

*Famous
Western
Explorers
to
Ladakh*

Prem Singh Jina

FAMOUS WESTERN EXPLORERS TO LADAKH

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Leh, Ladakh



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Dedicated to

Professor Maya Ram

Mrs. Manju Jina

My Parents

Foreword

Ladakh has attracted and inspired travellers, explorers and scholars from all over the world for centuries. The unique cultural traditions, the distinct life style of its people and an air of mystery surrounding Ladakh due to its geographical isolation and lack of communication has encouraged explorers to undertake the difficult task of reaching Ladakh braving many problems. Travel accounts of these pioneers have inspired many more to visit Ladakh, the process of which started as early as 1600 A.D. The interest in Ladakh from scholars and explorers has not subsided even after the improvement in communications and easy access to Ladakh in recent times. There has been a tremendous demand for the works of ancient travellers which is not easy to find.

The publication of this book 'Famous Western Explorers to Ladakh' by Dr. Prem Singh Jina will not only meet the long-felt need for such a work but will also prove to be immensely useful to scholars and particularly to researchers. The author has taken great pains in compiling this very interesting and useful work containing experiences and travel accounts by famous explorers to Ladakh. The work also reflects the deep knowledge and understanding of Ladakh by the author and his long association with Ladakh and publication of several works on various aspects of Ladakhi life and culture. We are extremely happy to see this work completed and Dr. Prem Singh Jina deserves all the encouragement and appreciation for this successful effort.

THUPSTAN CHEWANG
President
Ladakh Buddhist Association
Leh, Ladakh

Preface

Ladakh the highest region in J & K state and the most remote region of India comprise various ranges in altitude from 7000 ft. to 20,000 ft. and a wide variety of climatic conditions. One can ascend higher altitude valleys, viz. Nubra, Suru, Zangskar and Indus. Winters are severe as temperature falls to as much as -60°C at Dras. Except in Turtuk area, no crops are cultivated during winter. A barren, grey-brown landscape, it is almost devoid of vegetation. Thus life here is tough and very difficult in winter season. The whole Ladakh region remains cut-off from rest of the world during winter. The main motorable road into Ladakh remains open only for six months in a year. Due to geographical isolation this region is considered to be one of the poverty pockets in J & K state.

Ladakh has attracted travellers, adventurers, mountaineers and scholars for many centuries. At a time when there were no roads and no vehicles, the fascination of this land brought explorers from East and West—Portuguese, Germans, Italians, Russians and Hungarians alike. Ladakh has been the home of many cultures—the Dards, the Mongols, the Tibeto-Burmans—all shut out from the external world. It lay in its seclusion for many decades until the Zojila Pass was opened.

There are a few explorers who have done remarkable work in Ladakh during their brief stay there. This study is intended to collect their experiences at one place and cover the gap of information regarding nature, culture, socio-economic activities, and problems and prospects of this area.

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PREM SINGH JINA

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CHAPTER 1

Earliest Western Explorers to Ladakh

The travel records of Marco Polo tell us that he visited the court of the great Kublai during 1275. His travel records indicate that he visited hill regions of Badakshan for the sake of health. He had travelled many countries viz. Wakhan, Pamer, Balor and Kashmir, located at higher altitudes, but no references are available which prove that Marco Polo ever visited Ladakh.¹ Thus no European prior to the 17th century seemed to have visited Ladakh.

However, the first explorer from the West to visit Ladakh was a Portuguese layman, Diogo d' Almeida. He spent two years in Ladakh after 1600 A.D.² Diogo d' Almeida was a merchant. He sojourned Ladakh, viz Zojila Pass. When he reached Ladakh, he was amazed by what he believed and discovered:

“It was a land run by strange Christians whose monks recalled those of Portugal.”³

He reported his discoveries to the Bishop of Goa, who thought at first that Diogo d' Almeida had been to the frontier of China where Nestorian Christians were known to exist. It took some time to discover the actual position of the land which Diogo d' Almeida had referred in his travel records. Hence, he was the first European who explored the land called Ladakh.⁴

Jesuit father Antonio de Andrade (or Andrada) was another European who entered Ladakh and then went to Tibet. He was a Portuguese born at Oleiros in Aletejo in 1580. He became nov-

ice of the 'Society of Jesus' on 16th December 1596, and went to Goa in 1600. After the propagation of Portuguese and their influence over Goa, he desired to penetrate into China via Kashmir, Tibet and Tartary.⁵ According to his letters, which he had written to his superior, the Jesuit General Mutio Vitelleschi, one from Agra in 1624 and another from the court of the king of Great Tibet at Chaparangué on 15th August 1626, tell us that he had departed early in 1623 from Agra, Uttar Pradesh towards his destination.

In order to reconcile the various dates and assertions of the different pamphlets issued we are bound to assume that Andrade made two successive journeys from Agra. His first adventure started from Delhi via Agra in 1624.⁶ In this year he heard of an exceptional opportunity of following the quest for lost Christian communities in Tibet. He therefore, joined with the organisation of Hindu pilgrimage to distant Badrinath. He then crossed the Mana Pass in Garhwal Himalaya, at an altitude of 18,300 feet, and arrived safely at Tsaparang, the capital of Guge. Here he did not find any Christian missionary. Hence he decided to establish a mission. The king was most favourable to the Jesuit's intention, but this naturally created intense jealousy among the lamas, whose chief was the king's brother. The result was a rebellion, supported by the king of Ladakh, who seized the friendly monarch and broke up the mission.⁷ Later he reached Ladakh on the 16th of May 1624.⁸ Thereafter he visited Srinagar in Kashmir on the way. He probably went no further and returned to Agra.

On 17th June 1625 he once again set out from Agra for Tibet. He arrived in Kashmir. According to his letter from the court of the king of Great Tibet, he entered Srinagar and Chasaranga, very great and populous cities, the last of which had many Christian monuments. Hence on 28th August 1625, he crossed high mountains and arrived at the city of Redor in the cold northern region. Of this time no account is available about Ladakh. Perhaps he passed through Ladakh and visited Lake Manasarovar. Thence via Radok, Lob Nor, Koko Nor, he accessed China.⁹

After seven years, in 1631, Jesuit missionaries—fathers Francesco de Azevedo and Giovanni de Oliveiro travelled to Ladakh from Tsaparang. Their stay in Ladakh was short. Azevedo's travel accounts are interesting mainly for his description of the great Senge Namgyal, then the king of Ladakh. Because missionaries' main aim was to propagate Christianity in the Himalayan regions, they established their missions at Tsaparang, Lhasa and Shigatse.¹⁰ However, they did not have missions in Ladakh.

Desideri and Freyre visited Ladakh during 1710-1717. They came to Ladakh via Zojila Pass. Their travel accounts have been published in many languages. One of the books which deals with their travel accounts is entitled "*Early Jesuit Travellers in Central Asia*". It was authored by Wessels and was printed at Hague in 1924. In this book, it has been mentioned that Desideri reached Leh on 26th June 1717.¹¹

Ippotito Desideri was an Italian Jesuit. His native place was Pistoia in the north Italy. He was stationed at Goa, when he was commissioned by the head of the Jesuit mission at Goa. He had the higher sense of determination to reopen the Jesuit mission in Tibet. In those days travelling in India was a tedious job. He, therefore, could not reach Delhi until 11th May 1714.¹² At Agra, he joined the Jesuit priest, Manuel Freyre. He was deputed by Jesuit missionary. With father Freyre, he travelled to Kashmir by the Pir Panjal route and noted the caravan *serais* at each stage. Some of them by the Mongol emperors overlooking the Chenab.¹³ From Srinagar, Desideri travelled eastwards to Ladakh. He started journey for Ladakh in May 1715. On the way he came across a rope bridge. He gives an excellent account of this bridge which will interest all travellers to this place.

“From one mountain to the other two thick ropes of willow are stretched nearly four feet apart, to which are attached hanging loops of small ropes of willow about one feet and a half distant from one another, one must stretch one's arms and hold fast to the thicker ropes while putting one foot after the another into the

hanging loops to reach that opposit side. With every step the bridge sways from right to left, and from left to right. Besides this, one is so open on all sides, that the rush of water beneath dazzles the eyes and makes one dizzy.”¹⁴

I myself recollect that one of my students howled with fear at his first experience of one of these bridges, which he finally crossed on his knees with two friends to help him along. In Ladakh one passes through high sun intensity. Desideri also feelingly described his escape from an avalanche, while he suffered more than once from painful snow-blindness.¹⁵

In June 1715 at Leh, the king of Ladakh treated the missionaries most kindly, so much so that Desideri was tempted to stay there. Freyre, accustomed to the climate of India and worn out with fatigue, determined to abandon the enterprise. He did not, however, wish to return by Kashmir, with its difficult passes.¹⁶

When Desideri visited Ladakh, Nyi-ma-rNam rgyal was the king of Ladakh. He describes about the capital of Ladakh in this way:

“We arrived at the city of Lhe, also with the other name of Lhata, which is the capital of second Tibet”¹⁷

Desideri in fact was confused as he arrived at Leh, because Ladakh is very much similar to Tibet. Therefore, he called Ladakh as second Tibet. Similarly he misunderstood the proper name of Leh. So, he called the capital of Ladakh as Lhata.

Desideri has beautifully described about his journey between Kashmir to Ladakh as he says:

“From Kashmir to Lhata, which is one of forty days, one could not perform in any other manner except on foot. The greater part of the road is along the flanks of the loftiest and most awful mountains and in which ordinarily there is not found sufficient space for one man to pass by another. In certain places the mountain being rent asunder, sometimes by the avalanches

of snow, sometimes by the force of the deluge of rain, the pathway becomes wanting altogether and the passenger does not know where to plant his feet. In such cases one of our guides going in front with a hatchet cuts one's foot; then, seizing with their left hand my hand, he assists me put my foot in the hole already made; hence he recommences to encavate a little further on and we advance exactly as before, until at length we find the narrow pathway not altogether obliterated, on other occasions the mountains are found to be frozen over with slippery glazing and the narrow paths blocked with ice, so that you run the greatest risk of sliding down; and only the slightest carelessness with your feet would cause you inevitably to be precipitated down the slope and to be dashed in pieces in the torrent which runs below between the two mountains. Many of native Kashmiris who perform this journey for the purpose of conveying and fetching back wool often lose their lives and others become miserably crippled In other places one had each day to travel over the snow and weather being very clear, the continuous reflexion of the sun's rays inconvenienced me so far as to inflame my eyes and caused me to run some risk of losing my sight. It chanced that we traversed a deep and narrow gorge situated between two of the loftiest and steepest mountains; and I was drawn by curiosity to look up at a huge rock which had the rude form of an elephant, and that not artificially but naturally, my father companion (Padre Manoel Freyre) and all our followers cried out to me in fear for, hardly had I advanced a distance of 20 (twenty) paces, then in the place where I had just before stopped, there fell from high up the side of mountain an enormous and lofty wall of congealed snow which in its fall made a most terrifying crash. In consequence of all this, one is unable to lead or guide any animal through such places; and

the journey from Kashmir to Lhata (Ladakh), which is one of forty days, cannot be performed otherwise than on foot. Likewise the population being very scanty on this route and those parts being rather sterile and barren, one must be careful to carry with one the necessities of life which are rice, vegetables, and butter, and these, as indeed all one's moveable goods, have to be borne on the shoulders of men. Finally, from Kashmiris even to the end of the great desert (of which we have spoken much already), which is a journey of about five months by road—whether it be night or there be snow or rains or cruel cold and frost the only inn for wearied travellers is none other than the unsheltered ground.”¹⁸

As said earlier, Desideri designated Baltistan as the “First Tibet”, Ladak as the “Second Tibet” and Tibet proper beyond the Ladak frontier as the “Third Tibet”. Besides, Desideri called Ladakh as “Lhata-Yul” at many places in his travel records.¹⁹

Desideri and his comrades made no haste and spent nearly eight weeks in Leh.

On 17th August 1715, Desideri continued his great journey towards east of Leh. His route lay close to the Pangong lake. On September 7, he arrived at Tashigang, a strong fortified post on the frontier of Ladakh. After three months, he came across Gartok. Later in mid-October he started his journey for Tibet. On the way he passed through mount Kailash, which rises to 22,000 feet, while the pass which separates the Indus from the Tsangpo system was crossed at an altitude of 16,000 ft. ²⁰

A.H. Francke affirmed that the Jesuit was kindly received by the king Nyi-ma-rNam-rgyal; but as the Muhammadan traders plotted against him and undermined the king's confidence, he soon left the town and travelled to Lhasa.²¹

Samuel Van Der Putte was a Dutch layman who journeyed into many parts of the East, and his Tibetan exploits have been traced so far as they are ascertainable. Putte was dying in the

Dutch settlement in Java, he burnt his diaries, lest as he thought, an improper use might be made of them. Nevertheless, certain relics of the adventurous man are still preserved in the museum at Hague. It would seem that Van der Putte entered Tibet via Ladakh in the year 1728, and made his way to Lhasa.²²

On 9th January 1783 Warren Hastings nominated Captain Turner to establish an embassy in the court of Tibet at Lhasa. He went to Tibet via Ladakh. When he reached Ladakh, he was attracted by sculptured stones and inscriptions which he found along the way between Kashmir and Leh and particularly near Leh. About the inscriptions he says:

“Another sort of monument is a long wall, on both faces of which near the top are inserted large tablets with the words ‘Oom maunee paimee Oom’ carved in relief. This is a sacred sentence repeated upon the rosaries of the lamas, and in general use in Tibet. Of the form of words to which ideas of peculiar sanctity are annexed by inhabitants, I could near obtain a satisfactory explanation. It is frequently engraved on the rocks in large and deep characters, and sometimes I have seen it on the sides of hills; the letters, which are formed by means of stones fixed in the earth, are of so vast a magnitude as to be visible at a very considerable distance.”²³

Thus explorers from the West visited Ladakh mainly for the propagation of Christianity. All the explorers who entered Ladakh were from Portugal in early centuries and their main target was Tibet. But due to similar geographical location they considered Ladakh as a “Little Tibet”. East India Company had deputed many officers during the 17th century, their main function was to send secret reports of trade to their higher concerned officers. Britishers were also interested about the Central Asian trade relations with Ladakh. So they deputed from time to time new spies for getting upto date information about Central Asian politics.

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CHAPTER 2

History of Exploration During First Half of 19th Century

Ladakh, where earth and sky seem to meet, looks like the roof of the world. The journey may be tiresome but it has been fascinating many travellers, visitors and explorers from far off lands. Some were fascinated by its unique geographical location as the highest land in the world. Some wanted to see its barren mountains which had been under the sea for millions of years. Some wanted to study its ethnology and anthropology. Some thought that this roof of the world was the earliest habitation in the world. Some came to study Buddhism, some to learn tantric and some to meditate.¹ Above all they visited Ladakh to witness trade activities. In the following pages I would like to study their travel records and their reactions about Ladakh and its people.

It can safely be assumed that according to the available sources the first Western traveller who reached Ladakh during the 19th century was William Moorcroft. He came to India in 1808. He was a medical doctor, but surprisingly he got his specialisation in veterinary science. His expedition to Ladakh Himalaya started in 1812 and remained till 1825. In 1812, Moorcroft travelled the great chain of Himalaya to the north of Almora in Kumaun Himalaya to the trans-Himalaya of cold desert with two definite purposes:²

- 1) That, to procure genuine samples from the herdsmen of Hundes of the wool from which the celebrated Cashmere shawls are made.

- 2) That, to survey the sacred lake of Mansarovar, which lies at the foot of Mount Kailash between the sources of Indus and Yeru Tsangpo (Brahmaputra) via the village of Joshimath (in Garhwal Himalaya), which is far within the mountains.

Thus Moorcroft with his companions started his journey from Almora towards Joshimath. Later on, a journey of seven days from Joshimath brought them to Malari, a small village in the midst of the mountains of Garhwal Himalaya, and then to Niti, the last Indian village, from where the party surmounted the Shangki Pass. After ten days, journey they arrived at the valley of the Tibetan course of Sutlej to the camping station of Daba. Thereafter travelling for five days they reached Gartok³ which Moorcroft styles Gortope. Here, from the Tibetan merchants of Ladakh he received information regarding the geography of this little known country considerably at variance with European maps. They arrived on the 5th of August 1812 at the sacred lake of Mansarovar. On August 8th, the party set forth to the south and reached Almora at the end of the month.⁴

Moorcroft after having enough experience about travelling in higher Himalayan belt, once again started journey in 1819 with Trebeck and Guthrie for Central Asia. This time his attempt was to open up Central Asia trade with Britishers. He entered Ladakh from Lahul crossing over the Baralacha Pass and stayed there for two years. His account about Ladakh is marked by great shrewdness of observation and most scrupulous accuracy. During his stay in Ladakh, he explored Nubra, Zangskar and Dras. Though he was not a botanist by profession, yet he was keen to study the agricultural system and the plants that might be useful elsewhere. Therefore, he collected a few plant species and sent to Wallich or Royle for examination. About agriculture at Leh he remarks:

“Frost began early in September and continued until May. Barley sown on May 10th was cut on September 12. At Spituk, nearly 1000 feet lower, the barley took only two months to mature.”⁵

Now one question strikes in our mind that why Moorcroft spent two years in Ladakh? A.H. Francke replied this question in the following way.

“. . . His attempt to arrange for the king of Ladakh's tendering his allegiance to the East India Company. It took him a long time to win the confidence of Ladakhi king Tunduk Namgyal (*pron.* Dong-rub-rNam-rgyal) and his Prime Minister, Tsiva Tundup (*pron.* Thse-dbang-dong-rub).”⁶

About the capital of Ladakh, he says:

“Le’ the capital of Ladakh is situated in a narrow valley, formed by the course of the Sinh-Kha-bab (Sengge-Kha-bab, i.e. the Indus), and bounded on the northern and southern sides by a double chain of mountains running east and west, the highest of which are from eighteen hundred to two thousand feet above the plain. It is built at the foot and on the slope of some low hills, forming the northern boundary of the valley, and separated by a sandy plain about two miles broad from the river. It is enclosed by a wall, furnished at intervals with conical and square towers, and extending on either side to the summit of the hills. It is approached by double lines of the sacred structures or manis, frequently noticed in the journal, and houses are scattered over the plain without the walls, on either hand. The streets are disposed without any order, and from a most intricate labyrinth, and the houses are built contiguously, and run into each other so strongly, that from without it is difficult to determine the extent of each mansion. The number, it is said, is about a thousand, but I should think they scarcely exceeded five hundred. They vary from one to two or three stories in height, and some are loftier, the walls are in a few instances wholly, or in part of stone, but in general they are built with large unburnt bricks with light wooden balconies; the roofs

are flat, and are formed of small trunks of popular trees, above with a layer of willow shoots is laid, which is covered by a coating of straw and that again by a bed of earth.”⁷

Although Moorcroft waited for two years in Ladakh, he desired to press on to Tarakestan but unfortunately he failed to get permission from the authorities because of the jealousy of Kashmiri merchants. During his stay in Ladakh he studied flora and fauna also. We know all about his observations from his diaries and papers brought over to India after his death by his native servant. Indeed, like Scott, Moorcroft and his companion Trebeck died on their one and only great journey. Moorcroft never lived to tell his tale, but it fortunately has amazingly detailed notes.

In 1826, he was described as a man wearing Musalman dress and spoke Persian language very well, with the result the Kashmiri merchants of Lhasa were themselves deceived. In this way he got the chance to travel to Lhasa from Ladakh. At Lhasa he hired a house and lived for twelve years with his Musalman servant named Nisan whom he had brought from Ladakh. In Lhasa he was busy in making drawings and preparing geographical charts. It was also asserted that, he did not learn Tibetan, therefore, he could not get direct communication with any people. At last, in 1838 he set out to return to Ladakh and India, but was assassinated somewhere in Ngari Khorsum (or Nari Skorsum) on the way back.

In the end of 1814, James Baillie Fraser started his journey for Ladakh and reached Leh via Kashmir. At Leh, he found goods from different countries of Central Asia. He describes:

“Yarkund sends to Leo in Ludhak silver, Russian leather, called ‘Bhul R’, hal, felt carpets, called ‘Numbdas’, coarse and fine china silk, tafetas, valvets, earthen ware, stable fur, small coral beads, and seed pearls; and in return receives all manner of produce from Hindostan, keen-kabs, embroidered cloth, baftas,

and other white cloths, moulten chintz, quantities of red tanned skins of sheep, goat, and kid nerbisee or zedoary, silk manufactures of Benares, soongrees, and all sorts of spices.”⁸

James Baillie Fraser’s mission was to give clear picture of Ladakh and its neighbouring countries, and gather information which leads to the belief that it possesses a good deal of importance from its political and commercial relations with the Chinese Government at Gara, and the territories of the lamas, and with the Kashmir, as well as from its own internal resources and valuable exports. He says:

“Ludhak itself is probably, chiefly a grazing country, and supplies much shawl wool, though the principal mart for this is at Gara. The route through its territories describes chiefly rugged mountains topped with snow, projections certainly from the Himala range, and lower hills of reddish soil, covered with short grass, representing a country fit for sheep; but little is said of cultivation until we are brought to the valley of the Singkechoo, which seems to be the rich district of the country. This is full of cultivation and villages; here also is placed the capital of the country, Leh.

This town, our accounts inform us, is situated on the north or right bank of the rivers, but about two cos distance from it, and is watered by a rivulet, which here empties itself into its bed. From the village of Humee to Leh, a distance, it is said, of sixteen or seventeen cos, we are told that the valley widens much, and is from two to four cos broad, very richly cultivated with wheat, barley, and ol, or rye, and thickly studded with villages, the road, and planted on each side with chiloomach trees; and this prosperous state continues for a considerable distance below upon the river’s banks. The town itself once contained about 1000 good houses, but report states it to have fallen off, and it is now reduced to about 700.

