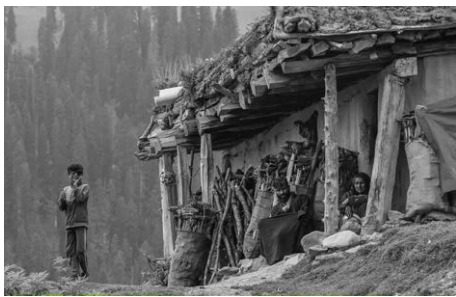




The Land that Flows with Milk is a Land of Abundant Fertility

by Shreshtha Chhabra



Kashmir's Bakarwal tribe faces existential crisis

by Zaid Bin Shabir



Inspired by the Peoli: Textiles that Emerge between the River and the Forest

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PHOTO ESSAY

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NEWS

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# Shepherding - A school of leadership for young shepherds

By Chamba Tsetan

I was 10 years old when I took my family's herd into the valley for grazing. Younger children would generally accompany older herders into the mountains but as they grow up, they herd their family's flock along with older experienced herders. It is a proud moment for every kid to be able to take up the responsibility over a whole herd.

I was born to a family from the Changpa tribe in Ladakh where the livelihood is based on livestock rearing. Everyone in the community is a shepherd by profession and when school closes for winter break, every kid in the village would help their family in herding.

For me, herding was just a fun thing to do and it took me a long time to understand what the practices of my tribe were teaching me. To an outsider, our lifestyle might have even looked like forced circumstances. But I have learnt some of the most important leadership lessons from being a shepherd that I think even school could not teach me.

As a leader, the safety of your team and achieving the goal together are the main responsibilities. In a military operation, the key responsibility of the commanding officer is the safety of the whole team and guiding them towards victory. In shepherding too, it is the same. The shepherd and the flock have the same goal: to find forage while remaining protected from predators. It is the shepherd's responsibility to lead the herd to achieve this goal.

This learning came in handy when I started playing ice hockey on a professional team.

Teamwork on the skating rink, like the shepherd and herd sticking together, helped us achieve our goal. While playing ice hockey, it is important to communicate with your teammates both on and off the ice in order to execute the game plan. Likewise, constant communication with the herd is crucial when you are in the valley. Communication is the key for a leader and the biggest challenge for a shepherd is not having a commonly spoken language with the animals. But this does not stop shepherds from creating a vocabulary of clicks and whistles. When commanding a herd, the animals understand the command from the pitch and voice of the shepherd and in the way they call out to them even from afar. My upbringing as a shepherd taught me how to communicate better with larger audiences beyond our commons.

Every morning when a shepherd embarks on their journey with a mission, it is to feed the herd well and bring them back safely. There is a whole process of planning that goes in the mind of a herder in terms of both terrain and quantity and quality of fodder. A herder is equipped with the knowledge and understanding of their ecosystem in terms of the different kinds of plants, their flowering stages and their health implications on the herd. These I learnt as a child from the elders and now know the specialties of every valley in Changthang. Later, I realized many of these mountain valleys were also named after plant species!

The distance and altitude of the journey are always based on the strength of the animals and the availability/lack of resources that the herder has to keep track of. This in a way connects

to understanding and being empathetic to your teammates in ice hockey. Empathy is the ability to understand the feeling and the needs of others from their point of view. Shepherds understand the movement of animals when they are thirsty, hungry and need to rest. For instance, while herding we would time our meal to when the animals were well-fed because the slow movements of the herd allowed us to enjoy our meals. This has helped me lead my team towards victory and more importantly through hard times.

I believe leaders are trained, not born. Changpas are trained to assess dozens of landscapes and plants and are always aware of the valley's temperaments. Their sustainable way of rearing animals makes it easy for them to adapt to the changing climate, in addition to contributing to carbon sequestration. It makes them exemplary of humans thriving with nature. What we call unstructured learning is real learning because in most cases it is engineered by nature and external circumstances. The trend in the need for outdoor education comes from the learning opportunities that were lost from our forests and grasslands. It is high time for stewardship in conservation and enhancement for many reasons, one of which is a system of an early educational experience for every kid.

*Chamba Tsetan has worked at the Himalayan Institute of Alternatives, Ladakh as an Academic Coordinator and works closely with his community as a founding member of the Youth Association, Kargyam. He anchors Centre for Pastoralism's work on wool insulation.*



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We would love to share your ideas on Pastoral Times! Send us your entries here: [communications@centreforpastoralism.org](mailto:communications@centreforpastoralism.org).





Around the World

Daytime pastoralist activities do not negatively affect spotted hyenas

By British Ecological Society Press Office

A study looking at the interactions of pastoralists and hyenas in Tanzania finds that the two can coexist, with no negative impacts to the hyenas. The findings are published in the *Journal of Animal Ecology*.

Pastoralists herding their livestock through the territories of spotted hyena clans along dedicated paths during daytime do not reduce the reproductive performance of hyena clans, nor elevate the physiological ‘stress’ of spotted hyenas. This is the result of a new study led by scientists from the Leibniz Institute for Zoo and Wildlife Research (Leibniz-IZW) and the Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority (NCAA).

The scientists analysed 24 years of demographic and physiological data from eight spotted hyena clans – two of which were exposed to activities by pastoralists. The activities of pastoralists were predictable, and diurnal and did not disrupt important behaviours in the mostly nocturnal hyenas. This may have allowed the population to perform well, the scientists suggest. Human activities can strongly affect wildlife but the effects can vary greatly, depending on the type of activity and the characteristics of the wildlife species involved. To promote human-wildlife coexistence, it is therefore important to assess which activities are sustainable for a given species.

Most past research has documented major changes in the behavioural response of such species to human activities, but did not examine whether such changes are indicative of the Darwinian fitness of wildlife (in terms of its survival and reproductive success) or physiological effects such as “stress” or allostatic load, which are much more relevant to conservation. “Acquiring the long-term data for such research – especially on large, group-living carnivores, which may be particularly conflict-prone – is not easy because of the enormous financial and temporal demands involved. We assessed for the first time the Darwinian fitness and the physiological effects of a common human activity – livestock herding – in light of the biology and social system of our wildlife species”, explains first author Arjun Dheer, doctoral student at the Leibniz-IZW.

