

Gladys Rogers Brophil, Editor

Anna Rogers, Assoc. Editor

# WARP & WEFT

---

Volume VI

Number 10

December 1953

---

## *The Weaving Bond Transcends Distance Between New Names and Far Places*

DR. HOPE NICHOSON, a medical missionary in the central provinces of India for the last thirty years, is in America on a visit and lecture trip. She has some exquisite hand woven fabrics from India, and her description of the life of an Indian weaver is fascinating. She is stationed at Madhya Pravesh, which compares to an American state, in the town of Bilaspur, about 40,000 population.

India is still divided into castes, and those of us who are proud of our abilities as designers and weavers will not be flattered to learn that weavers in India belong to the fourth class down, with only the outcasts, those who deal with the bodies of animals and refuse of all types, beneath them. There are others in the same class as the weavers—the general group is called the working class and the weavers are known as “Maharas.” Above the outcasts and workers are the business people, the warriors, and the priests.

Hand weaving in India is divided into three types: The Maharas who weave things to sell and work independently in their homes, the weavers in the schools and missions and especially talented weavers of Benares who work with brocades, silks, and metallics. The Maharas buy their yarns in the market place and set

up a horizontal loom, along the road before their homes. The loom is made by placing pegs in the ground as far apart as the desired length of the finished fabric. The warp is then wound from end to end, a very simple shed arrangement is made with sticks, and the weaver sits on the ground before her home making her fabric. Most of these weavers work with coarse cotton for everyday clothing, most of which is set not closer than 20 to 24 threads per inch. This is locally spun cotton which is rather short in staple and the spinning is done by others than the weavers. These fabrics are usually woven with a border running down one side of the fabric and the garment is made so that the border edges the hem. An elderly man of the family gathers together all the finished weaving at intervals, and takes the pieces to the marketplace where he sells them. The Maharas are very poor people and during hard times are often very hungry.

Some individuals and missions have inaugurated weaving classes in an effort to improve the finished product and develop a foreign market for the weaving of India. Some exquisite fabrics have come to America via this channel, and on the whole the general picture of life for these

—Continued on page 4

---

WARP & WEFT is published ten issues per year, Post Office box 34, Baldwin, Michigan  
Single copies and back issues, 25¢ plus postage. Yearly Subscription, \$2.50

## COTTON FOR WINTER

Cotton knows no season this year—whether it's cold or whether it's hot, you'll wear cottons weather or not.

Traditionally playing a summer role in familiar finishes, versatile cotton fibers have adopted the appearance of Fall and Winter fabrics.

Darker tones and heavier weight fibers, or combinations to produce heavier effects answer the needs of a mild Fall day, or even a cold Winter one. Cotton ensembles started last summer as separate wardrobe pieces, and when cool weather came they joined forces to give needed warmth. The bulky, Winter look is given in bulky knits, which combine so well with hand woven cottons, in serge, alpac, and tweed effects.

One of the most interesting of the Winter cottons was a charcoal sheath dress topped with a striped Spencer jacket with three quarter length sleeves. The fabric had a fine serge-like appearance. We also liked a black rebbed cotton—the yarn of this month's sample would be perfect for this—woven to resemble faille and made in a coat dress with jet buttons down the front. A narrow black velvet bow tied the throat and circled a neck edging of fringed black braid. Another good looking bulky cotton combined striped, lightweight cotton with a black Jersey top, the whole covered with a matching jacket.

So many of our readers like to have double duty clothes, and we can think of nothing better than a jumper of handwoven cotton cut so that it could be worn as an evening gown, a smooth sheath. Worn with a sweater or blouse, it makes a fine everyday dress.

## MORE ABOUT OUR SAMPLE:

The yarns used in this month's sample are furnished by and made available to you by Joseph D. Acton, 26 Lake Ave., Swedesboro, New Jersey. These are sizes 30/2 mercerized cotton yarns, finer you will note than many of the cotton yarns available elsewhere. It comes in 17 colors, bleached, white and natural. The colors are unusually good, we think, being soft shades more subtle than those often found in ready dyed materials. The natural and bleached ones sell for \$3.20 per pound; the colors are \$3.80 per pound, including postage. There is a 10% discount allowed on all orders of \$50. and up. There are about 12,600 yards per pound in the yarn, and it comes in four ounce tubes. The minimum order is a total of one pound, and a half pound is the minimum order for a single color. Check or money order should accompany the order. This is a vat dyed yarn, mercerized by not gassed, and therefore not as glossy as some of the other yarns. Dullness is often a desirable feature, and you will find this yarn delightfully soft in feel and effect. In spite of its fineness, we had no trouble with breakage and found it a pleasure to use. Mr. Acton says that these yarns are made by the finest spinners in America both as to quality and size. This 30/2 is the coarsest they make. He uses it often double in the heddles for a sport shirt material, and single with a linen weft for dress and suit fabrics. Mr. Acton also handles Salem Linen yarns, and all of his sample cards will be sent you upon receipt of 25c. Some of you may remember that Mr. Acton worked for some time on Kent tweeds with Roger Millen, author of the book on handweaving of tweeds.

