RECLAIMING INDIGENOUS FIBRES OF INDIA AS ACTS OF ECOLOGICAL RESISTANCE

DESI WOOL, KALA COTTON AND ERI SILK (HIMACHAL PRADESH, GUJARAT AND ASSAM)

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Abstract

This paper weaves together the stories of three textile systems rooted in indigenous fibres, *kala* cotton from Gujarat, *desi* sheep wool from Himachal Pradesh, and Eri silk from Assam, to explore how traditional practices carry ecological knowledge and cultural memory. Each fibre is deeply embedded in its landscape, shaped by the rhythms of local ecosystems and sustained through intergenerational care.

Kala cotton, cultivated without irrigation or chemical inputs, is being revived by small land holding farmers in Kachchh as a form of climate-resilient and decolonial design. In Himachal Pradesh, wool practices linked to Gaddi pastoralism reflect how seasonal migration and domestic weaving nurture livelihoods and cultural identity. In Assam, Eri silk-reared and woven by Rabha women, is produced in harmony with forest systems, offering a model of ethical and feminist labour.

These stories are not about nostalgia or preservation, but about sustaining slow, rooted practices in a fast-moving world. They remind us that textiles are not just material objects, they are acts of care, memory, and quiet resistance. In an era of ecological crisis, these practices invite us to imagine futures built on joy, kinship, and reciprocity with the land.

Keywords: *Local Fibers; Land-Based Fibre Practice; Forest and Agricultural Systems; Migratory Pastoralism.*

METHODOLOGY

All three authors have extensive experience with artisanal communities across India through craft-based revival, community-driven, and collaborative design projects. Pramila and Amruthalakshmi first met in 2011 at the National Institute of Design (NID) during their Master of Design with a focus on Textiles and Crafts. Later they collaborated on projects using natural fibers such as cotton, wool, and jute across regions including Rajasthan, Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh. For her ongoing PhD at Concordia University, Montreal, Pramila connected with Rachel after discovering their shared work on craft and material culture, including Rachel's engagement with 7Weaves in India and artisanal communities in Pakistan and Nepal (Fig.01).

Their shared focus on fibers, *kala* cotton, eri silk, and wool, rooted in ecological and social systems, guided multiple Zoom meetings, email exchanges, and collaborative writing sessions, shaping this paper to highlight the cultural, relational, and ecological significance of these fibers.

CASE STUDY I WOOL-PASTORALISM, ARTISANAL LABOUR AND REVIVAL OF DESI (INDIGENOUS) WOOL

In this section of the paper Amruthalakshmi Rajagopalan traces the life of indigenous wool in Himachal Pradesh, a State in Northern India, through three interconnected frames: the migratory