These generally consist of several stories, the lower story built by uniting two thin walls of stone filled with mud between them; the upper is entirely formed of the latter material, as is the roof, which is flat, forming a terrace. They are said to be well constructed, there are well stocked bazars and several shops (12 or 13) kept by the Cashmerian Mussulmans, but not Hindoo bunyas, or shopkeepers; flour, ghee, grain, flash, and all articles of consumption are sold in the market by the people from the country, who bring them to town. The palace of the rajah is at Leh; we were told that his title among the people of the country is "gealbo", which is equivalent to rajah. His name is Neema Mungreal. I believe his religion is that of the lamas; but an universal spirit of toleration seems to prevail under his sway, for all persuasions find protection there, Hindoos, Mussulmans, Lamas and Chinese."⁹

When James Baillie Fraser came in Ladakh, he noticed three important fairs. He says:

"Three grand fairs are held in the year at Leh, viz. one is Katick, or October, one is Phagoon or February, and one is Bhadoon or August. The first of these is called the Jung Dooz, and is the least; the second, called Dummooche, is the chief one; and the third termed Sooblas, holds a middle importance. At these fairs the concourse of Mussulmans from Yarkunds & C of lamas from Lassa Degurcha, Hindoos from Imritsir and all the Punjab, and of merchants from Cashmere, and other places, is said to be immense, and the valuable productions of these countries are all poured into Leh."¹⁰

James Baillie Fraser later went to Gartok which was then an important Central Asian mandi. According to him:

"To the eastward, and probably to the southward of Leh and sixteen days' journey entirely along the

course of the river Sing Kachoo and Eskung, as fully noted in the route below chief part of which lies through the Ludhak territory is situated Gara, or Gartope or Ghertope. . . . The route from Lch to Gara lies perhaps (indeed most likely) somewhat more to the south-eastward of that given in the sketch; and certainly the routes along the Sutlej and from Suchtote on the Lee to Numroo and Garha.”¹¹

According to Moorcroft’s account:

“It seems that Gartope is situated in the valley of the river Eskung, which is here of considerable extent, though surrounded, it appears, with hills. To this place the Ludhak merchants come to purchase the wool which is brought for sale from all the country round to a great distance, for the Cashmere market; and to this place, also, do the dealers from the low country of Hindustan come to dispose off and exchange their goods. The great melah, or fair, is held annually in the month of Bhadoon, and when well attended there are seen from 12,000 to 15,000 people.”¹²

Thus Gartok was then important market for Central Asian traders. It was one of the centres, traders from Ladakh purchased Pashmina and other raw wool at cheap rates, which they later sold to Kashmiri merchants.

We also learnt from Moorcroft’s encounter in Ladakh, not far from Dras, with a man who was a young Hungarian scholar, Csoma de Koros, heading east in quest of the origins of his race, Koros was a solemm and studious young man with a bent for adventure. Although he was on a private mission, Moorcroft acted as an official envoy of British India and encouraged this young man, he told him not to roam around pointlessly but to study the local language. He also gave some money and introduced him to the person who was then the secretary of Ladakh king. He was a man from Zangskar. Csoma de Koros eventually went with him to Zangskar to learn Tibetan. Thus it was the

inspiration through which Koros became one of the first European Tibetan scholars (second after the Jesuit Ippitito Desideri), and was later considered to be the pioneer modern Tibetan scholar.¹³

As said earlier Csoma de Koros was the first European who studied Ladakhi language and visited Zangskar. He arrived in June 1823, stayed for nearly a year and returned the following winter. Here his true vacation as a Tibetan scholar was born. Yet, though we have dozens of works by Koros, nowhere in his books does he mention Zangskar, except to complain of how terribly cold his stay there was, and how he had to barricade himself all winter in a room to learn the language and script.¹⁴

Koros met an old monk Palde Sangs-nye-Phunstok at Leh. He had been married to the widow of the king of Zangla. This monk, the physician to the king of Ladakh, was erudite, having studied for a long time in Lhasa, the capital of Tibet. Koros went with him to Zangla in June 1823. There he lived in the castle on the hill. Koros launched his studies of the Tibetan languages and started collecting material for a book. He also met some other monks and decided to take their help after the death of his first master, he stayed with one of them at his home in Tata, which is in south-east Zangskar near the monastery of Phugtal. Thus Koros spent another year in Zangskar, from 12th August 1825 to November 1826.¹⁴

It is believed that Phugtal was then a simple slab of dark local stone on which it was built. As said earlier, Csoma de Koros lived here during 1825-26. Here he studied Tibetan historical texts. Later the translation of these historical texts was published by him in 1834-36.¹⁵ His book "*A Grammar of Tibetan Language in English*" was published from Calcutta in 1834. In 1838 his article 'Enumeration of Historical Grammatical Works, to be met with in Tibet' was published. Some data given in this article (particularly the list of main types of Tibetan historical works) were printed by him even earlier in 1834.¹⁶

Thus the articles of Csoma de Koros written in the list of a

scientific study of Tibetan language and literature has not been surpassed even till now either in importance or in the number of texts enumerated; the classification given by him in Ladakh remains unique even now in spite of all its inadequacies. Here follows a list of his publications, which was the result of his hard work in Ladakh:

- 1) Enumeration of Historical and Grammatical works to be met with in Tibet, JASB, 1838
- 2) A Grammer of the Tibetan Language in English, Calcutta, 1834
- 3) Kings of Tibet, to the Subdivision of the Country in the Tenth Century, JASB, 1834.

The next explorer who visited Ladakh was Dr. Henderson, who reached Leh in 1834 disguised as a merchant under assumed name of Ishmail Khan. A. Cunningham says:

“Towards the end of the year 1834, the æccentric Dr. Henderson reached Leh, the capital of Ladakh, disguised as a Mussulman calling himself Ishmail Khan. His disguise was soon revealed, but he was kindly treated by the Gyalpo of Ladakh, who at once saw, in the opportune arrival of a British officer, a possible means of averting the ultimate conquest of his kingdom.”¹⁷

Dr. Henderson was provided with instruments, and according to Borong Hugel, he had a sense of observation, an account of his travels would have been particularly valuable. He was probably the first European who had ever visited Skardu, or little Tibet. He took that route to avoid the invading army of Dogras, and succeeded in reaching Kashmir in November 1835. All his baggage was lost on the road between Ladakh and Kashmir.¹⁸

It is to be mentioned here that G.T. Vigne entered Ladakh just after Dr. Henderson in 1835, shortly after More Tatsi had been placed on the throne by Zorawar Singh. From Balti he proceeded through Leh to the Nubra valley, and returned by the same route. This short stay in Ladakh was unfortunate owing to

the mutual jealousy between Dogra authorities and himself. This notice of Ladakh was, therefore, the last interesting part of his rambles in the alpine Punjab. His accounts of Kashmir and Balti were full of valuable information.¹⁹

During his visit to Ladakh, G.T. Vigne collected ninety plant species, which he sent to Royal Academy. But some of them were in such a bad shape or condition that Royal Academy could not determine them. However, his collection was important in the field of botany of higher Himalayan plant species for the botanists.²⁰

Falconer, who was incharge of Saharanpur Garden, penetrated Ladakh around 1839. He visited Kashmir and Baltistan and then Ladakh. In Ladakh he came upto Dras via Kashmir and collected some plant species. But the detailed list of the plants, which were collected by him is not available.

In August 1839 British explorer Dr. Alexander Gerard visited Ladakh to collect material for his books and lectures. He crossed a bridge of 56 metres of woven osier-shoots over the river Ravi near Manali on his way towards Leh. In his book he classified it as "not safe". In a lecture of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, he said:

"It is a curious phenomenon that when you pass trees, houses and fields in a coach you feel as if they are moving past while the coach is standing still. On one of these bridges it is exactly the opposite: The bridge seems to be moving while the torrent below is stationary."²²

Lieutenant Henry Strachey started his expedition for Tibet in September 1845 from the well known hill station of Almora in Kumaon Himalaya in Uttar Pradesh. On October 1st, 1846 he reached Lankpya Pass along with his party, which was then within Tibetan territory. As he records:

"I have now experienced what Moorcroft relates on one of his mountain passages in Ladak, the moisture

of the breath freezing on to the pillow at night, which has also taken some of the skin off my blistered face."²³

In 1847 the Governor General of India, Lord Hardinge appointed a Tibetan Boundary Commission with instructions to define officially the boundary line between western and the Tibetan possessions of the Maharaja of Kashmir, which latter comprised Nubra, Ladakh and Rupshu along the frontier. Captain Henry Strachey together with Major A. Cunningham and Dr. Thomas Thomson were chosen members of this Commission, and the Maharaja Gulab Singh, overtures were made to Tibetan authorities to meet the members and inspect and demarcate the limits of respective territories. However, no improvement was then made even from the British side though several meetings were called in this connection. The Chinese-Tibetan authorities declined to hold any intercourse with any British deputies and would not permit the Commissioners to cross over into Tibetan territory. Accordingly the three Englishmen confined themselves to the protected Himalayan states of Garhwal, Bushahr, Spiti, and Lahaul, through which they journeyed up into Ladakh and penetrated thence northwards even to the Karakoram, fixing their headquarter at Leh.²⁴

Dr. Thomson devoted himself most successfully to exploring of materials for his subject of botany. Before him, a little information was available about the plants and species grown in Ladakh and Tibetan plateau zones, which were so far accessible by him. As a best known botanist, he explored Western Tibet from Spiti to the Karakoram. He collected large plant species distributed widely in between Karakoram and Ladakh Himalayan ranges. It is said that he was the only man in botany who sent large plant species from Ladakh to the Herbarium of the New York Botanical Garden.²⁵

During the same period in 1848 Richard Strachey along with his friend J.E. Winterbottom set out from Almora to Ladakh and Tibetan territories. His mission was to get information about the mystic lakes located in the higher Himalayan belt.

In the next year Richard Strachey once again visited Ladakh Himalaya along with his brother. This time his expedition entered into the Guge sub-province of western Tibet from Ladakh in June-July. They even reached the great and ancient monastery of Tot Ling on the Sulej on 17th July 1849, which was situated to the south towards the Garhwal boundary.²⁶

Thus according to the travel records of Stewart Richard Henry and his brother revealed that they explored Hanle, a village in Chang-Thang division of Leh district in Ladakh, then reached the Tibetan province of Guge.²⁷

Alexander Cunningham of British East India Company, Calcutta, visited Ladakh in 1846. He investigated the archaeology and ethnology of Ladakh region. Before him no written historical records especially from dPal-gyi-mgon (10th century) down to the end of the 16th century was available. He, therefore, endeavoured to collect historical documents since 10th century onwards till 19th century. So in this connection he remarks:

“During the invasion of Ladak by Ali-Mir, the Mohamedan chief of Skardo (16th century), all the temples and monasteries of the country are said to have been destroyed, and their libraries thrown into the Indus.”²⁸

Cunningham, however, managed the history of Ladakh from around 1580 down to the Dogra wars in 1834. These chapters were apparently translated from Urdu language into English, as he wrote down in English, what he was told. This method explains a number of blunders found in Cunningham’s chapter ‘Under Native Rulers’. But a comparison of his account with that of chronicles, shows it to be authentic and from original documents.²⁹

Alexander Cunningham, a somewhat pedantic statistician, came across a number of centenarians, including a Sakte nun aged 110 years.³⁰ Regarding the houses of Ladakh, Major Cunningham thought:

“ If only these houses had glass windows and proper stoves they would be not uncomfortable. As things are, however, they can only be described as primitive hovels especially in winter.”³¹

Explaining about trade activities from Leh to Minor Asia, he says:

“The artificial production of Ladakh are confined to the manufacture of blanket and coarse woollens, chiefly for home consumption, and of black mohair tents, made from the only habitations of the nomadic population. Both blanketing and sacking can be purchased in Le’, the former only in small quantities, the latter in almost any quantity, as there is a constant demand for it for (making) bags for the conveyance of goods. The blanketing is manufactured in pieces one foot wide and eleven to fifteen yards in length. The price varies from two to three rupees each, according to fineness. The quantity of blanketing and of sacking annually expended in Ladakh on the carrying trade amounts to about 120,000 yards, in the manufacture of which 20,000 small maunds (or 640,000 lb) of wool are consumed. The total value of the manufacture is only Rs, 7,500 or £ 750.”³²

Alexander Cunningham noticed that Ladakh’s foreign trade was confined mainly to four products, viz. wool, borax, sulphur and dried fruits, as he remarks:

“The foreign trade of the country in home produce, is confined to four natural productions—wool, borax, sulphur, and dried fruits, of which only the first is of any consequence, and even that is not of sufficient importance to deserve more than a slight notice.

Wool, or Tibetan Bal, is the chief product of Ladakh. It is of two kinds, goat wool, or Lena, which is used for shawls, and sheep wool, or Bal, which is used for

blanketing and coarse clothing, and for stuffing pillows and bedding.

The quantity of home produce shawl-wool annually exported from Ladak average 2400 small maunds, or 76,800 lb. The value in Ladak is the same amount in rupees (Rs. 76,800), the shawl-wool is exported to Kashmir, Nurpur, Amritsar and Rampur.”³³

In conclusion, during the first half of 19th century Moorcroft, Fraser, Koros and Cunningham were the famous explorers who visited Ladakh. Major interest of Moorcroft and Fraser was to collect information about trade and political activities, whereas Koros started his new career in the field of Tibetology and translated many Tibetan texts at Zangskar. Cunningham, though not historian, but his historical collection about Ladakh became an important source of reference for the present research scholars.

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CHAPTER 3

Famous Explorers to Ladakh During Second Half of 19th Century

Ladakh is the remotest region in Indian Himalayas and is characterised by many diverse and complex landforms. Whenever one speaks about Ladakh, people throughout the world become attentive and a special eagerness and expectation lights up their countenance. It is not only the concept of tremendous heights, the call of unconquered peaks, uncharted glaciers and valleys, or the unbelievable scarce vegetation and animal kingdom, but also there is a greater and deeper significance in the word Himalayas as if an unseen spiritual influence lives in this very world.

It is believed that during old age Pandavas of Mahabharata fame came here to rest, wearied by the great struggle, and the Buddhist scholar Milarepa listened to the echoes of nature and voices from beyond. The Lama says:

“I must go my teacher calls me, his pilgrimage on earth is coming to an end.

But where does he live, your teacher?

He is now at Kailas and it will take me months to reach him there.”

Thus in significance and stupendous sublimity, there is no other mountainous region in the world that can be compared with this portion of the Himalayas. Ladakh in the western Himalayas is a home of wisdom, here men after meeting with the dry mountain ranges feel that they have achieved some great

things. Hence it is an interesting place for visitors, who come here to enjoy the peace and take the pleasure of spiritual high order power.

Viewing the above facts and witnessing the primitive traditional system, many western explorers visited Ladakh during second half of 19th century. Here follows the details.

In 1855, there was a German missionary at Leh in Ladakh which was run by Wilhelm Heyde, who left Kothgur on 26th March 1855 and arrived at Leh early in April. He failed to generate much enthusiasm for the place. The following description is taken from his biography written by his son.

“This town stands in a sandy plain at the intersection of a number of caravan routes. It has a large market place (bazar) and is dominated by a fine old royal palace.”¹

In fact, Reverend Heyde came to Ladakh along with Pagrell. Earlier both came in India in 1853, thence they decided to visit Ladakh with the intention of opening a mission in Mongolia. Owing to the fact of not getting the permission to pass through Russia, they decided to go to Lahaul. In Lahaul they opened a mission at Keylong and later they opened another mission at Leh. No doubt they initially wanted to visit Mongolia, for the reason that they knew through the travel accounts of the travellers who had visited Mongolia that there was evidence, both in the form of literature and monuments, of early Christianity in the region and they wanted to make a detailed study of the subject. Since they could not go to Mongolia through Russia or any other country, they thought it might be easier to enter Mongolia from north India via Ladakh.²

Wilhelm Heyde loved the countrymen and women. He was always ready to give all kinds of supports which was then possible from him for the welfare of Ladakhis. Describing about the inhabitants of Ladakh, he says:

“Slit eyes, protruding cheek-bones, smooth black hair and brown skin as typical Mongolian features. There

are also a number of tribes of mixed origin descended from early Hindu immigrants from India. One quality all these tribes have in common is total disregard of cleanliness. The older people never bath, and the younger people do so only very occasionally in summer. As a general rule, only the hand and face are ever washed, and only the well-to-do wore shirts. Not unnaturally, bugs of all kinds are ineradicable elements of the population.”³

Like Cunningham, Heyde disagreed with the quality and comfort of Ladakhi’s houses and wrote:

“Even the houses are not exactly inviting.”⁴

The famous German Schlagintweit brothers made botanical survey in higher Himalayan belt. For this purpose they came to Ladakh in 1855 and remained there for about two years. Actually they were not botanists but they made scientific study of botanical interest. They collected plants carefully. Later their collection had been worked up by different specialists.⁵

Hermann von Schlagintweit’s travel records also indicate that during 1855-56 Ladakh had one or two amenities, without these, Ladakhis’ life might have been in trouble. They had enough source of animal stock, viz. goats, sheep, oxen, horses and donkeys as well as a few cats and dogs. But for a long period they had no chickens. Hermann von Schlagintweit wrote:

“When we crossed the Himalayas for the second time in May 1856 we took the precaution of stocking up with chickens as presents”⁶

Hence, Hermann Schlagintweit’s statement about Ladakh proves that people in Ladakh were the followers of Buddhist religion and that was why they did not rear poultry. However, they were fond of meat.

Hermann von Schlagintweit, whose nick name was “Sakulunski”, after climbing Mt. Kuelin in 1864, was guilty of oversimplification when he wrote in his book “*Reisen in Indien*

und Hochasien”:

“Like Khorsum and of the domains of the Dalai Lama, the people of Ladakh are purely Tibetan, extending in the northern part of Ladakh, in Nubra, as far as the watershed frontier of the Karakoram. In the rest of Ladakh this social purity was contaminated by the arrival of Islam. Even 40 to 50 English miles west of Le, there are a great many Moslems.”⁷

About Ladakhis he expressed his views in this way:

“On the whole the Ladakhis were among the sturdiest and hardest working people in the whole of Tibet.”⁸

According to him people of Ladakh often lived to extreme old age. He encountered at Hemis monastery a monk named Dundup in 1865 who had then reached 103 years of age.⁹

Commenting upon the Ladakhi settlements he remarks:

“Several houses in the town, perhaps five or seven, have more than one balcony and were altogether superior to most houses in Tibet, but even in these houses the only pretensions to ‘style’ are the symmetrical arrangements of architraves above the balconies, dormer-windows and doors; the wooden galleries running right round to the inner courtyards at first floor level or higher; and one or two wooden ornaments that are clearly of Indo-Buddhist region.”¹⁰

During the same period, i.e., in the middle of 19th century, two Swiss travellers, Pierre Jaccard and Pierre Vittoz, entered Ladakh and felt that though Ladakhi seemed to be a Tibetan dialect, it was not an easy task for them to speak. According to them:

“A European vocabulary bears very little resemblance to that used by the Ladakhis, their upbringing and their daily life, their civilisation having nothing in common with European stands. To take just one ex-

ample: to us, the word 'crockery' denotes fragile objects, whereas in the Ladakhis it means something solid and durable, because their 'crockery' is made of silver or copper. Similarly their Tibetan dialect, though rich in nouns, is almost totally lacking in generic or abstract expressions. For example, the Ladakhis have a different word for every kind of tree or wood, but no word for 'tree'. Consequently one has to express oneself with the utmost precision, specifying 'willow', 'poplar', or 'Juniper'. The same applies of course to all pursuits which figure prominently in the Ladakhis' way of life. They have enough words connected with horses to fill a whole dictionary; there are some thirty different words for describing a horse's exact colour, and a separate word for each piece of harness, yet there is no word for 'riding' or 'saddle'."¹¹

The two British officers of the then Indian Army undertook an expedition to Kashmir, Ladakh and adjoining Tibet. Knight also then decided to travel the above countries. But it was not an easy task. Because during those days the means of communication were most difficult. The railways had yet to start and the air journey had not yet been dreamt of. Besides these difficulties, Knight started his journey from Kanpur on 21st May 1860 and travelling by bullock cart, he reached Delhi on 25th May after braving the heat, dust and other inconveniences of the road. Then further braving the gruelling heat, and swarms of flies at various intermediary stations, he alongwith his helpers managed to reach Shimla on 29th May 1860. In Shimla they planned their expedition to Kashmir and then onto Ladakh. After making another journey through the hot and dusty plains of Punjab, including Lahore, they reached the territory of the Maharaja of Kashmir on 13th June 1860 at a place known as Bimber. After enjoying the hospitality of the Maharaja, they left for Ladakh. On 27th July, Knight accompanied by a large number of porters and attendants left Ladakh on 21st August 1860. After spending 50 days in Kashmir and Ladakh, Knight with his attendants re-

turned to British territory and joined his duty at Kanpur on 31st October 1860. About the Ladakhi customs he says:

“The lamas are provided, by the custom of dedicating in every family of two or more, one to that office, should there be a number of girls in a family, all those that do not marry become nuns, and adopt the male attire of red and yellow. The nuns, however, seem to be by no means kept in confinement; they work in the fields and one of them enlisted with us as a coolie, and brought her load into camp before any of her male coadjutors. Among other curious information that each man is enlisted to the luxury of a wife all to himself; but that a family of four or five brothers frequently have but one between them, and that the system is productive of no ill-feeling. That of one female associating her fate and fortune with all the brothers of a family, without any restriction of age or numbers. The choice of a wife is the privilege of the elder brother and singular as it may seen.”¹²

Knight got surprised to see the main town of Ladakh. He called it “city of the dead”, as he remarks:

“The town of Ladakh although as a commercial point of view by no means a flourishing looking settlement, was, as far as picturesqueness was concerned, everything that could be desired. It was built in the style so popular throughout the country—on pinnacles of rock, and such out of the way positions as seemed, of all others, the least adopted for building purposes—immediately outside the town, occupying a sort of bason among the surrounding mountains, was what might fairly be called a ‘city of the dead’. It was of considerable extent, and was formed of groups of numerous monumental buildings which I have described, and which is a country where the habitations of the living appear so few in proportion to those of the dead, from so curious and remarkable a feature.

