

# The Fabric Tour of North India

## Abstract

India is a country with rich tradition and religion which is reflected in the expression of different fabrics, embroideries and folk arts. India divided into four parts i.e. NORTH INDIA, EAST INDIA, SOUTH INDIA AND WEST INDIA and we choose North India for my study. In the Panchachuli range of the Himalaya, rural women have been knitting the most beautiful garments in Tibetan cashmere and sheep wool. Chikankari is a delicate and intricate embroidery style from Lucknow that is believed to have been introduced by Noor Jehan, the wife of Mughal emperor Jhansi. Phulkari is the embroidery of floral motifs on fabric, traditionally practiced by the women of the Punjab. Pashmina literally translates as 'soft gold' in Kashmir. Kullu shawls are handwoven from three types of wool: Merino wool, Angora wool and Local sheep wool. Haryana produces Panja, an interesting weaving technique that gets its name from the tool used in the weaving process- Panja.

**Keywords:** North India, Panja Weave, Bandhani, Panchachuli Weave, Chikankari, Phulkari, Pashmina Shawl, Kullu Shawls.

## Introduction

North India is a loosely defined region consisting of the northern part of India. The dominant geographical features of north India are the Indus-Genetic plain and the Himalayas, which demarcate the region from the Tibetan plateau and central Asia. The North culture zone as the status of Chandigarh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand. Whereas the geological survey of India includes Uttar-Pradesh and Delhi but excludes Rajasthan and Chandigarh. Other states sometimes included are Bihar and Madhya-Pradesh. The main states of North India are-

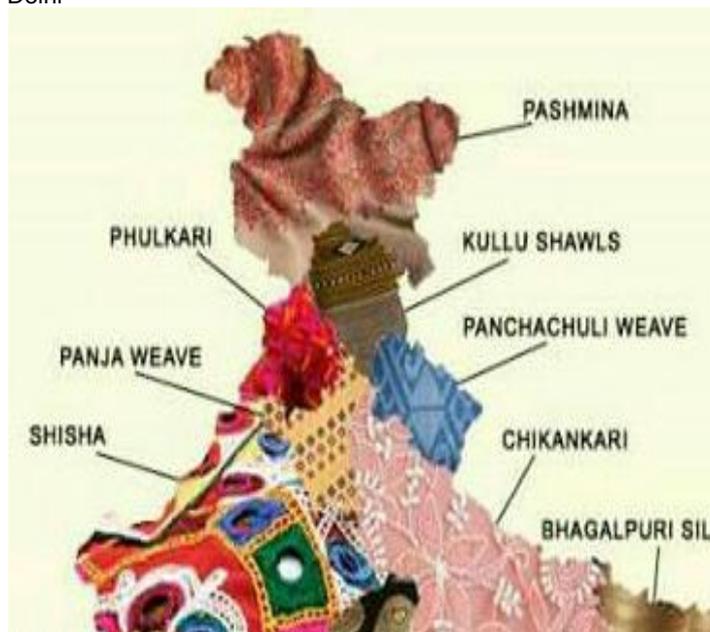
1. Haryana
2. Himachal Pradesh
3. Jammu and Kashmir
4. Punjab
5. Rajasthan
6. Uttarakhand
7. Uttar-Pradesh
8. Chandigarh
9. Delhi

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**Kullu Shawls of Himachal Pradesh**

