

# BEYOND THE BAN



## A Census of Shahtoosh Workers in Jammu & Kashmir





# BEYOND THE BAN

---

## A Census of Shahtoosh Workers in Jammu & Kashmir

---

Dr Ravindran Gopinath, *London School of Economics*

Riyaz Ahmed, *WTI*

Ashok Kumar, *WTI*

Aniruddha Mookerjee, *WTI*





## International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW)

### *International Headquarters:*

411 Main Street, Yarmouth Port, MA, 02675, USA

### *With offices in:*

Asia Pacific	
Canada	China
East Africa	European Union
France	Germany
Japan	Latin America
Netherlands	Russia
Southern Africa	United Kingdom

The International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) works to improve the welfare of wild and domestic animals throughout the world by reducing commercial exploitation, protecting wildlife habitats, and assisting animals in distress.

IFAW seeks to motivate the public to prevent cruelty to animals and to promote animal welfare and conservation policies that advance the well-being of both animals and people.



## Wildlife Trust of India (WTI)

C 644, New Friends Colony, 1st Floor  
New Delhi 110065, India

The Wildlife Trust of India (WTI), is a non-profit conservation organization committed to initiate and catalyse actions that prevent destruction of India's wildlife and its habitat. In the long run, it aims to achieve, through proactive reforms in policy and management, an atmosphere conducive to conservation.

WTI works through building partnerships and alliances and its strengths lie in its professional multi-disciplinary team, quick reactions, and its willingness to work with so far neglected issues like acquiring land for wildlife and rescue and rehabilitation.

IFAW and WTI formed a partnership in 2000 to strengthen the cause of wildlife conservation and animal welfare in India. The two organizations share concerns for a number of endangered animals, including the Tibetan antelope. Through this collaboration, IFAW and WTI are developing strategies to find solutions to wildlife threats in India and the surrounding region.

*Copyright* © Wildlife Trust of India and International Fund for Animal Welfare 2003

*Citation:* Gopinath, Ravindran; Ahmed, Riyaz; Kumar, Ashok; Mookerjee, Aniruddha (2003), *Beyond the Ban: A Census of Shahtoosh Workers in Jammu & Kashmir*, WTI/IFAW

*Cover Photo:* Aniruddha Mookerjee/WTI

*Title Page:* George Schaller

*Back Cover:* Andy Fisher

All rights reserved. All material appearing in this publication is copyrighted and may be reproduced only with permission. Any reproduction in full, or in part, must credit WTI and IFAW as the copyright owner.

The designations of geographical entities in this publication and the presentation of the material do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of the authors or WTI/IFAW concerning the legal status of any country, territory or area, its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

This book can be used subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, hired out, or otherwise circulated in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published without WTI/IFAW's prior written consent and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent user and without limiting the rights under copyright reserved above. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Cover design by Amrita Nandy

*Edited & Designed by Sunrita Sen*

*Printed by Lipee Scan Pvt Ltd.*

*89, DSIDC Okhla Ph-I, New Delhi, India*

# CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	5
Executive Summary	6
Preface	9
The Backdrop	12
The Census	16
Appendices	39
Bibliography	48





PROJECT TEAM

**Aniruddha Mookerjee**  
**Riyaz Ahmed**  
**Malik Abdul Majid**  
**Javed Hasan Ganai**  
**Wasim Rasool Mir**  
**Fayaz Ahmed Mir**  
**Sayed Zahoor Ahmed Geelani**  
**Mohammed Tajamul Islam**  
**Urvashi Dogra**  
**Dr Ravindran Gopinath**  
**Suraj Sahgal**

ADVISORS

**Grace Ge Gabriel**  
**Ashok Kumar**  
**Vivek Menon**



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report would not have been possible without the cooperation of the nearly 50,000 individuals in the Kashmir Valley who formed the base of this survey. They opened their homes, fed us, gave us innumerable cups of *kahwa* and answered some of the most prying personal questions.

We are grateful to Intisar Suhail and Ifshan Dewan of the Forest Department; Hillal Ahmed, Ghulam Rasool Mir and Kalimullah whose in depth knowledge and suggestions were very useful. Nizamuddin and Ghulam Quadir guided the team during the initial stages. Yusuf Jameel was helpful with his suggestions.

Riyaz would especially like to thank Aehsan, Rohail and Iftikar who helped in translations. Durgesh Shankar of Central Cottage Industries Emporium encouraged us. Pankaj Sekhsaria and Farhad Vania were willing guinea pigs for discussions. Pituni Airon helped with the pie charts.

At Wildlife Trust of India (WTI), every member of the team pitched in to help. Geeta Krahne, who is no longer

with WTI, initiated the survey; Dr. Rakesh Singh and Mohd. Khalid Pasha helped in designing the questionnaire; Bahar Dutt and Nidhi Gureja provided valuable initial comments; Sathyan A.V. and Saral Kumar helped in tabulating the data. Arvind Krishnan and Vijayata Sharma organised the pictures.

Thanks are due to Prof. Sanjay Srivastav of Deakin University, Australia, who looked at the first draft. Jennifer Hawley at IFAW, London, who gave detailed comments. Robin Clarke at IFAW, Cape Cod, speed read the draft to meet a tight deadline. Shefali Upadhaya for advice on cover design. Raj Kachuroo's marketing insights taught the team a lesson in reality.

There are many others, whose input was small, but crucial to the writing of this report. They cannot be named, but if they read this report they will know how important their contribution was and that we will remain ever grateful to them.

WTI is extremely grateful to The Rufford Maurice Laing Foundation for institutional support.



Weavers in Srinagar making the warp for a shahtoosh shawl.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# *Shahtoosh Workers: The Way Ahead*



Aniruddha Mookerjee/WTI

A shahtoosh shawl being woven in downtown Srinagar.

The aim of the survey was to enumerate and identify those dependent on the manufacture of and trade in shahtoosh and assess the impact of the ban on their income and employment.

The shahtoosh shawl, handcrafted by skilled workers in the Kashmir Valley, has long been acknowledged as a piece of fine workmanship, fetching high prices both in India and abroad. However, the fact that this activity was illegal and that the shawls were being made from the wool of the endangered Tibetan antelope (*Pantholops hodgsonii*), commonly known as the chiru, had not been recognized till the early 1990s. Thus, the manufacture of and trade in shahtoosh shawls continued – despite Indian and international laws banning killing of chirus and trade in their derivatives – for over three decades.

Once the connection was made, it was clear that the manufacture of and trade in shahtoosh was illegal. Loopholes in the wildlife protection laws of the northern Indian state of Jammu & Kashmir, which has a separate law and allowed the use of chiru derivatives under a license, were also plugged. But there was concern over how the ban on the shahtoosh trade would affect the workers, which according to some media reports numbered in hundreds of thousands.

It was in these circumstances that the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) and the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) initiated this survey. Its aim was to enumerate and identify those dependent on the manufacture of and trade in shahtoosh and assess the impact of the ban on their income and employment levels to help formulate policy measures for both their rehabilitation and relocation to alternative means of livelihood. This, WTI-IFAW felt was crucial to ensure the survival of the Tibetan antelope.

This report is based on the findings of a population survey conducted over a period of 13 months – January 2001 to January 2002 – by seven researchers. They moved door to door, collecting information from almost every family that included at least one shahtoosh worker. Data was collected for two years – 1998 and 2001 – representing, respectively, the pre-ban and post-ban periods. Given

that almost all families associated with the shahtoosh trade have been enumerated, the survey may be considered to be a complete population count and not a sample survey.

## The Findings

**Location:** Shahtoosh production activity was found only in the Kashmir Valley of the northern Indian state of Jammu & Kashmir that shares borders with Pakistan and the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) of China. A large majority (97 percent) of shahtoosh workers and their dependents were found to live and work in and around the state capital, Srinagar. A total of 93 percent of the workers were classified as urban. Within Srinagar, shahtoosh production was found to be highly concentrated in the so-called “downtown” or “old city” areas with 85.4 percent of all shahtoosh workers and their dependents residing here.

**Population:** In striking contrast to the exceedingly high population estimates that were being cited earlier, the total size of the population surveyed (including families of shahtoosh workers) was 45,405. Of this population, only 14,293 individuals were directly involved in the production of shahtoosh at any stage in its production process; of the remainder, 26,044 worked in other professions, and 5,068 individuals were classified as dependents. Thus, of the total surveyed population, just 31.5 percent of all individuals (or 35.4 percent of all workers) were employed in shahtoosh production and about 11 percent were classified as “dependents.”

**Gender:** The survey found a clear division of work by gender in the shahtoosh industry. Women greatly outnumbered men and played a crucial role in the production process. They constituted 74 percent of all shahtoosh workers. Spinning, which is by far the numerically most important trade, was exclusively conducted by women. But on the other hand, weaving – the next most important trade – was done exclusively by

men. The work of separating was also handled only by women. Men, however, appeared to dominate those areas of the industry where wages – or profits – were the highest.

**Age-sex breakup:** The majority of spinners (who are exclusively females) were aged between 20 and 59, and the age distribution within the 20-49 age group was fairly even. This indicated that spinners tended to stay in this profession for a substantial part of their working lives, and were probably highly dependent – in the absence of other skills – on this work. In contrast, weavers (who are all males) and separators (all females) tended to be younger and, therefore, presumably had more mobility across trades. (See Appendix 1.1 for a list of different categories of workers involved in the production of shahtoosh shawls). The findings on gender and the age-sex break-up indicated that the ban on shahtoosh production has impacted females – particularly spinners – most directly.

**Incomes, Employment and Output:** Since this survey was able to gather data for the pre- and post-ban periods, it was possible to arrive at broad conclusions on incomes, employment and output. The results were striking. Workers involved in different stages of shahtoosh production reported a very large decline, both in terms of participation and incomes. Data on output and employment broadly confirmed the estimated income. Shahtoosh production declined sharply after the ban. When data on output was combined with employment data, a very clear picture emerged. Workers reported a sharp decline in employment (defined as the number of months of work in a year) in shahtoosh-related employment, but an even larger increase in pashmina-related employment.

These statistics indicated a very large shift away from shahtoosh production and towards pashmina. Workers who previously worked on shahtoosh, by and large attempted to enter the pashmina industry. This brought about a large decline in average incomes, and a dip

Aniruddha Mookerjee/WTI



Women greatly outnumbered men and played a crucial role in the production process. They constituted 74 percent of all shahtoosh workers.

Warp threads being put through guides.





A shahtoosh shawl and the skull of a chiru.

There is reason to believe that well-designed, timely and targeted interventions by the Jammu & Kashmir Government can fully compensate losses incurred due to the ban on shahtoosh.

(due to the presence of additional workers willing to work with pashmina) in average levels of output per worker. However, since few alternative means of livelihood were available to most workers in these industries, they began to work for longer periods of the year in pashmina, even if they earned and produced less by doing so.

**Work Patterns:** The largest proportion of workers (55 percent) reported a complete shift from shahtoosh to pashmina. Another 16 percent reported a shift from working exclusively with shahtoosh to working with both kinds of wool after the ban. Eleven percent claimed the ban had left them unemployed, while another 10 percent had shifted from working with both shahtoosh and pashmina to using only pashmina.

**Workers’ suggestions for alternatives:** A vast majority (71 percent) suggested the regulation and promotion of pashmina production. Others called for subsidized loans for shifting to pashmina, employment schemes by the government and the setting up of textile mills where they could be employed.

**Conclusions:** The ban on shahtoosh has affected shahtoosh workers, especially the women. In these troubled times in Jammu & Kashmir, many of the traditional crafts in

which men were involved have declined. Female shahtoosh spinners played a crucial role in partially compensating the losses suffered by their male family members, who were pursuing other trades. But, on the other hand, the number of workers directly involved in shahtoosh production is reasonably low – about 14,000 individuals, a number of whom have already successfully transitioned to pashmina production. There is reason to believe that well-designed, timely and targeted interventions by the state government can fully compensate for losses incurred due to the ban on shahtoosh.

**Recommendations:** Above all, there is a need for finding viable alternative livelihoods for shahtoosh workers. Although a number of possibilities exist, the single most effective measure would involve strengthening the pashmina industry in Jammu & Kashmir and creating an international market for high-quality Kashmiri pashmina shawls, which may be given a distinctive brand name, such as “Kashmina.”

Since the international pashmina market is facing a supply glut, it is vital that the product made by the Kashmiri workers be repositioned in the market and strict quality control implemented. To ensure this, an appellation body – based on similar associations in, for instance, France (Champagne) Scotland (Scotch) and India (Darjeeling tea) – must be formed to ensure strict compliance with appropriate guidelines for the production and marketing of “Kashmina.” Further, this body can help ensure payment of appropriate wages and good working conditions for “Kashmina” workers.

A crucial deterrent to pashmina production is that the workers need to buy their own raw materials, including raw wool, which is often expensive. In contrast, shahtoosh wool is provided on credit, or “commission,” to grassroots workers. To overcome this limitation, it is recommended that a government-supported micro-credit loan program be initiated for pashmina workers. The program can be run on a cooperative model or by an NGO with appropriate experience in the field.

Finally, it is suggested that the Jammu & Kashmir Government, in conjunction with the recommended appellation body, take measures to revive old art forms related to shawl-making, such as the labour and time-intensive *kani* or *jamavar* styles. These art forms can be successfully adapted to “Kashmina,” and would ensure three things: (1) Longer periods of employment; (2) Higher income levels; (3) Perpetuation, in the minds of consumers, of the impression that Kashmir pashmina represents the highest quality of shawls.

To ensure that these measures help to completely end the production of shahtoosh shawls, only those workers and manufacturers who can certify that they are no longer involved in the trade will be allowed to use the brand name “Kashmina.” A structure to market this brand should also be put in place.

All these rehabilitation measures should be applied concurrently with strict implementation of the laws banning shahtoosh so that the trade does not move underground. Consumer awareness campaigns should be continued for at least three years, or more, to seal the issue.

## PREFACE

# *Shahtoosh and the Tibetan Antelope*

The chiru has a dense under fleece which adapts it well to living in extremely cold areas. It is this fleece, known to the trade as shahtoosh, that has been its undoing.



IFAW

Above: A chiru pelt.  
Right: Slaughtered chiru.



'Wrap Up The Trade (WUTT), An International Campaign to Save the Endangered Tibetan Antelope' – the report published by IFAW and WTI in August 2001, had revealed some startling information about the illegal international trade in shahtoosh.

The Tibetan antelope is endemic to the Tibetan plateau, its range spanning across a small region of Ladakh in north-western India through much of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) of China at an average altitude of 4,500 metres, where winter temperatures can go as low as minus 40° Centigrade. Related more closely to the sheep and others in the goat family (*Schaller, 1998*), the chiru has a dense under fleece, which adapts it well to living in extremely cold areas and migrating long distances.

It is this fleece, known to the trade as shahtoosh, that has been its undoing. According to one of the more believable stories that are told by elders in the trade, the chiru was earlier hunted purely for its meat. "It is the best, the most delicious that you can get and we still long for it," an old man told me in August 2000 in Pharyang in the TAR near the Nepal border. "In our society no part of an animal is wasted. Finding chiru hair exceptionally warm, we started stuffing it in the lining of our clothes and shoes. This must have found its way to Kashmir through itinerant travellers. Kashmir master weavers and

craftsmen must have found a way of converting it to a thread and then weaving it. And we then had a thriving trade."

It is interesting to note here that although the silk route extended to the Middle East and Central Asia, all of which have a rich tradition of weaving, (and shahtoosh in its raw form must have travelled to all these places) this wool seemed to have excited the weaving community only in the Kashmir Valley.