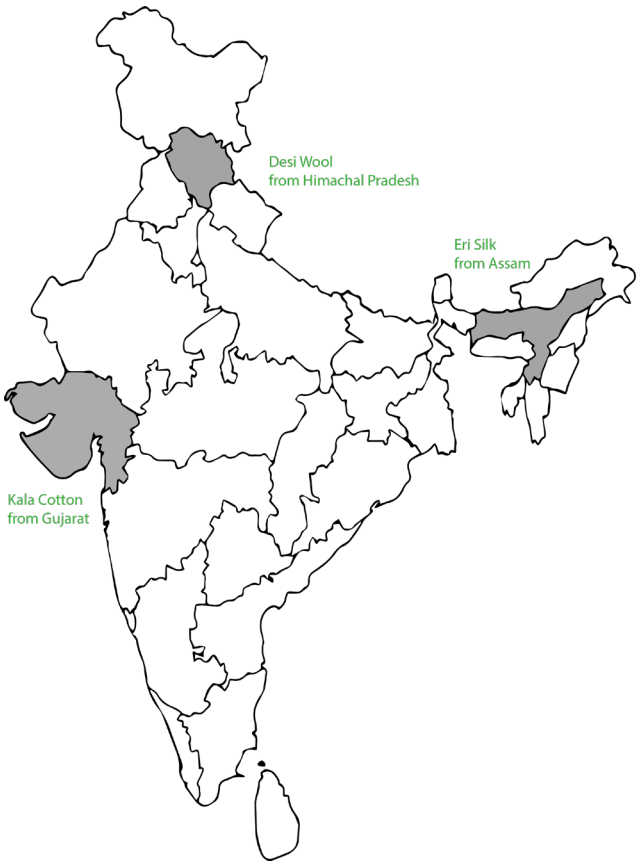

Fig. 01

pastoralism of the Gaddi community, the artisanal labor practices that emerged around wool, the erosion of these systems due to economic pressures, and the recent revival of these practices in response to broader ecological and economic shifts.
Following wool from flock to fiber, from domestic looms to contemporary craft initiatives, this section of the paper examines how mountain economies navigate change while sustaining values, such as livestock-based self-reliance, communal wool sharing, and seasonal material knowledge. (Fig. 02)

MIGRATORY SHEPHERDING: GADDI NOMADIC PASTORALISM AND THE WOOL ECONOMY

Himachal Pradesh is a State in Northern India, framed by the Himalayas. Here, nomadic pastoralism, a traditional occupation, forms the first link in the region's wool-based textile economy. The Gaddi community, one of the several native pastoral groups in the region, have since time immemorial, reared sheep and goats for meat and wool. This practice follows a well-established ancient system of seasonal migration that follows the ecological rhythms of weather and fodder availability across diverse landscapes, scrub forests, coniferous woods, and subalpine grasslands, navigated through inherited routes and seasonal knowledge passed down over generations. Their inherited knowledge of the landscape is shaped by generations of close observation, memory, and seasonal familiarity with shifting weather patterns, varied terrain, and seasonal vegetation cycles that structure pastoral life.
To the Gaddis, livestock is not simply a source of income but *dhan* (wealth), intimately tied to survival, dignity, and collective memory. They primarily rear *desi* (indigenous Gaddi and Rampur-Bushair) breeds of sheep and goats, well-adapted to regional conditions and yielding coarse, durable wool. The animals are sheared two to three times yearly, with some wool used within pastoral households and the remainder traded locally.

SPINNING AND WEAVING TRADITIONS: ARTISANAL LABOR AND WOOL-BASED LIVELIHOODS IN HIMACHAL PRADESH

From the migratory wool economy emerges a vibrant culture of making and wearing that shapes the social and material fabric of Himachali life. Traditional textiles, the *pattu* (women's shoulder drape), *patti* (handwoven yardage), *topi* (woolen *cap), and gardu and gardi (pastoral blankets), are* crafted from *desi* wool and serve both everyday and ceremonial purposes. These textiles do more than preserve tradition, they reflect personal histories, regional identities, and the environments in which they are made.
The foundation of this culture lies in artisanal labor rooted in domestic and community spaces. Rural homes continue to spin, knit, and produce cloth in small quantities, integrating textile work into the seasonal rhythm of agrarian and pastoral life. Most households maintain a small loom, or *racchch*. Even where handweaving has declined, commissioning a *pattu* from a local weaver remains common practice, with weaver and wearer collaborating on design, color, and layout.
This embodied, intergenerational practice affirms a sense of authorship and joy, expressed through the tactile language of color, pattern, and care. Designing and wearing one's own textiles becomes a form of self-representation, where aesthetics and memory intertwine. The motifs and colours on a *pattu* have evolved over several generations into a coded language of checkered patterning paired with tapestry woven borders. Motifs and patterning in the *pattu* are not isolated to the region, but share a pattern vocabulary from across borders, from along the trade routes with China.

Fig. 02

Ask a woman about the *pattu* she is wearing, and her eyes light up as she shares with animated pride about its age, wool quality, pattern, and the stories behind its colors. This moment isn't just about the cloth, it reveals how memory, pride, and making are woven together. By choosing to wear these traditional textiles, crafted by hand from local wool, wearers assert a refusal of sameness, celebrating the particularities of local wool, color, and craft, a quiet defiance of homogeneity.