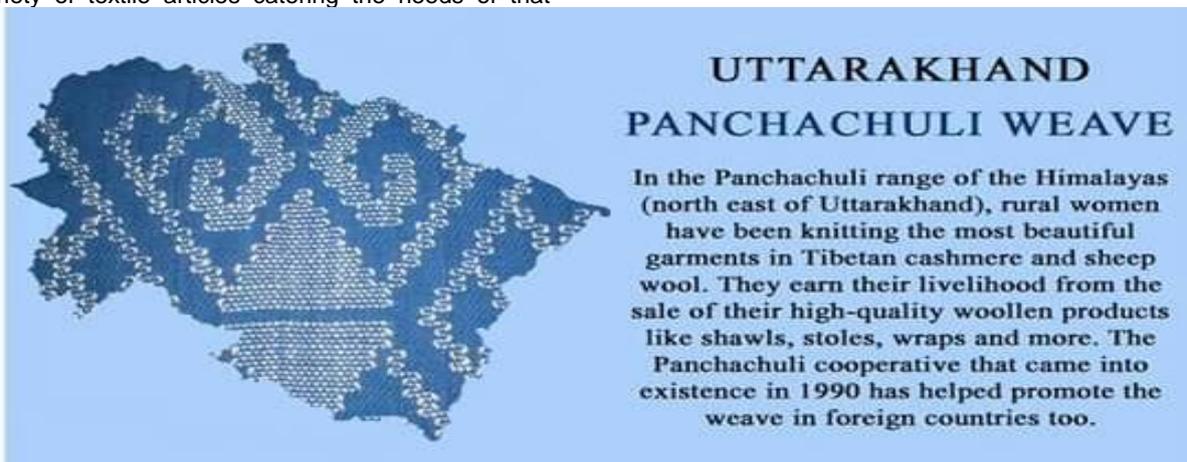
Initially, local wool was used as a raw material for weaving Kullu Shawls. This wool is acquired from sheep bred in Himachal Pradesh. The process of shawl weaving consists of making reels from ruffle, pashmina and angora wool yarn first. Typically this shawls have geometrical designs, the

shawls are also woven in floral design, which may run all over, on the corners or on the borders only. Each design may have 1-8 colors. Traditionally bright colors i.e. red, yellow, magenta, pink, green, orange, blue, black and white were used for patterning and white, black and natural grey or brown were used as the base in these shawls.

**Panchachuli Weave of Uttarakhand**

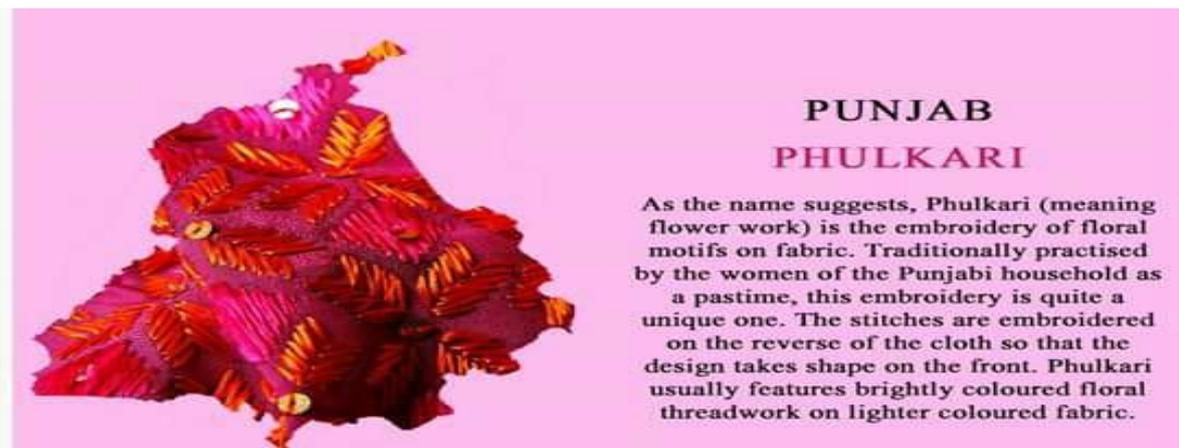
Uttarakhand, a newly carved state, is well known for eternal beauty, ethereal scenes and characteristic geographical symmetry. Sheep and Goat rearing plays an important role in rural economy of Uttarakhand. The wool obtained from these animals is mainly used by local artisans for manufacturing of a variety of textile articles catering the needs of that

particular area only. The Panchachuli weave are "hand spun, hand dyed, hand woven, hand knitted, hand embroidered by the Panchachuli women weavers of Uttarakhand". In winter they worked with the Panchachuli women weavers co-operative to produce some super fine, super warm, super stylish scarves.

