

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR LADAKH STUDIES

LADAKH STUDIES

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EDITORIAL

This fifteenth issue of *Ladakh Studies* is the seventh I have had the pleasure of editing. After four years, an evaluation would seem in order, and I would therefore like to invite members to spend a few moments to consider ways in which this publication may be improved. The upcoming tenth Colloquium at Oxford should be a good venue to discuss matters pertaining to this newsletter.

I want to thank the contributors to the present issue for submitting their work. As readers will have noticed, Tashi Morup—formerly of *Ladags Melong*—has established himself as our primary reporter on current events in Ladakh, and special thanks are due to him for sharing some news reports which were not published elsewhere.

From this issue onwards the publication date on the cover will reflect more precisely the actual time of distribution of the newsletter. Unfortunately, a regular spring/autumn publication schedule has proved difficult to maintain. The goal will remain to publish two issues per year.

As always, all are encouraged to contribute actively to *Ladakh Studies*.

FROM THE HONORARY SECRETARY

As I write this, final preparations are under way for the tenth Ladakh Studies colloquium at Mansfield College, Oxford on 7-10 September 2001. I am particularly grateful to Clare Harris, the co-convenor of the conference, and to Francesca Merritt, our treasurer. Between them, they are putting in an enormous amount of work to ensure that the conference is a success. In late July we visited Mansfield College together, and the arrangements there look excellent. We have a crowded programme of papers, and it will be good to see both old friends and a number of new members who are pursuing fresh lines of research.

While looking ahead to the next conference, I have also just received a valuable reminder of the second in the series of Ladakh conferences, which took place in Pau (France) in January 1985. The convenors were Patrick Kaplanian from Paris and Claude Dendaletche from the University of Pau. Patrick has gone to great lengths to produce a revised edition of the proceedings: these have now been republished and include a number of new papers. Unfortunately, Patrick does not expect to be able to come to Oxford – he has just moved to Armenia, where he is shortly to get married. However, copies of the Pau proceedings and the other Recent Research on Ladakh volumes that are still in print will be on sale in Oxford.

There will be a detailed update on the Oxford conference in the next Ladakh Studies, and I look forward to seeing a large number of you there in person.

NEWS FROM LADAKH

SPECIAL REPORT

MONGOLIAN HONOUR FOR BAKULA RINPOCHE

By Tashi Morup

A warm welcome was accorded to His Holiness Bakula Rinpoche on his arrival in Leh on July 13 after Mongolia recently conferred him with the prestigious Altangadas (Polar Star) award. Monks, senior citizens, leaders and a large number of people in traditional dress had gathered at the airport early this morning to welcome their supreme Lama and leader.

On the way to Sangkar Gonpa Bakula Rinpoche had a brief prayer at Shunu Mane at Skara where a day earlier a large number of citizens witnessed the funeral of Meme Tondup Sonam Shunu, a respected citizen, who died at the age of 84.

At Sankar Gonpa fully adorned monks standing on the terrace received their head Lama with *tung*, *gyaling*, drum and cymbals, while lay musicians played the *daman* and *surna*. Men and women carrying white khataks, incense and flowers along the road bowed with deep reverence while his holiness white Ambassador car passed by.

Changtse Chosje Rhas Rinpoche, who was waiting at Sankar Gonpa to greet His Holiness, presented a khatak and touched his forehead in a reverend manner to that of Bakula Rinpoche. Among the senior monks present at that moment was more than 90-year-old Meme Chhosphel.

Bakula Rinpoche was then led to *dukhang* (assembly hall) where His Holiness presented khataks to Gyalwa Tsongkhapa's image. Rhas Rinpoche followed. With His Holiness seated on a high throne flanked by images of Avalokiteshvara and Buddha Shakyamuni, about fifty monks began a prayer. *Mandal stensum* for His Holiness long life was then offered by Rhas Rinpoche and Chog-zhi Lama Lhundup Rabstan on behalf of all the Gonpas. Finally Bakula Rinpoche helped by his Personal Assistant Sonam Wangchuk retired to his residence adjacent to Gonpa.

Sonam Wangchuk, personal assistant to Bakula Rinpoche, said that this was only for the third time in 80 years that Mongolia has awarded their prestigious Altangadas. His Holiness Bakula Rinpoche was chosen in recognition of his contribution towards strengthening of Indo-Mongolian relations during his ten-years tenure as Indian Ambassador. Bakula Rinpoche has previously been awarded the Indian equivalent, Padmabushan, for his invaluable service to the nation.

Besides being the head lama of Pethub monastic community, His Holiness Bakula Rinpoche is also known as a political leader. In 1949 he became president of the National Conference following the visit of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and his daughter Indira Gandhi. During his leadership people of Ladakh saw the amelioration of the landlord system and other social problems, besides interesting political developments. However, people's imagination is drawn more towards his pre-political period. Far back in 1923, a young boy of six-year-old was declared the 12th incarnation of Bakula Rinpoche at Pethub monastery while his enthronement marked by a ceremony that only a few living aged people in Ladakh remember now. Meme Chosphel recollected the moment, when the young Bakula in red robes seated on a white horse in the middle of a long trail of musicians, monks and devotees cut through the fields towards Pethub monastery on the day of his departure from his palace home at Matho village.

Interestingly, his mother was the daughter of the 11th Bakula, who had a wife and children in the Zanskar region of Ladakh. At the age of 11, Bakula Rinpoche was sent to Lhasa to study Buddhism. He was a bright student and achieved the *geshe* degree in relatively a short time. Then he returned to Ladakh to take up his religious service in his monastery and began his invaluable service to commoners.

Key dates in HH Bakula Rinpoche's life:

Born on May 19, 1917 in Ladakh on the holy Buddha Purnima day.

Education: Studied for 14 years at Dresprung Losaling monastery, Lhasa and obtained Geshe Lharampa with distinction.

1948: first meeting with Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister of India.

1949-53: President, National Conference, Ladakh.

1953-67: Minister, Government of Jammu and Kashmir, India.

1967-77: Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha).

1979-89: Member, National Commission for Minorities, New Delhi.

1990-2000: Ambassador of India to Mongolia.

1968-69: First visit to Buriyat, Russian Federation and Mongolia.

1989: First visit to the people's republic of China.

SPECIAL REPORT **ANOTHER DRY WINTER**

By Seb Mankelov

Emerging from the *chaddar* and trudging up hill to Zangla much of Zangskar looked exactly as it does in summer. The tiny walls built on the hillside to protect Zangla from avalanche had neatly trapped small drifts of snow. Other than that, the slopes behind the village were brown. The south facing aspects of Zangskar held even less snow. The hillside behind Karsha was entirely bare, the brown fields and leafless trees below the village were the only indication that we were in the depths of winter. Across the valley, to the south west of Padum, the 6000m+ peaks of the Greater Himalayan Range were covered, but only just. Rocks peppered the snowfields and the glaciers, polished hard and blue by the wind, caught the evening sunshine. The view was one of early spring, not the last day of January.

Zangskar and Ladakh look set for another dry summer. Following another winter of poor snowfall, the drought conditions that already grip many villages are likely to increase in severity this coming summer. At the end of October 2000 there had been little sign of snow and the roads connecting Leh with Manali and Srinagar were open, as was the Kargil-Zangskar road. A month later on the 30th November the Pensi La had finally closed but the Srinagar-Leh road, despite closing for several days was clear again and open to traffic. In Zangskar a meagre snowfall in December 2000 was followed by infrequent storms that only deposited several inches of new snow throughout January 2001. In the Indus Valley 6 inches of fresh snow dusted the hillsides for Spitik Gustor but temperatures remained unseasonably warm. A period of stable weather followed—as is often associated with January and February—and cloudless skies were the norm. Yet, even with clear skies temperatures remained abnormally mild with early morning temperatures on the *chaddar* struggling to fall below -15°C . By the end of January the rate of snow sublimation in Zangskar had visibly exceeded that of deposition. With vast areas of mountainside already visible, the decline of snow cover was rapid. Having curtailed our plans to ski out to Spiti we returned on a rather wet and rapidly deteriorating *chaddar* to the Indus Valley.

Reports from other areas of the Indian Himalaya suggest that Ladakh was not alone in experiencing a mild and snow-free winter. In Himachal Pradesh the Rohtang La was reported open throughout January and February and much revenue from snow-reliant winter businesses was lost. An email from the Jammu and Kashmir Tourist Office at the end of March reported that all ski courses in Himachal and Uttar Pradesh had been cancelled and skiing in Kashmir's famous Gulmarg resort had also not been possible. Further correspondence with the J&K Tourist Office confirmed that the Pensi La road linking Zangskar to Kargil was open for the beginning of May 2001 and similar, unusually early, openings of both the Leh–Srinagar and Leh–Manali highways were also reported.

SPECIAL REPORT
THE END OF THE CHADDAR?

By Seb Mankelov

A chance meeting with an Indian army engineer at Leh airport (February 2001) confirmed that the chaddar road (linking the Indus and the Zangskar Valleys) is expected to be operational by the end of October 2001. Now funded by the Indian Army, the Officer engineer commanding the project was confident that his orders would be executed in the specified period, and the road that follows the course of the Zangskar River completed. Construction of the final section of road, a 60km stretch linking Chilling with the current Zangskar road terminus just down stream of Hanamil, was due to commence on March 1st 2001.

To those who have knowledge of the terrain that this road will cut through, its completion in 8 months may seem unlikely. The Zangskar Gorge is, in places, so precipitous that access to much of the river course is currently restricted to those that raft the river in summer or walk the frozen river, the chaddar, in the winter. However, looking at the terrain between Leh and Kargil or Leh and Manali, one would probably have assumed a motorable road linking these towns as being equally impossible. There is no doubt that the Indian Army along with the engineering prowess of organisations such as HIMANK and the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) have ample experience when it comes to extreme road building. Apparently, the recent extension to the highway at Panggong Tso provided more of a challenge than anything that the Zangskar Gorge is expected to offer; although, at the time of this discussion, the engineering team conducting the final gorge survey had yet to return from the chaddar.

An ongoing project, the 'chaddar road' appears to have floundered in recent years with funding difficulties and only last year the Public Works Department (PWD) in Zangskar were again preparing to submit another funding application. However, with the recently confirmed involvement of the Indian Army the wait appears to be over, and the completion of the first road to provide year-round access to Zangskar looks to be a certainty.

It is unclear what the exact benefits of the road will be to the Indian Army. However, a 'backdoor' route into Kargil, despite being restricted by the Pensi La to summer use only, has obvious benefits should the existing Leh–Kargil highway fall under Pakistani artillery. Additionally, the chaddar road, when combined with the longer-term plans of the Padum–Darcha highway (via the Shingo La) and the tunnel under the Rohtang La, could feasibly provide the final link that allows year-round road access to Leh from Himachal Pradesh.

For Zangskaris the picture is similarly unclear although it is fairly safe to predict that many villages will suddenly find themselves subject to through traffic and the inevitable roar of tourist and local buses, Tata trucks and Army convoys. For Zangskaris and tourists alike the Zangskar Valley will be a moderate day's bus ride from Leh. A factor that according to many Buddhist Zangskaris will be very influential in the fight to shift their administration from Kargil to Leh.

Whether completion of the chaddar road is achieved this October or next it finally looks to be imminent. Zangskaris will undoubtedly benefit from the new road, although positive developments rarely come without a few negative strings attached. Whatever the road brings one thing remains certain: the road will supersede the necessity of walking the chaddar route through the Zangskar gorge .

10-DAY LOSAR CELEBRATIONS CONCLUDE

From Tashi Morup

Leh, Jan 6: On the final day of 10-day Losar celebration at Basgo a large crowd witnessed the five nude men, playing the role of some traditional characters, taking bath in the glacial stream as a part of special customs followed during the colorful celebration that ended on Thursday. The naked men hurriedly took dips into the icy-cold stream to the much amusement of the large spectators including men, women and children. The five characters (played turn-wise by the villagers) included Lama dZegu (three white-turbaned men) and the comical Apo-Api (two men in the guise of an old couple wearing masks). This followed the women offering chang (local wine) to them (the five men), who are now dressed up nicely with black hats. After a dance episode everybody moved on to the Mazhing (the King's field) for the horse racing event.

At the Mazhing, which is below the famous Basgo castle, people flocked to see the five to six participants riding on tiny decorated horses racing repeatedly (about nine times). Every time the racers have to hit with his whip a ritualistic object kept at the end. The winner's horse gets a butter piece on its forehead as a mark of victory. After the race is over the traditional dance of the four or five Karogs, who are the members of the aristocratic families including Lhardak, Tongspoon, Kharpon, Togochey, continues. The tiring two-day Karog dance consisting of 360 items at a site called rTserings is meant to honor the deities. While the traditionally attired Karogs with golden dances, a member of the Kalon family patiently sits on a raised portion to watch them throughout the session. The Kalon performs a sword dance at the end.

The head of the village (Goba) Tsering Angchuk said except for the roles played during Losar the noble families are exempted from all other community obligations. However, he lamented the absence of Padrimo, a group of masked ladies performing a unique dance for the last two-three years. But Ullu-Bullu, hordes of masked kids carrying antelope horns, had a good participation this year, he added. Also another good thing nowadays is the absence of post-tipsy quarreling that predominated the scene in the past.