These tombs although by no means of very modern date, bear traces in many instances, of the more recently departed of the Buddhist population. Burnt fragments of bone, hair etc., were scattered about in various direction, while, collected together in one corner, were the little mounds of mud with a rise at one extremity, where the sculptured turban ought to rest, which denoted the last resting place of the Moslem faithful.”¹³

Describing about chortens he says:

“The tomb like erections, were considered in the light of gods; the bones and ashes of departed lamas having been pounded up together and deposited beneath them, together with such valuable as turquoises, Pushmeena, Rupees etc.”¹⁴

Leh Bazar was then not very clean. There were few shops, but the trade was mostly in the hands of outsiders. Only a few Ladakhi Buddhists, however were seen in the market. As he remarks:

“In the afternoon we explored the Bazar, where we found abundance of dogs, dirt, and idlers, but little else. What little there was in the way of merchandise, the proprietors seemed utterly indifferent about disposing off, and after visiting a few shops we went away in disgust. The people were a mixture of Cashmeeries, Chinese, Tartars, Bangalees, and Indians of all sorts and sects, and more ideal, good-for nothing looking scoundrels.”¹⁵

Leaving the Bazar, when Knight marched towards Hemis monastery, he found hundreds of chortens as well as stone slates inscribed with Buddhist Mantras on Mane walls, as he describes:

“Outside the town we passed a mound of the inscribed stones, which must have been nearly a quarter of a mile in length, and probably contained as many as

30,000. The left bank of the river, which thus formed our path, was a continuation of detached huts, forming no regular villages, and affording very little shade or apparent prospect of shelter for man or beast. The right bank, however, was studded with picturesque looking little villages, but generally on rocky summits, and surrounded by tombs and Mani panees, to an extent almost to rival the towns themselves in size and importance.”¹⁶

Before reaching the Hemis monastery Knight found chortens, Mane walls surrounded by trees and sufficient source of water. As he comments:

“The entrance to the gorge in which the monastery is situated was, as usual, quite covered with Mani panees and walls of inscribed stone; one of the former was studded with human skulls, and otherwise ornamented, in a way that proved the vicinity of some stronghold of lama talent though not perhaps of the very highest order. . . . The monastery we found was situated in a beautiful wooded valley, thickly planted, and having a dashing little torrent forming through the centre. . . . It was built as usual, on the very face of the rock, and towering above it was an airy fort, ensconced among a number of crow-nest habitations, perched about apparently with more regard to effect than comfort.”¹⁷

Inspecting the Hemis monastery he remarks:

“Originally containing some two hundred lamas, its numbers had now dwindled down, by their account, to fifteen or sixteen. We, however, saw actually more than that number ourselves while wandering through the building.

They owned to having treasure in the monastery to the amount of three laks of rupees (£ 30,000), but of this we saw small signs during our inspection.

Some of the divinities were, however, provided with vestments of cloth of gold, and were seated upon thrones, studded with would be precious stones, others were accommodated with large silver bowls, placed on pedestals, filled to the brim with 'ghee', or rancid butter, and unless blessed with inordinate appetites, these, from their enormous size, might fairly last them all till doomsday. We were altogether conducted through four temples, each inhabited by a number of Chinese figures, seated in state, with offerings of corn, flour, rice and ghee etc. before them, and these were generally served in valuable cups of china and precious metals. Hanging from the ceiling and the walls around were scrolls, decorated in the Chinese fashion, with figures of tightly-robed, narrow-eyed ladies and gentlemen, scattered about with the usual perspective results.

Some of the scrolls were decorated with scenes which it would take hours to decipher and appreciate. One, in particular, of the last day, was figures, and appeared well worthy of a close inspection.

The most curious things in the place, however, were the praying wheels, which I here saw for the first time. They were little wooden drums, covered round the sides with leather, and fitted vertically in niches in the walls. A spindle running through the centre, enabled them to revolve at the slightest push. They were generally in rows of eight and ten, and well thumbed and worn they looked, but others of larger dimensions were placed by themselves, decorated with the words "Um mani pance", in the Lanza character all the barrel.

In the vicinity of the monasteries were various small temples, probably chapels of ease, rudely decorated with grotesque figures, in red and yellow, and having queer-looking structures fastened on the top of them

generally a trident with tufts of hair attached, or strips of coloured calico, horns of animals, and other rude devices.

In one place we came upon a praying wheel, turned by water, but I was unable to ascertain whether the benefit accrued to the water.”¹⁸

Describing the style of head-dress of males Knight says:

“The style of head-dress generally worn among the natives facilitated his efforts immesely in these matter; for throwing aloft his sword, and relinquishing his umbrella, he used to seize suddenly upon a pig tail, and handling it after the fashion of a bell-rope, proceed to insist upon the production of impossible mutton and other delicacies in a way that was almost always successful, even under circumstances apparently the most hopeless. He had a sharp, detonating way, too, of delivering a volley of Thibetian, at the same time curling up his fierce-looking moustaches and whiskers, and gesticulating with both arms, which always had a great effect, the more so that the expletives were generally in Hindostanee, and not being understood, were all the more terrible to the unfortunate pig-tails on that account.”¹⁹

As Knight reached Kargil, now a separate district, which has district headquarter at Kargil, he met a Thanadar of Kargil, or Vazir of Pushkoon. This dignitary had formerly been its Rajah, but during Gulab Singh’s time he was reduced only to the post of Vazir and got thirty rupees per annum salary.²⁰ After travelling some distance in Kargil, he pitched tents with his attendants at the nearby village. Here villagers welcomed his mission at the village. They arranged culture show in his honour. Explaining the beautiful scene he remarks:

“Where our last camp was pitched, we found a circle of natives congregated, some standing, some sitting on their haunches, but all accompanying to the full

extent of their voices—at the same time clapping with their hands—the efforts of a band of six or seven artists on the pipe and tabor, who kept up a quavering strain of what they doubtless believed to be music. To the united melody thus produced, a string of a dozen or so of ladies, in their full war point, were decorously going through the monotonous evolutions of a popular dance, waving their arms about, gesticulating, and at the same time ligering, as it were, over the ground, and comforting themselves in that staid, yet fitfully living way, which seems to be the general style of Eastern dancing, they were attired most picturesquely, and evidently in their very fullest ball costume.”²¹

Regarding costume he says:

“They all wore caps of some kind, either of a shape of a large, and very ultra scotch cap, black, and very baggy; these were hung round with little silver ornaments, something in the shape of wine labels for decanters, but studded with turquoises, in a row. The broad bands of turquoises, worn usually on the forehead, were for the time disrated instead from the nape of the neck, over a square piece of stiff cloth, embroidered with strings of red beads. Round the shoulders, and hanging low, in order to show off the turquoises, lumps of amber, and other family jewels, were the sheepskin cloaks inseparable from Thibetian female costume; they were however, of larger size than those of every day life, and were gorgeously decorated outside in red and blue, the fur merely appearing at the edges. Below this, everything merged in some mysterious way into the variegated sheepskin boots of the country, also decorated with red, blue, and yellow cloth patterns on the instep.”²²

Like many countries in Central Asia, Polo was then popular game in Ladakh and in Kargil in particular. According to Knight:

“ . . . Open space of ground, where the male part of the community were to show off their prowess in the native games. To my astonishment, some fifty or sixty. Thibetians here assembled, each provided with a veritable hockey stick, not on foot, however, but each man mounted on his own little mountain pony, and prepared to pay a downright game of hockey on horse-back. In the centre of the battle-field, between the two ‘sides’ the pipes and tabors forming ‘the band’ took their station, and each time the wooden ball of contention was struck off, set up a flourish to animate the players. The Thibetians, however, required no such artificial excitement, but set to work with an energy and spirit quite refreshing to behold, and the scene soon became most animated and amusing. The Thibetians, unlike Englishmen under similar circumstances, appeared to think the more clothes they had on, the better, and in their long woollen coats and trousers, and their huge sheepskin boots, they quite overshadowed the wieri little horses they bestrode. Besides having to carry all the weight, the ponies, most unfairly, came in also for all the ‘shinning’, but in spite of these disadvantages, they performed their parts to admiration, dashing about in the most reckless manner, at the instigation of their riders, and jostling and knocking against one another in a way that would have disgusted any other pony in the world. Conspicuous among the crowd of riders, was the thirty rupee Prime Minister, who on a most diminutive little animal, charged about in a way he never could have condescended to do, had he had the misfortune to have still remained a Rajah. Each time that the ball was sent into the goal, the striker, picking it up dexterously, without dismounting, came again at full speed down the course, the band struck up, and throwing the ball into the air, he endeavoured to strike it as far as possible in the direction of the adverse party.

Behind him, at best pace, came his own side, and a desperate collision appeared the inevitable result; however, not a single man was unhorsed during the entire struggle, nor were there any violent concussions, or accidents of any kind on either side.

The men rode very short, and their clumsy boots, struck through the heavy stirrup-irons, gave them a ludicrous appearance, which was little indicative of the firm seat and active part they displayed in the games.”²³

The survey of Kashmir was entrusted to T.G. Montgomerie, an engineer in the Bengal Army. With the help of Survey of India, Captain Montgomerie and his corps of pundits enabled to locate and measure some thirty-two peaks of the Karakoram range bordering Kashmir and Ladakh.²⁴

In 1863 captain T.G. Montgomerie started his journey from Bareilly (U.P.) in India. From Kathmandu (Nepal) on 7th March 1865 he entered into Tibet. Thence through the annual trading caravan from Lhasa to Ladakh, known as the ‘Lopchhak mission’ he arrived in Ladakh on October 1865.²⁵

Leitner started his journey for Ladakh in May 1866 from Lahore on a tour through Kangra, Mandi, Lahaul, Zaskar and then Ladakh with Henry Cowie, the brother of David Cowie, then Advocate General of Bengal.

On 2nd August 1866 they reached Dras, where two old stone sculptures attracted him. He writes about these statues in this way:

“Outside the village, we came upon two curious old stones, standing about six feet high, upright, and carved (like Buddha) These stones were of irregular form, and carved on three sides, and the designs, though much worn, were distinctly traceable. They represented, apparently, a male and female figure, standing about five feet high, and surrounded by

three smaller figures each. Like all the other sculptured figures we had seen, they were innocent of clothes, with the exception of the rope, or very scant drapery, which ran across their ankles and up either side of the shoulders”²⁶

Changthang during those days was the centre of salt trading. Changthang is a sub-division of Leh district. People of this region are known as Changpas. Their noses are flat and their features are Chinese looking. Leitner met these people on the way near Dras, and writes:

“The few travellers we met during our march were flat-nosed, heavy looking creatures, with Chinese skullcaps and pig-tails, and were employed in conveying salt to Cashmere, packed in bags of woven hair, and loaded on cows and asses as weired and strang-looking as their owners.

We also encountered an original looking gold-washing association of five They were all also weighted with bags of grain, to keep them alive during their search. Their labour consists in sifting the fine sand which comes down in the snow-torrents, charged with minute particles of gold; and the proceeds, from the appearance of ‘the trade’ would not seem to be very great. They say it amounts only to a few annas a day, but would probably not allow to the full amount for fear of being taxed.”²⁷

On August 6, 1866 Leitner reached Kargil. At Kargil he found a fort near the bridge, which had been pulled down by Gulab Singh in one of his excursions to Tibet. Here at the village he met some females with their cultural dress. Explaining about their costume, he writes:

“The female costume consists generally of robes of sheep and goat skins thrown across the shoulders; while a long tail of twisted worsted plaits, looking like a collection of old fashioned bell-ropes, forms

the chief decoration. This is attached to the back hair, and hangs down quite to the heels, where it terminates in a large tuft, with tassels and divers balls of worsted attached to it.”²⁸

At Mulbek, Leitner came across a curious block of massive rock standing closed downside the path, on which a colossal figure was cut with four arms, which Leitner describes:

“At a place called Moulwee we came to a curious block of massive rock standing close beside the path, with one of the red-topped houses built into its side. Above this was a colossal figure with four arms, rudely cut on the face of the rock, and above all was perched an implement, something after the fashion of a Mrs. Gamp’s umbrella of large proportions, together with sundry sticks and rags, which seem to be the common style of religious decoration in these parts.

The figure was about eighteen feet high, the lower extremities being hidden behind the building at the base of the rock. It resembled in some measure the sculptures occasionally seen among Hindoo temples, but no one appeared to know anything whatever of its origin or history.

Close to this there were an immense number of stones collected together, bearing inccriptions in two different characters, one of which resembled slightly the Devanagree or Sanscrit.”²⁹

After Kargil, Leitner proceeded towards Leh and just after passing through Sergol he came to Lamayuru monastery at the downside of the path. He describes about the monastery in the following way:

“In the temple we found a small square room with a gallery round it, from which were suspended dingy-looking Chinese banners, flowers, & C., and at one end were about twenty idols of various designs, seated in a row staring straight before them, and covered

with offerings of Indian corn, yellow flowers, butter, & C. They were for the most part dressed in Chinese fashion, and in the dusky light had certainly a queer weird-looking appearance about them, which was quite enough to overawe our village guide; The service began by three of the most unctuous of the lamas squatting down on some planked spaces before the devinities, and raising a not unmusical chant, accompanying themselves at the same time with a pair of cymbals, while two large double-sided tom-toms or drums gradually insinuated themselves into the melody.

These were each fixed on one long leg and were beaten with a curved stick, muffled at the end. The performance of the cymbals was particularly good, and the changes of time they introduced formed the chief feature of the music, and was rather pleasing than otherwise. The service as it drew to a close, was joined by a dwelt upon two enormous brass instruments like speaking-trumpets grown out of all decent proportions; they were about five feet long, and were placed on the ground during the performance, and as two of the fattest of the lamas operated and nearly suffocated themselves in their desperate exertions, the result was the most diabolical uproar that ever could have been produced since the first invention of music.

The most interesting object in the place was a library of Thibetian books. It consisted of an upright frame divided into square compartments, each with a word cut deeply into the wood over it, and containing the volumes."³⁰

At Khalatse he saw 'Lantza' inscription on stones. It is the common vehicle of Sanskrit language among the Buddhists of Nepal proper, where it is pronounced as 'Ranja'. According to him:

“ ‘Ranja’, therefore, and not, according to a barbarian metamorphosis, Lantza, it should be called by us, and by way of further and clearer distinction, the Nipalese variety of Devanagri. Obviously deducible as this form is from the Indian standard, it is interesting to observe it in practical collocation with the ordinary Thibetan form and when it is considerable that Lantza or Ranja is the common extant vehicle of those original Sanscrit works of which the Thibetan book are translations, the interest of an inscription traced on a slab in both characters cannot but be allowed to be considerable. The habit of promulgation of the doctrines of their faith by inscriptions patent on the face of religious edifices, stones & C., is peculiar to the Buddhists of Tibet.

His explanation of the stones was, that at the last day a certain recording angel, whom he called Khurjided, would pass through the land, and inspecting these mounds of inscribed stones, would write down the names of all those who had contributed to the heap what the inscription was he seemed unable clearly to explain, but believed it to refer in some manner to the Supreme Being. Whatever it was, all those who had contributed their share towards its dissemination, by adding stones to the mounds, were certain of future rewards, while those who had omitted to do so were as equally certain of punishment.”³¹

During Maharaja Gulab Singh’s period, every village in Ladakh had to pay tax. When Leitner reached Khalatse, he also noticed that at Khalatse each house had to pay tax. According to him:

“Regarding the state of people here (Kalache) he told me that each house paid a tax of seven rupees per annum to the Maharajah. This, for the entire village, would only give 105 rupees per annum towards the enrichment of the Treasury.”³²

Buddhists in Ladakh put inscribed stones on Mane walls. So Mane walls consisted inscribed mantras and sometimes historically related instructions on stones. Leitner explains:

“The Mani a word naturalized from the Sanscrit is a stone dyke, from four to five feet high and from six to twelve in breadth; length from ten or twenty feet to half a mile. The surface of the Mani is always covered with inscribed slabs; these are votive offerings from all classes of people for the attainment of some particular object, does a childless man wish for a son, or a merchant about to travel hope for a safe return, goes to a lama and purchases a slate, which he deposits carefully on the village ‘Mani’, and returns to his home in full confidence that his prayers will be heard.”³³

In 1859, at the age of twenty Robert Barkley Shaw moved to India, taking up residence at Kangra, in the western Himalayas, where he embarked on a career as a tea planter. On 20th September 1868, when Russians added Samarkand to their growing Central Asian empire, Robert Shaw set out from Leh to Yarkand and possibly Kashgar. His aim was to make complete reports on the ancient silk road towns of Yarkand and Kashgar. He was the first European after Marco Polo who went Yarkand and Kashgar. On his return Shaw submitted a detailed and confidential report to the government in which he spelt out that there would be dangers from Tsarist armies to the Indian sub-continent. George Hayward also sent the same kind of report. Viewing the warnings of Hayward and Shaw reports, Lord Mayo, then the British Viceroy decided to advance to Kashgar, Shaw was also chosen to accompany him. The mission, which left India in the summer of 1870 proved a failure, for Yakub Beg was away, and Mayo’s men got no further than Yarkand. However, Mayo appointed Shaw to the Political Department making him British Joint-Commissioner at Leh.³⁴

In the meantime, Forsyth had led a second mission to Yakub Beg, who was then the ruler of Kashgar and Yarkand, for treaty.

In 1875, Shaw was sent to Yarkand to ratify the treaty Forsyth had negotiated, and established himself as Britain's first ambassador there.

It was the great movement, Robert Shaw was having his establishment in the Kangra valley, then every year few English sportsmen who penetrate into the wilder parts of Ladakh reported him about their wonderful experiences related with wild animals to be found there. Wild sheep as large as ponies, wild cattle with bushy tails like horses and long hair on their flanks reaching nearly to the ground, besides antelopes and gazelles. In addition there were curious monasteries perched on almost inaccessible rocks with prayer wheels, gigantic images and ancient manuscripts, as the chief attraction. Thus Ladakh was then tolerably well known among Britishers, and it was situated at the distance of nearly a month's march across the mountain from their establishment.

The above information about Ladakh attracted Shaw in 1867, and he decided to visit Ladakh during his yearly excursion. Arriving at Leh, he first of all decided to study the customs and manners of Ladakhis. But as soon as he walked in the Leh town, he found people from the different parts of Central Asia. He describes:

“For strolling about the streets, or seated in silent rows along the bazaar, were to be seen men of a different type from those around. Their large white turbans, their beards, their long and ample outer robes, reaching nearly to the ground, and open in front showing a shorter undercoat girt at the waist, their heavy riding boots of black leather, all gave them an imposing air; while their dignified manners, so respectful to others, and yet so free from Indian cringing or Tibetan buffoonery, made them seem like men among monkeys compared with the people around them.”³⁵

At the time when Shaw entered into Ladakh, Dr. Cayley was then the new British Resident at Leh. He was facing some prob-

lems related with imposing the custom duties and its reduction. According to him:

“Dr. Cayley, the new British Resident at Leh, was able to announce to them a considerable reduction in the duties. It appeared that, some years before, the Cashmeer Maharaja, in whose territory Ladak lies, had entered into engagements with the Supreme Power, the British Government to reduce his enormous custom duties to five percent, for merchants trading between India and Central Asia. As usual, this engagement was nowhere carried out, and after repeated remonstrances, our Government was obliged to depute an officer to Ladak, for the purpose of watching its execution. Dr. Cayley was the first appointment to this post, and he at once reported to our Government that the reduction of duties was systematically disregarded by the Cashmeer officials. On the details being brought officially to the knowledge of the Maharaja, orders were sent up to Ladak to remedy this state of things, and this time these orders were attended to, as there was a British officer to watch over their execution.”³⁶

Robert Shaw visited Ladakh second time on the 6th May 1868 from Kooloo via Bara Lacha Pass and Roopshoo. At Leh he learnt about Argoons.³⁷ He describes about this race in this way:

“Ladak is infested with a set of ruffians called Argoons, half-bred between Toorkistan fathers and Ladak mothers. Like most half-castes, they possess all the evil qualities of both races without any of their virtues. They also in Ladak possess a monopoly of the carrying traffic. They own a few miserable ponies, and as soon as they have made a bargain with a merchant for the carriage of his goods, and received a large advance, they go and buy a few more from some brother Argoon, who has just arrived with his

cattle half-dead from a journey. These ghosts of horses are then fed up for a few days till their sores begin to heal, when they are started again under loads that would break down a London dairy-horse in such country. This is a favourable specimen of an Argoon's conduct. You are happy if he does not insist on getting the whole money in advance, and then get himself taken up by some convenient creditor, who will only let him go on receipt of a further sum of good money which you have to throw after the bad. With me the case was even worse. For, in addition to their natural cupidity, there was the fear of being punished for introducing a possibly unwelcome visitor into Yarkand. Having a home, and a wife or two at each end of their journey—both at Yarkand and at Leh—they are equally in dread of the rulers of both places.”³⁸

At Leh, Robert Shaw met Mr. Thorp who had formerly been in the 98th Regiment, and had recently been travelling about in Tibet. When he heard that Shaw was starting for Yarkand, he volunteered to go with him. But somehow Shaw advised that it would not be possible for him to take a company of his great good-nature. At this time he also heard a report from another Englishman Hayward regarding his intention of attempting to reach Yarkand. Finally on the 20th September 1868, he set off for Yarkand from Leh.³⁹

During the course, when Robert Shaw was on a journey towards Yarkand and Kashgar, Hayward was also on his mission to Yarkand and Kashgar. In 1869 he joined Robert Shaw's company at Kashgar and returned to India via Ladakh. He published a famous map describing different routes to Ladakh.⁴⁰