The investigation was conducted on eight clans of spotted hyenas (*Crocuta crocuta*) living in the Ngorongoro Crater, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in northern Tanzania. “Livestock grazing and using mineral licks occurred predictably on a near-daily basis within the territories of two of our eight study clans between 1996 and 2016”, adds Dheer. This created a natural experiment of exposed and unexposed clans which the scientists exploited.

“We tested whether the hyenas of the exposed clans had fewer surviving offspring than the unexposed hyenas and whether the herding activities increased the physiological ‘stress’ of the hyenas”, explains Dr Oliver Höner (Leibniz-IZW), head of the Ngorongoro Hyena Project and senior author of the paper.

To assess the fitness effects, the scientists used 24 years of detailed demographic data from the eight clans and to estimate physiological stress, they measured the concentration of glucocorticoid metabolites (fGMC) in 975 faeces from 475 hyenas. The team also accounted for the effects of additional ecological parameters such as disease



PC: Oliver Höner



PC: Arjun Dheer

outbreaks and the abundance of African lions (*Panthera leo*), the hyenas’ main competitor, and of prey. The main result was that hyena clans exposed to Maasai pastoralists moving through their territory with their livestock had similar juvenile recruitment and fGMC levels as unexposed clans. “Our results suggest that the hyenas in the Ngorongoro Crater coped well with daytime pastoralism”, explains Dheer.

A likely explanation for the lack of detectable effect on hyenas is that the activity was predictable and minimally disruptive because it occurred during daytime. “Hyenas are mostly nocturnal when it comes to critical behaviours such as hunting”, explains Höner. Even if pastoralist activities forced other critical hyena behaviours such as the nursing of young cubs into nighttime, it might not have been too much of an adjustment for them to make.

“Spotted hyenas are behaviourally flexible. In other areas, they were observed to move their cubs to dens further away from the paths that pastoralists used, or to nurse more at night”, Höner says. The authors caution that such results should not be extrapolated in an uncritical fashion. “In areas where pastoralism is more intense and environmental conditions such as the abundance of wild prey are less favourable than in the Ngorongoro Crater, pastoralist activities may well have a significant detrimental effect even on a behaviourally highly flexible species such as the spotted hyena”, explains Höner.

“Our investigation highlights the need to develop evidence-based coexistence strategies within a local context to benefit both stakeholders and wildlife. It also underscores the importance of interpreting the effects of human activity in light of the socio-ecology of the species of conservation interest”, concludes Victoria Shayo (Head, Department of Wildlife and Rangeland Management, Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority).

Additional scientific analyses that cover a variety of anthropogenic activities and species – and that measure effects on fitness and physiology – will be conducive to promoting human-wildlife coexistence. 🐾🐾

Read the full article here: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1365-2656.13812>

Film Review

A Nomads’ legend keeps the Indian wolf alive: An unconventional conservation story

The documentary ‘Walking With Wolves’ follows a wolf family and nomadic shepherds in a three-year journey that throws up many surprises.

By Nayantara Narayanan

Source: Scroll.in



PC: Krupakar-Senani

After searching for six months, Senani Hegde, Krupakar and Joseph Raja almost gave up their quest for the Indian wolf in south-central India. Put on the trail of the elusive animal by a wildlife enthusiast, the trio set out to document the life of the wolf but could find no signs of it on the arid plains. However, when they changed tack and started following nomadic tribes, they not only saw the wolf but also uncovered an unusual belief that has possibly helped keep the Indian wolf alive.

“Wolves are generally hated by everybody,” said Raja. “But initially, the nomads seemed over-protective of the wolf.” After half a year of looking for wolf tracks and observing the wandering tribes, the filmmakers finally saw an old male wolf with one of its ears bent. Obviously, they called him Bent Ear.

The film they made over the next three years became Walking With Wolves, which won the wildlife conservation film award this year at the Centre for Media Studies’ Vatavaran festival. The filmmakers show how Bent Ear survived many years in the Raichur area, where wilderness has been taken over by farming and grazing and where wolves are regularly hunted or poisoned to protect domestic animals.

Several surprises

The filmmakers were in for a series of surprises while working on the project. First, they realised that Bent Ear had a female partner and sub-adult children. In the absence of prey, the wolf family fed on berries and bananas. The filmmakers learnt from the nomads that wily Bent Ear knew how to penetrate their sheep pens. They observed his son learning to do the same.

They saw Bent Ear avoiding food too conveniently placed, as though he suspected it might be poisoned. They filmed the death of the cubs by poisoning but also the birth of a new litter.

But the biggest surprise came to them in the attitude of the nomadic people towards the wolf. Unlike local farmers, the nomads never chased, hunted or hurt the wolves. The filmmakers soon uncovered a legend of three brothers, one of whom is cheated out of his share by the other two. He leaves but not before bestowing a curse that he would come back to claim his due. The tribesmen consider the wolf to be that brother, returning to take what’s rightfully his. It’s possible that this fraternal feeling between the tribe and the wolf saved Bent Ear and his family.

Despite its importance as an apex predator in the central Indian ecosystem, the Indian wolf is one of the least-studied animals. It is one of two wolf species found on the Indian subcontinent, the other being the Himalayan wolf. Yadvendradev Jhala, a scientist at the Wildlife Institute of India, has studied wolves for decades but even he can only make an educated guess that there are between 2,000 and 3,000 Indian wolves in peninsular India. Few people know anything about the animal. Protecting it is almost impossible.

“The wolves don’t live in forests, they live outside forest areas,” Jhala said. “They are endangered and on Schedule I but it is very difficult to enforce the law because they are outside the protected area network.”

Ashwin Aghor can only guess at the number of wolves in the Ahmednagar district

of Maharashtra where he works. Aghor is the director of projects at EnviroCare Welfare Society that has conducted work to reduce animal conflict with humans. The projects include building water holes for animals. Aghor has no doubt that the wolf population has crashed in the last 30 years or so.

Rare sightings

“From conversations with shepherds, we find that the sightings of wolves were very frequent and now they are very rare,” he said. “A person who is 70 years old will say that when he was 30 years old he would have seen 20 wolves in a day. Now he doesn’t even see 20 in a month.”

According to Jhala what the wolf desperately needs are refuges across the agro-pastoral landscapes of India. These might be a few square kilometres that haven’t yet been touched by people, like the sacred groves in Rajasthan and Gujarat. They could turn into safe sites for breeding and rearing wolf pups. “But these refuges are fast vanishing because of extractive uses by people and encroachment by agriculture,” he said.

