World’s most precious fibre:

PASHMINA IN LADAKH

November 2021
MESSAGE

Ladakh’s geographic and climatic characteristics have lent themselves to produce the world’s most unique fibre which is Pashmina and grow unique varieties of Apricot and the berry of Himalayan pride which is seabuckthorn, marking them with unique qualities amiss from such products found across the world.

While much is being done to popularise the unique products of Ladakh, concerted efforts by local authorities that address poor integration with the national and international market, support technological advancement and promote Brand Ladakh through the right policy interventions and incentives can catapult these sectors to the forefront of international markets. Exporting these products is also a strategic priority for Ladakh with tremendous potential to transform the economy of the union territory.

Aiming to showcase the potential of Ladakh’s flagship products, I would like to congratulate to Invest India and officials of Industries & Commerce Department, Ladakh for bringing out this engaging report series on Pashmina, Apricots and Seabuckthorn. I trust that investors will find these publications to exceptional resources in their exploration of India and the union territory of Ladakh. I hope to soon welcome you to the rooftop of the world and to participate in the advancement of its flagship products.

(Feroz Ahmed Khan)
FOREWORD

Nestled in the laps of the majestic Himalayas, “Ladakh’ is one of the highest regions in the world and one of the most unique geographies to visit. It was recently given the status of a Union Territory (UT). Since then, there has been a concerted effort by the people and governments at the local and national levels to leverage Ladakh’s specialty products such as Pashmina, Apricots and Sea Buckthorns and popularize them world over. Putting Ladakh on the global export map, in its specialty products, by creating the necessary market linkages, addressing existing issues and providing policy support and incentives to the local communities to adopt global best practices to make Ladakh a major hub for its niche products is one of the foremost agenda items of the new administration.

Leh, the most accessible town of Ladakh, is an important trade centre and one of the most preferred places for tourism as well. It’s bustling with many young entrepreneurs and the region now stands a chance to make the right advancements in technology, gain investor confidence and construct value chains for boosting its economy. At this point of time, the youth of Ladakh need to find vigor for entrepreneurship, scaling up businesses and capturing the untapped potential to complement the government’s concentrated efforts.

I congratulate Invest India for handling three detailed research projects and highlighting the potential of local industries in Ladakh and especially Leh. I am certain that the potential investors, embassies and companies will find these publications useful in their exploration of India and the Union Territory of Ladakh. I hope to soon welcome you to Himalayan district of Leh to participate in the region's socio-economic transformation.

(Adv. Tashi Gyalson)
Chairman/Chief Executive Councilor,
LAHDC, Leh
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Saugat Biswas, IAS
Secretary

D.O No. Secy/I&C/UTL/2020-

Foreword

Ladakh was carved out as a separate Union Territory on 31st October, 2019. Since then the Union territory has focused on a journey of development taking all sectors into consideration. The vision of the Hon’ble Prime Minister of India, steered into reality by the Hon’ble Lieutenant Governor Shri. Radha Krishna Mathur has catapulted the populace of Ladakh, bringing them face to face with a new level of prosperity and well being, that is sustainable and focused to the residents of Ladakh.

In the last 2 years Ladakh has seen development in the fields of health, education, social sector, infrastructure, road connectivity, telecommunications, civil aviation, empowerment of grass root democracy and the industrial sector.

Ladakh has embarked on the journey of industrial development by lifting up the indigenous sector, the produce and products of Ladakh. The focus has been on creating entrepreneurs and industrialists from among the people of Ladakh by leveraging the resources available in the Union Territory.

In this journey the Industry & Commerce department of Ladakh has joined hands with various institutions and agencies such as NIFT, NID, KVIC, NIFTEM, INVEST INDIA among others to contribute in their own unique way in this path of development.

INVEST INDIA has been instrumental in conceptualizing Ladakh’s first Incubation centre, supporting in various domain specific areas for supporting the startup ecosystem in Ladakh and are on the way to assist us in the food processing and textile sector. I am glad that the INVEST INDIA is bringing out the preliminary reports on Seabuckthorn, Apricot and Pashmina in consultation with the I&C Department of Ladakh. I trust that the reports will be fruitful in introducing the sectors, theirs use and economic potential to the various potential buyers, processors, financial agencies and entrepreneurs. I congratulate the officials of I&C Department, Ladakh and INVEST INDIA for the effort.

Saugat Biswas
MESSAGE

An amalgamation of some of India’s most unique landscapes and warmest people, Ladakh crowns India’s diversity—both demographic and geographic. Despite its harsh topography and a highly variable cold desert climate, Ladakhi agriculturists have leveraged Ladakh’s environment to cultivate some of India’s most exotic agricultural products.

Leh, the largest district of this union territory, stands out for its spectacular scenic settings and emerging commercial potential. With a population of a mere 1.33 lakh, Leh has carved itself as a buzzing city with emerging entrepreneurs and businesses that are boosting regional indigenous industries and creating many new ones. Leh’s growing and self-reliant rural economy is also a testament to Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s vision for an Atmanirbhar Bharat.

Ladakh’s relative seclusion in the Great Himalayas, it’s picturesque locations and cultural diversity make it favourable for both domestic and international tourism. Ladakh displays a strong and promising potential for upward growth. Not only is the region blessed with an abundance of natural resources like solar and wind power, but it is also a hub for skilled and highly specialised artisans. It produces the world’s finest quality of plush pashmina, apricots and sea buckthorn that thrive in such climatic conditions. The considerable market advantage these products hold over the international competitors is, however, still untapped. The significant and bold steps taken by Prime Minister Modi in the Ladakh region will bring investments into the UT and boost trade and commerce and enable the emergence of an export-oriented economy.

The emerging market for these products has pushed Ladakh at the precipice of rapid economic growth, generating sustained employment and bringing in long term investments from several budding entrepreneurs. Despite gaps in their supply chains, pashmina, apricots and sea buckthorn markets can be enhanced through policy interventions, technological advancements and promotion of global best practices. This will enable these products to maximise their potential and scale newer heights in international value chains.

I congratulate Invest India for publishing three detailed reports that demonstrate Ladakh’s commercial development and local industry potential. I am confident that investors will find these publications to be an invaluable resource as they explore India and the union territory of Ladakh. I am eager to witness the growth of these industries and extensive international support in helping realise it.

