THE ROAD TO PADUM: ITS EFFECT ON ZANGSKAR

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Summary

For centuries Padum has been seven day's journey from Kargil on foot or horseback; since 1980 it is little more than as many hours. This change has been more significant than any other since the Dogra invasion. Zangskaris had mixed feelings about it: welcomed by the young but viewed with reservations by the old and those who had travelled in the outside world. Construction brought work and outside labourers to the valley. Completion has brought administrators, Kashmiri shopkeepers and goods, window-glass, new buildings, government rations and new foods, tourists and road accidents. More roads are planned and under construction; Zangskaris need to consider carefully if these will be beneficial.

First of all I would like to say how much I appreciate the relaxed and informal atmosphere of this conference, it is quite unlike any other academic conference that I have ever attended, and yet the transfer and flow of information is not only smoother but I think of sufficient breadth and depth that makes it a land mark, not only between east and west, but perhaps more importantly, between the Indian sub-continent and the traditions of Central Asia, whose future is very much on the point of change. Leh has always been a trading town and although the trade which made it important may have appeared to have died off, it has become a market place for ideas, and its location tucked in between the folds of the main Himalayan range and that of the Karakoram, make it central to the understanding of modern development. It is this change which is the focus of this paper.

Before the advent of the internal combustion engine, all travel and trade was made either on foot or with the help of horses, mules, yak, dzo, donkeys, and even sheep. It is the nature of their requirements which has led to the positioning and size of certain Ladakhi villages, i.e. as stages along the route. Kargil was, until recently, known as the town of 'seven days'. Seven days to Srinagar, seven to Leh, seven to Skardu and seven to Padum. True these

distances could be shortened on a good horse and in times of emergency messages were carried by relays of riders and horses, but essentially seven days was the norm. Now it is one day in a truck or a bus. At once this measures distance in time rather than actual miles or kilometres as we have become accustomed. It is the way in which we render that distance down by our transport which matters. i.e. it is the time it takes which is fundamentally important, not the distance, and it is this which is far more important when assessing change to culture. As another small example it is only an hour or so from Leh airport to Delhi, and yet to walk that distance would take you at least a month and for nearly half of year be entirely impossible.

What is important when assessing change is not just the change itself, but more importantly the rate of change. It is in fact akin to differential and integral calculus, where the rate of change is more important than the actual speed. i.e. time is involved as well, not in some peripheral way but as a fundamental part of the equation. And here time is not in seconds, i.e. feet per second or miles per hour, but the unit of time is years or even decades. Like a tree growing imperceptibly, it is only when you return after a dozen years or so, that you notice the change most markedly. The change is so slow that the local people do not either notice it or attach little importance to it, and yet if it had happened overnight it would be obvious for all to see. It is the perception of change which is as important as the change itself. The real change may be more or even less, depending on who is doing the perceiving.

My main concern, however, is not just to itemise the major changes, although these are interesting and crucial, it is perhaps more important first to explore a psychological framework which can then be used in other situations not just in Ladakh or India.

Development is such a key issue and yet it is rarely looked at because it is itself changing so fast. You cannot stop countries developing and yet it is useful to have a point of reference with which to make comparisons.

Unlike the road to Leh, the road to Zangskar has little strategic importance, and so its construction has taken many years. Its actual volume of traffic is very limited in comparison to the great convoys that come over the Zoji La, and yet its effect in proportion to its size has been enormous. Very often what we might see as a small change is enormous for the people concerned. For instance the building of a single bridge over a fast flowing and dangerous river can bring vast changes in its wake not only to the day to day lives of villagers but to kinship patterns, demography and even grazing patterns. It is the knock-on effects of engineering projects which are

so difficult to predict, not only on the human population but to the environment. Engineers rarely stay long enough to see the effect of their work, and to the more traditional anthropologists the sight of an engineer sends them running even further into the mountains. Consequently this is an area of great interest and I might say uncertainty.