Walking With Wolves might only be the beginning of an investigation into the lives of wolves in India. The film discovered another animal with a wolf-like appearance hanging around Bent Ear’s den and playing with his new litter. Was letting another adult into his family Bent Ear’s new survival strategy? “That’s a mystery,” said Raja. “That animal came at the end of our work. It just showed us one aspect and we said ‘now we have more questions.’” 🐾🐾

Publications

National Wool Report

Desi Oon Hamara Apna: An Assessment of the State of Value Chains for Indigenous Raw Wool in India.

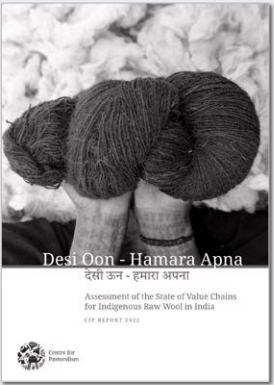
A summary by Madhu Ramaswamy

In 2018-20, the Centre for Pastoralism (CfP) carried out an assessment of the sheep wool value chains in India. The assessment was inspired by the Living Lightly Exhibition (2016), where discussions highlighted the deteriorating conditions of shepherds and wool artisans across the country.

This study is based on a survey of seven states spread across three regions: Gujarat and Rajasthan (Western); Telangana, Karnataka and Maharashtra (Deccan); and Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh (Himalayan). We interviewed multiple actors including individuals working with local NGOs on

the sheep wool economy, wool traders, members of pastoral communities, artisans and government officials working in state wool procurement agencies.

The research indicated that there was a sharp fall in prices and demand for indigenous sheep wool and woollen products, leading to loss of livelihood options for the herders as well as wool artisans. CfP and a group of organisations have since come together to revitalize the indigenous wool economy through diverse ongoing initiatives. The Desi Oon Festival to be held from the 16th to the 20th of December, 2022, at the Triveni Kala Sangam, New Delhi, is among these. 🐾🐾





Book Review

Living the Good Life in a Hole in the Ground

By Li Juan

Li Juan spent minus-20-degree nights with nomadic herders in the Chinese steppes. You'll want to join her.

What is it about stories of survival under extreme conditions that makes them so enthralling, that can even leave some readers hankering to emulate them? “I wanted to live in one room with my whole family and have a pathetic corncob doll all my own,” wrote Wendy McClure in her charming 2011 memoir, *The Wilder Life*, about the lengths she went to, as a child and an adult, in her devotion to Laura Ingalls Wilder’s *Little House on the Prairie* books. You may not have gone as far as McClure, who slept in a fiberglass covered wagon on the South Dakota prairie, but you’ve probably wondered how well you’d hold up during a Wilder family winter, or on a frigate, ice-bound in the Arctic Sea.

This fascination with life in harsh, remote landscapes is not exclusive to Americans, either, judging by Li Juan’s *Winter Pasture* (translated by Jack Hargreaves and Yan Yan), the account of a winter the Chinese essayist spent living in, essentially, a hole in the ground with Kazakh herders in northwestern China. In this tale of age-old human ingenuity and perseverance, the smallest pleasures—a piece of candy, a new red hat, a visit from a distant neighbour—pop with a luminosity that our cornucopia of contemporary consumer goodies cannot rival. People can figure out how to survive under the most punishing circumstances, and learning about how these people do it—how they have done it for centuries—makes *Winter Pasture* an unlikely but inspiring getaway read for the late pandemic.

A celebrated writer in her homeland—although one who, as the translator Eric Brahmansen explained to me in an email, “very much came from the periphery of the Chinese literary establishment”—Li is a member of the Han ethnic majority. Eschewing the Beijing scene, she lives in Xinjiang province, where her mother runs a small general store patronized by Kazakh nomads in search of rope and other essential supplies. In a typical moment of disarming honesty, Li admits that one reason why Cuma, a middle-aged herdsman, agreed to let her accompany his family on a three-day journey to the vast, frigid steppes south of the Ulungur River is that he owed her mother money and she offered to cancel his debt—which no one expected him ever to pay off. (Historically, the Han majority has had a colonial relationship with the Kazakhs, who are Muslims, and the Chinese government has detained and persecuted Muslim ethnic minorities in the Xinjiang region, most notably the Uyghurs. If this context affected Li’s interactions with the Kazakh herders she visited, she does not say so.)

Nevertheless, Cuma and his family made Li work for her keep. As pastoral people, these ethnic Kazakhs drive herds of sheep, cattle, horses, camels, and goats from one grazing area to another according to the season. Their winter pastures, owned by the herders’ clans, are vast expanses of low-lying dunes consisting of little more than grass, sand, and (if the herders are lucky) snow. This landscape is so sparse in resources that if the herders need mud—and they usually do need it for insulating their stoves and other uses—they must make it from the dirt they’ve hauled along with them. In the winter of 2010, when Li was there, the temperature got as low as 20 degrees Fahrenheit below zero. (Her hand cream froze solid in its tube.) One of Li’s chores was to march off into the desert, looking for spots where a slight ridge provided enough of a block to the wind to allow snow to accumulate. She’d pack as much snow as she could into a large bag and arrive back at camp, bent over nearly double under the load, bearing the camp’s only source of water.

Technology eases path for the weary nomads in J&K

The nomadic communities of Jammu & Kashmir have been offered smart cards and free transport to aid their biannual migration

By Peerzada Ashiq From: The Hindu

For centuries, Jammu and Kashmir’s nomadic community, known as Gujjars and Bakerwals, have undertaken arduous journeys on foot as part of their seasonal migration to find better pastures for their livestock. They often lose cattle and, on occasion, family members to accidents and hardships along the way. However, technological solutions and transport services have been offered this year to help them cover long distances in less time and more safely.

J&K’s Tribal Affairs Department has surveyed 98,000 such families to map their routes and transit locations. “Technology has been leveraged in various aspects, including the development of smart cards to replace multiple annual (No Objection Certificates) NOCs and permissions for migration. A pilot project covers 10,000 families over the next three months,” Dr. Shahid Iqbal Chaudhary, Secretary to the Tribal Affairs Department, told The Hindu.