(Shrirkant Balasaheb Suse) IAS
Foreword

Set amidst the most northern reaches of the Himalayas, India’s recently created union territory on 31st October 2019, Ladakh, is home to among the world’s most unique geographies. The relative seclusion of the region has also allowed for the emergence of a vibrant culture that adds colour to the cold brown desert in which it has flourished. The region is abuzz with new entrepreneurs and industries who are fuelling regional indigenous industries that are a mine of untapped potential.

Products like pashmina, apricots and sea buckthorn are among such sectors that have, over the centuries, come to define Ladakh. Representing both the uniqueness of Ladakhi ecology and its skilled artisans, these products are integral part of the local culture and economy. They are now only just arriving at the national and international stage. Their potential not only promises to generate jobs for hundreds of Ladakh’s youth in the coming years but can also produce significant monetary gains for entrepreneurs whose visions are rapidly changing Ladakh. The emerging market for these products has pushed Ladakh at the precipice of economic growth and prosperity.

I would like to extend my congratulations to Invest India and officials of Industries & Commerce Department, Ladakh for undertaking these three projects and producing three detailed reports that highlight Ladakh’s business transformation course and the potential of its local industries.

(Santosh Sukhadeve) IAS,
MESSAGE

Situated in the lap of the vast Himalayas, the pristine region of Ladakh, attracts people from all over the world with its inexplicable beauty and warm hospitality. Among the many main stays of life in the Himalayas are lesser known yet wonderful products such as sea buckthorn, apricots and Pashmina, all a vital source of both, survival and pride for the Ladakhi people. Besides providing much-needed nutrition and warmth in our cold and arid territory, such products also host immense environmental and economic benefits and will play an ever-growing role in the UT’s sustainable development. While the local people have been using them for centuries now, it is in the recent years, that their popularity has increased globally due to their high-quality, organic nature and ethical trade practices. For instance, the Ladakhi pashmina is the world’s finest wool while our sea buckthorn berry is fully organic by default and the best quality grown in the Himalayan region. Similarly, our unique apricot variety, the Raktse Karpo, and the Halman are among the sweetest apricot types in the world. Besides their high quality, these products support the livelihood of the local people engaged in their production and also provide a template to promote fair trade practices in these products in the future.

With Ladakh becoming a union territory two years ago, there is a concerted effort by the people and governments to leverage Ladakh’s unique, specialty products and popularize them. The government’s One District, One Product (ODOP) is a landmark initiative in this regard by helping to realize the huge potential of these products through better marketing, branding and export linkages. The Industries Department is also actively involved in promoting these very special products through targeted exports, higher production, value addition and better remuneration for our artisans, farmers and entrepreneurs dependent on them. Once our initiatives to promote and market apricot, sea buckthorn and Pashmina begin to show results, the Department will expand its initiatives and include other Ladakhi products like buckwheat, Goji berry and many other medicinal plants as well.

I complements the Invest India team and my colleagues at the Industries Department in bringing out this series of engaging and insightful reports on some of Ladakh’s flagship products. I am certain this timely effort will provide much needed information to potential investors, embassies and companies to explore, invest and participate in Ladakh’s new journey towards economic and social transformation.

(Moses Kunzang)
Message

Ladakh, renowned as the “Land of Passes” is situated in the most northern region of the majestic Himalayas. The union territory is an amalgamation of cultural and demographic diversity, with immense market potential for sea buckthorn, apricots and the Ladakhi pashmina — a critical part of the heritage of the region. These unique products have been identified under the One District One Product (ODOP) initiative, which under the aegis of ‘Districts as Export Hubs’ is aimed at manifesting the vision of Hon’ble Prime Minister of India to foster balanced regional development across all districts of the country.

Under this initiative, the government is committed to facilitating investments into these products to bolster trade and commerce and enable the transition to an export-oriented economy. ODOP is a transformational step in realizing the true potential of a district — it fuels economic growth, generates employment and regional entrepreneurship. There is a critical need for efficient utilization of Ladakh’s very high potential in terms of labor, land and natural resources which are the basic inputs in the production process. Export promotion will ensure the maximization of these products’ potential and position them in international value chains.

The Strategic Investment Research Unit (SIRU) at Invest India is publishing three extensive reports, that showcase Ladakh’s commercial development and local industry potential. I hope you find these reports informative in your exploration of the very interesting economic opportunities in Ladakh.

Sincerely yours,

Deepak Bagla
Leh National Highway
NH-1 in Himalayas, Ladakh
LADAKH: THE ROOF OF THE WORLD

The Union Territory of Ladakh is a one-of-a-kind combination of nature, spirituality, and adventure. Comprising of two districts namely Leh and Kargil, it constitutes India’s highest plateau at over 3,000 m (9,800 ft). Ladakh is bordered by the Karakoram and Himalayan Mountain ranges to the North and South, the Tibet Autonomous Region to the east, and the union territory of Jammu and Kashmir to the west and stretches for about 45,000 square miles sharing international borders with Pakistan, China and Afghanistan.

Popularly known as the “land of passes” it has a chilly and dry climate with an average annual precipitation of about 3 inches (80 mm) and a fragile ecosystem characterised by low plant density, high winds and high-UV exposed atmosphere. It sees severe winters and houses some of the highest places of the world including its capital and largest town Leh, which is located at an altitude of 11,400 feet. Although Ladakh hosts large, rugged hills but it is home to some of the warmest people. The region is renowned for its remote mountain beauty and its Buddhist culture and is sometime called ‘Little Tibet’ due to the strong influences of Tibetan culture among people.

India’s coldest, most elevated inhabited region (2300-5000 metres)

- Consists of two administrative districts: Leh, Kargil
- Capital: Leh situated an altitude of 11,400 feet
- Geographical Area (in sq. Kms.): 59,146
- Population density of only 5 persons per sq. km.
- Major rivers: Indus, Zanskar and Shyok
- GSDP (including J&K, in FY 2017-18): USD 19.71 Bn
- Northern most region in India
- Home to the world’s finest wool ‘Pashmina’

India’s coldest, most elevated inhabited region (2300-5000 metres)

Geographical Area (in sq. Kms.): 59,146
WHAT IS PASHMINA?

