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Ladakh: Land of High Passes

PART I
Tourism: Savior or Destroyer?

BY PRAMILA JAYAPAL

MUSSOURIE, India 1 November 1995

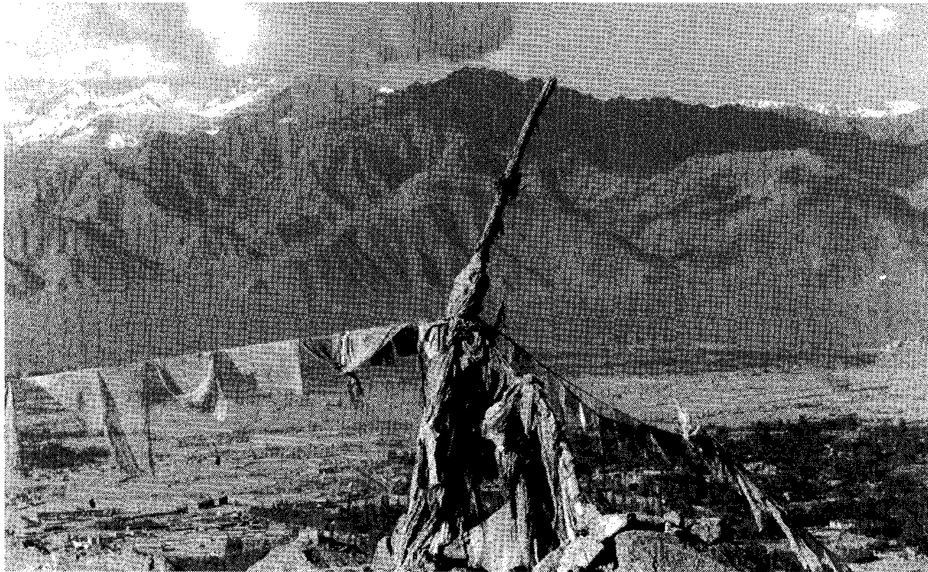
I was not prepared for Ladakh. I had read about it. I knew about its barren beauty and majestic scenery. I knew that it was more Tibetan than Tibet, now that Tibet is a Chinese-occupied territory. But still, when our plane from Delhi flew through the narrow mountain gorges and I saw the snow-tipped peaks all around us with wisps of cloud encircling their tips, I felt unprepared to absorb the grandeur, the sense of complete remoteness, the feeling of vulnerability next to the enormity of nature.

According to the Hindu epic, the *Mahabharata*, Vishnu (the Preserver of Life in the Hindu divine trinity) lived on the shore of a great sea with two seagulls. Every year, no matter where the female seagull laid her eggs, the sea would come in and wash them away in its raging waters. The seagulls finally appealed to Lord Vishnu for help. Vishnu rescued them by opening up his mouth and swallowing the sea—in its place lay Earth. Then Vishnu slept, exhausted from his feat. While he slept, the demon Hiranyankisha leapt on Mother Earth and raped her so brutally that her limbs were broken and levered up, high into the clouds, forming the Himalayas.

The intensity and brutality of this legend accurately reflect the barren, intimidating grandeur of the Himalayas, within whose rain shadow Ladakh is nestled. It does not, however, do justice to the absolute perfection and magnificence of the land. The arid rolling hills of Leh give way to 20,000-foot mountains, and wide-open, high-altitude plains where shepherds bring their animals to graze. From the tops of passes strung with colorful prayer flags, one can see silhouettes of mountain ranges dusted with fresh snow. Although Ladakh receives less than 50 mm of rain per year, glacial melt from the mountains creates rushing rivers, next to which are patches of green barley fields, well-irrigated by channeled water. In the northern part of Ladakh, the terrain is scattered with curved rocks, smoothed by rain, that look like fine, ebony-colored metal sculptures.

Ladakh is situated in the northeastern corner of the country on the borders of Tibet and Pakistan. From 950 A.D. to 1834, Ladakh was an independent kingdom. In the early 1800s, under attack by Mongol forces, Ladakh was forced to appeal to the Mughal Governor of Kashmir for assistance, thus becoming part of the Mughal Empire. With the partition of India in 1947, Ladakh—like Kashmir—was divided, with part of it (called Baltistan) in Pakistan and part in India in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Since China's 1962 war with India over disputed border territory, the Indian government has stationed hundreds of army troops in Ladakh. Today the region is considered to be of great strategic importance, particularly in light of in-

Pramila Jayapal is an Institute Fellow spending two years living amid and writing about societal issues in widely diverse regions of India. She has recently been joined by her husband, Alan Preston.



Prayer flags and an offering at Tsemo Gompa, Leh

creased Pakistani activity and China's continued occupation of Tibet.

Ladakh's area of 98,000 square kilometers (about the size of the state of Ohio) accounts for almost half the area of the entire state of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), although its population of about 160,000 accounts for less than 2% of the state's population. Ladakh's extreme weather and location keep it isolated for more than half the year, when the roads close and, in bad weather, planes cannot fly in or out. During the 4-5 months of the year when it is accessible, it is flooded with tourists who come to see and experience its unique culture and majestic terrain. The rapid escala-

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RAJASTHAN
UTTAR PRADESH

tion of tourism in the last decade has sparked a sharp controversy over the impacts of tourism on this formerly isolated and completely self-reliant economy. Over the last few years, Ladakh has become a center of international interest, as its collision with the modern world is watched, monitored, adjusted and analyzed.