Circumstantial evidence does tend to support the theory that shahtoosh shawl weaving remained, for a large part of its history, a by-product of subsistence hunting. In fact, elders across the spectrum of categories of shahtoosh production recalled during this survey that before the spurt in production in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the quantities produced were "less than a fifth of what it was at its peak." The product was "made for the aristocracy by elite weavers of Kashmir," and it is understandable that its supply remained restricted due to its "class, price and a certain snobbery attached to its use."

However, as the West, especially Europe, started discovering the warmth and the virtues of a shawl that was just 150 grams in weight, and as middle and upper middle class incomes started rising in India, the demand for the "exclusive and expensive" shahtoosh shawl shot up overnight. Again, there is no documentation or hard



**Female chirus grazing with their young on the Changthang plateau in the Xinjiang province of China.**

evidence to back this claim, but discussions with those long in the trade invariably point to this phenomenon.

As a result, from a small group of elite workers, said to be not more than two or three thousand, the number shot up to 10,000 and more to meet the phenomenal increase in demand. The rise in the prices of raw material (unprocessed chiru hair), according to oral history, matched the rise in demand till a point where the rise became a function of the restrictions on supply due to the ban on shahtoosh. From a byproduct, shahtoosh had become a fashion statement and a commercial success.

To feed this demand, thousands of chiru were massacred in China and the wool moved through Nepal and the northern Indian state of Uttaranchal into Jammu & Kashmir. Although the trade in chiru derivatives was restricted by both the Indian Wildlife Act and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna (CITES), it went on unabated because, strangely enough, no one knew that shahtoosh was chiru hair.

It is also worth noting here that the majority of shahtoosh workers, till recently, had no clue to the origins of this wool and strongly believed (some of them still do) that it was the seasonally shed hair of a mountain goat which stuck to shrubs and rocks and was collected by children. I have never been able to understand why the body of shahtoosh workers had absolutely no curiosity regarding the source or the origin of a raw material that they were constantly handling and using.

The story of how the whistle was blown on this trade and how it was still continuing on a large scale, though underground, was documented in WUTT, which also put in perspective IFAW-WTI's international campaign to educate customers in the West and India to reduce demand. It also records how IFAW successfully lobbied with the Chinese government to strengthen enforcement

and stop the killing of chiru in the TAR.

WUTT, however, had one unfinished task – to complete the census of shahtoosh workers in the Kashmir Valley. This census was necessitated by the fact that no one, not even the Government of Jammu & Kashmir, had authentic data on the number of shahtoosh workers in the state. Unsubstantiated numbers were being thrown about in the media that hundreds of thousands of people would be thrown into destitution if the shahtoosh trade was halted. If the ban had to be implemented it was important to look at the alternatives that could be made available for those being made redundant. History is replete with instances of changes in technology and circumstances leading to distressing redundancies and unemployment. It was, therefore important that this process of change from shahtoosh to another occupation be made as painless as possible.

By the time WUTT had gone to press, this survey had done only 1,210 interviews. Ideally, the survey should have been completed and reported in WUTT but considering the disturbed conditions in Jammu & Kashmir and the long confidence-building process that the enumerators had to go through, only 1,210 interviews had been possible. Taking that as a sample, as well as speaking to elders in trade, we had extrapolated an approximate total population of 30,000 shahtoosh workers, assuming there were 21,000 spinners and 5,250 separators.

When we completed the survey in early 2002, we found that we were completely wrong. On tabulating more than 45,000 individual data sheets that had come out of this survey, we found that there were less than 15,000 workers involved in the manufacturing process in January 2002. By the time this is read many more may have shifted to pashmina or other kinds of weaving.

However, the trends forecast by WUTT remained valid.



Women accounted for the largest segment of shahtoosh workers in just two manufacturing stages and this section remained the worst hit. WUTT's other forecast that over 60 percent of the workers wanted to shift to pashmina also remained valid.

Several changes have happened since WUTT was published. First and foremost, the Government of Jammu & Kashmir has amended its wildlife laws and made it more stringent than the Central Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 (WPA). The Tibetan antelope has been upgraded to Schedule I and it is now a non-bailable offence to hunt it or use its derivatives. With this, Jammu & Kashmir – which was the only state in India where the use of chiru derivatives was legally possible due to the animal being in Schedule II of the state's Wildlife Protection Act – has made it illegal. An enormous amount of lobbying, legal intervention and public campaign went into this and IFAW-WTI contributed a major share to this effort.

At the same time India's central wildlife laws have also been amended making punishment for wildlife offences more stringent as well as making provision to cover a longstanding legal lacuna regarding shahtoosh. It is interesting, as well as ironic, to note that even though the Tibetan antelope was upgraded to Schedule I of the WPA as early as 1977, it was only in 1995 that the Government of India accepted the connection between shahtoosh and the animal. Thus, between 1977 and 1995, shahtoosh manufacture continued to flourish and shahtoosh shawls established an enlarged global market. It was a peculiar situation where the enforcement agencies were unable to enforce a law because they did not know what it was that the particular law made illegal. Therefore, the provision in Indian law that anyone owning a trophy or a derivative of a Schedule I animal should declare it within 60 days of it being notified became redundant because, nobody, not even those enforcing the law, knew that shahtoosh was a chiru derivative. Since there was no established method of determining the age of a shahtoosh shawl this information gap led to a situation where anybody caught could either argue that the shawl was pre-1972 or even pre-1995 and, perhaps, get away with it.

To cover this gap, the amended WPA has put in a provision, notified in April 2003, giving owners of chiru derivatives 180 days to declare their possessions. Once

these are verified, listed and stamped, there should be no ambiguity about the legality. IFAW-WTI had strongly lobbied for this measure too.

Is pashmina a solution for the displaced shahtoosh workers of the Kashmir Valley? This is a question to which WTI has tried to find an answer in the last two years and this report presents a feasible plan that has the support of most of the stakeholders. In a seminar entitled 'A New Life for Shahtoosh,' held at the Lakme India Fashion Week 2002 in New Delhi, which was attended by Mr. S.B. Mohapatra, Secretary, Ministry of Textiles; Ms. Kiran Dhingra, Joint Secretary in charge of Wool at the same ministry; Mr. K.K. Sinha, Chairman and Managing Director, The Handicrafts and Handlooms Export Corporation of India; Mr. P.R. Sinha, Member Secretary, Central Zoo Authority, who represented the Ministry of Environment and Forests; Mr. Ghulam Rasool Mir, General Secretary, Kashmir Valley Shahtoosh & Pashmina Shawl Weavers' Association; Ashok Kumar and Vivek Menon from WTI and others, this solution was discussed and supported by all those present. The transcripts of this seminar, including the minutes are appended to the report. (See Appendix 3)

Moreover, the objective conditions for implementing the recommendations of this report are just right. The number of workers involved is not huge; its socio-economic and religious status is uniform; the alternative occupation being suggested is not alien to the people; it does not need inordinately large investments and the market for the alternative product exists. Additionally, the state is finally enjoying some stability with a new and popularly elected government. WTI Project Officer, Riyaz Ahmed, who supervised the census, and is now in the process of evaluating the response of the shahtoosh workers to the recommendations, reports that the response, cutting across the board, is favorable.

The matter becomes even more urgent because shahtoosh is still being manufactured in the Kashmir Valley and the Government of Jammu & Kashmir cannot turn a blind eye to a law passed by its own legislature. It is now up to the Government of India and the Government of Jammu & Kashmir to move this forward.

*Aniruddha Mookerjee*

WTI



An anti-shahtoosh poster put up in an upmarket boutique in Delhi.

On tabulating more than 45,000 individual data sheets, we found there were less than 15,000 workers involved in the shahtoosh manufacturing process in January 2002.



## THE BACKDROP

# *Shahtoosh and the Kashmir Valley*

In India, the maximum penalty for trade in shahtoosh can be as high as seven years' jail and a fine.

### 1.1 Laws Protecting the Chiru

The trade in both raw shahtoosh wool and finished shawls is prohibited or regulated by a number of domestic and international laws and treaties that govern the hunting of and trade in wild species and their derivatives.

The Tibetan antelope, or chiru, is protected under Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), which prohibits international trade in its body parts. By mid-2003, 162 countries were signatories to this convention. In 1979, the chiru was transferred from CITES Appendix II to Appendix I, whereby, instead of permitting a regulated trade, a total prohibition of international trade in the species was imposed. China, Nepal and India are all signatories to CITES, and, therefore, any trans-border movement of unprocessed shahtoosh wool into India through its northern border with the TAR or via Nepal is illegal.

The domestic laws of China, Nepal and India also offer protection to the Tibetan antelope and prohibit any trade in its body parts, including its wool. In India, the chiru was brought under the auspices of Schedule II of the Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972 (WPA). At that time, it was provided "regulated" protection, or trade under license from the government. However, in 1977, the species was upgraded to Schedule I, which gave it total protection from hunting and trade. The maximum penalty for such illegal trade can be as high as seven years' imprisonment and a fine.

### 1.2 Jammu & Kashmir's Special Status

Ironically, there was a serious lacuna in the laws protecting the chiru in Jammu & Kashmir, the hub of the manufacture of the shahtoosh shawl.

IFAW/Stevens



*Above:* A woman in a white shahtoosh shawl.

*Below:* Chiru females with their young.



George Schaller

The seizures and litigation did not, however, stop raw shahtoosh wool from reaching Srinagar, the capital of Jammu & Kashmir and the hub of manufacture of the shawls.

**Shawls seized in London with price tags.**



Andy Fisher

The WPA, which applied to all the other Indian states, did not extend to the state which has its own wildlife law – the Jammu & Kashmir (Wildlife) Protection Act of 1978. This Act is similar in most respects to the central government Act, but has a category termed “special game.” Hunting and regulated trade in the derivatives of certain species named in this category is allowed with a license granted by the state government. The chiru was included in this category despite the fact that trade in the animal and its derivatives were banned under the central WPA.

That situation, however, changed with the pressure to ban the shahtoosh trade gaining momentum as wildlife conservationists established the link between the production of shahtoosh shawls and the slaughter of the Tibetan antelope. In May 2002, the Jammu & Kashmir Legislative Assembly passed an amendment bringing the state Act on par with the central legislation which included the Tibetan antelope in Schedule I. Thus, under the laws of Jammu & Kashmir, too, the chiru now had full protection.

The legislation did not come about easily. The connection between the shahtoosh shawl and the Tibetan antelope had been established by 1993, but it took another two years to convince the Government of India of this connection. The Jammu & Kashmir Government took even longer to act on the evidence. This created a piquant situation: laws banning shahtoosh were in place in most parts of the world, except, crucially, in Jammu & Kashmir, where the manufacture of shahtoosh continued unchecked. A series of seizures of raw shahtoosh wool and shawls began in 1994 in several countries, and prosecutions were soon launched. The seizures and litigation did not, however, stop the wool from reaching Srinagar, the capital of Jammu & Kashmir and the hub of manufacture of the shawls. Nor did they impact the weaving of shahtoosh shawls and their sale in the state.

Since Jammu & Kashmir permitted both the hunting of chiru under licence (though no licences had ever been issued by the Government) and a regulated trade in its wool, it remained to be seen if there was any legal action

that could be taken to stop the trade? The state had already ignored directions from the central government to ban weaving and trade in shahtoosh shawls and – due to the “special” constitutional relationship between Jammu & Kashmir and the rest of India – it was not immediately apparent how the law could be applied.

### 1.3 Overcoming Legal Obstacles

A careful study of constitutional provisions and legal precedents indicated that there could be two ways of going about ensuring that the Jammu & Kashmir Government banned the trade. The Indian Constitution holds that all international treaties that are ratified by the central government must also apply to Jammu & Kashmir, and that when a state law differs from central law, the latter would prevail. The second route was to point out that Jammu & Kashmir had not regulated the trade in conformity with its own laws. None of this had been tested in a court of law. In 1998, Ashok Kumar, then with the Wildlife Protection Society of India, a Delhi-based non-governmental organization, filed a public interest litigation in the High Court of Jammu & Kashmir, seeking a ban on the trade in shahtoosh.

Lawyers for the traders argued that if an animal had shed its hair voluntarily, the hair would cease to be an animal article as defined by the WPA, and that, therefore, anyone could collect it and use it. They claimed that the shahtoosh wool had been collected from rocks and bushes, while failing to provide any evidence in support of this claim. In response, the plaintiff provided irrefutable evidence of the slaughter of the Tibetan antelope, and of the smuggling of raw wool from the TAR into India.

In May 2000, the High Court ruled that the central government had an obligation to uphold the provisions of CITES throughout India, including in Jammu & Kashmir. The ruling added that the possession of “animal articles,” including “trophy” or “uncured trophy,” was illegal under the state Act and, consequently, the possession of and trade in shahtoosh was illegal. The court also accepted

that shahtoosh cannot be obtained without killing the chiru, and that the underwool, or shahtoosh, irrespective of how it is obtained by a dealer or manufacturer, is government property. The High Court judgment declared that shahtoosh wool should be included in the definition of “animal article” as well as “trophy” as defined by the state Act, and that it was thus the obligation of the state to render all assistance to the central government in implementing the provisions of CITES.

Since the import and export of animal articles is also prohibited under India’s Export-Import Policy, the court’s ruling obliged the Jammu & Kashmir Government to enforce the ban on shahtoosh. The judgement stated that the prohibition against working on animal articles was absolute, except in accordance with a licence issued under the provision of Section 43 of the state Act. The court felt that it was unacceptable that the trade should continue after the state legislation had been enacted; it added that the state government had failed to implement the Act, and this defeated its purpose.

1.4 Recent Developments

The judgment was a significant victory for conservation, but to be effective it had to be implemented. Soon after the judgment was delivered, the chief minister of Jammu & Kashmir announced in the State Legislative Assembly that shahtoosh shawls would be banned. Almost simultaneously, there was a deluge of reports in the

Kashmir press alleging that if the ban were to be implemented, hundreds of thousands of poor artisans would starve to death across the state, which was already hard hit by insurgency.

Such claims were belied by the fact that shahtoosh workers are also known to work on pashmina shawls, and it is likely that important shahtoosh traders – a handful of whom control the trade – helped to circulate such reports (WUTT, 2001).

Meanwhile, the Jammu & Kashmir Government asked the central government for a large grant of money to rehabilitate of shahtoosh workers. The dialogue on the rehabilitation funds has not made any headway so far.

In May 2001, the WTI filed a contempt of court petition asking the state government to implement the High Court order of May 2000. A year later, in May 2002, the Jammu & Kashmir Legislative Assembly, through the landmark amendment mentioned earlier, brought the state Wildlife Act at par with the central Act. The Tibetan antelope was included in Schedule I of the state Act, thereby giving it full protection.

The amendment came into force in July 2002, but has not been implemented so far. Shahtoosh shawls and raw wool continue to be seized outside Jammu & Kashmir. WTI has filed yet another contempt petition in July 2003 requesting the apex Supreme Court to direct the state government to implement the ban on shahtoosh production and trade.

Laws and Treaties relating to the Tibetan Antelope

International Treaty

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) came into force on 1 July, 1975. The Tibetan antelope (*Pantholops hodgsonii*) was included in Appendix I in 1979, whereby international trade in derivatives of this species is prohibited.