During the last thirty years the coming of the roads to Ladakh has been as significant a cultural change as the invasion of the Dogras in 1834, which in itself tied Ladakh's fate to that of the subcontinent rather than to Tibet, China or Central Asia. Indeed the war with "Our Moslem brothers" in 1965 was centred on the road and their attempts to cut the road were numerous. These culminated in a desperate attempt to capture the road bridge just outside Kargil, and it was that war which more than anything else spurred the road building on to new heights. Significantly perhaps it is precisely at this bridge that the road to Zangskar starts.

Perhaps at this point it is worth just looking more carefully at what a road is, for in one sense there is nothing there at all. True there are natural paths that men and animals have taken, but these skirt round natural obstacles. Modern roads however are by their very nature less able to blend into the landscape, they dominate it, at least just long enough for a vehicle to pass over it. And when the vehicle has passed its usefulness is over, until the next vehicle comes along. Although a road may be several hundred miles long its usefulness is at least in one sense transitory. It lies there throughout the winter unused and its potency for change is still there, an invisible chord lurking deep beneath the snow. For many years the road to Zangskar was un-metalled and except for lengths of the Suru valley is still un-tarred. It is not so much a road, but a long thin strip without rocks snaking its way through the mountains, and yet its effects were felt long before it was ever completed.

All engineering projects have three phases. Planning and Anticipation, Actual Construction and then the Active Life of whatever it is that is being built.

1. **The Planning Phase**

This lasted many years having been started in 1962 and only finished in 1980. This has in a sense been the longest phase the further one goes down the road. The engineering planning was hampered by four things. The terrain, the weather, the lack of finance, and perhaps most importantly the lack of suitable machinery. That the road was built at all is extraordinary and I have the deepest respect for the road builders of Ladakh, who are in some ways the

modern equivalents of Abdul Ghani Sheikh's 'Adventurers'. The roads are after all, only trade routes, and the truck drivers caravan leaders. The only difference is that all the horses are under the bonnet. A truck carries 60 quintals (1 quintal is 100 kg in the metric system) i.e. 6,000 kgs. or approximately 6 tons. A horse on the old trade route from Panikar to Padum would carry 80 kgs. or the weight of an average person, therefore on one truck is carried the equivalent of 75 fully laden horses, and it can do the journey in one day not seven. The advantages are clear. The only problem, as with so much in Ladakh, the trucks go back virtually empty apart from the human cargo.

In places such as Padum the coming of the road was greeted with mixed feelings. The younger people saw it as modern progress and welcomed it, particularly if it meant they could in some way benefit from it. I remember in a house in Karsha where I lived in the winter of 1976-77 I saw a picture painted by a young artistic monk and it showed very clearly a road leading up to his monastery and a bus driving up to it. The anticipation was positively joyful. The village headmen who acted as sub contractors did quite well out of the construction phase but even they found it difficult to encourage the villagers to work for a day rate as it then was of 15 Rs. for men and 12 Rs. for women. Masons got 30 Rs.. How much the *gobas* made on this I am not sure for I have heard several quotes, some as high as 40Rs. Maybe this in some ways explains the villager's intransigence rather than any ill-feeling or lack of comprehension about the road. Certainly many of the fit young men were either off trading or looking after their animals on the *dok-sa*. The annual butter production was more important than working on the roads, and so it was left to the older men and the gangs of women, some of whom were feeding babies in between shifts. The women often sang as they worked.

Only the older men and some of the more intelligent lamas foresaw problems. One man in particular summed it up very neatly. "Today we are happy, we have enough food. When the road comes young people will want money, and we will lose our peace of mind" Not a few Zangskaris had travelled widely in India and some had even walked to Lhasa and back several times. They were aware of how the road had changed Ladakh and how influence crept up from Kashmir, an influence that they were not always entirely in favour of. Even before the road to Padum was completed they said that Leh was like Srinagar. Zangskar was very proud of its independence and also of its separateness from the rest of Ladakh. Indeed at one time it had even been part of Kishtwar, and in the upper reaches of the Lungnak is closer to Lahoul and Kulu, than the central Indus valley.