Meanwhile most of the characters were wearing white-cloth masks to prevent any bad omen befall on the community. It is generally believed that once during the King's time one of the characters uncovered his face that led to an epidemic called dZe. They believe that uncovering of the face during such celebration annoys the Paldhan Lhamo and other protecting deity whose images are there in the Basgo Gonpa.

35-year-old Rinchen Namgyal Lhardak has a significant role to play during the Losar celebration. He has to perform lots of rituals while observing religious practices to appease the deities. Namgyal bathes in the stream early morning in the freezing temperature before his ritualistic offerings to the deities as the initiation process of the Losar. And the Onpo the astrologer too is an important person whose words are sincerely abided by the villagers.

While such traditions are still prevailing in many parts of Ladakh especially in the villages, the Leh town, which used to have the most attractive celebration, has completely lost it. And it would be nice to keep the prevailing traditions in the villages alive in face of diminishing interests. Nyemo and Alchi villages till recently had similar practices but not anymore.

DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT BOARD APPROVES 38.54 CR KARGIL PLAN

In the wake of delayed finalization of Jammu and Kashmir plan by the Planning Commission, Chief Minister Dr Farooq Abdullah on 11 January asked development agencies to ensure optimum utilization of funds for expeditious completion of various schemes in the remaining months of current financial year. "We have faced many difficulties in seeking the funds. Use these on such schemes that benefit more areas with larger population rather than time consuming projects", the Chief Minister said while addressing district development board meeting at Kargil this morning. He said the main plank of the development strategy should be taking up of minimum schemes to ensure their timely completion, as otherwise spill over due to fund-starvation results into escalation of costs. "This puts the schemes into jeopardy thereby depriving people of their benefits", he said, adding

that the effort must be to ensure percolation of fruits of development expeditiously to the people. [. . .]

The CM made a fervent appeal for judicious use of scarce power supply and said that immediate steps would be taken for early completion of Iqbal Hydel Project. He said the army authorities have assured him about air-lifting of the machinery and equipment for the project. About expansion of schools, he said the emphasis should be on creating facilities in the existing educational institutions rather than opening of new ones.

Responding to the demand for air service to Kargil, the Chief Minister said that he has taken up the issue in New Delhi and would again pursue it at the appropriate level. He said he will talk to Prime Minister Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee and Defence Minister Mr. George Fernandes in this regard. He interacted with the district officers and made queries about various sectors of development like horticulture, public works, power etc. [. . .]

Earlier, the board approved Rs 38.54 crore for Kargil district for the current year. It also approved extension in the service of 22 Junior Engineers, appointed in the district on adhoc basis and accorded sanction for filling up of available 34 class IV vacancies in the district. Upgradation of two primary health centres at Padam and Sankoo into sub district hospital was also approved.

Giving brief resume of the last year's achievements, the District Development Commissioner, Kargil Dr Din Mohammad said that 99 per cent of allocated about Rs 39 crore have been spent during the year. Under centrally sponsored Border Area Development Programme, Rs 3.64 crore were provided while Rs 3.76 crore were financed by the NABARD. Under Tribal Sub Plan the district got Rs 61 lakhs. Two irrigation schemes at Zangla and Haftal have been commissioned in the district. About Rs 4 crore were spent on the construction of new roads, bridges and various link roads.

The Chief Minister, on his arrival at Kargil, addressed a large gathering and urged them to co-operate in the development effort by maintaining unity and peace. He said the government is aware of problems confronted to people living in far off areas and every possible measure would be taken to solve their difficulties within given resources. [. . .]

LADAKH STANDS AT PAR WITH NATION'S BEST HOSPITAL

From Tashi Morup

Leh, January 21: When it comes to health services, Ladakh stands at par with the nation's best hospitals. And latest induction of some hi-tech machines and more in near future will add to the fine work culture in the district hospitals including the main Sonam Norboo Memorial Hospital, Leh.

After Color Doppler Imaging System for diagnosing heart diseases, latest to arrive is Laproscopic Surgical set which has made the gall stone operation much simpler and pain less. And already two surgeries have been successfully performed with the help of this machine by Dr. Tashi Motup Surgeon Specialist, who has the experience of working with this machine at PGI Chandigarh. Dr. Motup also has in his credit the first time Esophagus Cancer surgery in Ladakh successfully performed on a 63-year-old man on September 26, 2000. An associate doctor said such kind of surgery is normally possible only in an advanced institute like AIIMS or PGI.

Dr. Motup said, with the help of the Laproscopic Surgical set operation for removal of gall bladder stone is free of conventional incision-related complications and it has reduced the stay in the hospital to just two days instead of over a week normally. Early return to the work is another advantage. The machine would also reduce the workload, he said. And a few more things added to the equipment will enable the skilled doctors to perform other surgeries like Appendectomy, Hysterectomy, Herniorrhaphy etc.

Dr. Motup has recorded about 90 cases of Gall Bladder stone in just eight months in the year 2000, which, he says, is high related to the population of Ladakh. Unlike in other places this disease

is found in younger age group of people in Ladakh and more among the women between the age of 25 and 35. Even a 10-year-old girl has been operated for Gall Bladder stone. Irregular bowel habits mostly among the women in Ladakh and consumption of legumes could be one of the factors of high prevalence of this disease, said Dr. Motup.

Acquiring of the Laproscopic Surgical set is indeed a one more step towards the good health of Ladakh. But the District Medical department has more things in store, including up-gradation of SNM and other blocks' hospitals in the coming years. And to start with Medical department is purchasing a Computerized Tomography Scanning (CT Scan) machine in 2001, thanks to Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council for their open-handed support. Such a high cost machine (nearly two crore rupees) will enable almost all kinds of diagnosis in geographically difficult Ladakh.

It is the work culture evolved over the years under the able and sincere local doctors that has won the people's heart. And yet lot of credit for present neat and tidy hospital with good service by its staff goes to the able leadership of Chief Medical Officer Dr. S Dawa Lonpo and Medical Superintendent Tsering Norboon. An official source said, recently an army official wife visited this hospital to take away a patient to Army hospital. However, impressed to see the hospital she instead felt to have the patients in Army hospital brought to SNM.

SIX KILLED, 42 HURT AS BUS SKIDS INTO GORGE

KARGIL, Jan 30: Six persons were killed while at least 42 others injured, some of them seriously when a State Road Transport Corporation (SRTC) bus skidded off the road and fell into a deep gorge near Kaksar bridge last evening. Reports reaching here said that incident took place when the ill-fated Government owned Transport bus was on its way to Thasgam in Drass from Kargil in the evening. After some mechanical snag, the bus went out of control just near Kaksar bridge and rolled into about 300 feet gorge. Four passengers were killed on the spot while two others succumbed to their injuries later. About fifty passengers were on board when the incident occurred. The Army and GREF men rushed to the spot after they received information about the mishap. Several passengers were found missing and could be traced latter. One passenger was still missing. The unofficial sources have put the death toll over eight.

The injured were shifted to District hospital Kargil and some were provided first- aid at nearby Army unit. Out of the 42 injured passengers the condition of over a dozen of them was stated to be serious. They were today referred to Srinagar for specialised treatment. The identity of those killed could not be established so far. The bodies were lying in the mortuary of Kargil hospital. Deputy Commissioner Kargil, Dr Mohd Din visited the hospital to review the situation and inquire about the health condition of the accident victims. The Police also supervised the rescue work in the evening which was disrupted due to darkness and chilling cold. With tough efforts the jawans removed the bodies and injured from the deep nullah to the road.

THREE KILLED IN KARGIL BLAST

Three members of a family were killed and two others critically injured in a powerful blast inside their house in Kargil district of Ladakh. The blast, caused by an explosive device, occurred on February 7 in the house of one Mohammad Ibrahim at Pashkyum village, about 12 km from Kargil town. Official sources said Ibrahim found some explosive device outside his house in Khurbathang firing range and took it into his house where it exploded killing Ibrahim, his son and a daughter on the spot besides seriously injuring his wife and another daughter. The impact of the explosion was so powerful that the victims' bodies were blown into pieces and their house was ripped apart, they added.

TEARFUL FAREWELL GIVEN TO POPULAR LEH SURGEON

From Tashi Morup

LEH, Feb 28: Many eyes filled with tears when Dr Tsering Norbu (Surgeon), overcome by emotional remarks in his praise, gave his brief farewell speech in a choked voice to the doctors and other Medical staff in a simple function at Sonam Norbu Memorial hospital in Leh today.

After twice extending his service period by the state government, Dr Norbu retires from the post at the age of 60. However, the Medical staff in the area and the local people still carry a hope for further extension in his service. This modest farewell party was a gesture of that expectancy. Chief Medical Officer S. Dawa Lonpo disclosed in the function that he met the State Medical authorities in this regard and awaiting the response. He has also placed a demand in the presence of Chairman LAHDC Thupstan Chhewang that tenure of some of the other specialist doctors in Leh must be extended in view of their outstanding services.

Another specialist Dr Tsering Norbu (Physician) said, “if something good has happened in Ladakh in the last three decades, it is Dr Tsering Norbu's services as surgeon.” He described this retiring doctor as an epitome of dedication and determination. Despite poor facilities in the hospitals, Dr Norbu never let people feel any shortfall in the vast area of remote Ladakh. Unlike today's ready facilities, the operation theatres in those days had to be first warmed up with Bhukharis. Then after removing the Bhukharis, Dr Norbu himself had to do sterilization and anesthesia before going for operation. He said Dr Norbu was always there at the call to help the needy patients even in cold-chilling winters.

BUDDHISTS PROTEST IN LEH AGAINST TALIBAN ACTION

On March 3, Thousands of people in Leh held a peaceful march in protest against the action of Afghanistan's radical ruling Taliban for smashing statues of Lord Budha in the country. Not only Buddhists but members of other communities including Muslims also joined the protest and expressed deep shock and concern over the most uncivilised and unwarranted action by the fundamentalist regime of Afghanistan.

A complete bandh was observed in the mountain locked Himalayan town of Leh which is dominated by Buddhist community. Various political leaders, social activists, monks, intellectuals, women and children participated in the protest march. They condemned the destruction of thousands year old idols of ancient Buddhists history. They drew the attention of world communities towards this act and sought their immediate intervention. [. .]

LBA Youth Wing president Lopzang Nyantak, the chairman of the LAHDC Thupsten Chhewang, Riaz Ahmed of the Ladakh Merchants Association and others addressed the gathering at Polo Ground. They appreciated the stand taken by the Union Government and efforts of the Indian Prime Minister. They said that Indian Parliament's concern over the issue of highly sensitive nature is appreciated by people of Ladakh and said that it should be condemned by the world bodies. They also sought immediate intervention of United Nations Security Council.

A resolution was also passed on the occasion which will be passed on to the President of India. The LBA members alleged that various statues in Ladakh which are even more than 1000 year old have not been properly preserved and there is a need of immediate attention by the Government of India.

ALSU CONDEMNS DESTRUCTION OF BUDDHA'S STATUES

The All Ladakhi Students Union, Jammu has taken strong exception of the decision of the fundamentalist Taliban to destruct Buddhas statues. In a statement issued at Jammu on March 3, the Union termed the act a barbaric and inhuman attack on the world's oldest and tallest statues and said that destruction of Buddha statues with tanks and rockets was a black day in the history of world. Release said that it was clear that fanatic militia government's main motive was to strike at the root of the Buddhist monuments and to divide the people on earth on communal lines. "There is no denying the fact that no religion in this world teaches the lesson of inhuman and destruction of the other faith. It is really sad to see that instead of providing basic infrastructures to Afghan people who are in miserable condition with no food and shelter Mullah Mohammed Omar spending crores and crores of rupees for spreading terror in the world", the release read.

The release further said that attack on two gaint statues of the Buddhas built between 2nd and 5th A.D measuring 50 metres and 34.5 metres tall at Bamiyan was not only a matter of great concern to the Buddhist but it was an immeasurable and great loss to the human values and mankind.

BUDDHA SMILES IN SPLENDID ISOLATION AT KARTSEKHAR

For centuries Ladakh remained an abode of Buddhism and during its heydays Buddhist master-pieces in the form of sculptures and monasteries sprung at different places. This sleepy village nestles one such lofty but little known and almost forgotten Buddha.

The statue is more than nine metres high and is carved on a lofty hillock. There are three other such statues present at Mulbek in Kargil, Sani in Zaskar and Leh, out of which one each at here and Mulbek are the earliest and most magnificent. This village falls some eight kms from Sankoo, a prominent place falling on Kargil-Zaskar road. Some 60 families, all Muslims, are residing in this area who have almost no information about it.

"It might have been constructed by some king", is the only response that Zaqir Hussain, a local had. During the recent Kargil Mela it was for the first time that any media team arrived here and the locals said not many people, in fact, come here. "Some Buddhists from Leh or other parts come once in a while. So is the case with the government officials", said Zakir. The statue is more than nine metres long with deep relief and a rosary around its neck and matted hair are some of its specialities. It represents Chamba Maitreya, the future Buddha.

Nothing can be said with perfection about its age or who its builders were. Parvez Dewan, commissioner secretary, however, apparently the only officer who knows more than anybody about it, said it belongs to 7th century. Dewan also says it was built by Kashmiris and for this he assigns certain reasons. "Kashmiri art had reached up to Alchi and this place before that. Also, the statue has deep relief and has knee cap and garland which makes it certain that it is undoubtedly not a Tibetan art", he added. This assumes significance as Tibetans are said to be the builders of most of the art work in Ladakh that has come after 11th century.

