficiency of Looms of Ladakh and your plan of action for it?

The main objective of the ERP development project is to have a disruptive and socially embedded technological system in place which would enable the artisan's access/share timely information to make good quality products resulting in more work and income. Most of the women members of the cooperative are not the primary bread-winner in the family. Since these artisans are involved in other family livelihood activities like animal husbandry/agriculture/labor work etc. in addition to their handicrafts work. As the income from handicrafts/handloom work is still incomparable to the income from other sources, the women are not financially empowered. With the help of the ERP system, Looms of Ladakh aims to add more time to the production and business season which was limited until now. On one hand, the backend of processes will be strengthened by the implementation of the pilot, while on the other hand, an efficient sales & stock management module will assist well in increasing the size of business through online sales/marketing initiatives. A system to capture member-level production data, which includes quantity and quality of products developed, designs, time taken, etc., can make processes more transparent. Accuracy of data would result in making work remunerative for members unlike many collectives working with artisans at group level where both hard-workers and free-riders don't get fairly rewarded/motivated. Direct benefit transfer mechanism based on the work-done will help avoid the dependence on more dominant members of the groups. These all can culminate into better options for financial independence and economic equity for women. The plan of action is to develop the web & mobile application-based ERP solution in the next 6-8 months, with the help of an expert team at KOSHA. Looms of Ladakh will identify Operators/ ERP managers in each of the village centers that it operates. These managers will be trained by KOSHA and Looms of Ladakh team to implement and further train in implementing the ERP solution at each member level within their respective centers. Thus, this project will also help in building the digital literacy of the women members apart from the efficiency resulting from the ERP implementation.

Building Sustainable Business and Livelihood for the Women of Ladakh

-Rangdol Janfan, Summer Intern Looms of Ladakh



Rangdol Janfan, a student in the social sector (TISS) was an intern with Looms of Ladakh. The internship with Looms of Ladakh gave him an insight into the industry, community, and the stakeholders and changed the outlook towards the sector. Rangdol stated “Most importantly what I felt after working with Looms of Ladakh is that one is connected with the bigger purpose of improving the lives of the people.

As a student in the social sector (TISS), it is my wonderful privilege to get a chance to work and learn in the Looms of Ladakh. It is a perfect place to experience the corporate setting and social objective confluence.

This has been my first experience of working with an organization that is involved in producing high-end luxury wearable goods. The organisation - Looms of Ladakh - supports decentralized production in the homes of a couple of hundred women scattered in nine different villages in Ladakh.

The effort and the teamwork involved in maintaining this scattered network in distant locations is something that amazes me. The organization is making shawls, stoles, mufflers, caps, socks, and gloves out of

pashmina, sheep wool, yak wool, and Bactrian camel wool that is produced locally, and are 100 percent handmade, naturally dyed, and is also unique to the region.

Many of the members of this organization are producers. They are working with full dedication to give identity to the real owners of pashmina and the habitats of the region. Looms of Ladakh is imparting skills and necessary training to its members to add value to their produce. My internship with Looms has given me new insight into the industry, community, and stakeholders. It has also changed my outlook on the sector.

For an intern like me, it has been a huge opportunity to work with Looms of Ladakh and gain on-the-job experience in brand building and skill development. My short stint with this organization has been very fruitful and an experience worth recommending. Especially, one would like to underscore that the organization's work culture makes a real difference to one's personality. Looms of Ladakh inculcate among its members and workers the spirit of hard work, commitment, and professional ethics. Another upside is that one enjoys going to the field to meet the members at different centers or villages and also while working at the office and meeting the clients and funders. The organization, in its growing stage, is also very dynamic. The members and staff have well-defined roles. At the same time, they are also involved in other activities like picking new and meaningful ideas and knitting them together to shape and structure the organization better. Being an organization with small administration and a large network of scattered members, the intern gets the opportunity to participate in all aspects of the organization from purchase to processing, marketing, fundraising, community mobilization, capacity building, and so on. It gives an all-around exposure to both the industry and the community. Most importantly what I felt after working with Looms of Ladakh is that one is connected with the bigger purpose of improving the lives of the people. What is very significant at a personal level is the awareness that each little action on my part as an intern will help, even if it is a drop in the ocean, in building a sustainable business and livelihood for the women of Ladakh.



New Product Launch

-In collaboration with Okhai

Co-created with Love by Okhai x Looms of Ladakh | Designer Manorath Dhillon

This is a love story between Artisans from the mineral mountains in Changthang region of Ladakh and Rabari Artisans from the Gulf of Kutch of Gujarat. Of tribes that have been practicing their crafts for hundreds of years.

They joined hands in a unique collaboration. Exquisite and Ancient techniques of wool weaving and hand embroidery in a limited edition collection that was conceived in the high Himalayas and made near the beautiful beaches of Gulf of Kutch



Looms of Ladakh "Yapola" Handwoven Lambswool Jacket

Looms of Ladakh "Yapola" Handwoven Lambswool Jacket in relaxed fit is minimal & contemporary that will elevate any look and make you stand out in any crowd. The extra weft and the zero-waste cut perfectly blend the folk and the modern inspiration for the look. The fibres natural chocolate brown colour and the simple cut of the piece makes it a perfect companion for your early winter styling.