We spent almost two months in Ladakh, looking at various issues of development both by trekking through the region and by talking to policy makers, various NGOs and friends we made along the way. The issues that emerged from our time in Ladakh are as murky and complex as any others I have seen, and ultimately address the crux of the nature of development. There are lessons to be learned, issues to be discussed and views to be challenged from Ladakh's trajectory into the modern world. But answers do not come easily, and the often-passionate discussions I had with various Ladakhis show the range of prevailing opinions.

This newsletter focuses on the impact of tourism on Ladakh's unique culture. Part II will explore the quandaries of applying "Western-style development" to Ladakh.

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The Road to Tourism

Ladakh was opened to tourists in 1974. Initially, the influx of visitors to the region was minimal since people's enthusiasm was dampened by the long, grueling three-day road journey from Delhi to Leh (Ladakh's capital) via Srinagar. Then, as tourism in the rest of the Kashmir Valley began to boom, more and more people made the spectacular trip across the Himalayas to Leh.

In 1978, the first Indian Airlines planes began flying to Leh, making access much easier, and in the 1980s, a second road was built from Manali to Leh. Tourism reached its peak in 1988 when almost 25,000 visitors flooded into Leh in the three summer months. This dramatic increase was driven by two main factors: 1) Ladakh's culture was beginning to receive attention, partly as a result of the work of a high-profile international organization called The Ladakh Ecological Development Group (LEDG), which is trying to "preserve the unique culture" of the Ladakhis, and 2) political unrest in Kashmir, for years considered a trekker's paradise, was pushing tourists to look farther east for their trekking jaunts. Although the number of tourists dipped in 1989 due to Buddhist-Muslim riots in Leh, over the past six years it has stabilized at about 16,000 tourists per year, still a large number given the remoteness of the area and the short tourist season.

Ladakhi Culture: A Tradition of Self-Reliance and Tibetan Buddhism

Ladakh is unique in large part because of its vibrant culture and traditional way of life. It has been described by many as one of the last truly self-reliant societies in

Ladakhi woman wearing a goucha

the world. Until the roads were built in the 1960s connecting Ladakh to the rest of India, people ate what they grew, used local resources like mud and bushes to build their houses, and built their villages around the availability of water from glaciers. Nothing was wasted; barley, a high-altitude crop, was harvested, roasted and made into a flour called *ngamphe* (Ladakhi) or *tsampa* (Tibetan). The remains of the barley were made into a local brew called *chang*. Willow trees and home-made mud bricks dried in the sun were used for housing materials. Long woolen robes called *gouchas* (for men) and *kuntops* (for women) were made out of home-spun, home-dyed wool, and worn with yak-skin capes and woolen shoes lined with yak or goat skin.

The nature of traditional Ladakhi life epitomized one of the central principles of Buddhism, called *pratitvasamutpada* or interconnectedness — a harmony between people and the land, a dependence on family structures and human linkages, an understanding that the land is the only provider and that sustainable resources are only those that are available from nearby. Money was not the main currency; instead, people used barter of goods and services, and operated on the

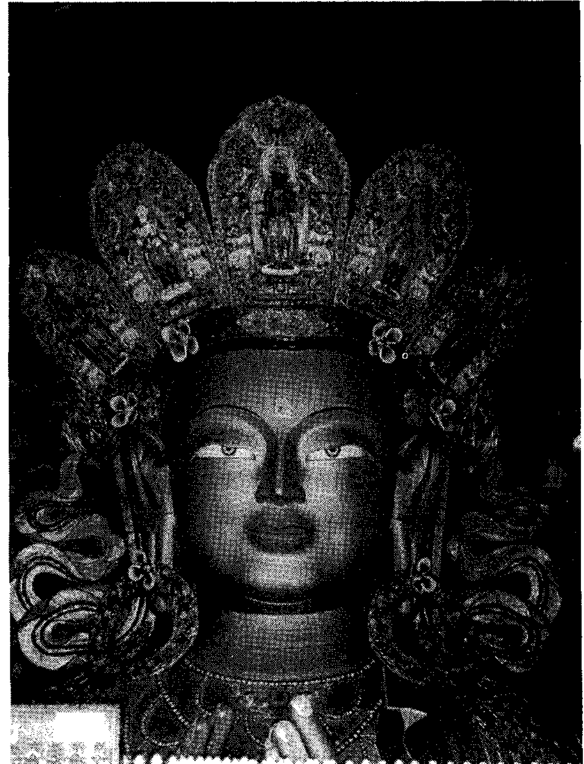
notion that everyone was part of a community that helped those within its reaches. People shared water-powered mills to grind barley, and groups of families called *phaspuns* bonded together to provide assistance in births, deaths and marriages. Culture, religion and survival seemed inextricably connected.

Ladakhi culture is grounded in Tibetan Buddhism, an extremely complex religion that takes its serious followers years to understand. It is actually called Lamaism, an offshoot of traditional Buddhism. The basic philosophy of Buddhism is based on The Four Noble Truths: 1) life is suffering; 2) the cause of suffering is desire; 3) desire must be overcome, and when it is there is no more suffering or re-birth; and 4) the way to enlightenment is by following the 8-fold path. The 8-fold path leads to Nirvana if one is able to live in the right way, specifically in eight areas: belief, resolve, speech, behavior, occupation, effort, concentration and contemplation.