Using remote sensing technology and geographic information system, officials delineated pastures and the grazing land in each district. This step was followed by mapping of routes and the migration pattern to understand when Bakerwals and their livestock use the highways, first in spring when they start from the plains of Jammu and then in autumn when they leave the upper reaches of the Kashmir valley. A communication network was worked out and radio messaging was used to reach those grazing livestock in the upper reaches to relay messages about free transportation and the halting points.

The Tribal Affairs department also collaborated with the Forest Department and the Census Operations Department to provide smart cards to tribal families. “The smart cards will replace the multiple permission regime and offer a unified central database to all the organisations and agencies for smooth and hassle-free movement of families during the biannual vertical migration,” Mr. Chaudhary said.

Embedded with a chip, the smart card contains demographic details, transit routes, originating place, destination and other vital statistics.

Every year, Niyaz Khatana, 67, his wife, two younger brothers and four children, migrate from the Jammu region’s Rajouri in May, when the temperature soars and becomes unbearable for cattle. They walk along the Mughal Road for 230 km distance to reach Margan Top in south Kashmir, where the highland meadows offer a cooler environment during summers. Thereafter, they trek up to subalpine and alpine meadows and grazing pastures along with their sheep, the main source of income for the family.

“It takes two or three days to reach our bahaks (traditional mud huts) from Margan Top to



PC: Nissar Ahmad

grazing pastures. From May till October, sheep live in pastures surrounding Margan Top and are able to gain weight due to quality grass available in these areas,” Mr. Khatana said.

However, after working hard for four months on sheep-rearing, the journey gets difficult and dangerous when they return to the Jammu plains from Kashmir’s hills in September or October.

“I lost 112 sheep to a speeding truck on the Kokernag-Shopian highway in the middle of the night in 2017. In 2015, our family got stuck and lost cattle due to the harsh weather on Mughal Road (which connects Shopian valley with the plains of Poonch),” Mr. Khatana said.

Transhumance refers to the practice of moving animals to different fields in different seasons. According to the first-ever survey conducted by the Tribal Affairs Department on transhumance in 2022, around 98,000 families undertake biannual vertical migrations in Jammu and Kashmir. Close to 12,000 of these families use the Mughal Road and the Srinagar-Jammu national highway.

“Their journey takes 30-45 days end-to-end, out of which more than half is on roads, involving several transits and halts. Hundreds of animals and even several people were lost in accidents during migration. They also cause traffic obstruction,” Dr. Chaudhary said.

However, the journey to the plains along these highways has eased this year after the intervention from the government.

“In April 2022, the department provided transport for families and livestock during migration, mainly on

highways and the Mughal Road. This move is also an outcome of policy collaboration with the University of Shkoder, Albania,” Dr. Chaudhary said.

Fifty trucks and 100 light commercial vehicles were deployed and Deputy Commissioners were authorised to hire vehicles to ferry nomads and their livestock safely on the highways. The service is presently offered in 13 districts.

“Out of 13 districts, Anantnag, Shopian, Ganderbal and Pulwama are focus areas with maximum migration followed by Kupwara, Baramulla and Bandipora. Ten trucks each, along with lighter vehicles, were provided in Anantnag, Shopian and Ganderbal,” Dr. Chaudhary said.

He said two transit accommodations have been arranged and work on seven such facilities is going on. “More than 12,000 families will be provided services over a period of one month up to October 25 this year,” he added.

The free transport service will see families travelling from Kashmir to Khwas and Budhal in Rajouri, Akhnoor in Jammu, Mendhar in Poonch and Mansar in Samba, reducing their travel time considerably and saving the livestock from any natural disaster on the highways. “In the first four days of the launch of the service in September, 1,688 families have been provided transport services across all districts,” Dr. Chaudhary said.

The Tribal Affairs Department has sent messages to people in dhoks (mud hutments) in the upper reaches. Announcements were also made on the radio and several help desks were established at roadside points to inform the nomadic families about the transport service.

In this inhospitable landscape, the herders make the most of one remarkably versatile material: sheep manure. Unlike the droppings of their other livestock, sheep manure is neither too wet nor too dry. It can be formed and dried into bricks, which the herders use to line the walls of their shelters, called “burrows,” 6-foot-deep pits dug into the side of a dune. The burrows are tight quarters, about 100 feet square, accommodating a sleeping platform (also made of sheep manure bricks), a tiny kitchen, and a stove (which burns sheep manure). The pens where the animals spend the night are similarly built of sheep manure, the bricks formed into walls that, as Li puts it, “magically, continuously radiate heat.” The herders cover the walls of their burrows with hangings famed for their elaborate needlework, creating a snug, colourful living space where they spend the

very long winter nights. Going outside after dark isn’t an option, on account of the wolves.

*Winter Pasture* features some beautiful writing, particularly when describing the landscape, whose extraordinary flatness allowed Li to “fully feel the roundness of the earth—the earth curved down in all directions as our team of camels inched along the crest of the sphere.” It’s a place where twilight barely exists and when night comes on, “darkness, like a kettle of water, fills the world.”

Read the full article here: [https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1R6b8\\_JGdPJVa\\_bR1LHRUTD21nOuU75DpT3--OvPkb64/edit#gid=0](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1R6b8_JGdPJVa_bR1LHRUTD21nOuU75DpT3--OvPkb64/edit#gid=0)





Kashmir’s Bakarwal tribe faces existential crisis

By Zaid Bin Shabir, Photographs by Abid Bhat From: BBC News



In Indian-administered Kashmir, a nomadic tribe is struggling to maintain its traditional lifestyle in the face of changing forest landscapes and weather conditions.

“People try to paint a rosy picture of our life but ours is, in fact, a saga of endurance and miseries,” says Liaqat Khan, a shepherd from the Bakarwal tribe.

The Bakarwals are part of a 3.4 million-strong nomadic community of the Jammu and Kashmir region, whose primary occupation is rearing cattle.

At around 55km (34.17 miles) from Srinagar - the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir - they camp in Dardwodur forests.



Nazira and her family have been camping in the alpine forests

Nazira, 30, is a skinny mother cradling her newborn here. Her tribe arrived three days ago and camped on the alpine heights.

“It’s time for us to start winter migration,” Nazira says, as she sticks her head out from her makeshift tent.

For years, the Bakarwal tribe has been shuttling between Jammu and Kashmir. They spend six months in Kashmir during summer, arriving in the valley in April. By October, they return to the plains of Jammu for the winter.