For the grass that you have just eaten, oh goat, give us some good pashm. For the water that you have just drunk, oh goat, give us some good pashm. Sit down on the grass and be still, oh goat, so that we can take out your pashm

- A song recited by the Changpa people while combing the pashm wool from their goats.¹

The word Pashmina is derived from the word Pashmineh which traces its origin from the Persian word 'Pashm' or "soft gold". More popular with the name of "Cashmere" globally, which became an internationally recognised generic name for a location specific term for an internationally produced and traded commodity. Its classification is derived from goat fibre with microns (μ) less than 19. Interestingly, the term "Cashmere" has remained popular for over five centuries, or more and it didn’t change even though the fibre comes from different places such as Mongolia and China. But it is the fibre from Changthangi breed, a region in Ladakh, which is even finer with average diameter of 12 to 15 microns (μ) and is called Pashmina. This unique feature has made Ladakhi Pashmina earn the sobriquet of the warmest and most precious fibre in the world.

¹. https://www.wanderingsilk.org/pashmina-cashmere-history-meaning

Image Source: https://www.instagram.com/nomadicwoollenmills/
To give a clear-cut definition, Pashmina is the fine under fleece or down that grows on high altitude Changthangi goats in bitter winters, which gets combed out in the summer, when the goats are shedding. Locally the goats are more commonly known as Changra. ‘Chang’ is derived from the first part of the word Changthang. ‘Ra’ is derived from the Ladakhi word for goat ‘Rama.’

The pastoral community, the Changpa, raise large flocks of sheep, goats, and yak on the grim highlands of interior Asia, in an immense swaddle encompassing Afghanistan, Ladakh, Mongolia, Tibet, and Sinkiang. The Changpa community are nomads scattered throughout the area and are recognized by their unique tents made of yak hair. The site is vast and has a diverse topography of flat land areas intermingled by gorges and mounts. For centuries, the community has lived in this high elevation setting and shepherded the goats for pashm supply. The region’s elevation is over 14,000 feet which impede cultivation, and the only good economic use of the bleak, barren setting is through herding. Goats, sheep, and yak grow a thick, warm, soft undercoat of downy, superfine fibres. Since the temperatures plunge to -50 degrees Celsius and lower, this undercoat helps them survive the weather. As the spring season comes in, the animals have no more need of the undercoat, and the sumptuous fibres of the undercoats are combed and plucked out.

Pashm, as it is known in the Urdu and Kashmiri language, is collected in business quantities from the Changa community who herd Capra hircus, goats.

Herding of goats in Changthang

As springs comes, the goats naturally shed the undercoat which is collected and combed by the herders followed by its procurement process spearheaded by the All Changthang Pashmina Grower’s Cooperative Marketing Society (ACPGCMS)

Temperatures plunging to -50 degrees Celsius and lower during winters in Changthang
The raw material for the Kashmiri shawl industry has always been Pashm, and the fabric woven from it is called pashmina. The term cashmere was adopted when the British ruled India because the woven products (mainly embroidered and woven shawls) largely came from Kashmir. Hence, they were widely recognised as cashmere because of their geographical affiliation with the region of Kashmir.

To put things in a clearer perspective, please find below the basic difference between Cashmere and Pashmina:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CASHMERE</th>
<th>PASHMINA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Definition</strong></td>
<td>Fine and soft wool that is used to make yarn, textiles, and clothing</td>
<td>Very fine and soft wool made from Changthangi goats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of Goat</strong></td>
<td>Obtained from various types of Himalayan goats</td>
<td>Obtained from one specific type of Himalayan goat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Texture</strong></td>
<td>Soft and fine texture, however, an expert may find it coarse in texture when compared to Pashmina</td>
<td>Fine and soft texture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Diameter of wool</strong></td>
<td>Diameter between 16 and 19 microns</td>
<td>It is more difficult to obtain since it is from a specific type of goat obtained during a particular period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Availability</strong></td>
<td>Comparatively easy to spin</td>
<td>It has a very thin texture. It is difficult to spin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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MAP OF LADAKH

Country Boundary
National Highway
District Headquarters
UT capital
Major Tourist Destinations
Airports

LADAKH

JAMMU & KASHMIR

KARGIL

LEH

Panamik

Hunder

Dras

Mulkbekh

Nimoo

Pangong Lake

CHANGTHANG REGION

TSO KAR

WORLD'S MOST PRECIOUS FIBRE:
CHARACTERISTICS

There are several important features which make the most precious fibre in the world stand out:

**Fibre diameter:**
This is the single most important feature of pashmina where smaller the diameter, finer the fibre.

**Fibre length:**
The average fibre length is 55-60 mm

**Colour:**
Raw pashmina is found in three basic colours of white, cream, gray, beige and black

**Quality:**
The quality of fine pashmina is directly related to the altitude at which nomads graze and maintain these goat herds as well as to the variety and health of the pasture the goats eat.

THE STORY OF “LENA”
(PASHMINA IN LADAKHI LANGUAGE)

Made from the down of Himalayan goats, pashmina is extremely fine and soft wool. Pashmina is a kind or category of cashmere, but it is not the same as cashmere and is challenging to obtain. Indigenous to the highland of Ladakh, they are made from a particular type of Himalayan goats called Changthangi goats. The thin texture of the fabric is a result of the diameter of 10-15 microns. Since the material is made of highly delicate strands, it is crucial to spin the wool by hand and physically plait them to craft fine-looking stoles, shawls, blankets, and cloaks.

The central and east Asian plain provides the ideal cold and dry environments for yielding high-quality fibres. Thus, nearly all pashmina and cashmere come from there. China, Mongolia, and Iran are the significant producers of pashmina and cashmere.

In the Indian Changthang community, the current pashmina production is estimated to be between 37,000 and 50,000 kg annually. This accounts for less than 1 percent of the global pashmina output. There are 200,000 Changthangi pashmina goats in Ladakh as per the Sheep Husbandry Department, Leh. Assuming an average of 300 grams yield per goat in those villages where pashmina is being harvested, the total volume of harvested raw pashmina adds up to 60 MT. Whereas various scientific literature state that Pashmina production in India is 50 MT of which Changthangi breed of goats contribute to 90 percent.

The global demand for pashmina has increased in the past few years, with the United States, the United Kingdom, and Japan as the top consumers. However, increasing demand has not benefitted the welfare of the herders as the middlemen are making the most from sales.