Ironically, the monument has no caretaker and Archeological Survey of India or state Archives department is yet to take it over. There are vertical scars on it and the impact of weathering is apparent. "There is nobody for its preservation here", admits Dewan. He, however, said it is well preserved. "If not excellently preserved it is reasonably well preserved", he said. This entire tract is called Purig area and Kartsekhar (the palace of Kartse), it is said, was its capital during its prime time. Most of the people here now live below the poverty line and reside in small and crumbled muddy structures. On a hill top there is one such structure which locals said hosts grave of a king.

EID-UL-ZUHA CELEBRATED IN LEH

On March 6, Eid-ul-Zuha was celebrated in the district with religious fervor and traditional gaiety. As per a release, Namaz-e Eid and respective congregational prayers were offered at Imamia Eid-Gah Masjid, Shay, Thiksay and Fiayang. The big congregational prayer was offered at Imamia Jamia Masjid Leh under the Jammah of Sheikh Mohammad Ali, Imam Jumma wherein thousands of Muslims participated.

Speaking on the occasion, Sheikh Mohammad Ali highlighted the significance of the day and stressed upon the Muslims to follow the principles of Islam. On the occasion, Imam Jumma also strongly condemned the destruction of ancient Buddha statues by the Taliban and described the action as unwarranted, uncivilised and un-Islamic because Islam orders us to respect the places of worship or other religions and does not allow the destruction of religious places of any community. At the conclusion, special prayers were observed for world peace, prosperity, brotherhood and communal harmony among different section of the community.

RAILWAY BOOKING COUNTER OPENED AT LEH

From Tashi Morup

Leh, Mar 26: The news that a railway booking counter opened in Leh today by Army and Civil Administration would bring cheers to customers in Ladakh, provided it functions smoothly and “sincerely” in future, in keeping with the spirit of “Sadbhavna”, which is an on-going Army Goodwill operation in Leh and Kargil led by Lieutenant General Arjun Ray, VSM, General Officer Commanding, 14 Corps. Dignitaries present on the occasion included Chairman LAHDC Thupstan Chhewang, Army, Paramilitary, Intelligence and Railway officials.

This Passenger Reservation System (PRS) inaugurated jointly by Lt. General Arjun Ray and R K Thoopal, Member Traffic (Railway Board), will greatly benefit the local people, army personnel and tourists, who jointly form a huge customer. Earlier reservations could only be undertaken in person from Jammu, Chandigarh or Delhi, which are the nearest railheads. With the introduction of this facility the people of this region will be able to book railway tickets all over the country from Leh, obviating the earlier arduous and cumbersome procedure.

The PRS facility will not only benefit the army personnel but also the tourists and a large number of pilgrims from Ladakh, who travel to different religious sites in India. Thousands of foreign and domestic tourists who visit Ladakh during summer can also book their railway reservations from this counter in Leh preventing many of inward or outward movement hassles upsetting even their most well charted travel plan. Hundreds of pilgrims from Ladakh too will heave a sigh of relief as they have a booking office at their home ground removing one of their most dreaded experiences of buying tickets from the railway offices in Delhi or other big cities.

The first customers of this 10-member staff counter equipped with two computer terminals were Lt. General Arjun Ray, who booked a ticket for April 11 to travel between Chandigarh and New Delhi and R K Dhooopal to travel between Jammu and Delhi. A staff LNK Janaki Raman of Signals, who did the bookings on his computer terminal, said they were in Delhi for about three months to get the training in ticketing. However, induction of some local staff (maybe from Ladakh Scouts) would add to the convenience especially for the residents of Ladakh.

Army claimed that the opening of the PRS facility is another milestone in keeping with the thrust on community development, empowerment of women and upliftment of the people of the border areas. The army is running 16 Army Goodwill primary schools, providing health services to the locals including provision of out of area specialized medical care to patients. So far the Army has

dispatched 27 patients to Chandigarh, Delhi and Pune for advanced treatment and surgery including provision of artificial limbs, eye operations and plastic surgery). In addition community development and empowerment activities include electrification of villages, vocational training, adult literacy programmes, national open school programmes and national open school programmes and computer education.

Presently, a 30-girl-student batch is getting training in weaving, knitting and sewing apart from computer and other education programmes in a center at 14 Corps office premises in Leh under the direct supervision of Army. Recently, under the same Operation Sadbhavna Brigadier S K Dev, Commander III Artillery Brigade, inaugurated the 'Adoption' (Under Army's care) of four Tibetan Refugee camps comprising 1500 Tibetans at Agling in Leh. In his inaugural speech Brigadier Dev, while expressing the army's support to the refugees in the form free medical service including frequent medical, water supply and other helps, alerted the residents of external forces threatening to disturb the peace of the region.

FEMALE LITERACY ON RISE IN LADAKH

Kargil district in Jammu and Kashmir has achieved around 13-fold increase in female literacy while Leh has surpassed Srinagar during the past two decades. Giving this information while presenting Census Report 2001 to Governor, Mr Girish Chandra Saxena and to Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah here this afternoon, the Director Census Operations, Mr. Feroz Ahmed said the Ladakh region has achieved this unique distinction after the State Government initiated several measures in mid-80's to give fillip to female literacy.

As per the report, female literacy rate has shot up to 40.96 in Kargil district in 2001 from just 3.14 in 1981. Similarly, Leh district achieved about fourfold increase during this period. Against 12.09 per cent in 1981, it swelled to 50.03 in 2001. This is nearly two per cent more than Srinagar district which is credited with 48.11 per cent female literacy. The Kargil district that ranked last in the 14 districts of the State in 1981 is now fifth in the ladder.

Welcoming this splendid increase in female literacy in Ladakh, the Chief Minister recalled the dismal position about girl education 20 years ago and said concerted efforts had to be taken to promote literacy among them. In this regard, he referred to the measures like opening of more schools, provision of incentives like free books and uniforms and scholarships to the students.

[n.b. census results can be accessed online at: www.censusindia.net]

CONTROVERSY OVER PANCHAYATI RAJ, LAHDC FUNCTIONING RULED OUT

Even as there are apprehensions among the people that the coming in of Panchayati Raj system would clash with the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council's (LAHDC) functioning, the concerned officials and leaders have ruled out such probability. On the contrary, LAHDC's Chairman Thupstan Chewang and Chief Executive Officer Dheeraj Gupta share the view that Panchayat system would lead to "even further" devolution of power to the village level reinforcing the pace of development in Ladakh. Nevertheless, increasing the responsibilities on the power hierarchy in the administration. Because as per the amendment brought into LAHDC Act the executive body of the Council shall still be the apex authority with control over the developmental funds received from the Government. And there will not be Zila Parishad, which is the supreme body at the district level under Panchayati Raj system. And as per the Act the block committee's Chairman would be the ex-officio members of the LAHDC. Thus the annual general council

meeting of the members only could be christened as District Planning and Development Board meeting so that Block Committee Chairman also attend this formal meeting, Chewang said.

However, the NC president Tsering Narboo Lampa while expressing the party's non-interference in this matter said, some conflicts might arise if the Council intervenes in the functioning of Sarpanchs and Panchs at the rural level workers under them. Similarly, BJP also anticipates some conflicts that would come up between the two parallel bodies LAHDC and the Panchayat Raj primarily due to the fact of "political and non-political" connotations attached to the respective systems.

This unresolved issue is presently overshadowed by the general ignorance about the newly inculcated systems. And the fact that most of the Sarpanchs and Panchs in the six blocks already being declared elected un-opposed tells, to a good extent, about public's least knowledge about Panchayat Raj and its underlying powers. Even many of the opinion leaders are not sure about what is Panchayat Raj versus Hill Council would lead to.

Meanwhile, District Panchayat Officer Mohammad Hanif told EXCELSIOR that of 68 seats for Sarpanch in six blocks 51 have been declared elected unopposed and 421 Panchs out of 458. However, only 13 women Panchs were declared elected uncontested representing the weaker section (women and SC). Not a single woman has become Sarpanch so far. Interestingly, in Nubra block no nomination was filed for Skampuk and Partapur constituencies of Hunder Halqa and Sumoor constituency of Tigar. Similarly, no nomination filed for the Chilam Panch constituency of Shachukul Panchayat Halqa of Durbuk Block.

The election will be held in three phases led by Leh and Kharu on April 6 and Khaltse and Nubra on April 9 and Durbuk and Nyoma on April 12. However, Leh town which falls under the jurisdiction of NAC does not come under the ambit of Panchayat election.

This had reduced the voters' figure in the panchayat elections to 56000 voters which has till further reduced to a minimal due to the uncontested elections.

SHABIR SHAH MEETS LBA LEADERS

From Tashi Morup

Leh, May 9: In a meeting held at Hotel Omasila in Leh today leaders of Ladakh Buddhist Association (LBA) sounded flip towards the Chairman of Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party (JKDFP), Shabir Shah's, dream of three regions (Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh) coming together to form a 'Welfare State' in Central Asia where people enjoys full freedom and every right.

Nevertheless LBA leaders appreciated Shah's recognizing the views of people of Ladakh also in Kashmir issue unlike any other party in Kashmir. However, LBA leaders including the President Tsering Samphel, Vice President Angchuk Tsao and General Secretary P T Kunzang made it clear that they continue to suffer the State government biased attitude towards especially the Buddhists community of Ladakh as they did in the past over 50 years. And they cannot expect any change in the attitude in future also, they added. Instead they called on Shah to put in a word or two in favor of the UT demand of the people of Ladakh. On the other hand President of Ladakh Muslim Association (LMA) Shafi Lassu said that in the brief meeting with Shabir Shah they expressed that the Muslim community being the minority in Leh district was more concern of their security and wished for a speedy solution to the Kashmir issue first before talking of any division of the J&K State. He said, the Muslims in Leh welcome the talk initiatives and feel that Pakistan should also be included.

In the meeting with LBA leaders Tsering Samphel also pointed out that when inclusion of Pakistan in the talks is justified on the basis that a portion of Kashmir is under them then in that case China should also be included as a large portion of our land is under Chinese occupation. Earlier

Shabir Shah and his associates also met the leaders in Kargil during his five-day visit to Leh and Kargil. Shah said that though he was awaiting the clarifications he sought from K C Pant yet the Center's interlocutor in the Kashmir Pant had expressed that the JKDFP being positive towards the talk initiative was a step towards the solution of the Kashmir issue. Unlike other groups JKDFP is open to talks initiatives leading towards the peaceful solution of the Kashmir issue, Shah said, while reasserting his standpoint of involving Pakistan also. And opinion of all communities and regions of the J&K State should be regarded as well and on this account he differed with Hurriyat group, which led him quit the group, Shah said.

SINDHU DARSHAN PREPARATIONS

From Tashi Morup

Leh, May 31: While special craftsmen from Rajasthan were giving the final touch to the exquisite Sindhu Ghat, prepared in a record short period, at Shey Union Home Minister L K Advani and Tourism and Culture Minister Anant Kumar arrived today here a day prior to the three-day Sindhu Festival beginning from tomorrow.

On the very first day the two ministers had a busy schedule. Shortly after their arrival L K Advani and Anant Kumar met nearly a thousand Indo Tibetan Border Police jawans in popular Kumbha Hall at Choglamsar. [. . .] Endorsing the difficulties ITBP jawans face at 28 posts at Indo-Chinese border in Changthang area as told by Director General ITBP S C Choube in his speech earlier, Advani said he has had the opportunity to visit some of these posts and in fact his first visit to this area was in 1962 during the war as a correspondent. Promising to meet the demands placed by DG Choube, soon TV and Video sets and other small things would be issued to the Jawans posted at these high and difficult posts. He also handed over a cheque worth five lakh rupees on the occasion.

Afterward Anant Kumar addressed a press conference at Dragon Hotel Leh where LAHDC executive members led by Chairman Thupstan Chhewang and other district officials were also present. Anant Kumar said over the last four years since 1996 domestic tourism in Ladakh has tremendously increased primarily because of Sindhu Festival. Sindhu Festival, he said, is aimed towards promoting tourism and create an international symbol of friendship as the river Sindhu (Indus) flows in Tibet, India (Ladakh) and Pakistan. Earlier he visited the Ghat where craftsmen from Rajasthan have built five Chatris made of Red Sandstone specially brought all the way from Rajasthan. These structures are said to have a blend of local design also.

Meanwhile there is also a little skepticism in the air as to what is the intention behind having a Sindhu Ghat in Leh. However, as per the proposals, according to officials, there is no plan to build temples at the site, which is simply a Ghat, a manifestation of multi-religious theme. Government of India has also sanctioned three-crore rupees for setting up a Sindhu Cultural center in Leh and website called Sindhudarshan.india.com has also been launched besides several literatures and posters to promote the site for tourism and to propagate friendship.

SPECIAL REPORT

PANT FINDS NEAR UNANIMOUS SUPPORT FOR UT

From Tashi Morup

Leh, May 30: After meeting with various groups Center's interlocutor K C Pant expressed his understanding of the 'almost' common stand in favor of Union Territory status for Ladakh while briefing the media at Leh Circuit House today. Except for a hesitation from a joint Muslim group of Shia and Sunni communities including Haji Ghulam Hussain, President Anjuman Imamia Leh, Mohd.

