

Workshop Title: Cotton & the Charkha

Duration: 2 days

Materials fee: \$30.00 Includes handouts, fiber samples

Optional charkha rental: \$15.00 for the use of charkha

Level: Beginner

Class size limit: 12

Space Requirements: The charkha is best used while seated on a bare floor, but tables and chairs will suffice for a teaching environment. If participants have small folding tables (e.g. TV trays), they are encouraged to bring them if there is space in the facility. Otherwise, 4 large tables for 12 students will work.

Synopsis

Learn to spin cotton the easy way! Spinning cotton on the accelerated charkha is very easy and meditative. The charkha was designed specifically for spinning cotton, but any short (less than 2") fiber can be spun on it easily. (Anything is easy with the right tools; the charkha was designed specifically for spinning cotton.) Learn how to tune and maintain the charkha, how to determine the ratio, and how to spin to specification.

We will spend a half-day learning about cotton types, preparations, and properties, including upland, Pima, and Egyptian, Sea Island, and naturally colored cottons from North and South America. We will spin samples of all of these cottons in commercial preparations --carded, drawn, combed and roving as well as hand made punis from India. There are over 24 samples in the packet.

Learning Objectives

1. Learn spinning terminology
2. Understand the charkha
3. Understand the ergonomics of usage
4. Understand yarn terminology
5. Learn the long draw
6. Spin cotton effortlessly
7. Learn about the different cotton species and their qualities
8. Learn about commercial preparations and their qualities
9. Learn to spin the different preparations
10. Complete a sample notebook of species and preparations

Students should bring

Enthusiasm

Guild/Group should supply

The number of rental charkhas to bring two weeks prior to the workshop

Facility with tables and chairs for the students

An extra table for instructor display

Biographical Information

My educational background is in engineering. I have been spinning and weaving cotton since the early 1980's. While I do spin and weave with other fibers, the environmental cottons are my passion. I worked previously for Sally Fox, managing Vreseis Limited and performing research on fiber, yarn and fabric made of the naturally pigmented cotton.

In my current work with New World Textiles, I am involved in research on organic, naturally pigmented, and recycled cottons and in the development of spinning slivers and yarns from these cottons. I am not committed to 100% cotton products; I also blend these cottons with other natural fibers.

As a cotton enthusiast, I also develop tools and techniques; the *Khadi Khanoo*[™] shuttle, a shuttle that holds the spindle for a book charkha, allows the use of singles as weft. The technique of the long draw allows for fairly consistent color sections to be spun, which can be woven as stripes on a plain warp or a "single shuttle plaid" on a striped warp. The simplicity of technique and the availability of colored fiber allow the spinner and weaver to create dynamic fabrics.

Articles

Arm's Length Spinning, or Single Shuttle Plaid, Spin-Off Fall '96

Spinning Crepe Yarns, SS&D Summer '97

The Carolina Flax Project, SS&D Fall '97

Spinning for a Single Shuttle Plaid, SS&D Winter '98

The Whole Truth about Sett, Weaver's, Spring '98

Lyocell, Weaver's, Fall '98

Crepe & Shape, Spin-Off Fall '99

Spinning Hope in Stecoah, Fiber Ethics, Winter '01

Huck Goes Green, Handwoven Web Project, Jan/Feb '07

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