Be that as it may, the anticipation of the road caused political problems between the Buddhists and Moslems of Padum, and this led amongst other things to the riot and disturbances of 6th November 1976. Or as they referred to it, a 'small local problem'. It was as if the coming of the road had, like a bullet or jet aircraft. sent a shock wave before it. And this shock wave was felt quite a few years before the road actually arrived. To examine the causes of the riot is not the purpose of this paper but I think that the anticipation of the road, the uncertainty and economic forces that were associated with it cannot be ignored. It is not to say that the road caused the riot but I believe that it provided a feeling of uncertainty that allowed old feelings to come to the surface, which might have been resolved amicably in other circumstances. Some of the problems dated back to 1947/8 when Zangskar was for a short period, along with Kargil held by Pakistani forces. If nothing else this illustrates that the road is more than just a trade route, it is a vehicle for ideas and politics. A way of life, a new path. Zangskar is remote, but only to those that do not live there.

2. The Construction Phase

This of course was preceded by surveyors, and I well remember seeing their trail of yellow paint daubed on the rocks, not only blazing the trail but at every kilometre proudly announcing the distance from Kargil. It was, and still is 235 kms. to Padum, although the real distance should have been measured in centuries. Yellow is also the colour of Ratnasambhava and is associated with the south i.e. Delhi and central Government and has as its vehicle, appropriately enough, the horse. The story of the workmen has largely gone unrecorded and yet it is they that built the road single handed with picks and shovels and limited explosive. Compressors and drills were in short supply. The altitude and cold told heavily on the workmen who had come up from the plains. Biharis in particular suffered, and it is not known how many died in the snowstorm of September 1987. Some say 30, others far more. Some of the best outside workmen came from Nepal, and their women work alongside them, as do the Bakerwal women. The specialist bridge builders came from Punjab. The engineers were mostly from the Jammu and Kashmir Public Works Dept. and some of the most well known were Ladakhis themselves. The terrain is not at all easy and crossing the Pensi La required many years of explosive work. At this time the road-head was at Panikar. The onset of winter always stops work by the end of October, and sometimes earlier. The first few weeks of the next year from May onwards are spent repairing the damage caused by avalanches and rockslides. The stretch of road beneath Nun Kun

before Parkachik, where the two ranges meet is particularly unstable. The mountains are young and still on their way up so to speak. Also the increased precipitation in the monsoon period has a detrimental effect, causing severe rutting and the collapse of retaining walls. Such is the maintenance work, that the road can hardly ever be called finished, that is the nature of the mountain environment. The road is an ideal example of the Noble Truth 2A namely that of Impermanence. Indeed it is interesting that in many cultures, the road or the way is used as a religious analogy for the spiritual path.

Ironically the first vehicles to reach Padum did so in mid November 1976 and these were two J&K police jeeps who were sent to investigate the riot and took away several prominent Moslems for questioning in Kargil. They spent the winter out of the valley, much to the consternation of their wives and families, although it may have been for their own safety. They themselves preferred to say that they had simply been transferred. To see the first vehicles coming over the fields was an awesome sight, and the noise of the first internal combustion engine had arrived. It was, I thought, not altogether boding well for the future that it should be the police inspectors who arrived first. They had crossed the river at Tungri over the ice. The first oil leak occurred and the local people viewed the jeeps with a mixture of admiration and awe, though they knew full well their purpose. Few of the women had ever travelled out of the valley, though some were accustomed to go down to Manali for work in the winter. For many it was their first glimpse of the road and of what the outside world had to offer.

As the road approached, the villagers from higher up the Lungnak and those like the Changpa and the villagers of Shun and Sha-de expressed concern because they feared that the excess grain would go out on a lorry and not be traded with them for salt or wool. Already the road was making its effect felt much further away, and the delicate balance of trade routes that had evolved over hundreds of years were being slowly eroded. Some people clearly remember Tibetans coming down to Sonnamarg with salt right up till the sixties. The road has pushed the old trade routes further and further back, and with it many of the subtleties and local variations. In its wake follows everything else. The road is in a sense a mirror through which one walks. It is also a rite of passage to a previously 'under-developed' community, though I use the words developed and under-developed carefully. The spiritual development of the monks and indeed lay people in Ladakh and Zangskar is of a very high order, and this development has been a by-product not of its apparent 'backwardness' but of its natural seclusion, a seclusion which it still retains more or

less in winter. Indeed Leh was probably more cosmopolitan in the 1850's than it is today. The re-opening of certain trade routes may in the future make Leh once more the centre of an Asian trade network.