“We belong to nowhere,” says Zulfi, a young Bakarwal girl in Kashmir. “This is just our summer home.”

The Bakarwals were officially declared as a “scheduled tribe” - tribal communities recognised by India’s Constitution as socially and economically disadvantaged - by the federal government in 2001.

Today, the tribe fears for the endurance of its traditional lifestyle due to increased wild animal attacks on their cattle - their main source of income.

Sale of their livestock has also dwindled.

“Earlier, a day of hard work would fetch a good amount of money for a sheep or a goat but not anymore,” says Mohammed Zubair, 50, a disabled nomad camped on the outskirts of Srinagar.

The community also struggles with increased instances of inclement weather. “It’s extremely difficult to travel to the high-altitude pastures of the Himalayas,” says Liaqat Khan.

In June, unseasonal snowfall and severe cold weather conditions in Chenab valley of Jammu and Kashmir left hundreds of tribal families stuck on roadsides, with little food or fodder.



In recent years, the tribe has struggled to maintain their livelihood



The community also struggles with increased instances of inclement weather

Another major concern for the tribe is their access to forest lands.

Last year, hundreds of families from the community were served eviction notices for “illegally” occupying forests in which they have lived for decades. Authorities also demolished several houses - the community lives in temporary tents and mud huts in these areas.

A few months later, however, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha said authorities would work to safeguard the rights of tribal communities in the region and provide them with rights certificates.

The harsh realities of their current existence are pushing the tribe’s younger generation to focus on getting a good education and living an easier life.

The administration has also set up community schools to educate children of such tribes in forest areas.

Despite various kinds of pressures on the community, many say they are determined to stick to their traditional lifestyle.

“We aren’t giving up on anything,” says Zulfi. “Although we are uncertain about our lives, we are firmly holding on to our traditions, no matter what.”



Access to forest lands is a major concern for the tribe. Many in the tribe are determined to keep their traditions alive

Around the World

The Cattle Economy of the Maasai

The Maasai people of East Africa built a pastoral way of life around their cattle, but the modern market economy has threatened to override the economy of bovine exchange.

From National Geographic Society

Cattle are the traditional partners of the Maasai people of East Africa. One of the most vibrant indigenous societies on the continent, the pastoralist Maasai built an economy and way of life deeply intertwined with their cattle herds in the Great Rift Valley of southern Kenya and northern Tanzania. In their worldview, the creator god Enkai sent the cattle sliding down a rope from the heavens into their safekeeping. The herding practices of the Maasai, central to their cultural identity, have come under tremendous pressure in recent decades.

Since they arrived in the Rift Valley’s savanna four centuries ago, the Maasai have lived a migratory, pastoral lifestyle. Warriors—traditionally young men and boys—are responsible for protecting the cattle from predators and herding them to water sources and pasture land. The flocks roam to new areas with the changing of the seasons, a practice that allows the grasslands to regenerate. Maasai women are in charge of milking the cows as well as looking after the home and children. In Maasai tradition, land is viewed as a common resource, to be shared equally but under careful



PC: Ton Koene

management that ensures its sustainable use. During severe droughts, for example, grazing may be extended into marginal lands that would otherwise be rarely used.

The Maasai have historically depended on their cattle in meeting all of their basic needs: food, clothing and shelter. Their traditional diet relies heavily on milk and dairy products, lean beef and other meats, cattle fat and blood, on which they depend for their salt intake. Several cooking utensils and drinking vessels are traditionally made from cattle rib bones and horns. Its hides have often been employed for bedding materials and for the walls or roofs of temporary shelters. More permanent houses include a plaster made from bovine dung and urine. For many years they clothed themselves in garments known as shuka, made from cowhide. Some still use its leather to make sandals.

Cattle represent the fundamental currency in traditional Maasai society. Families seek to accumulate large herds to demonstrate their wealth and status. They are sold and bartered in many kinds of exchanges involving goods and services. The Maasai have no central political structure, so it is common for cattle to change hands as part of diplomatic relations between clans. Cattle are almost always part of a young woman’s bride price, delivered by the groom to the bride’s family. A man may take more than one wife if he is wealthy enough—and this wealth, of course, is denominated in cattle. A community will offer one or more cattle as a gift to a young warrior who exhibits exceptional bravery, and by the same token, payment in cattle may also be demanded as a fine for dishonourable or criminal behaviour.

The Maasai have sought to protect their unique cultural heritage and autonomy from the time of British colonialism through the establishment of independent Tanzania and Kenya in the early

1960s and into the 21st century. In recent years, the greatest threats to the Maasai way of life have arisen from the spread of the commercial market economy. Their highly developed and ritualized barter system, organized around the currency of cattle, has had to give way to the wider commercial economy founded upon nonindigenous concepts of property and value.

Specifically, a shift toward private ownership and titling of land has had a drastic impact on the pastoral Maasai and their traditional methods of caring for their livestock. Vast areas of savanna that were formerly managed collectively have been subdivided and put to new uses, including private ranching, agriculture and commercial development. The demise of communal land tenure created new levels of economic inequality among the Maasai.

With greater pressure and competition for access to pasture land, much of the available land has been overgrazed, resulting in a reduction in herd sizes.

The Maasai have also been displaced from large stretches of territory that have been designated as national parks and wildlife conservation reserves. The Maasai region has become a popular destination for safaris and wildlife tourism, bringing modest economic benefits to the area. However, Maasai pastoralists are barred at most times of the year from accessing important grazing and water sources located within these sites, bringing about major disruptions to cattle migration patterns.

The future of one of Africa’s proudest and most fiercely independent indigenous societies is thus gravely endangered. With their pastoral livelihoods threatened, many Maasai have taken up other ways of making a living, such as farming or working in the tourist trade. The global economy of money and land appears to be supplanting the Maasai economy of bovine flesh.