J.L. Stewart made his botanical tour to Ladakh in 1868. Although he mentioned some of his important findings, he was unable to publish complete list of plants which he had collected from Rupshu and Ladakh.⁴¹

Frederic Drew was in the Geological Survey of Great Britain. In 1862 he left the British Government service and entered the Maharaja of Kashmir's service and came to his court at Jammu. In the beginning his duties were confined to geological investigations, or more exactly, to looking for minerals. This made him to travel to many mountains. Later he became the head of the Forest Department. Lastly he had the position of Governor of Ladakh. In this way, after spending ten years service in Maharaja's government, he retired.⁴²

Drew visited Ladakh three times. He came to Ladakh for the first time in 1862 and visited Dras, Kargil and Suru valley only. Later he visited Ladakh in 1869, 1871 and January 1872.⁴³ As Drew entered into the territory of Ladakh he found a great contrast between the Kashmir's mild and soft climate and Ladakh's arid, bare and stony mountains with variable climate. Days are hot and nights are extremely cold even during summer. As he says:

“Here in Ladakh is a clear light-blue sky and bright sun, with a brisk keen air; it is more a climate of extremes, in that the sun's rays are powerful, being less weakened in traversing the smaller thickness of atmosphere, so powerful as to heat quickly the rocky ground exposed to them, while, from its rarity, the air both receives less heat from the sun's rays, and in the evening allows of a quick radiation from the day-heated ground, so that cold nights suddenly succeed to days that have been felt to be hot by those exposed by the sun.”⁴⁴

At Dras, Drew found mainly two races: Kashmiri and Balti. Kashmiris were settled at Matayan village whereas Balti and Dard came in the upper portion. During old days it was the part of Ladakh kingdom, later for some time it was administratively controlled by Baltistan. But once again after very short time it came under the direct control of Ladakh.⁴⁵

Kargil, town and headquarter of Kargil district, is situated at

the bank of Suru river, comparatively at a lesser altitude than Leh and Dras. One can witness fruit trees and shrubs in its vicinity. People grow barley, grain and vegetables. According to Drew's observation:

“The villages here are about 8900 feet above the sea; partly from this somewhat less altitude as compared with Dras, and partly from the place being less in the way of the comparatively moist air that steals into this country through the Dras Pass, there is both less snow in winter and a greater force of sun and warmth in summer to help in vegetation. Here wheat flourishes as well as barley; but the great difference to be observed was the growth of many fruit-trees (chiefly mulberry and apricot), as well as willows and poplars, along the water courses that are led over the terraced-fields.”⁴⁶

From Kargil, Drew marched towards Leh. On the way, he came across many passes like Namikala (13,000 ft.), Fotu-La (13,400 ft) and villages—Shargol, Mulbek, Kharbu, Lamayuru, Khalsi, Hemis Shukpa, Bazgo, Spituk, etc. At Shargol he first noticed a small monastery with a few lamas. A large monastery at Lamayuru. Remains of a fort or tower made by Sokpos (who invaded Ladakh towards the end of 17th century) at Hemis Shukpa. Except Spituk village all cultivated spots between Kargil and Phyang were watered from side-streams which are coming almost immediately from the mountains with a more or less steep fall. But at Spituk the land is irrigated from the river Indus itself. At Spituk he saw a big monastery a few hundred feet high. He explains:

“At Pitak there is an isolated rock a few hundred feet high, on which all the older buildings are situated. The monastery is on the summit at one end, and there is a fortification of two towers connected at one end, and there is a fortification of two towers connected by a double wall that must have helped to make the rock a strong position. Formerly all the houses were,

for protection's sake, built thus high up; this was very commonly the case throughout Ladakh, only in the last generation or so have the people taken generally to building in the plain."⁴⁷

Leh is situated on the bank of Indus river. This river flows through Spituk village, about eight kms away from Leh main town. When Drew reached Leh town, he saw eight or ten storeys palace on the slopy rock with massive walls. Below it houses and bazaar uniformly whitewashed. He remarks:

“Entering from the direction of Kashmir we pass through a small gateway and find ourselves in a long, wide and straight bazaar, the houses regularly built and uniformly whitewashed. This has been erected since the Dogras took the country, as is now the place that is most frequented. At the farther end of this bazaar one passes into the old part of the town, among houses separated by narrow winding passages. As one rises on the slope of the hill one meets with a few houses of a higher class; these were built by the Kahlons, or ministers of the former sovereigns, and now for the most part belong to their representatives.”⁴⁸

Drew divided the inhabitants of Ladakh into four sections—Champa, Ladakhi, Balti and Dard. The first three belong to Tibetan race. Dards are found in Dras and valley along Dras river, and in a few villages of the Indus. Champas lead nomadic life on the upland valleys, the Ladakhis are those who are settled in the valleys. And the Baltis, who are the branch of Tibetan race, later converted to Muslims.⁴⁹

Drew observed some colonies in Ladakh. For example ‘Khambas’. They came from Kham, far to the east of Lhasa. Some of them settled along Rupshu and at the bank of the Pangkong lake. But they had no houses and still lived in tents. They were the professional beggars.⁵⁰ The next colony of Baltis who were settled at the bank of Indus river were called Chushod.

These immigrant Baltis came four or five generations back before 1871 or say during 15th century from Purig and Skardu. At Leh he came to know many families of half-castes called Arghauns⁵¹ and 'Ghulamzadas'.⁵²

Almost all the Ladakhis in 1871 were engaged in agriculture. They managed to pay the government dues and to get for themselves a fair living. Grim was grown upto 15,000 feet. At lower levels, besides the grim, wheat was grown, but a little quantity of this was consumed by Ladakhis themselves, as they supplied the wheat to the market. Drew remarks:

“At lower levels, besides the grim, wheat is grown. But little of this is consumed by the Ladakhis themselves; they grow it for the market, for the use of the people of the town and of the travelling merchants. Wheat does well upto 11,500 feet; it is cultivated, but with less success, even at 12,800 feet. Peas and barley (of the kind common in other countries) are crops that grow at almost as great heights as any. This barley is given to horses. . . . Every crop, as has been said, requires irrigation for its growth; several times has the land to be watered to bring on the plant Ploughing is done chiefly with hybrid of yak bull and the common cow; this they call ‘Zo’ if male and ‘Zomo’ if female. The yak itself is not good for the plough.”⁵³

The usual food of Ladakhis is like Chinese food in which they use barely, grim and butter. Sometimes vegetable, but meat and tea is used maximum. Tea and ‘chhang’ is used by them in good quantity during winters, when they do not have agricultural work. Drew says:

“The drink of the Ladakhis is ‘chhang’, a light beer made without hops. They have no good vessels to keep it in, so it usually is sour by the time it is drunk. Tea is another favourite drink in this country, but the poor people, that is nearly all the population, seldom

are able to afford it; it is made in a chrun, with butter added.”⁵⁴

Ladakh is a rainless area, therefore, people have their houses built by stone at the foundation and then sun-dried bricks. All the palaces in Ladakh are made of stones and are in multistoreys. Drew says:

“The houses are built of sun-dried bricks or of stone. They are flat-roofed, of two or three stories, but these are very low. Except in the very poorest houses there is always a reception room kept neat and clean, the rest not having this character. The houses are all whitewashed, the aspect of them—perhaps among groups of trees, or else standing out in relief from the sombre rock on which they may be built, rising one behind the other on the face of it—with their varandah-rooms or with balconies projecting, is often bright and pleasant.”⁵⁵

Women in Ladakh had good social liberty. Except well-to-do families, most of the Buddhist families then had polyandry system.

“Thus far we may think women’s position here to be better than in India, but what is next to tell darkens the picture. Polyandry, plurality of husbands, except among the few rich people, is quite general; . . . polyandry is an economical arrangement, one established on the poverty of a barren country, and extending throughout the people as far as indigence itself does. . . . There can be no doubt that the practice of polyandry in Ladakh originated from the smallness of the extent of land that could be tilled and the general inelasticity of the country’s resources, while the isolation from the rest of the world— isolation of manners, language and religion, as well as geographical isolation—hindered emigration.”⁵⁶

In Ladakh nearly every village has monastery, excluding

Kargil and Dras region. One monastery can hold hundreds of lamas. It is often situated in high places difficult of access—on a spur of the mountain or on the hill-rocks. At the entrance of the monastery we see prayer wheels, chortens, and sometimes Mane walls. In the monastery there are number of images of gods, goddesses, daks, dakinies, lamas, rinpoches, etc., besides thanka and wall paintings. In the monastery lamas periodically assemble at image room to worship with prayers and sacrifices of grain, etc. with music. Drew remarks:

“One enters into the image room, there is generally a fine lofty square chamber, the centre-space of which is supported by columns of wood. Here are kept the images to be adored; images of some of their gods, or of Buddha, or of apotheosised Lamas. These are sometimes in metal, gilt, sometimes in clay gaudily painted. Often the artist has been successful in giving an expression to the face that well suits the character represented, as for instance the ineffable calm—a calm that, were it less unmoved, would almost express contempt for everything around—on the countenance of Buddha, or Sakya Thubba as he called, the founder of the religion, whose devotion was continual contemplation of, and whose ideal was absorption in, the divinity.”⁵⁷

After Leh, Drew visited Nubra, Zangskar and Rupshu. He made geographical study of these regions and included in his book, *Jummoo and Kashmir Territories*. He conducted a detailed study of high altitude lakes located in Changthang sub-division like—Panbuk, Tsomoriri, Tso Kyaghar, Pangong lake, etc.

An Austrian palaeontologist from the Moravian mission named Ferdinand Stoliczka functioned from 1866 as secretary of Asiatic Society of Bengal and while exploring Ladakh he arrived in Leh on 18th June 1874. After his death, a statue was erected in his honour in Leh.

Stolitzsky, an eminent Austrian geologist, visited Ladakh in

between 1873-74 and died in 1874 on the Karakoram Pass while conducting geological survey in the region.

Forsyth, Golden Trotter and Henderson also visited Leh in the same year. On their way to the Pamirs, Forsyth and his colleagues were on a political mission during the time when the British Government had posted an English officer at Leh to watch over their interests in Kashmir and Turkistan. Henderson and Hume, members of the Forsyth Mission had also published a list of four hundred and twelve plants collected in Ladakh.

One of the most famous European scientific naturalists, Dr. Ferdinand Stoliczka of Austrian German descent had carried out essential studies about the nature in the Ladakh region and he later died in Ladakh on 19th June 1874.

Jonson who was a mountaineer climbed some mountain summits around Leh from 1871 to 1883.

Hayward in his second journey to Ladakh, surveyed the routes leading to Leh. This time he carried out the surveys on behalf of the Royal Geographical Society, London, during 1885-87.

Mrs. and Mr. Ujifarvy went to Ladakh via Karakoram during 1880-81, just before Hayward's second visit to Ladakh.⁵⁸

Francis Younghusband had very bravely made his duty as to watch the higher Himalayan mountains and endeavoured to clear the confusion of Russian invasion upon India from the northern side of the mountain. In the course of this work he visited Ladakh a number of times during 1889. Zojila is the gateway of Ladakh. After crossing Zojila one can feel as if he has reached in the different world similar to moon, barren and dry with high mountain peaks. But Zojila Pass is also not an easy task for every one to cross it. One has to climb up and up then after reaching about 11,400 feet from 6,400 feet, one can cross the pass. Younghusband remarks:

“The Zojila. It was only 11,400 feet in height, and quite easy on the approach from the north, though

steep on the south. And now there was a sudden and wonderful change in the scenery. This pass, though it does not lie across the main watershed between India and Central Asia, yet is on the line of what geographers regard as the true Himalayan range—the continuation of the line of the great peaks, including Mount Everest and Kinchinjunga. And it stands in such a position as to form a barrier to the monsoon clouds which beat up again it from the Arabian Sea. Consequently, here on the north side of the Zojila, as I had found on the north side of the Rotang Pass in Kulu, very little rain falls and the mountain-sides are bare and barren.”⁶⁰

The distance from Zojila to Leh was covered by Young-husband in twenty days. He reached Leh on 31st July 1889, and met old Shukar Ali who had crossed the Mustagh Pass. He says:

“We travelled rapidly through the country, and on July 31 reached its place, Leh. In twenty days our party had travelled just over four hundred miles, and crossed one pass of eleven thousand, and three of thirteen thousand feet—all, however, very easy. On entering Leh I was met by old Shukar Ali, the only Ladaki who had come across the Mustagh Pass. At Leh I was the guest of Captain Ramsay, the British Joint Commissioner.”⁶¹

In 1885 F. Redslob arrived as the first resident missionary and was allowed to stay in the former meteorological observatory. Over the next five years rapid progress was made. A small Church was built in the same year and in January 1887 Redslob started a small school in Leh.

Mr. A.D. Carey, of Bombay Civil Service, conducted his study tour during 1885. He went on a journey through Chinese Turkistan and North Tibet at his own expenses. On July 1885 he reached Leh. Thereafter, he, along with Andrew Dalglish, proceeded eastwards to the Changchenmo valley and Chin 16,000

to 17,000 feet above sea level, which lies between Nubra and Khotan in Kashgaria. In 1887 he made a second journey over the Kuen Lun and after travelling Tien Shah and Yarkand, he returned to Ladakh in the middle of April 1887.⁶²

Another famous traveller Ransdel came to Leh in 1888-90 via Khotan, however nothing is known about his travel to Ladakh.⁶³

In the next year, 1891 Bower travelled to Ladakh. He along with Dr. Thorold made new departure in the exploration of Tibet. Bower, already known to fame as a traveller in Turkistan and as the discoverer of the Bower M.S., made secret preparations for entering Tibet by a new route, namely from the northern parts of Ladakh adjoining the Lingzhi T'ang, and attempted from north-west to the far south-east on 3rd July 1891.⁶⁴

When captain Bower was in Ladakh, Dr. Karl Max was running a mission hospital at Leh. Perhaps he arrived at Leh quite early in April 1887. After reaching Leh, he opened a hospital for the welfare of Ladakhis. This hospital was then sponsored by the British Government. He was the first fully trained missionary doctor.⁶⁵

Just after Dr. Karl Max, one English brave lady decided to travel to Central Asia. She was Mrs. Isabella Bishop. She travelled to Leh privately for her own interest and pleasure. As said earlier when she was fifty-eight years old, she chose as her objective to travel the countries between China and north India. According to her aim she came to Ladakh in 1889 after crossing the Zojila northwards with three servants.⁶⁶

One year later, E.F. Knight, a brave explorer by land and sea, precise, critical, self-assured and victorian to his fingertips, arrived in Ladakh on an official mission. Describing about an incident during his visit to Leh, he says:

“After breakfast, we repaired with Naib Wazir, the treasurer, and other notables to the gallery overlooking the quadrangle, where seats had been prepared for us. The jovial treasurer, finding that I appreciated the

national beverage, produced at intervals flowing bowls of chhang to cheer as we grazed at the successive whirling troops of devils and monsters that passed before us. . . . The great crowd had already collected—men and women of Ladak and Chinese Tibet, lamas and nuns red and yellow, and a sprinkling of Hindoos and scornful Mussulmans, feeling around Leh.”⁶⁷

Martin Conway also led a sizeable surveying party from Indus to Leh and soon thereafter Kinght was there to deal with climbing work in the Alps. He was known chiefly for his book on art.

During 1891 and 1892 two French gentlemen of adventurous spirits named Dutreuil de Rhins and Fernand Grenard made various minor explorations in Chinese Turkistan and Ladakh. During their journey they travelled to Keria Oasis, Karakorams, Leh, Tanktse, etc.⁶⁸

A great deal of our knowledge acquired through earlier-said scholars about the plants of Gilgit, Skardu, and the Karakoram is also due to C.B. Clark, although he does not seem to have done much in this field from Ladakh proper.⁶⁹

J.F. Duthie crossed the Zojila in July 1893, visited Dras, the Deosai plains and went back to Kashmir via Bandipur. He was a botanist, but in his reports he does not list many of the plants he found there. Dr. Weber, who was responsible for the supervision of meteorological observations and the post office at Leh came here in 1894. He was then the key man of the Moravian mission.⁷⁰ During the same time, S.H. Ribbach came to Leh from Keylong. He made a beautiful study of Ladakhi culture and tradition and later published the same in a book.⁷¹

A.H. Francke, the great author of many books on Ladakh, arrived direct from Germany in 1896. In 1899 he moved to Khalatse (a village 110 kms away from Leh). Later he made historical and archaeological studies in Ladakh.⁷² In the same year Webie and Malcolm surveyed Ladakh.⁷³ A famous Swedish

traveller and explorer named Seven Hedin, conducted his study of Central Asia and Tibet in 1887 and onwards. He explored the Trans-Himalayan region and visited Ladakh for the first time in 1899.⁷⁴

Messrs Littledale and Fletcher made difficult journey via Bokhara, Samarkand and Thian Shan to Kashgar in January 1895. He next steered for Yarkand and Khotan. On their return journey they passed over Ladakh. However, during the same period, Mr. Littledale by his adventure not only achieved a point only 70 miles from Lhasa, but also succeeded in mapping a belt of important and diversified country along the unknown tracts extending from Tengri Nor to Ladakh. This latter achievement was, geographically, the more important than the other.⁷⁵

In 1898 Dr. Bullock Workman and his wife marched along it across the Shyok river, up the valley of Nubra, and over the Sasser-la to the Karakoram Pass. The scenery is an exaggeration of that described by Dr. Neve as seen on the road from the Zojila to Leh. However, Workman made a powerful picture of its weird repellent grandeur in his book.⁷⁶

Thus during the second half of 19th century G. Knight, Robert Shaw, Leitner, Hayward were among the prominent explorers who made all efforts to explore the regions unknown beyond Ladakh. Robert Shaw and Hayward were awarded the most coveted explorers' trophies, the Gold Medal of the Royal Geographical Society, for their journeys through Ladakh and Eastern Turkistan. During the last period of 19th century, Younghusband made many journeys beyond Ladakh after 1884. As he was a boy, and had sat at the feet of his celebrated uncle-explorer Robert Shaw, Younghusband had dreamt of emulating and perhaps exceeding his uncle's achievements on India's frontiers and in the great political no-man's land beyond.⁷⁷ In conclusion he would probably have achieved the highest rank and was involved in many political activities at the Himalayan border. Frederic Drew, though a geologist, left the British Government and joined Maharaja of Kashmir's service in 1862. Thereafter, he made detailed study of geography of Ladakh.

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CHAPTER 4

Explorers to Ladakh Before it Opened to the Foreign Tourists

Ladakh consists highest mountain ranges in the world. It has desert and plenty of salty lakes situated in the high altitude. The scenic beauty of these barren mountains have special attraction for every visitor. People in villages lead a peaceful life with their limited resources and still follow primitive manners. In fact they are still very far from the ill-effects of industrialisation. They have no problems related with soil, water and air pollution. No severe disease comes to them. They live under the clean blue sky, fresh environment and enough sunshine which keeps them healthy. They enjoy their life with social freedom, dissatisfaction is hardly seen. They have enough time for chatting and drinking butter tea, even with visitors despite the language barrier; they always greet them by saying 'Jule' and attract them through their beautiful smile. Though the journey to Ladakh is tiresome, the behaviour and hospitality of Ladakhis keep the visitors away from all problems which they may have faced during their journey. These are some facts which fascinate travellers. During 20th century many famous explorers came to Ladakh for different motives. In the following lines, I have made a brief study of their records which they noticed during their tours of Ladakh.

In 1900, Deasy came to Ladakh, later he explored Tibet, Pamirs and Central Asia for three years and published results of his explorations in 1901 under the title *Tibet and Chinese Turkistan being the Record of three years Explorations*.¹

An American, Dr. Workman and his colleagues reached Leh during 1900-1901. Dr. Workman, general practitioner of medicine in Massachusetts, married to Fanny Bullock. Ten years after the marriage he retired from his practice for reasons of ill-health and the couple decided to travel. They bicycled through Spain and Algeria, then from Ceylon up through India to Peshawar. It seems that Dr. Workman's ill health, like Mrs. Bishop's spinal complaint, needed only exercise and interest. As said earlier they arrived in Leh in the beginning of 20th century.

When Dr. Workman arrived in Leh he was fifty and Mrs. Workman was nearly forty. They were determined to 'conquer' as many mountains in the Himalayas, Karakoram and Pamirs as possible. In the next years they conquered many. They were rich, organized and well-equipped, but brave and determined. The couple kept their eyes on the ground at whatever height, recording temperatures, and distances; listing flowers, examining glaciers, noticing how the peasants worked on their land and tended their water channels.²

Dr. Workmans felt little interest for the people of the Himalayas and had no sympathy with them like many western explorers.³ Moreover like Hedin the Workmans were ungenerous to their predecessors and possible rivals. Another woman climber, Miss Peck who took the Andes for her stamping ground, was viciously attacked by Mrs. Fanny Bullock Workman when her claim to have climbed 'the loftiest mountain known' in the western hemisphere affected Mrs Fanny's position as 'the heretofore undisputed holder of the altitude record for women, won by strenuous effort on mountains presenting technical difficulties of the very first order.'⁴ The position of Mrs. Fanny was so incensed that she personally paid for a team of European engineers to go to Pery and make an authoritative triangulation of Miss Peck's mountain: not surprisingly, perhaps they found its peak to be lower than Mrs Fanny's.⁵

After exploring many unknown peaks of the Himalayas including the Ladakh portion, the Workmans were honoured in America, France and Great Britain. In a family photograph, Dr.