The Buddhism that was brought from Tibet to Ladakh was Mahayana ("Greater Vehicle") or Tantric Buddhism, which includes the practice of spells and charms, and the Tantric doctrine of worship of female energies (*saktis*) in conjunction with male energy.* Mahayana, unlike Hinayana ("Lesser Vehicle") Buddhism, which is widespread throughout the south, believes in the concept of worship of a Supreme Being and other divinities (named Bodhisattvas) who refuse to enter Nirvana and obtain freedom until all suffering humanity is saved. Some believe that Mahayana was called the "Greater Vehicle" because salvation for the masses could be obtained by having faith in the divine Boddhisatvas and by calling on them for assistance in achieving Nirvana. Hinayana, on the other hand, believed that each individual had to work toward salvation alone; as a result, achieving Nirvana was extremely difficult as a human, and available only to a few.

Mahayana Buddhism was not, in the beginning, a particularly popular form of religion in Tibet. The traditional religion was called Pon, a form of nature worship and demonolatry with human and animal sacrifices and rites. It was not until the mid-8th century A.D. that an Indian guru called Padmasambhava went to Tibet, and recognized that the popular Pon deities and rites needed to be fused with Mahayana. The resulting religion was called Lamaism; Padmasambhava is often recognized as its father, and the saint of Tibetan Buddhism.

At Shey Monastery, near Leh, we observed part of an all-day monks' *puja* presided over by the Head Lama. I was struck by how surprisingly ritualistic the *puja* was, filled with many symbols, rituals and rites that seemed almost supernatural. The inside of the small temple had, in its center, a giant gilded Buddha



Maitreya Buddha, Thikse Gompa

that stood about 40 feet high, with small blue curls on his head. On all sides of the temple were seated monks in their maroon robes, and in one corner, on a platform with several objects of offering and worship in front of him, was the Head Lama. The Lama would chant in a low, sonorous tone, and the monks would follow; every once in a while the monks' voices would drop off, leaving just the deep solo chanting of the Head Lama. In between the prayers, different head-dresses were passed out to the monks; one resembled a wig of long black, plaited hair; another was a type of crown that was put on top of the wig. Several times the Head Lama would use the objects in front of him (for example, a small branch that he would dip in holy water and then sprinkle around him). We were told that these kinds of rituals, particularly the various head-dresses, are very much a part of Tantric Buddhism and would not be present in a Hinayana Buddhist *puja*.

In spite of Ladakh's exposure to the modern world, religion is still integral to every-day life. *Gompas* or monasteries dot the countryside, perched on the outcrops of rocky hill crags against azure skies, guarding the villages below. *Mani* walls, or walls of prayer stones inscribed with carvings of religious prayers and the ever-present prayer to Lord Buddha, *Om Mani Padme Hum* (Hail to the Jewel in the Lotus), are scattered along well-traveled paths and signal the entrance to

*Apparently it was believed that gods listened more benevolently to the prayers and requests of humans when the *sakti* or female form of the god was present. Almost every main god has a *sakti*, who are often some of the most powerful.

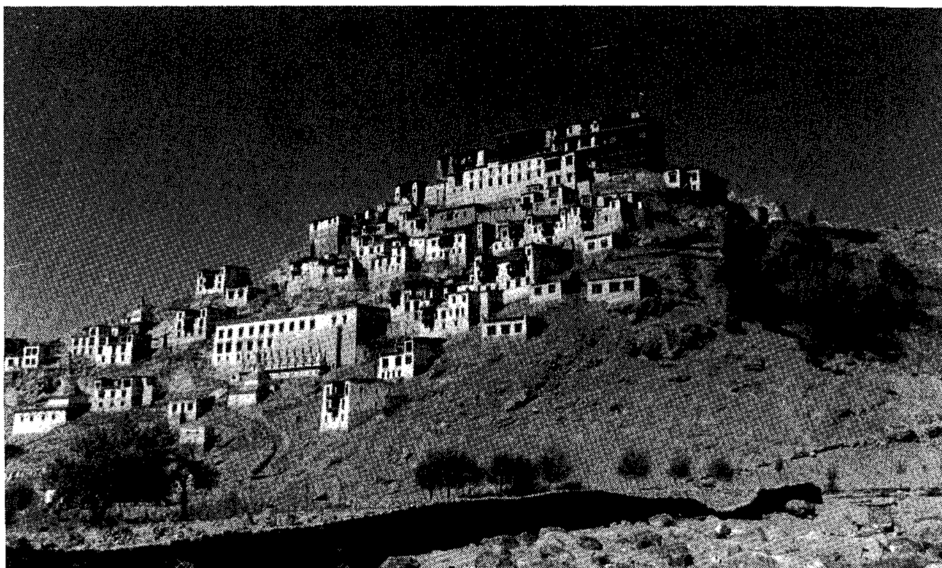
Mani stones with a carved wheel of life

villages. Here, they are accompanied by *chortens*, dome-like structures that taper upwards in a spire, crowned with a moon and sun, the symbol of everlasting unity and interconnectedness. The carvings on the *mani* stones, often intricate *chakras* or circles of the wheel of life, seem to be alive; the deep etchings have been done in complete faith, with love and passion. The prayers, it is said, are carried through the air and with the wind across thousands of miles.

Trekking Through the High Passes

The other primary reason for tourists to visit Ladakh is to trek in the majestic diversity of the surrounding mountains. According to Prem Jina Singh's 1994 study on tourism in Ladakh, about one-third of all tourists come to Ladakh to trek for one to two weeks. There is an element of challenge to trekking in Ladakh, to acclimatizing to the minimal oxygen in the air at altitudes over 15,000 feet, and to the steep ascents and descents over high mountain passes.