Domestic Laws

China	Listed as Class I protected Animal in the Wild Animal Protection Law of 1989.
India	Listed in Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972, which extends to all of India except Jammu & Kashmir. Hunting and trade in derivatives is a punishable offense. Originally listed in Part I of Schedule II (special game) in Jammu & Kashmir Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1978. A "regulated" trade was permissible, and since no "regulation" had taken place, the High Court of Jammu & Kashmir held on 1 May, 2000 that the shahtoosh trade was in violation of the State law, CITES and India's Export-Import Policy. Upgraded to Schedule I of the State Act in May 2002 banning hunting and trade. The import and export of all species of wild fauna and derivatives is prohibited (except for specimens which carry CITES certification) under the Export-Import Policy of India for the period 2002-2007. India fulfills its obligations under CITES by this notification under the Foreign Trade (Development and Regulation) Act of 1992. Penalties for violation are dealt under the Customs Act of 1962.
Nepal	Listed in Schedule I as an endangered species in the Nepal National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act.
European Union	Placed under Annexure A of the Commission Regulation (EC) No. 338/97, which forms the legal basis for the implementation of CITES in the European Union. Annexure A provides the highest level of protection for endangered species equivalent to CITES Appendix I.
United Kingdom	Control of Trade in Endangered Species (Enforcement) Regulations (COTES) 1997 which provide for a large fine and a maximum two-year prison sentence for anyone found illegally trading shahtoosh. This regulation is currently being revised to strengthen enforcement powers and allow a prison sentence of up to five years.





Chiru skins and weapons seized by the authorities in Tibet Autonomous Region.

### 1.5 Economic Indicators

Before considering the impact of the ban on shahtoosh on the people of Jammu & Kashmir, there is a need to look at the state’s overall socio-economic and demographic status. Due to the ongoing insurgency, there is a severe paucity of data on a number of key indicators, especially with regard to human development. In 2001, however, the state participated in the national census, and preliminary data is available from that source, as well as from a number of other government data sources.

According to the 2001 census, Jammu & Kashmir had a population of 10.07 million people, and a sex ratio of 900 females to every 1000 males – which is below the national average of 933. The adult literacy rate, at 49.1 percent, and the overall literacy rate of 54.5 percent, were both below the national averages of 54.3 and 65.2 percent, respectively. The teacher:pupil ratio, too, was low by Indian standards. However, enrolment rates of girls at all

levels of schooling – an important predictor of future socio-economic performance – were average to above average in 1993, the last date for which data is available.

In terms of income, inequality and poverty, Jammu & Kashmir did not fare too badly in comparison to the rest of India. Its per capita monthly consumption, at Rs747 in 1999-2000, was well above the national average of Rs591.

According to the latest data (for 1999-2000), about 3.5 percent of all Kashmiris, 2.0 percent of urban Kashmiris, and 4.0 percent of rural Kashmiris are poor. These compare favourably with the national averages of 26.1, 23.6 and 27.1 percent, respectively.

Although the state has a lower unemployment rate than the Indian average, it is very significant that urban females, in 1999-2000, had a much higher unemployment rate (9.2 percent) than the Indian average of 5.9 percent. Male unemployment, however, was in line with the national average.

Due to the ongoing insurgency, there is a severe paucity of data on a number of key indicators, especially with regard to human development.

Seizure of a consignment of shahtoosh in Delhi.





## THE CENSUS

# *Shahtoosh and the Shawlmakers*



Aniruddha Mookerjee/WTI

WTI-IFAW investigators collecting data from shahtoosh workers.

The only way to arrive at a realistic assessment of the impact of the ban was to conduct a complete and comprehensive survey (or census) of shahtoosh workers and their families.

### 2.1.1 Rationale

This survey, the only one to date on the social and economic impact of the ban on shahtoosh production, was necessitated by the conflicting claims regarding the actual and potential economic impact of the ban on shahtoosh on the population of the Kashmir Valley and the need to provide alternatives to those displaced by the ban. It was difficult to accept any of the figures being advocated at the time of the ban, since the Valley's last published census information was for 1981. The only way to arrive at a realistic assessment of the impact of the ban was to conduct a complete and comprehensive survey (or census) of shahtoosh workers and their families.

### 2.1.2 Objectives

The survey's main objectives were:

- (a) To understand and document the production process involved in making a shahtoosh shawl;
- (b) To count the number of people who were directly or indirectly engaged in shahtoosh production;
- (c) To assess the qualitative and quantitative impact of the ban on income levels, employment, and the output of shahtoosh shawls.

### 2.1.3 Methods

In this report, we look at data – on a wide range of indicators – collected from almost every family that included at least one shahtoosh worker. Seven researchers gathered this data over a period of 13 months, from January 2001 to January 2002.

The census questionnaire (see Appendix 2) was designed to capture three broad categories of information. The first 14 related to geographical, demographic and occupational information. Another 13 variables concerned the output of shahtoosh, pashmina, and income and employment levels, while the third related to workers' suggestions for compensatory measures in the wake of a ban on shahtoosh production.

Data was collected for the years 1998 and 2001 in a single survey. These two years were taken as representative of the pre- and post-ban periods. The total size of the population surveyed was 45,405.

The surveyed population was distributed in the Srinagar Urban Agglomeration, and the *tehsils* (sub-divisions) of Chadura, Badgam and Beerwah in Badgam district. Given that almost all families associated with the shahtoosh trade have been enumerated, this survey can be taken to be a complete population count, and not a sample survey.

The distribution of the population enumerated under Group 75 (which stands for spinners, weavers, knitters, dyers and related workers) of the 1981 census, revealed that this occupational category was concentrated largely in the Srinagar Urban Agglomeration. Based on this information, data was collected from each of the census wards within the Srinagar Urban Agglomeration that

were known to hold large concentrations of shahtoosh workers.

Extensive interviews with representative workers in all stages of production were tape recorded and qualitative and technical information gathered about the processes involved at their respective stages. Each stage was videographed as well.

### 2.1.4 Data Limitations

(a) Two hundred families in Srinagar district associated with shahtoosh production did not volunteer information and were not included in the database. Considering the large size of the data collected, this worked out to be approximately 0.44 percent of the population, which is statistically insignificant. The survey data can, therefore, be assumed to be representative of the entire population.

(b) Age and sex data for 13 and 9 percent respectively of the censused population was not available.

(c) The locality specifications used in this survey do not always match with the definitions in the 1981 census, making it difficult to compare – on a locality/segment basis – the results from this study with those from the 1981 census.

(d) The data on incomes, employment and production were collected during a single census for two points in time – 1998 and 2001. This was done because no data about shahtoosh workers was available.

e) Quantitative data that is collected orally suffers from a degree of inaccuracy due to misreporting (both under and over-reporting). The inaccuracies tend to magnify when survey questions relate to the past. Hence, the data presented here must be viewed as indicative of trends, rather than being accurate to the last decimal point.

Aniruddha Mookerjee/WTI



Given that almost all families associated with the shahtoosh trade have been enumerated, this survey can be taken to be a complete population count, and not a sample survey.

A shahtoosh shawl being embroidered.



A manufacturer weighing wool.

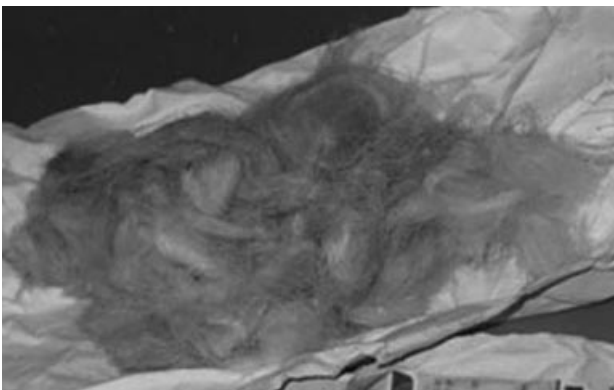
## 2.2 The Production of Shahtoosh

The manufacture of the shahtoosh shawl comprises a large number of processes or categories involving different sets of people often with skills special to a task.

**Dealers in Raw Shahtoosh Wool:** A group of people, who the trade referred to as “dealers,” would earlier bring the unprocessed wool to Kashmir from Delhi, which was, and still is, the main hub of the trade in raw wool. Dealers would purchase the wool from Tibetan or Nepalese traders, who would travel to Delhi with their goods (*Hillal Ahmed, Manufacturer, Pers comm*).

After changes in legislation, and a subsequent crackdown on shahtoosh traders outside Jammu & Kashmir in the mid-1990s, the traditional dealers no longer found it cost-effective to travel to Delhi. As a result, the Tibetan and Nepalese traders were forced to bring the wool directly to Srinagar where the dealers purchased it from them.

**Manufacturers or Producers:** These individuals are directly or indirectly involved in every step of the production process - from purchasing the raw wool to ensuring the completion of a finished shawl. Manufacturers may themselves be involved in one or two processes, but their final output is always a finished shawl, and they have nothing to do with its marketing. The bigger manufacturers usually bypass the dealers, buying the raw wool directly from Nepalese or Tibetan shahtoosh traders. Once the wool is with the



Unprocessed shahtoosh wool.

**GHULAM AHMAD RISHI**  
**Location:** Rajouri Kadal, Srinagar  
**Category:** Dealer

*“My family has been in the trade for generations, but I had to end the family tradition after the ban. The ban has been harmful, rendering many people homeless and jobless.*

*“Raw shahtoosh wool comes in via the Lhasa-Nepal-Delhi route and is woven into shawls only in Kashmir. The wool in 1969 was available for only Rs 2,800 per kg, but in 2001 it cost Rs 20,000 per kg. The cost of the shawl, too, has risen dramatically. A plain shawl of an average size of 1.5x7 would cost about Rs 3,000 in the 1970s. By the 1980s it fetched Rs 5,000-7,000.*

*“The shawls are sold mostly in Delhi, Mumbai, Punjab and Bengal. There is also great demand in the United States, Europe and Japan. A major share of profits go to these traders. They are responsible for this ban. They have brought it on us by drawing attention to the shawl by hiking its price.*

*“The ban has been harmful for the people of Kashmir and the government needs to take action to help jobless shahtoosh workers. Perhaps, the government can promote the pashmina shawl and create a unique brand identity for shawls from Kashmir. Shawls manufactured in Punjab are being passed off as the original Kashmir shawl spoiling the market for the real pashmina.*

*“I do not think the ban was necessary as shahtoosh is the wool shed by a wild goat that inhabits the upper regions of Ladakh. There is no proof that the animal is killed for its wool. If it was, it would have been wiped out a long time back. The supply of raw wool has increased significantly over the past two decades instead of decreasing. How is this possible? But if I am shown proof that the chiru is being killed for shahtoosh wool, I will certainly support the ban.”*

**MOHMAD AZDULLAH SHAH**  
**Location:** Rathpora Eidgah, Srinagar  
**Category:** Manufacturer

*“The art of making shahtoosh shawls was earlier very specialized unlike the pashmina, which was more common. The quality of the wool, and with it, the shawl has declined. People no longer care for the unique craft they had learned over generations.*

*“I was taught weaving by my father, who was tutored by his father. Now, the profit motive dominates the trade.*

*“Before the Indo-China war of 1962, raw shahtoosh cost about Rs 250 per kg. Since then the price has continued to rise largely due to unscrupulous traders. I remember how I was shocked when I once purchased raw wool at Rs 14,000 a kg in 1988, but was soon after befriended by a Nepalese who said he would sell me wool at half that price.*

*“In 1995, I bought a kilogram of wool from a ‘lama’ in the Majnu-ka-tila area of Delhi for Rs 27,500. Prices kept on increasing till the ban. Right after the ban, they fell.”*



**ALI MOHAMMAD**  
**Location: Bacchpora**  
**Category: Agent**

*"My family of seven includes my wife, two sons and three daughters. My sons help me in my work with shahtoosh and pashmina. One of my two sons-in-law is also in the business.*

*"My father died while I was still a child. My uncle brought me up and taught me the trade. I have been in this business for 40-50 years.*

*"Earlier, shahtoosh wool would be brought in through Ladakh. However, after the India-China war, the border was closed and the price of the wool shot up.*

*"The current price of a typical ladies' shawl is about Rs 15,000-18,000, depending upon the weaving style. A close-weave shawl is more expensive as it has more shahtoosh than a loose-weave shawl. Prices have remained largely constant over the last eight years, but there are, at times, minor variations in price depending on the current availability of raw wool.*

*"The number of workers employed by the shahtoosh industry has increased considerably, while the supply of wool has gone down.*

*"I have heard that the government had sent a team to the chiru's habitat and that they found remains of the animal indicating that it is being killed for the trade. But shahtoosh suppliers say the animal is not being killed and I believe them. How can people kill an animal on which they depend?*

*"The old pashmina was of the highest quality. This age-old art has now been spoiled because of the use of machines and the mixing of impure materials with pashmina in the process. To counter this trend, unions have been established and the government urged to close factories that use such machines."*

**MUSRAT KHAN**  
**Location: Devi Angan, Srinagar**  
**Category: Separator**

*"I have been separating shahtoosh wool for more than 20 years. My mother used to work as a separator as well and now my daughters help me after they return from school.*

*"We work at home and with my daughters' help I can separate up to 200 gms of wool a day. This fetches me about Rs 200.*

*"There is a risk of catching infection in this work, but we prefer it to spinning as it fetches more money. The spinning of pashmina thread fetches only Rs 30 a day, while spinning shahtoosh brings Rs 50.*

*"I find the quality of the wool has deteriorated over the years. The manufacturers say they are not receiving supplies regularly. We get shahtoosh for separation work for just about two months in a year. The manufacturers have switched to other business, but what will we workers do?"*



Aniruddha

**Separating shahtoosh from raw wool.**

manufacturer, it is sorted according to colour and then given out to people at all stages of production, usually on a piece-rate basis.

**Agents (Poiywans):** The work of *poiywans* is not considered very important now, but used to be crucial just a decade ago. *Poiywans* would either purchase shahtoosh directly from dealers/traders, or receive it on commission from manufacturers. They would then give the shahtoosh to spinners for spinning, collect the finished yarn from them, and finally sell the yarn to a manufacturer. If a *poiywan* received shahtoosh from a manufacturer on commission, then the yarn would be returned to the same manufacturer.

**Separators (Charun wajen):** This stage of production is handled exclusively by women. Earlier, this task used to be highly time consuming and separators would painstakingly separate the thick guard hair from the shahtoosh with their nimble fingers. During interviews with separators, the WTI team found that the invention of a simple instrument about seven years ago has made this task easier and faster. Two sturdy nails are fixed at a distance of 30 inches on a piece of wood, which is approximately 3"x4"x6". A nylon fishing line – about as thick as a guitar wire – is stretched tightly across the nails so that it vibrates with a twang if plucked with a rough plastic plectrum.

The raw shahtoosh is held on the string with the left hand, while the right hand plucks it. When the string



Aniruddha Mookerjee/WTI

**Grading the wool for spinning.**





Yarn being spun on a traditional hand-driven wheel.

vibrates, the thin shahtoosh hair sticks to the wire, while the heavy guard hair falls off.

Separators usually take a day to separate 50 grams of raw wool, and, depending on the weight of the clean wool, earn Rs 45-50. Early every morning, they collect 50 grams of raw wool from the manufacturer's house. When they bring it back the following morning, the manufacturer weighs both the waste and the shahtoosh to ensure that the two add up. The clean wool is then ready for spinning.

**Spinners (Katun):** This job, too, is handled exclusively by females. Typically, spinners pass their skills on to their daughters. Spinners are usually given 10 grams of shahtoosh at a time, and use this wool to produce threads. The threads are then rolled into knots of 10 threads (each measuring nine inches long) and spinners are paid Re 1 per knot. Using a traditional (manual) spinning wheel, spinners can typically produce yarn for about 150 knots out of 10 grams of wool. Some of the more skilled spinners can produce up to 200 knots. Earlier, *poiwwans* would supervise these two stages of production (i.e., separating and weaving) and they would then sell the yarn to manufacturers.

