Conclusion

In conclusion, the development strategy for Ladakh should emphasise the following elements:

1) Self-reliance and sustainability as key-words;
2) The importance of farmers and farming as a profession to be recognised by society as well as planners and developers;
3) Agriculture, animal husbandry and other primary sector activities to be given top priority in funding and management;
4) Special plans and programmes to be initiated for the development of traditional handicrafts and small-scale industries based on local products like pashmina, yak wool, fruits, etc., with a view to value-addition at the local level, including marketing in other parts of India as well as export;
5) Non-conventional energy sources such as solar and hydro to be developed in preference to those based on fossil fuels;
6) Tourism, which has become an important source of income, to be given a new direction so that its benefits are shared by a greater number of people particularly in the rural areas;
7) Rural areas to be developed as quickly as possible with the provision of basic infrastructure including electricity, medical and educational facilities, and the creation of employment opportunities in the villages in order to minimise population shifts to Leh.

Hanu Village: A Symbol of Resistance

Sonam Phuntsog

The village of Hanu is situated at the crossroads of Leh, Kargil and Baltistan. The citizens of Hanu are descendants of an ancient race of people known as the Dards and they speak an old dialect of Shina. They wear simple garments made of wool. Their food rituals and customs can be traced to their agricultural and pastoral modes of living and family life. In the past, they worshipped nature and still believe in different deities and spirits.

Historical Background

The influx of the Dards into Ladakh started two centuries before Christ. There is no written evidence prior to that. The major sources of the ancient history of the Hanu-pa are based on local traditions, religious songs and old monuments. According to popular tradition, three brothers called Galo, Melo and Dulo migrated from Gilgit to Ladakh and settled in the mountains of Hanu. Other tribes followed and settled on either sides of the banks of the river Indus in the neighbourhood of Hanu. The old name of the pasture of Hanu was Handangman. Now it is called Chopo-brog. Ladakhis call its inhabitants 'Brog-pa ('denizens of the high pastures'). The people of Hanu, however, deem this appellation degrading.

In the past, Balti and Ladakhi traders travelled to Leh and Skardo through the Chorbat Pass situated in the vicinity of Hanu. The people of Hanu were often locked in conflict with their neighbours and looked at strangers with suspicion. Later, Hanu and other Dard villages were invaded and annexed by the kings of Ladakh.

1. Several people have contributed to the translation of this article including Konchok Phande, Ravina Aggarwal, Abdul Ghani Sheikh and Nawang Tshering Shakspo.
Festivals

For every feast celebrated in Hanu, meat, goat, butter, apricot oil and pa-ba (cooked dough made of roasted barley flour) are consumed. Among the major festivals are mamani and sngo-lha.

Mamani is held on the twenty-first of January every year. On that day a goat is loaded with phe-khal-brgya (‘a hundred score of barley flour’ where ‘score’ is equivalent to half a walnut shell). Nobody wants to keep this goat after that. The food is then offered to the forefathers at the Mentog-sa (‘flower place’). Then, the head and legs of slaughtered goats are cooked and eaten by the villagers.

On the fifteenth day of the fifth month of the Tibetan calendar, the festival of sngo-lha is observed. On that day, the villagers kill a white goat and offer it to the village deity. Then they gather to dance, sing, eat and drink for three days.

One of the biggest ceremonies in Hanu commemorates the martyrdom of Apo Tho-shali. As the story goes, the King of Ladakh, Tsewang Namgyal (1535-75) summoned the people of Hanu to build a road but they refused. The King then summoned Tho-shali, their leader, but he declined as well, saying ‘the Brog-pa don’t have taxes like dogs don’t have saddles’. On hearing this, the King was enraged. He arrested Tho-shali from Hanu and took him to Bru-zhal rgyal-po’i zam-pa, a bridge near Hanu-mdo. There he buried him alive within its walls. On a rock in that spot is inscribed ‘Tho-shali was killed because of his resistance’. Due to his martyrdom, the people of Hanu were exempted from taxes until the year 1842.