**PSEUDO COTTON TWEED DRESS FABRIC**

The reason we call this a "pseudo" tweed is that it looks somewhat like a tweed fabric without actually having any tweed yarns in it. Cotton tweed yarns are very hard to get, yet the effect they give is extremely popular this year. We stumbled onto this technique quite by accident immediately following World War II when we wanted a wool tweed material and were unable to buy any regular tweed yarns. We worked out this pattern in greens, beige, and red for a coat fabric and it looked so much like a colorful tweed that we were very happy with it.

	4	4	4	4	4	4	(4)
3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
1	1	1	(1)	1	1	1	

The circled heddles are for the tan and colored threads listed at the end of the threading rotation.

**THREADING ROTATION**

The threads as listed here go in one heddle and in one dent of the reed.  
Use a 15 dent reed.

- 4 Tan
  - 2 Tan 1 Grey
  - 1 Tan 1 Brown
  - 3 Grey
  - 3 Tan 1 Brown
  - 1 Tan
  - 2 Tan 1 Grey
  - 2 Tan 3 Brown
  - 4 Brown
  - 1 Tan 1 Grey
  - 3 Grey
  - 1 Brown
  - 2 Grey 3 Tan
  - 2 Tan 1 Brown
- } Total 45 threads per inch

Finish each group with  
2 Tan 1 Yellow or  
2 Tan 1 Blue or  
2 Tan 1 Red  
And reverse

X	X	O	O	X	O	4
X	O	O	X	O	X	3
O	O	X	X	X	O	2
O	X	X	O	O	X	1
1	2	3	4	A	B	

O--Counter  
Balanced  
X--Rising Shed

**SISTER GOODWEAVER SAYS:**

The way to be sure there is nothing wrong  
Is to check each step as you go along.

**WEFT ROTATION**

Shuttle 1 -- 3 Tan wound together  
Shuttle 2 -- 3 Brown, 1 Tan wound together  
Shuttle 3 -- 3 Grey wound together  
These three shuttles are used in regular rotation.

**TREADLING:**

1, 2, 3, 4.  
If desired, diamonds may be treadled by reversing the treading directions at regular intervals.

**BEAT**

The beat must be even and not too hard, which would give a stiff unattractive effect. Shrink this fabric before making into wearing apparel.



Concluded from page 1

weavers is on the upgrade. One of these special schools is located just four miles out of Bilaspur. It was built originally during World War II as a thousand bed hospital but peace was declared before it was put into full operation. It has gradually been converted to the Koni Training Center, with the aim of providing training for young people who spent time in the Armed Forces when they would normally have been learning a trade. A wide variety of crafts are taught including weaving and soap making. There are two types of weaving done at the school, regular cloth weaving done on usual upright, foot treadle looms, and cotton tape weaving. This tape is about 2" wide, is called Niwar, and is wound on frames to replace our springs and mattresses. Dr. Nicholson says that in reality it is much the same idea as the plastic webbing used on outdoor furniture. Covered only with a thin cotton pad, it makes a comfortable bed. She ought to know; she has slept on one for years. From her description of the looms on which Niwar is woven, it would seem to be a kind of inkle. Students at the school are also taught to weave household fabrics, curtains, table linens, towels, etc., and some wearing apparel. The looms at the schools are up to 45" in width because the width of the loom becomes the length of the skirt in weaving a Sari, and for tall adults that width is necessary. Most of the local Indian cotton is poor quality with short staple. It is interesting to note that when the Indians want a good quality cotton for fine materials they import it from the United States. Very little Egyptian cotton is used. Weavers in Central India also work frequently with silk, which is grown in Kashmir to the north. It is shipped to Bilaspur where it is spun and woven. Most Indian

fabrics are woven plain or with lengthwise stripes, occasionally with plaids. After the fabric is taken from the loom it is often sent to another worker who prints designs on it with the use of wood blocks. Space dyeing of the yarns is a frequent means of decorations, as is tie-dyeing. Bilaspur is especially noted for its crisp striped men's silk shirting, which is very sheer and looks a bit like a silk organdy. The hand of this is most pleasant, and Dr. Nicholson says that it washes up to a soft and lovely fabric. She was given a length of it for a blouse by a grateful patient just as she was leaving for her American trip.