3. **Post Construction Phase**

The third and most extensive phase in term of change is the aftermath of the road arriving. I will try here to elucidate the nature and size of those changes, and for the most part I will be using Padum as the source for much of my information. Obvious visible changes include the following.

New Buildings. These have been built primarily along the route of the new road and comprise many Government Buildings, though the new offices of the Sub-Divisional Magistrate are situated near the Buddhist cremation ground, just above the old carvings. Previously the Tehsildar had lived in two rooms rented from the old Gyalpo Teshi Namgyal for the princely sum of 40 Rs a month. The whole infrastructure of government has arrived, and with it, its own architecture, which relies heavily on cement, concrete and reinforcing bars. The two styles of architecture in some ways highlight the differing attitudes to the environment. One natural, the other imported. Indeed one wonders if the people themselves actually need the government or whether it is not the other way round. To quote Ved. Prakash Gupta who was Tehsildar in 1976, who said in a moment of confidence over dal and rice: "These people are perfectly civilised. They have no need of government. It is we who should be learning from them". Since then of course the road has arrived and with it all manner of projects and schemes. Some of which work, some of which have yet to be finished. Others like the new bridge between Padum and Karsha have already fallen victim to the environment. Concrete does not respond well to the extremes of temperature and the ravages of the melt water put a severe strain on footings, particularly if the cement ratios and cover to reinforcing are not of sufficient standard. This is perhaps a minor detail but much the same thing which happened in Ladakh is happening on a smaller scale in Zangskar and it would be sad to see a plethora of half-completed projects.

With new buildings comes new architecture and glass has, I think, been the main difference, or rather large sheets of glass, which give big windows totally changing the style and living conditions of many new buildings. Insulation is as ever a major problem but a large glass room is very useful in winter during the day. Many of the modern 'Hotels' are simply left empty over the winter. Padum suffers from two types of development. The ribbon development already

mentioned which also gives access to traders from Kashmir, and the more environmentally insensitive development in individual fields, which would have been unthinkable a few years ago.

In at least one instance I know that the *khang-chung* was larger and more modern than the *khang chen*. The father who was a teacher and village elder in Padum, instead of going to a smaller house, had in fact built himself a large new house in one of his fields, much to the consternation of his son who had 'inherited' the old but still substantial town house. His father would not let him alter or extend the old house because he said it would upset the *lha*. Also interestingly his 'uncle' who was in a polyandrous marriage with his mother, now lived with him, and not in the new *khang chung*. New architecture and settlement patterns may also in some ways reflect changing attitudes to the family structure. The main feature of new houses is that they are not suitable for the wintering of animals, a primary function of the older buildings, and this in itself highlights the first step away from the land. Increased wealth has undoubtedly changed Padum and will continue to do so for many years to come.

What one is witnessing is the transformation of a village into a town, and perhaps more importantly, the transfer of a predominantly non-cash flow society into a cash-flow one, and as in all cases there are winners and losers. What was stable almost to the point of ritual ten years ago is now no longer existent. The *changpa* with their caravans of a thousand sheep and goats no longer come. Salt comes in by truck. Bridges no longer have to be built by weeks of patient preparation twisting rope out of birch twigs. People can come and go with far greater mobility. There are cash jobs in the valley and here the tourists have played their part. Far from destroying the culture they have I think given a greater awareness to the local people of the worth of their culture and in particular the worth of their monasteries and the paintings and artefacts associated with them. However recruitment of monks is becoming a problem, although it is interesting to note that the nunnery in Karsha has actually increased its numbers. This maybe reflected in the fact that there is greater wealth around to support nuns whereas before unmarried women were kept at home to help with the agriculture. One very positive thing is that horses are still kept, particularly in Lungnak where the road has not reached and these are still used for government caravans of and for treking parties. The tourist industry has kept a significant number of young men in the valley who would otherwise have left for other jobs in Ladakh or elsewhere. Always it is a question of scale and in many ways the winter helps to preserve the Zangskari's individuality and thus the culture is not swamped. The tourists come and then they go. The

trade comes to them as it does in Leh, and this means that there is a considerable income to be made from hotels and the sale of land near Padum has raised prices. Indeed before the road, land was rarely, if ever, bought and sold. The price of land has increased dramatically and in certain areas is worth as much as 30,000 Rs per kanal (1/8 acre; 506 sq.m.); the government rate however is only 13,000 Rs. and this is combined with compulsory purchase. A lot of the middle ground in the plain of Padum is being claimed by the government and may or may not be irrigated in the future.