Workman then looked like a successful small town doctor of his time, conventionally dressed in dark jacket and striped trousers, heavily moustached, silver-haired and silver tie pinned: as if waiting for his next patient. Mrs. Fanny, on the other hand, looked great adventurer. But by and large both the husband and wife looked commandingly erect like explorers. Mrs. Fanny's white lock of hair held high, her back eyebrows level over a long nose, stiff in leg of mutton sleeves and starched ruffles, she stood behind her husband, one large well-kept hand resting firmly on his shoulder. Their only child, a daughter, was of their own spirit. She studied geology at London University and then married a Scotsman.⁶

English travellers, A. Reeve Heber and his wife Kathleen, who visited Leh in 1902, were the first personalities who paid special attention towards the inhabitants of Ladakh with one or two modifications, that, which they described, still seems to apply:

“The market is crowded with all sorts of different people. Attractive Jarkandis rub shoulders with slit-eyed Tibetans; a Kulu or his neighbour from Lahul do business with a shepherd from Baltistan, Kashmir or one of India's northern provinces. But what business? The Jarkandis from the far north offer brilliantly coloured carpets; snow leopard, fox, wolf, beech-marten and beaver skins; silk from Khotan, and thick felt mats. The exceedingly arduous journey to Leh takes them over a month, and sometimes the path can only be identified by the skeletons of men and animals lining it. As soon as they have sold their stock the Jarkandis move on further south to buy material which they can sell in their own country. They frequently combine business with religion by making the journey in late summer and going on to Bombay, whence they embark upon a pilgrimage to Mecca. They come back next year and return to their native land in the autumn.

Then there are the Tibetans, trying to persuade Baltis to accept cooking butter and dried apricots in return for salt, borex and Lhasa tea. The nomads from Changthang offer the featherweight wool of their long-haired sheep; the Kashmiris take it with them down to their valleys and use it for making their famous shawls.

A man from the Kulu valley has brought petroleum to Leh market, and occasionally one or two China cups, while a trader from India offers German cloth, brocade for the Ladakhis' elaborate ceremonial dress, underwear, tea, cigarettes, spices and all 101 commodities a house wife needs to run her house properly.

When trade is at its most brisk and the traffic to a halt because the wares are laid out all over the road and even pedestrians can hardly pick their way through them, as quite apart from the merchandise people from far and wide block the streets with their yaks, dozs, donkeys, horses and mules.”⁷

As a matter of fact, A. Reeve Heber and Mrs. Kathleen Heber visited Leh via Zojila, Namikala and Photu la passes along Srinagar to Leh route which was then the popular trade route towards Minor Asia. When they arrived at Lamayuru near Khalatse, the beautiful landscapes around Lamayuru attracted them. The landscape was like purple hills and was looking as the capital of Hobgoblin land. They remark:

“But who shall adequately describe this capital of Hobgoblin land in its setting of purple hills, distant snow peaks, and brilliant blue sky? Running down towards the village, interspersed with ‘Chorten’, fat round structures, rather like gigantic pepperpots, are long ‘mani walls’ built of stones and surmounted by two flattened sides, gently sloping up to meet each other, these tops being formed of flat stones covered with prayers.”⁸

In Ladakh, chortens indicate that you are reaching near the village. Similarly 'lhatos' indicate that you are reaching at the top of pass or hill. According to Heber & Heber.

"Often on the tops of hills seen from the road side, but apparently on no beaten track, having simply invited attention because of their height or the suddenness, will be seen 'lhatos' similar to those on the tops of passes."⁹

In Ladakh there are many bird species like pigeon, crow, eagle, vulture, hawk, kite, duck, mallard, tufted pochard, ruddy sheldrake, snipe, etc. Heber & Heber made a beautiful description about these:

"Let us begin with our residents. Of the crows and ravens, our friendly scavengers, to whom should be added the noisy magpies with their constant 'Cha, Cha, Cha, Cha, Cha' we have already spoken, but we must not forget the chough with its red or yellow bill, who in the early spring builds his nest in the sandy cliff near Leh, while pigeons (Rock and Blue Hill) abound. Smaller birds on the whole, find the rigours of winter too severe, and many of them leave us, their places being taken by others who descend from the higher regions. The sparrow we have always with us, and he is kept company by the little Grey Tit in his beautiful grey coat and black waist-coat and cap. We are not sure about the Dipper in his evening dress suit, nor the Crag Martin, but believe that both manage to hold out through the coldest months. The hardy Mountain Finches (Adams' and Brandt's) however, do not even come down from the neighbouring heights, where they manage somehow to find food all the winter, although quite a number of birds from the higher uplands visit us during the cold months. The eagle and the vulture, finding too much snow on the mountains, come down to obtain their food, leaving us in the spring to make room for hawk, kite and

kestrel. The little Robin Accentor, with his dull red breast, also finds the mountains his summer residence too cold. When the down-country Rosefinch, the common Redstart and the Field and Desert Larks leave us in the autumn, their half-brothers, Seventzov's Rose Finch, Guldenstadt's Red-Start and Elwes' Horned Larks come to represent their families. Most of our Desert Chats leave us in spring, only a few staying behind to build a nest here and there in the deserts around Leh. The winter also provides excellent shooting for the sportsman. Besides the Ducks, Mallard, Tufted Pochard, Ruddy Sheldrake, and Common Teal (to mention only a few), and Snipe, which can be found in all the swampy little rivulets, the mountains and hills will provide Chikor (the partridge so common in India) for his gun and his pot, whilst near Tibet, the Tibetan Sandgrouse can be obtained. If we want pheasants, these, too, are represented up on the snows by the Tibetan or Himalayan Snow Cock, who draw immediate attention to themselves by their peculiar and shrill whistle which so rapidly ascends the scale."¹⁰

Both the travellers visited Zangskar and stayed at Zangla, then capital of Zangskar. Zangla area was given to the king of Zangskar by General Zorawar Singh. According to Heber & Heber:

“Zangla is the capital of a small province of Zankskar, consisting of only seven villages, which were presented to a former king in reward for aid rendered to Zorowar, the Dogra general, on his way through to the conquest of Ladak.”¹¹

There are races different from Ladakhis called 'Brogpas' or 'Drogpas'. They are settled along Dras and 'Da' & 'Hanu' villages. Those who settled along Dras are Mohammedans, whilst in the villages of 'Da' and 'Hanu' the Buddhists are predominating. Brogpas originated from Gilgit, where they played the na-

tional game of polo and later introduced it to Ladakh. They had been quite a brave people at one time. Once Ladakhi king wished to use them as forced labour, to which they objected. Through an old man, chosen by them, they sent the message to Ladakhi king, that they never would be slaves, not even of a king. The old man received the reply that he himself would be the first who would be forced to work, but as he absolutely refused, they immured him. However his fellow countrymen were equally obstinate; so no forced labour could be extracted from any of them.¹²

Brogpas at Hanu treated their hat of special value. As Heber & Heber remark:

“Of course his hat differs from any hat worn by anybody else in Ladak, where the hat is of great diagnostic value. It is not unlike the hat of the Ladaki, but the part which is turned up is not lined with lambskin, and is continuous all the way round. Those worn by the ladies are different again, the upper half being turned over somewhat like a billycock hat; the side turned over and uppermost is usually a veritable needle-case with rows of needles stuck into it. We asked them why they carried all these in their hats, to which they replied that each needle had been given by and represented a friend. The popular Brogpa woman should therefore not be difficult to recognize, that as if those who are less are scrupulously honest. Although they now speak a dialect of Tibetan they must at one time have had a language of their own of which one sometimes strikes peculiar remnants.”¹³

Brogpas of Da and Hanu had a peculiar religious arrangement. For example a Buddhist family often had one member Mohammedan. Similarly in a Mohammedan Brogpa family one member must be a Buddhist priest of the neighbouring monastery of Lamayuru. Explaining further details, Heber & Heber say:

“Some authorities account for this extraordinary arrangement by the fact that originally the Dards were

Mohammedans, and presumably have not been able entirely to throw off this allegiance. It is stated that in one of their villages, they actually found a burial ground; sure proof of them of a Mohammedan ancestry, for the Buddhist burns his dead, whilst it is the Mohammedan that inter. This may be a satisfactory explanation of their religious ideas.”¹⁴

Brogpas of Buddhist religion do not raise fowl, nor they eat their eggs. They may use cows for ploughing purposes, but do not drink milk, or even butter which is made from the same.¹⁵

Another race called Khampas, which George Borrow described as gipsies of western Tibet. Actually they came to Ladakh from Kham, a province then in Tibet. They find more lucrative to wander like gipsies than to stay on their native soil. They wander mostly in the upper valleys of Indus and Zangskar, and are, in fact, engaged in trading activities. Heber & Heber remark:

“But not only does he sell things, he also buys and is especially keen on Zankskari and Spitti ponies. All likely four year old ponies are very welcome to him, for whilst he buys them for about Rs. 60, he sells them at three or four times that amount down-country.”¹⁶

In Zangskar, Khampas normally came to purchase ponies. Because Zangskari pony was very much popular among trekkers, and they categorised them into two groups— ‘Stongyor’ and ‘Labyor’. Heber & Heber say:

“In countries like Ladak, where one has such long treks and few pieces of road that can be trotted on, the most comfortable and least tiring pace a pony can possess is the amble, with the result that if a pony does not have one naturally, he must try to acquire it by having the two legs on the same side tied together. The natural amble is called ‘stongyor’, which means ‘empty amble’, for the pony uses it even when he is not ridden, whilst the ‘labyor’ or ‘learnt amble’ can

only be obtained when a rider on his back holds the reins fairly firmly, and unfortunately an animal, like his human rider, forgets his lesson in less time than it takes to learn it. A 'labyor' therefore minimizes the value of a pony. To come back to our gipsy, he soon sends one or two of his servants for one of the said wonderful animals, which seems as good as its description. But we, too, know something about ponies, and, therefore, request the rider to dismount and drive the pony along empty, with the result that the amble disappears, for it is only a 'labyor'. We then inquire that as price of the beast, and are told that as a favour we shall have him for Rs. 160, but as our opinion on this score does not harmonize with his either, no deal results."¹⁷

Changthang is the wool centre. The best quality of wool is called 'lena', and is of very soft quality, which grows near the skin of the goat. It is generally grown during winter season under the long shaggy hairs of goats in the northern plains of Ladakh. About 80 percent of 'lena' production in Changthang is sold to Kashmiri merchants through Ladakhi mediators. Heber & Heber say:

"The ordinary soft 'lena' wool is sent in large quantities to Kashmir, where it is known as 'pashmina' and is woven into the celebrated Cashmere shawls. At the time of the great Mogul Emperors, Mirza Hedar, grandfather of the celebrated Akbar, came to Ladak from Yarkand with five hundred men, and paid a long visit to the king. At the latter's request, he conquered the country of Purig, and presented it to his host, then went on down to Kashmir and subdued it for himself. The Ladaki king sent him some 'Snamber' or Ladaki home-spun, woven of 'lena', as a present, and he admired it so much that he introduced the import of the wool into Kashmir. He is said to have had it woven into the first two shawls, or

‘shal’, the word meaning ‘a bard’, a name which he seems to have given them ‘faut de mieux’, for it hardly suits such essentially fine soft cloth. Two Persians then came to Kashmir to buy saffron and cummin, and bought these shawls to take back to present to their king. Next year they tried to obtain more; later the cloth was taken also to Alexandria, and so its fame slowly became world-wide. Thus these delicate soft shawls are really derived from the protection which nature has given to our long-haired Himalayan goats to withstand the excessive cold on the roof of the world.”¹⁸

‘Perag’ is the important head ornament of Ladakhi women. Heber & Heber explain in details about ‘Perag’:

“In olden times the women of this country wore a round head-dress like that which adorns the lady of Purig of Central Tibet, until a Ladaki king brought his royal consort from a small state in the closed land where the ‘perag’ was the national head-dress, and the ladies of his realm at once copied their new Queen. The ‘Perag’ consists of a central elongated piece of leather, covered with red cloth, converging slowly to a long narrow point below the waist behind, and a shorter blunt one in front. The whole thing is supposed to represent a snake, and the front part appearing over the forehead certainly resembles the head of the cobra. On this bright red background rows of turquoise matrix are sewn, often ending in front a chased gold and silver ornament studded with small turquoises. Sometimes a large red cornelian also varies the apex. This would seem startling enough, but unfortunately a later Queen had an attack of earache, so attached a large piece of black lambskin each side to protect her ears. The court ladies must do likewise, so now every perag is accompanied by these large ear-flaps, and the ‘coiffure’ is most wonderfully

adopted to them by plaiting the hair into a number of small plaits, which are sewn into the ear-pieces at each side, and continued with wool down the back on both sides of the 'perag' to unit below in a large tassel, which reaches to the bottom of the skirt. To one side of the 'perag' a projection of silver from which rows of coral-beads depend is also fastened."¹⁹

Polo is a popular game of Ladakh, which was, as said earlier, brought by migrants of Gilgit and Dards to Ladakh. In old days it was played in every good-sized village. In Leh, the game was played in the high street. Heber & Heber describe:

"This consists of a level space about two hundred yards long, which cannot boast of a blade of grass, but is covered by a layer of dust so thick that before play begins, it has to be laid with water. On one side it is bounded by the high wall of the Wazir's or State Commissioner's garden, on the other by a low wall about one foot high built of large stones, piled one on top of the other without mortar or cement or even mud. Halfway along this, a platform of mud and stones has been erected from the top of which 'the notables' watch the game, 'shamiana' or awning being erected on high days. Two large stones at either end are sufficient as goal posts. . . . Rules for play there would seem to be none. If your opponent gets in your way, ride him down. If only six players have come, three a side will do, if ten players turn up, two fives make an equally good game."²⁰

Horse racing and arrow shooting were also popular games among Ladakhis. Horse racing took place during New Year's day or in winter. Arrow shooting usually took place in spring. In these games Mohammedans and the Buddhists equally participated. About arrow shooting, Heber and Heber say:

"A garden or an enclosure with trees round an open space is chosen, at one end of which a heap of earth

is piled up about four feet high. Into the centre of this is stuck a bull's eye, about the size of a china plate and made of white clay. At the opposite side, about twenty yards from the target, are several tents, nicely decorated, in which sit those members of their respective community, who, by subscribing towards the shoot, have brought themselves the right to be present and take part. Others may join in, but are there on sufferance, and if they have not paid, even superb shooting will not obtain the applause of either the band or the onlookers. Is it necessary to say that the inevitable band is there also? The shooting begins. An archer takes up his position, draws his bow, his friends encouraging him by calling: 'Shok, Shok, Shok, Shok', and continuing to do so until the shaft has flown. Should it break the clay, the band strikes up and is rewarded with a backsheesh, whilst the archer has a salutation scarf thrown round his neck. If an enemy should be shooting he can be discouraged by shouting: 'Kyor, Kyor, Kyor', which means 'miss'. All having loosed their arrows, of which each man shoots three, they retire for refreshments and conversation, whilst the arrows are fetched back. This competition also lasts the continuous beating of the kettle-drums, is constantly inviting more spectators to the show."²¹

In the same year, that is, in 1902, Rawling entered the Changchenmo valley and made a number of expeditions over the Lanak la for the sake of sport. His second journey which started from Leh in May 1903 had the support of Surveyor General, Col. St. G. Gore, who seconded to him a sub-surveyor.

Though Swedish famous traveller Sven Hedin made several visits in high Himalayan belt, he came to Ladakh twice during 1899-1902 and 1906-1908. He remarks about the capital of Ladakh as:

"Leh is the last place of any importance on the way

to Tibet. Here our equipment must be finally completed. Nothing could be omitted; if we forget anything we would not obtain it afterwards. Here the silver stream of rupees flowed away without intermission, but I consoled myself with the thought that we should soon be in a country where, with the best will in the world, we could not spend a farthing. A large caravan sucks up money, as a vampire blood, as long as it remains in inhabited cultivated lands; but when all contact with human civilisation is cut off, it must live on its own resources; consequently, it gradually dwindles and approaches its dissolution. As long as it is at all possible we let animals eat all they can, the best clover to be had must be procured, and both horses and mules must be so well tended that they can afterwards live on their own fat and endure the hardships that await them.”²²

During his stay in Ladakh Seven Hedin was very much impressed by the Moravian Mission services. He found:

“The Moravian Mission in Leh rendered me invaluable service. They received me with the same hospitality and kindness as before (1899-1902), and I passed many a memorable hour in their pleasant domestic circle. Postor Peter had endless worries over my affairs; he managed both now and afterwards all the business with the new retainers. Dr. Shaw the physician of the Mission, was an old friend I had known on my former journey He died in Leh a year later, after a life devoted to suffering humanity.”²³

When Seven Hedin came in Ladakh he noticed two graves of famous explorers Stoliczka and Dalglish. About them he describes:

“On the hill behind captain Patterson’s bungalow lies a burial ground with the graves of five Europeans:

The names Stoliczka and Dalgleish especially attract our attention. Over Stoliczka's grave a grand monument has been erected. The inscription on a tablet in front informs us that he was born in June 1838 and died in June 1874 at Murgoo, near the Karakorum pass. The Indian Govt. erected the memorial in 1876 as mark of respect and gratitude for the service which Stoliczka had rendered during the journey of Forsyth's embassy. The same inscription is repeated on the side in Latin. Dalgleish's tombstone is simpler, but is also adorned with a tablet of cast-iron. He was born in 1853 and was murdered on the Karakorum pass in 1888. Both terminated their life pilgrimage in the same country high above the rest of the world."²⁴

Hedin was awarded Founder's Medal in 1898 and Victoria Medal in 1903 by the Royal Geographic Society for his contribution to geography and exploration. In fact, he was a bold and most ambitious explorer. Allen Charles writes:

"Once he had made up his mind to attain a particular object no consideration of other people's feelings, convenience or even safety was ever allowed to deflect him. In his own words, the adventure and the 'conquest', of an unknown country, and the struggle against the impossible, all had a fascination which drew him with an irresistible force. But to him exploration in the field was only half the battle; its results had to be recorded for all time to the glory of Sweden and Dr. Seven Hedin. By temperament Hedin was a Nazi, to whom exploration was a 'Kampf', a struggle not only against the forces of nature but also on paper, against rival explorers. It is not surprising that he espoused in turn the causes of Kaiser Wilhelm II and Adolf Hitler."²⁵

Hedin was a great writer too. During his journeys in Himalaya he had written his travel records in detail in nine volumes,

text and maps in three volumes. His famous book *My Life as Explorer* became very much popular.

At last this great writer and explorer died in Stockholm on 26th November 1952. Once honoured as the man who had done more, single handed, than any other to colour the blank spaces of the map of the world, the eighty-seven years old Swedish explorer ended his days friendless and neglected. Among the newspapers that noted his death was 'The Times'. It recalled how Dr. Hedin had supported Kaiser Wilhelm II in the first world war and Adolf Hitler in the second (despite being, as the writer put it, one-sixteenth non-Aryan). As to his achievements, it recalled that Hedin was apt to dismiss the geographical fruits of all discoveries other than his own.²⁶

Like Sven Hedin, Sir Francis Younghusband visited Ladakh a number of times. He entered the snowy regions of Himalayas when he was in the Survey of India, and also visited the Karakoram mountain at the end of the last century along with Godwin Austin. His mission to Tibet in 1903-1904 became a subject of controversy and is discussed by Peter Fleming in his book *Bayonets to Lhasa*.²⁷

Although Younghusband's mission was great, he even wanted to make an expedition to Mount Everest in 1893 with Captain Bruce. In this way he was the first man who had a proposal to make a definite expedition to Mount Everest, when he was with Captain Bruce in Chitral near Gilgit.²⁸

Seven Hedin also remarks:

"Younghusband is a gallant man, a type of the noblest that a people can produce his expedition to Lhasa, which open Tibet to scientific exploration . . . Sir Francis Younghusband has recommended to me a well known caravan leader, Muhamed Isa, I had seen him in Kashgar and Srinagar, and knew that he had been present at the murder of the French explorer, Dutreuil de Rhins, on June 5, 1894. During about thirty years he had travelled in most part of Central

Asia, and also acquainted with many parts of Tibet. . . He accompanied Younghusband on his famous march over the Mustagh pass, and had been his caravan leader in the campaign to Lhasa (in 1903-1904). I gratefully accepted Younghusband's proposal (to visit to Tibet)."²⁹

Hedin recognised Younghusband very well. Whenever Hedin met him, Younghusband welcomed him warmly:

"I was welcomed in the Grand Hotel by my old friend Colonel Sir Francis Younghusband—We kept Christmas together in Kasgar in 1890, and he was just as friendly and pleasant as then."³⁰

Younghusband never worried about leave, sometimes he went out for expedition in unknown Himalayan valleys without prior sanction of his leave from the authorities. Same kind of incident happened, when he was on the expedition to Mustagh pass on 26th June 1906. During this time British Government was unsure about the possibility of an invasion from Russia through the high mountains, the British in India began to make defensive action and the 'Great Game'—the shadowy, see-and-run contest between Britain and Russia in the high mountains—got under way in earnest. From material the pundits and other surveyors had collected was then still not clear whether India could in fact be invaded from the north or not. So Francis Younghusband was despatched to find out the clear position of the above high mountain politics.³¹