After receiving the shahtoosh, spinners first divide it into little clumps (*temb*) by passing the wool through a small wooden comb (*kangi*). The spinning starts once the spinner begins to run the wheel with her right hand, and holds clumps in between the fingers of the left hand while touching the *tul* (an iron spindle with one sharp end, which is fixed on the wheel). As the wheel starts turning,

#### RAJE

**Location:** Nawa Bazar, Srinagar

**Category:** Spinner

*"I must be about 80 now and I have been spinning shahtoosh for 60-70 years. I learned the art from my mother and she was taught to spin by her grandmother. My mother died while spinning and I hope the same will happen to me.*

*"Most of my family worked in the shahtoosh business. My father was a raffugar (darner) and my husband was an embroiderer. But neither of my two sons have taken it up. One used to be a fur worker; the other is a chemist. But my daughters-in-law spin shahtoosh.*

*"As a child I went to school for a while, but after an accident my mother kept me at home and taught me spinning. Ghulam Nabi Shair, a well-known manufacturer, would supply me shahtoosh. He also helped me to learn how to spin.*

*"Earlier, a knot would have 30 threads; then this decreased to about 25 threads; and now it is 20. The length of each thread has also decreased.*

*"Shahtoosh wool used to be so much more superior when I was young. The old shahtoosh was soft and bright with long hair. Now, in contrast, it is dull and short. Earlier, the hairs that were collected after separation were used in Kashmiri blankets. Nowadays they are mixed with pashmina.*

*"I am so old now that sometimes I do not have the energy to spin. But I continue because I have little else to do and it has become a habit."*

ALI MOHAMMAD GUGJI

Location: Yach Pora, Dangerpora

Category: Weaver

*"My father was a pashmina weaver, as are two of my three sons. My wife helps us by doing pherai (thread processing) work. I began working as a weaver in 1941, when I was about 15. I learned to weave from a neighbor; then went to train under an expert weaver, Naber Nar, with whom I worked for 10 years. After I was recognized as an expert, I shifted home, and began teaching others the art.*

*"I learned the skill for six years before I wove my first shahtoosh shawl in 1955. At that time, the wages for weaving a 1.5x7 yard shawl were as low as Rs 100-125. Over time, the wages rose to Rs 200, then to Rs 400, and reached a level of Rs 600 about 20 years ago.*

*"During my early years in this profession, shahtoosh would come from Tibet via Ladakh, and a group of Kashmiri dealers (known as bota-wanees) would buy the shahtoosh from the Ladakhis. Two of the better-known dealers were Amel Shahdad and Rishi. Shahdad would bring apricots, pashmina, and small quantities of shahtoosh from Ladakh to Kashmir. The price of shahtoosh was Rs 300 per kg in 1947-48, but the supply of shahtoosh ceased entirely when China invaded Tibet. At this point, a new supply route opened up, with shahtoosh moving from Tibet to Nepal, from there to Delhi, and onwards to Amritsar; Sikh traders would then bring the wool to Kashmir. Before the advent of militancy in Kashmir, a Sikh named Ram Singh from Amritsar would supply most of the raw shahtoosh used by manufacturers in the Valley. But as the situation here worsened, he stopped coming. These days, the Nepalese take the wool to Delhi, where Kashmiri dealers purchase the wool directly, and transfer their supplies to Kashmir.*

*"It is unfair that while the supply of raw shahtoosh that comes from Tibet through Nepal and Delhi is never stopped on the way, shahtoosh shawls – which take more than a month to complete – are confiscated at the point of sale. It is as if the shawl is a contraband item.*

*"Like most shahtoosh workers, I want the ban to be lifted if possible. Thousands of people dependent on shahtoosh have been affected by the ban. Raw shahtoosh still reaches the Valley, and completed shawls continue to be sold, but the workers are suffering grave losses.*

*"I also feel the production of pashmina should be encouraged in order to reduce the complete dependence of workers on shahtoosh. The de-hairing and spinning of pashmina by machines should be stopped entirely in order to improve the quality of pashmina shawls. I make pure pashmina shawls and each costs me about Rs 4,500 to make.*

*"Before the insurgency broke out, my sons would sell pashmina shawls to tourists – mostly foreigners – staying on and around the Dal Lake. This market has now been largely destroyed as less and less tourists come these days due to the killing of some foreigners and the militancy in the state."*

the spinner slowly lifts her left hand, and the thread comes out of the *temb* and the farther end of the thread is connected to the *tul* of the wheel. The yarn is wound on the *tul*. Then it is made thick by combining threads from two spindles on a wooden cone (*pretsch*). This wooden cone is put on the spinning wheel to blend the two threads into single threads, which are then arranged in knots.

The knots (*gunds*), which contain 12 nine-inch threads, are made with the help of a wooden instrument, known as a *thinjour*. It consists of a flat wooden base, with two sticks fixed at a distance of nine inches. The yarn is wrapped around these sticks, and a knot is tied after every 12 threads. These knots are then given back to *poiyywans* or manufacturers in return for wages.

**Processors of thread (*Perkumgor* in Kashmiri):** This stage of preparing the thread is divided into a number of sub-stages. The yarn first goes to the weavers, who are all males. The weaver's first task is to strengthen the yarn. He does so by washing it with a herbal soap-like substance called *reetha* and then applying a special starch. The thread is wound and unwound several times to dry the yarn. This process is called *pherai*. Family members of the weaver, including children, usually help in this process, but weavers sometimes hire workers specifically for the task.

After drying, the threads are sorted on the basis of thickness to ensure uniformity. Next, they are divided into two categories – stronger and weaker – and are wound on holders made of thick cotton threads stretched on a wooden frame known as a *presch*. The stronger threads



Aniruddha Mookerjee/WTI

Strengthening the yarn.





The yarn being stretched out in the first stage of making the warp.

are strengthened further by the application of a special type of resin called *sarrash*. This thread is again wound and unwound to dry it. The stronger yarn is now ready for *yen-yaren*, or the preparation of the warp.

Warp-making, or *yen-yaren*, is also the exclusive domain of men. Either weavers themselves, or men hired by weavers, undertake this work. Typically, two to four men are needed to make a warp, depending on the quality and uniformity of the yarn. Iron rods are first fixed on the ground, at pre-determined intervals, in a straight line. Two men, working in tandem, guide the thread around the rods. Once the threads, required to create a desired breadth, are put on the warp, it is lifted and stretched. The threads are then spread evenly across the breadth, and wrapped on a wooden roller called a *dolle* or *nawardana*.

The weaker thread is used in making the weft. The weaver winds the weaker threads on cotton spindles with the help of a spinning wheel. This process is called *watche-kien wallen*. The yarn wound on the reel is taken out and fitted into a special metal-tipped bobbin, which is then used to create the weft.

#### ISHTIAQ AHMAD KHARADI

**Location:** Aalikadal, Srinagar

**Occupation:** Carpenter

*"My father worked as a carpenter for 40 years, and spent a bulk of his time making spinning wheels. I have been a carpenter for 16-17 years and have been looking after the family business since my father fell ill five years ago.*

*"In my father's time, a wheel would sell for just Rs 40. This was because the cost of wood was low at the time and the demand high. I would sometimes sell 10 wheels in a day. Over the last 16-17 years, the cost of wood has sharply increased and a wheel is now sold for Rs 500. It takes one full day to make a wheel. This increase in cost is responsible for a decline in demand along with the fact that the ban on shahtoosh has forced many shahtoosh spinners to find other work, since they were unwilling to spin pashmina because of the low wages."*

#### NASEEMA

**Location:** Nawakadal, Srinagar

**Category:** Thread guide

*"I have been working as a barangor for the last 30 years. The work of barangors requires two persons, at least one of whom must be trained in the art. Over the last three decades, the payment for this work has increased from 25 paise per 100 threads, to Re 1, and further, to Rs 6 for work on a plain shawl, or Rs 10 per 100 threads for a chashme-bulbul shahtoosh shawl. Those are the current rates and weavers pay me this amount up-front.*

*"I have noticed that these days pashmina has been arriving in larger quantities than shahtoosh. I have decided to apply for a bank loan in order to shift to the pashmina business."*



Ends of the warps being inserted into thread guides.

GHULAM MOHAMMED

Location: Aalikadal, Srinagar

Category: Washerman

*"We are a family of seven including my wife, four sons and a daughter. My children are all graduates. I have been washing shawls for 40 years. My eldest son, Tariq, has worked with me for about 20 years now. I learned the art of washing from my grandfather. It took me only 5-6 months to learn the art, but I was allowed to handle work on pashmina and shahtoosh only after four years. My first assignment was to wash a consignment of plain white shawls bound for Russia.*

*"During my grandfather's time, plain shahtoosh shawls were more common than embroidered ones. Now, the two types are equally in demand, both in India and abroad.*

*"The popularity – and supply – of shahtoosh increased about 15 years ago and continued till just before the ban. Following the ban, there has been a big decline in supply. I can make this out from the supply of shawls that come to me for washing. Fifteen years ago, just 5 percent of the shawls coming to me were shahtoosh. Immediately before the ban, more than 10 percent were shahtoosh. Right after the ban it fell to 1 percent. Pashmina continues to account for a bulk of my work.*

*"Both pashmina and shahtoosh are given a first wash to clean the resin. It is then taken for clipping and washed again after that. If the shawl has been dyed or embroidered, it is washed once again, and then pressed. Washers also apply certain salts, acids, and chemicals to embroidered shawls to prevent the colours of the threads from spreading. The experience and expertise of the washer can make a great difference to the quality and looks of a shawl."*

**Thread guides (*Barangor*):** The wooden roller with the warp on it, or *bolle*, is then sent to the *barangor*. To be woven on a loom, the thread has to pass through two sets of thread-guides: (1) the *saaz* (made of thicker cotton threads stretched with four to five sticks); (2) the *kangi* (made of wood and bamboo and shaped like a long comb). Two different sets of people, mostly women, work on this stage, and are paid according to the number of threads they insert into the guides. The rate is usually Rs 10 per 100 threads and the weaver makes the payment.

**Weavers (*Vover*):** This is done exclusively by men. Weaving is done manually, by sliding the bobbin, carrying the weft into the warp and setting it with a comb. Weavers receive yarn from manufacturers according to weight, but are paid by the number of shawls they weave. Payments differ according to the design and the size of the shawl.

There are two accepted categories of designs: the plain, and the intricate *chashme bulbul* (or the eye of the bulbul bird) weave. A weaver gets Rs 1,000-1,300 for weaving a 1x2 metre shawl, and can complete approximately three shawls in a month. There is another, more exclusive, type of shawl, the *kani*, which is woven in a few locations by specialized weavers. It takes, typically, two weavers and nine months to a year to complete a *kani*. These shawls involve a different technique, using small sticks (*tuje*) of different colors instead of bobbins to create the required design.

**Washermen (*Chalungar*):** From the weaver, the shawl goes for its first wash, or *chalun*, to remove the starch and resin. This is the only hot water wash it is subjected to and it is not ironed at this stage.

**Clippers (*Purzgar*):** After washing, the shawl moves on to the clipper, who scrubs it with gourd loofahs



Weaving a *kani* shawl. One of these traditional shawls can take a year to complete.



**ALTAF AHMAD GANIA**  
**Location:** Dana-Mazar, Safakadal  
**Category:** Clipper

*"I learned the art of the purzgar from a relative, who had been in this line of work for 13 years. I chose this work because the level of qualifications required was not very high and my relative, an expert purzger, encouraged me.*

*"After spending some time practicing on pashmina, I moved on to shahtoosh. When I began working, the piece rate per shawl was Rs 40 for pashmina, and Rs 50 for shahtoosh. I would clip four ladies' shawls in a day. The rates have not increased much since then.*

*"The piece rates for clipping have not increased much since then. Currently, one can earn Rs 60 per pashmina shawl, or Rs 75 per shahtoosh shawl.*

*"However, due to a decline in the quality of shahtoosh – which makes clipping more difficult – I can now complete only three shawls in a day.*

*"Prior to the ban, work on shahtoosh shawls came in more regularly than did work on pashmina; after the ban, however, the shahtoosh-pashmina ratio of work has gone down significantly, from 4:1 to 2:3.*

*"I am disappointed by the government's sudden decision to ban the shahtoosh trade. It should have first made arrangements for alternative livelihood for shahtoosh workers. The ban has impacted grassroots workers most directly. Manufacturers have used it as an excuse to reduce workers' wages.*

*"If the government had promoted pashmina production and regularized its sale and supply, the present situation would not have been as bad. Militancy has had no real impact on my work."*

(sometimes the core of a husked corn cob is also used) and broad metal pincers to remove the fluff or any loose strands. This work is also done mostly by men and a clipper is paid Rs 70 per shawl.

The shawl is then sent for another wash. This may be the final wash, and a steam iron may be used if the shawl is not dyed or embroidered. A washer-man is paid Rs 50-70 per shawl, inclusive of all the washes.

**Darner (Raffugar):** Sometimes, if the weave of a shawl is imperfect, or if a few threads are lost, or holes appear during clipping, the shawl is sent to a specialised darner who is paid according to the size and number of holes he darns.

**Dyer:** If the manufacturer wishes to dye a shawl, it is sent to a dyer before the final wash. Dyers charge Rs 50 per shawl.

**NOOR MOHAMMAD**  
**Location:** Nawakadal  
**Occupation:** Shuttle-maker

*"Two of my children are graduates, but are unable to find jobs. The other two are still studying. I am the only bread-winner in the family. I began making shuttles and clips in 1966, when pashmina was far more popular than shahtoosh.*

*"After a decade or so, shahtoosh began to gain popularity; now, however, both seem to be in decline. I have always made shuttles for both shahtoosh and pashmina. Pashmina shuttles are heavier than the ones used for shahtoosh, but the clips are the same.*

*"The average life of a shuttle (or bobbin) is about 50 years, while a clip lasts just 10 years as they have to be sharpened regularly, thus shortening their life. The iron and wood used for making shuttles and clips are purchased from the local market.*

*"I make four shuttles or, alternatively, two clips in a day. Both items sell for Rs 250 a piece. Due to the insurgency and the ban on shahtoosh, there has been a big reduction in the demand for shawls, and consequently, for shuttles and clips."*



Aniruddha Mookerjee/WTI

A **chapawal** uses a wooden block to stamp a design on a shawl. The shawl will then go to an embroiderer who will work, usually with silk threads, on the design.