Ladakhi pashmina accounts for only a very small percentage of global cashmere production. Consequently, uncovering the ambiguities of worldwide demand and price fluctuations is highly susceptible to competing in the bulk market. Even so, there is a tremendous opportunity to position regionally grown pashmina in a small, specialized market rather than a bulk one. The niche market is on a steady rise. Conscious Indian and global fashion brands and consumers are willing to pay high prices for differentiated products. The niche market consumer base is willing to pay first-class prices for ethically produced products, complying with fundamental values of environmental sustainability and the fair allocation of economic benefits. A combination of various factors has set the stage for transforming the Ladakhi pashmina industry from a low-value material focused to a high value globally recognized sector.
Testimonial from a herder in Changthang

When asked about the importance of this vocation he said: “Pashmina from Changthang is the finest in the world. It is something that makes us proud. However, it is mostly recognised globally as a product of Kashmir, which is unfair. He also went on to highlight that: While the government is making efforts to process pashmina locally through the herder’s cooperative, it is important that the cooperative focuses on small herders and not limit their interests to just the large producers.”

When asked whether the vocation would survive, especially with younger generations’ lack of interest, he said: “Just as gold has not gone out of demand, nor will pashmina which we call soft gold. As long as people live in Changthang, pashmina rearing will remain a part of our lives. As for our younger generations, they will take it up gradually as they realise that standards of living in Changthang go up. After all that is what development means.”

Sonam Gyatso, from Sumdo near Korzok

Image Source: Received from Industries Department
SCHEMES IMPLEMENTED BY SHEEP HUSBANDRY DEPARTMENT, LADAKH FOR WELFARE OF NOMADIC COMMUNITIES

- **Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana – Gramin (PMAY-G)**
  - To address these gaps in the rural housing program and given the Government’s commitment to providing “Housing for All” by the scheme of 2022, the Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY) has been restructured into Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana – Gramin (PMAY-G).
  - The aim is to provide a pucca house with basic amenities to all rural families who are homeless or living in kutcha or dilapidated houses by the end of March 2022.
  - To help rural people Below the Poverty Line (BPL) in constructing dwelling units and up-gradation of existing unserviceable kutcha housing by aiding in the form of a full grant.

- **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)**
  - The Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE) flagship scheme was implemented by National Skill Development Corporation.
  - The objective of this Skill Certification Scheme is to enable many Indian youths to take up industry-relevant skill training that will help them secure a better livelihood.
  - Individuals with prior learning experience or skills will also be assessed and certified under Recognition Prior Learning (RPL).

- **Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)**
  - The Government of India launched it to provide connectivity to unconnected habitations as part of a poverty reduction strategy.
  - The Government of India is endeavouring to set high and uniform technical and management standards and facilitate policy development and planning at the State level to ensure sustainable management of the rural roads network.

- **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act**
  - An Act to enhance the livelihood security of the households in rural areas of the country by providing at least one hundred days of guaranteed wage employment every financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work and for matters connected therewith incidental thereto.

https://ladakh.nic.in/provider/central-government/
Process of Dehairing/Carding

Process of Drying

Packed stacks of raw pashmina

Process of Scouring/Washing

Manual Sorting of colours

Pashmina in Ladakh
FORMATION OF COOPERATIVE SOCIETIES IN LADAKH

The Cooperative movement was introduced during the 2nd five-year plan in Leh District. However, it was only in the 4th five-year plan that the impact of the Cooperatives started to show results. Today, the Cooperative occupies an important place in the economy of the district. This is because of active voluntary participation of the people, liberal financial assistance, and positive role of the district administration and relentless, dedicated service of the departmental officials.

In Leh district for Pashmina, the following are the cooperative societies registered under the Cooperative Societies Act 1989:

- **All Changthang Pashmina Grower’s Cooperative Marketing Society (ACPGCMS):**
  The ACPGCMS has focused its efforts on the goals of improving the quality of the raw wool that was being supplied to the bulk fibre market and ensuring a fair as well as consistent price for the wool in the market. The scouring and dehairing plant in Leh by the cooperative have been an integral component of these efforts which is going to be replaced by a new upgraded machine very shortly.

- **Looms of Ladakh Women Cooperative:**
  The Sheep Husbandry Department, Ladakh facilitated the formation of the Looms of Ladakh Cooperative to create pashmina wool based finished products that could help enhance the economic value realized by Ladakh in the Pashmina / Cashmere economy.

  These efforts have collectively created a strong infrastructure and foundation on which a vibrant pashmina ecosystem can be built in Ladakh.

With increased awareness among people about the remarkable pashmina of Ladakh, recent years have witnessed a growing interest and presence of start-ups and entrepreneurs keen to create higher-value addition finished products from the raw pashmina fruits through use of modern technologies, innovation in designs and better market linkages. These new-age, young entrepreneurs are not just generating vital, stable and profitable sources of livelihood for the local youth but also inspiring the next generation to build upon these innovations and create greater value for their local community and the regional economy at large.

Some of the most innovative Ladakh-based companies include:

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We established Lena in 2016 initially with 7 women artisans with a vision to create high quality Ladakh pashmina shawls and bring it on the global map and also to set up a natural dyeing resource centre and make natural dyeing a part of our culture.

The vision that motivated us through, is to produce the finest of spinners, weavers and natural dyers. To achieve the finest quality Ladakh pashmina- we wanted to engage the local artisans and train them how to spin and weave pashmina with the same techniques they use for wool. Working with pashmina not only provided a dignified way of livelihood but it also gave them a better and sustainable source of income. The impact that we have seen in the lives of these women in our team is that they have now gained a new sense of confidence because they are able to contribute to their family income. They are motivated to learn new textile skills.

We strongly believe in providing fair wages to the artisans in our team and contribute in strengthening the local Pashmina Economy of Ladakh. Preservation of Ladakh’s textile heritage is another objective of Lena. We know that it is not in the hands of a single enterprise or a person. It should be a common goal for all of us who are working in the local textile industry. Like the work of many couture designers in Ladakh are bringing back the traditional dresses in fashion, we are preserving and promoting the art of hand spinning and hand weaving of pashmina which are techniques on the verge of disappearance. The beautiful traditional warping techniques in Hand weaving, passed on for many generations are still in practice at our studio.

To honour the rich textile heritage of Ladakh we have launched a new collection wherein we have replicated the traditional designs of indigenous weavers of Changthang on our pashmina shawls. This collection has caught the attention of many textile lovers.