Dr. Nicholson says that the manufacture of the metallic yarns used by the brocade weavers of Benares is fascinating. The metal is hammered until it is thin, then with a powerful hydraulic machine it is pulled through a metal die which makes it into an unsupported round metal thread. It is so fine that it is somewhat flexible and is very strong. Because smoke and gases common in America are unknown in India, these metallic threads do not tarnish or only very slightly, and can be worn for years looking as beautiful as when first taken from the loom. In the October issue of Ladies Home Journal is an article about a Maharani of India and a picture of her in a hand woven sari of gold thread. It took two years to weave and is valued at \$1500., but will last several lifetimes—and never goes out of fashion.

Thanks to Dr. Nicholson for her very detailed report on the weaving of India; I wish all of you could have enjoyed the great pleasure of actually talking with her and asking questions. She is a patient and talented woman!

### A WORD ABOUT TWEEDS:

We are calling this month's sample a "Pseudo Cotton Tweed" so we'd like to say just a word about tweeds in general. The tweeds cover a wide range of rough surfaced sturdy fabrics which may be made of wool, rayon or cotton in plain, twill, or a variation of twill weaves. Originally tweeds included only fabrics woven with homespun effects, usually with multi-colored yarns. There have now been added fabrics that are more uniformly and closely woven of smoother yarn, similar to our sample this month. These include monotone tweeds, woven with yarns of different shades of the same color. The fabrics range from lighter weight suitings, similar to this sample, to heavy coatings. In addition to monotone and multi-color effects, they may be woven with plaids, checks, stripes, or other patterned effects. Harris tweeds are made by hand in the Outer Hebrides off the coast of Scotland. The dyes in these yarns are cooked over peat fires and the smell of peat often remains in the fabric, especially when it is damp. Tweed derived its name from the River Tweed in Scotland, on the banks of which the fabric was first woven.

Tweed type cotton fabrics, similar to our sample for this month, are used primarily for wearing apparel, although we have found several interior decorators who like especially to use it for upholsteries and draperies. Tweed type cotton fabrics have the weave and pattern rather than the weight indicative of tweed fabrics. Some are firmly and closely woven; others are more loosely woven.

Many of the tweed type cotton fabrics have a percentage of wool fibers to give the final result a more wool appearance, to add resilience,

and to give additional warmth retaining qualities. There are also some types of cotton fabrics, corduroy, for instance, which is printed to simulate tweed. However, the majority are woven with dyed yarns. A cotton Donegal could be woven with a cotton yarn in which colored nubs are spun. This particular yarn is not common on the market, but very occasionally one, if fortunate enough, to happen on to some. At the moment we are hoarding two pounds we picked up at a small mill in the South—black with green, blue and yellow nubs. Homespun is a loosely woven fabric in a plain weave, and is frequently made of yarn which is irregular in diameter. Hopsacking is also an openly woven fabric, usually in a basket weave. The more closely woven tweeds, either wool or cotton, may be in plaids, stripes, or checks, such as the Gun Club check. Tweeds have a wide range of surface effect, and range from rough textured fabrics to those with moderately smooth surfaces, and may be heavy, medium, or light weight. Hard finished Herringbone twill weave tweeds, for instance, are often called Cassimere to distinguish them from other heavier and rough Herringbones. Sometimes different colored yarns are so woven in a basket or twill, weave that it simulates a tweed, as is demonstrated by our sample this month.

Never in recent years have tweeds been more popular than at the present time. They are being used alone and in combinations with all other types of fabrics, from velvets through jersey to chiffon. Truly the weavers' heyday! Weave a tweed in cotton for daytime or sports wear, in wool for a coat or suit, in silk or wool for an evening gown—any way you wish you can use tweed!

### SILAS SAYS:

There is much glib talk about "Harris Tweeds" so, here is an exact definition of them:

"Harris are tweeds made from pure virgin wool, produced in Scotland, spun, dyed, and finished in the Outer Hebrides, and handwoven by the islanders at their own homes in the islands of Lewis, Harris, Uist, Barra, all known as the Outer Hebrides."

\* \* \* \*

Sheep taken to Africa by the Phoenicians at the time Carthage was founded were a fine and beautiful breed. Centuries later the Arabs carried them to Spain where finding perhaps the climate and pasturage of their ancestors as favorable as in the earlier days, they became what we call Merinos, which is the Spanish word for wandering.

\* \* \* \*

Paul Rodier, in "The Romance of French Weaving," says, "Throughout history there is one sound which keeps on, come what may—the sound of the shuttles. For the need of cloth is a constant need and we may be sure that the looms never stood idle unless the Barbarians were actually burning the villages where they were, or pounding on the gate of the city they coveted."

\* \* \* \*

So many weaving terms have become a part of our daily speech. For instance, have you given a thought lately to the poor man who shuttles back and forth between home and office?