It is in this maker culture and ecosystem that co-operative structures such as Bhuttico (Bhutti Weavers Cooperative Society), established in 1944, formalized artisanal crafting into viable livelihoods. They connected skilled weavers, about 60% of them women, to broader markets while allowing them to remain within their communities. The Kullu shawl, handwoven and GI-tagged for its distinctive patterned borders, continued to represent this blend of tradition and economic sustenance.

LAND-BASED RHYTHMS: THE FRAYING AND REVIVAL OF DESI (INDIGENOUS) WOOL ECONOMIES

Himachal Pradesh's wool economy was traditionally rooted in land-based systems, where the rhythms of pastoral migration and seasonal fiber work structured daily life. Yet, despite communities continuing to rear sheep and maintain knowledge of indigenous wool processing, the material itself is increasingly undervalued. Shepherds often shear and discard local wool, unable to find viable markets or infrastructure to support its use.

This decline reflects shifts in both material preferences and production systems. Imported merino wool, prized for its softness, dominates higher-end markets, while synthetic blends meet the demand for cheaper goods. Even in craft-rich districts like Kullu, handwoven traditions face erosion, power-loomed imitations from industrial hubs like Ludhiana (a textile center in Northern India) are sold to tourists, displacing artisanal labor and devaluing localized economies.

REVIVAL OF DESI (INDIGENOUS) WOOL: CARE, CONTINUITY, AND QUIET RESISTANCE

Though traditional systems declined under industrial and economic pressures, pockets of practice quietly endured, sustained in rural homes and re-emerging in new forms through community-led revival. With support from organisations like the Centre for Pastoralism's Desi Oon initiative and the Eicher Group Foundation's Himalayan Knot Project, attention is returning to community-led systems that centre local fibres, knowledge, and livelihoods.

Among the region's active efforts, Kulvi Whims has rebuilt pastoralist-artisan linkages over the past decade by sourcing and handcrafting with nearly 12,000 kg of *desi* wool annually. The brand supports a network of spinners, dyers, and weavers, positioning indigenous wool as a viable material for contemporary markets. Similarly, The Wool Knitters, who once worked primarily with imported merino, have shifted to using *desi* wool, training over 500 women in the region to create contemporary product lines. Their more pragmatic approach blends a small amount of merino into some of their products to meet market expectations for softness, helping buyers grow familiar with the distinct texture of *desi* wool.

Such efforts do not seek to preserve tradition as static heritage, but to renew the social and ecological relationships that sustain land-based material practices. Through place-based design, skill-sharing, and market adaptation, such initiatives build continuity without romanticising the past.

In contrast to the extractive, fast-paced systems of industrial fashion, this work places value on attentiveness to material lifecycles, slow making, and mutual ties in craft networks. It repositions wool not simply as raw material, but as a practice rooted in care and memory, where making holds together people, place, and purpose.

CASE STUDY II KALA COTTON – DROUGHT-RESILIENT CROP AND DECOLONIAL DESIGN IN KACHCHH

In this section of the paper Pramila Choudhary explores the life of *kala (pronounced kah-lah)* cotton, a native variety of *desi* cotton *(Gossypium herbaceum)*, through three interconnected frames: its ecological resilience in Kachchh's arid landscape, the artisanal labour practices of spinning and weaving that have emerged around it, and the slow, community-led revival of indigenous cotton systems. Following cotton from seed to spindle, from loom to garment, this section of the paper explores how communities in Kachchh navigate ecological and market changes while holding onto values of land-based care, circular making, and aesthetic autonomy (Iyengar, 2021; Border & Fall, n.d.; Khamir, n.d.).

Kala cotton thrives in the semi-arid ecology of Kachchh, (also spelled Kutch) is a district in the western Indian state of Gujarat, bordering Pakistan and the Arabian Sea. Known for its salt desert (The Rann of Kachchh), it has historically been home to diverse communities of pastoralists, artisans and agriculturalists. *Kala* cotton is considered "Old world" cotton, with its lineage tracing back to the ancient Indus Valley Civilisation. It was a primary source of cotton for the subcontinent and a key part of India's textile trade before and during colonial rule (Moulherat et al., 2002).