Our objective also lies in promoting ethical sustainable and cruelty free production practices. The quality pashmina fibre is obtained without harming the animals. There is a huge scope for Ladakh pashmina in the national and international market. While being one of the finest fibres in the world, the natural and sustainable way of rearing, spinning, weaving and dyeing adds value to it in a world that is growing towards achieving sustainable development goals and mitigating climate change.
Government of India’s Vocal for Local, Start-up and Skill India lays great emphasis on upskilling and entrepreneurship. Ladakh is home to niche natural fibres - pashmina and yak wool. Also, Ladakhi women have continued practising their knitting skills. During my tenure as Deputy Commissioner of Leh in 2015, it felt important to complete the value chain at source region of Pashmina and all other local wool. This realisation led to a 6 month skill development project which helped in mobilising and bringing together 150 herder-artisan women initially to own the vision. My co-founder dedicated herself to incubating and handholding the herder-artisan women in upscaling, team building, business planning, institution and brand building during and beyond the skill development project. Looms of Ladakh is currently in its fourth year. We hope with the newly hired young professionals, elected herder-artisan women leaders and my co-founder, Looms of Ladakh will be a symbol of a homegrown luxury brand.

- G. Prasanna Ramaswamy IAS,
  co-Founder, Looms of Ladakh

For Indian crafts and textiles to become a sustainable livelihood option for artisans and aspirational for their younger generation, a scalable and sustainable business model is key. I envision autonomous and democratic global fashion brands in each textile cluster of India run by designer and artisans together. At a personal level, Looms of Ladakh is a satisfying journey for me as I am able to experience the innate goodness, industrious acumen and collective judgement of people. We are together trying to find a balance between traditional knowledge and technological inputs.

- Abhilasha Bahuguna,
  co-Founder and Strategist (Gratis),
  Looms of Ladakh
MEMBER TESTIMONIALS

Mrs. Lobzang Lamo, CEO –

The women cooperative is striving hard to increase the income levels of its members by trying to add value at source region and exploring new business opportunities for the cooperative. We have also been able to hire well-educated & experienced professionals from Design and Management background to help the cooperative enhance product range & quality to meet market demands, and to put organizational level systems & processes in place.

Mrs. Shakeela Bano, Cashier –

Being part of the cooperative helped us in getting many opportunities to learn new things, from different characteristics of animal fibres to new skills like spinning on new model charkha & Bageshwari charkha, and from Banking Operations to Talking with anyone official or professional on the same table. Personal growth for the members in the cooperative is immense. We will slowly bring out the leader and business woman in each of our member owner.

Mrs. Sonam Chondol, Events & Showroom Coordinator –

We feel proud to be associated with the Cooperative because the cooperative is local, it is owned by all Ladakhi women, majority of them being housewives and uses all types of local raw material viz. Pashmina, yak wool, bactrian camel wool and sheep wool.

Milee Parmar, ED-

When I joined the cooperative, I was pleased to see a strong sense of ownership among the Office Bearers and members, and the way of functioning with complete autonomy which is the bedrock of primary members’ leadership in farm and off farm producer organisations. We are working on strengthening organisational systems related to finance, resource planning, record keeping & documentation, and producer group level Capacity Building. I am sure this can be easily done over time with support from hardworking and proactive members.

Mrs. Dolma Chonzom, Product Officer, Leh-

In this fast fashion world, the cooperative is proud to provide slow fashion options to the market with the cooperative products being totally handmade using 100% natural material.

Nishant Raj, Design & Production Head-

Cashmere, a premium to luxury fibre, owes its current popularity to the legendary Pashmina Shawl of Kashmir. But Pashmina’s true origin lies in Changthang of Ladakh. The artisans of Ladakh are talented and extremely hardworking, hence the future of pashmina will be written here in Ladakh through design intervention in spinning, knitting, weaving and natural dyeing, and equitable partnership with the other traditional craft clusters of India.

Mrs. Tsering Youdol, Product Officer, Changthang –

The members feel motivated to work harder to improve their skills, as member fees payment for spinning/knitting/weaving etc. are made in individual accounts as per different skill levels.
Almost all pashmina and cashmere come from the Central and East Asian steppe, which provide the ideal cold and dry conditions for producing high-quality fibers. Mongolia and China are the biggest producers, contributing approximately 85 per cent of the world’s supply. Other pashmina-producing nations include Iran, Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, India, and Turkey.

Currently, the global cashmere trade is divided: 60 percent from Mongolia, another 30 percent from China and Russia, 9 percent from Afghanistan, Nepal, and Central Asia, and barely about 1 percent from Kashmir. While China and Russia produce 750 tonnes of pashmina wool every year, and Mongolia dominates the world market with 1000 tonnes, India has a contribution of 45 tonnes.

**Global Pashmina Markets**

- North America – United States, Canada, and Mexico
- Asia-Pacific – China, India, Japan, S. Korea, Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia
- Europe (Germany, France, UK, Italy, Russia, and the rest of Europe)
- Central and South America – Brazil and rest of S. America
- The Middle East and Africa – GCC countries (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and UAE), Turkey, Egypt, S. Africa, and others
- Top 5 countries exporting and importing Pashmina

**Top 5 countries exporting and importing Pashmina.**

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9. [https://sustainablefibre.org/about-cashmere/](https://sustainablefibre.org/about-cashmere/)
Pashmina shawls are made from ethically sourced wool that is organic. The wool used for Pashmina comes from the Changthangi goats, which are reared for their milk by the Changpa tribes. Unlike the infamous shahtoosh shawls, for Pashmina, no animal is hurt during the process.

In spring, the Changthangi goats are ready to shed the undercoat, and pashmina fibre is collected through hand combing by the artisans. The fibre then goes through natural shedding as well as hand combing sorting and weighting before artisans’ hands spin the fleece into a fine yarn. Thespian yarn undergoes a process known as gluing to enhance strength and durability before arriving at the weaving machine.

A traditional pashmina can last for generations and is often considered an heirloom piece, passing down from one generation to another. The proper production of Pashmina is natural, organic, sans chemical, and without industrial mechanism. Every step along the way is performed in a slow fashion manner. The production waste is minimal as each fibre strand is a treasure and is best utilized by the artisans. Ethical production also means the artisans’ livelihood and health are protected by receiving a fair wage and using non-toxic dyes.

Pashmina Industry is working to make a difference in the lives of people across the Himalayas who are linked to the authentic Pashmina eco-system and are struggling for their livelihood, healthcare, and education of their children and dignity of labour.

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15. https://www.pashminagoat.org/
The industry is poised to deliver on 8 of the 17 UN SDGs, which include:

- Goal 1: No Poverty
- Goal 3: Good Healthcare and Well-Being
- Goal 4: Quality Education
- Goal 5: Gender Equality
- Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth
- Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities
- Goal 13: Climate Action
- Goal 15: Life on Land
1. Threat to Pashmina goat rearing:
Change in climate and extreme summer and winter are causing the goats to die of starvation or of hypothermia. Local people are migrating out of Ladakh and hence there are lesser families involved in the rearing of these goats. According to data available roughly 2,500 families are managing 200,000 goats in Changthang.