**Phulkari of Punjab**

Phulkari and Bagh were the traditional embroidered shawls from rural Punjab. The word Phulkari comes from two Sanskrit words "phul" which means flower and "kari" which means work. Taken together Phulkari means 'flower work'. This embroidery begin in Punjab in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and continues today. Bagh, which literally mean "garden", is a type of Phulkari. The main characteristics of Phulkari are the embroidery is on the wrong side of the cloth so the design is automatically embroidered on the right side of the cloth. Traditional Phulkari was made of hand dyed and hand woven spun cloth called

"KHADDAR" using high quality untwisted silk thread called "PAT" with bright colors like red, green, golden, yellow, pink and blue. The motifs were used on Phulkari embroidery in only geometrical motifs such as horizontal, vertical, diagonal, circular, rectangle, triangle etc. Phulkari is an integral part of the life of Punjabi girl. In any function, festival, get-together functions one or the other type of Phulkari or Bagh is invariably used. It is belived to be auspicious, a symbol of happiness, prosperity and suhag of the married women.



## PUNJAB PHULKARI

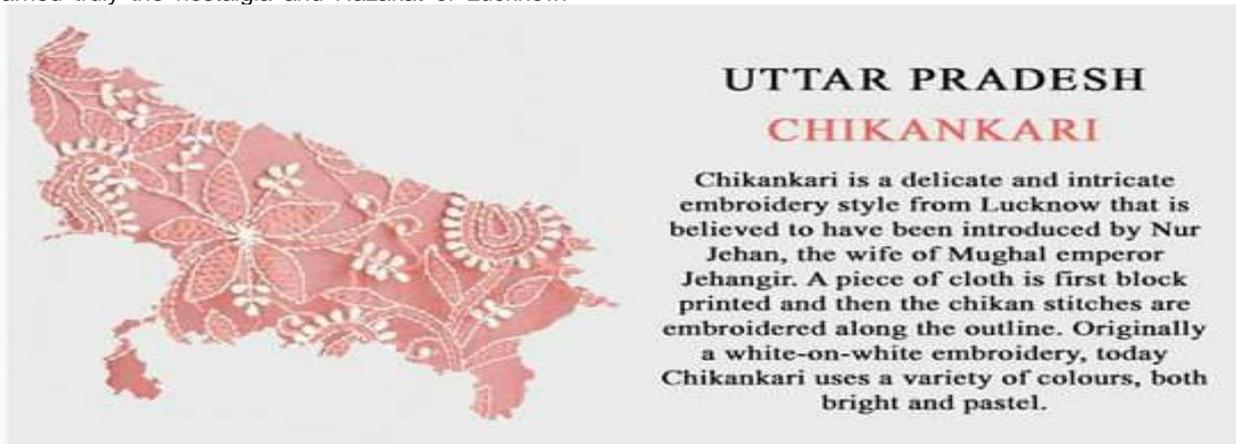
As the name suggests, Phulkari (meaning flower work) is the embroidery of floral motifs on fabric. Traditionally practised by the women of the Punjabi household as a pastime, this embroidery is quite a unique one. The stitches are embroidered on the reverse of the cloth so that the design takes shape on the front. Phulkari usually features brightly coloured floral threadwork on lighter coloured fabric.

### Chikankari of Uttar-Pradesh

Chikankari derived its name from Persian which means "wrought with needle work". This art was restricted mainly to the royals and common man seldom got chance to have it with time it started diminishing. The work is mainly done on muslin and cotton cloth most suited for hot and humid summers of North. As the embroidery delicate and pastel it carried truly the nostalgia and Nazakat of Lucknow.

The white embroidery on white cotton especially on muslins is known as chikan work.

Chikankari work is done sari border, tiny butas in the body of the saris, blouse, kurtas, cuffs, cap, table cloth, table mats, cushion, curtains and other household linens. It is commercialized and had gained the foreign market.