After the 2001 Bhuj earthquake spurred industrialisation and displaced traditional livelihoods, Khamir, a non profit organisation, founded in the Kukma village, Bhuj in 2005 by Kachchh Nav Nirman Abhiyan and the Nehru Foundation for Development, has led efforts to restore and revive handicrafts, such as *kala* cotton and rebuild local livelihoods (Jha, 2018).

Once a locally dominant fibre and a key input to regional textile trade, *kala* cotton declined during the colonial and post-colonial eras as long-staple, hybrid, and later genetically modified varieties such as Bt cotton (*Bacillus thuringiensis*) were promoted for higher yields; these shifts, together with changing markets, sidelined *kala* as "inferior" and nearly drove it from mainstream cultivation (Jha, 2018; Mongabay India, 2019). Unlike the hybrids favoured for mechanised production (Iyengar, 2021), *kala* cotton requires no irrigation, no chemical inputs, and minimal external intervention, its short-staple, *desi* ecology fits rainfed farming systems and avoids groundwater overextraction (Khamir, n.d.).

Communities in Gujarat and across India grew and spun short-staple *desi* varieties well into the 19th century. The colonial introduction of American long-staple cotton (*Gossypium hirstum*) in the mid-19th century disrupted this stem, as it was better suited to mechanized mills in Bombay and Lancashire. While long-staple cotton generated higher commercial value, it required more water

Fig. 03

and chemical inputs, displacing local varieties and threatening rural livelihood. Evidence of resistance can be seen in Gandhian-era advocacy of *khadi* (hand-spun yarn and handwoven textile) which explicitly promoted *desi* cotton as an anticolonial symbol of self-reliance (Aravind & Girisanker 2022). In recent years, farmers in Kachchh have begun to reclaim this fibre, especially as climate variability intensifies. As Paresh Mangalia, who works with the non-profit Khamir and has been closely involved in the revival process along with the community members, shared, "This is not just a crop, it's a philosophy. *Kala* cotton allows farmers to work with nature, not against it" (Mangalia, 2024, personal communication). Reviving *kala* cotton is therefore an act of decolonial design: it restores seed sovereignty, reinforces regional self-reliance, and strengthens community resilience. (Fig. 03)

HANDSPINNING AND HANDWEAVING TRADITIONS OF ARTISANAL COMMUNITIES OF KACHCHH, GUJARAT

Once cotton is harvested, it enters the hands of spinners and weavers whose practices are equally rooted in ecology and memory. Kachchh's artisanal economy faced rapid disruption after the 2001 earthquake, which paved the way for large-scale industrialisation. Between 2001 and 2011, over 400 large and medium industries were established in Kachchh, turning it into one of India's fastest-growing industrial districts (Government of Gujarat, Kachchh District Human Development Report, 2016). Large projects and special economic initiatives accelerated urbanisation and drew labour away from rural, craft-based livelihoods, while industrial land use and mechanised production eroded local markets for handmade goods. Although industrialisation created wage employment and improved certain physical amenities, it also disrupted artisanal supply chains, reduced access to raw materials and workspace, and weakened intergenerational transmission of craft skills, pressures that many weavers and craft families responded to by shifting to factory work or migrating for wages (Government of Gujarat, 2014; Gandhy & Jain, 2008; Mehta, 2010).

As Meera Goradia (former director of Khamir) reflects, "Reviving *kala* cotton was not a one-year