**Proposed interventions:**
- Provide incentives to the local people to stay back in Ladakh and not migrate to other regions. The nomads can be given better facilities.
- Budget should be allocated to create a stock feed in fodder banks which can be utilized in the winter.
- Providing better education facilities for children of nomadic families must be undertaken to improve their overall socio-economic status.

2. Border Conflict:
The border conflict has led to loss of valuable grazing land for the Changpas. Despite repeated requests they have not been given access to grazing field, nor have they been provided alternatives. This has also led to locals migrating and opting for alternative occupations.

**Proposed interventions:**
- Provide access to alternative feeding grounds for the locals to access
- Collaborations with Ministry of Animal Husbandry and Dairying can be to train the locals and encourage them to rear the goats and look after their nutrition and welfare
- Locals should be kept in loop with relations with China and given remedial interventions
3. Threat to skilled artisans:
The shawls were earlier woven by hand to maintain its purity but now there has been machine intervention which has caused it to be mixed with nylon or angora to endure the strain of the machine. The artisans are shifting from handwoven to processing the shawls in machines as the pay per shawl is better and the time taken is also less. This pattern is being observed more in Kashmir but could also be affecting the industry in Ladakh.

**Proposed interventions:**
- To promote and encourage artisan to weave by hand, protection can be given to them in terms of financial incentive. Bans can be put on machine production of pashmina to protect its authenticity.
- Inspection of production units can be done to analyse how many artisans are equipped with machines and penalties should be levied on them.
- Pashmina products should be properly labelled to indicate its constituency and whether it is hand-made or machine made should be mentioned. This will help to differentiate the hand-made pashmina and educate the customers better.
- Women were considered to be experts in weaving Pashmina threads, but they are hardly available to work 3-4 days a month. Hence women-centric employment plans should be conducted to induce them to come forward and work.

4. Explosion of fake Pashmina Shawls:
The market is infested with shawls which look identical to the original Pashmina and are sold at half-price which causes customers to fall prey to these fake copies.

**Proposed interventions:**
- Quality assurance tags can be put to differentiate fake and hand-made pashmina.
- Increase R&D on pure pashmina designs and patents on the designs can be given exclusively to Pashmina shawl manufacturers.
- Product diversification and introduction of new Pashmina products can help to tap into a new customer segment and generate more revenue.

5. Hardship involving in weaving:
The work involved in weaving the pashmina shawls is highly tedious. It impacts the vision of the weavers. Moreover, the revenue generated per day ranges from Rs. 300-400 for such a backbreaking job. Hence, the trade is not attracting younger generation and they are opting for alternative means of livelihood like construction work etc.

**Proposed interventions:**
- Economic incentives such as government grants and subsidies can be given to the artisans involved in weaving.
- Trainings and Skill enhancement sessions can be conducted to ensure the artisans are aware of the best practices and the environment they should weave in.
- The heritage significance of the art of weaving should be publicized so that locals view it as a part of their culture and tradition, and are encouraged to indulge in it.
6. Impact of covid-19:
There has been a steady fall in the export and domestic demand of pashmina shawls. Lack of exhibitions and shows, have reduced the work of the artisans. Moreover, the inflow of tourists has also reduced.

Proposed interventions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serial no.</th>
<th>Type of Intervention</th>
<th>Proposed solution</th>
<th>Agency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Credit support</td>
<td>Financial incentive should be given to the locals to rear the Pashmina goats</td>
<td>Ministry of Textiles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Supply chain</td>
<td>Access to grazing pastures goat rearing</td>
<td>Ministry of Animal Husbandry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Certification</td>
<td>Protection of handloom pashmina shawl artisans</td>
<td>Ministry of Textiles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Training and Development</td>
<td>Vocational training of pashmina shawl manufacturers</td>
<td>Ministry of Textiles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Market linkages</td>
<td>Creation of online platform for Pashmina artisans</td>
<td>Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Branding and Marketing</td>
<td>Better trade promotion of Pashmina Shawl</td>
<td>Ministry of Commerce</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. Unexplored export potential:
China accounts for 60 percent of global pashmina/cashmere exports, with another 30 percent coming from Mongolia and Russia, 9 percent from Afghanistan, Nepal, and Central Asia, and barely 1 percent from India.

Proposed interventions:
• Export promotion of the textile can be done to create awareness of the fabric in collaboration with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India.
• Training of the locals should be done to enable them to handle export documents and negotiate deals.
• Virtual seminars and exhibitions can be conducted to instigate the customers to buy this product.
• Online platform can be created to take orders and cater to a larger customer segment.
The ODOP Team at Invest India has created the following table which enlists the different permits and licenses required by companies and start-ups in Pashmina to export their products to the respective countries:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exporter</th>
<th>Exporter Compliance</th>
<th>Importer</th>
<th>Importer Compliance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>1. ACCC (Australian Competition and Consumer Commission) guidelines 2. Labelling Guidelines as per the Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection 3. Consumer Goods Safety Standards (2017) Regulations 4. Wool Specific labelling requirements as per ACCC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
GLOBAL CASE STUDY

Image Source: https://www.instagram.com/lena.ladakh/
GLOBAL CASE STUDY 1: CHINA

China is a leader in Cashmere market:
★ World’s richest country in terms of cashmere resources
★ World’s largest cashmere producer and exporter of cashmere items

The present worldwide cashmere yield is at 2 Mn tonnes, with China producing about 1.8 tonnes, accounting for more than 80 percent of global production. China currently accounts for 93 per cent of the world’s cashmere raw material.

More than 40 countries and regions receive these resources, the majority of which are Japan, Italy, France, and America. Dehaired cashmere yarns, cashmere sweaters, cashmere woven items, and machine knitting cashmere outfits are all available in China nowadays. The product structure is stretching from woollen, pure to worsted and blended spinning; product technology content has gradually risen, shifting to high count worsted cashmere products, thin and light cashmere clothing for all four seasons. The application range of cashmere products is expanding; product quality is continually improving; and exports are increasing year after year. China has a cashmere resource advantage but, at the same time, has developed a distinctive manufacturing advantage.