Shafi President Ladakh Muslim Association accompanied by two other members, all parties irrespective of any religious or political affiliation strongly placed the demand of UT before K C Pant during his separate brief meetings that lasted for over three hours.

K C Pant was bit taken to surprise when local NC leaders Kushok Thiksey MP Rajya Sabha and Tsering Norboo Lampa also expressed their view in favor of UT, which they said is the popular demand of Ladakhis. A joint memorandum signed by all the concerned leaders in favour of UT was also presented to the Deputy Chairman Union Planning Commission K C Pant.

Councilors of LAHDC led by Chairman Thupstan Chhewang, LBA members led by Tsering Samphel, MLA Tsering Dorje Lakrook, Pintoo Narboo, Kushok Stakna, Lama Lobzang, E S Gergan Pastor Moravian Church, Abdul Hakim a Congress leader, BJP members Everester Sonam Paljor and Rinchen Namgyal were some of the other eminent leaders who separately spoke to Pant.

While out-rightly rejecting the Kashmiri leadership leaders unanimously appealed for UT status to safeguard the rights of the people of Ladakh spread over the 70 percent area of the State. Also many of them expressed concern over center's stance of paying more attention towards those who take to guns which, they said, is dangerously conveying a wrong message especially among the youths even in a peaceful region like Ladakh.

Besides the UT demand K C Pant also discussed other developmental issues in Leh such as power, Hill Council, Tourism, education etc. while some eminent local figures put in their views and the possible solution to the Kashmir problem. Former Minister of J&K State Pintoo Narboo while insisting on trifurcation of the State said, we are not asking for division on religious ground. It is the righteous demand of the entire Ladakh region in wake of the persistent negligence of the region at the hands of State government. Even in those brighter days while his father late Sonam Norboo was a member of NC, Narboo recalled him often having tears in eyes for not delivering the goods by the State government. Earlier Executive Councilor Rigzin Jora asserting the superficiality of the J&K Statehood said, it is like three different nations clubbed together and expecting the system to survive. Agreeing upon the common demand E S Gergan Pastor Moravian Church representing about 200 Christian population in Leh asked the Union leader to consider a nomination for smaller minority in case of a separate political set up as that of UT status to Ladakh. He also brought to Pant's notice the unavailability of such provision in the Hill Council laws. Earlier Chairman Thupstan Chhewang stated about the erratic release of developmental fund for Leh district by the State government.

Meanwhile, all shops, restaurants and other business establishments in Leh remained closed today observing the "bandh" called by LBA, who also held a large public demonstration to protest State government and to demand UT for Ladakh. Although after his chartered plane landed at Leh airport K C Pant accompanied by Media persons were taken from a different route to the circuit house avoiding the public demonstration, while returning he went by LBA leader Tsering Samphel request to meet the public also.

K C Pant held a private meeting with army officials led by Lieutenant General Arjun Ray, VSM, General Officer Commanding, 14 Corps.

20 KILLED, 72 HURT IN LEH ROAD MISHAP

From Tashi Morup

SRINAGAR, June 27- Twenty passengers were killed and 72 others injured, ten of them seriously, in a tragic road mishap near Khardungla on Leh-Nobra road today. Three of the injured are foreign tourists. According to a message received from the Deputy Commissioner, Leh, the SRTC bus, on its way from Nobra to Leh fell 300 feet deep into a gorge at South Polo, 50 km from Leh near "India Gate" point, when the driver reportedly lost control over the vehicle while negotiating a curve on Khardungla—Leh stretch.

There was a shriek after the bus hit something and lost control, said Stanzin Rangdol from Rdongsa, who was one of the least injured sitting at the back seat. The bus had left Panamik at about

6 am. Norboo said, about 10 people were sitting on the bus roof. And 21-year-old Ziv from Israel, who was also sitting at the back, said, the bus rolling down had some pauses also.

The incident site is a steep incline of boulders and crushed rocks, which had blood and blacken oil stains and belongings strewn all over before the crushed bus hanged over boulder with its least affected rear downward. JK-01-A 7387 Number Plate and rest of the rear portion was relatively intact compared to the badly crushed fronts. The bus conductor from Zanskar was also killed while the driver was seriously injured with multiple fractures.

Gift packs of apricot and sweets, children books, jerry cans, blankets, shoes, bags were lying all over. The police, Army and para-military reached the incident site soon after getting the wireless message from a passing by police and CRPF officials. They swung into action helping out the injured stuck in the rocks and bringing them up.

“Chetak” Air force helicopters were pressed into service for the rescue and relief operations. Several injured passengers have been retrieved and shifted to Sonam Narboo hospital and army hospital, Leh for treatment. Fifty-three injured have been admitted in Sonam Narboo hospital and 19 in Army hospital. Rescue operation has been completed by 3 p.m.

A medical team with ambulances halted the vehicles carrying injured to give them emergency treatments. Men and women with multiple fractures cried out in pain “inject me the painkiller, please”. Many of them were unconscious. At the SNM hospital hundreds thronged hearing about the incident. All the district officials and leaders visited the hospital. Entire medical staff was there to serve. ITBP jawans and many locals had turned up to donate blood. All the wards had injured surrounded by doctors and others.

LAST RITES OF LEH BUS MISHAP VICTIMS PERFORMED

From Tashi Morup

Leh, June 28: Entire Leh was mournful today during the funeral of 21 bodies of Khardung-la bus accident victims. Large public had gathered at the Dus-thot crematorium at Choglamsar to witness the last rites performed by about 60 monks and novices headed by Chimet Rinpoche of Karma Dubgyut Choling Gonpa.

The body of the only non-local deceased from Anantnag, Kashmir, Maharaj Krishan Bhat S/o Dina Nath will be sent to Jammu on Friday in Indian Airlines flight. He was a school headmaster at Tiger village in Nubra. Lundup from Aye and Yangchan Dolma from Kubed breathed their last today at SNM hospital adding to the casualty figure of 20 on Wednesday.

After the arrival of the relatives of the deceased from Nubra the funeral began from SNM hospital at about four p.m. The funeral comprised the long cavalcade of vehicles led by ambulances and mini-trucks carrying the bodies of the deceased. Large public started arriving at the hospital from morning hours. Leaders and officials too were present throughout. Earlier Stakna Rinpoche visited the hospital to perform a prayer, also attended by monks, for the deceased.

At the crematorium the ritual began with a prayer by Chimet Rinpoche and other monks while the wailing and sobbing relatives of the deceased took sacred round around the white-wrapped bodies kept above significant Kil-Khor space prepared at the site. After the prayer was over Chairman LAHDC Thupstan Chhewang presented white Khataks followed by members of Ama Tsogspsa (Women Alliance) and others.

State Minister Tsetan Namgyal, Councilors, District Officials, members of different organisations were also present besides youth representatives of Leh town and large public perched on the adjacent hill to witness the bodies being enflamed. District Administration, LBA and others together made the arrangements for the funeral.

Bodies were enflamed at different positions. At one spot bodies of two brothers were Rigzin Namgyal and Lundup from Aye were enkindled. His father Phunchok Namgyal burst into tears after placing the bodies on the funeral pyre. And a family from Kubed lost three members in the

accident. Tsewang Tundup and his wife Tsering Dolkar and son Tsewang Dorje together parted from this world. Also among the deceased whose bodies cremated today was a about four-month pregnant woman Tashi Dolkar from Charasa Sumoor.

Others died in the incident were Sonam Dorjay, S/O Tsewang Nurbu, a resident of Khemi, Phunchok Dolma D/O Lobzang (Baltipa) Panamik, Dorjay Wangtak from Aranu (Aye), Dawa from Kuri, Sonam Phunchok, a ITBP personal, from Kuyul, Changthang, Stanzin Wangyur from Charasa, Padma also from Charasa, Tsering from Kuri Khampa Yogma, Chamba from Panamik, Ishey Lamo from Charasa, Stanzin Gurmet from Aye, Padma Laskit from Kuri, Stanzin Tondup also from Kuri, Konchok Chondol from Kuri Gonpa, Yangchan Dolma from Kubed.

Meanwhile sources give many reasons for this mishap. Either accusing the driver who in lieu of money overboard the bus and yet others blame the passengers themselves for forcing into the bus. But management of the traffic on this route is also much to be blamed. Official sources revealed that once-a-week private bus service to the Panamik side leads to overcrowding of the bus. And it was two day to go for Hemis festival the ill-fated bus was jammed with passengers mostly in their 20s. While as two RTC buses coming

from Diskit side had 18 and 10 passengers respectively on the same day. It is to consider that Panamik side, which is more populated and larger area, has just one private bus service in a week against three in the smaller Diskit side as per adjustments made by the District Administration. And also some alertness at checkpoints could have avoided this catastrophic loss of human lives in Ladakh. The last record of such mishap dates back to some 20 years ago when an RTC Passenger Service truck turned turtle killing 11 persons near Ligse village, said Tsering Wangdus, Traffic Manager RTC.

Meanwhile, all the government offices, schools and business establishments were closed to observe the Bandh called on the funeral day. Earlier Government employees and others observed two-minute silence at SNM hospital in the morning. [. .]

TRIBUTES PAID TO FIRST TRAINED GRADUATE TEACHER OF LADAKH

From Tashi Morup

Leh, June 30: “Thank you God for blessing Ladakh Eliezer Joldan” said Pastor Dechen emphatically with his eyes closed before a large gathering portraying this pedagogical figure of yesterday during a Memorial Service meeting for late Eliezer Joldan at the Moravian Mission School Hall, Karzu in Leh on Friday. Especially his old students comprising top leaders, doctors and other intelligentsia of Ladakh-today attended the memorial service, organized by late Joldan’s wife Ama Kunga and daughters. And one after another speeches revealed the greatness of Eliezer Joldan the first graduate of Ladakh who decided to teach the children of remote Ladakh denouncing a lucrative Tehsildar post of that time.

After completing the B.Ed. Degree course from Punjab University Lahore Joldan became the first trained teacher of Ladakh. Principal Moravian Mission School Leh E S Gergan said his love for kids and Ladakhi culture was distinctive. He never attended any Church or other meetings in modern “pant and shirt”. He would always wear Ladakhi Goncha. Above all Ajang Joldan had embraced “humility” as his way of life, said Gergan.

Another proud old student Abdul Hakim described Joldan as the one who kindled the light of education in Ladakh. Dr. S T Phuntsog named him as a distinct individual with absolute perfection. Eliezer Joldan fits as a Role Model for the teachers, said Sonam Wangchuk, General Secretary SECMOL. Meanwhile, Abdul Ghani Sheikh an Urdu writer in between the speeches evoked several memories that told Joldan’s qualities as a schoolmaster. Eliezer Joldan would play, swim in Mitsig Chulung water reservoir, act in plays and so on with his students. And then later in a meeting he

would praise the various abilities of different students to boost up the confidence. Often he would read out storybook to stimulate reading habit in students.

Eliezer Joldan was very particular about the word pronunciation. His student P Namgyal, former Union Minister, recalled an anecdote that told Joldan's concern and attentiveness towards every student. In order to correct the tendency of pronouncing terms such as school as 'sea-kool' and stop as 'sea-top' P Namgyal as a student faced the strict observance of his teacher Joldan. On mistake students would get sticks but later Joldan would give sweets (Shahikhara) always ready in his pocket to pacify the punished student. Renowned Scholar Tashi Rabgais could not hold back his tears while remembering Eliezer Joldan.

On this memory service occasion Reverend Dechen felt the need to trace the origin of Joldan family, which, he said, also throws light on the not-so-old history of Christian community in Ladakh. Once a Meme Sonam Tsering/Stobgais of Baopa family of Stok fell in love with Abhi Cho Cho of Dukpa family of the same village. Meme Sonam and Abhi Cho Cho eloped to Karzha Phagspa, where they met some Christian missionaries. They converted to Christianity and studied upto eighth standard. On returning Leh Meme Sonam (now Samuel Joldan) became Post Master then a reputed job. Impressed by Joldan King of Ladakh allotted him a land in Leh, where his family lived till date. Between them six children were born. Only son Meme Tharchin Joldan married to Abhi Chamnyet from Shey (Shamul). And Meme Tharchin and Abhi Chamnyet were blessed with four children. One of them was Eliezer Joldan (1916), who grew up to become the first trained teacher of Ladakh. His sad demise at the age of 85 this year was a great loss to Ladakh that gained invaluable wisdom from this teacher. And in his honor Chairman LAHDC Thupstan Chhewang promised the re-christening of present Degree College as Eliezer Joldan College as per the request of his old students. Endorsing this request LBA president Tsering Samphel said, this is not a request but a demand. Thupstan Chhewang hoped that it would be an inspirational to have Eliezer Joldan College. Finally, Tadzjin Joldan thanked everybody for showing so much love and respect for her late father.