Page 6

### BOOK REVIEW:

This month we want to tell you about a book which is out of print and not generally available, except in larger libraries. It is "The Weaves of Hand Loom Fabrics," written in 1927. It is illustrated by photographs of fabrics from the textile collections of the Pennsylvania Museum. These studies aim to present a definite classification of early hand loom fabrics—and often power loom fabrics as well—on the sole base of weave so that every piece may be indexed, making collections of greater practical value and more instructive. We feel that some such classification of our own collections and exhibits would do much to clarify variations in weaves for students and Guild members.

The book opens with a table of weaves, giving each group a number similar to the file number of a library book, and each variation a sub or decimal number. An analysis of weaves follows and this is especially help to students who may find, as so many of us have, that names are often tagged to fabrics haphazardly. There are several chapters discussing and describing, with illustrations, the various kinds of weaves—simple compound, and history of cloth weaves, twill weaves, satins, velvets, and brocades. This is a book which could well be a basis of study for one of your Guild study groups.

TITLE: "The Weaves of Hand Loom Fabrics."

AUTHOR: Nancy Andrews Reath.

PUBLISHER: Pennsylvania Museum and School of Industrial Art.

PRICE: \$2.50 (There are a few copies of this book still available at Craft & Hobby Book Service, Coast Route, Monterey, California.)

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:

"Shortly after the war, when some silk yarns first became available to hand weavers, I purchased some white silk and wove a suit for myself. It was very successful and I have been happy wearing it. Now, however, I find that it has a yellowish cast which I do not like. Is there some way in which I can restore the whiteness? I am afraid to use regular laundry bleach; are there other preparations used to whiten silk?"

We feel that it would be more satisfactory, in the long run, to have your suit dyed than to try to bleach it. If you did manage to restore the whiteness it would still be a very temporary measure. The work would have to be done by an expert; that is not a project for home experimentation if you want satisfactory results. Some dyers use a very diluted pigment bluing for this purpose, but there is the chance of streaking and unevenness, and a novice should not attempt the work. Preparations on the market to whiten silk, are not as far as we know, sold at retail. Sometimes, if the garment has been dry cleaned for a long time, washing will give a fresher appearance. However, with a suit, you would have to be very careful in washing because of possible difficulty with linings, stiffenings, buttons, etc.

In commercial manufacture of silk, only wild silks which are naturally dark in color, may need to be bleached. Much of the color is in the gum, and is automatically removed in the degumming process. It may be bleached in either yarn or fabric state, and bleaching is done by placing it in a closed machine and exposing it to sulfurous acid fumes, at a temperature of 90 degrees for five or six

hours, then washing, souring, washing, rinsing, and drying for finishing.

## POEM

Anna Tozier sings so beautifully of dreams:

Last night they fluttered by me,  
As I sat in the gathering gloom;  
With a golden thread I was weaving  
A song in a silver loom.

A-weaving the ghost of an echo,  
Of a rare and lovely strain,  
As glad as a child's soft laughter;  
As sad as a cry of pain.

They followed my gorgeous fancy—  
My bark that idly goes  
From a land that no man seeth  
To a land that no man knows.

My busy fingers faltered, as they  
Hovered about my head,  
And the wheel of my loom did  
Slacken—I had broken my golden  
thread.

Then my soul leaped up to hold them  
My dreams so wild and sweet,  
And the golden thread unraveled,  
And the thread lay at my feet.

Each day I strive to weave it—  
This song that my soul would sing.  
But I break my loom, and tangle my  
Thread, and the torsions cling.

If they would but stay and teach me—  
If my dreams I could only hold  
I would weave in a loom on silver  
A beautiful song of gold.

But I strive in vain. They follow  
Where the bark of my fancy goes,  
From a land that no man seeth to  
A land that no man knows.

Heart Throbs  
Grosset & Dunlap  
1905

# The Weaver's Marketplace

Grace Blum  
**Handweavers Workbasket**

Box 691 R. R. 1,  
West Chicago, Illinois

Robin & Russ Groff  
**Robin & Russ Handweavers**

10 W. Anapamu St.  
Santa Barbara, California

OUR ADVERTISERS

IN THE

GOOD

FELLOWSHIP

OF THE SEASON

JOIN

TOGETHER TO

SEND YOU

Marguerite Snyder  
**THE YARN MART**

817 PINE ST.  
Seattle, Washington

The Brophils & The McCarrs  
**Norwood Loom Company**

Box 272  
Baldwin, Michigan

*Seasons Greetings*

*And SPECIAL GOOD WISHES From*

Gladys Rogers Brophil - Anna B. Rogers

*for WARP & WEFT*

Box 34  
Baldwin, Michigan  
RETURN POSTAGE GUARANTEED

*Warp & Weft*