China produces 60 percent of the world’s cashmere, valued at an estimated USD 560 Mn to USD 920 Mn each year. Chinese cashmere products are quite competitive in the national market due to:
★ Raw material costs
★ Labour costs
★ Product quantities
★ Scale benefits

VALUE CHAIN FOR CHINESE CASHMERE MARKET

IMPACT OF COVID-19

For the cashmere sector worldwide, 2019 has already been a difficult year. Some dehairing mills began to receive orders in the middle of February 2020 but due to the spread of covid-19 and the resulting global lockdown, all of these orders were cancelled. When compared to January, the cost of cashmere fell by nearly 15 percent in April. The mills were forced to close until the beginning of June, initially due to the pandemic and later due to a complete lack of cashmere demand.

China was able to offset the losses caused by the covid-19 as the mills received tremendous support in the way of bank loans and tax breaks. After lockdown ended at the end of March, the administration promoted consumer-friendly policies in an attempt to boost the local economy.

Northern and western China’s high altitudes are suitable for generating cloud-like wool. Long-haired goats spread around the countryside produce thick coats to keep warm during the harsh, dry winters.

Challenges

China’s current condition is having the reverse effect on the market it established. Goats that were formerly profitable are now extremely expensive to keep alive, and prices are beginning to climb as supply decreases. This, combined with the severe environmental consequences, indicates that “big-box” cashmere production will soon be phased out. There are simply insufficient resources.

To combat a decrease in quality, the luxury market is taking steps to safeguard cashmere sources. This involves safeguarding cashmere pricing during downturns so that suppliers are not compelled to overstock herds.

Also, the design capabilities of high-end luxury mills that make the world’s best cashmere are sometimes lacking in Chinese businesses.

The grasslands where cashmere goats are raised are highly and increasingly degraded, putting pressure on livestock producers to boost product returns per unit of grazing pressure.

Breeds with higher yields of high-quality fibre are being researched to lessen the demand for larger herds and to build more climate-resilient production systems.
Iran together with Afghanistan is the third largest producer and exporter of cashmere in the world, after China and Mongolia. Even in terms of quality, Iranian cashmere ranks third to China and Mongolia. Its cashmere is long and highly curved and ranks third in price.

The most important determinants of animal fibre quality are the species that produce it and the diameter of the fibre. Cashmere goats have double coated fleece and consist of two major fibre types: coarse, medullated guard hair and fine, non-medullated insulative down fibre.

There are 25 Mn goats in Iran, 25 percent of which are cashmere-producing. 40 percent of all goats in habitats are kept by nomads, also called as ashayer. Goats breeds like Raeini, Nadushan, Birjandi, Abadeh and Abasabadi are also used for cashmere production. The major portion of Iranian cashmere is produced by Raeini goats kept by nomads in Kerman Province. The major portion of cashmere production takes place in eastern Iran.

The primary centres of raw cashmere in Iran are Baft, Sirjan, Mashad and Birjand, with Mashad continuing as the centre of the Iranian cashmere industry. The primary trading centres are Kerman and South Khorasan Razavi provinces. The export of raw cashmere is one of the sources of foreign currency for the country.

There is almost no value addition, and all the raw cashmere produced in Iran is dehaired and exported to China and Europe.
MARKETING

Nomads have weak linkages to the market and public service. They get low prices for produce, and have been able to operate at margin due to lower costs owing to free land and water. There is a large seasonal variation of supply, demand and price of cashmere. Cashmere harvesting and buying takes place over a short spring period in nomadic areas. While 62 percent of nomads sell their cashmere in one period of time, 22 percent, 11 percent and 5 percent sell their harvested cashmere at two, three and four different intervals, respectively all nomad goat owners sell to local or travelling merchants or traders. The raw cashmere is unsorted and sold at lower prices than could be expected if the cashmere was sorted at source into quality classes. Around 30 percent of cashmere is lost during shedding season and if not harvested would be wasted.

ROLE OF MIDDLEMEN

Dealers, commission merchants and brokers play a critical role in getting the cashmere from nomad producers to the manufacturers. The cashmere is sold ungraded at flat price. The nomad producers don’t receive information on seasonal price through reliable sources. The local mills in Mashad and Semnan scour and dehair about 30 percent of the locally produced cashmere and 29 percent of Afghanistan’s clip. Almost all Iranian processed dehaired cashmere is exported to European countries for making garments. China heavily imports raw cashmere from Iran for further processing. Afghanistan exports cashmere to Iran for primary processing.
Pricing

Nomads don’t get any price differential for producing fine cashmere. The producers are unaware of the global market prices for different cashmere quality classes. Since, most of the cashmere is exported without any value addition, producers are unable to achieve good prices. The pricing also varies according to seasonal factors and external factors like tariffs, demand in the market, etc. Nomads don’t receive seasonal price information from relevant sources, which further makes them vulnerable to selling product at lower than market price.

Since there is no price grade difference in the Iranian market, the profitability depends on the yield of goats. Raeini breeds are more profitable due to higher yields. Herders have no incentive to improve the cashmere quality, due to no price difference.
The lack of official statistics at domestic level make it difficult to assess and evaluate the industry with regard to global players.

Economic sanctions, struggling domestic economy, high inflation and declining money value have added to the woes of the Iran nomads and cashmere traders.

There is a growing demand for Cashmere at global level due to increase in popularity of cashmere clothing and rising population that prefers high quality clothing.

There has been rise in disposable income, thus the expenditure on clothing accessories is likely to rise in future.

Cashmere clothing is known for its elegance and light weight and particularly popular in rich countries.

The past two years have been hard for Cashmere Industry of Iran. The price of Cashmere plummeted from USD 95 in mid-2019 to USD 75-80 in January 2020. They further fell down owing to the pandemic and declining demand. The scenario is in sharp contrast to what the Cashmere traders expected. Most of them are forced to sell at prices lower than the purchasing value. There has been price increase at times due to demand from China. The export tariffs by the Iranian government have further led to reduction in demands from China, Pakistan and Afghanistan market. Iranian greasy Cashmere has improved in terms of quality, but there is no data on quantity aspect due to lack of official statistics. As per rough estimation, quantity of cashmere is about 1,000 tons out of which 50 percent comes from tannery, thus of low yield and length. Thus, only the other 50 percent is economically fit for further processing.
GLOBAL CASE STUDY 3: MONGOLIA

Industry Overview

- Mongolia produces 40 percent of the world’s supply of cashmere which amounts to around 10,000 tons per year.
- Cashmere is the third largest export industry of Mongolia and also the primary source of livelihood for herders.
- Out of total cashmere produced in Mongolia, only 24 percent is made into final product.
- There are around 200 Mongolian processing facilities for Cashmere and wool products.
- Cashmere Industry employs 1,00,000 people.
- Only 10 percent of raw cashmere is finished locally and 85 percent of raw cashmere is exported after primary processing, predominantly to China.
- Only 12 percent of market demand for Cashmere final products are supplied by Mongolia.