HEAVY PAK FIRING IN KARGIL AFTER TWO YEARS OF LULL

SRINAGAR, July 20: Pakistani troops today resorted to shelling along the Line of Control (LoC) in Kargil sector ending over two years of lull in the border skirmishes in the area. Official sources said the first barrage of shells from Pakistani side landed in Goma-Galu and Budgam mountain ridges around 5 am without causing any casualty. The initial blasts were followed by intermittent shelling, they said, adding Indian troops retaliated to silence the Pakistani guns. The unprovoked shelling by Pakistani troops mostly remained restricted to mountain ridges away from civilian areas, but some of the shells landed in open areas in the periphery of Kargil town. The intermittent shelling was continuing when last reports were received, the sources said. Defence sources when contacted confirmed the shelling but said "it is a routine matter and there was no need for panic. It might be an attempt of Pakistan to push armed intruders into Kargil after their earlier attempt was frustrated by Army on July two when troops shot dead two three heavily-armed infiltrators in Drass sector", they said. However, the sources said the troops are on high alert and forward posts were asked to maintain a tight vigil. Patrolling has also been ordered to scuttle any attempt of militants to infiltrate into the State.

On July 11, four Army personnel were killed and nine others were injured when a powerful explosion took place in Mushkhoh Valley. Although there was no report of any casualty or damage to property, artillery and mortar shells rocked the hilly border district for the whole day sparking panic among the residents of the Kargil town, the sources said. They said as there was no let up in the shelling people abandoned their normal activities and remained indoors to avoid getting caught in the shelling. The streets in Kargil town wore a deserted look as most of the shops remained closed after several shells exploded in the periphery of the town, the sources said. Panic-stricken residents

told PTI by phone that they heard the massive explosions since early today. “The shelling is intermittent at present but we fear it might escalate”, Mohammad Hussain, a resident of Kargil said. “We were apprehending that the guns will start booming again after the India-Pakistan summit breakdown”, he said recollecting the trauma they faced during the Kargil war.

ARMY BLENDS CAUTION WITH SADBHAVNA TO KEEP PAK AT BAY IN LADAKH

KARGIL, July 30: The guns have fallen silent with the Kirti Divas and Operation Vijay celebrations to commemorate the martyrs day and the re-capture of Tiger hills by Indian armed forces over, two years after the Kargil war is over. The Agra summit is also lost into oblivion. Yet, it is not all relaxed at the line of control in Kargil right from the Tiger hills to the Batalik ranges, which had become a household name two years ago. For the army, the preparedness and caution goes on with Bofors guns positioned all along the line of control and jawans taking positions in the almost inaccessible higher reaches of the area with all its disadvantages of rough terrain, rocky mountains and rarified air. It continues to be a tough battle with tensions yet to ease between India and Pakistan, days after the Agra summit is over.

Yet, the army carries on its operations with a greater level of reassurance two years after the Kargil War, with the General Officer Commanding the XIV Core Command, Lieutenant General Arjun Ray devising an innovative twin strategy for preparedness—that of keeping his forces alert on the rocky mountains and that of winning the hearts of the people of the region with the Army's latest Sadbhavna movement. "We've met hundred per cent results," the General claims.

The Sadbhavna is a planned and structured exercise of building up infrastructure including schools, vocational training centers and medical facilities for the people and also involving them in the process. Unlike the cosmetic Sadbhavna movements elsewhere in the border areas started by the army, in Ladakh in the areas close to the line of control, there is a greater amount of seriousness involved on the part of the army which is focused on evolving a one-to-one relationship with the people in an earnest bid to win the people's hearts. The army, through a decentralized system where all officers and jawans have been involved maintains a continuous rapport with the people and is willing to listen to their problems and find suitable remedies for the same, something where the civilian administration has been failing all along.

Terming this an important exercise, General Ray says, “we have to win our people, people are our strength and our oxygen.” Elaborating, he says, that once the people are on the side of the army, there can be minimal chances of infiltration with people regularly coming back with a feedback to warn the army of any untoward incident or any suspicious movement. The General agrees that one of the causes of the genesis of the Kargil war was not only the lack of level of preparedness on the part of the army but also the lack of people's support. When infiltrators and Pakistani army had taken up positions all along the Bataliks and Tololing, there is a possibility of people knowing about it all along but “they were hesitant in reporting to the rather distanced army.”

Giving a window to his vision of a healthy relationship between the army and the people, General Ray says, “commitment of the army is there as long as there is commitment of the people. Therefore, we are protecting our people here”, and adds that this is a step towards protecting the territory itself. This, he said, was already paying dividends because people have started reporting to the army about even the minutest incidents in their villages including the regular visits of strangers from outside the area. Even somebody from outside coming to solicit a marriage ceremony in some Kargili village does not go unnoticed.

A day before the Kirti Divas was celebrated on July 26 last, a beaming Brig Rajeev Williams in Drass talked about how successful a mock exercise conducted by him had been. They had army-men dressed in civil clothes scaling some of the peaks near a village in Drass just to put the trust of the people to test. The villagers immediately spotted the men and came to report about it, he

said with satisfaction. The feedback has been tremendous, re-iterates General Arjun Ray. At the same time, he assures, the forces are not neglecting the aspect of preparedness. The jawans are being trained with latest techniques of rock climbing and expert rock climbers have been flown in specially for this task. This is not an easy task given the difficult topography of the area and the problems of rarified oxygen. The problems persist when jawans and officers man the posts on the higher reaches of the barren rocky mountains, where they not just fight the nature but also loneliness and a complete loss of appetite. An officer told of a friend who had been on Chunkar, the highest peak at 18,000 feet in the Batalik sector. "I couldn't recognize him when he was back. He was ailing and was half his size, having spent three months up there." There are often cases reported of frost-bites, minor or injuries from these altitudes, much like the Siachen Glacier, though the number of casualties because of unfavourable weather conditions in Siachen is much higher. Unconfirmed reports also said recently two soldiers had died in the Bataliks. But it was not known whether the killings were due to injuries from altitude, fall or firing from across the LoC.

Whatever the risks involved, the army, this time, is not willing to take chances and allow the mistake of Kargil to be repeated. The entire stretch of peaks, including the controversial 12 kilometre area, which was left abandoned before the Kargil War is now being manned. All entry routes have been plugged including the 35 kilometre stretch of the difficult peaks in Batalik, right uptill Chorbatla, which were never ever manned before the Kargil War. Special emphasis is on the villages close to the borders including the Mushkoh Valley in Drass and Chulichung and Gurgurda, 4 kilometres from the line of control in the Batalik sector. The officers say it has not been an easy task convincing the jawans and even some officers about matching preparedness with a close rapport with the people. If the people had been scared of the army before and after the Kargil war, the jawans too had nurtured a grudge against the people for not informing them about the infiltrations. But when the entire theme of Sadbhavna was conceived by General Ray, some nine months ago, the need for educating his forces about the importance of the same began. The concept has picked up in a big way. In fact, some villagers claim it is a two-way relationship. "They help us in providing various facilities," say the people at Lattu village in Drass, "and we in turn help the soldiers injured at the heights." The villagers of Hardass, where army has helped save the apricot trees, the lifeline of the village, from drought, claim that they were now getting their due since they were the only village which was on the army's side during the Kargil war.

Besides winning over the people, the army is exercising extreme caution in a bid to avoid any damage and harm to the villagers. The artillery battery in Turtuk area of Nubra Valley in Ladakh, which was a part of Pakistan occupied Kashmir till the 1971 war, has been shifted away from the village, because it was felt that this could be a possible target in any firing from across the line of control. The idea was to protect the people as far as possible. When it rained shells and fire from across the line of control last week, and over 2900 artillery shells had been fired all along the LoC from Drass to Siachen by Pakistani forces, the Indian army decided to maintain its cool as a policy of restraint, which General Ray believes, has to be exercised by the stronger party. This, he felt, is important both for conflict prevention as well as protection of the people of the area.

At least so far, the policy of restraint has worked. The shelling from across has stopped. Barring stray incidents of some odd shells landing in Chuni Chung, Harka Bahadur and Gumri villages, the firing from across the LoC was restricted to only the forward positions. The General felt that Pakistan, this time, was hell-bent on provoking us. Usually artillery firing is a last resort. This time, they decided to use it as the first. "It is bankruptcy on part of Pakistan to spend so many rounds for nothing," he told visiting journalists last week. He said one reason of opening firing and provoking us to over-react also stemmed from Pakistan's desire to sabotage the Sadbhavna. "But they are only bringing us closer to our people," he claims.

OTHER NEWS

DRY WINTERS, DRY SUMMERS: WATER SHORTAGES IN ZANGSKAR

Kim Gutschow and Seb Mankelov

“ENTIRE KARGIL DISTRICT TO GET WATER WITHIN TWO YEARS”, an eye catching headline from Autumn 2000's Ladakh Studies. Taken from the Daily Excelsior, the article details some of the drinking water and irrigation projects scheduled for Kargil District until the close of work in 2002. Impressively, some of the reported projects are completed, some are currently underway and some are scheduled for the imminent future. None however, appear to address the very immediate water shortages that are currently plaguing Zangskar.

Like much of Ladakh, Zangskar relies upon winter precipitation, in the form of snow, to replenish the snowfield and glacial reservoirs that supply villages with irrigation water throughout each summer. The majority of Zangskari villages are situated such that they intercept and utilize melt water carried in tributary streams between snowfield or glacier and the major rivers that flow through this landscape. Confined to the bottoms of wide glacial valleys, or deep and narrow gorges, the major rivers draining Zangskar are often too low to be of any use to gravity fed irrigation systems. The lack of viable arable land on perennially shifting floodplains and the difficulties of pumping water up from river gorges have restricted the exploitation of Zangskar's most abundant water sources.

High above Zangskar's rivers, villages are often at the mercy of winter skies for the snowfall that provides water security every summer. For villages dependant upon seasonal snowfields, winter snowfall is a critical indicator of the following summer's irrigation supply. Seasonal shortages in snow translate directly into summertime drought in such villages. In other villages, permanent snowfields or glaciers provide more water reserves and a temporary decrease in winter snowfall may have little or no immediate effect in the supply of irrigation water. For settlements in central Zangskar which are largely fed by glacial melt water, like Padum, Pipiting, and Sani, many years of drier winters may be required before any reduction in water availability is observed on a village level. By contrast there are a handful of villages that experience much greater water security. The majority of fields in Yulang, for instance, are scarcely affected by a slight decrease in winter snowfall. Situated on the floodplains of the mighty Doda River, Yulang has plentiful irrigation water even in a summer where other villages suffer drought.

In the winter of 1999-2000 snowfall shortages led to a drought across much of Ladakh and Zangskar. This lack of snowfall directly precipitated a painful drought in the summer of 2000 in many Zangskari villages that have little or no access to glacial melt water. In lower Zangskar (Sham) where water is scarce every year, Zangla villagers took the drastic measure of leaving one third of their fields fallow when, in early spring, it became clear that irrigation water would not be sufficient to irrigate the entire village that summer. Across the valley from Zangla, in Pishu, villagers only managed to irrigate their crops three or four times before their streambed dried up completely. Pishu and the nearby Kumig village, which lies up the valley, share a similar shortage of water each summer, as their irrigation water dwindles or dries up shortly before the fall harvest. Other Zangskari villages usually have sufficient water to allow for a final watering just before harvest (to soften the soil) and occasionally even after the harvest is complete (before the autumn ploughing or *ston log*). This year, however, even more severe shortages than usual forced Kumig villagers to also employ the drought procedure of leaving more than one third of the village fields fallow. Across the valley from Kumig, the village of Sendo also faced devastating drought in the summer of 2000. More than a third of all fields in Sendo (26 out of 66 fields) were left fallow due to lack of water in the village streambed. In Sendo's case, the fallow fields lay mostly in the half of the

village which lies slightly further from the streambed and reservoir, where only one of the 19 plots was cultivated and the other 18 plots lay barren and desiccated.

In most of the villages studied, the scarcity of available irrigation water was compounded by some inefficiencies in the channels or pipes which routed water to the fields. In Sendo, as well as Pishu and Zangla, the villagers had attempted to increase the efficiency of the channels—which allow a great deal of seepage—by the use of metal and/or plastic pipes. In each case, these pipes were not fitted together properly due to a lack of couplings, tools, or other methods of joining the pipes together. In Zangla, the pipes were jury rigged together with whatever stray material was available. Pieces of plastic, jute, old clothes, and twine were wrapped tightly around the two pieces of pipe which lay mouth to mouth, as valuable water seeped slowly through fissures in the material. Even such stop-gap measures were unable to supply sufficient water to distantly located fields in Zangla and Sendo. In Sendo, large metal pipes lay rusting and abandoned in the dry streambed due to a lack of couplings and the required tools to fit the unwieldy metal pipes together. In the meantime, the villagers repeated requests to the P.W.D. Department for tools, couplings, or assistance in digging out their reservoir—which had been filled with silt after a flash flood the previous year—were largely ignored. Large green patches below the reservoir and irrigation channels were telltale signs of seepage, which further compromised the already insufficient supplies of water flowing in the irrigation channel each day.

We spent some time discussing the drought with villagers in Kumig, Zangla, Sendo, and Pishu. While the number of fields each house in Kumig had cultivated varied, the poorest subsidiary houses (*khang chung*) only cultivated one or even part of a field. Meme Gelag an elderly informant from Kumig noted that some houses only cultivated a few 'rooms' (*nang*) of a single field—a room being a subdivision of the field created by the irrigation process ranging from 1-5 square yards. He noted that some optimistic villagers had plowed additional fields in early spring, but then later abandoned them after the first watering, when it became clear that additional melt water was not forthcoming. Recalling how the streambed was reduced to a trickle this year in late spring when snowmelt ordinarily might swell the streambed to burst its banks, Meme Gelag soberly added that most households in Kumig would face food and fodder shortages the following winter. He added that government officials had come around to document the drought but despaired of seeing much of the promised relief.