One person who shall remain nameless, received a substantial grant for building a hotel, and in the meantime instead of building the hotel immediately used the money to purchase a tipper truck which is rented out to the PWD. The hotel was eventually built and is similar to several other hotels run, during the summer, by men from Manali. This same person admitted that although he still grew barley, he sold it off to the Buddhists for making *chang* and arak, whilst he and his family lived off the government rice ration, supplemented of course by government *atta* (wheat flour).

Supplies. Even before the road came, the government ration station was in full swing and accounted for many of the horse and mule caravans coming in from Suru, though issues were almost exclusively for government officials and some privileged families in the Padum plain. In the next decade there was a great increase, making rations available to most inhabitants of central Zangskar. The 1989 figures below are for supplies to the Padum area only; Karsha and more outlying villages were supplied from other depots, and it is impossible to say what population was served.[1]

	1977	**1989**	**1989 price**
Kerosene*	30,000 litres	120,000 litres	12 Rs/5 litre
Rice	1,000 kg.	23,000 kg.	2.63 Rs/kg
Atta (flour)	1,000 kg	25,000 kg	2.36 Rs/kg
Sugar	1,000 kg	50,000 kg	5 Rs/kg
Salt	3,000 kg	50,000 kg	3 Rs/kg

*mainly for cooking stoves and lamps.

The necessity of getting supplies in before the middle of September was highlighted by the early and severe snowfall of 1987

1. The 1989 *atta* supply would only suffice for about 350 full rations; the population of Zangskar was about 7,000 in 1981. Only those with cash incomes, such as government officials, would be able to buy substantial amounts of *atta* and rice, but the uptake of sugar, salt and kerosene is much wider. (Ed.)

when not only were the road workers cut off and forced to cross the passes ill-clad, but government rations were so low that government officials had to subsist on the local diet, a state of affairs that they have no wish to repeat. The rations are carefully monitored. In 1989 the standard ration was 8kgs. of rice per head per month and for *atta* 6kgs. per head per month. Sugar was 400gms./head/month.

One of the main problems up Lungnak side was that the people in the villages there could not reach the government's ration station in Padum during the main winter months because of snow and the danger of avalanches. This I think has been alleviated and in 1993 I saw many caravans carrying government supplies to the upper reaches of that valley, to be stockpiled at Testa.

The availability of other foodstuffs in Padum has increased dramatically. In 1976 there were only three shops selling a very limited variety of goods, such as ink, cigarettes, biscuits, batteries, dried apricots, *dal*, matches, *naswar* (oral snuff), brown sugar, mirrors, tea and milk powder. Now in the height of summer you can get cabbages, carrots, bananas, coconuts, tomatoes, onions, eggs, Nescafé, butter, honey, lemon squash, etc. etc.

The sale of butter and salt is interesting as this made up the backbone of the long distance trade prior to the coming of the road. Butter produced on the *dok-sa* (summer grazing ground) would be traded down the gorge in winter for about 45-50 Rs/kg, when the government's Amul butter would sell for half that amount, 30 Rs/kg. The same with salt. 1kg of the *changpa* salt which was highly prized for tea was worth at least 2kg of government ration salt. The rate of exchange for grain being that a saddle bag of salt 3/4 full was worth the same as the same saddle bag filled up with grain, mostly barley, although peas were sometimes mixed in as well. Both trades survived the initial impact from the road but the *changpa* trade from Karnak has since stopped. They can take their salt into Leh direct by truck, thus saving a months grazing journey into Padum. They used to come twice a year, once in July and again in September. The wool from their larger sheep was much prized for making *nimbu* (woven woollen strips) out of which their *gonche* (cloaks) were made. It is this erosion of the apparently simple crafts which will in the end have the largest impact, making the differences in wealth between higher and lower villages even more marked. One thing which I noticed was that cattle were being brought over from Pangi and from Lungnak side and then shipped out by lorry to Kargil for slaughtering there. Prices for cattle and *dzo* were good. A good *dzo* being worth anything up to 5,000 Rs. and a good horse 4-12,000 Rs.