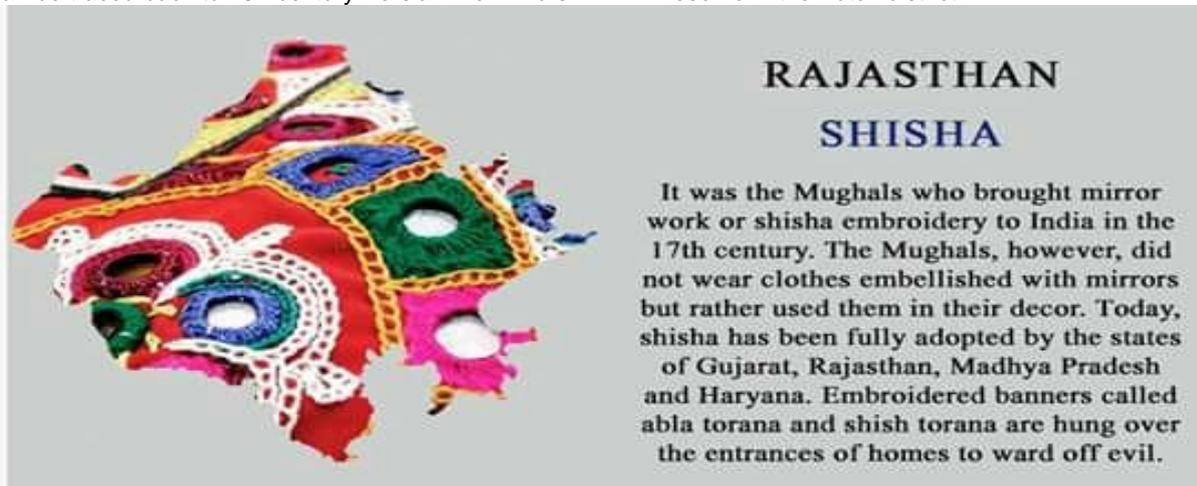
## UTTAR PRADESH CHIKANKARI

Chikankari is a delicate and intricate embroidery style from Lucknow that is believed to have been introduced by Nur Jehan, the wife of Mughal emperor Jehangir. A piece of cloth is first block printed and then the chikan stitches are embroidered along the outline. Originally a white-on-white embroidery, today Chikankari uses a variety of colours, both bright and pastel.

### Shisha of Rajasthan

Mirror work embroidery from India was more intricate and skillfully crafted than any other that had seen. Mirror work, other wise known as shisha, can be traced back to 13<sup>th</sup> century Persia. The mirrors

help to trap or blind the evil eye, reflecting bad luck and evil spirits away from the wearer. Mirror work embroidery from Rajasthan is dominant amongst the Jat community who reside in the Banni Grassland reserve in the Kutch district.