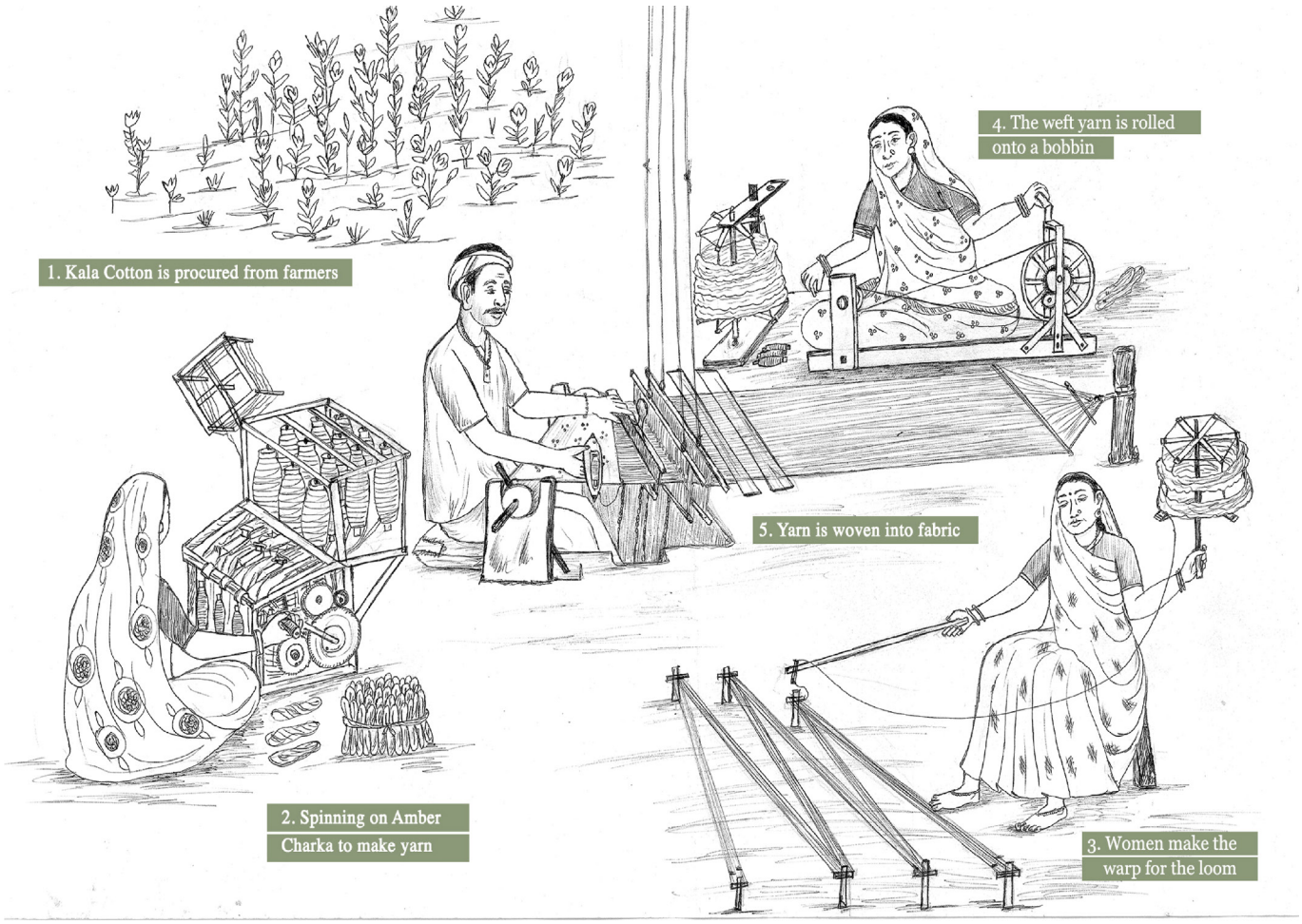

Fig. 03.1

project, it took more than a decade of patient collaboration. The turning point came when we started listening to what the land and people already knew" (Goradia, 2024, personal communication). Under her leadership at Khamir, the *kala* Cotton Initiative was born, connecting farmers, ginners, handspinners, and weavers to create a fully localised value chain.

The return to Gandhian spinning tools such as the *ambar charkha* and the reactivation of home-based looms re-established pride in textile making. The cloth produced, coarse at first touch, softens with wear and time. It speaks of slowness, tactility, and place. Each yard of fabric becomes a quiet act of resistance against homogenised fashion systems. As weavers narrate their relationship with yarn, their labour becomes not only economic but expressive, tied to community, self-representation, and cultural survival. (Fig. 3.1)

REVIVAL OF INDIGENOUS COTTON: CARE, CONTINUITY, AND QUIET RESISTANCE

The resurgence of *kala* cotton is not just a revival of a fibre, it is a renewal of relations. This revival, driven by everyday practice and mutual care, challenges dominant textile logics that privilege speed, sameness, and distant supply chains.