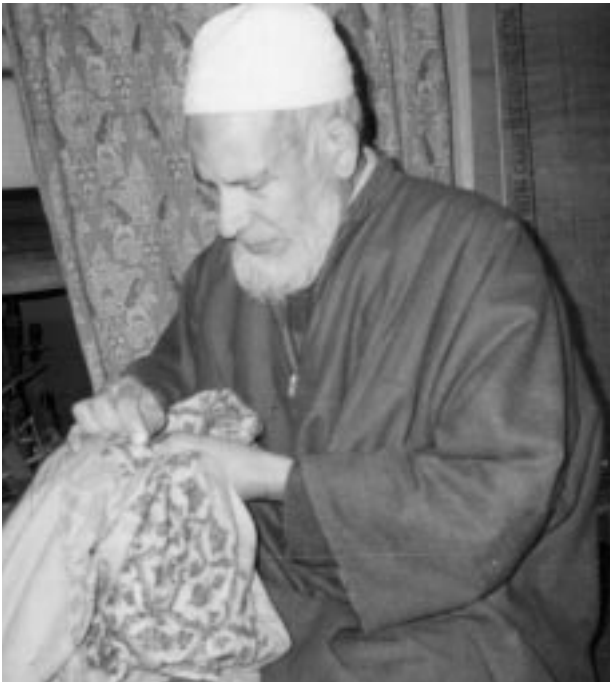
Aniruddha Mookerjee/WTI

**BASHIR AHMAD KHAN**  
**Location: Ganderbal Giraj**  
**Occupation: Embroiderer**

*“I have been an embroiderer since the age of 15. Of my four brothers, one is a businessman, and the other three are also embroiderers. I learned to embroider from local artisans in my neighborhood. I initially worked on ruffle and later shifted to pashmina and shahtoosh. After I became an expert, I began teaching others.*

*“For some time now, I have been distributing assignments on shahtoosh and pashmina shawls that I receive from manufacturers in Srinagar among workers in my village. Most of them prefer to work on pashmina because they are unable to keep shahtoosh safe or clean and manufacturers charge them for any damage of the shawls. I receive mostly pashmina and very little shahtoosh. The pashmina-shahtoosh ratio would be about1:6. Both silk and staple threads are used for embroidery. Silk is considered superior, and is mostly used on shahtoosh shawls, while staple is largely used for pashmina. Silk is also considerably more expensive. In embroidery work that fetches a worker Rs 10,000, the cost of silk thread is about Rs 500-600, while staple thread costs just Rs 200-300.*

*“There are a number of distinct types of embroidery design, including neemdor, jamawar, jali and bail-daar, and each type earns different wages and takes varying times to complete. The rate for a pashmina neemdor shawl is Rs 2,500-3,000; for a shahtoosh neemdor, it is Rs4,000. It takes a month-an- a-half to complete a shahtoosh shawl, and a little less time for pashmina. All wages are lowered by 15 percent if staple thread is used in place of silk. It does not make much difference to us whether we work on shahtoosh or pashmina, since the wages are similar. The ban has affected embroiderers because manufacturers now fail to pay on time.”*



Aniruddha

A shawl being embroidered.

**Designers & Embroiderers:** A major value addition to the shawl is embroidery. The first step in this process is to create a design, for which manufacturers hire a designer (*naqqash*), who the manufacturer briefs about the requirements. After the design is approved, the drawing goes to a *chapawal*, who makes a wooden printing block out of it and stamps the design on the shawl. Traditional design blocks are always available with *chapawals*; in such cases, the services of a designer are not required.

The shawl next moves on to an embroiderer, who, depending on the intricacy of the design, can take up to a year to finish it. This process can cost anything from a few hundred to a hundred thousand rupees. The thread used in embroidery work is usually made of silk and its cost is borne by the embroiderer. After embroidery, the shawl goes back for a final wash and a steam press.

**Table 1: A Comparison of the Production Processes of Shahtoosh and Pashmina**

Process	Shahtoosh	Pashmina
Sorting	By hand	Mechanized
Spinning	By hand	Mechanized
Washing	By hand	Mechanized
Strengthening thread by coating in resin	By hand	Not required
Warp-making	By hand	Mechanized
Weaving	By hand	Mechanized
Cleaning, Clipping	By hand	By hand
Washing & Dyeing	By hand	Mechanized
Embroidery	By hand	By hand

2.3 Demography, Geography & Occupational Distribution

This section draws a picture of the current demographic and geographic make-up of shahtoosh production in Jammu & Kashmir. It also presents data of occupational distribution within the industry.

2.3.1 Geographic & Age-Sex Distribution

The survey found that a large majority (97 percent) of shahtoosh workers and their dependents lived and worked in and around Srinagar. Further, shahtoosh production was found to be an overwhelmingly urban-based activity, with 93 percent of the survey population being classified as urban. According to the 2001 census shahtoosh workers and their families constituted 3.6 percent, 0.2 percent, 0.01 percent and 0.02 percent of the total population of Srinagar, Badgam, Pulwama and Baramula districts respectively.

Within Srinagar, shahtoosh production was found to be highly concentrated in the so-called “downtown” or “old city” areas where 85.4 percent of all shahtoosh workers and their dependents resided. The wards of the downtown area that are of particular importance to the industry are shown in the box on the right.

Srinagar Census Wards with Concentration of Workers	
Nawabazar	Zadibal
Nawakadal	Almgari Bazar
Aalikadal	Badam Wari
Fatehkadal	Kawdara
Zainakadal	Eid Gah
Haba Kadal	Noor Bagh
Hawal	Waniyar
Khivan	Mandibal
Narvara	Maharaj Gunj
Nohatta	Mallarata
Nowshehra	Khwajabazar
Lalbazaar	Anna Masjid









Tables 2 and 3 and Chart 1 indicate the age, sex, and geographic distributions of shahtoosh workers and their families. The data presented is for all people belonging to families that have at least one member working in the industry. Men and women appear to be fairly equally-represented in this population (particularly so in the Srinagar area), and a large majority falls within the 10-44 age group.

Table 2: Age-Sex Distribution of Families of Shahtoosh Producers by District

Age in Years	Srinagar		Badgam		Pulwama		Baramula	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
0-4	947	977	40	27				
5-9	1217	1154	44	41				
10-14	1552	1457	56	48				
15-19	2282	2651	73	75				
20-24	2221	2587	47	53		1		
25-29	2056	1849	31	34				
30-34	1650	1726	38	39		6	3	
35-39	1644	1551	34	28		1	3	
40-44	1382	1231	27	19			10	
45-49	1123	1142	19	32		1	9	
50-54	903	861	23	12		2	4	
55-59	626	704	17	16		1	3	
60-64	640	588	14	7				
65-69	306	283	3	3		1		
70 +	204	205	5	3				
TOTAL *	18753	18966	471	437	0	13	32	0

Note: \*Total refers to population for which age and sex data are available.

Table 3: Population of Shahtoosh Workers by District

	Srinagar Badgam	Pulwana	Baramula	
Total enumerated	44208	908	54	235
% Female	50.3	48.1	N/A	N/A
% of Total for which age and sex data are available	85.3	100.0	24.1	13.6

Chart 1: Residential Status of Shahtoosh Workers' Families in %



Men and women appear to be fairly equally represented in this population (particularly so in the Srinagar area), and a large majority falls within the 10-44 age group.

Of the 45,405 individuals “captured” in this survey, a total of 14,293 were directly or indirectly involved in the production of shahtoosh.

### 2.3.2 Occupational Distribution

The surveyed population included both shahtoosh workers and members of their family - many of whom were engaged in other professions or chose not to work. Therefore, the total population size was significantly larger than a count of those directly involved in the production of shahtoosh. To identify each individual by occupation, a set of 42 work codes was developed and 20 of these codes pertained to those who were involved in one or more stages of the shahtoosh production process. (See Appendix 1.1 for a complete set of work codes and occupational distribution.)

Of the 45,405 individuals “captured” in this survey, a total of 14,293 were directly or indirectly involved in the production of shahtoosh. Of the remainder, 26,044 worked in other professions, and 5,068 individuals were classified as dependents. It is immediately apparent that within this population sub-set, just 31.5 percent of all individuals (or 35.4 percent of all workers) were employed in shahtoosh production. Approximately 11 percent of the population was classified as “dependents” (See Table 5). Women greatly outnumbered men in this industry and there was a clear division of work by gender. Children below the age of 10 were not reported as workers at any stage of production.

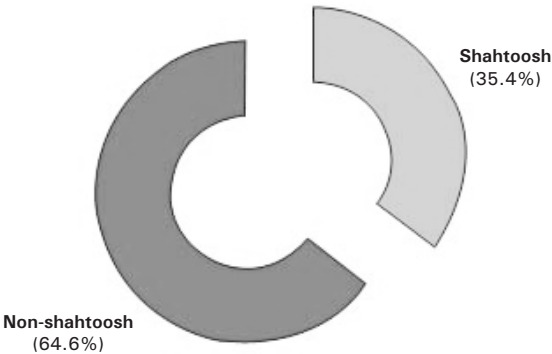
**Table 5: Workers and Dependents**

	Number	% of Total Population
Working	40377	88.8
Dependents	5068	11.2
TOTAL	45405	100.0

**Table 6: Occupational Distribution of Working Members of Surveyed Population**

	Number	% of Population
Shahtoosh	14293	31.5
Non-shahtoosh	26044	57.4
TOTAL	40337	88.9

**Chart 2: Occupational Break-up of Total Population in %**



35.4 percent of all workers were employed in shahtoosh production. Approximately 11 percent of the population was classified as “dependents”. Women greatly outnumbered men in this industry and there was a clear division of work by gender.

One of the findings was the overwhelmingly gendered nature of shahtoosh production and the importance of women in the production process. Spinning was conducted exclusively by women, but weaving was done only by men.

Women separating shahtoosh wool.



Turning to categorisations within the shahtoosh industry, the survey found some significant patterns. One of these was the overwhelmingly gendered nature of shahtoosh production and the importance of women in the production process (see Table 7). Spinning, which is numerically by far the most important

trade, was conducted exclusively by females. But weaving – the next most important trade – was done only by males. While some occupations were the exclusive realm of men, others were witness to a high degree of gender bias: this is apparent from distributional data for *poiyywans*, *perkums/perkumgors*, manufacturers and embroiderers.

Table 7: Distribution of Shahtoosh Workers by Occupation, Sex, and District

Age in Years	Srinagar		Badgam		Pulwama		Baramula	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
Dealers	14							
Manufacturers	106	2						
Poiyywans	89	23	2					
Separators		359						
Spinners			9803		86		13	
Perkums/Perkumgors	786	166						
Barangors	2	55						
Weavers		1808		5				
Washers		55	1					
Clippers	44							
Dyers	42							
Raffugars/Darners	13							
Designers	29							
Embroiderers	502	60	76	5			31	
Hawkers		74						
Traders	33							
Sazgurs	3							
Carpenters	2							
Shuttle-makers	1							
Fringe-makers	1	2						
TOTAL	3604	10471	83	91	0	13	31	



Table 8: Occupational Distributions in descending order by District						
	Srinagar	Badgam	Pulwana	Baramula	Total	
	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	%
Spinners	9803	86	13		9902	69.28
Weavers	1808	5			1813	12.68
Perkum/Perkumgor	952				952	6.66
Embroiderer	562	81		31	674	4.72
Separators	359				359	2.51
Poiywans	112	2			114	0.80
Manufacturers	108				108	0.76
Hawkers	74				74	0.52
Barangors	57				57	0.40
Washers/Finishers	56				56	0.39
Clippers	44				44	0.31
Dyers	42				42	0.29
Traders	33				33	0.23
Designers	29				29	0.20
Dealers	14				14	0.10
Raffugars/Darners	13				13	0.09
Sazgurs	3				3	0.02
Fringe-makers	3				3	0.02
Carpenters	2				2	0.01
Shuttle-makers	1				1	0.01
Total	14075	174	13	31	14293	100.00

The work of separating, as with spinning, was handled entirely by women. Despite the fact that women constituted 74 percent of all shahtoosh workers, men appeared to dominate those areas of the industry where wages – or profits – were the highest.

Table 8 presents the above data with an emphasis on the relative numerical importance of each profession. Table 9

presents the age-sex break-up of workers in the four most numerically important trades. Besides reinforcing the results presented above, the data also indicates some important findings on the age distribution of workers. A majority of spinners (who are exclusively females) were found to be aged between 20 and 59, and the distribution within the 20-49 age group was fairly even. This indicates that spinners tended to

Table 9: Age-Sex Break-up of the Four Numerically most Common Trades in Shahtoosh Production										
Age Group	Spinner		Weaver		Perkum				Separator	
	Females*		Males		Males		Females		Females	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
10-14	21	0.2			2	0.3	2	1.5	4	1.9
15-19	555	6.0	72	6.0	36	4.8	21	15.7	49	22.9
20-24	1230	13.4	231	19.2	125	16.6	23	17.2	53	24.8
25-29	1120	12.2	270	22.5	176	23.4	19	14.2	30	14.0
30-34	1178	12.8	189	15.7	117	15.6	20	14.9	21	9.8
35-39	1248	13.5	153	12.7	108	14.4	11	8.2	15	7.0
40-44	1005	10.9	74	6.2	49	6.5	18	13.4	9	4.2
45-49	955	10.4	71	5.9	47	6.3	6	4.5	12	5.6
50-54	696	7.6	41	3.4	30	4.0	5	3.7	8	3.7
55-59	553	6.0	25	2.1	15	2.0	2	1.5	6	2.8
60-64	396	4.3	36	3.0	19	2.5	3	2.2	3	1.4
65-69	167	1.8	22	1.8	18	2.4	2	1.5	2	0.9
70 +	87	0.9	17	1.4	10	1.3	2	1.5	2	0.9
Total	9211	100	1201	100	752	100	134	100	214	100

\* Where only one sex is mentioned, there are no workers belonging to the other sex.

stay in this profession for a substantial part of their working lives, and are probably highly dependent – in the absence of other skills – on this work. In contrast, weavers (who were all males), male *perkums*, and separators (all females) tended to be younger and, therefore, presumably more mobile across occupations. It is apparent, then, that the ban on shahtoosh production is likely to have impacted women – and most directly spinners and female *perkums*.

### 2.4 Income from Shahtoosh & Pashmina

Table 10 summarises trends in monthly income from shahtoosh and pashmina production in the pre-ban and post-ban periods. The results are striking. Workers involved in different stages of shahtoosh production reported a very large decline, both in terms of participation (i.e., any income from shahtoosh production), and in mean (or average) incomes. In strong contrast, pashmina workers reported a very large increase in participation, but a steep decline in income. It is also apparent from the data that median incomes have fallen steeply, while modal income remains unchanged; the upper-end of the income range, in each case, also falls steeply. Together, these statistics suggest, quite conclusively, that the post-ban period has seen a large-scale shift away from shahtoosh to pashmina. Incomes, however, have fallen across the board.

As noted earlier, there exists, in any survey – and particularly in one that quantifies incomes or output during an earlier period – errors related to misreporting or lack of

recall by respondents. The data on income, output and employment, particularly for the pre-ban period, should, therefore, be treated as indicative of broad trends rather than as a completely accurate representation. Having stated this caveat, the above data captures the best-available information on trends in this industry.

### 2.5 Output and Employment

Data on output and employment broadly confirms the findings on trends in income. Shahtoosh production declined sharply after the ban, while net pashmina output more than doubled, even though average pashmina output declined very steeply. When data on output is combined with employment data, a very clear picture emerges. Workers report a sharp decline in employment (defined as the number of months worked per year) in shahtoosh-related employment, but an even larger increase in pashmina-related employment. Moreover, the median and mode employment data for shahtoosh suggest that most workers were engaged increasingly in pashmina production.

The statistics shown in Tables 10 and 11 imply a large shift away from shahtoosh production, and towards pashmina. Workers who previously worked on shahtoosh, by and large attempted to enter the pashmina industry. This brought about a large decline in average incomes, and a decline (due to the presence of additional workers willing to work with pashmina) in average levels of output

Table 10: Monthly Income in Rupees from Shahtoosh & Pashmina Production

	Shahtoosh		Pashmina	
	1998	2001	1998	2001
No. of Respondents*	12818	3724	1747	8919
Mean	1661	956	1803	927
Median**	800	600	500	400
Mode	600	600	240	240
Minimum	50	50	40	40
Maximum	100000	30000	80000	67000

\*Number of respondents refers to the number of individual workers, in each case, who reported any income, output or employment from the production of shahtoosh or pashmina. Hence, the number of respondents need not match across periods, even though the same individuals are being surveyed.

\*\*Median refers to that level of income, output, or employment above (and below) which lies 50 per-cent of the population. Where data is highly “skewed” (i.e., where there is a large preponderance of high or low values), the median can serve as a better indicator of “averages” than does the mean. Mode refers to the level of income, output or employment that is most frequently observed. Range refers to the gap between minimum and maximum values for any indicator.