The villagers of both Kumig and Zangla reported that a Land Revenue officer (*patwari*) had visited earlier that summer and had taken notes on the number of fallow fields attached to each household. Villagers were told that these reports would be submitted to the District Commissioner in Kargil, who would authorize the ration stores in Padum and Zangla to give each household a certain number of free rations the subsequent winter. While villagers in Zangla felt fairly confident of receiving government assistance due to the fact that one of their own—the King of Zangla—was highly placed in the Ladakhi administration as a District official, Kumig villagers were far less confident. Informants noted wearily that even if the free rations were sanctioned, they would surely be "eaten" by corrupt officials at the Padum ration depot and the Revenue office. Sendo villagers, for their part, told a story of the visit of a Block Development Officer (B.D.O.), who was none other than the King of Zangla. The Sendo villagers who were surprised by the visit of an important bureaucrat but also hopeful as he was one of their own, a Zangskari, pressed the king for immediate assistance to their irrigation system, including concrete to line their reservoir and, if possible, the major irrigation channels. While Sendo villagers plied the king with more local beer and brandy (*a rak*) than he could consume, he appeared to be plotting his own development strategy for Sendo. Ignoring their requests, he urged the villagers to initiate a government plantation and plant poplar saplings instead. The villagers have yet to receive an ounce of assistance for their seeping irrigation channels, silted reservoir, and ill-fitting steel pipes, while the king appears to have mastered the system by ascending even higher in the ranks of the state bureaucracy.

In contrast to villages like Pishu, Zangla and Sendo which rely heavily on snowmelt from narrow tributary streams, the village of Yulang, which lies several hundred yards below Sendo, next

to the floodplain of the Doda River, experienced little water shortage in the summer of 2000. Due to its proximity to the Doda River, Yulang was one of the few villages in all of Zangskar in which most villagers experienced almost no inconvenience from the summer's drought. Only 1% (4 out of 323 fields) of the fields surveyed in Yulang were left fallow, most of them located in a part of Yulang village called Rihan which lies uphill from Yulang's primary or 'mother' leat (*ma yur*) and thus receives its irrigation water from neighboring Karsha village. This section of Yulang receives no water from the Yulang leat and considerably less water than most of the Karsha households due to its distance from the Karsha streambed and its unfortunate position at the tail end of the irrigation network.

Water shortages on the scale observed in 2000 are unusual although not unheard of in Ladakh and Zangskar. Many of the elder informants noted that the drought last summer was more of an exception than the norm. When asked, such elder informants could remember only one or two occasions in their lifetime when they had experienced droughts of similar severity. Meme Gelag, who is over 70, and the Karsha Lonpo, who is 65, could recall one other similarly severe drought in their lifetime. Both the Karsha Lonpo and Meme Gelag spoke of a time shortly before Partition in 1947 when a two-year drought struck all of Zangskar with devastating effects. Because the poorer households consumed their grain stores in the first winter after the drought, they resorted to begging for food from wealthier houses and the monastery in the second year. The Lonpo of Karsha added that a few people died during this period from food shortages. He also reported that most sharecropping households avoided paying grain taxes to the monastery on their leased fields by substituting money for grain.

Kumig appears to have been experiencing water shortages already for two decades. As Henry Osmaston notes, "even in the 1980's, Kumig's water supply was marginal; I remember they were running short just before harvest" (personal communication, 8/3/01). Yeshe Angdus, a 63 year old villager from Sendo—which has an excellent view of the snowfields above Kumig—spoke of the decline of the Kumig snowfields that he had observed in his life time. Suspended high above the village and tantalizingly close to the larger permanent snowfield that drains to Stongde, the Kumig snowfields have, in recent years, declined beyond all recognition. The decreasing snowfields have placed increasing emphasis on the methods of channeling water from the entire catchment area below the snowfields to the village far below. However, large areas of porous scree slopes between the snowfield and the village have hampered any attempts to engineer permanent irrigation channels between the Kumig snowfield and the fields. Meme Gelag described a communal project to improve the village's irrigation prospects long ago, when he and some other villagers walked up the mountain slopes behind the village until they were just below the snowfields. Their feeble attempts to channel the water more efficiently through the scree slopes were foiled for a number of reasons. Although the men dug a channel that was so deep that you could stand up in it and not see out, the water still seeped out through the scree rather than flowing in the channel. Additionally, the cold was so intense that they all nearly froze to death and had to keep coming down to avoid frostbite. The cold winds caused any water that did pool in the channel to freeze. Since the water only seemed to flow when mixed with dirt, it was impossible to create sufficient flow in the channel. When the older generation asked the young men of Kumig to return to the snowfields this year to dig out the channel, the young men refused. Even when the elders reminded them that they now had down coats, kerosene stoves, and sleeping bags—none of which were available back when Meme Gelag performed a similar feat—the youths refused, whether in fear or despair it is hard to tell. Meme Gelag added that he would rather go down the chadar in the thin sweatshirt he was wearing that day than go back up to the Kumig snowfields. At least on the chadar there is plentiful driftwood to make a huge fire at night for warmth, while there is not a speck of wood or dung to be found near the Kumig snowfields he recalled.

For Kumig, water shortage in the village has become a chronic and desperate problem. As a result of increasing aridity and more recent drought, many Kumig villagers have begun to seriously consider the logistics of moving the entire village down several hundred feet to the Zangskar River.

Meme Gelag noted quite poignantly that when he walks through the village of Kumig these days, “I feel like crying.” Such words—coming from a man who has seen Partition, past droughts, harsh taxation under the Kashmiri Darbar, and other hardships—state the stark reality which has made the unthinkable not merely possible but probable. Kumig village, which is one of the oldest villages in Zangskar, if one is to believe the 16th century Zangskari chronicle known as the Bo Yig, may be forced from a fortress like perch it has held for over a thousand years to the wide and shifting floodplains of the Zangskar River far below. If so, it may result in a rare case of village relocation, similar to the relocation of Shagar Yogma after an avalanche in the mid 1980s.

To this end, the villagers have begun the construction of new fields in the shifting sands of the Zangskar River floodplain which are fed by a new irrigation channel that begins just downstream from the Pipiting bridge. Meme Gelag described how villagers built fields on the floodplain in 1999 and continued the planned shift by digging the foundations for new houses and working on a collective irrigation channel in the summer of 2000. After the decision to shift the village cultivation down to the floodplain was made jointly, every household was conscripted to send one able bodied worker to dig the irrigation channel for almost 45 consecutive days. While the irrigation channel was completed this summer and individual fields were irrigated for the first time, there were still a few kinks in the system. An engineering miscalculation had necessitated a mechanical pump at the far end of the irrigation channel to pump water from the channel over a rise to the villager's collective field (*yul pa'i zhing*). While the villagers were able to secure a ram pump and water the field just in the nick of time, the lack of walls surrounding the field left it at the mercy of a herd of sheep which nibbled the entire field bare just as the shoots were coming out of the ground. These trials and tribulations underscore the difficulties of carving a functional set of fields and channels out of barren desert wasteland, even in an age of modern technology.

It remains unclear whether Zangskar will fall under the grand irrigation projects planned for the Kargil District. So far Zangskar again appears to have slipped through the net without catching the funding and resources that it so desperately needs. Depressingly, failed projects abound, the most prominent of which is the huge Haptal Canal. Intended to bring irrigation water from the Haptal Valley to the Padum plain, poor engineering and landslides have rendered the canal useless and it now lies abandoned above the arid land it was supposed to irrigate. Admittedly, the 10-year Zangla canal project has finally been completed and should be in full use this summer. However, the long-term future of this impressive engineering feat remains to be seen. A walk up the channel is enough to confirm the precarious nature of the construction and the lack of measures to avert erosion or avalanche. The channel is cut into shattered and rotten rock, whilst teetering piles of loose boulders are precariously balanced on the cliff face above.

Like much of Zangskar's development, many of the irrigation projects appear to have been thought up with little feedback from the village level. Furthermore, the few successful irrigation schemes seem to have been fueled more by political gain and personal profit than by any interest in the collective welfare of the villagers. There is a need to bring community level concerns into funding decisions, while supplying tools and equipment into the village hands that tend these channels on a day to day basis. Although the Zangskari villagers value their self sufficiency and appreciate the limited nature of Kargil District's resources, until now they have had little say in how these resources are administered.

RESEARCH AND INTERNATIONAL AID: A POSSIBLE MEETING

The case of Nomad RSI in Ladakh

Laurent Pordié

Development studies and anthropology have shown long ago that development projects do not succeed through economical forces or technology transfers alone.¹ International development projects face obstacles, most often unwanted and badly identified, between development workers and targeted populations. The 'cultural obstacles', which predominate in the discourse of international development workers, are coming as much from their own culture as from the 'receiving culture'. Therefore, development projects should be conducted taking into consideration the particularities of target groups, regarding their perceptions of health and disease, their social organisation and their cultural disposition to receive and integrate the proposed project. Nevertheless, this issue is often left unconsidered in 'classical' international aid programmes and treated superficially, despite the promising descriptions included in theories of 'integrated development', 'grass roots level' and 'bottom-top' approaches, or in the most famous 'cultural development' slogan promoted on the international scene by UNESCO during the Seventies. It is clear that answers to these problems fall within the purview of social science specialists and that the expatriate and local staff is generally not educated address these issues; nor can grass roots level research strategies, such as Participatory Action Research, provide a complete understanding of the complexity of social logic. It was a logical move, therefore, to launch an associative initiative at the margin of international organisations approaches, trying to involve research fellows and development workers within a similar structure.

This article discusses the case of Nomad RSI, a French non-governmental organisation dedicated to research and international aid applied to traditional medicines.² The organisation mainly operates in developing countries, focusing on ethnic minorities and remote areas. Nomad RSI is also conducting consultancies for international organisations and research centres.³ It is important to clarify that Nomad RSI does not pretend to have found the solution for international aid, but it certainly contributes to development through a different kind of response building on local particularities.⁴ This approach is unique in the field of international solidarity. Nomad's approach also raises additional questions stimulating further reflection, for example the problem of distanciation from one's object of research, the dialectics between social activist ideology and the

1. I use 'development', despite the hierarchical dimension of the word itself, in the absence of a more suitable terminology and for semantic simplification.

2. The activities include three main topics: revitalization and development of traditional health systems, environmental preservation (biodiversity and pharmacopoeias), indigenous rights (intellectual property).

3. National Centre on Traditional Medicine of Cambodia, Médecins du Monde, Action Against the Hunger, etc.

4. The Nomad approach has recently been recognised with the following awards: The Rolex Award for Enterprise, Sciences & Medecine Category (New York, 2000), Yuthog Cup, Tibetan Medical College, Lhasa and China Medical Association for Minorities (Lhasa, 2000), South-North Solidarity Award, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France (Agen, 1999), The Award for Vocation, Foundation of France (Paris, 1999), Istom Award for Development (Paris, 1999).

demands for objectivity of research, the implementation of research results, etc.⁵ This article hopes to open a discussion while introducing the organisation, its theoretical foundations and its practical engagements.

From application to involvement: a research paradigm

5. Different schools offer different theoretical answers to this subject. Some regard the integration of research and action as the most progressive approach, although others regard it as an unsolvable logical difficulty. Nevertheless, I address these two concepts not as a matter of theory, but as a matter of field practice and methodology.

Development is a major factor of social change. It is therefore necessary to clearly understand the nature of the actual social change in order to match the activities with the developmental dynamics of local populations. Changes appearing as a consequence of developmental activities should be understood according to traditional values (i.e. identity), while presenting new elements as free as possible from the cultural inputs related to their original cultural contexts. Consideration of the socio-cultural environment, which is closely related to health, demands the harmonisation of programmes using both modern and traditional models, thereby rejecting the hierarchical dichotomy between 'tradition' and 'modernity'. Nomad has developed an original concept of international aid through an inter-disciplinary approach involving development professionals and social science specialists.⁶ The organisation has the means and methods to consider the dynamics of the societies it intends to transform and to understand the social processes involved in the current transformations. The proposed cooperation between research and development ideally integrates the activities into the social dynamic and helps to set up activities, whose nature is re-interpreted by local communities. Through this process, for the projects to be efficient, the target groups must find in the programmes some ideas and symbols related to their culture and must not experience it as an imposition of imported norms and values. The development activities then become a response to local needs, as established and evaluated by development agencies (local and foreign), but also to what are perceived and understood as needs by the local population itself. Access to local logics and their understanding is one of the fundamental aspects of the conception, follow-up and evaluation of the organisation's programmes.

A few examples will illustrate more clearly these general comments: How can one set up a management system for a health centre without imposing a way of thinking and duly considering the indigenous management system? How can a malaria control programme be elaborated which considers local perceptions of disease? What are the social, economic or political challenges of international health? What is the role of medical traditions in public health and cultural identity? What are the destabilising effects of our own developmental activities on local social organisation? These questions summarise concerns that reflect the integration of human sciences in international health projects, even if solutions are not always simple. The problems highlighted here certainly have an impact on the efficiency of the programmes. An NGO whose staff is comprised of fifty percent researchers does not neglect action, but tries to fit its activities into the social, cultural and environmental reality. The aim is to secure the impact of the activities, as well as to limit their side effects on the socio-cultural environment, through a theoretical and methodological approach (applied research on development) adapted case by case for each singular intervention. In a broader perspective, this approach helps in extricating from practical field experience the modes of research implementation in international development.