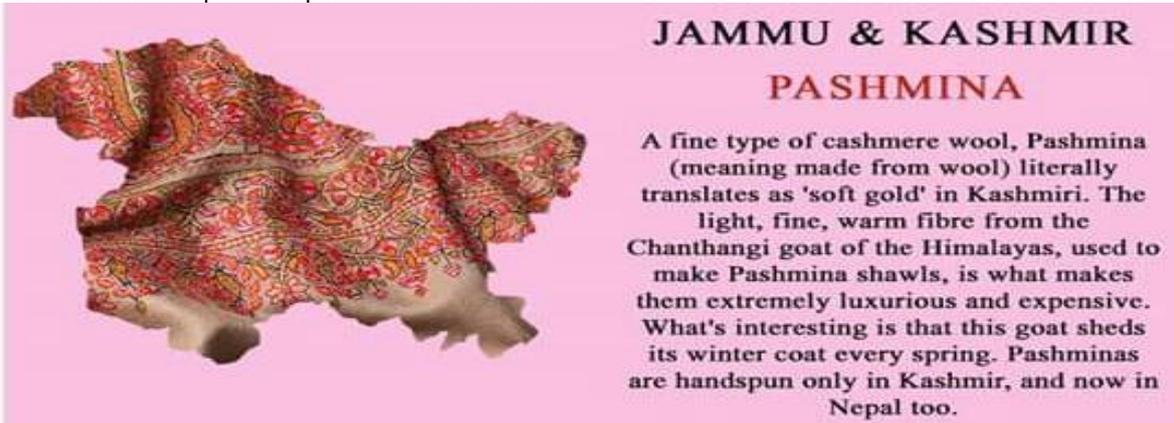
## RAJASTHAN SHISHA

It was the Mughals who brought mirror work or shisha embroidery to India in the 17th century. The Mughals, however, did not wear clothes embellished with mirrors but rather used them in their decor. Today, shisha has been fully adopted by the states of Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Haryana. Embroidered banners called abla torana and shish torana are hung over the entrances of homes to ward off evil.

**Pashmina Shawl of Jammu and Kashmir**

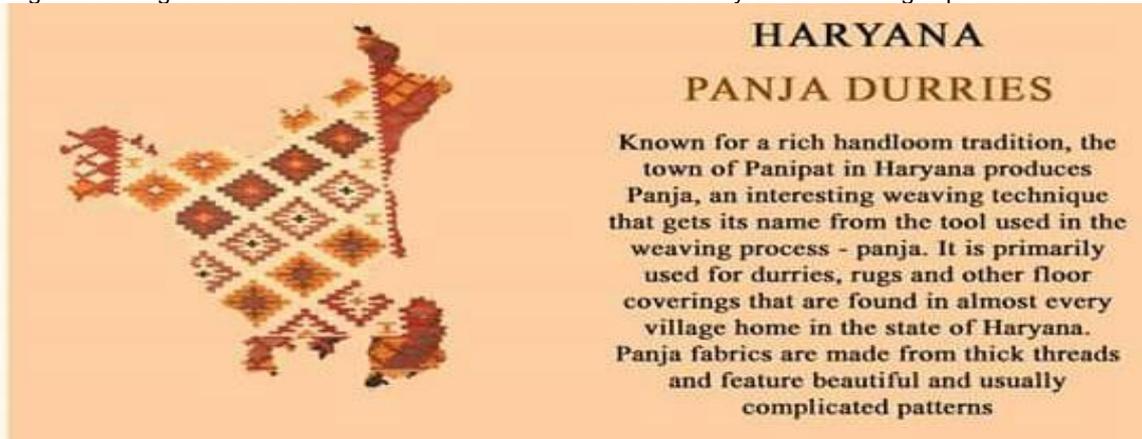
Pashmina is a down fiber os under coat derived from domestic goat known as 'Capra hercus' which is native to India. The habitat of these Pashmina goats is spread throughout the mountainous region of central Asia. The traditional method of processing, involving dusting, dehairing, combing, spinning, finishing etc. have given these Kashmiri Shawls a special importance all over the

world. Pashmina is a fine type of Cashmere wool. The textiles made from it were first woven in Kashmir. The name comes from Parsian: Pasmına, meaning "made from wool" and literally translates to "soft hold" in Kashmir. They are known for their softness and warmth. These are superior quality shawls. They are made from wool of the capra hercus, A species of wild Asian mountain goat. So, that the name given.

**Panja Durries of Harayana**

Panja weaving forms part of India's glorious weaving tradition. This craft is mostly used for making durries, light woven rugs used as floor covering. The craft gets its name from a metallic claw-

like tool called Panja in the local dialect, used to beat and set the threads in the warp. Cotton and wool are used in the making of Panja durries. The warp is invariably made of the cotton. Wool as a weft is extensively used in making expensive durries.

**Conclusion**

In the world India has so much variety of textiles that Indian Traditional textiles give us. It gives finest and coarser cloth, fabrics of various designs using various types of raw materials from cotton, various vegetable fibers to wool and silk. Weavers, dyers, printers in India are producing new and new designs every day to make Indian industry un-ending.

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