Looms of Ladakh "Tsarap" Handwoven Lambswool Jacket

Looms of Ladakh "Tsarap" Handwoven Lambs wool Jacket shall add to your style an understated glamour with a bohemian twist. The natural colors of the wool combined with the minimal extra weft in the weave makes it a classic and universal piece for your wardrobe. Satisfy your mountain callings with this perfect piece to keep you stylish and warm.





Looms of Ladakh "Shyok" Handwoven Walnutdyed Pashmina Overlay

Looms of Ladakh "Shyok" Handwoven Walnut-dyed Pashmina Overlay is a chic and luxurious piece that makes a strong statement with its unusual appeal. A perfect winter coverup, this softest pashmina piece is something you'd have never seen before. Crocheted flowers on the shoulder seams add an element of joy to the look which shall definitely be a conversation starter in any situation.

Looms of Ladakh "Nubra" Handwoven Walnut-dyed Pashmina Overlay

Looms of Ladakh "Nubra" Handwoven Walnut-dyed Pashmina Overlay will be the perfect companion to your everyday wear. The minimal piece will be your winter wardrobe staple for years to come. You will fall in love with the fall of handspun handwoven pashmina used for making the piece. The no-waste cutting for this pattern makes it as sustainable as it can get.



Looms of Ladakh "Markha" Handwoven Walnutdyed Lambswool Jacket

Looms of Ladakh "Markha" Handwoven Walnut-dyed Lambs wool Jacket is a contemporary bohemian piece which you can effortlessly worn on your jeans for the day or style it with your dresses for an evening soiree. The Ajrakh inner lining of the jacket adds a fun twist to the piece. Style it over a basic outfit to complete the look.



Looms of Ladakh "Indus" Handwoven Lambswool Jacket

Looms of Ladakh "Indus" Handwoven Lambs wool Jacket is an easy to wear versatile piece keeping you warm and cozy both at home as well as on a day out with your friends. For the pleasant yellow colour, the yarns are lovingly dyed using marigold from Ladakh. The Ajrakh inner lining adds an extra tint of personality to the piece. Style it with a pair of jeans and boots, for your trip to the mountains.

Looms of Ladakh "Tsaldir" Handwoven Pashmina Overlay

Looms of Ladakh "Tsaldir" Handwoven Pashmina Overlay brings casual yet effortless elegance to your winter wear. The mixture of plain and extra-weft weaving, and the camel colour extracted from walnuts create a perfect design for your style. Tailored to sartorial perfection from premium quality handspun & handwoven Pashmina, it assures a soft and soothing touch against the skin.



Looms of Ladakh "Parang" Handwoven Embroidered Lambswool overlay

Looms of Ladakh "Parang" Handwoven Embroidered Lambs wool overlay is the minimal and versatile piece adding a modern and bohemian flair to your style. The Ajrakh inner-lining and minimal hand-embroidery creates perfect amount of embellishment to the piece. Pattern of piece is cut out keeping zero-waste concepts in mind.



Looms of Ladakh "Zanskar" Handwoven Lambswool Jacket

Looms of Ladakh "Zanskar" Handwoven Lambs wool Jacket is a no fuss piece adding just the right dose of style to your casual everyday wear. The weaving like embroidery in the piece and natural colours from Marigold stand out for the person with an eye for details. Style it with a pair of jeans or a pretty dress to add an element of freshness to your OOTD.

Looms of Ladakh "Suru" Handwoven Crocheted Pashmina Overlay

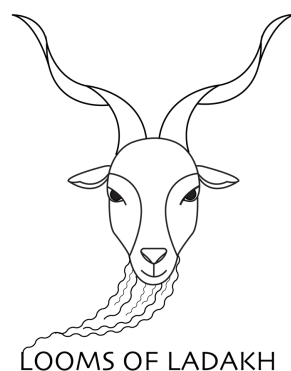
Looms of Ladakh "Suru" Handwoven Crocheted Pashmina Overlay is a chic and luxurious piece adding an effortless glamour to your evening chai with friends and family. Crocheted flowers on the shoulder seams add an element of joy to the look which shall definitely be a conversation starter in any situation. Ultra-soft and light pashmina used for making the piece will make you feel as if you're wrapped in a cloud of warmth.



With Love,



X





Looms of Ladakh is herder-artisan-led and owned luxury brand that brings farm to fashion design to a raw material economy of pashmina, yak, Bactrian Camel and sheep wool – upskilling traditional artisans and providing sustainable solutions at the intersection of economy, ecology and culture that appeal to global audiences

**Looms of Ladakh Women Cooperative LTD.
registered under J&K self reliant cooperative act
1999, 20 May 2017**

Contact Us

Address : Looms of Ladakh, First Floor Tourist Information Centre, Leh - 194101
Email:loomsofladakh@gmail.com,loomsofladakh.coop@gmail.com.