

## SPECIAL FEATURE

# The warmth of shawls

Winter is here and there are many items of clothing that we will add to our wardrobe - shawls being one of them. Discussing shawls require that we briefly identify the history of this wonderful piece of clothing.

The very name 'shawl' comes from Kashmir, but historians claim that the attire originated in Hamadan, Persia. The concept was brought to Kashmir by one Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani. In the 14th century, Hamadani came to Ladakh and processed the wool of Kashmiri goats to make a pair of socks, which he later gifted to the Raja of Kashmir. The Raja was extremely pleased with the gift and praised its superior quality; that's when Hamadani suggested they start a shawl weaving industry in Kashmir. His skills and knowledge changed the province forever and gave rise to an entirely new successful industry.

Initially shawls were worn only by males, and only later it was adopted by the elite European women of the 18th century. It was much later that women on our side of the world adopted the garment as a fashionable cover to use in winter.

Enough of history! Let's just move on to the types.

## THE KANIKAR AND THE JAMAVAR

Both originated in Kashmir. The Kanikar has intricately woven designs inspired by objects in nature such as flowers, fruits, birds, etc. The Jamavar is a brocaded woollen fabric with a little bit of cotton added to it.

## THE DOURUKHA

This is a woven shawl with a multi-coloured schematic pattern on both sides; these shawls can be worn on any side preferred.

## PICOS

These are also known as the triangular Spanish shawls. Some picos are embroidered, and others are made from solid coloured fabrics.

## THE TIBETAN SHAWLS

Also known as Shahtoosh, are made from fleece of the Tibetan antelope. Finely woven, these delicate shawls can be easily pulled through a small finger ring.

## CHINESE SHAWLS

These are typically made in China as the name

suggests and are usually made out of silk, with intricate detailing of designs. Variants to the classic shawl are shrugs, stoles, scarves and foulards:

## SHRUGS

A cross between a loose jacket and a colourful shawl with sleeves.

## SCARVES

These are much smaller in size compared to the shawls and are meant to be wrapped or tied stylishly around the neck only.

## FOULARDS

Are the classic women's fashion scarf, usually made of silk. It's a versatile size

that can be worn as a head scarf, or around the neck or waist. These were popular with French socialites and made famous by them.

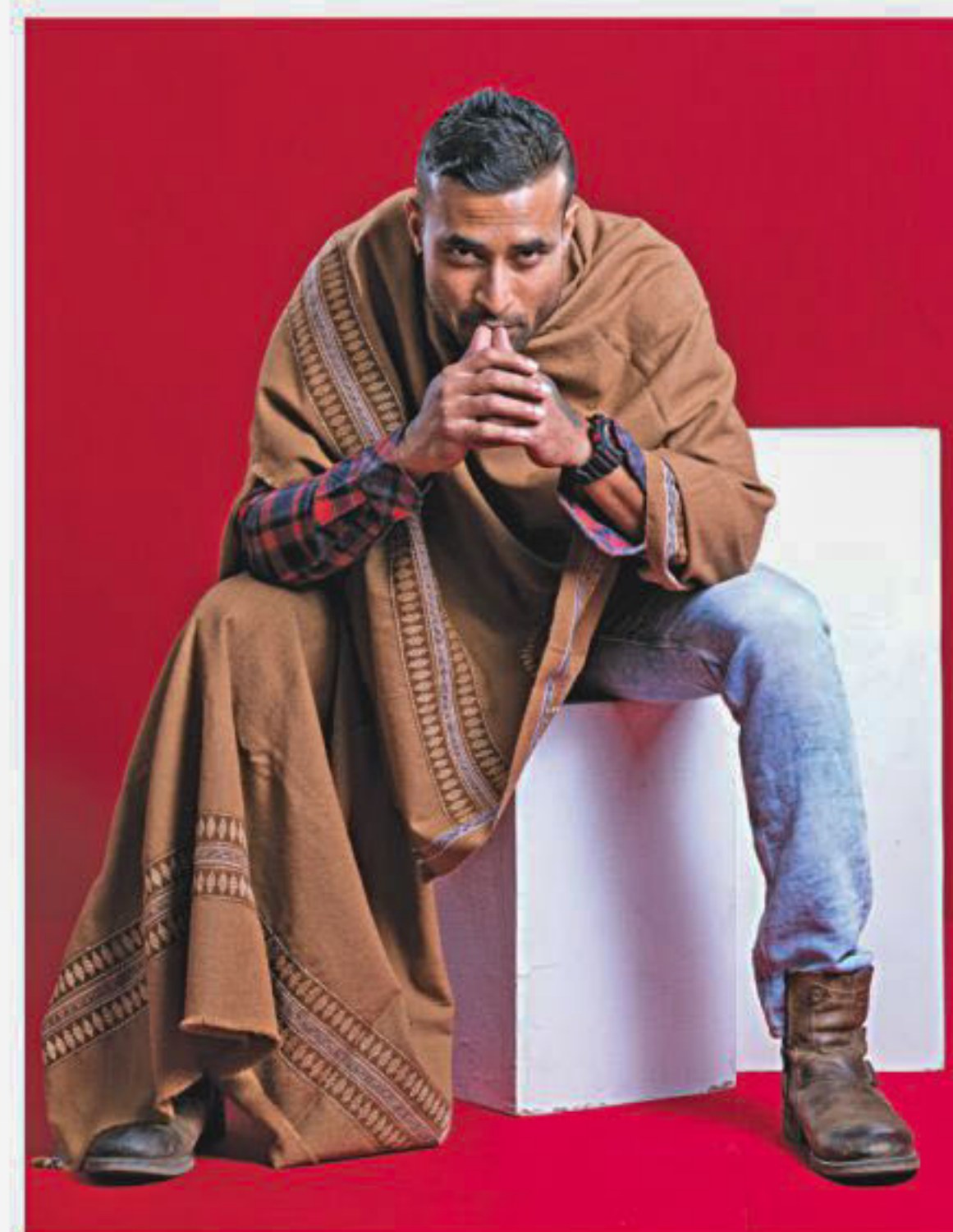
## STOLES

Typically longer than scarves but not as wide, are worn around the arms and shoulders. Many times, a stole is saved for fancier occasions.

By Mehrin Mubdi Chowdhury

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