



As a Kumaoni folktale goes, *Peoli* was a young maiden who lived in the forest. She spent her days tending to the plants and trees of the forest with whom she shared a deep bond of love. One day, a prince who came to the forest for hunting, saw her and fell in love with the *li* (girl, in local language). They got married and she left the forest to live with him in the palace. Life at the palace, away from nature gradually made *li* sick and she eventually died. She was buried at a spot from where a plant with yellow flowers sprouted (*Peo*: Yellow). The spring-yellow coloured flower was named *Peo-li*, in memory of the girl.

The philosophy at *Peoli* has emerged from this love for nature. A strong belief in celebrating indigenous textile traditions forms the basis of our work approach. Simple, functional and aesthetic products have been derived from the local craft vocabulary using natural materials and dyes, for consumers who are sensitive about the resources used in the making of the item they purchase.





Peoli is a design studio based in Almora located at the southern edge of the Kumaon Hills of the Himalayan Range in Uttarakhand, North India. It is an initiative by two textile design graduates from the National Institute of Design, Abhinav Dhoundiyal and Vasanthi Veluri, who work with the women artisans of Almora to develop a range of handmade woollen and cotton products.

Handcrafted from their origin, Peoli's products are a celebration of the essence of 'the Handmade', of the agile fingertips measuring each length of yarn, of the lyrical narratives of the counted woven picks and knitted stitches and of the sensory experience of the granular earthy materials. Carded wool, cotton, silk, nettle and hemp are spun into soft supple yarn using a hand-held spindle or a Bageshwari Charkha, a foot operated spinning wheel of indigenous make, and further hand-woven, knitted and stitched into contemporary garments. Each of the Peoli products is dyed using natural colours, dyes or colorants derived from natural sources. Natural substances are soothing materials for the makers, users and their respective contexts. Natural dyes produce living colour – a unique hue each time, a colour that matures and ages, pays a tribute to the Sun, Water, Soil and Wind and celebrates the story of the source from which it has been cultivated.

PEOLI





The work philosophy at Peoli strongly proposes a locally fuelled model of sustainable development. Indigenous raw materials like Harsil wool, Tibetan wool, nettle, hemp and dyestuffs sourced from local farming communities are used to craft winter and summer apparel. Ethically sourced materials like Eri silk, organic Kala cotton, Nagaland hill cotton and Merino wool imported from New Zealand are combined with indigenous materials to enhance their comfort and aesthetic appeal. A similar synthesis is applied in crafting the products where local craft skills like handloom weaving and knitting are ingeniously merged with hand embroidery, beadwork, shibori, etc.

The synergy of various activities at Peoli is a conscious effort towards conservation of natural resources and leaving a light carbon footprint in the process. Harvested rain water heated with solar energy is used for natural dyeing. Hand done processes like hand stitching, hand spinning, etc. are used wherever possible to utilize the unlimited human energy and reduce our dependence upon machines and non-renewable sources of energy. Earth-friendly chemicals and materials are used for the processing of textile materials.





Primarily working on a decentralised model, Peoli engages about sixty women artisans who are looking for opportunities to support their families economically by a means that lets them work from their homes. This framework guides our entire design process at the studio, where it is our constant effort is to develop products which are easy to interpret and process by the makers, and in return let them earn a sustainable livelihood, infusing a sense of pride and confidence in the humble craft they produce.

The employment opportunities that we are able to provide using the local skill vocabulary also respond to the macro issue of population migration due to which the hill villages in many areas of Uttarakhand are deserted.





Peoli, as an atelier, also attempts to propagate aesthetics in the local craft vocabulary by allowing the craftsmen to experiment and explore their skills with pure and natural materials, bringing them a dimension closer to the actual craft tradition of the area that has probably gone extinct due to the invasive synthetic material culture.

As a resource centre, we have been able to maintain a wide vocabulary of natural materials, colours and natural dyeing recipes, various woven and knitted patterns, which constantly act as rich references for designing products and help us in creating an aesthetic fusion of craft traditions and contemporary fashion.

At Peoli, we seek a balance guided by design thinking, a balance of aesthetics and practicality, of craft and contemporary fashion, of commerce and a light carbon footprint, of consuming and giving back to the earth in the process. Peoli stands for the life giving River and the knowledge that is the Forest.