My methodology is informed by prior apprenticeship research on indigenous cotton systems and continues through immersive fieldwork and intergenerational knowledge transmission. Inspired by my grandmother, Anchi Devi,who handspun fibres and worked alongside Meghwal weavers, I approach *kala* cotton as a living archive. Her seasonal fibre choices and dye palettes reflected what Ingold (2013) describes as "relational making", a process grounded in observation, experimentation, and intimate environmental knowing.

Brands working with *kala* cotton's revival have also been supported by a growing network of ethical fashion brands that collaborate with artisan clusters in Gujarat. Brands like Bandhej, Maku Textiles, Anavila, AND by Anita Dongre Design, 11.11 / eleven eleven, Runaway Bicycle, Lafaani, The Summer House, and Injiri among others are helping reposition this humble fibre on the global stage. By working closely with Khamir and local weavers, these brands create handspun, handwoven textiles rooted in traditional knowledge

Fig. 04

and climate-resilient practices. Their collections foreground natural dyes, slow processes, and respect for maker agency, reframing *kala* cotton as a symbol of sustainability and aesthetic integrity. Today, *kala* cotton represents not a return to tradition, but a reimagining of what futures can look like when rooted in care. The fibres spun, woven, and worn reflect not only ecological resilience but also a creative refusal, where design emerges not from trend, but from kinship with soil, season, and story. This movement offers a counterpoint to extractive economies, a grounded, feminist, and ecologically attentive way forward.

CASE STUDY III: ERI SILK – NON-VIOLENT FIBER AND FEMINIZED LABOUR IN ASSAM

In this section of the paper Author3 explores the forest-dependent Rabha communities, where Eri silk is transformed into textiles through community-rooted craft practices shaped by traditional ecological knowledge. Current initiatives aim at revitalizing Eri silk by repositioning it within contemporary fashion and design. Following the thread of Eri silk from homesteads and handweavers to emerging markets, this section explores how indigenous craft and agricultural systems can persist and thrive, grounded in values of cultural resilience and ecological continuity.

THE STORY OF ERI SILK IN ASSAM: THE *BARI* HOMESTEAD SYSTEM AND FOREST-DEPENDENT RABHA COMMUNITIES.

Rabha indigenous communities live primarily in the humid plains and densely vegetated low hills of the Brahmaputra valley in Assam, in one of the planet's most biologically rich regions. Known for their skill as weavers, they have traditionally produced Eri silk for use within their communities, a tradition dating back several thousand years. Handspun and handwoven Eri silk – also known as "*ahimsa*" or "peace" silk – is soft, durable, absorbent, and breathable, making it particularly suitable for the humid climate.

The forest-dependent Rabha communities live and work within the indigenous *bari* homestead system (a mixed use system including managed forest, fruit trees, gardens and Eri silk production)

navigating an understanding of interconnected ecological care and forest-land management that includes approaches such as mosaic planting for fodder crops and natural dye plants, where for example, indigo seedlings are planted under the canopy cover of forest trees, offering ideal growing conditions for the dye plants. These mixed plots are interspersed with traditional food crops and community-managed forests on their tribal lands, allowing families to sustain themselves while preserving native plant and tree species and providing habitat for many living beings.

Eri silk production is one aspect of this interconnected ecological approach. Using organic agricultural methods, Eri silkworms (*Samia cynthia ricini*) are reared on *bari* homesteads. The caterpillars are fed on leaves from the castor plant (*Ricinus communis*), and are carefully tended until the pupae have matured. Most pupae develop into moths and leave the cocoon naturally, while some are harvested to be used as a protein-rich food source by the community.

Throughout these different aspects of *bari* life, community members employ traditional ecological knowledge passed through the generations: an understanding of the carrying capacity of the land, an awareness of multiple interconnected ecosystems, and the need for balance in human/non-human interactions. Nearly everything the communities use in daily life comes from their coexistence with and care for their environment, transforming the bounty of the land into food, medicine, clothing and shelter. (Fig. 04)

TRANSFORMATION: REARING, SPINNING AND WEAVING ERI SILK

Rabha systems of rearing and processing Eri silk for textiles are deeply embedded in community-based craft and agricultural practices, guided by indigenous ecological knowledge. After the moths emerge, women degum the cocoons, and then tease and align the short-staple fibres. Spinning is carried out using a traditional hand-held drop spindle, and threads are dyed with plant materials including barks, roots, leaves, and seeds.