We experienced the grandeur of Ladakh first-hand as we trekked for 18 days through the Markha Valley and surrounding areas, over three 17,000-foot passes, along narrow river gorges bordered on the sides by sheer rock cliffs of red, purple and green rock, across fields of barley blowing in the wind. We were ex-

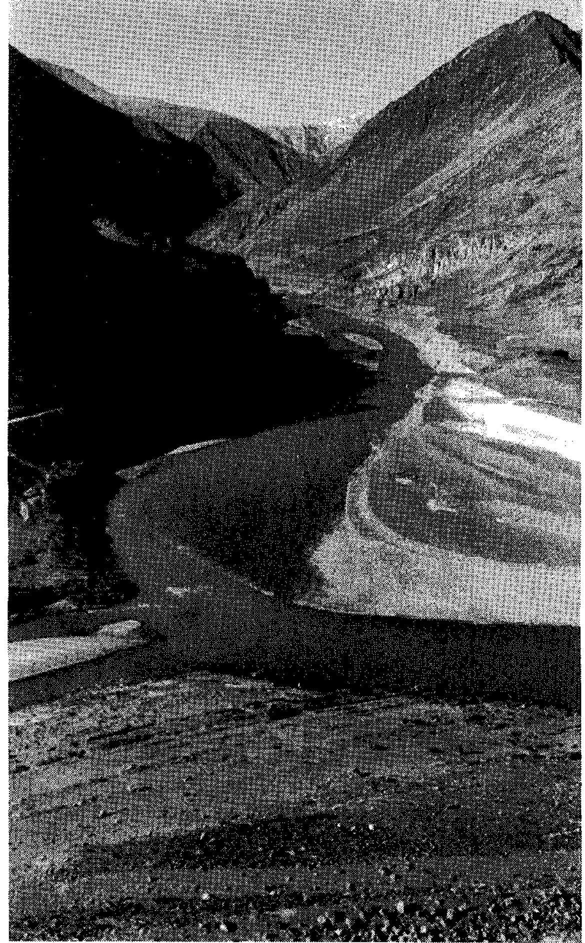


Thikse Gompa, one of Ladakh's most important monasteries

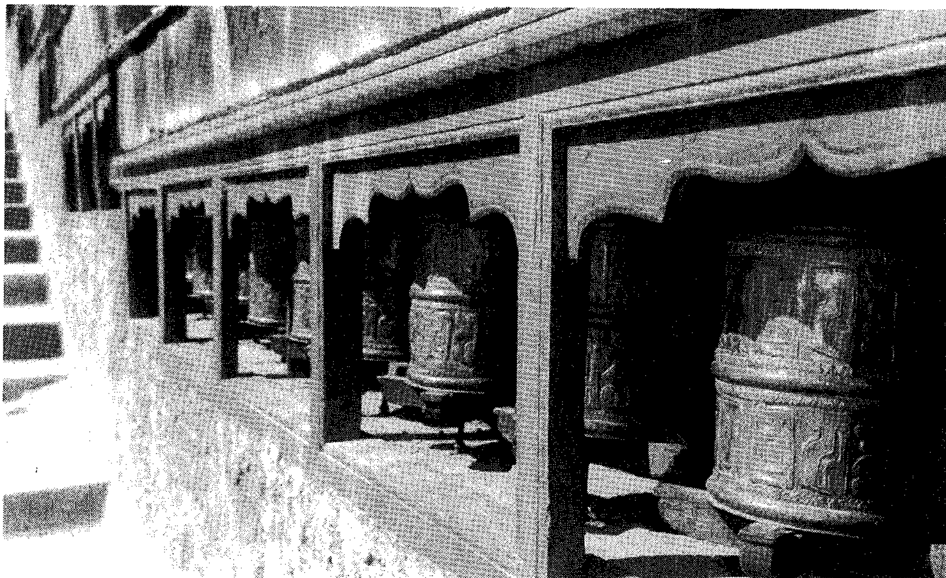
hausted by the altitude and the lack of oxygen in the air. In the first few days, as our bodies acclimatized, we would gasp for air as we walked slowly up the steep, rocky paths. Inevitably, our horses and guides would start later than we, cheerfully walk by us as if on a short jaunt, and then wait for us for several hours to catch up. It was humbling, but a reminder that the people of this area had acclimatized to life here, physically and emotionally, and had a connectedness to the land that an outsider could never have. When we arrived at our campsite, we would collapse, exhausted, and then watch Tamding, one of our guides, take the horses up a steep mountain to graze. He always carried a small copper prayer wheel in his left hand, flicking his wrist slightly so it turned in rhythmic clockwise circles.

W.K. Fraser-Tytler, a former British Minister to Afghanistan, described the region in this way: "It is a wild desolate country of great peaks and deep valleys, of precipitous gorges and rushing grey-green rivers; a barren, beautiful country of intense sunlight, clear sparkling air and wonderful coloring, as shadows lengthen and the rocks turn gold and pink and mauve in the light of the setting sun."