Younghusband had very bravely made it his duty to watch the higher Himalayan mountains and endeavoured to clear the confusion of Russian invasion upon India from the northern side of the mountains. Similar to Robert Shaw, when he was a Lieutenant in the British Government, he made expeditions in Himalayas and had spend the best part of five years exploring north of the Karakoram. When the British moved him forward in the 'Great Game' it was not as a pawn but a Knight, and he was given six Gurkhas to accompany him. In Kashmir he found the

people less vigorous or robust than the English, but in comparison with them 'the ordinary Englishman looks remarkably uncouth and rude.' The small party heading northwards crossed the Himalayas, the Indus near Leh and then the Shyok at Nubra valley, which in summer, he said was 'a mighty rushing river, and crossing it in ferry boat on its swirling surface causes wild excitement.' He had heard of Russians on the far side of the Karakoram, claiming to be interested only in scientific exploration. Near the headwaters of the Shyok the local tribes were terrified by repeated raids from Hunza and their chieftain asked Younghusband to accept their allegiance to the British in return for protection. Younghusband assured him that the request would be referred to the Viceroy, and staged the most impressive durbar possible with his limited forces, himself wearing his king's Dragoon Guards uniform, his six Gurkhas marching backwards and forwards in full dress, presenting arms and firing salutes. The British Government, he said, would take measures to prevent the Hunza raids and the tribes were relieved and pleased. A little later he reached Hunza. Here he solemnly explained to the brigands that 'the queen of England was naturally very angry at her subjects being raided, and has sent me to see their chief and come to some arrangement with him by which they could be stopped.'³² This confident assertion, delivered in the very fortress of the raiders, was effective—at least temporarily. Farther north, Younghusband actually met some Russians; they were very cheerful and hospitable but assured him that the entire Russian army thought of nothing but invading India. Two years later, on another mission of exploration and counter-intelligence, Younghusband again ran into a Russian party, this time in the Pamirs; they told him he had no right to be there and as he was outnumbered he was forced to agree to leave, giving his word not to travel by certain specified passes. The list included all the passes then known to lead back to India and the Russians clearly intended to delay him but he was equally determined to get back to India quickly. He kept his word and used none of the prescribed passes, but he had caught the smell of another possible way over the mountains, unknown to the Russians or to any

other foreigner, so he took a chance and with terrible difficulty struggled back to India many months before the Russians had thought he could possibly arrive there.³³

The 'Great Game' continued for some years, played sometimes enthusiastically, sometimes not; so depending on the often conflicting reports of military spies on the practicability for invasion or defence, of the various passes, and the particular interest of individual politicians in Moscow, Delhi and London. As so often before, the Indus valley of Ladakh Himalaya itself was considered important by outsiders only as a path between the mountains and a means of access to the passes leading to the north and south of it. Gradually Russia and Britain turned their attention to Europe, where the clouds of the First World War were building up. Russia became increasingly and desperately occupied with its own affairs. The Great Game petered out and the countries near the high Indus were once more forgotten by the outside world. But in their own world and to themselves, naturally, they remained supremely important. In the last years of the 19th century there had been various tribal uprisings further down the Indus, in the region where the river turns south to break out of the mountains. But Kashmir, including Ladakh and Baltistan, had remained fairly quiet. In retrospect one can see this was an ominous quiet; the indrawn silence before the first gusts blow out of the sky.³⁴

Thus Younghusband made several expeditions over the Himalayan mountains and many times passed through Ladakh. He was not only expert in border politics but a joyous wanderer with nature with a passionate concern with god, for the mountains had given him a mystical experience. From then on, whatever his official duties—investigating rumours of Russian infiltration in the Pamirs, serving on the North-West Frontier, leading a British expedition to Lhasa, Cambridge lecturer, Resident in Kashmir, President of the Royal Geographical Society—his devotion to natural beauty and to god grew steadily. He told the Royal Geographical Society: "Those who come and tell us of some beauty they have discovered in a natural feature would be

as welcome here as one who has discovered a new river. Wordsworth ought certainly to have had the gold medal of this Society and Shelly and Byron too, if they had lived till it was founded”³⁵ He was invariably calm, courteous and introvert, as his official said: “He was the most silent man I have ever met.”³⁶ A habit doubtlessly developed by his historic travels through the most silent regions of the world. In his own estimation he said:

“Young husband’s highest achievement was the founding of the world congress of faiths, an organization dedicated to the belief that all religions have a common and mystical root, and he put his heart into such books as *Life in the Stars*; *The Living Universe*; and *Modern Mystics*.”³⁷

S.H. Ribbach, the German missionary, who spent twenty years in Ladakh, visited here for the first time in 1903. He made a deep study of education system, customs and ceremonies. In one place of his book *Drogpa Namgyal*, he describes—What happens when a father asks a soothsayer to set up a horoscope for a new born baby, collecting details, he writes:

“In his cramped dark cell, black with smoke, that clings to the steep rockface like a swallow’s nest, sits the astrologer and soothsayer Dordje Dudjoms. By fasting, meditation, magic formulas and gestures he has just brought under control and conjured up his tutelary demon, the terrible tamdrin, so vividly that he is convinced he can see him standing before in human guise. In his state of acstasy he is subjected to the process of yoga, the mystic union with his tutelary demon, who is now obedient to his orders and bereft of his magic powers. Next, the astrologer takes down from a shelf some ancient tables and spreads them out on the little table in front of him. Among the tables, filthy with the marks of constant consultation, is the likeness of a tortoise, and on the shell covering his stomach is astrological calendar giving the animal signs for each year of the twelve year

cycle, as well as other beasts, monsters, magic signs and figures among them the "Sparka" sign, a pattern of continuous and broken lines, and the nine "Meva" signs, rectangles with figures and the name of each of the five "elements" (fire, water, earth, wood and iron) in their respective colours: red, blue, yellow, green and white. Next to the calendar is a large astrological table on linen divided like a chessboard into squares of different colours, each denoting one of the five "elements". The astrologer's eyes are fixed on his tables and his dirty fingers grope for a pile of dices rather like draughts men which he then arranges on the coloured squares and moves them from side to side, or up and down, in accordance with some magic ritual, until some of the squares are completely full. Next he turns his attention to the calendar with the animal signs and keeps up a sort of subdued murmur while his eyes and fingers range over the magic numbers. Fire is a child of wood, which sustain it: the connection is harmless. But see here: monkey and tiger, they are bitter enemies and this is an evil omen; the years in which mother and child were born do not accord with their animal signs, and that means a visitation by evil spirits. Now he extracts from a dirty old leather bag a number of black and white dices made of horn and arranges them in two separate piles. Suddenly his eyes flash: The earth dagger that keeps spirits under control has been wrenched out of the ground! Woe unto you son of The spirits of earth and water are at large and will torment you. And see here: The Meva signs bade ill, the elements are in conflict with each other, the demons and witches of the mountains are raving, wait a moment, my son: I will write you a formula! so saying, he takes a long strip of paper, and still sitting on his little carpet, holds the paper in his left hand and writes down what the stars and high magic signs and figure not to men-

tion his fertile imagination, have revealed to him about his little son's prospects. This boy was born in a fire and monkey year. Fire and wood are compatible, but tiger and monkey are enemies. The powers of evil are stronger than the powers of good. He then proceeds to draw on his paper little circles denoting good and bad signs, corresponding to the black and white dices. From the Sparka row he withdraws the sign for earth. This makes things even worse. More rings and crosses are drawn, the latter at first predominating, but other secret signs are added and the preponderance crosses are diminished until by the end of the first procedure the good signs are in the writing again: The signs for the boy's physical future, and for his power and fortune; are good those for his life and intelligence less good. The rope connecting earth and heaven is broken: The earth-dagger has been wrenched out of the ground. The powerful spirits of earth their queen, along with the mighty water gods are unleashed and infuriated! They can only be appeased by building a number of small clay stupas, by baking a huge votive cake for the queen of the earth. For the water gods that dwell in the streams and springs of the village, pellets of dough are to be strewn upon the waters as votive offerings. Beware of building a house or digging up the ground during the coming year! Neither grow nor eat turnips! After sunset do not walk over a freshly ploughed field! Do not walk in a south-westerly or north-easterly direction! The book of the ten thousand water-Gods must be read in your house! Make cross-wires to close the portals of heaven and earth against demons and witches! At this point the soothsayer drops some ink from his cropper ink-well on the balls of his thumbs and with this rough and ready 'ink-pad' imprints his signet under what he then wraps in a covering of silk. Now he has finished. With a smile of satisfaction he

rolls up the future prospects of a unwitting child into a scroll ready to be handed over to the anxious father.”³⁸

Meebold, the important explorer from west, came to Ladakh from Kashmir via the Bhot kot Pass in 1905. He explored many parts of Suru and Kangri region including the route to Da. He visited Leh and also crossed the highest pass of Khardongla which stands between Leh and Nubra. Later he published an interesting list about the plants of Ladakh.³⁹

On 20th June 1905, Dr. A.H. Francke returned from Europe and on 27th October 1905 he travelled the area of Buddhist Dards. At Da, he alongwith his colleague Chuspel met Gang-Sonam and other two village lamas and copied many rock inscriptions. On 25th July Franke left via Keylong (now district headquarters of Lahaul-Spiti, Himachal Pradesh) for the Buman-Manchand area.⁴⁰ In 1908 he had to return back to Germany because of his wife’s ill-health, but returned to Ladakh the following year to undertake a survey of Indo-Tibetan borderland under the auspices of the Archaeological Survey of India. Then he started his journey to Ladakh from Shimla on the 14th of June 1909. He travelled upto the Satluj valley through the hill-stations of Rampur-Bushahr and by the Hang pass he arrived at Spiti. From Spiti he crossed the Phasang Pass and continued his journey through Rupshu along the wide shores of lake Tsomoriri. After surmounting the two mountain passes—the Phologonkha pass and Taglang pass—he reached Leh.⁴¹

In 1909 the British and Foreign Bible Society in London coordinated the translation work. Yoseb Gergan (Ladakhi) produced the first draft in 1910 and sent it for correction to Dr. A.H. Francke. He corrected the version and then sent it to David Macdonald, a British official of half Scottish, half Sikkimese descent who in the 1920s worked as British trade agent in Yatung, Tibet.⁴² This was Francke’s another valuable contribution to the translation of Bible in Tibetan language.

In 1914 Francke made a dramatic journey by land through Russia via the former Moravian settlement in Sarepta to Yarkand

in China and from there across the Karakoram Pass to Leh. This time his purpose was to collect material for a museum in Munich, and having arrived in India, he continued his linguistic studies along with the Bible translation work. At the time when he was busy in collecting the material for Munich museum he remained cut-off from the latest news from Europe for several weeks but soon after crossing the Karakoram Pass into India he met a scientific expedition leader, Dr. Filippi de Filippi who informed him that Germany was at war with Russia. It was not until he reached Leh in September 1914 that he heard the disagreeable news that Germany had also been at war with Britain for over a month. Thus Francke fell into trouble. However, he managed to publish his research work entitled *Antiquities of Indian Tibet*. It was the time of war, therefore he was allowed to stay at Leh for only three weeks. Thereafter he went to Srinagar. In Srinagar he was bound to stay for sometime; eventually he decided to learn Sanskrit language at interment camp—Ahmednagar.⁴³

In 1916 all the German missionaries in camp were repatriated via London and Holland. Francke then served as an interpreter in a special camp in Rumania for Indian prisoners of war before he himself was captured again at the end of the war by Serbians. At the end of war, the British Government banned the German missionary service in British territory. Hence, Francke did not get permission to return to India. However, he was in touch with Ladakhi scholar Yoseb Gergan, who helped him in seeking out historical documents related to Ladakh. Consequently like Jaeschke, Francke gained wide academic recognition. In 1911, the University of Breslau awarded him an honorary doctorate. In 1919 he came back to his family in Silesia. Here he worked at first for the State Library of Berlin besides other tasks for the British museums and institutes in Munich and Hansburg. In 1922, he acquired the right of giving lectures in Tibetan language at the University of Berlin. In 1925, he got the nomination of an extraordinary professor in the University of Berlin. At last he died in Berlin on 16th February 1930.

In 1907, Tsuyoshi Hino, a Japanese soldier, visited Kashgar,

Yarkand and Karakoram Pass. He is the first Japanese to have visited Ladakh.⁴⁴

On 18th July 1912, Stewart arrived in Ladakh. He was a botanist by profession. He crossed the Zojila Pass from Kashmir and followed the main caravan road to reach Leh, arriving there on 30th July 1912.⁴⁵ On 2nd August, he alongwith his colleagues climbed the Khardong Pass (18,380 ft). And in the same year he returned to Srinagar from Leh via Basgo, Timisgam, Khalatse, Moolbeck (Mulbek), Pakartse, Yarungshan la and the Wardwan valley. About his Ladakh journey, he writes:

“Leaving Leh we returned to Kashmir by another route. From Basgo we took the old and higher road via Timisgam and Tingmoung, rejoining the main path below Moolbeck and turned off toward Suru, crossing the Sapi la (16,000 ft) on the 16th and visiting the Pakartse on the 19th. The 21st we crossed the Yarungshan la (15,500 ft) and returned to Kashmir via the Wardwan valley.”⁴⁶

He again visited Ladakh in 1913 and reached Leh by the end of July using the same route as in 1912. This time he also visited Rupshu, Upshi and Gya in Ladakh region and Kyelong, Kulu and Shimla in Himachal Pradesh. He remarks:

“With (the) another party I returned to Ladakh in the same way (via to Zojila) in 1913 and arrived at Leh by the end of the July, staying a week in the vicinity. August 6th we started on the Indus, passing the famous Hemis monastery and leaving the Indus at Upshi in order to visit Rupshu, reputed to be the highest inhabited part of the world. The inhabitant are nomads, depending for their livelihood on their herds of yaks, goats and sheep. From Gya we ascended the Takalung la (17,500 ft.) and descended to the plains that seem to be the favorite home of the wild ass, Equus Kyang, and the Tibetan hare. August 9th, we visited the salt lake called the Tsokar, one of the

many Central Asian lakes without an outlet. August 12th, we crossed the Lachalung la (16,000 ft), the 15th, arriving in Kyelong, the main village of Lahul, the next day. Thence via the Rotang and Kulu we went to Shimla."⁴⁷

Stewart travelled in Ladakh by foot and covered about 400 miles, and also collected nearly 475 species which he collected from altitudes of from 9,000 to 17,500 feet. As he says:

"Travelling on foot we covered about 400 miles in Ladakh each summer. Not many novelties were found, though four or five things seem to be new. With the exception of a few from Kargil (8,700 ft.) my specimens, which amount to about 475 species, were gathered at altitudes of from 9,000 to 17,000 feet."⁴⁸

When Stewart was in Ladakh he noticed no forest in Ladakh. Trees were grown on irrigated land or they may be found where natural water was sufficiently available, because snow is quite abundant in Ladakh. The high mountains stop the rain-laded clouds and very little moisture from rain gets across. Ladakh consists three main elements of flora, e.g. alpine, desert and oasisitic. In his own words about the flora:

"Though the flora on the Indian side of the great range of the Himalayas, which separate Kashmir from Ladak, is luxuriant and abundant, the opposite is true on the other side. In Kashmir, forests with *Betula utilis* at the upper limit are found upto about 13,000 ft. but there is no forest in Ladak. Trees will grow when they are irrigated, or in a rare spot where they can find water naturally, but they form a very small part of the covering of the country.

Between Kashmir and Ladak, there is to be sure, a transition zone which is possibly wildest in the Suru region. Himalayan alpine plants being found where there is water far into the heart of Tibet. Taking the flora as a whole, however, there could hardly be a

more pronounced contrast than between these two regions. This is due not an altitude. The high mountains stop the rain-laden clouds and very little moisture gets across whenever there is enough water from melting snow, which can be led out by irrigation ditches to carefully prepared terraces, crops and trees flourish. Wheat or barley may be growing on one side and irrigation ditches are prepared with great care and run along the hillsides for long distances. They are conspicuous objects because of grass due to the extract moisture. There are, as Meebold also notes, three main elements in the flora of Ladak, alpine, desert and oasisitic. These three are very easily recognisable and separable. The alpine element is largely confined to narrow belts below the melting snows and along the upper courses of the streams and does not spread out into the valleys. The main part of the country is desert with flora that connects up with Turkestan more than it does with India. The flora of the basis is cosmopolitan. A few things like *Lancea tibetica*, *Pedicularis longiflora* and species of *Gentiana*, which grow out in the desert if there is water, are indigenous without doubt, but most of the plants are probably parts of Central Asia it becomes difficult to tell what the indigenous flora is."⁴⁹

In the winter of 1913 the Italian explorer Filippi de Filippi walked up to Leh along the frozen Indus through deep narrow gorges, always watching the ice for breaks, always aware of the swift-flowing water under his feet. He had 150 porters with him, another 150 following behind, and pack animals carrying more than forty tons of stores. The people of Leh, he considered, were extremely dirty. On this repetition of an old theme he further considered that one wonders if any of Leh's visitors had ever seen miners or factory workers in their own countries, or ever questioned whether cleanliness was practicable or even desirable in a place where the temperature and the wind froze the blood for much of the year, and every drop of water had to be chan-

nelled or carried by hand. The western eye for dirt seems to operate most effectively in the east.⁵⁰

Martin Conway led a sizeable surveying party up the Indus to Leh soon after Knight was there. Conway was then thirty-six and although he had done a good deal of climbing in the Alps he was known chiefly for his books on art. It astonished that painter whom he took on the Karakoram expedition that Conway should here 'almost suddenly blossom into a man of action and a born leader of men'.⁵¹ The role must have suited him for in the six years after Conway left the Indus he crossed Spitzbergen, climbed several of the highest peaks in Latin America and explored Tierra del Fuego. His other life as art critic and historian was equally vigorous and successful; he became Slade Professor of Fine Arts at Cambridge, then Director General of the Imperial War Museum. Over the years, his main interest gradually centred on the ways in which human beings form communities and then express communal feelings, a sociological approach to the world as opposed to Knight's political approach but one which, ironically led him into the centre of politics. For thirteen years—from 1918 to 1931—he sat in the House of Commons representing the combined English Universities. He thought his best book was *The Crowd in Peace and War*, which expressed his personal philosophy—romantic, beauty-loving, hopeful, inquiring and reverent. In the year before he died his last book *A Pilgrim's Quest for the Divine* was published.⁵²

Conway was a companion 'of the rarest quality' and the party he led to Leh was an extraordinarily happy one. His second-in-command, C.G. Bruce, then a junior officer in a Gurkha regiment, was a large young man of overflowing physical courage and strength, Welsh, in spite of his name, with all the wit and gaiety of his race. Conway's expedition gave Bruce his first view of the great mountains that wall the Indus, and although, like the Portuguese missionaries, he often found them horrible, they so deeply challenge his energies that he could not leave them alone. Apart from his service in the First World War, in which he was wounded at Gallipoli, he spent most of his next

forty years soldiering and climbing on duty and off, near the Indus, indomitable, cheerful, enthusiastic and confident.⁵³

At the age of fifty-two, Bruce, by then a General, became ill and was retired from the army with Medical Board's advice to 'go home and lead a quiet, regular life'. This was in 1920, but in 1922, he led an Everest expedition. In the next twelve years he enjoyed ten seasons' climbing in the Alps and another two in Himalayan expeditions. His life after retirement may not have been quiet, he wrote later, but it was certainly regular.⁵⁴

The third British member of Conway's party was a young and unknown painter, A.D. McCormick. Many of the Indus explorers, including Hedin, had themselves painted the mountains near the Indus in an amateur way, but it was Conway, the art critic, who first took a professional painter on his expedition. McCormick was chosen, or so he believed, because he could make mountains look like real hills and when he first saw the high mountains his reaction must have been all that Conway could have desired:

"Away in the heavens above I saw three great ice peaks, like towers of polished silver, which the passing blond shadows dimmed and brightened as when one breathes on bright metal. I had eyes for no other scenery that day, for I had seen heaven and the great white throne."⁵⁵

While Bruce climbed and Conway surveyed and another friend hunted, McCormick sketched, sitting near the river or high up on one of its tributary valleys, utterly absorbed and utterly happy.⁵⁶ It was a perfect life, he wrote 'we felt that we lived the life we were meant to live'.⁵⁷ It was a hardworking life though. Before they left the region the party had surveyed and mapped another 2000 square miles of the Karakoram and assembled large collection of botanical specimens, minerals, butterflies and moths.⁵⁸

Major M.L.A. Gompertz 'Ganpat' of the 10th Baluch Regiment, Indian Army visited Ladakh around 1916-25. According

to Landgrabbing:

“ ‘Ganpat’ was the sobriquet the sepoy had bestowed on the captain when, as a very callow second lieutenant, he had been posted to an Indian infantry regiment. He was long and thin, and it would have been difficult to conceive anyone more unlike the conventional presentment of the jovial, pot-bellied, elephant-beaded deity of good fortune known to India at large as ‘Ganesh’, and to the Mahabrattas as ‘Ganpat’. But it was the nearest his men’s tongues could get to his real name, and so it stuck.”⁵⁹

Ganpat travelled in Ladakh extensively for over six months. He remarks:

“To me the high snows in general, and Ladakh in particular, exercise an attraction which is irresistible. Other people also find the same thing, and this year it was my fortune to be able to pass over six months wandering in Ladakh with a camera and a typewriter, seeking to make pictures in words or by plate of film of all I saw—the quaint types by the roadside, the fascinating villages and monasteries, the women, the children, the red-clothed lamas, even the skushoks, who are reincarnations of past Buddhas and so holy that they might escape rebirth for ever, but of their charity condescend to return in mortal guise to this sinful world to help its suffering inmates.”⁶⁰

Among the other travellers on the roads to Ladakh, Turkestan, Yarkand and onwards from Dras at the same time as he was, noted as were Dards and Kashmiris. Ganpat expressed their habits on the way very well:

“And on the road ways the same travellers: the laden, unhurrying pack-animals, sandal-wearing, shouting, bearded Kashmiris, dark, slant-eyed men from Dras, with shapeless leather ‘pubbas’ on their feet and tinder pouches at their belts, black-coated, long-booted

traders from Turkestan on high Yarkandi ponies, loose-gowned pig-tailed Tibetans of Ladakh, with their string-woven shoes, their almost hairless faces frames in the fun flaps of caps—a joyously laughing, stout-hearted people, for all that the only use they know of for water is drinking.”⁶¹

About the population and Buddhists method of worshipping, he recorded:

“Ladakh is filled with a hotchpotch of peoples Mussulmans who are three quarter Buddhists, who are really animists or devil-worshippers. But everybody believes in something, and it seems to me after a good many months, that even the civilized people who come here believe also.”⁶²

It is very noticeable that Ganpat considered Leh different than Kargil not only from the religious point of view but also from the administrative point:

“Purigh, of which Kargil is the capital, is Mussulam . . . Ladakh is a country of true Tibetan type, which is a good way of expressing the difference between these countries and those to southward.”⁶³

Ganpat described Ladakh as the actual roof of the world:

“Somebody once described Ladakh as being, if not the ‘Roof of the World’ —a term generally applied to the Pamirs as ‘at least the Attice’. But I think more correctly Ladakh could lay better claim to being the actual roof. This little, forgotten country, some two hundred miles from south to north, by about three hundred long from east to west, contains a great portion of what is the biggest ‘massif’ of mountains in the world—the Karakorum. The Karakorum range for practical purposes forms the northern boundary of Ladakh, although actually the undemarcated boundary between Ladakh and Chinese Turkestan runs well to northward; but since there are no inhabitants, and

no villages for several hundred miles nobody has ever worried their heads much about the actual frontier of these parts.”⁶⁴

Geographically Ladakh consists of three large valleys and because of that the population is densely concentrated around these valleys, as Ganpat noticed:

“Naturally, therefore, the greater part of inhabited Ladakh is the big river valleys—the Shyok, the Indus and the Nubra. These three are the chief centres of population, and villages are numerous, often not more than five or six miles apart, quite big ones every now and then.”⁶⁵

Ganpat acknowledged that the monasteries in Ladakh were pink and white in colour covered with chortens and Mane walls. These were the centres of lamas. As he remarks:

“ ‘Gompas’, which, we of the west, would call a monastery. It is pink and white and, apparently, plastered on to the face of an immense rock, but it has been there a long time and has not fallen down yet, so it will doubtless last for several more reincarnations of its lamas. Around you are white structures, from little pillars of a couple of feet to big ones ten and twelve feet high, and beyond those again lie walls, apparently meaningless, and covered with stone carved in unfamiliar writing. ‘Chortens’, these first, ‘bone places’, in which are deposited the ashes of the moral covering of the Buddhist; ashes moulded into little porkpie-like shapes. The walls are not meaningless either, for they are breast-works against devils, and you must leave them on your right hand, which is the sane way as you pass wine in Europe. Then and then only will the carvan stones bring you protection and good luck, and the mystic verse, ‘Om mane padme hum’, from which the walls get their name of ‘Manes’, bring credit to you in your rebirth into this or other worlds.”⁶⁶

The inhabitants of Ladakh are primarily Tibetan and truly the same as the inhabitants of Greater Tibet. Probably during old days they had migrated from Greater Tibet and settled in upper and lower sides of Indus valley. But there is also a mixed population around Leh and adjoining areas of Leh as Ganpat found:

“The inhabitants of Ladakh are primarily Tibetans: race, history and religion alike combine to make them truly the same as the inhabitants of Greater Tibet, for all that for nearly a century they have been politically subject to the rulers of Kashmir. Where they differ is that, where Greater Tibet has been to a large extent a closed country to the outside world, Ladakh, lying as it does directly across the main trade route between India and Central Asia, has inevitably been an open country, interested to some extent in, and directly influenced by, her northern and southern neighbours.