Electricity has arrived with generators at Padum, Sani and Karsha. These are worked intermittently and are in the main providing light. The charges are I think 9 Rs per month per light bulb. The diesel fuel to run them has of course to be brought in by oil tanker. There are moves afoot to construct the Haftal Hydro-electric project, but it is doubtful if this would function well in winter. Solar heating in the form of trombe walls would be good, as in the rest of Ladakh but so far there is no great evidence of them, though the villagers would undoubtedly benefit from them, the winter being more severe here than in Leh,

Labour: Patterns of labour have also changed and workers come over to help either at harvest, or on the various projects that are going on. Rates of pay vary but 45 Rs a day is fairly standard, though equivalent labourers in the central Indus valley get approximately 60 Rs. Most of the people that employ help at harvest have comfortable jobs which means that they can afford to pay for help. However it is a sign of the times that the agriculture is not standing on its own two feet, and this is because of the large government ration imports which are sold at reduced rates. The solution is not easy but farmers should be encouraged not to ignore their land, they do so at their own peril, both agriculturally and ecologically; fields that stand idle are liable to be blown away by the harsh winds in the autumn.

Diet has also changed, although not as much as in Leh. As an example I include the diet of a family[2] equivalent to six adults in Padum based on figures for the annual consumption of certain foodstuffs. The data has been obtained by oral cross referencing. People in Zangskar who rely heavily on their food reserves are usually very accurate on this point, though less accurate when it comes to estimating crop yields; this may be due to an underlying fear of government officials and taxation which prior to the relaxation in 1947 was burdensome.

The main swings are obvious: a great increase in the use of Government *atta* which releases land for more barley. Peas are down and rice is up. Indeed this prosperous family was unusual for Zangskar in general to be eating so much rice in 1977, but not so unusual for Padum. Reckoning two children as equivalent to an adult, these figures give an adult daily ration of about 800 gm of grain and

2. This family should not be regarded as typical of the valley. Besides having a farm, the man is both a salaried government employee and a local dignitary who has to provide food at traditional meetings. (Ed.)

ANNUAL FOOD CONSUMPTION OF A FAMILY IN PADUM

	1977 4 adults 4 children		1989 2 adults 8 children		% Change
Staple foods					
Barley for food	500 kg	(hg)	450 kg	(hg)	-10%
,, for *chang*	150 kg	(hg)	150 kg (150 kg)	(hg) (hg)*	+100%
Peas	300 kg	(hg)	180 kg	(hg)	-40%
Wheat	500 kg	(hg)	150 kg	(hg)	+14%
,, flour (*atta*)	—		420 kg	(Govt.)	
Rice	300 kg	(bt)	700 kg	(bt)	+130%
Total domestic use	1,750 kg		2,050 kg		

* 150 kg homegrown barley for brewing *chang* for harvest labourers, excluded from domestic total. hg = homegrown bt = bought

Remainder of diet:		
Ghee	5 kg	5 kg
Mustard Oil	10 kg	15 kg
*Dalda**	-	23 kg
Rape seed Oil	-	4 lt
Dal	30 kg	30 kg
Butter	36 kg	33 kg
Churpe (cheese)	25 kg	15 kg
Potatoes	35 kg	80 kg
Cabbage	-	10 kg
Local Vegetables	6 kg	6 kg
Yak Meat	70 kg	120 kg
Sheep/Goat meat	20 kg	20 kg
Onions	5 kg	21 kg
Salt	20 kg	20 kg
Sugar	12 kg	60 kg
Red Tea	20 kg	15 kg
Lipton Tea	1.5 kg	5 kg
Milk/Yogurt	1500 litres	1000 litres
Chang (beer)	500 litres	500 litres

* A cheap margarine, mainly used in Ladakh for 'butter' lamps.

peas per day in 1977, rising to 940 gm in 1989.[3]

The other significant changes are an increase in vegetables, notably cabbage, onions and potatoes. Twice the amount of meat is eaten. Sugar is up considerately but I think this is not just an increase in the amount of Lipton tea that is drunk, but an increase in the amount of sugar taken to sweeten the *tsampa* in the making of *kolak*.

