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Life on the edge of earth (An Overview of Threatened Nomadic Culture of Changthang Ladakh)

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“Changthang” a Tibetan word literally meaning western plateau is a name given to the vast plateau of Tibet lying to the western side of earlier Tibet and extending into the Indian side in Ladakh. The area is known for its hostile terrain with very low hydric index, altitude ranging from 14000 ft to 16000 ft asl and temperature ranging from 30 in summer to -40 during winter. The area is full of rugged mountain, barren land and dispersed pasture grasses fostering world unique germplasm like Changthangi Pashmina goats, Changthangi Sheep, Semi domesticated Yak, Zanskari horse and Bos taurus in the form of Local cattle. It is also habitat of worlds precious wild life germplasm like Snow leopard, Tibetan antelope, Tibetan Gazalle, Tibetan Wolf, Red Fox, Blue Sheep, Argali, Wild Yak and many wild birds etc. The native ‘Changpa’ tribal people inhabitate the Changthang region, who migrate from one place to another with there livestock throughout the year. The pashmina internationally known as cashmere is the finest fibre of all domestic animals produced by several breeds of pashmina goat all over the world and our Changthangi goat produces the finest pashmina fibre in the world. The livestock of Changthang region sustains the economy of thousands of Changpa nomads since from the beginning and they live in a harmonious way till date.

Now, due to poor production from livestock, low market value for livestock product, limited pastures, hard life, alternative and easy source of income like tourism, these nomads are migrating towards town leaving their age old practice of pastoralism. A detail study in this regard has been studied under AICRP on Changthangi goat and presented in this article.

Keywords: Changthang, Changpa, Livestock, Pashmina