



Livelihood, Sustainability and Change among Changpas of Changthang: Ladakh India

Veena Bhasin*

Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi, Delhi 110 007, India

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ABSTRACT Pastoral societies use animals as providers of food, fuel, fiber, draught power and transportation. However, nomadic, semi-nomadic and transhumant pastoralist societies have lifestyles that revolve mainly around their livestock. The transhumant pastoral societies inhabiting the high Himalayan areas exploit the seasonal abundance of grazing areas. As social and ecological conditions change, pastoralists adjust accordingly. Contrary to their reputation, pastoralists have traditional practices for conserving vegetation by rotational grazing. Pastoralists make a significant contribution to India's economy in terms of food security (milk), provision of draft animal power, as well as foreign exchange earnings (meat, fiber for example, *pashmina* wool). Since pastoralists do not own land, their produce is generated by dependence on communally and state owned grazing land. Currently, the trend towards globalization of the market, with pastoral lands increasingly being commercialised and/or turned in to national parks, has created problems for the pastoralists. Since Independence of India, the pastoralists of the Himalayas have faced a series of significant changes from external, political and economic changes. These structural alterations have brought adjustments in many aspects of the traditional pastoral system, including migratory cycle, local economy and social organisation. Many of them left their traditional transhumant way of life and settled along valleys. Some have settled in urban areas, others stick to the pastoral activities by changing the composition of livestock by increasing number of goats and decreasing number of yaks. All pastoral groups in Himalaya face the similar constraints and stimuli. Natural exigencies, extreme weather conditions, drought, epidemics and predators, result in reduction of animals. Likewise, social crisis, such as phases in domestic developmental cycle and work force shortage in herding groups cause concern in the community. An attempt has been made to study the change and problems faced by the area- Changthang and people- Changpas due to the development programs of the government agencies of the state.