# Inspired by the Peoli: Textiles that Emerge between the River and the Forest

By Vasanthi Veluri From: Shepherds of Himalayas

## Peoli – Spring Bloom and the Birth of Our Design Studio

Peoli (*Reinwardtia indica*) is a wild shrub with yellow flowers, which bloom during the spring all along the hills of Uttarakhand. The bright yellow is symbolic of hope and warmth when it appears after the long harsh winter; hence the Peoli flower holds a valuable place in local folklore. Uttarakhand – a mountain state is blessed with a bounty of natural resources – fresh air, dense oak forests and crystal clear water streams. Borrowing our name and philosophy from nature and the local wildflower Peoli, my fellow batchmate and design graduate from the National Institute of Design, Abhinav Dhoundiyal, and I set up our brand in 2015. Our design studio is based in Almora located at the southern edge of the Kumaon Hills of the Himalayan range where we work with women artisans to develop a range of handmade woollen and cotton products.

## Sustenance with Sustainability

A strong belief in celebrating indigenous textile traditions forms the basis of our approach. Simple, functional, and aesthetic products have been derived from the local craft vocabulary using natural materials and dyes, for consumers who are sensitive

about the resources used in the making of the item they purchase. Handcrafted from their origin, these products are a celebration of the essence of 'the Handmade', of the agile fingertips measuring each length of yarn, of the lyrical narratives of the counted woven picks and knitted stitches and the sensory experience of the granular earthy materials. Carded wool, cotton, silk, nettle and hemp are spun into soft supple yarn using a hand-held spindle or a Bageshwari Charkha, a foot-operated spinning wheel of indigenous make, and further hand-woven, knitted and stitched into contemporary garments. Each of these products is dyed using natural colours, dyes, or colourants derived from natural sources. While helping keep our carbon footprint low, natural substances are soothing materials for the makers as well as the users in their respective contexts. Natural dyes produce living color – a unique hue each time, color as it matures and ages, pays a tribute to the Sun, Water, Soil and Wind, and celebrates the story of the source from which it has been cultivated.

Through our work, we propose a locally fuelled model of sustainable development. Indigenous raw materials like Harsil wool, Tibetan wool, nettle, hemp and dyestuffs sourced from local farming communities are used to craft winter and summer apparel. Ahimsa or Eri silk which

is a variety of silk obtained without harming the silkworms, indigenous old world cotton—more resilient and less water consuming than other varieties of cotton, grown without any synthetic fertilizers in arid climatic conditions and Merino wool imported from New Zealand are combined with the indigenous fibres to enhance their comfort and aesthetic appeal. A similar synthesis is applied in crafting the products where local craft skills like handloom weaving and knitting are ingeniously merged with hand embroidery, beadwork, shibori, etc.

The synergy of various activities at our organization is a conscious effort towards the conservation of natural resources and leaving a light carbon footprint in the process. Harvested rainwater heated with solar energy is used for natural dyeing. Hand-done processes like hand stitching, hand spinning, etc. are used wherever possible to utilize unlimited human energy and reduce our dependence upon machines and non-renewable sources of energy. Earth-friendly chemicals and materials are used for the processing of textile materials.

As a resource centre, we have been able to maintain a wide vocabulary of natural materials such as locally sourced dyestuffs such as walnut

hulls, rhododendron flowers, the seed covering of *Mallotus philippensis* and indigenous fibres such as Himalayan nettle and hemp and Harsil wool, colours and natural dyeing recipes and various woven and knitted patterns, which have rich references for designing products and have helped us in creating an aesthetic fusion of craft traditions and contemporary fashion.



Read the full article by Vasanthi Veluri on

<http://www.shepherdsofhimalayas.com/inspired-by-the-peoli.html>

# The Yak Herders of Arunachal Pradesh

By Nikita Deshpande

Far away in the deep, dense mountain valleys of northeastern India lives a semi-nomadic community of yak herders known as the Brokpas. They are a part of the Monpa tribe, who since ancient times, have inhabited the areas around southeastern Tibet or the lower reaches of the Brahmaputra river. Presently, about 38,862 (according to the 1991 census) of them reside in the districts of Tawang and West Kameng of Arunachal Pradesh in India. They are followers of Tibetan Buddhism while retaining some of their traditional shamanist practices.

The Brokpas domesticate and rear the yak and its crossbreeds colloquially known as the Dzo, Dzomo, Kot, Sing Kot, Balang etc. Come summer and the Brokpas set off to the higher and cooler climes suitable for their yaks to graze and sustain themselves. In preparation for this yearly sojourn, the herders equip themselves with sufficient food stocks, bedding items, utensils, raw materials and animal feeds. As the summer intensifies, they move to higher altitudes, setting and shifting up to three camps in the entire season. Once they are settled at the mountain top in their makeshift brang-khem (temporary huts made from stone and wood), other villagers visit them - offering Ara (local wine made of processed millet and rice) and there is song and dance - to commemorate the successful climb. The Brokpas then spend the next four months in the high mountains - milking the yaks in the morning and evening and looking after them while they scatter and graze during the day. The herders return to their villages by the time winter comes knocking on the door.



PC: Ritayan Mukherjee

obtained from the yak such as milk, mar (local butter) chhur (local cheese) are consumed as well as sold. Yak meat called ya-sha is sold by the Brokpas though they generally refrain from consuming it themselves. In earlier times, the herders used to trade their dairy products with the villagers in exchange for other basic necessities such as grains, spices and vegetables. Even though the community has now adapted to the monetary system with butter and cheese priced at Rs.300 and Rs.350 per kilo respectively, they fail to find any organised market for their products. Nevertheless, one can find these herders huddled by the roadside and setting up shop during the local festivals of Losar (traditional new year) and Torgya (annual festival of the Tawang monastery).

Yak wool (known as Ya-Bai) is used in making garments. Generally, men wear a traditionally designed black-and-red thick woollen jacket called Chhupa (woven from the outer hair of the yak) and also a thin jacket called Khanjar (woven from the inner hair of the yak). Women wear a red-coloured and grey-striped long silk dress known as Shinka along with a red or grey-coloured cloth called Totung.

While the Brokpa men herd yaks on the high mountains, the women of the household stay in

the villages and grow crops like wheat, millet, rice, potato and maize. The Monpas like their food to be spicy and thus chillies are extensively used in their food preparations. Generous servings of butter and fermented cheese are used in every delicacy given the fat-rich food's ability to protect them against the biting cold. Chamin, a local chutney made by grinding chillies with fermented cheese, is a popular side dish prepared in almost every household. Some Monpas are non-vegetarian and prefer eating beef, pork, yak, mutton, chicken and fish over vegetables. Besides the popular northeastern fare like thukpas and momos, a variety of other dishes contribute to the making of the Monpa cuisine. Zan is their staple food, which is prepared by adding millets or another kind of flour to boiling water. It is

generally consumed with vegetables, meat, chamin or with fermented cheese or soybeans. They also make noodles out of buckwheat flour called puta. Khazi is another dish made by mixing cooked rice with finely chopped maanpatta, a local vegetable (similar to spring onion leaves), chamin and salt. Bresi is sweetened rice prepared mainly on festive occasions. Khapse is a fried savoury item prepared mainly on Losar (local new year). Again, the fermentation of yak milk yields a product called Chhurpi which is another dish loved by the community.