Impact of COVID-19

- Mongolia’s tourism sector from overseas was entirely shut down, negatively impacting the selling of cashmere clothes. Orders of major big-brand were cancelled.
- From January 2020, Mongolian borders were blocked, tradesmen were nowhere to be found. Shipments of Mongolian scoured and dehaired cashmere to China delayed for more than 30-60 days.
- This led to price decrease in 2020. During the 2009 and 2015 economic crises, raw cashmere prices fell by 25 to 30 percent. In comparison to 2019, raw cashmere prices have dropped by 40 to 50 percent in 2020.
- Dehaired cashmere exports in 2020 were only 215 tonnes, down from 392 tonnes in 2019, or 45 percent less than in 2019.

Interventions for capital support

The “Agricultural and Rural Development Project” by the Asian Development Bank provided 3.89 Bn MNT to three firms and 8.2 Bn MNT to two firms at 7 per cent IR per annum.

The Government of Mongolia is providing loans to Cashmere industries at lower interest rates (188.2 Bn MNT in 2017, 107.3 Bn in 2019 with 12-14 percent. R. per annum, and 300 Bn MNT loans in 2020 with 3-8 percent interest rate per year).

Due to parliamentary elections in Mongolia in 2020, the government attempted to keep raw cashmere prices high, but the real consumer market in China and Europe was not responsive.
Privatisation has led to brand equity and certification marks
Finest quality cashmere in the world
Second largest market share globally in Cashmere production

• Inadequate marketing and distribution system
• Poor public and private institutional capacity
• Reduction in cashmere quality
• Processing facilities underutilised capacity
• Lack of value addition leading to loss of lucrative value
• Export laws are not in favour of the domestic industry

Global demand for Cashmere growing particularly in European countries
Key initiatives taken by multilateral platforms to promote sustainable Cashmere Production
Multilateral treaties signed by Government

Mongolia Sustainable Cashmere Platform (MSCP)
MSCP is a national level umbrella mechanism facilitated by UNDP. Over a dozen global brands have signed statement of support for this program. It has a two-year Collection Action Plan with four key objectives

- Formulate and implement a collective action plan to address the root cause that is impacting the sustainable cashmere for Mongolia.
- Influence policy implementation by the Government to create a legal and institutional framework to promote sustainable cashmere in Mongolia.
- Develop partnerships and coordinate investments and actions to accelerate the efforts
- Position Mongolia as a global leader in sustainable cashmere production

The Four-Year Cashmere Program
The Four-Year Cashmere Program is implemented by Ministry of Agriculture and Light Industry. It has following characteristics

- It involves investment in domestic processing firms operating at under-utilized capacity. The Government estimates increasing industry revenue by almost one Bn USD through domestic processing.
- The Government aims to increase full domestic processing to 60% and incentivize production and export of environmentally sustainable products, while also increasing competitiveness of the industry.
- The main objective is to create favorable legal, investment and tax environment for export of final products, improve cashmere quality through goat breeding, raw material and enhance human resource productivity.
- The program is expected to increase exports by more than 5 times and generate 3,600 new jobs.
- The first phase of the project provides subsidized working capital loans to domestic processing facilities.
LAND DEGRADATION
As per the Statistical office the population of livestock in Mongolia has consistently increased, arrived at 30 Mn goats (from total of 70 Mn animals), This is putting pressure on the grassland of Mongolia. As a result, 70 percent of pastureland has already degraded.

CLIMATE CHANGE
As per United Nations report, almost a quarter of Mongolian grassland has turned into desert. The Cling temperature further adds to its vulnerability. The country has in fact witnessed a 2 degrees rise in temperature over the past 70 years, higher than the world average, which puts its goats and grasslands into danger.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPEDIMENTS
Since the region was made a union territory two years ago, there has been a renewed push in bringing Ladakh’s unique native products to the attention of the country and the world by streamlining efforts to promote these products, encourage greater local production and create the necessary infrastructure for these commodities to reach far and wide. Doing so is not important only for its associated economic benefits but also for minimising the impact of climate change in the region. Through discussions with cooperative societies, Nature Conservation Foundation, Sheep Husbandry Department, Industries Department and entrepreneurs based in Ladakh, this report focused extensively on existing issues and challenges for people involved in the pashmina value chain, recommending targeted policy interventions to address such issues and devise strategies to make Ladakh’s pashmina globally competitive and export oriented.

This is where this report gains significance- it tries to tell the story of Ladakh’s pashmina which indeed is the warmest and most precious fibre in the world. Furthermore, the pashmina derived from the goats in Changthang region is also one of the highest-quality one can find anywhere in the world and hence, it becomes ever more crucial that more and more people know about this marvellous fibre. With such USPs in abundance, it is ironic that Ladakhi pashmina is still not as popular in mainstream narratives as the Kashmiri pashmina.

The situation is changing rapidly, however, with policy and government support provided and an uptick in interest from young entrepreneurs to innovate and create secondary, high-value products, the regional economy is poised for much positive change in the coming years. There is a need to encourage more herders to continue this legacy of herding the rare Changthangi goat and entrepreneurs to popularise the Ladakhi pashmina in mainstream fashion circles, expedite the GI tagging and strengthen last-mile linkages with necessary infrastructure so that Ladakh can compete with other major producers of pashmina or cashmere at the global stage.

The changing dynamics of the post-covid world order and realigning supply chains have forced countries around the world to relook their supply chains, imbibe resilience in their businesses and diversify their supply chain linkages away from a handful of countries. In this context, it is essential for India under the ‘Atmanirbhar Bharat’ campaign to strengthen the local supply chains of strategically important regions like Ladakh. Doing this is important for ensuring food, human and environmental security in our country since products like pashmina have the potential to take India stand out in the global world economic order.
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World's most precious fibre:

PASHMINA IN LADAKH

Administration of Union Territory of Ladakh

Industries & Commerce, UT Ladakh

https://ladakh.nic.in/
https://industries.ladakh.gov.in/

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