The sun was indeed intense, making the days boiling hot until it was covered with a rare cloud, or the tall cliffs of river gorges blocked it from our view. The nights had me redefine my understanding of cold; frost would form on our tent, our hot breath against the outside air wisps of visible white. Dinners were always early, and several times we cooked inside our guides' tent (half of an old Army parachute, rigged up with a long wooden pole in the middle) to avoid the chill, biting winds of the mountains. In the even-



Ladakh's majestic terrain

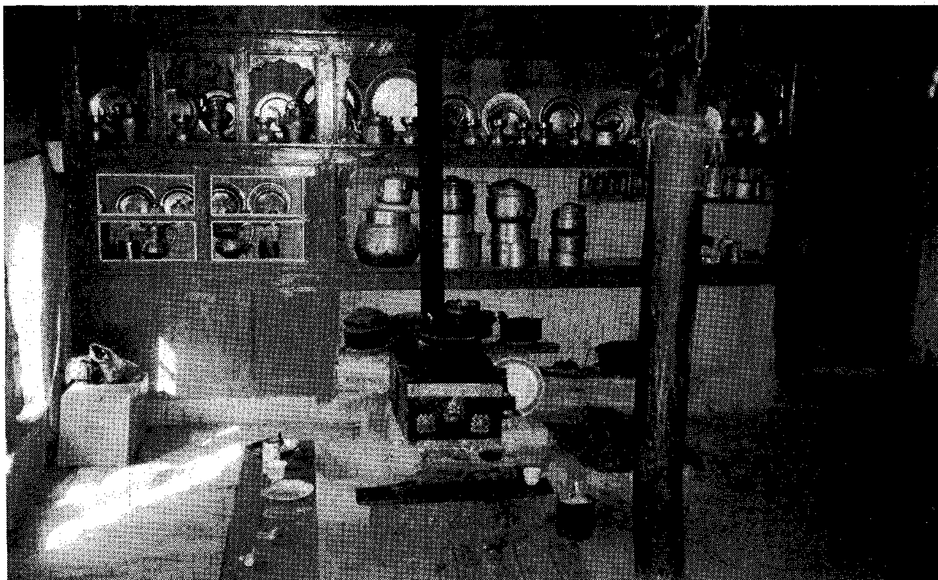


A row of prayer wheels at a gompa entrance

Shuzin and Tamding, our trekking guides-cum-horsemen

ings, when we were warmly ensconced in our tent and sleeping bags, I would fall asleep to our guides' chanting of a melodious prayer.

During our trek, we were able to observe for ourselves the resourcefulness and self-sufficient nature of the Ladakhis. There is a peaceful quiet and harmony that one feels walking through the Markha Valley, even though it is currently one of the most touristed areas in the region. In the village of Khaya, not far from the Zanskar and Indus Rivers, women bend over, using their sickles to whisk away ready-to-harvest stems of barley, singing as they work. In the bright sunshine of the days, other women perch on large flat rocks by rivers, washing clothes with rhythmic scrubs. In a garden in Shingo village, I knelt with Padma and her mother digging potatoes out of the ground. Toilets are built in two stories allowing for the collection of human waste as manure. Dirty dishwater is collected in a bowl and fed to the animals. Seabuck thorn bushes are built as fences around the animal shelters, the small red and orange berries used for jams and the branches as fuel for wood stoves. People prepare for winter with a calm determination, drying apricots and greens on the roofs of houses, storing cut barley either to feed the animals or to roast and grind. In several



Living, cooking and sleeping room in Padma's house, Shingo Village

villages, entire families sat in the fields—the women sickling and harvesting, the children collecting the grain, and the men tying and bundling. The lush green fields here seem to play the same role that the dinner table in the West used to play.

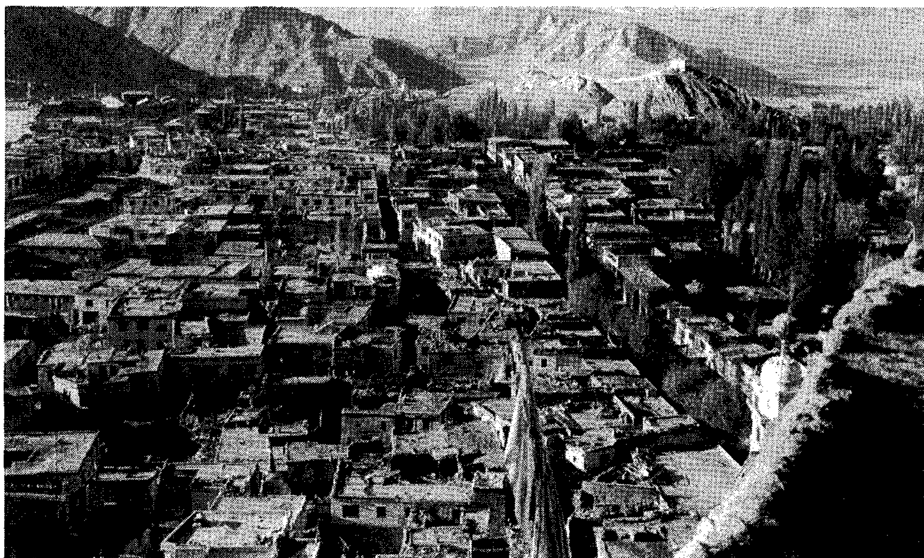
Tourism and Change

The impacts of tourism are, not surprisingly, most obvious in Leh. The town itself is a narrow maze of curved streets below towering cliffs upon which the old Royal Palace and Tsemo (Red) Gompa are perched. The light of the day changes the colors of the cliffs, and in different lights, the Palace and Gompa can look terrifying, welcoming or nondescript. The streets are filled with the bustle of shops selling everything from souvenirs to sparkling *gouchas*. On the sidewalk, women vegetable sellers sit cross-legged, with baskets of tomatoes from the warmer northern regions and the usual onions, turnips and potatoes. Often, one can tell from which part of Ladakh they hail by their dress and head-dress. More often than not, the streets are crowded with traffic: Ambassador cars, new Jeeps with names of trekking agencies emblazoned on them, and—worst of all—huge lorries trucking in goods from Kashmir and equally large Army trucks that leave behind them a thick black cylinder of exhaust. Houses and guesthouses abound and continue to be built, and more and more satellite TV dishes are appearing on rooftops.