Surplus meat, if available, is preserved by drying in the sun and applying salt so it can be used later in winter. On important social occasions, the Monpas drink copious amounts of their favourite alcoholic beverage called Chang - made by fermenting and distilling grains of rice, maize, millets and barley. Different varieties of Chang are prepared to suit different occasions and tastes. Another drink known to soothe their senses in the freezing cold is the salty butter tea - made by churning crude tea leaves, yak milk,

butter and salt in long cylindrical wooden jars. Being cut off from the plains and the mainland has enabled the Monpas to preserve their culture, traditions and practices. However, the isolated herding community has not remained untouched by modernisation. Rather than covering the high mountain passes on foot, they now make arrangements for transportation (e.g. vehicles) while shifting camps. The younger generation, having received a formal education, seems not so keen on continuing their family's traditional occupation and is looking for better economic opportunities elsewhere. Given the situation, there is a dire need for the government and other institutions to intervene if the pastoral lifestyle and all its contributions are to be protected.

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Nikita Deshpande is currently working with the research team of a development consulting firm in Bangalore. She has completed her post-graduation in rural management from the Institute of Rural Management, Anand and has been working in the social development sector for about 4 years now. Her research interests lie in the areas of agriculture, livelihoods, environment, and women empowerment.

The yak is central to the lives and livelihoods of the Brokpas and the Monpas. Dairy products



Photo Essay

# Jamnagar's 'swimming camels' in deep waters

By Ritayan Mukherjee, P. Sainath and Binaifer Bharucha

A variety of evidence indicates that the unique Kharai camel breed of Jamnagar and the Rabari community of camel pastoralists that coexist with them have resided around the area's mangroves for centuries. This includes its remarkable adaptation to swimming and to the saltwater of the Marine National Park and Sanctuary (MNP&S) as also anecdotal records of the community's history. The area's rich ecological diversity, which includes coral reefs, mangrove forests, sandy beaches, mudflats, creeks, rocky coastline, seagrass beds and more, suggest that the camel and its herders have been benign or actively beneficial residents.

And yet the pastoralists' continued access to the region is threatened by the Forest Department, which believes the animals overgraze and deplete vegetative cover. In the meanwhile, several industrial and other commercial activities are having an obvious and seriously detrimental effect on the ecosystem that goes largely unchallenged. The following photo essay from Ritayan Mukherjee, P. Sainath and Binaifer Bharucha tells us the codependent story of the herders, their herd and the marine ecosystem.



Jethabhai Rabari looking for his herd of camels at the Marine National Park area in Khambaliya taluka of Devbhumi Dwarka district



Rabaris and their herd in the creeks of the Gulf of Kachchh



The Kharai camels swim to the mangroves as the water rises with high tide





Jethabhai Rabari (left) and Dudabhai Rabari making tea after grazing their camels in Khambaliya



Bhikabhai Rabari accompanies his grazing camels by swimming alongside them



Magnificent Kharai camels about to get into the water to swim to the bets (mangrove islands)



Jagabhai Rabari and his wife Jiviben Khambhala own 60 camels in Beh village of Khambaliya taluka, Devbhumi Dwarka district. 'My livelihood depends on them. If they are happy and healthy, so am I,' Jagabhai says.



There are about 1,180 camels that graze within the Marine National Park and Sanctuary



Around the World

# ‘We have travelled for a month to find grass’

climate crisis piles pressure on Senegal’s herders

By Kaamil Ahmed **From:** The Guardian

Perched on the edge of a cart packed with a dozen young goats and pulled by a donkey, Abou Sow drives his family’s convoy at pace. They are heading south, from Senegal’s Sahelian northern landscapes to more fertile land still green after the dry season.

Most of the travelling group are teenagers, or in their early 20s, part of a new generation adopting a pastoralist lifestyle that faces the challenges of the climate crisis and of shifting attitudes towards herders.

“There’s no water, there’s no grass near our homes, so we have travelled now for a month,” says Sow, 18, who is heading for Tambacounda, a town that has long been on the route for Fulani herders. “We don’t have a choice. Our goats and cows need to eat and drink so we follow the road to wherever is greener. We don’t know where we will end up.”

The uncertainty goes beyond the journey ahead of him to the future of pastoralism as a livelihood. His home region of Louga, in Senegal’s semi-arid northwest, has experienced increasingly harsh conditions – prolonged droughts followed by heavy rains – forcing moves farther south.

Sow thinks the government could do more to help support the herders when they are struggling to feed their livestock and has questioned government policy that banned pastoralists from moving beyond the region during the Covid-19 pandemic, even during the dry season. Efforts to protect the environment such as the Great Green Wall, a project to plant trees in the Sahel, pose a problem for herders who travel long distances around areas reserved for the project.

But Sow is proud of the pastoralist culture he has inherited, which he believes must continue even when it often seems more stable to become a farmer.

The young men who guard Sow’s family herd have already left in search of suitable grazing land. Sow is following behind with the women and children. Everything they need to eat and to set up camp is packed onto wooden carts whose wheels creak as they rattle over the uneven ground.

The path is difficult. The family members sleep outside and draw water from wells as they travel on tracks that run parallel to the smooth, freshly tarmacked roads connecting neighbouring Mali to the ports in the capital, Dakar.

At regular intervals, they encounter other livestock herds at watering holes or being escorted by young men, tasked by relatives to keep the cattle fed until rains bring vegetation back to their villages. They can be away for months.

Read the full article by Kaamil Ahmed at <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/jul/22/climate-crisis-piles-pressure-on-senegal-herders>



PC: Andy Hall

“We leave the village and stop somewhere and stay around there for a week or two and then we move again to the next place. It’s tough; you walk until your legs hurt”, says Aliou Ndong, 21, who has helped herd his uncle’s livestock since he was a boy.