Most of these activities are collective: women work together to spin, dye and weave. At each stage, the practice of community and ecological care is evident, as through their collective efforts women transform raw materials using place-based knowledge and embodied skills. When dyed with natural materials, Eri textiles are fully compostable and will biodegrade at the end of their life, contributing to carbon capture and soil enrichment. Instead of contributing to environmental degradation, they complete the cycle of ecological care, reinforcing interconnections between people and the land.

In Assam, it is said that "every home has a loom and every woman is a weaver". In the Rabha community, rearing, spinning and weaving Eri silk all constitute key aspects of women's labour and identity; weaving skills in particular are highly valued, and often a source of great pride. Women gather to work and talk, with older women carrying out the bulk of the skilled labour, while girls learn by helping their mothers. Alongside textile skills, knowledge of local dye plants is passed down through generations, along with traditional uses of plants for medicine, basketry, and as foraged foods. These intergenerational exchanges underscore the vital role of women in preserving cultural knowledge and sustaining life through ecological care, as well as illustrating the interconnectedness of Eri textile production with broader ecological and cultural practices.

Through its transformation from raw fibre to complex cloth, Eri silk carries profound cultural significance, and its use is enmeshed in Rabha daily life. Worn as wrapped clothing by both men and women, Eri is used for everyday wear, as well as for celebratory and ceremonial occasions, reinforcing community identity. The ongoing cultivation of Eri silk allows the Rabha people to retain control over a critical element of their cultural lexicon, ensuring the transmission of craft skills and ecological practices. As such, Eri silk embodies resilience, resistance, and joy, offering a tangible expression of cultural knowledge and continuity.

REVITALIZATION: ERI SILK WITHIN CONTEMPORARY FASHION AND DESIGN

Currently, there is renewed interest in regional fibres and craft practices within fashion and design, as disillusionment deepens with the extractive nature of much of mainstream fashion production. Efforts to reposition Eri silk focus on its environmental benefits and its roots in community and land-centered production guided by traditional ecological knowledge. These practices also have potential to strengthen local economies, and to create employment opportunities within indigenous communities, built on intergenerational

know-how and skill.

Connecting community-made textiles with the distant world of fashion and design necessitates educating designers, retailers and customers about the deep contexts from which these textiles emerge: the ecological systems they sustain, the cultural knowledge they preserve, and the value of slower, place-based production. This reframing positions Eri silk as a counterpoint to fast fashion: a form of luxury grounded not in excess, but in care, ethics, and connection.

Design-led initiatives are central to this transformation. The community-based initiative We Are Kal offers a range of thoughtfully designed Eri silk pieces directed towards the European market, with careful consideration of how story-telling and design-led products create meaningful connections with clientele, thus amplifying the economic and cultural impact of their work.

With a focus on materials innovation, 7Weaves is another community-based initiative that is reclaiming traditional knowledge while connecting handwoven Eri textiles to the global slow fashion and design movement. Rooted within Rabha culture, 7Weaves has developed a place-based production system while seeking out global opportunities for collaboration. These include exhibiting carefully designed textile collections at international fashion trade fairs, partnering with fashion designers to develop micro-collections tailored to specific markets, and working with fashion education programs to connect Eri textiles with the next generation of conscious designers. These approaches seek to reposition community-made textiles as an ethical luxury within contemporary design, one centred around place-based knowledge and a culture of care, and reinforcing the interrelationship between craft, community and ecology.

Beyond educational and market strategies, such initiatives also cultivate networks of indigenous solidarity. Through exchanges with communities in Meghalaya, Bhutan, and beyond, 7Weaves and others are fostering a revival of indigenous textile knowledge systems across regions. In doing so, they suggest a vital, living vision of fashion where land-based fibre practices not only persist and thrive, but also foster care, survival, and joyful resistance.