Table 11: Monthly Output in Rupees before and after the Ban

	Shahtoosh		Pashmina	
	1998	2001	1998	2001
No. of Respondents	12543	3693	1669	8751
Mean	91	68	121	56
Median	4	4	4	5
Mode	4	4	4	4
Minimum	0	0	0	0
Maximum	60000	30000	30000	70000



Aniruddha Mookerjee/WTI

Preparing the warp for a shahtoosh shawl.

Table 12: Employment (in Months) in Shahtoosh & Pashmina Production

	Shahtoosh		Pashmina	
	1998	2001	1998	2001
No. of Respondents	10751	3394	1720	7945
Mean	9.7	7.3	5.0	9.2
Median	11	7	5	11
Mode	12	11	6	12
Minimum	0	0.3	1	1
Maximum	12	12	12	12

per worker. However, since few alternative means of livelihood were available to most workers in these industries, they began to work for longer periods of the year in pashmina, even if they earned and produced less by doing so. These conclusions are supported by data on changes in income, output and employment (see Table 13).

Since few alternative means of livelihood were available to most workers in these industries, they began to work for longer periods of the year on pashmina.

Table 13: Percentage Changes in Income, Output, and Employment after the Ban

	Shahtoosh			Pashmina		
	Income	Output	Employment	Income	Output	Employment
Sum	-83.3	-78.0	-76.2	162.4	142.2	754.0
Mean	-42.4	-25.3	-24.5	-48.6	-53.8	84.9
Median	-25.0	0.0	-36.4	-20.0	25.0	120.0
Mode	0.0	0.0	-8.3	0.0	0.0	100.0



## 2.6 Impact on Specific Categories

We now look at the impact of the ban on specific occupations, and in particular on the five numerically most important trades: spinning, weaving, *perkum*, embroidering and separating. Table 14 presents data on percentage changes in median income, output, and employment for each specific process that is related to shahtoosh or pashmina production.

The data on several vocations – dealers, dyers, darners, *sazgurs* among others – is clearly unreliable probably due, in part to the small sample size. For example, a 100 percent decline in incomes reported by dealers supplying raw material to other categories involved in shahtoosh production does not match observed reality by the enumerators. Separators, weavers, and other numerically important occupations register more realistic changes in income, output and employment. This is due to greater measurement accuracy based on larger sample sizes.

Although these figures should be taken merely as rough indicators of change, they tell an interesting story. In most cases, and especially in the more “important” (i.e., numerically larger) categories, decrease in income, output and employment in the shahtoosh industry are accompanied by offsetting increases with reference to pashmina. Interestingly, there is no change in the median output among spinners, weavers and *perkums/perkumgors* – the



Aniruddha Mookerjee/WTI

Making the warp.

**Table 14: Impact of the Ban on Median Income, Output and Employment of Specific Occupation-related Categories**

Occupation	Shahtoosh			Pashmina		
	Income	Output	Employment	Income	Output	Employment
<b><i>Spinners</i></b>	-6.3	0.0	-33.3	0.0	25.0	120.0
<b><i>Weavers</i></b>	-21.1	0.0	-55.6	37.5	0.0	200.0
<b><i>Perkum/Perkumgors</i></b>	9.1	0.0	-66.7	66.7	0.0	200.0
<b><i>Embroiderers</i></b>	-10.0	-70.0	-33.3	0.0	0.0	100.0
<b><i>Separators</i></b>	-40.0	-33.3	-45.5	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b><i>Poiywans</i></b>	-75.0	-50.0	-14.3	-50.0	-27.3	66.7
<b><i>Manufacturers</i></b>	-69.2	-37.5	30.0	-25.0	-16.7	84.6
Barangors	212.5	200.0	-25.0	-76.9	-81.3	33.3
Carpenters	-81.8	-83.3	-100.0	-28.3	N/A	100.0
Clippers	1.4	16.7	-62.5	14.3	0.0	80.0
Dealers	-100.0	-100.0	-100.0	-55.1	-81.5	71.4
Designers	0.0	127.3	-80.0	-10.0	-21.4	71.4
Dyers	-100.0	-100.0	-100.0	-25.0	108.3	-11.1
Hawkers	-40.0	-16.7	0.0	-33.3	10.0	100.0
Raffugars/Darners	-100.0	-100.0	-100.0	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sazgurs	-100.0	-100.0	-100.0	-43.3	733.3	300.0
Shuttler-makers	-20.0	-20.0	0.0	-100	-100.0	-100.0
Traders	-91.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	50.0
Washers/Finishers	-85.5	-86.7	-50.0	6.7	150	137.5

*Note: This table is organized first in descending order of numerical importance (first seven rows, in bold italics), and then in alphabetical order.*

three most “important” trades. Summarizing this data, and confirming the overview data presented on income, output and employment, we find that the ban has resulted in a shift away from shahtoosh and towards pashmina production. The degree of movement, however, varies greatly by specific occupations.

### 2.7 Changes in Work Patterns

How did the ban on shahtoosh production impact relative employment patterns – i.e., did it cause people to move from one industry to another, or did it result in mass unemployment? The data presented above hints at what happened to work pattern. More specific and concrete data was also collected in this regard and is presented in Table 15.

The largest proportion of workers (55 percent) report a complete shift from shahtoosh to pashmina. Another 16 percent report a shift from working exclusively with shahtoosh to working with both kinds of wool after the ban. Eleven percent report that the ban left them unemployed, while another 10 percent have shifted from working with both shahtoosh and pashmina to using only pashmina.

### 2.8 Suggestions for Rehabilitation

Given the fairly significant impact of the ban on income, output and employment patterns, the shahtoosh workers were asked for their suggestions on rehabilitation measures. Table 16 summarizes the distribution of what individual workers thought was the single most important measure that might be implemented. A vast majority (71 percent) suggested the regulation and promotion of pashmina production. Others called for government employment, subsidized loans for moving into pashmina business, or the setting up of textile mills where they could be employed.

### 2.9 Purchase Prices of Wool

In the course of conducting this survey, the researchers also compiled a list of market prices for unprocessed shahtoosh wool. This data gives a clearer picture of market conditions for this most vital input in the shahtoosh industry.

Raw shahtoosh wool comprises both the thick upper guard hair and the fleece, or shahtoosh, which is found close to the skin. The guard hair is not amenable to weaving, and has to be separated from the light and wispy

Table 15: Change in Work Patterns after the Ban

Status	Frequency	Percent
Complete Shift from Shahtoosh to Pashmina	5845	54.9
Shift from exclusively working with shahtoosh to working with both shahtoosh & pashmina	1703	16.0
Still entirely or partly involved with shahtoosh production but unemployed after the ban	1151	10.8
Previously worked with both, now only pashmina	1098	10.3
Previously worked exclusively with shahtoosh. Now work primarily with pashmina, but continue to do some work with shahtoosh	440	4.1
Previously worked, and still work, on both materials, but work now on a reduced quantity of shahtoosh	276	2.6
Other categories	136	1.3
TOTAL	10649	100

Table 16: Rehabilitation Measures: Suggestions by Shahtoosh Workers

Suggestion	Frequency	Percent
State-regulated supply and purchase of raw pashmina with reasonable wages for workers	5134	71.1
Government employment	1147	15.9
Subsidized loans for pashmina	800	11.1
Setting up of textile mills	141	2.0
Total	7222	100

Snow-white wool is regarded as the best-quality shahtoosh, and fetches the highest price. Most wool, however, comes in mixes of light brown.

A dealer with samples of light brown, dark brown and white wool.



Aniruddha Mookerjee/WTI

fleece. The price of raw shahtoosh depends largely on the proportion of fleece that it contains. Before spinning, the unprocessed wool is cleaned by a group of female workers, known as separators, who separate the long hair from the fleece. This fleece is then spun and finally woven into shawls. Rates of the wool vary according to its colour. Raw wool comes in three natural colours – light brown, dark brown and white – depending on the part of the animal’s body that it has been plucked from. Snow-white wool is regarded as the best-quality shahtoosh and fetches the highest price. Most wool, however, comes in mixes of light brown. Light brown and dark brown shahtoosh are equally priced. It should be noted here that the body colour of male chiru changes from summer to winter. In summer, males appear reddish fawn in colour, fading to white on their stomach. The tail, which is around 13-14cm long, partially conceals a whitish rump patch. The face and front legs of the male chiru are a shade of dark grey. The males change their coat prior to the winter rutting period. The dull summer fleece is replaced by an impressive winter one that is a lighter shade of grey and

tan with a white undercoat running from the chin to the belly region. In contrast to the body, the face and the front of the legs are black. From a distance some males appear white (Schaller, 1998). There has been a significant change in demand for shawls over the last decade with a shift away from traditional, natural-coloured shawls towards dyed shawls and those with coloured woven designs. Pure white shawls, usually worn only by men, are the most expensive. Shawls are typically made in two sizes. A lady’s shawl is usually 1x2 metres, and weighs up to 130 grams. Men’s shawls are larger, measuring approximately 3x1.5 metres, and can weigh up to 180 grams. Longer pieces were sometimes sold as fabric lengths in the European market earlier, but this has now stopped. Traditionally, unprocessed shahtoosh would come as a mix of the three colours selling at a common price before being segregated by dealers or manufacturers either before, or during, the process of separating the guard hairs from the fleece (Hillal Ahmed, manufacturer, Pers. comm., March 2001). Earlier, Tibetan and Nepalese raw wool dealers were unaware of the differences in quality

Table 17: Market Prices for Raw Shahtoosh

Colour of Wool	Percentage of fleece	Price per kg (Rs.)
Dark Brown	33	17,500
	35	18,500
	38 (the most common mix)	19,500
	39	21,000
	45	22,500
Snow White/Light Brown Mix	30	24,000
Snow White	30	30,000
Dark Brown/Light Brown (Wholesale Rate)		17,000



and prices, but they now try to separate the colours at the initial stages and demand higher prices for wool containing a larger proportion of white wool.

However, respondents across categories reported deterioration in the quality of raw shahtoosh over the last two decades, which may be due to a number of reasons that need field research:

(a) Better enforcement in China, Nepal and India may have led to a fall in poaching implying less supply and, therefore, less attention by dealers to the quality of the wool supplied;

(b) It is possible that poaching pressure over the years has led to younger or immature animals being killed leading in shorter wool lengths being supplied;

(c) It is possible that poachers, due to enforcement pressures, are no longer killing the animal in peak winter when the fleece is at its best.

There is a margin of about Rs 3,000-4,000 per kg between retail and wholesale rates of wool. Also, it costs about Rs 2,000 per kg in Delhi compared with prices in Srinagar. Table 17 summarizes current market rates for shahtoosh.

## 2.10 Conclusions

An obvious fallout of a ban on any product is unemployment and loss of income. This is more so for small and traditional, skill-based single-centre production processes such as shahtoosh weaving.

In the Kashmir Valley, the home-based processing, weaving and spinning of shahtoosh shawls used to provide a welcome means of income, especially to female spinners, ancillary craftsmen and weavers. The very high cost of raw materials and the traditional structure of shahtoosh production and distribution allowed the persistence of a traditional putting-out system in this trade.

While in modern societies the putting-out system has given way to more economically efficient means of capitalist production, this personalized production process, which is peculiar to shahtoosh, allowed women and small producers of the Kashmir Valley to access raw material without having to buy it. The high cost of the raw material put it beyond the reach of the small artisans. It compelled the putting-out merchant to supply it to individual artisans without charging them the cost. Producers, meanwhile, gained access to the raw material without having to maintain a regular minimum level of liquidity to finance the buying of the raw material on a daily or a short-term basis.

Pashmina production, which is seen as the next best alternative to shahtoosh production, is economically

The number of workers directly involved in shahtoosh production was found to be reasonably low, about 15,000 individuals, many of whom have made a successful transition to pashmina.

much less attractive. With the lower cost of the raw material there is no need for a putting-out merchant to provide loans to artisans gratis. With pashmina, the spinners have to buy the wool and then sell the yarn to the same merchant from whom it was bought. Further, although every shahtoosh weaver can work on pashmina, it fetches lower wage rates. Modern pashmina production methods have also made the category of separator redundant, as this process is fully mechanized.

The ban on shahtoosh has, therefore, led to a significant fall in the incomes of the shahtoosh workers, especially its largest segment, the female workers. In these troubled times, many of the traditional crafts in which men were involved have declined. Female shahtoosh spinners played a crucial role in partially compensating the losses suffered by their male family members, who were pursuing other trades.

However, the number of workers directly involved in shahtoosh production was found to be reasonably low – about 15,000 individuals, a number of whom have successfully transitioned to pashmina production. As a group, the workers are homogenous and concentrated in one geographical region. There is reason to believe, therefore, that a well-designed, timely and targeted intervention by the government can fully compensate for losses incurred due to the ban on shahtoosh.

## 2.11 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this survey, and given the fact that the survival of the chiru hinges on the ban on the shahtoosh industry and trade, one clear and overriding recommendation emerges. Above all, we find, there is a need to find viable alternative livelihoods for the shahtoosh workers of the Kashmir Valley. Although a number of possibilities exist, the single most effective measure would involve creating and strengthening an industry and an international market based on high-quality Kashmiri pashmina shawls.

Pashmina shawls and other related products, including stoles, mufflers and scarves are produced all over the world in such diverse locations as the Indian states of Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttaranchal and Punjab and countries such as China, Korea, Nepal, Italy and France, among others.

Although this product is sold as Cashmere or Kashmir pashmina, only a fraction of “Kashmir” pashmina shawls are produced in Kashmir. Yet, for hundreds of years, the formidable reputation of the handmade and hand-embroidered Kashmir pashmina shawl – produced by traditional artisans of the Kashmir Valley – has reinforced

Female shahtoosh spinners played a crucial role in partially compensating the losses suffered by their male family members who were pursuing other trades.

Hand-made pashmina originating out of Kashmir must be branded in such a way as to enable consumers to instantly identify the difference.

the association in consumers' minds that a pashmina shawl must necessarily be from Kashmir. As a result, pashmina producers everywhere are benefiting from this embedded market orientation, except crucially, those whose efforts created this market in the first place.

The inequality of the situation comes into sharper focus when one notices that pashmina production the world over has become almost fully mechanized, and that this product, which is decidedly cheaper and lower in quality than "true" pashmina, is masquerading as the "real thing" and successfully competing with the original handmade product.

The seriousness of this disadvantage can be gauged from the fact that while the cheapest handmade Kashmir pashmina shawl sells for approximately Rs 8,000 in India, the machine-made shawl can cost as little as Rs 1,500, or sometimes even lower if it is a silk mix and the consumer cannot perceive the difference.

According to market perceptions, the international pashmina market is facing a supply glut, especially with regard to the machine-made variety; prices, as a result, are low and highly unstable. In such a situation, a straightforward shift of displaced shahtoosh workers to pashmina could lead to the following:

1. Additional over-supply, causing a further decline in international prices.
2. The increasing redundancy of the largest segment of shahtoosh workers, i.e., the separators and spinners (who are all women), as these two stages of pashmina production are largely mechanized.
3. A drastic fall in individual incomes, forcing workers towards the underground shahtoosh market.