The tourist industry has created an aura of transience in the town. Many of the shops are run by Kashmiri merchants who come to Leh for the summer to reap the economic benefits of tourism. Nepalis come from across the border to be cooks and houseboys at the several guesthouses in town. Indians from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Himachal Pradesh. also come to earn their summer salaries, considerably higher in Ladakh than in other parts of India. Sayed Ali-Shah, the wizened owner of the best photo shop in Leh whose forefathers were traders along the silk route, feels that "it is not tourism itself that is bad; the problem is the transience of the town that comes with having a big summer tourist industry."

Not surprisingly, the "invasion" of all these communities (including the large number of Tibetans who are residents of Ladakh) has generated resentment among the Ladakhis. The Kashmiri merchants now sell everything from souvenirs to vegetables; the Tibetans have become the most sought-after guides for trekking; and the Nepalis who come often have experience in the tourist trade in Nepal and are attractive hires. One individual told us he felt it was unfair that the Tibetans, as refugees, are not subject to any Indian taxes or regulations, yet can earn substantial profits. "They are richer than most of us," he said. Ali-Shah tempered his resentment of the Kashmiris, saying, "I am not too fond of the Kashmiris, but ultimately the blame must go to the Ladakhis for being lazy. Anyway, the Kashmiris are rented space by the Ladakhis; if the Ladakhis wanted to start a shop themselves, they could."

Not only has the booming tourist industry in Leh encouraged migration from other parts of India and Nepal, it has also naturally led to a rural-to-urban migration by young Ladakhis, in particular. People from all over the region flock to Ladakh to work in the ever-increasing number of industries that have arisen to support the tourist trade. This migration to Leh has had severe implications for agricultural families who have traditionally had the youngsters working in the



The effects of rapid urbanization in Leh

fields, and now must hire labor during the important summer harvesting months. It has been one of the main factors contributing to the declining profitability of farming, as will be discussed in my next newsletter.

Our trek gave us the opportunity to see the impacts of tourism not just in Leh, where change has happened much more quickly and definitely, but also in the villages. Change in the villages is not as obvious or as complete as change in Leh, but it is indisputable. Tsomo, a project coordinator at LEDG, says that one of the visible changes taking place in the villages that have been exposed to tourism is that people are no longer willing to provide anything free of charge. Formerly, Ladakhi hospitality would always ensure that a visitor received some butter tea and *tsampa* in welcome; now everything has a price. Several others echoed this sentiment.

Not all the change is necessarily bad. In fact, we received as many different perspectives on tourism as people we talked to. Not surprisingly, those who are most actively involved in tourism are the most eager to point out its benefits. A monk, who is the Director of Education and Information at LEDG, put it most succinctly when he said, "Those who benefit from tourism like tourists."

"Amul chocolate wrappers, empty tunafish cans and plastic bags punctuated our trek, scarring the sparse and pure scenery."

Economic benefits to the community are the most tangible. Prem Jina estimates that every tourist creates economic activity in the ratio of 1:3.2—in other words, for every rupee spent by a tourist, Rs. 3.2 can be generated through the multiplier effect. He also estimates that in 1992, tourist expenditures were approximately Rs. 78 million (US$2.8 million), accounting for almost 48% of Ladakh's GNP. The average Ladakhi involved in tourism has certainly noticed these economic benefits. A guide I spoke to along our trek said, "Tourism and trekking are good. A whole industry has been created that allows people to work and have money. Hotels need to be built and staffed, shops are opened, trekking guides are needed. This has provided employment for people." In the Zanskar Valley, Zanskaris were even using the strength of tourism in their valley as leverage for negotiating with the State for a separate district. The Zanskaris' recent ban on tourists entering their valley has meant a significant decrease in funds from tourism to the Kargil district.

What costs do these economic benefits have? One immediate and tangible cost is the garbage in Leh and along the trekking routes. Some of it was clearly from tourists who had not bothered to burn or carry out their toilet paper, leaving it to mar beautiful spots near rivers, around rocky fields, and one time even on top of a hill on monastery grounds. Amul chocolate wrappers, empty tunafish cans and plastic bags punctuated our trek, scarring the sparse and pure scenery. I learned, however, that our guides saw nothing particularly wrong with leaving trash around. By the middle of the trip, we had collected a tremendous amount of garbage (ours and others) into a big polythene sack. Tamding one day asked me what we were going to do with the garbage. I replied that we were taking it back to Leh where we could dispose of it properly. He and Shuzin (our other guide) roared with laughter. "*Madam-ji, aap Leh tak le rahe hai?*" (You are taking this up to Leh?) he said with incredulity. I tried to explain why this was important, but "biodegradable" and "preserving the earth's ecological balance" are not yet in my (or their) Hindi vocabulary.

The physical impacts of tourism are only one piece of what organizations like LEDG fear is eroding the traditional life and culture of Ladakh. LEDG was formed in 1983 by a Swedish linguist, Helena Norberg-Hodge to "promote ecological and sustainable development which harmonizes with and builds on the traditional culture." Norberg-Hodge, who arrived in Ladakh in 1975, says in her book *Ancient Futures* that "The impact of tourism on the material culture has been wide-ranging and disturbing. Still more significant, however, has been its impact on people's minds."