Besides the Tibetans of true stock there are two other classes in the country: one is the mixed population, mostly to be found about Leh, the Arghuns, offspring of the unions between Ladakhi women and Kashmiri or Yarkandi fathers, Mussulmans all by virtue of their fathers; the other is Dards, a small survival of the aryan races which at one time held Ladakh, before they were swamped by the waves of Tibetan incursions Actually, indeed, when an inhabitant of Ladakh speaks of a Ladakhi he means a man of the country around Leh—of the Indus valley. A man from the east is a ‘Chang-pa’, someone quite different, while a ‘Nubra-pa’ again is looked upon as being of a race distinct from the people of Ladakh proper.”⁶⁷

About their features, he says:

“Their features are essentially Mongolian, high cheekbones and slanting eyes, and with very little facial hair, though sometimes one meets goat-bearded old

men who make you wonder whether hairlessness is truly a Mongolian trait or merely the result of generations of hair-plucking with the little tweezers that men and women alike carry at their belts. The features of both Arghuns and Dards—the latter in particular, are Aryan, or nearly Aryan, in form, dependent upon the amount of Mongolian blood in their composition, and upon the myriad factors that govern the physical development of mixed races.”⁶⁸

Ladakhis are cheerful, honest and willing to do any kind of hard work, as Ganpat found:

“The three characteristics which I would select as most noticeable in the Ladakhi are cheerfulness, honesty and willingness to work. Courage, perhaps also, not the courage of the fighting man so much as the courage of the sturdy animal. They will face hard work and exposure to heat and cold, and go on laughing; they will march great distances carrying heavy loads, and live with very little in the way of food or comfort. Indeed, comfort, as we understand the term, is unknown to them—to rich or poor alike—even though the term rich in Ladakh would mean poverty in England and straitened resources even in agricultural.”⁶⁹

In Ladakh polyandry still existed at that time, as Ganpat noticed:

“The eldest son of a Ladakhi family married a wife either of his own volition, or else as arranged by the parents of both sides. The offer of his brother, or of two brothers next in age, but not their fortunes, since they have none. Any further brothers have to go out into a cold world and earn their own living. The lady being married takes on both or all three brothers, and the children for all official purposes are the children of the eldest. But I believe, in respectable families, when the eldest brother is at home, others are expected to keep out of the way.”⁷⁰

Ladies have the dominant character in the Ladakhi families, as Ganpat remarks:

“The Ladakhi lady is complete head of her own household, and the men are well underneath her extremely capable thumb. She has her own money: she trades on her own; her word is very much law. And, lastly, when she meets you on the roadside, she passes the time of day freely and cheerfully, which is most attractive to anyone who has spent long years in age veil-cursed east.”⁷¹

In old days it seemed that Ladakh was to a great extent self-sufficient in food stuff except tea which was imported from China. Ladakhis were making tea after boiling it up three times, then mixing it with butter and churning it with the help of ‘Gur-Gur’, as Ganpat says:

“Ladakh is very much a self-supporting country, and produces everything, or nearly drink of the country. Indeed, it is more than drink, since the Ladakhi, like the people of Tibet, makes his tea with butter, and it is more like strong rich soup than tea as we drink it. The tea comes from China via Tibet, and is boiled three times before use, so that it is a decoction and not an infusion. After the third boiling little strong red liquid and the leaves, is filled to the brim again with hot water, allowed to simmer a little, the leaves strained off, and the contents emptied into a big wooden chun, into which butter is put, and the whole churned up with a little salt and perhaps some soda added.”⁷²

Regarding the food habits, he says:

“Barley meal is the Ladakhis’ staple food, but those who can afford it eat meat as well in the evening. The barley is used in many forms, as puddings, cakes, and in a kind of shorbread which will keep good for a year.”⁷³

After Ganpat, Giuseppe Tucci made about eight visits to Ladakh. At an early age he had taken up his research work on Buddhism, and was soon convinced that for a real knowledge of the said religion and its role in the political and cultural history of Asia, Sanskrit, Pali and Chinese were not enough. Because of his chief concern with Mahayana and Tantric Buddhism, he paid extensive visits to Tibet and to regions of Tibetan languages and culture like Ladakh. With the generous cooperation of the British authorities in India he repeatedly visited Tibet in between 1927 and 1948. Tibet which was then rich in works of Mahayana and Tantric Buddhism, thus played a leading role in his academic studies, and also stimulated a lot of his research.⁷⁴

Travelling to Tibet, Tucci crossed the frontiers of India like Ladakh, Sikkim, Lipulekh. He remarks:

“The impact of arriving there for the first time is one I shall never forget. Yet it was repeated with equal intensity every time. I crossed the frontiers, whether by way of Kashmir, of Ladakh; of Shimla along the Sulej valley and the Shipki pass, of Almora and the Lipulekh; or by the more-used route through Sikkim, and Kampadzung or Yatung as the case might be. As the sub-Himalayan landscape changed and the influence of Indian ways grew less and less, as happens in all the border lands, it was not just a different landscape that greeted me, but an unfamiliar human world.”⁷⁵

Describing Leh palace, he says:

“The mansions of the nobility follow the pattern of ordinary dwellings. They differ only in size. Floors are added, power is expressed as height. This is especially the case with castles and palaces. The palace of the kings of Ladakh, built by Sengge-Namgyel (c. 1600-45) in the seventeenth century, is an outstanding monument in the grandeur of its nine stories.”⁷⁶

Marco Pallis was the other British traveller who started his journey to the Indian Himalaya on All Fools' Day (i.e. 1st April) in 1933 from Liverpool in England. Richard Nicholson, a son of the famous builder of yachts, and a fellow-musician of Marco Pallis, F.E. Hicks, a school master and notable rock-climber, C.F. Kirkus, best rock climbers in this country, pioneer of many new routes, especially in Wales, Dr. Charles Warren, a man of considerable Alpine experience, were the members of his team.⁷⁷

In the mid of May 1936 Marco Pallis decided to visit Leh-Ladakh. He took fifteen days from Srinagar, but he enjoyed the rest house facilities at intervals. Marco Pallis says:

“Srinagar to Leh is an easy journey of fifteen days, but the time can be shortened by doing double stages. Rest houses have been built at intervals along the route and the villages are bound, as part of their taxes, to provide transport animals if required, rates of payment being laid down in a schedule obtainable at the Residency office. Supplies of fodder, firewood and certain basic articles of food are also catered for, so that the traveller has not to forage far afield. In certain cases it is pleasanter to avoid the conventional halting places and to split up distances in a different proportion, camping on ground of one's own choosing.”⁷⁸

Very small number of travellers then got permission from H.M. Resident in Srinagar for visiting Ladakh. As Pallis remarks:

“The number of visitors proceeding into Ladakh in any one year is wisely limited, so as to avoid throwing an excessive strain on the scanty resources of the province. Permission to enter has therefore to be obtained from H.M. Resident in Srinagar. But for this measure, the peasants, tempted by a prospect of ready cash, might improvidently barter away too large a share of their produce, leaving themselves short in

the lean season. The whole administration of the Treaty road is simple, efficient and to the advantage of all concerned.”⁷⁹

The Zojila is a fairly low pass gateway to Ladakh but it is most murderous. Marco Pallis accounts:

“Through such a low pass (11,300 feet) and a simple walk under summer conditions, the Zoji is one of the most murderous, accounting for a number of animal lives, and human lives too, levy its deadly toll by means of sudden avalanches, or engulfing its victims in bottomless drifts.”⁸⁰

Dras, after the Zojila, a place which has highly coloured landscape, is the coldest place in Ladakh and was once camping ground. Marco Pallis says:

“At Dras, which is a fairly large village with a few general utility shops and a camping-ground in the usual willow grove, we felt that India was already far away. This was the highly-coloured landscape, the way of life and the invigorating air of Central Asia.”⁸¹

Marco Pallis noticed a place Tasgam, thirteen miles beyond Dras. Here he found remains of the Tartar race. According to him:

“There is one attractive halting-place some thirteen miles beyond Dras, where it is worth stopping a night for the mere pleasure of camping there. It is an oasis called Tasgam, set like a verdant island in the midst of a sea of shimmering radiation, with multi-coloured tangles of wild flowers along the edges of its corn-fields, and a bewitching willow-wood to camp in. The inhabitants of this and neighbouring hamlets belong to a tribe who, though speaking a dialect akin to Balti, are a hairy non-Tartar race. In Tasgam they looked healthy enough; but in villages farther on they were afflicted with all sorts of nameless diseases.”⁸²

From the administrative point of view Purig, which was then known as the area between the Zoji and Ladakh, had its headquarters in Kargil. Kargil was a small town and a bazaar of Indian-owned shops drawing their subsistence from the Turkistan-India transit traffic. Here there was an official of the Kashmir Government who amongst other duties, examined the travellers' passes into Ladakh. Inhabitants of Kargil were largely Baltis. Marco Pallis remarks:

“The administrative headquarters of the whole district between the Zoji and Ladak, which is known as Purig, are at Kargil, a small township which has grown up round a bazaar of Indian-owned shops which draw their subsistence from the Turkistan-India transit traffic. In addition, it is the centre of a considerable tract of fertile land, beautifully filled and planted with trees, its irrigated terraces reach far up the hillsides and its minor valleys all around. It is the seat of an official of the Kashmir Government, who among his other duties, is charged with the examination of travellers' passed into Ladak. The place is beautifully situated on a wide, fast-flowing river, the Suru, and has an air of prosperity which makes an agreeable change after the miserable villages round Dras. The inhabitants are largely Baltis, clad in hard-wearing brown woollens, with flat round caps to match.”⁸³

Marco Pallis found enough greenery around Kargil. At the head of an iron bridge he noticed a thin line of poplar trees. As he remarks:

“The greenness of Kargil is more than usually joyous, because the last few miles before the village are tedious, with torrid stretches of sand, tiring both for pedestrians and horses. An iron bridge brings one opposite a thin line of poplars, just over the river which widens as one advances in the parallel direction, until the whole panorama is unfolded, with groves, bubbling rills of pure water. The waste ground

covered with purple iris, different from the one we found below the Zoji.”⁸⁴

At Kargil, Pallis met with a woman, who was then playing with her dogs. When Pallis asked her some questions related to her profession, she replied: “She had some twenty dogs with her and was taking them down to Kashmir to sell to the English ladies.” Thus some Ladakhis in Ladakh were in old days breeding Tibetan kind of dogs for the English ladies. He also found numerous artificial rivulets conducting the life-giving water to corn-fields and shady groves. These unexpected encounters with life in the midst of desert impressed him very much.

“Twenty-three hot miles separated him from the next halting place. At first the way crossed an arid plateau, its monotony received only to the south-west. The lifeless table-land seemed as if it would extend for ever, when suddenly without warning. We were looking over the edge of a huge sunken valley watered by a river from which numerous artificial rivulets conducted the life-giving water to smiling corn-fields and shady groves. The place seemed so secluded and out of keeping with the dead wastes immediately surrounding it, that it might well have been taken for a mirage. These unexpected encounters with life in the midst of desert are always dramatic, and man never fails in his emotional response to the first sight of green. It is one of the peculiar charms which belong only to barren countries and cannot be shared by luxuriant ones.”⁸⁵

‘Chortens’ is the symbol of Nirvana. During his visit to Ladakh, the first chorten he found was near the village Shergol. About Shergol and the location of chorten he remarks:

“There was a bridge to the right giving access to the small village of Shergol. From a gravel bank on the left several cold springs gushed out as if placed there specially for the convenience of thirsty travellers. But

what immediately arrested our gaze and held it riveted was the sight of something like a stone hell terminating in a needle-like pinnacle—it was a chorten, the symbol of Nirvana, found in all Buddhist lands.”⁸⁶

A little farther on the post of chorten, he saw Mulbek Gonpa. About this gonpa he writes:

“Mulbek Gonpa into view, perched on the summit of a precipitous aiguille, its white and red walls outlined in the golden evening light. It looked like a small fortress, with its projecting balconies that huge airily over the gulf. Standards, like closed parasols, marked the angles of the roof.”⁸⁷

Mulbek village is situated just near the foot of the rock, which was laid out with an artistic distinction. The construction of buildings here, Pallis found, was similar to Tibetan:

“Almost every house in it could lay claim to some artistic distinction. Even the meanest were of ample size, two-storied, with few openings on the bottom story, for this was as usual in Tibetan houses, taken up by granaries and stables. The classical plan consists of a central block with two wings. The rooms on the upper floor form three sides of a square, leaving a central space open to the sky, like a court with an arcade round it. The woodwork of doorways and window-frames was of simple but elegant design, while the more important upper rooms had graceful covered balconies of wood. Over the whole fluttered a forest of prayer-flags. One of the dwellings, which belonged to the headman, was a mansion fit for a duke.”⁸⁸

As said earlier during old days government constructed rest houses at many places in between Srinagar and Leh route. Pallis found government rest houses beyond the farms in which local wooden materials were used. But they were not well maintained:

“Government rest house which, unlike those found in Sikkim, was built in the style of the country, with ceilings of rough poplar logs and a little porch held up by wooden posts terminating in the spreading bracketed capitals of the Tibetan pillar. Throughout Ladak the native style has been kept in the rest-houses and even at the Residency of Leh. The official who initiated this policy had two great qualities—imagination and a readiness to let well alone, would that his example had been followed throughout India. Unfortunately these Ladak rest-houses are not kept clean: We found that one or two of them were infested with lice.”⁸⁹

In Ladakh, Buddhist women have more freedom than the Muslims. They seemed to be the real ruler in the home. As Marco Pallis found:

“Moslem sister, whom we had met on the way, had looked worn and suspicious, but here we saw rosy complexions and unaverted eyes. The Ladaki wife is anything but a doormate, more than not, she is the real ruler in the home, and children, when asked about their parentage, will often give their mother’s name before their father’s.”⁹⁰

Ladakhi people wear long chuba, cap, sheep and goatskin costume. Pallis remarks:

“The male consisted of a long chuba or gown of brown or grey or sometimes purple homespun secured with a sash, in which they stuck a brass spoon and a flute. The shoes which they wore were different than that of Tibetan style but nicely decorated with the Swastikas. The cap of Ladak, made of cloth or a valvety material, flattened on the crown, but with the edges turned up, something like a ‘cap of Liberty’. Often solid bracelets adorn the wrists, and the ears were pierced for rings. The men tend to be

big and strong-looking and seemed to be the toughest people. At night they hardly bother to shelter, if that involves them in the smallest extra trouble. They weared their hair in flowing locks like the three Musketeers. Younger ones had a slight girlish appearance. Many grow beards, which I thought may not be the Tibetan race. But the race must contain a high percentage of Aryan blood. The dress (of women) is dark, trimmed with sheepskin and decked out with silver ornaments of beautiful chain work, one of which dangles from the shoulder; the chains terminate in a tiny manicure set with silver tweezers and knives. A basket, like that of the Swiss peasants, is carried on the back, under the basket a goatskin with the hair turned outwards prevents chafing. The head-dress is extraordinary. It consists of a sort of bonnet, shading the face and curling snail-like over the back of the neck. On this are sewn uncut turquoises, few many, big or small, according to a person's means."⁹¹

After, Mulbek, Marco Pallis reached Bod Karbu. Here he saw several small hamlets set along the lower slopes of the hills, while all the flat lands were given over to corn, out of which rose islets of trees and the pinnacles of chortens. The edges of the fields were a matted tangle of common wild flowers, cranesbills, vetches, blue chicory and various clovers, which gave to the country its individual honeyed scent. The walls were hidden under white clematis and purple catmint. In one or two places the curtain of red rocky hills was pierced by a narrow gate through which plunged a small torrent. Peeping inside was rather like viewing a theatrical scene: everything resembled the main valley, but seen in miniature: the stream with its stony bed, a few fields, a flume of running water, a long row of Mani walls leading up to a tiny village of fine stone houses, the whole crowned by a diminutive white and red Gonpa.