Research as Nomad RSI conceives it does not involve the researchers in recommendations on current development activities or on the nature of future activities. Research projects are conducted by members specifically engaged for research, and they are quite distinct from the rest of the working team so as to reduce bias (romantic identification, ideological engagement, will to transform the object of study...), and to avoid a hybrid approach in which scientific objectivity can be lost (even if 'objectivity' is unreachable in any case...). The potential use of the results is determined by an interdisciplinary team defined for each programme, whose members are not

6. Nomad RSI encourages cooperation involving a close and permanent partnership during the entire project's duration. The 'use' of anthropologists as consultants is today a growing tendency, which certainly reveals an existing need, but their impact remains drastically restricted (use of research reports, re-interpretation by development workers, factual implementation of results, etc.). Relevant disciplines are: anthropology, ethnopharmacology, environmental sciences, development studies, ethnogeology, ethnobotany, ethnopsychology, epidemiology and indigenous rights.

directly involved in the research.⁷ This methodological approach allows Nomad to use the 'involved research' terminology because those who are conducting the research are not, in practice, the ones who are involved in the use of their results.

7. It might actually not be any applied research, in the sense of an opposition with more theoretical or fundamental research, but a possible implementation of the research.

In addition to the researchers assigned to the different programmes, Nomad set up an Interdisciplinary Research Committee (IRC) in 2001. It is a working group focused on the main problematic revealed by the fieldwork and on research application in human sciences. The IRC is inter-disciplinary so each member can benefit from the multiple competences of the team through a collective work.⁸ The abolition of inter- (and intra-) disciplinary boundaries is part of the heuristic approach of Nomad which helps—through multiplying the angles of research—in acquiring an unfragmented body of knowledge about the diverse faces of each studied object. The IRC conducts two types of activities: Firstly, the IRC works on key themes of international development through exploring development and applied research from a theoretical perspective, as well as issues brought up by the fieldwork. Secondly, this group works closely with the programme's researchers (knowledge sharing between experienced researchers, technical advising for younger researchers). This initiative is quite unique for an organisation working on international solidarity. It symbolizes the interpenetration of two fields that were until now just skimming each other. The aim is to strengthen the organisation through theoretical and practical issues, to question development and the transformation processes that it is creating and to revise the way of conceiving interventions in international solidarity.⁹

Ladakh case study: Project of revitalisation of amchi medicine

The orientation towards traditional medicines and the specificity of Nomad in this field is to be included in a broader approach that goes beyond health. The development of vernacular therapies, besides its therapeutic role, helps in reducing social inequalities because it facilitates geographical and financial access to health care.¹⁰ The revitalisation of medical traditions, because of their nodal position within the social, physical and psychological equilibrium of the community, implies promoting local identity and culture. It is within this general view that the Nomad project in Ladakh should be understood. It ultimately attempts to improve public and social health using local indigenous resources.

It would be impossible to present in this article the entire anthropological, environmental and ethnopharmacological justifications that guide the organisation's activities. I will give some indications, which I hope will help in understanding the general framework underlying the programmes. Nevertheless, one point needs to be made here because it is a central principle for all programmes. It concerns the adjustment of the permanent Ladakhi team to the concepts and analysis developed through research¹¹ and the role of Nomad as a partner organisation for local

8. For example university scholars, Research Centres, NGO's, own members.

9. These issues will be expressed in the journal *Artemisia*. A meeting between health, human sciences and international aid, soon to be launched by Nomad RSI.

10. I have shown elsewhere (Pordié, 2000) that the efficacy of Tibetan medicine, namely amchi medicine in Ladakh, is based on characteristics that are religious and intellectual (knowledge of the system and recognition of the power), social (tradition and social integration), sensory (intake of medicines, physical contact through external therapies) and physiological (potential acceleration of homeostasis and pharmacological activity). Recent publications attest to its pharmacological efficacy (Ryan, 1997, Aschoff, 2000). Nevertheless, anthropological questions persist regarding the nature of clinical protocols, the paradigmatic incompatibilities between biomedicine and Tibetan medicine, and the confused mix of nosological categories.

11. Because in the ideal objective of autonomy of the Nomad Ladakh structure, it is necessary that the local personnel (medical coordinator, administrator, executive secretary) is able to use the fruits of the theoretical approach of the organisation (link between research report and social activities).

initiatives.¹² Activities are carried out giving priority to partnership with existing local structures (concerted project, advising) in a sustainable perspective. The re-appropriation of activities by autochthonous communities (associations or village groups) helps in reducing the psychological and material dependence often induced in a 'donor–receiver' relationship.

The project on revitalisation of amchi medicine in Ladakh is composed of five main activities, the first three of which will be discussed in more detail below:

- Amchi Health Centres and pharmaceutical support (medicinal raw materials)
- Medical education
- Intellectual property rights
- Technical support for local associations
- Research projects.¹³

This level is not reached today after over three years of work, one of which has been fully dedicated to preliminary research, but remains as a primary goal. Therefore, in the context of the formal and informal training offered to the team members, a special course on data collection and research methodology will be given by the Head of the Department of Social Sciences of the French Institute of Pondicherry in October 2001. This course will also target staff of other local organisations and aims to develop a critical perspective on the development mechanisms of amchi medicine in Ladakh. The objective is not for everyone to become an expert in social sciences but to allow each team member to understand the essence and the meaning of social research.

12. Nomad is mainly collaborating with Ladakh Amchi Sabha and to some extent with the Trans Sengi-La Area Local Doctor's Association and the Medical Department of the Central Institute for Buddhist Studies, Choglamsar. The partnership also includes collaboration with foreign institutions, such as the University of Rochester, New York and the French Institute of Pondicherry (French Cooperation).

13. The research projects are accompanying all other activities. The 2001 projects concern: "Social role of the amchi", "Anthropology of birth", "Impact of Nomad activities on social organisation and collective perception", "Relationship between people and environment, Around the culture of

medicinal plants", "Intellectual property and preservation of the flora", and "Associative logics and individual legitimation in amchi medicine". Research is carried out by experienced researchers and post-graduate students.

Health centres and pharmaceutical support

The rise of modern society and the market economy in particular have induced a break-up in the traditional system of supply and payment of the amchi (Pordié, 2001). Plants are today the object of lucrative business and are only available in medicinal shops in Leh.¹⁴ The amchi now have to pay for their raw material, but still provide their treatment for little or no charge and never recover the total cost of their initial investment (except amchi in the urban areas, which are not covered by the project).¹⁵ Therefore the amchi find themselves in serious difficulties of supply. Therefore, Nomad has started a dynamic in the villages through supplying a fund of raw material that has to be managed by the amchi so that they can be autonomous in their supply and able to practice their medical art with every element of the pharmacopoeia. Participation of key persons in the villages helps in involving the rest of the community, once they have shown motivation in developing amchi medicine. Two years after having started this project, the concept apparently works, but not enough to allow the amchi to get their supply. The project has been reframed while adapting the new plant supply according to the remaining stock. The results of the evaluations gave indications on the nature (individual or social) of the failure and helped to start the Amchi Health Centres programme which fits better with the expectations of both villagers and amchi.

The management of the centres is based on the firm belief that it must build on local ideas and motivations, rather than an imported cultural system. Today one centre is operating in the Sengi La area (with community financial participation decided by the villagers) and two more are underway in Zangskar (Shun Shade) and Changtang (Rupshu). There is no standard model for the management or evaluation of these centres. The answers are adjusted case by case: one concerns a very isolated and impoverished settled community, the other a group of nomadic pastoralists. The objective is to find a satisfactory, but flexible response.

Education

14. Tibetan medicine, as a syncretism of several medical systems (especially Indian and Chinese medical traditions), includes many plants not available in Ladakh. Nevertheless, F. Meyer has shown that only those plants considered to be most valuable were imported from India to Tibet. For the vast majority "[the physicians] had to find indigenous drugs to replace [the original ones]" (1986).

15. Each amchi interviewed in the course of my studies (93 people, nearly half of the amchi population) buy some of their plants in the shops in Leh.

The Tibetan medical science is taught through classical medical books (in particular the *rgyud bzhi* or Four Medical Tantras) characterising scholarly traditional medicine. The teaching of Tibetan medicine is therefore quite standardised and is transmitted in universities (maximum standardisation) and through lineage (minimum standardisation). The project is targeting physicians trained in the lineage system.¹⁶ The education programme relies on the medical texts and comprises text commentaries and case studies, because of the esoteric and hardly intelligible nature of the fundamental books. The practice of the village amchi, evaluated by the Nomad medical coordinator Amchi Karma Chodon, is mostly practical and the theoretical dimension is commonly neglected. But mastering the theory is indispensable to guarantee the quality of the practice. It is on this issue that the education project is focusing, centered around three main types of activities: regional and international seminars, a diploma school and an educational newsletter.

16. The programme also provides material support to students at CIBS who have the required school level and who have passed the entrance examination. They graduate in five years with the ka-chu-pa degree, which is the highest institutionalised Tibetan medical degree.

The *dus-ra-pa* diploma school has been set up in partnership with Ladakh Amchi Sabha (LAS) in order to give an answer that fits the social reality of Ladakh.¹⁷ Previously, only the Medical Department of the Central Institute of Buddhist Studies was providing institutional diploma courses open to students having at least passed class ten. However, only a minority of the people interested in Tibetan medical studies meet this criteria. At the same time, institutionalised amchi are needed, according to the central Indian government, for amchi medicine to be recognised as an Indian System of Medicine.¹⁸ If amchi medicine is recognised, the central government would promote its development (budget allocations, governmental positions, health centres, etc.). The *dus-ra-pa* school is therefore part of the recognition project because it gives institutional status, in four intensive years (medical theory and practice, Tibetan grammar) to amchi that would not be able to gain it otherwise. The local recognition of the amchi by the new powers of modern Ladakh helps to strengthen the status of amchi in the villages. The physicians also are conscious of the importance of their practice and of their role in Public Health. This activity certainly seeks to improve medical knowledge, but also considers the social and cultural dimension of the physician to ultimately have an impact on a variety of levels. The school has two batches (22 students, about 10% of the amchi population), and the first of these will graduate in 2003. Nomad and LAS decided to limit here the number of students so the number of institutionalised physicians will not exceed the existing capacity for accommodating them upon finishing their studies. These amchi, who have been selected according to strict criteria, will be engaged in the Nomad Amchi Health centres, provided drug banks and included in some of the activities of Ladakh Amchi Sabha.¹⁹

An educational magazine, *Trans-Himalayan Amchi Medical Education Newsletter* (Tib: *gang jongs sorig dron ma'i*), was launched in 2000. The aim of this newsletter is to strengthen the amchi practice from a standardized perspective—particularly the theoretical aspects. This journal is the first of its kind, covering the Himalayas, and is distributed freely to all Ladakhi amchi as well as those of other Indian regions (Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh), Nepal and some areas of Tibet and Bhutan. The journal is published every three months, written in Tibetan, the language commonly used or understood by the amchi, by experts belonging to these different countries and consists of 80% medical articles, 10% articles on social issues, and 10% articles on relevant projects and activities taking place in target regions. This project hopes to foster the emergence of a trans-national network of physicians of Tibetan medicine. The distribution is done through diverse partnerships in the different areas aiming to shift the entire responsibility to the local partners.

Intellectual property rights

The aim of this project is to strengthen the rights of the Ladakhis with respect to the exploitation of the flora by foreign pharmaceutical companies. The majority of biomedical drugs on the market

17. This is the lowest formal degree in Tibetan medicine.

18. Four medical systems belong to the Indian Systems of Medicine: Ayurveda, Unani, Medicine of the Siddhas and homeopathy (!). Nevertheless, amchi medicine in Ladakh is benefiting from a partial recognition as there is a Research Unit on Amchi Medicine (affiliated to the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare), a governmental Chief Amchi and 40 amchi receive some support from the government. Ladakh Amchi Sabha has submitted a demand for full recognition of the amchi system to the Home Minister during his visit in summer 2000. More recently a proposal was presented to the Health Secretary of the State of Jammu & Kashmir on July 9th, 2001.

19. The candidates have to meet some criteria that helps in preventing the rural exodus of the newly graduated amchi: a letter of motivation of the family, the goba and the 'members' (who select the candidate), age limitation, engagement in practicing in their village of origin.

derive from the natural kingdom, reflecting the therapeutic potentialities of nature. In this respect, but also because of the tendency toward natural and 'complementary' medicines, the pharmaceutical industry are showing interest in medicinal ingredients used in traditional medicines.²⁰ The economical perspective is quite attractive: research and development of new therapeutics, of pesticides, of cosmetic products. This pharmaceutical craze, although it serves the interest of some local groups, is harming indigenous populations, which only gain little profit from the exploitation of their knowledge. Intellectual property rights and benefit sharing have to be secured.²¹

This project does not intend to close Ladakh to foreign botanical research or ethnopharmacological investigations, as it is sometimes misunderstood in India, but seeks to impose on research groups, through a legal framework, a controlled and rational study and use of the flora. It considers traditional knowledge as an heritage and guarantees equal benefit sharing. This project helps in setting up a legal frame aiming to control 'biopirates', while informing and educating the amchi population and mobilizing local institutions. This project treats local medicinal plants as symbols of knowledge and tradition, rooted in ancient medical science. In this respect, the plants form part of the cultural identity of the Ladakhis who claim a proprietary interest in them. Beyond juridical protection, ethnic identity is expressed through the plants. Thus, the plants stimulate local awareness about the natural environment, its value and wealth (as well as socio-cultural environment) and must therefore be central to conservation policies. As a subject of environmental conservation, the plants are a symbol of modernity, while preserving tradition. Again, we can see how an action initially focused on a particular issue also affects issues of identity, as well as social and environmental questions.