According to her (although others disagree), the process of change in Ladakh began in earnest in 1974 with the start of tourism. Along with the Indian government's opening up of the area came development, Western-style. Norberg-Hodge writes that development meant a focus on the monetary economy and "centralization" of services to Leh, which in turn brought rural migration, a house-building boom around Leh, and a growth in population. It also brought a threat to the environmental sustainability that Ladakhi society had always enjoyed. The increased dependence on outside goods and services disrupted the sense of balance between people and their land. The most obvious evidence of this in both Leh and in villages along trekking routes is the now common conversion of agricultural land into guest houses. A final cost of tourism, according to Norberg-Hodge, is its impact on peoples' sense of pride in their culture. She notes that she began to see young Ladakhis who had previously been proud of their traditions develop a sense of inferiority about their culture as they begin to imitate "modern" Western ways.

Many Ladakhis feel that Norberg-Hodge's attitude is "alarmist." Rigzin Jora, former President of the Ladakh Buddhist Association, and now one of five Executive Councilors of the newly formed Hill Development Council that has taken over responsibility for Leh's development from J&K state (discussed in my next newsletter), says that in fact tourism helped Ladakhi culture tremendously. According to him,

"Ladakhis began to experience inferiority *vis-à-vis* mainstream Indian culture in the 1960s when the Indian army came into Ladakh." Practices like polyandry, which had been common in Ladakh, were considered "bad" in comparison to traditional Indian moral values. Jora believes that it was actually when Western tourists came to Ladakh and began appreciating traditional Ladakhi culture that the culture was revived. This cultural regeneration, Jora believes, has instilled confidence in people as Ladakhis, a distinct entity from mainstream Indian society. Still, Jora (who runs a large and successful hotel in Leh) believes that Ladakh must proceed with caution and restraint and "not go berserk because tourists provide money. In the past, the benefits of tourism have outweighed the costs. Now, it is about 50-50. We must make sure that it stays this way."

When questioned about whether the Hill Council would try to put limits on tourists and tourism, Akbar Ladakhi, the Executive Councilor of the Hill Council in charge of tourism, said, "We will not get in the way of tourism. We must try to provide an infrastructure for tourism with local touches and modern facilities." Thupstan Chhewang, the Chief Executive Councilor of the Hill Council, wants to ensure that Ladakhis do not begin to depend on tourism as the basis of their economy, because it is not guaranteed or sustainable. At the same time, he recognizes that it is still one of many extremely viable income-generating activities for Ladakh.

According to many people we spoke with, tourism has *already* created a desire for money, and engendered a sense of competition among previously contented people. Tourism in the village context tends to benefit just the family whose land is being used as a campsite, or whose house has rooms to let to tourists. This accumulation of wealth by one family often creates a sense of jealousy among other villagers. The contrast between traditional and modern was abundantly clear when we visited the house of one family in Markha that had the largest camping sites. The family was building a new greenhouse in front of their house, almost as large as the house itself. Inside in the one room that the whole family shares, centered around an old engraved cooking stove that brings warmth on cold nights, we saw the traditional copper and brass teapots stacked neatly on wooden shelves near the stove and, directly next to them, a huge music system in the corner blaring Hindi music.

No one we spoke with believes that the economic benefits of tourism should be denied to Ladakhis. There is a hope among many that change will come more slowly here, because the bitter winter cold and the closing of the roads in the winter months act as "a natural check" on tourism. Winter months bring the majority of family affairs and festivals, and the opportunity to return to traditional life. Many who wear Western clothes during the summers return to traditional woolen robes during the winter for their warmth and practicality; families who run guesthouses can spend their time with each other rather than catering to the needs of tourists; many restaurants close down; and the shops that are open know that they are selling just to locals in the winter.

But it is also true that we met many people who acknowledged that winters were becoming less and less a time for family; that, instead, they had started using their hard-earned profits to escape Ladakh's cold winter, going as far away as Kerala and Karnataka, and leaving their villages and families to pursue employment elsewhere. Other changes are also lasting: even in the winter snow, the satellite dish on a Leh house rooftop will remain sandwiched between brightly colored prayer flags. In the summer when the snow melts, the polythene bags and aluminum Frooti juice packets will still linger, not too far from a beautifully carved *mani* wall.

Other changes are also lasting: even in the winter snow, the satellite dish on a Leh house rooftop will remain sandwiched between brightly colored prayer flags.

Tourism is an inextricable part of the process of change in Ladakh. Rather than debating whether it is "good" or "bad," it seems most important to discuss how to manage it so it contributes to Ladakh's development, while allowing the culture of its people to survive. The Hill Council members hope to develop a sensible policy for tourism in Ladakh. Several references were made to a potential daily fee that could be charged to tourists *a la* Nepal; this revenue could then be used to develop an appropriate tourist infrastructure. Bhutan's policy of allowing in only a small number of wealthy tourists did not appeal to anyone, particularly since most of the Hill Council members believe that Ladakh is currently receiving "high-quality tourists" who are interested in the culture and traditions of the land. Still, Ladakh needs to put more effort into educating both its tourists and its local population about issues like garbage management and low-impact trekking. SECMOL, The Students Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh, has begun making inroads into this with a page in its magazine, *Ladakh Melongs*, which details certain cultural and religious traditions that tourists should know about, as well as providing ads about keeping the area clean.