A festival was initiated at Hanu Gongma and Yogma to celebrate the joy that people felt in their hearts at this tax release but also to mourn Tho-shali’s death. The festival lasts for three days. A goat for the village deity, a sheep for the goddess Sman Karpo and finally a goat for Apo Tho-shali are sacrificed on the first day. The food eaten during the first two days is dedicated to Apo Tho-shali. The festivities begin with three songs dedicated to the deities during which they are recited the names of seven gods, seven goddesses and seven flowers that are offered to them. In early days, all the horns obtained by hunting ibex for the entire year were placed at the lha-tho (‘shrine of the village deity’) by the lha-rdags (‘guardian of the village deity’) after washing them and purifying them with fumes of cedar during the first day of the Tho-shali festival.

Religion and ideology

In 1779, three monks of Spiti brought the message and teachings of Buddhism to Hanu and some people converted to its fold. They were followed by a hermit of Skyurbuchan called Konchog Wangpo who preached Buddhism to them. Many people embraced this faith. The hermit built a monastery in the village in 1825.

Influenced by the Buddhist faith and Ladakhi culture, the people of Hanu discarded many old customs. Since then, it became a ritual to ordain a monk from the village every year. Influenced by the preaching of Lama Konchog Stanzin, head monk of Phyi-dbang monastery, the villagers became followers of the ‘Bri-gung-pa sect.

In 1905, a conflict arose when Tashi Phel, a monk from Hanu and the village headman, Phelo, were beaten up on certain vague charges at Lamayuru monastery on the eve of its annual festival. Lamayuru monastery represents the bKa’-rgyud-pa sect and is affiliated with Phyi-dbang monastery. The people of Hanu were highly infuriated and in protest they joined the Ge-lugs-pa sect. A priest of Likir gompa was invited to Hanu to perform religious rituals. It was only after seven years, in response to the prophecy of the local oracle, that the villagers once again converted to the ‘Bri-gung sect.

In 1945, a school was opened in the village by the state government, but people on the whole refused to send their children to school. Even today, there are only three (educated) persons from the village of Hanu who are employed by the government. Young people generally prefer to enlist in the army and guard the borders of the region facing Baltistan, which is under Pakistani occupation.

A Song from the Hanu Dialect

The following song recounts the history, lifestyle and identity of the people of Hanu.

Soso koso kohani ho
Brushal Gilgit hani ho
Run ras ye hani ho
Ram ras sili lha hani ho
Durus ye hani ho
Galo, Melo, Dulo hani ho

Where do you come from?
We are from Gilgit.
What is your religion?
We are worshippers of deities.
What is your race?
We are the descendants of Galo, Melo and Dulo.
What clothes do you wear?
We wear clothes of silk.

What is your occupation?
We are engaged in gold collection.

What is your land like?
Our land is made of flat meadows.

What plants do you grow?
We grow bamboo.

What are your houses like?
Our houses are decorated with turquoise.
We have doors of lapis lazuli.
We have hearths of lapis lazuli.
We have thresholds of ivory.

What are your dances like?
Likely to draw a lot of spectators.

Women's Development in Ladakh

Spalzes Angmo

Women have symbolised creation and motherhood since life began on this planet. No society or nation where women are not respected has ever grown. In our ancient civilisation, despite being a primitive traditional society with low literacy, womanhood has been respected. Indian history is replete with glorious examples which symbolise Indian womanhood at its best. To emulate we have the courage and vision of Indira Gandhi and the compassion of Mother Teresa, to name but a few among the hundreds who have illuminated the pages of our history. God perhaps has been a little prejudiced when he created man by giving him much more physical strength, but God has compensated women by giving them more compassion, resilience and noble values.

Human energy is the best available renewable source. However in some areas of the country the rate of population growth is so high now that the increase in human energy is becoming counter-productive to growth and development. But in the case of the Ladakh region as a whole, the density of the population is not great and it is here that human energy is very important. Half of the total population of Ladakh are women, and unless they play an active part in all fields of development of this ancient area half of the human resources will be wasted. Women in Ladakh have an immense role to play in various aspects of life, according to the changing times. The Women's Welfare Society has organised various seminars on women's development. The main purpose of these seminars was to discuss the various socio-economic problems of Ladakh's women, and to suggest ways and means for their upliftment.

Social and economic position of women
Although women in Ladakh do not suffer from many social evils such as dowry deaths and female infanticide as their counterparts in Northern India,