

Changpa Community - An Overview of the Tribe

The Changpa are semi-nomadic Tibetan people. They are mainly found in the Changtang, a high plateau that stretches across the cold desert of Ladakh and also in some parts of Jammu and Kashmir. People from this tribe lived in the western regions of the various autonomous Tibetan regions but were then forced by China to move out.

The military tensions between India and China caused major disruptions in the life of tribal people of Changpa whose major occupation is rearing of Pashmina goats which are found on high altitudes. The intrusion of the Chinese army in areas of Chumur and Demchok since January 2020 has cut a large part of this tribe off their summer pastures.

About the Changpa Community

- The Changpa people mainly live in the Changtang in Ladakh which is a high-altitude plateau that stretches 1,600 kilometres from southeastern Ladakh in India to northwestern Tibet in China
- Due to the high altitude, the region is cold during summers with occasional snowfall and winters are extremely cold to work. Thus, maximum rearing is done during the summer season
- The tribe mainly earns their livelihood through the rearing of Pashmina goats and also own yaks and sheeps
- They trade the Pashmina wool in return for rice, grains and other basic necessities
- The Changpa speak Changskhat, a dialect of Tibetan, and practice Tibetan Buddhism
- Among the Changpa tribe, people are further divided into two other groups, namely, Phalpa and Fangpa

What is Changthangi?

- The Changthangi or Ladakh Pashmina is a breed of cashmere goat native to the high plateaux of Ladakh, India
- They are raised as they give the fine cashmere wool which is also known as Pashmina
- These goats are generally reared by the nomadic community called Changpa, whose people reside in Ladakh

What is Pashmina Wool?

- Cashmere wool itself is obtained from the Changthangi goat (*Capra hircus*) native to the high plateau of Ladakh
- It was in Jammu and Kashmir that textiles made out of Pashmina wool were manufactured and sold
- Pashmina products have a Geographical Indication (GI) label
- In 2019, the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) published an Indian Standard for identification, marking and labelling of Pashmina products to certify their purity