While the Hill Council has the best intentions regarding tourism, it also has a list of other issues that it needs to tackle. Tourism may well fall by the wayside, or not receive the attention it needs in a timely fashion. Ladakh is too small to have another tourism explosion, and yet signs of this abound. Air service to Leh is expanding, as two new airlines are poised to add Leh to their routes. More ominous still is the fact that more

and more tourists are ready to take the challenge of braving the Ladakhi winters to see festivals and take on the latest challenge in adventure tourism, a dangerous ten-day trek down the frozen Zanskar River. This means the tourist season is getting longer, and the ability to contain its impact more difficult.

Having seen so many other paradises spoiled through tourism, I find it difficult to be confident that Ladakh will be able to keep the pros and cons of tourism in balance. If Hill Council members are able to mitigate the economic interests of those involved in the tourist trade, and hold true to Thupstan Chhewang's idea of using tourism as only one of many income-generating activities, it may be possible for Ladakh to sustain its culture. There is legitimate cause for hope. First, the attention that Ladakh has attracted from the international development community as a result of Norberg-Hodge's controversial warnings has created awareness about the potential costs of tourism while it is still early in the process. Second, Ladakhi culture is deeply rooted in its traditional lifestyle and spirituality which, despite changes, are still undeniably vibrant. Outsiders will never be able to—nor should they—convince Ladakhis to forgo the benefits of tourism; however, when Ladakhis themselves experience the costs, the fact that their culture is still alive will give them a foundation from which to create a new future. Whether tourism is a savior or destroyer will ultimately be up to the people of Ladakh. ❑

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Current Fellows & Their Activities

Hisham Ahmed. Born blind in the Palestinian Dheisheh Refugee Camp near Bethlehem, Hisham finished his A-levels with the fifth highest score out of 13,000 students throughout Israel. He received a B.A. in political science on a scholarship from Illinois State University and his M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of California in Santa Barbara. Back in East Jerusalem and still blind, Hisham plans to gather oral histories from a broad selection of Palestinians to produce a "Portrait of Palestine" at this crucial point in Middle Eastern history. [MIDEAST/N. AFRICA]

Adam Albion. A former research associate at the Institute for EastWest Studies at Prague in the Czech Republic, Adam is spending two years studying and writing about Turkey's regional role and growing importance as an actor in the Balkans, the Middle East and the former Soviet bloc. A Harvard graduate (1988; History), Adam has completed the first year of a two-year M. Litt. degree in Russian/East European history and languages at Oxford University. [EUROPE/RUSSIA]

Cynthia Caron. With a Masters degree in Forest Science from the Yale School of Forestry and Environment, Cynthia is spending two years in South Asia as ICWA's first John Miller Musser Memorial Forest & Society Fellow. She is studying and writing about the impact of forest-preservation projects on the lives (and land-tenure) of indigenous peoples and local farmers who live on their fringes. Her fellowship includes stays in Bhutan, India and Sri Lanka. [SOUTH ASIA/Forest & Society]

William F. Foote. Formerly a financial analyst with Lehman Brothers' Emerging Markets Group, Willy Foote is examining the economic substructure of Mexico and the impact of free-market reforms on Mexico's people, society and politics. Willy holds a Bachelor's degree from Yale University (history), a Master's from the London School of Economics (Development Economics; Latin America) and studied Basque history in San Sebastian, Spain. He carried out intensive Spanish-language studies in Guatemala in 1990 and then worked as a copy editor and Reporter for the Buenos Aires Herald from 1990 to 1992. [THE AMERICAS]

Sharon Griffin. A feature writer and contributing columnist on African affairs at the *San Diego Union-Tribune*, Sharon is spending two years in southern Africa studying Zulu and the KwaZulu kingdom and writing about the role of nongovernmental organizations as fulfillment centers for national needs in developing countries where governments are still feeling their way toward effective administration. She plans to travel and live in Namibia and Zimbabwe as well as South Africa. [sub-SAHARA]

Pramila Jayapal. Born in India, Pramila left when she was four and went through primary and secondary education in Indonesia. She graduated from Georgetown University in 1986 and won an M.B.A. from the Kellogg School of Management in Evanston, Illinois in 1990. She has worked as a corporate analyst for PaineWebber and an accounts manager for the world's leading producer of cardiac defibrillators, but most recently managed a $7 million developing-country revolving-loan fund for the Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH) in Seattle. Pramila is spending two years in India tracing her roots and studying social issues involving religion, the status of women, population and AIDS. [SOUTH ASIA]

Cheng Li. An Assistant Professor of Government at Hamilton College in Clinton, NY, Cheng Li is studying the growth of technocracy and its impact on the economy of the southeastern coast of China. He began his academic life by earning a Medical Degree from Jing An Medical School in Shanghai, but then did graduate work in Asian Studies and Political Science in the United States, with an M.A. from Berkeley in 1987 and a Ph.D. from Princeton in 1992. [EAST ASIA]

Teresa C. Yates. A former member of the American Civil Liberties Union's national task force on the workplace, Teresa is spending two years in South Africa observing and reporting on the efforts of the Mandela government to reform the national land-tenure system. A Vassar graduate with a *juris doctor* from the University of Cincinnati College of Law, Teresa had an internship at the Centre for Applied Legal Studies in Johannesburg in 1991 and 1992, studying the feasibility of including social and economic rights in the new South African constitution. While with the ACLU, she also conducted a Seminar on Women in the Law at Fordham Law School in New York. [sub-SAHARA]