The role of Nomad RSI goes beyond the project activities themselves. The organisation has generated a dynamic amongst local associations involved in amchi medicine. I do not possess today enough data to present a clear analysis of this phenomenon, but its presence seems sufficient to propose a few comments. After Leh Nutrition Project stopped its activities in the field of amchi medicine, a period of uncertainty regarding its development followed. Today there seems to be a clear revival of this medical system, in part coinciding with the arrival of Nomad RSI. Obviously Nomad is not the only cause, but by fostering a favourable contextual environment, it is the main factor in today's revival of amchi medicine. The material support certainly plays a role, but beyond that, the exchanges of ideas and perceptions, the arguments developed for the defense of Tibetan medicine and the adaptation of the programmes to local motivations have created a more general enthusiasm. We are now trying to theorize this phenomenon which I call 'developmental diffusion', meaning that the impact of Nomad is effecting the targeted object through an informal diffusion process and not a formal pre-conceived work plan.

20. In India, the Neem tree (*Azadirachta indica*) and Basmati rice were both sought to be patented by American companies. After the explosion of the early '90s, pharmaceutical research today is in a period of observation and waiting, impeded by technical difficulties and juridical uncertainty (Chevassus-au-Louis, 2000).

21. See Posey and Dutfield, 1997.

These few examples show the fundamental principles (conceptual, theoretical, methodological and practical) of the organisation. Nomad takes as a fact that medicine and disease express their entire meaning in their re-interpretation by society; they are social phenomena that highlight the meeting point between biological, social, cultural and symbolic dimensions. Mono-disciplinary approaches (and technical approaches) common in international development actually legitimize the global approach of Nomad RSI.

The ambition of this brief account has been to show how simple activities are answering more complex challenges, understanding that the organisation's activities are accelerating the transformation processes in a desirable direction. The main difficulty remains at this level: to bring solutions answering social events and evolution in which cultural practices are accepted (i.e. medical practices or not), but with enough flexibility so that the new activities can be integrated in the way that the community wishes. This ultimate aim demands a permanent evaluation and re-evaluation which, because it is hardly practicable, is sometime discouraging efforts while stimulating our intellectual approach and social motivation.

We should consider this approach as experimental for many reasons: integration within a similar structure of indepth research programmes and social activities, exploration of the practical link between research and international aid, work on non-classical themes in international development (medical traditions). Besides these issues, we should consider the gap that the researchers commonly create between their personal convictions and their scientific research. As shown by Ann McElroy, "many anthropologists are indeed concerned with social injustice, but they may choose to address such issues in community service and their personal lives rather than through research" (1996). Nevertheless, there are some research topics in which the position of the researcher is hard to define, in particular regarding health problems. HIV/AIDS studies can be taken as an example because they are questioning the 'neutral position', which is supposed to characterise research unless it is considered as a methodological mistake. In this respect, Benoist and Desclaux say "neutral distanciation regarding AIDS is neither possible, nor humanly acceptable: it is then the involvement of the researcher which is necessary" (1996). The same applies to other fields of health research not exclusively focused on lethal pathologies. The survival of traditional health practices should be equally considered as they promote better acces to health care, environmental preservation, cultural and ethnic identity and local heritage. These issues are worth giving attention to in the contemporary world. Their sustainability appears today as an important matter. Anthropologists wishing to present an intelligible understanding of the traditional medicines to the ones who are intending to revitalise them discover how much this knowledge is a way of action. Therefore, their involvement makes sense, maintaining their scientific soundness, while at the same time enabling society to benefit from their research.

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACTS

Douglas McNab. *Cash crops and Sustainable Livelihoods: A Case Study of Potato Production in Sabu Village, Ladakh.* MSc dissertation, University College London, 2000. Pp. 69, tables, figures, plates. douglas_mcnab@hotmail.com

Ladakh is a cold, high altitude, montane desert region in northern India. Its economy is traditionally based on subsistence agriculture involving the combined exploitation of animal husbandry and intensive irrigated cropping. Rapid economic development of the region since the 1970s has led to increased opportunities for off-farm employment. Rural-urban migration is leading to fears of rural depopulation. A number of researchers have argued that ways are needed to raise rural incomes and standards of living in an ecologically sustainable manner. The production of a cash crop is one possible approach. This study focused on Sabu village where potatoes are grown predominantly for sale to the army. It investigated the factors affecting participation in potato production and assessed whether or not cash crops can contribute to "sustainable livelihoods". Key questions addressed in the study included:

- Is potato production related to socio-economic status?
- What other factors affect potato production?
- Can potato production raise rural incomes without jeopardising food security?
- Is potato production related to environmentally damaging practises?
- Can potato production contribute to viable sustainable livelihoods in rural Ladakh?

Research was undertaken in collaboration with a local NGO who provided background data on the village population and land use. Methods used included direct observation, semi-structured and structured interviews and ranking tasks.

While the majority of households were found to grow and sell potatoes, those with higher socio-economic status, or SES (larger land holdings), allocated more land to potatoes and hence produced and sold more than households of lower SES. Implications for income differentiation are discussed. Obstacles preventing increased potato production included lack of land and labour, and limited army demand. However, the demand from the army was said to be rising in 2001, and if the export of potatoes and other vegetables to Delhi takes off in the future, then this limit on the amount of potatoes produced may disappear.

Traditional food crops had not been excluded by potato production and were still grown by the vast majority of households. Thus, while the majority of households were benefiting from the increased income generated from selling potatoes, immediate food security had not been jeopardised. Chemical fertilisers were generally used only in small amounts in combination with traditional fertilisers and there was no evidence of damage to soil fertility or water quality. These findings were supported by measurements of soil and water quality undertaken in 1997. Potato production was thus found to be contributing to "sustainable livelihoods" in Sabu.

Gerhard Emmer. *The Unnoticed Muslims on Top of the World: Religion and Politics in Ladakh from an Anthropological Perspective.* M.Phil. thesis, Fakultät für Human- und Sozialwissenschaften, Universität Wien, March 1999. Pp. 274.

Researchers of the past have often anticipated the culture of the inhabitants of Ladakh as purely Buddhist while they have widely neglected the fact that half of the Ladakhis are Muslims. In contrast to the Buddhist population the Muslims remained largely unnoticed by social scientists until the agitation of 1989.

Gerhard Emmer's investigations especially deal with the Muslims of Leh District, a minority in this region, consisting of Sunnite and Shi'ite Muslims. The Sunnis, who represent the majority of the

Muslims in Leh, came as caravan traders to Ladakh where they settled and married local Buddhist women. The offspring of these couples and all their successors are called Argons. The Shi'ite Muslims are mainly descendants of stranded soldiers and refugees. In the early 1990s both groups experienced political and social discrimination by the Buddhist majority.

The major concern of the study is the role of religion and religious institutions in the identity formation of Ladakh's population, an identity which is either based on Buddhism/Islam or Ladakhiness, while representation takes place as oscillation between these two types of identity, depending on the particular political situation. This is not an attempt to conceive Buddhist and Muslim Ladakhi either as primordial or as sharply contoured homogenous blocs. Instead, the study tries to find out what role, in the past and at present, religion has played in the process of social identification which is, on the other hand, responsible for the ongoing political discourse.

Religious symbols and rituals still function in Ladakh as creators of political identity. Furthermore, religion is not only a vehicle for transporting the demands but also an inseparable ingredient of the whole political process in Ladakh, which takes place in the wider frame of the federal State of Jammu and Kashmir as well as the Indian Union. Buddhism and Islam, although in a different way, have significantly shaped the notion of development while economic change has reflected back to religious institutions and has changed them as well. Globalisation has considerably accelerated this process of transformation and, as a result, has amplified social contradictions which bear the process of modernisation in itself.

Roy B. Ashton. *Development: Social Disintegration? A study of community change in rural Ladakh.* Undergraduate dissertation, Dept. of Geography, Cambridge University, April 2001. Approx. 70pp.

roy@tefficks.dhs.org

Based on a study conducted in six villages in the summer of 2000, the dissertation considers Ladakhi understandings of "community", and then discusses how Ladakhis describe their village communities to be "breaking down", before focussing specifically and in more detail on one particular inter-household cooperative institution for work-sharing, called *bes*. After describing the operation of *bes* as thoroughly as possible given available data, the dissertation examines ways in which Ladakhis interviewed experience *bes* to be declining or changing.

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BOOK REVIEWS

***Le roi et le moine: Figures et principes du pouvoir et de sa légitimation au Zanskar (Himalaya Occidental)*, par Isabelle Riaboff. Thèse de doctorat, Université de Paris X, Nanterre, 1997. Pp. 301, 3 vols., photographs, maps.**

This is certainly one of the best theses I have had the pleasure to read. It is packed with firsthand information, which is no small feat given the abundance of literature on Zanskar that has appeared in the past twenty years.

The thesis contains analyses of the kingdoms, the administrative division of the region and the villages. Village organisation and the social hierarchy which are shown to be quite different from those of the Indus valley, offer rich material for comparison. This is even true of kinship terminology, which the author is the first to describe with a degree of precision, and which also here takes us away from the Indus valley because of the importance attached to and the specificity of the terms for affines. The same goes for clan organisation: the elements brought forward by the author (existence of a common ancestor, existence of "noble" *phaspun*, proper name for each phaspun) refute the theories of Brauen (1980) and she does not shy away from saying so.

Society is analyzed in great detail: king (above all the one of Zangla, the village that constituted the field site), nobility, farmers, etc., and their reciprocal relations are all examined. Solid chapters deal with economic activity and with recent developments since the introduction of Indian law. The sections dealing with rituals are no less interesting. There one learns that *sa-kha*, the ceremony of the first plowing, is accompanied by an enactment that makes fun of marriage.

It is impossible to sum up the wealth of information and the luxurious detail of the thesis. I would like to put forward but three small reproaches to the author:

- 1) For providing only transliterations of written Tibetan, as if Zangskari is not a living language.
- 2) For citing as primary sources such that are only secondary or tertiary. For example (on p. 42, n. 94) the impression is given that it is only in a book from 1989 that we have learnt that Ladakh has been occupied by the Chinese in 1962 and that the Indians subsequently decided to construct a road. Similarly (p. 64, n. 40), a book from the same period is given as the source of the information that there are monasteries in the villages of the Indus valley, and (p. 67, n. 48) that it is possible that monks of different schools reside in the same village. There is a certain tendency to ignore a whole generation of researcher who carried out research in the 1970s.
- 3) The third point of critique is the most serious. The author presents Zanskar as entirely separate from Ladakh. But she herself notes that Zanskar was conquered for the first time by Trashi Namgyal (1555-1575) and definitively in 1630. Can one say that the Artois or Roussillon are not part of France on the pretext that they were only included under the reign of Louis XIV? And what then to say about the Savoie and Nice? This insistence on separating the two mars the thesis. A comparison between the statuses of the kings of Ladakh and those of Padam or Zangla, for example, would have been illuminating. And this separation at times leads to strange things. On p. 241 she explains in detail how the kings of Ladakh and of Zangla regarded taxes as if they concerned two separate states. But the latter being a vassal (there is no need to fear this word) could not collect taxes without the consent of the former. There had to be some kind of agreement between the two.

However, the author acknowledges that she is aware of this third issue and is revising her text to address this weak point. Publication of the thesis is awaited eagerly, because these minor criticisms do not at all detract from the value of this thesis in which many researchers will find ample material for reflection.

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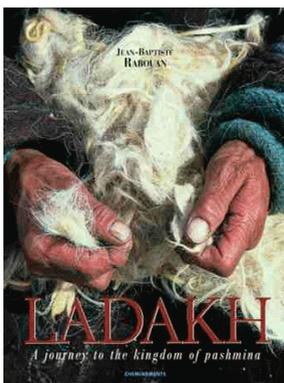
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BIBLIOGRAPHY OF LADAKH SUPPLEMENT NO. 12

by John Bray

This is the latest in a series of supplements published in *Ladakh Studies* which lists additions to my *Bibliography of Ladakh* (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1988). A new edition of the bibliography is currently in preparation, and this will be published by White Orchid Press, Bangkok. Please send new references to John Bray (Central Lodge, 55 B Central Hill, Upper Norwood, LONDON SE19 1BS. E-mail: JNBray@aol.com).

- Ashton, Roy B. 2001. Development: Social Disintegration? A Study of Community Change in Rural Ladakh. BA dissertation, Department of Geography, Cambridge University, UK. 70 pp. ■ Based on a study conducted in six villages in 2000. Considers Ladakhi understandings of 'community'; contemporary social change; and *bes*, a co-operative institution for sharing work between households.
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