## 2.12 Repositioning Pashmina

The shift, therefore, may not be a viable solution unless pashmina is re-positioned. The following re-positioning, which this report recommends, has emerged out of the market perceptions and the needs perceived during the survey:

1. There is a need to separate the high quality hand-made Kashmir pashmina from the machine-made variety flooding the market by informing consumers about the difference between the two varieties.
2. Hand-made pashmina originating out of Kashmir must be branded in such a way as to enable consumers to instantly identify the difference. It is suggested that this generic brand be called "Kashmina" (from Kashmir pashmina).
3. This branding will elevate it above the "other" types of pashmina, and will lead to higher prices and more sustainable incomes for former shahtoosh workers.
4. To ensure that this measure has its desired effect, i.e., it causes a complete end to the production and trade in shahtoosh, only those workers and manufacturers who can certify that they have ended their involvement with

shahtoosh, will be allowed to use this brand name.

Several additional measures will help to ensure the success of this initiative:

1. An appellation body – based on similar associations in, for instance, France (Champagne), Scotland (Scotch) and India (Darjeeling Tea) – must be formed to ensure strict compliance with appropriate guidelines for "Kashmina" production and marketing. Further, this body can help to ensure the payment of appropriate wages and good working conditions for "Kashmina" workers. It is recommended that a study be initiated to research successful models in this regard.
2. A crucial deterrent to pashmina production is the fact that, unlike with shahtoosh production, pashmina workers need to buy their own raw materials, including raw wool, which is often very expensive. (In contrast, shahtoosh wool is provided on credit, or "commission," to grassroots workers.) To overcome this limitation, it is recommended that a government-supported micro-credit loan program be initiated. Such a program can be run by an NGO with appropriate experience in the field, or on a cooperative basis.
3. It is suggested that the Jammu & Kashmir Government, in conjunction with the newly-formed appellation body, take measures to revive old art forms related to the production of shawls, such as the labor- and time-intensive *kani* and *jamavar* styles of shawl-making. These art forms can be successfully adapted to "Kashmina," and would ensure three things: (1) Longer periods of employment; (2) Higher income levels; (3) A perpetuation of the impression that pashmina represents the highest quality of shawl-making.
4. Since marketing is the most important plank on which the success of Kashmina as a product depends, it is recommended that the government appoint an international marketing consultant to draw up a practical and professional sales strategy to popularize the product.
5. To help reduce shahtoosh workers' dependence on a single industry, the government should consider the desire expressed by a number of workers for employment in textile mills as an alternative means of livelihood. It is suggested that the government study the viability of providing support to such projects on a cooperative basis.
6. Most importantly, there should be no let up in the international effort to enforce the ban on shahtoosh as well as the ongoing anti-poaching programme in China. All governments, particularly those in Europe, North America and South-east Asia, and especially Japan, should ensure that customs and other law enforcement officials have the information and the capacity to detect and prevent illegal shahtoosh trade.
7. There should be annual meetings of the three major stakeholders – China, Nepal and India – to discuss this and the CITES authorities of the three should set up a joint cell to monitor trade routes and poaching.

There should be no let up in the international effort to enforce the ban on shahtoosh, as well as the ongoing anti-poaching program in China.

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1.1 Work Codes and Definitions

Code	Type of Workers	Explanation
1	Dealers	Dealers purchase raw wool directly from Tibetan or Nepalese smugglers and sell it to manufacturers.
2	Manufacturers	Manufacturers pass the raw shahtoosh on for processing by different workers.
3	Poiywans	Poiywans receive shahtoosh from manufacturers and pass it on to spinners.
4	Separators	Separators — mostly women — receive shahtoosh from manufacturers and remove rough coarse hair from the fleece. They are paid by the gram for dehaired shahtoosh.
5	Spinners	Spinners spin thread from the wool and are paid for their work by the tola (1 tola = 10grams).
6	Perkum/Perkumgors	Perkums/perkumgors prepare the spun thread for weaving
7	Barangors	Barangors pass the thread into the kangi of the loom for weaving. They are paid by the number of threads passed into the kangi.
8	Weavers	Weavers weave the shawls mostly for the manufacturers and are paid per shawl.
9	Washermen/Finishers	These workers wash and “finish” shawls, and are paid for each wash.
10	Clippers	Clippers remove any protruding threads from the shawl in order to smoothen it. They are paid per shawl.
11	Dyers	These workers dye shawls and are paid per shawl dyed
12	Raffugars/Darners	Raffugars or darners are paid according to the size of hole that is darned.
13	Designers	Designers create designs for embroidery work and are paid according to the complexity of the design.
14	Embroiderers	Embroiderers are given designs to embroider and are paid according to the type of design.
15	Hawkers	Hawkers purchase shawls from the manufacturers and resell them. They usually do not have a fixed shop.
16	Traders	Traders purchase shawls from the manufacturer and sell them to retailers.
17	Sazgurs	Sazgurs make sazs or thread guides, and sell these to weavers, who use them in looms.
18	Carpenters	Carpenters make looms and wheels and sell them to weavers and spinners. A single carpenter does not usually make both items.
19	Shuttle-makers	Shuttle makers make bobbins and clips and sell them to weavers and clippers, respectively.
20	Tassle-makers	Those who make the fringe on the edge of the shawls.

APPENDIX 1.2 Occupational Distribution by District and Sex

Age in Years	Srinagar		Badgam		Pulwama		Baramula	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
Dealer	14							
Manufacturer	106	2						
Poiywan	89	23	2					
Separator		359						
Spinner		9803		86		13		
Perkumgor	786	166						
Barangor	2	55						
Weaver	1808		5					
Washer/press	55	1						
Purzgar	44							
Dyer	42							
Designer	13							
Raffugar	29							
Embroiderer	502	60	76	5			31	
Hawker	74							
Trader	33							
Sazgur	3							
Carpenter	2							
Shuttle-maker	1							
Govt employee	1400	122	19	1				
Businessman	1503	16	21	2				
Labourer		887	7	23				
Technician	2079	59	26	1				
Others	333	16	4	1				
Farmer	54	11	14	1				
Only Pashmina	242	787	11	31				
Unemployed	1308	960	34	48				
Student	4695	4515	139	103				
Handloom	164	22	1					
Private job	423	86	6					
Handicraft only	983	237	31	16				
Housewife	16	1159	2	101				
Child < 06	1226	1151	49	32				
> 58 yrs (unemployed)		371	242	8	9			
Retired	229	7						



## SOCIO-ECONOMIC SURVEY OF SHAHTOOSH WORKERS

DATE: 06-10-01 Total family members: 05-five Village/Town: Rana wali District: Sahiwal

Head Of Family: Abulhasan Nabi Khan Serial No: 1996 Signature: 3.3.1

Local Address: Moh - Ashraf Khan.

[illegible]

## Transcripts of Seminar 'A New Life for Shahtoosh'

*WTI-IFAW held a seminar entitled 'A New Life for Shahtoosh,' at the Lakme India Fashion Week (LIFW) on 6 August, 2002 to discuss the feasibility of introducing "Kashmina." LIFW is an annual event of the Fashion Design Council of India, and a meeting point of the top designers and international buyers in India. The seminar was open to all stakeholders and was attended by representatives of the trade, government, NGOs and the press. The discussion panel comprised:*

- ♦*Mr. S.B. Mohapatra, Secretary, Ministry of Textiles;*
- ♦*Ms. Kiran Dhingra, Joint Secretary in charge of Wool, Ministry of Textiles;*
- ♦*Mr. K.K. Sinha, Chairman and Managing Director, The Handicrafts and Handlooms Export Corporation of India (HHEC), Ministry of Textiles;*
- ♦*Mr. P.R. Sinha, Member Secretary CZA, who represented the Ministry of Environment and Forests;*
- ♦*Mr. Ghulam Rasool Mir, General Secretary, Kashmir Valley Shahtoosh & Pashmina Shawl Weavers' Association;*
- ♦*Mr. Ashok Kumar, Senior Advisor & Trustee, WTI;*
- ♦*Mr. Aniruddha Mookerjee, Director, WTI;*
- ♦*Mr. Vivek Menon, Executive Director, WTI. Moderator;*

*The seminar began with a presentation of the "Kashmina" concept by Mr. Aniruddha Mookerjee. The following are edited transcripts of the panel discussion.*

**Mr. S.B. Mohapatra:** I think we really have to see if this is economically feasible with the participation of a strong local NGO and then if a 5 or 10-year-plan is prepared by the Wildlife Trust of India, perhaps a beginning can be made. The idea of a 10-year plan is quite long.... I do not think you can overnight stop the killing of these antelopes. It is a centuries old thing. Till such time as we are able to provide alternate occupation and educate the weavers there, the situation may not dramatically improve.

But, if a beginning, however small it may be, is made through joint efforts of all the organizations present here, perhaps, in the long run, maybe in 7-10 years, a noticeable improvement will be there and we can also be assured that at least something is being done to preserve these antelopes. So, I would suggest that the participants here, who come from diverse fields, should give their suggestions and that Wildlife Trust could create a prospective plan in consultation with the local people and see that this is implemented with funding from the Government of India as well as international aid agencies.

**Mr. Vivek Menon:** Thank you for your honest and uncompromising opening remarks. At IFAW-WTI, we completely agree with the fact that you have really got [to get] down to those two or three of the most important things. One is economic feasibility – will this work? Is it just us sitting here in this room and talking, or should we

not do a proper economic feasibility [study]; and the answer is yes. As I said, it is a process that we started with the report on how endangered the chiru is, which we released last year. Now we are releasing a report on the way forward and most certainly with this sort of encouragement we can go forward and also try and produce a report on the economic feasibility. It can then go ahead from there and the appellation body that you talked about [can be formed] that will monitor this and actually put a trade mark. And, thirdly, very correctly as you pointed out, a grassroot organization in Kashmir should come forward and here I want to make clear that we are the Wildlife Trust of India, beyond a point we don't have expertise in marketing a product. What we are trying to do is to go beyond our scope and try and provide some sort of a way out. We understand that this cannot be done overnight, but at least we are trying to catalyse it, which is what an NGO can do.

**SBM:** Even good Merino is not being made. It has been so much diluted and that I suspect a big racket is going on and some people are buying shawls from Ludhiana (a weaving centre in the northern Indian state of Punjab) and selling them as Kashmiri. Just because a Kashmiri fellow is sitting behind the counter, people think that this is a Kashmiri shawl. People are going to Dilli Haat (a handicrafts market in Delhi) and merrily buying it without realizing that what they are buying is not really a Kashmir product.

**VM:** That's the point; if we can have an appellation body which can put a seal on this... that is the whole point....

**SBM:** You can make even Merino Shawl; you can make various other things; you can do a whole range of products. Even Kashmiri crafts – also there is no reason why they [shahtoosh workers] cannot be trained in handicrafts for which we have a good market, particularly wood products and various other crafts of Kashmir.

Even silk is coming up in Kashmir in a big way. In the last three-four years there has been a substantial improvement in silk production. Some of them could be diverted to silk and Kashmir has a very unique variety of silk like pre-mulberry plus. They have also got this oak tussar, which is not found anywhere else. The normal tussar we can get in the other parts of the country is the usual rough wild tussar, but if this delicate oak tussar is available... we should be able to exploit its potential and perhaps employment opportunities can be created.

**VM:** Can we quickly go around to Mr. Sinha for the views of the Ministry of Environment & Forests (MoEF)?

**Mr. P.R. Sinha:** So far as view of MoEF is concerned it's very clear – an illegal product cannot be sold. So you are trying to find alternatives here. One thing I would like

to tell the audience – that when we are discussing the rehabilitation of the people who are already engaged in this trade, we must also look at the possibility of other people joining it in the meanwhile.

So, it has to be a multi-pronged strategy. If you put enough pressure on poaching, then automatically down the line people will be in the right frame of mind to take to alternatives. Unless the government effectively implements the anti-poaching laws, you will find [making] people take to alternatives very difficult. That's my opinion.

**VM:** So are you advocating a carrot and stick?

**PRS.:** You have to bring in all the issues for the conservation of a species ...unless you have a very strong enforcement mechanism, you will find it extremely difficult. So, the law has to be strong and with a human touch.

**VM:** I think that is a good point and we will get back to the enforcement issue later and we can get back to people in the audience as well, but we will do a quick round of the panelists first. Mr. Mir would you like to say something? Please speak in Hindi, if you feel comfortable.

**Mr. Ghulam Rasool Mir** (*Speaking in a mix of English and Hindi*): I am very happy to see all of you in the audience. In the troubled circumstances that we live in, I am glad that there is at least someone who is thinking about pashmina and shahtoosh weavers of Kashmir. I had lost all hope in the last two years about what will happen to those mothers and sisters who are working as spinners or separators; what will happen to those weavers who earn only Rs 200 day and feed their families.

There is almost no shahtoosh left in the market today because shawls are not being actively marketed now. Only 1-2 percent of the work is being done today and that too very secretly, not in the open. And people who were artisans of shahtoosh are totally pressurized. Those artisans that worked on pashmina, continue to do so. Those who did shahtoosh can weave pashmina, but who will give them pashmina work? The manufacturers and traders who deal in pashmina have their own weavers with whom they have been working for a long time and continue to do so. But those who were in shahtoosh are dying these days. They cannot support their children. They don't even have the money to pay the fees for their children's education. This is the truth.

"Those who did shahtoosh can weave pashmina, but who will give them pashmina work? The manufacturers who deal in pashmina have their own weavers with whom they have been working for a long time..."

These are really difficult circumstances, and now that you have organized this seminar, I would like to assure you all that the workers who were involved in shahtoosh, either as weavers or spinners, the former can enter pashmina easily. But a mother who was spinning shahtoosh thread from about 10 gms of wool in a day or who was working on the first stage of separating and used to take home only Rs 50 for cleaning 50 gms of raw wool – from where will she now earn that money? Will she be able to earn the Rs 50 a day by spinning pashmina?

We had raised this question before the Jammu & Kashmir Industry Minister, Dr. Mustafa Kamal Sahib. He assured us that though the ban has been imposed on shahtoosh weaving: "We will not allow this art to be lost, we will find a way to keep this art alive. How this will be achieved would be discussed in the next meeting where we will call you and will give full compensation so that the artisans can work with pashmina [the work for pashmina and shahtoosh is being done in the same way though there is a slight difference in quality], so they shift to pashmina weaving and improve the quality and beauty of this pashmina."

In the last few years the market for pashmina has deteriorated so much that real pashmina does not exist any more. That real handmade Kashmiri handicraft has ceased to exist; instead there are only cash fabrics now. Machine-made pashmina thread is used for weaving and the mothers and sisters who were working on pashmina are not working in the same way as they were doing earlier. Its process is now being made more machine-friendly. For example, I made a shawl for my family just last year. It cost me a little more than Rs 5,000. Because every day inflation increases and so do the prices. But, nowadays the shawls that are being sold in the market sell for approximately Rs 3,000 to Rs 4,200. The shawl I made with my own hands costs more than Rs 5,000 and the shawl woven by these modern machines is sold for only Rs 3,300. How then can you call this a Kashmir product?

There is another problem. Nowadays we see the Amritsar (a textile weaving centre in the northern Indian state of Punjab) shawl being sold as if it has been made in Kashmir. It is unfortunate that this is being done by those who are neither Kashmiris or with no background in this trade. And in real terms, this shawl has not been made in Kashmir or by Kashmiri workers. Either it is silk pashmina which is not made in Kashmir - for silk pashmina woven in Kashmir will not be less than Rs 3,000, while the silk pashmina made outside Kashmir is priced at a mere Rs 300-500. Its coming from all over and is being sold in the markets with a Kashmir label on it. A single wash ruins this shawl.

Sir, take a Kashmir pashmina shawl that was made 20 years back and see how good it looks even today. And purchase a shawl today and see the difference in six months. If there is any sympathy for the spinners and weavers, then I would personally request you to initiate such measures that provide sufficient and able compensation for them. If, in this initiative, I can be of any assistance, I would be more than willing. Thanks.

