

A Cooperative Luxury Brand in the Making - Pashmina, Yak and Camelids Fibre Value Addition in India

Abhilasha Bahuguna

Looms of Ladakh, India

Milee Parmar

Looms of Ladakh, India

Nishant Raj

Looms of Ladakh, India

Abstract

Pashmina and Yak wool are deeply interwoven with the history and culture of Ladakh. The raw pashmina fibre comes largely from the Changthang region of Eastern Ladakh, which represents the western extension of the Tibetan plateau, an important high altitude grazing ecosystem (Goldstein and Beall, 1990). The rangelands are used by Changpa pastoralists for livestock grazing. The Changpa rear a diversity of livestock including horse, yak, camelid, sheep and goat that provide a range of products and share the high-altitude cold desert habitat. Ladakh pashmina is largely supplied as raw, dehaired wool in bulk to the cashmere industry that Kashmiri artisans, traders and merchants have brought to the attention of the world with their exquisite and niche products like shawls and other apparel. While yak wool, being equally niche and exquisite is primarily used for utilitarian purpose by the yak rearing communities in India. In the global market, the demand and value for Pashmina, Cashmere and Yak wool products are emerging with many luxury brands promoting the same in market. Looms of Ladakh Women Cooperative, with a vision to become an exclusive global luxury brand of ecologically and culturally sustainable fibre, bringing economic benefits to the herders & artisans of Ladakh, aims to capture the economic benefits of Pashmina and Yak wool at its origin.

This presentation shall study the social and ecological impact literature of the luxury natural fibre industries in South America and Central Asia to draw insights for Looms of Ladakh. It shall also discuss the vision and mission of Looms of Ladakh and steps taken in this direction.

Research issue to be addressed: Studying social and ecological impact of the luxury natural fibre industries in South America and Central Asia to draw insights for building a luxury cooperative brand in India.

Methodology used: Secondary research from existing literature in journals, articles and news pieces. Primary data collection from herder and artisan member owners of the cooperative luxury brand.

Results achieved (conclusions) or expected as well as their relevance for theory and practice:

1. Source regions have to balance the herd sizes of pashmina goats, yak and camelids. Yak and camelid fibre research and development need of the hour for ecological balance. They are also luxury fibres.
2. Efforts to improve value addition in source region for their participation in the global luxury industry to be more than raw material economy along with providing raw material. The pie is big enough for shared growth.
3. ITC Nepal Chyangra Pashmina project created a lot of awareness and supported enterprises. However, these individual enterprises lack the economies of scale, capacity and brand value to scale up to international luxury brand level. Also, the herders are still raw material providers. The source region needs organisation and brand value to scale up value addition, research and development to cater the international luxury market.

Keywords: luxury fibres, pashmina, yak, camelids, cooperative, changthang, sustainable fashion

ISBN: 978-989-54263-2-4