



Pashmina Shawl

Why in News?

Recently, Custom officials complained about the **presence of 'Shahtoosh' guard hair in [Pashmina shawl](#)**, which is obtained from **endangered Tibetan antelopes** in many of their export consignments.

What is Pashmina?

▪ About:

- Pashmina is a [Geographical Indication \(GI\) certified wool](#) that has its origin from Kashmir region of India.
 - Originally **Kashmiri people used Pashmina shawls** to keep themselves warm during the winter season.
- The term '**Pashmina**' has been derived from a Persian word "**Pashm**" meaning a **weavable fiber precisely wool**.
- Pashmina Shawls are very **costly due to their fine quality** of wool and the hard work involved in making one single piece.
 - Weaving a single Pashmina Shawl takes a long time depending on the type of work involved. It generally **takes around 72 hours or more to complete one shawl**.

▪ Source:

- The wool that is used in weaving the Pashmina Shawl is **obtained from the Changthangi goats (Capra Hircus)** domesticated in the Ladakh.

▪ Fibre Processing:

- The raw Pashm is **harvested by the Changpa tribes of Ladakh who herd the Changthangi goats**.
 - The Changpa are **semi-nomadic community** which inhabit Changthang (which is spread across Ladakh and Tibet Autonomous Region) or other regions of Ladakh.
 - As of 2001, the **Changpa were classified as a Scheduled Tribe** under the Indian Government's reservation program of affirmative action.
- The **Kashmiri weavers buy the raw pashm** from the middle men, the only connecting link between the Changpa tribe & the Kashmiris; clean the grubby raw pashm fibre.
 - They then **comb the fibre & segregate it** according to the fineness.
 - It is then **hand spun** & then set up into warps & **put up on the handloom**.
 - The **yarn is then hand woven & transformed** into the beautifully luxurious pashmina shawls that are renowned the world over.
 - This art of weaving Pashmina Shawls is passed on from generation to generation as a tradition in Kashmir.

▪ Significance:

- Pashmina is one of the **finest and highest quality wool** in the whole world.
- Pashmina Shawl **attracted the attention of people from all across the world** and hence this became one of most demanding shawls in the whole world.
 - Its high demand **boosted the local economy**.

▪ Concern:

- Due to restricted availability and high prices, **adulteration of Pashmina with sheep wool/ultra-fine merino wool is a common practice** by manufacturers.
 - In 2019, the [Bureau of Indian Standards \(BIS\)](#) published an **Indian Standard for identification**, marking and labelling of Pashmina products to certify their

purity.

▪ **GI Certifying Criteria for Pashmina:**

- The shawl should be **made from 100% pure Pashm.**
- The fineness of the fibers should be up to **16 Microns.**
- The shawl should be **handwoven by local artisans of Kashmir.**
- The yarn should be **only spun by hand.**

What is Shahtoosh?

- Shahtoosh is the **fine undercoat fibre obtained from the Tibetan Antelope, known locally as 'Chiru'**, a species living mainly in the northern parts of the Changthang Plateau in Tibet.
 - As per the [International Union for Conservation of Nature \(IUCN\) Red list](#), Chiru has been classified as **'Near Threatened'**.
- As they offer high levels of smoothness and warmth, Shahtoosh shawls became a **highly expensive commodity.**
- Unfortunately, due to **commercial poaching of the animal**, their population declined dramatically.
 - [Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna & Flora \(CITES\)](#) included the Tibetan Antelope in 1979 leading to **prohibition in sale and trade of Shahtoosh shawls and scarves.**

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. With reference to 'Changpa' community of India, consider the following statements: (2014)

1. They live mainly in the State of Uttarakhand.
2. They rear the Pashmina goats that yield a fine wool.
3. They are kept in the category of Scheduled Tribes.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (b)

Exp:

- The Changpa are semi-nomadic community which inhabit Changthang (which is spread across Ladakh and Tibet Autonomous Region) or other regions of Ladakh. **Hence, statement 1 is not correct.**
- They herd Changthangi (Pashmina) goats and are among the few suppliers of authentic cashmere wool of the finest quality. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- As of 2001, the Changpa were classified as a Scheduled Tribe under the Indian Government's reservation program of affirmative action. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**
- **Therefore, option B is the correct answer.**

Source: TH