Ndong carries only a stick and a jerry can of water as he nonchalantly walks among the two dozen cows of his herd, guiding them with sharp whistles away from nearby agricultural land, where a farmer’s son watches on horseback.

Ndong says a lot has changed since the time of his father’s generation. Herders now have less grazing land close to home and must travel farther south and stray from traditional pastoral corridors.

“It’s harder for our generation, we struggle to get food for our cows. Previous generations didn’t have to come as far as us, they would be able to stay closer to the village. The environment has changed and that forces us to go further. The trees have been cut to make fields and there is not much open grass for us.”

Pastoralism in Senegal and the wider Sahel region has changed drastically over recent decades. As well as adapting to changing landscapes caused by the climate crisis, herders have been forced to change their routes as more land is used for agriculture.

Migrating herders have long-standing relationships with farmers to whom they sell their products, but competition for land can create tension, with farmers accusing herders of damaging crops. Ndong is occasionally told by farmers that he cannot pass through a village, and is thus forced to take longer routes around farms.

“It’s no longer just the herds moving through large spaces of vegetation, it’s now about navigating between settled areas and farms.”- Alex Orenstein, data scientist. —pull out quote

Elsewhere, as in neighbouring Mali, such tensions have intensified into larger conflicts, in which pastoralists are discriminated against and even targeted in massacres because of their perceived associations with armed groups that draw from the same ethnic groups.

## The Land that Flows with Milk is a Land of Abundant Fertility

By Shreshtha Chhabra

Milk, synonymous with spirituality, has been placed on a pedestal of worship by communities due to its transformational qualities. However, humans consumed dairy products made from animal milk much before the milk itself. Dairy products like yoghurt, cheese and fermented milk were the initial forms of animal milk products used for consumption. A surprise discovery, this curdling transformation occurred in transit across long distances. Collected milk came in contact with the rennet enzyme in bags made of intestines, resulting in leftover curd solids.

Our relationship with dairy is closely knit throughout the course of human evolution—traversing across borders, this bond strengthens as we reach the Indian subcontinent. Considered sacred, milk is offered to gods, kings and consumed by the bourgeois alike. It holds prevalence in the scriptures, Vedas and even bedtime stories to lure children by crediting milk-drinking strong men who won battles.

It is presumed that humans first drank animal milk in the present-day region of the Middle East, obviating the necessity of wet nurses. Wet nurses were appointed to replace biological mothers who were unable to lactate after childbirth. The Greeks, bent upon ticking off all boxes before appointing a wet nurse, underwent a rigorous process to develop this selection. They believed that behavioural characteristics of the nurse would transfer to their children while feeding. Thus, overlords carefully chose the wet nurse after examining her temperament, health, skills and so on. However, this wouldn’t solve suspicions of child exchange that resurfaced among the elite. Gradually, the ‘nurse’ element had to be scrapped from the equation and replaced by animal milk. Sourced from the nearest cattle, the milk had to be transported quickly in order to prevent curdling in the innard bags.

Corroborating the residue of milk in unglazed pottery, there is also evidence of a dairy industry in Neolithic Britain and Eastern Europe in 400 BC. The importance of milk in human lives is also well understood with references dating back to Greek mythology. While Goddess Hera fed her son—Hercules, milk droplets (or 400 billion stars) spilled across, creating the all-encompassing ‘Milky Way’ Galaxy. As opposed to the unending blanket of darkness, this silver river symbolises proof of life.

Milk, the first food consumed by mammals everywhere is commonly synonymised as



PC: Nipun Prabhakar

the safest. Perhaps that’s why milk had to be consumed, even if from another mammal. In the Middle Ages of the Roman civilization, milk plays vital cameos as well. The founding twins of Rome—Romulus and Remus, abandoned by the Tiber River, were found being milk-fed by a wolf and raised back to health. Speculating that infants who were foundling (a common practice in the 14th century) or orphaned, also ushered the era of the consumption of animal milk.

It is withal unclear which animal’s milk was first chosen to be consumed by humans. The symbiotic relationship that humans have with cattle today makes it almost impossible to imagine life without the abundance of milk. From the Gujjars in the north to the Monpas of the northeast, to the Raikas in the west, and Kurubas in the south, each of India’s pastoral communities has a story to share through their herding and milking practices. The livelihoods led by these pastoralists often occur in isolation due to the migratory nature of their work. Unfortunately, despite its stature, the pastoralist economy remains largely neglected by the government and its stakeholders. The Union Government admitted in August of 2022 that even today pastoralists don’t reap the benefits of their newly developed schemes.

Milk is held sacred in cultures across the world today, underlining the fact that cattle were pivotal in several mythologies. Through milk or meat sacrifices to Gods, pastoralism continues to hold its importance as the ‘nectar of life’.

*Shreshtha Chhabra is a researcher and writer with an inclination towards the food-art-community nexus, studying food from the intricate perspectives of policy, societal impact, and collective sustenance. With an interest in design, she is also exploring pottery as a form of creative expression.*

## World Cheese Award

The 34th World Cheese Awards saw more entries than ever before with a record-breaking 4,434 cheeses submitted from 42 countries and 900 companies from around the globe (10.9% UK based, 89.1% international). Ukraine saw a huge increase in entries after the World Cheese Awards was moved to Wales from its original

2022 location of Kyiv. There were increased entries from Canada, Argentina, Slovenia, and Israel, whilst India followed its first entry in 2021 with several more this year. Well-established cheesemaking nations such as France, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom were well represented by both returning and new entrants, with a notable increase in Swiss entries.

All entries were judged in a single day by 250 experts from 38 different nations who studied the appearance, texture, aroma, and flavour of the various kinds of cheese. Bronze, Silver, Gold, and Super Gold accolades were awarded during the morning session after which the Super Golds were reassessed to find the top 16 cheeses of 2022 and the World Champion Cheese of 2022.

This year, Käse received a bronze for its lavender infused Cheddar. The lavender flowers were sourced from Kashmir and the cheddar, aged between 6-18 months, was made in a traditional British cloth-bound style.

Text from the press release of the Guild of Fine Foods

Centre for Pastoralism partners with Käse cheese in the production of a variety of pastoral cheeses.

The Living Lightly Website is LIVE!

Scan the code to graze pastoral landscapes.

www.livinglightly.in

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