**VM:** Thank you Mr. Mir. Mr. Ashok Kumar...





A seminar entitled 'A New Life for Shahtoosh,' being held at the Lakme India Fashion Week on 6 August 2002.

**Mr. Ashok Kumar:** I will also talk in Hindi. Around one year back, when I went to Nepal, I met a person living in France with a business in Nepal. He is married to a Mongolian lady. They invited me, we had a talk. They are also producing shawls there in a limited quantity. He told me that his shawls are being sold in places such as America and France and it retails for only \$1,000 and this shawl is approximately half in size compared to a shahtoosh shawl.

I asked him what he suggests that the Kashmiri people do. He said that there is no textile or fabric that can match the quality of Kashmiri hand-woven shawls. There are shawls being made in Nepal, the cheaper shawls. They also come in from China. But for a lay person, there is no difference that is easily visible.

As Mr. Mookerjee said if the name of the tea is Darjeeling it will sell up to Rs 1,000-2000 per kg in an auction. Similarly Champagne that is from Champagne district [of France] can be priced at over £100. He suggested that the marketing of such products has to be done by an organization that has expertise in the subject.

Now we have to decide what kind of constructive and positive steps we should take where there is support from the Ministry of Textiles and Wool Board and a Kashmir agency. Of prime importance would be the support from a government agency which would concentrate on this and make an effort to put this together; that each shawl will have stamp and a certificate with a number which will be given on the shawl and a small booklet which provides the history of the shawl.

When we purchase a whisky bottle outside the country there is a complete story written on the bottle. It seems like the bottle is not as big as the story with it. So with this story an item, which would normally sell for \$5-7, now gets sold at \$25-50. These are all marketing gimmicks, I am myself from a marketing background and have been a marketing manager all my life.

We have to decide what steps need to be taken, and the assistance that can be sought from government agencies. Another point that I would like to make is that a more superior quality of pashmina wool is available in Mongolia.

If this is so, then this wool has to be brought from Mongolia. So, the government should purchase this wool for the Kashmiri weavers or send the Kashmiris on a delegation to Mongolia to facilitate the process.

**VM:** I request Joint Secretary for Wool, Ms. Dhingra, to make a few comments.

**Ms. Kiran Dhingra:** We have been working at the Wool Development Board on pashmina.... According to our professional analysis under the microscopes, Indian pashmina, of which we have something like 50 metric tonnes, is in fact considered superior to the Mongolian one, both in terms of length of fibre, colour of fibre, as well as the micron.

Its availability is limited, as you said, mainly to the mountains of Ladakh, more in the areas of the Changthang Plateau, and then eastwards at heights in the



“...the main concern of this seminar [is] a branding of what comes out of Kashmir as handwoven. Either Kashmir pashmina under a brand or Kashmir pashmina blends under a brand, but definitely with a stamp of quality.”

Himalayas of about 14,000 feet on an average going upwards to 18,000. In Ladakh itself, which is where we get the most... the best quality pashmina, there is about or next to about 32 metric tonnes. The rest of it is... outside India. We don't have the estimate of how much and it is mainly in Mongolia. Processing is done in India, but the best pashmina really ends up on machines in Italy and in England.

We can look at Ladakh pashmina from three aspects. One is the growth of the pashmina wool itself, next is the weave and product development and the third would be marketing. If you look at pashmina, you would have to look at the problems of the pashmina goat rearers too – the people living on the Chang Thang plateau. Their problem is that a lot of pashmina is smuggled in across the border from Nepal and, depending on its quality and quantity, the prices of raw pashmina fluctuate widely in India. One way of taking care of that is introducing mechanical de-hairing, so you introduce the process of mechanisation so that the value addition takes place within the plateau itself and flows back as far as possible to the Ladhakis so that their interest in pashmina rearing continues.

Till we are able to stabilize the availability of pashmina, I think that we wouldn't really be able to talk in terms of expanding the activities in weaving... [These] would be aspects which you would need to attend to in any programme for development that you take up through the Wool Development Board.

You have the hand-crafted pashmina, you have lots of pashmina in the market selling, as Mr. Mir, said from Rs 300 upwards to whatever. We could diversify that to make stoles, make better designs, better colouring, and so on and so forth. In fact, the Wool Research Association, which is the textile research association for wool, has taken up projects over the last two years to experiment with dyeing of wool – with natural dyes, with other colours – and several of these, I think four or five, they have started simultaneously.

Blending of wool with other fibres could also be a possibility, but basically what we would then be looking at is diversification and the third aspect which has been, I think, the main concern of this seminar, that of branding what comes out of Kashmir as handwoven. Either Kashmir pashmina under a brand or Kashmir pashmina blends under a brand, but definitely with a stamp of quality.

Those are the sort of aspects which we look at from the

Wool Development Board. We started with a UNDP project that would mechanize wool gathering. It should not harm the Kashmiri industry because, though there is a demand in Kashmir that all of it should come down raw to the Valley, it shouldn't really harm... them to mechanize a part, because I don't think it will really impinge on the availability of raw wool within Kashmir.

That definitely is an issue that would keep coming up each time pashmina is discussed as to whether there should be any flow back, any processing within Ladakh. Whether it should be mechanized or not. Or should it all come down to the valley. With the UNDP... I think in the last six years, about Rs 5-6 crores could flow to the pashmina development programme. It would depend upon their ability to absorb it. And [as] the secretary says, if we can find an organization with the help of the state government...

**VM:** Mr. Mir, I want to ask you that if we are all coming together to help you, then would you also put in your efforts to help us in enforcement, or help the Wildlife Department? Can you assure us that your association of weavers and manufacturers will try and stop work on shahtoosh and instead concentrate on working on the alternatives we are suggesting?

**GRM:** I assure you even now that we have put in all efforts since last year.

In the last two to four months in Srinagar or the Kashmir valley, according to me, the work on shahtoosh was absolutely zero because raw wool was not available. The reason for this is not clear to me, but no manufacturer was able to get raw shahtoosh wool. Weavers and spinners faced many problems in these three to four months. I have absolutely no hesitation in saying that hardly one or two spinners got raw wool to work with, wherever they got it from, and they are doing very little work. Like I had mentioned earlier, only 1 to 2 percent work is carrying on. The larger traders used to do their marketing in Delhi, because that's where the trade was flourishing. From Delhi, which countries it was sent to, is a different issue. But, due to raids and investigations here, work in shahtoosh has been stopped. They [the manufacturers] have told the spinners and weavers who were associated with them that they will no longer work with shahtoosh.

When asked for work, by the spinners and weavers, they agreed to give them pashmina wool to spin and weave. But only 5 percent of the workers have started working on pashmina today because the profit in working with pashmina is not as much as shahtoosh. Hence, they are investing their money in other trades instead.

So, I am assuring you that if you are genuinely concerned about the spinners and weavers and also keep in mind this art from Kashmir and think [plan] in the correct way, then you have the support of the weavers' and the spinners' groups.

**VM:** Mr. Sinha, are you happy with that?

**PRS.:** I am aware of the difficulties, which normally people face in Kashmir and what I was trying to emphasize was that it should be a multi-pronged strategy, that's all.

**VM:** Thank you, I am told that Mr. Sinha, Chairman & Managing Director of Handicrafts Corporation, is with us and... can we have your views?

**Mr. K.K. Sinha:** ...I am in the Ministry of Textiles and HHEC is the marketing and export wing of the Ministry of Textiles and Handicrafts Corporation. And we have been aware of the problem for quite a number of years.

So far as we are concerned, we have always said "No To Shahtoosh," but merely saying no to shahtoosh doesn't take care of all the troubles. So long as there is a demand, you know, whether by the legal channels or illegal channels, they will find the way to the market and I think this has been happening. The frequent seizures of shahtoosh... is giving rise to the speculation that the trade is on, the international trade is on, and merely wishing it away will not help. So the other day we had a small interaction in our secretary's room (with Mr. Mookerjee) about this thing and we felt that we would be too happy to join in this campaign – in fact, we are into it.

The other gentleman who was speaking a few minutes ago when I entered the room – that you have to find the alternate, not only the product but the people who are engaged in it. I am told that more than 10,000 weavers are somehow connected with this production of shahtoosh and I am happy to inform you that we in HHEC are working on a project that promotes that.

I couldn't catch on to "Kashmina," but pashmina has to be upgraded so that it is almost at par in terms of quality. Price should always have been an advantage with pashmina – between the price of shahtoosh and pashmina there is such a wide range.

So, in fact, I would say that what interaction we had with a couple of major importers from the country... of silk pashmina and I dare mention maybe some of them are doing some trade in shahtoosh... they did comment that they had bought it in London or bought it elsewhere in Europe. So, we said that... if that is your criteria, we have a quality of pashmina that also passes through a ring. Now, how much we can [produce] and what kinds of marketing or production intervention is required will have to be worked on and we are really working on it and I perceive the market is waiting for some kind of the quality upgradation and technological upgradation that should take place. A few weavers in Kashmir, who work with one of our projects there, have confirmed that... they are able to come up with very high quality – you give it a brand name.

The question today is how to brand it and how to make the people aware of this. This awareness campaign has to be carried on and I am sure that the fashionable ladies and the millionaires' wives, they would welcome it – that carrying shahtoosh on their shoulders is no longer a symbol of graciousness, elegance and of high fashion.

I am sure with our campaign and this awareness programme... we will be able to create an alternative

source of employment. First, we have to think about 10,000 of them, if they have nothing, no livelihood they will carry on – chiru will still get slaughtered. But I think this kind of wonderful seminar and the people who are working for it are doing a good job and we will be able to create an additional channel or an important channel like pashmina or "Kashmina"... and ultimately if we are able to meet the demand for such quality of the product then the buyer is no longer interested to carry on this stigma that they still have in carrying this shawl.

**VM:** I think Mr. Sinha has said very much what other people have said and I think people who have been connected with wildlife conservation and who had talked about chiru protection have never realized that we have people in the Textiles Ministry and in the handicraft board who speak so strongly for conservation. And it is good that we all get together and now Mr. Mir has also said that the association of weavers will support the chiru as long as they have an alternative. This is what we always thought was the case – that people can come together as long as there is a logical alternative and that is what we are trying to do. Are there any questions from the members of the Press Corps?

**Person:** Do you think there is a drop in [sale of] shahtoosh in Delhi?

**VM:** In Delhi, Mr. Mir, of course, says that there is no more wool coming into Kashmir, may be that is, but do people in Delhi feel that actually shahtoosh has gone down? Mr. Bipin Bihari (head of enforcement in Delhi) is saying that he is continuing to see these shawls so I don't know from where it is coming from if it is not coming from Kashmir.

**AK:** I think shahtoosh shawls are still coming today to Delhi. As per my information, there have been seizures as well. At the same time, the demand is also there. The fashionable ladies and not everybody comes to these seminars and workshops [meant for] reaching people. We have a WTI staffer here who has been to Ludhiana and a number of places and held workshops, but in these and other places, in these workshops... you address 20 ladies or 30-50 ladies. But, there are still a huge number of people in some of those places who do have large amounts of surplus money. So, the demand is still there and is not going away.

**VM:** Let me say that there are three prongs. Mr. Sinha

"The frequent seizures of shahtoosh you will find... is giving rise to the speculation that the trade is on, the international trade is on, and merely wishing it away will not help."

says that it should be a multi-pronged exercise; we have treated it as a three-pronged exercise – one is enforcement in which WTI is very closely involved, second is these alternatives and the third is passing that message on and we realized very quickly that we are a bunch of biologists. If we tell women don't buy Shahtoosh, no one will listen. Which is why we entered the fashion week three years ago and why we are using [in the campaign] people like Ritu Kumar (a well known Indian designer).

Two days back, in the first opening solo show of the Lakme India Fashion Week we had Usha Uthup, Bulbul Sharma, Shobhana Narayanan and people like that on stage saying “No to Shahtoosh.” Usha Uthup also recorded a cassette and this is the first song that is recorded for conservation, I think, in its history. A very good catchy song saying, “Say No to Shahtoosh.”

So there are brand ambassadors coming forward and telling people don't wear shahtoosh.... But fashionable women still want fashionable alternatives and now people have come to know the two of us in Delhi party circles. The moment we walk in, people put away their shahtoosh. At least one woman told me, “Vivek, I completely agree with you that we surely need to save this wonderful animal, but shahtoosh sits so lightly on my shoulders.” So that feeling is still there, so can we give them something equally light? Mr. Mir has said that yes, it is possible. Pashmina could be as light and as wonderful and then if we can market it. Lets give the fashionable woman a similar feeling at the same price.

Any other comments from the members on the panel?

**AK:** I go back and repeat what I have said – let us have a structured mechanism. The government should take some initiatives in forming some kind of an organizational structure with the people – shahtoosh weavers, pashmina weavers and, perhaps, with the official of the Jammu & Kashmir Government – to which the Ministry of Textile and Wool Board can supply marketing expertise and formulate some kind of a standing committee, hold meetings and get down to some... practical ideas and suggestions and funds and I think MoEF will also be willing to contribute some amount of money.

**VM:** It is a practical suggestion. As an NGO we have started the catalysis but is there anybody in the room who is willing to call a meeting on behalf of the government? Where can we meet again?

We had invited the state of Jammu & Kashmir also to be part of this.... There are chairs empty on the dais, I'm afraid some people didn't come, but they need to work on that.... I am glad that Mrs. Dhingra has agreed to call that meeting and I am sure the Ministry of Environment & Forest and NGOs... Mr. K.K. Sinha too [will participate].

Excellent, so we have got two people who are willing to take the first step, and on behalf of NGO community, I would say that both WTI and there are people in WWF also... Mr. Sen is there and Brigadier Talwar. We can all join hands and make sure that we move forward in a structured manner. Everybody in the panel and audience, thank you very much.



Singer Usha Uthup, a brand ambassador for “Say No to Shahtoosh” at the Lakme India Fashion Week 2002.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Fox, J.C., Nurbu and Chundawat, R.S., 1991, *The Mountain Ungulates of Ladakh*, Indian Biological Congress

IFAW, WTI, 2001. *Wrap Up The Trade: An International Campaign to Save the Endangered Tibetan Antelope*, International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) and Wildlife Trust of India (WTI), London

Irwin, John, 1952, *The Shawls of Kashmir*

Kumar, Ashok, and Wright, Belinda, 1997, *Fashioned for Extinction: An Expose of the Shahtoosh Trade*, Wildlife Protection Society of India

Lowe, J., Ginsberg J.R., and Schaller, G.B., 1999, *A petition to list the Tibetan Antelope as an endangered species pursuant to the US Endangered Species Act of 1973*, Submitted by Earth Island Institute, San Francisco, CA, and Wildlife Conservation Society, Bronx, New York, USA

Schaller, G.B., 1998, *Wildlife of the Tibetan Steppe*, The University of Chicago Press.

Talwar, R., and Chundawat, R.S., 1995, *A Report on the Survey of Tibetan Antelope (*Pantholops hodgsonii*), in the Ladakh region of Jammu & Kashmir*, Supply Centers for Shahtoosh Trade in West Tibet

George Schaller





## CONSERVATION ACTION SERIES

If the killing of the endangered Tibetan antelope (*Pantholops hodgsonii*) is to stop, the trade in shahtoosh, the wool culled from the fleece of the animal, has to end. Yet several thousand workers in the Indian state of Jammu & Kashmir make a living out of this wool, and have done so for generations. The International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) and the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) initiated this survey to assess the actual and potential economic impact of the ban on shahtoosh on these workers and provide suggestions for measures that may be taken for their relocation and rehabilitation.