3. But WHO recommendations indicate that food requirements of children aged 0-18yr average about 2/3 of adults. Use of this factor and exclusion of grain used for *chang* would remove the change and reduce the amount to about 650g/adult/day (c.2200 Kcal). However this is still nearly double the consumption found in a survey at sTongde, so entertainment may account for some. (Ed.)

Change of diet is undoubtedly important particularly for the children.

Dress: This has changed considerably, particularly in the summer. Traditional dress is however worn on festive occasions. The Buddhist women prefer to wear a colourful scarf which is much more comfortable than the old *perag*. Men love to sport their down jackets, jeans, cotton shirts etc. but still have deep respect for the traditional dress. In winter all revert to the old style *gonche* and many prefer to wear two.

Language: The use of English has increased and a new school at Pipiting has started. Also some Buddhists are sending their children to be educated at the monasteries. The best education is still outside the valley. Pay for teachers is low and often delayed. The importance of children learning Ladakhi and Bhoti is essential, even though their teachers may prefer Urdu.

Politics: In the wake of the 1976 disturbances in Padum, a new system of deciding contentious affairs has been in force for a number years. So ingenious is the system that it could well have applications in other small scale areas of conflict, and even larger ones. The notion is simple. It consists of a village committee which is made up of five members. The *goba* or headman and four others, two Buddhists and two Moslems. The difference is that the Buddhists are elected by the Moslems and vice versa which tends to lead to moderates, rather than extremists, on either side, and hence the greater chance for compromise in difficult situations.

Road Accidents: These have been severe, though not as severe as the avalanches. The most common accident is that of a tipper truck going over the edge if a retaining wall collapses, and with many people on the back fatalities are common. About twenty people have died from road accidents since the road was opened. In 1987 avalanches killed 45 people in the village of Skagam and another 9 in Uberag. Although in no way linked to the road, they maybe linked to a change in overall world weather patterns. Particularly heavy and sudden snow falls are rare, and village sites usually very safe.

Conclusion

The changes in Padum have been very significant, but not as bad as they could be. The most important changes are probably to do with the economics and in turn the politics of decision making. The view of the outside world has no doubt shifted. The tourist season is

short but welcome. It is perhaps significant that both the Buddhist and the Moslems have both built new religious buildings, namely the new monastery at Photang and the new mosque at Padum. The most significant changes however may occur if the road to Lahoul over the Shingo La is completed or the road down the gorge linking Zangskar to central Ladakh. The changes would then be far greater.

It is interesting to note that in 1993 when the road was progressing slowly up the Lungnak valley, there were heated discussions in Padum about the rate of progress, which seems to have slowed in the last two or three years. The villagers would like it speeded so that they are not left behind the development in the rest of central Zangskar. On the other hand I believe that the important leaders in Lungnak and Testa, who have a significant income form organising government caravans and supplying horses and mules, are keen that certain bridges are NOT improved. They realise that when trucks come this livelihood will be taken out of their hands. In the early 1970's in Afghanistan I heard of various villages in the Hindu Kush in Nuristan which elected not to have a road, foreseeing the problems of a loss of independence — a view which was justified after the Russian invasion a few years later. That aside, this choice highlights the problems of the shift in local economy which are often not considered as part of the overall equation.

How the problem will be resolved is up to the Zangskaris and the engineers. A road through to Darcha in Lahoul would change the whole balance and nature of Zangskar. Instead of being a remote valley, it would simply become another corridor. Time, terrain and weather will however keep Zangskar cut off for half the year. They may lose their peace of mind but there will still be many thousands of square miles of nearly inaccessible mountains.