CONCLUSION: AFFECTIVE PASSAGE IN TOXIC TIMES – FASHION AND JOY AS RESISTANCE

In an era defined by ecological degradation and the toxic aftermath of fast fashion, the revival of indigenous fibre systems signals a transformative affective passage. These practices challenge dominant narratives of sustainability that remain entangled with colonial economies and industrial systems. Instead, Kala cotton, Himachali wool, and Eri silk reorient us toward place, practice, and people.

Their making, slow, relational, and embodied—stands in stark contrast to the alienation of mass production. Each handspun thread, each naturally dyed fabric, becomes a conduit of memory, agency, and quiet defiance. These fibres carry with them ancestral knowledge, ecological rhythms, and the care of communities who continue to steward land through craft.

Fashion, in this context, becomes more than consumption. It becomes a medium for joy and resistance, a way to remember what has been forgotten, to revalue what has been dismissed, and to build solidarities across geographies and generations. The warmth of wool, the softness of silk, the sturdiness of cotton—they are not just materials, but metaphors for survival, suggesting future scenarios where fashion production is rooted in community and the land, and where luxury is based on care and ecological flourishing.

Through this affective and material passage, we glimpse futures rooted in regeneration, not extraction; in continuity, not rupture; in collective thriving, not individual accumulation. These fibre stories offer us not only a critique of the present, but a sensorial map toward more just, joyful, and life-affirming worlds.

NOTES

Khamir collaborates with organizations to support craft revival and community development. It works with Kachchh Nav Nirman Abhiyan (KNNA) on craft initiatives, while the Nehru Foundation for Development (NFD) and KNNA helped establish the Khamir campus in earthquake-affected areas. Khamir partners with Craftroots on craft development projects, and KMVS links women waste collectors to supply Khamir's Plastic Recycling Project.

Rabha communities are organized around the

bari homestead system, with extended families living and working on small plots of land within the forest. These homesteads form a transitional band between forested hills and agricultural river valleys and include managed forest trees, fruit-bearing trees and vines, forest-gardens of vegetables and herbs, plots of castor plants and Eri-rearing sheds, and animals such as chickens as well as the family's tools of production including looms, agricultural tools, and food storage systems.

LOCAL WORDS

Ahminsa - nonviolence
Bari - homestead system
Kala Cotton- (*pronounced kah-lah*) cotton, a native variety of *desi* (*local*)
Desi - indigenous
Pattu - a woollen drape worn by women in Himachal Pradesh
Patti - handwoven yardage
Dhan - wealth
Topi - woolen cap
Gardu and *gardi* - pastoral blankets
Racchch – a handloom

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CAPTIONS

[Fig. 01] Illustration of India Map, indicating three regions, covered in the paper, Gujarat, Himchal Pradesh and North east of India.

[Fig. 02] Local women draped in handwoven *Patti*, made at home using *desi* wool for personal use, are pictured alongside sheep grazing at BakharThaach (Shepherd Field), located at the base of Hanuman Tibba in the Greater Himalayas. Also shown is a contemporary adaptation of traditional *Pattu* check designs by The Wool Knitters. Photo Credit: Rajahopalan, A.

[Fig. 03] Kala cotton growing in a farm in Kutch, Gujarat, is pictured alongside Meera, a weaver at her loom, and her mother preparing the warp. This image highlights intergenerational craft and the resilience of indigenous fibers. Photo Credit: Khamircrafts Kutch.

[Fig. 03.1] An illustrated overview of the kala Cotton process, from cultivation to handspun yarn, highlights the resilient, rain-fed cotton native to Kutch, Gujarat. The visual traces the fiber's journey through harvesting, ginning, spinning, and weaving—each step grounded in traditional, low-impact techniques practiced by local artisan communities. Photo Credit: Khamircrafts, Kutch.

[Fig. 04] Women artisans from the Rabha community engage in natural dye preparation— winding bobbins, sorting Eri cocoons, and working with dye materials like myrobalan (a natural mordant) and Indian madder (a traditional source of red dye). This process reflects the community's intimate ecological knowledge and sustainable dyeing practices passed down through generations. Photo Credit: MacHenry.

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