Peasant houses in Ladakh have had a wonderful combination of the qualities of amplitude, solidity classical plan and

appropriate detail. A mean or cramped or ill-constructed dwelling was never to be seen, while in general, in the houses lower story allocated to animals and stores. The upper floor usually half-opened. All necessary objects decorated their principal rooms. Explaining further, Marco Pallis says:

“The lower story is usually allotted to animals and stores, and the family spends the summer on the upper floor in half-open chambers round the pillared court. When it is very warm, people often sleep out on the flat roof, usually naked, with clothes or a blanket thrown over them. Household furniture is confined to necessities. Besides cooking-pots and wooden bowls and cups for eating and drinking, with perhaps a china cup or two for special occasions, there is always a red glazed pottery charcoal stove for keeping tea warm, in form not unlike a Greek urn; and one or two brass or copper teapots, often decorated with good chasing, sometimes even with applique silver plates and dragon handles, earthenware pitchers for beer, small carpets for sitting on, and low tables for tea, painted gaily with flowers. All these objects are hand-made and of real artistic value; richer peasants sometimes possess quite fine utensils, and the woodwork of the principal rooms in their houses may also be decorated. There is no collecting of useless junk to clutter up the home. Special attention must be drawn to the common red pottery, which is undecorated and depends entirely on perfection of shape.”⁹²

Next to Bod Karbu, he came to Photul la, here he also noticed beautiful gonpa Lamayuru. He remarks:

“A pass, the P’hotu La (13,400 feet), separates Bod Karbu from Yuru, where the first of the great monasteries is situated. It is usually called Lamayuru on maps and in books, an Indian corruption of the real name, which should be Yuru Gonpa. Before the Gonpa he found a solitary chorten near a small stream

valley and the another chorten was situated at the path which was turning abruptly left for a few yards up a small col. The road contoured round the left of the comb in a great curve, to the foot of a huge sandstone cliff honey-combed with caves. On the crest of this cliff stood the magnificently proportioned Gonpa, a tall central building, with a number of lower wings containing monk's quarters and on one side a warren of peasant houses."⁹³

He saw a continuous line of huge Mani walls and white chortens near the Gonpa. At the bases of larger chortens he noticed dragons, horses, lions and phoenixes figures. The monastery itself was white, with the usually red frieze under the roof. These bonds were always made in the same way, by laying bundles of sticks closely bound and painted red, so that the cut-off end outwards like a brush. Yuru was the first big monastery situated on the main caravan route. Besides he saw most of the movable objects at the temples of Yuru monastery of second rate. Because of this fact he concluded that it must have been plundered by the Dogra armies, but he was not certain. He suspected that archaeologists, curio-dealers and travellers could have played their part in stripping Yuru of its treasures, though the monastery was old, he found the temples of Yuru in a poor state of repair. Cracks had appeared in walls.⁹⁴

In the monastery he found many Buddhist gods and goddesses statues. Describing about them he says:

"It will be noticed that the figures divide into two strongly contrasted types. On the one hand we have Buddha and celestial beings, their lotus pedestals in altitudes of imperturbable serenity. On the other hand there are frightful apparitions, decked with crown's necklaces of human skulls, dancing in convulsive frenzy on the prostrate forms of men and animals. In one of the chapels at Yuru, stands a colossal image of the Bodhisattva Chenrezig (a Bodhisattva is in the state of knowledge approaching that of Buddha), he

is portrayed as a tall figure with innumerable arms forming a circle which surrounds him like an aureole; he has not one head but eleven, disposed like a pyramid. Chenrezig's typical representation is, however, not the eleven-faced form, but the likeness of a young and beautiful white prince, with four arms. That is why an imprint, indicating the rudiments of the extra pair of arms, is one of the signs sought for on the body of the baby that is chosen to act as the earthly sanctuary of the Bodhisattva's emanation."⁹⁵

After walking one or two miles eastwards from the Yuru, Marco Pallis found a Dogra fort. In this part of the Indus valley the road passed through three villages: Khalatse, Nurla and Suspol. The whole valley between Khalatse to Suspol is suitable for horticulture, particularly for apricots. He remarks:

"The valley of the Indus, comparatively sheltered from the most biting winds, offers ideal conditions for the cultivation of the apricot. Fruit ripens almost as high as Leh, but there the climate is too rigorous. The city lies near enough to the orchards, however, for a daily supply to be brought in baskets during the months of July and August. A certain proportion of the crop is dried and stored for winter use. In this form, apricots are an excellent food for travelling. They are delicious when stewed, and have a very sweet, slightly toffee-like flavour. They are also economical, for they required the condition of little or no sugar, quite different from the tart dried apricots slit into halves and stocked by grocers at home. The reason is doubtless that the last-named variety is picked unripe, while the Himalayan fruit is left on the tree long enough for the sun to complete its work. The low humidity of the climate allows the apricot to be dried, without decay setting in."⁹⁶

He deplored the wealth of western countries in general, and

he condemned those writers who dared to describe Ladakh and its peasants as poor and unhappy. He writes:

“The inhabitants of these villages must surely be some of the happiest on the face of the earth. One can only pray that no zealous enthusiast will feel impelled to ‘improve’ or ‘enrich’ them, acting on some sociological theory worked out under totally dissimilar circumstances. Certain writers have alluded to the poverty of the people, doubtless referring to their lack of ready money and their rather spartan simplicity of life. There is no luxury, nor a big margin of surplus food, but if the enjoyment of a sufficient, if rather unvaried, diet composed of tasty, unadulterated materials and the leading of a healthy, outdoor life in majestic surroundings with work which has its leisure as well as its strenuous phases, the wearing of durable and comely homespun clothing, the dwelling in spacious, well-built homes, and the possession of a restricted number of objects pleasing to the eye—if all this be poverty, then let us deplore our world.”⁹⁷

About twelve miles above Suspol village, he visited Likir monastery of Gelugpa sect commonly known as ‘yellow-hats’. At the monastery he found old and larger houses and enjoyed a high reputation for strict observance of monastic rules being surpassed in this only by the neighbouring convent of Rezong.⁹⁸

After Likir he came across Basgo. This village had apple orchards and dominated by an ancient ruined castle built to command the entrance to long side valley, through which one can approach the river Shyok. Possibly in olden times Turkoman may have followed this route.⁹⁹

He stayed in a rest house near Nimu village. From here he went to Spituk monastery. This monastery was dominated by the famous yellow hat order. Near to the monastery he found limestone cliffs. As he says:

“The main road to Leh passes, not on the river side, but between the hill on which the Gonpa stands and a low line of fantastic limestone cliffs, where, we were told, the lime is collected which is used for the foundation coating of sacred paintings.”¹⁰⁰

At the Spituk monastery, Marco Pallis found the abrupt staircase which led to the main buildings, these occupied difficult levels on the hillside. Next, along with his party, he went to the main temple. About the main temple he says:

“A fine building containing mural paintings and festooned with scrolls, there we made our usual offering to fine precious stones, which were taken over by a tall and lithe-looking lama with a very keen, vivacious face, who discharged the office of bursar. He asked if we preferred to have the stones set in a decorated chorten at the end of the aisle or in the gilt diadem of Tsepagmed, whose beautiful image stood on the right of the Buddha, behind the altar. We chose the latter as the most suitable setting for jewels.”¹⁰¹

At Leh town he saw willow and poplar trees. Castle was the main building of the town; below to this a mosque was located. He remarks:

“A belt of willows standing in rather dry ground marks the outskirts of the city. As we came to the houses, our beggare animals turned off the road abruptly. The ponies stepped over a wooden bar at the base of a gateway, and we followed, thinking it must be some short cut, and found ourselves all at once in the main bazaar, a broad and stately street, flanked by rows of immense pollarded poplars. The vista is closed by the prodigious castle of the Ladak kings, its lower stories of Egyptian severity, while the upper ones are pierced with larger windows leading out on the wooden balconies. The scale of the building is colossal, dwarfing the rest of the town; though most of its unoccupied, it

is in a fair state of preservation. It is built at the end of a rocky spur, at the foot of which nestles Leh.

Immediately below the castle is the mosque, for there is a large Mussulman community—built in the usual Ladak style of architecture. Later on, it became one of our regular pleasures to walk down to it at night and wait for the muezzin's call. The first time that we happened to be there, standing in the darkness of the unlight street, we heard from the balcony of a house a tenor voice of rare sweetness singing a melancholy rhapsody. The man now and then paused in his song and then began to sing again. His mellow notes floated out into the surrounding stillness; he seemed to be expressing some deep joy that lay close to tears.¹⁰²

In summer, Leh market was busy with Central Asian traders who came from Turkistan, Kashmir and from many other countries. Describing about Leh market business during summer, Pallis remarks:

“In the summer, when caravans from India and Turkistan enter or leave Leh almost daily, the scene in the bazaar is most picturesque. Here one can see tall, thin, hawk-nosed Kashmiris in their unbecoming Euro-Indian rages. Across the way saunter some stocky Baltis in thick grey-brown homespuns and close fitting caps. Tall Turks, fair as Englishmen, but with narrow slits of eyes and rather unintelligent faces, stalk about the market, clad in white shirts, sheepskin caps and Cossack boots. Some of them add a Bolshevik touch in their drab Russian semi-uniforms, probably exported from the factories of the five year plan. Their women wear fine orange or rose embroidered dresses and are closely veiled, while their Ladaki sisters moved about freely, for their position is high in society and in no need of protection. A few red-cloaked lamas are always to be seen and occasionally

a true Tibetan, or an Afghan youth of great beauty, with white skin, long eye-lashes and oval face, an amorous prince from the brush of Persian Bihzad come back of life.”¹⁰³

Yaks were the main carrier to Turkistan, but ponies or mules were also employed in the long distance traffic and for high mountain passes. He says:

“Huge yaks ruminant contentedly in the courts of the Turkoman Caravan serais, over which, like a shower of wool, floats the clinging white down of the poplars. The average condition of the animals is quite good but many ponies or mules employed on long-distance traffic show the usual sore-marks from the hard pack-saddles, suffered during the protracted journey across the Karakoram. I have heard that many animals fall from fatigue and are abandoned on the passes there, where wolves put an end to their sufferings. The Turks are extremely callous and frequently inflict cruelties out of sheer stupidity. I cannot say that I have witnessed any cruelty in Leh itself, even from Turks, or heard any animal abused; so I am prepared to believe that insensitiveness, rather than actively sadistic instincts, is responsible for the evil.”¹⁰⁴

From Leh, Pallis went out to see monasteries. The Phyang monastery situated in the midst of a tract along Srinagar to Leh route, with fascinating views up and down valley, the walls of which were covered with brilliant paintings. On all sides serene countenances of Buddhas, of every size and colour, Bodhisattvas, saints in ecstasy, terrifying protectors writhed in flames and leaped on the bodies of victims, who personified the evil passions to be subdued within the soul; the whole showed boldness in composition and remarkable precision in the drawing. These paintings, he thought, were not very old, but were painted beautifully.¹⁰⁵

Hemis monastery situated thirty miles from Leh on the far-

ther side of the Indus was founded by Stagtsan Rbspa. The older building of the monastery was destroyed by landslide. So, new building was constructed and had around 500 monks on its roll.¹⁰⁶

Normally, Tulku or a high class incarnated lama may be responsible to look after the monastery according to his respective sect. Pallis remarks:

“Hemis led naturally to a general discussion on Tulkus, or lamas reputed to be incarnations of known personalities, whether heavenly being or saintly predecessors I had long sought an opportunity for eliciting the views of a really thoughtful lama concerning these much revered figures, so numerous and popular in the Tibetan Church. I put the problem thus:

If a Tulku is the incarnation of a saint, and yet is notorious as evil-doer, by whom is the sin committed? It is not legitimate to say of a Tulku that he is a great sinner, he said—for you must not judge only by appearances. Truly the holy one who animates the Tulku’s body commits no sin; nor may it be taken for granted that a sin has been committed at all, even if it seems so in your eyes. It may be planned to try your faith, or from some other motive judged in reference to standards far removed from yours or mine.”¹⁰⁷

Across the Indus, in the shadow of a snow mountain, Marco Pallis saw Stok Palace; near to the palace there was a monastery also. In the palace descendant of the great line of Ladakh kings resides, though a descendant of king, a state pensioner, he still bore the courtesy title of king.

During his visit to Ladakh Pallis found Ladakhis simple and religious minded. They fulfilled their basic requirements with handicrafts. They keep themselves busy in spinning coarse wool. They always assiduously spin coarse woollen thread. The finished thread they wound on a stick. In this way a continual supply of yarn spun was assured for weaving into clothes during

winter months.¹⁰⁸ In conclusion Pallis was very much impressed with Ladakhi culture and hence made all possible description about the same in his book *Peaks and Lamas*.

The next great explorer was H.R.H. Peter, Prince of Greece and Denmark, he visited Ladakh in 1938. He then estimated the population of Ladakh was 32,999. Buddhist population percentage was 89%, Muslims were 10.5%, Sikhs were 49 and Christians 70. The proportion of men to women for the Buddhists was 14,760 : 14,650, as 1730 men to 1760 women for the Muslims, 36 to 13 for the Hindus and Sikhs (who rarely bring their women with them to these distant parts) and 37 to 33 for the Christians (nearly all converted of the Moravian Mission). Like Tibetan Buddhism people belonged to Drung-pa, Gelug Pa, Nyingma-pa, Kargyut-pa, etc. The Muslims who were often called Baltis were Shias. Sinkiang, Turki and Vigur merchants who lived in Leh and constituted a foreign minority; these people were orthodox Sunnis. They usually intermarried with the local Buddhist Ladakhi women, and their offsprings were known in Leh as Argons; they were about 300 of them. A small ethnic group of distinctively different racial appearance was constituted by the Dards living in the extreme west of Ladakh. Prince of Greece found that they were Buddhists like the bulk of the population, but they were fair with blue eyes, and their features were those of the Nordics of Europe.¹⁰⁹

Prince of Greece, Peter found Ladakhis like Tibetan or Mongolians race. According to him:

“In physical appearance, the ordinary Ladaki men and women resemble their Tibetan cousins in that they have broad, Mongoloid faces, slit eyes and black, straight hair. The men, however, have more hair on their faces than the average Tibetan can grow, and this is a distinctive characteristic. Both sexes wear their hair long, but plaited at the back. Washing among the peasantry is resorted to very little, and the general appearance of the Ladakis is untidy and dirty, not to mention the fact that they smell strongly. When the

weather gets chilly in the winter, or when a voyage to some other part of the country necessitates going through a colder area, more clothes are simply worn over those already on the body, and temperature is measured by the number of gowns one is obliged to put on.”¹¹⁰

Peter found Ladakhis' houses solid structures built of stone in traditional Tibetan style, with flat roofs, white-washed walls and gaily painted doors and windows (the lower part of which was usually broader than the upper part). At the ground floor they had stable for horses and mules. There was no chimney system for smoke in the kitchen. This had resulted kitchen room dark and dirty, smoke was being allowed through the cracks and joints of the ceiling and roof.

Agriculture was the main profession of Ladakhis. Barley, wheat, peas, beans were among the principal crops grown in Ladakh during spring. In the autumn, buckwheat, millet and turnips were cultivated, together with a certain amount of fodder grasses for the cattle. Peter found sandy soil everywhere. Earth was, therefore, often brought from the hill-sides for top-dressing of the fields, ploughing was done with dzos together with ordinary cattle and ponies. Men generally looked after ploughing, transport and marketing of goods. Ladies milked the cows and dzomos, fed them and helped in agricultural activities.¹¹¹

In Ladakh no house was freed from taxes. Kashmir administration collected taxes from each house as well along the trade routes. Grain and wood were often collected by the authorities instead of cash payment, as Peter remarks:

“The collection of revenue in Ladak is naturally the responsibility of the Kashmir administration. The basis of assessment of the revenue is a rather arbitrary one, being simply the holding or the houses, which is called *Zhing-Kham* (*Zhing-K'hams*) allotted by the State and which is farmed by a single family unit, the head of the latter being responsible for the payment

of the tax. The size of the holding or the quality of the soil is not taken into consideration, and this has led to complaints of unjust imposition, which the government has tried in the past to remedy. Cash is the medium in which taxes are paid, but along the trade route, grain and wood are often collected by the authorities instead, as these products are badly needed by the traders on their way to and from Central Asia. In 1938, revenue totalled Rs. 50,823."¹¹²

In 1938, when Peter came to the capital of Ladakh he found that it had a population of 2377, out of which 1287 were Buddhists, 991 Mohammedans, 43 Sikh Hindus and 56 Christians. Buddhists were having Mongoloid features. Among them there were reported to be 650 men against 637 women. The Muslims included Kashmiris from the valley, Turki, Vigur and Yarkandi traders from Sinkiang in Central Asia, Argons or those whose fathers had taken local Ladaki women as wives, and a few Baltis from the neighbouring sub-division. There were 447 men against 544 women in this religious community. Among the Hindus and Sikhs there were 30 men against 13 women. The community was only a temporary one made up of officials and employers of the Kashmir state.¹¹³

During his visit Peter found that polyandry was practised quite intensely in and around Leh. Out of one hundred families, ninety of them lived in this form of matrimony. The remaining ten per cent either did not want polyandry, or they were not able, to follow the prevalent custom due to lack of brothers in the family. It seemed, in Leh, especially among the better educated, the wealthier and those who had travelled to the big cities in the plains of India did not follow polyandry system.¹¹⁴

As regards the marriage system, Peter found that among Buddhists, two types of marriages were popular—bag-ma or mag-pa and bag-pa (bag-po). Bag-ma was a fraternally polyandrous one in most cases, all the brothers of the bridegroom becoming automatically husbands of the bride. According to the tradition only elder son and sometimes the next eldest one at the cer-

emony married to the wife. However, all the other were understood to be married with the wife of the eldest brother. He further remarks:

“Mag-pa marriage can also be polyandrous if the heir-ess so desires, but in the case, it is non-fraternal, the women usually choosing husbands who are unrelated and the secondary ones being generally younger than their predecessors. A man can be Mag-pa to an heir-ess and to her sisters, but unless he is formally married to them all, he only has a right of access to the younger ones; they are free at any time to leave the household and to contract Bag-ma marriage outside.”¹¹⁵

Peter found that among Buddhists betrothal took place at a very early age usually before ten with regard to the girl, between ten and twelve with regard to the boys. First, horoscopes of the potential candidates were taken, and the parents (or guardians) of the bridegroom called at the house of the bride to present Chhang and Khatags to her parents. This ceremony is named Tri Chang (Tri-Ch’hang) and in it petitioning party makes the offer six or seven times to express insistence. When this part of the proceeding is over, the parents of the girl accept the request, but demand for themselves and for their daughter more chhang, tea, butter, khatags and food. All relatives of this side take part in this ritual which was known as Hol-Chang (Hol-Ch’hang) or Tri-Chang Chen-yuo (Tri-Ch’hang Ch’hen-mo). “The great ask Chhang”. With the confirmation of Hol-Chang, Nyen-Chang (gNyen-Ch’hang) or “relatives Chhang” followed. Then the bride-to-be’s relatives received more chhang, love, meat, tea, butter and khatags, as well as the bridegroom’s contribution to the dowry, called Rin-t’ho “Price list”. This would eventually constitute part of the wife’s own personal property, called Rag-tag (Rog-rTog), which could never be included in that of her husband or husbands, except by the essential Go-ras (mGo-ras) or “cotton cloth”, the laying of khatags on the head of the bride (or brides of a Mag-pa married to more than one sister). If betrothal

is broken up after this ritual it would be incumbent to act as though a divorce was necessary since the parties considered to be as good as married. The near relatives of the girl received more khatags from the bridegroom's family, and a piece of cloth is then taken to the kitchen which is tied round one of the pots. Other presents, such as ornaments, cash and turquoises, are sometimes added to the gifts made to the family of the bride.

In return, the visiting party received a piece of cloth and a dish to take home. The latter would then plan the wedding feast, called Beg-ston (Bag-ston), and thence decided the auspicious date upon which the final rites would be performed."¹¹⁶

According to Peter, in the wedding ceremonies of the well-to-do families, chhang is offered three or four times to the bride's relatives and after Tri-Chang further chhang is distributed, called Bsu-Chang (bSu-Ch'hang) or "taking-home-Chang", and on the day of wedding, the bridegroom's (eldest) father, azhang or maternal uncle and some of the members of his p'ha-spun escort the girl to her house and the main ceremony follows. Among the Bog-ma marriage of wealthier people, principal ceremonies start after the formalities of Go-ras ritual have taken place, a feast called Drags-Chang (Drags-Ch'hang) or "very much chang", is given to the bride's parents by their relatives. They bring tsampa, chhang, sheep and goat carcasses, tea, butter, rice and cash to help them with the occasion. The same kind of feast is held in the bridegroom's house for his (or their) parents by the latter's relatives. Then the first phase of the wedding festivities begins. On the date decided upon, a procession is formed at the bridegroom's house. It usually consisted his father, his azhang', members of his 'p'ha-spun', fifteen to twenty in number. It never included the boy himself, who stayed at home and waits. Towards the close of day, all these people would set out accompanied by a dancing party, gorgeously dressed, of five to nine 'Nya-opas' (gNya-bo-pa) or 'witnesses'. These, chosen among the friends and companions of the bridegroom designated by astrology, their principal qualification as they would be led by a Nya-pon (gNya-dPon) or "chief witness."¹¹⁷

As the 'Nya-opas' and other people proceeded towards the bride's house, Peter found that they were offered chhang and tsampa on the way by anyone who cares to come along from the village. They took these offerings in their hands as blessings of good luck, and in return pay out cash in small coins. Some distance from their destination, the people in the procession were intercepted by members of the girl's family, male and female, called either Nang-mi (Nang-Mi) "people of the interior" or Yado Dzao (ya-do mDza-bo) "Companion-friends". They beat them with sticks and make a pretence of holding them up. The bridegroom's relatives offer pieces of cloth, khatags, and cash (annas) to appease the trouble-makers, and they were then subjected to questioning and answering in song form, based on the eighteen Puranas, called on this occasion Nya-rbs-Chop-gyat (gNya-rabs-bcho-brGyad) "The eighteen legends of the witnesses."¹¹⁸

He further noticed that the same show of resistance was made again at the door of the girl's house (including thorns put deliberately on the ground to impede setting down) and more offerings were made to remove the obstacles. The leaders of the procession then state the object of their visit, and proceed to dance round a tsampa and bread image called Drangyas (Brang-rGyas) which had been put up in the yard together with the carcass of a whole sheep or Sha-Kog (Sha-K'hog). Lamas who were present here, begin worship while the dance continued on.

In the following feast, bride was hidden away, her horse stolen, she was not allowed to go to the toilet, etc. and was generally bothered by her relatives who expressed in this way their (feigned) disinclination to let her go. Her father and azhang were paid some nominal sum of money so that an end was put to this mischief. She then had a khatag wound round her head and was led into the kitchen, where the lamas conduct a religious ceremony called Yang-kug (gyang-K'hug) which was an evocation of blessing addressed to the pre-Buddhist god of wealth, in order to secure happiness and prosperity for the bride.¹¹⁹

The bridal party remained during night in the house of bride

and in the morning started for the bridegroom's house, taking the bride with them, and with this second phase of wedding ceremony began.

As soon as the second phase of wedding ceremony begins, Peter found that the bride was received at the entrance of the bridegroom's house by two or more lamas, reciting prayers. They hold an earthenware vessel full of foodstuffs (chhang, tsampa, rice, tea, dried apricots, and various vegetables) called Zablug (Za-bLugs) (sku) or "victual earthen vessel", whirl around the head of the bridegroom as he comes to stand on the doorstep waiting for his future wife. The pot was then taken to a large stone upon which crossed dorjes (r Do-rje) were drawn with a piece of charcoal, and was broken upon it. This ceremony was called Gyag-Chod (rGyag-Ch'hod) meaning "casting the hindrance away".¹²⁰

Peter noticed that after the Gyag-Chod ceremony everybody entered into the house and feast begins in which people sing and dance, the expenses this time paid by the bridegroom's azhang. The bride then was brought in, and seated with her bridegroom and his brothers. They all together eat out of same plate (food plate), one of the witnesses, called Na-tri-pa offered a Go-ras or cotton cloth on the head of boys.¹²¹

The third phase of wedding ceremony is the final and important one. As Peter remarks:

"The third phase of marriage, the most important one, follows. The Na-tri-pa, who is also known as the Tashi-pa (bkra-Shis-pa) or "lucky one", in Ladak, conducts the bride into the store room of the house. He carries a Da-dar (mDa-dar or arrow with flags in the five colours of Buddhism, a mirror, a sheep's ankle bone, and a khatag) and is followed by the bridegroom or bridegrooms. Once they have all got into the room, the match-maker (for that is what the "rose-conducting-one" is) removes the Go-ras which the bride has been wearing since she was taken from

her house, and those of the men which have just been put on in the kitchen, and lays them down on a plate containing barley grains which is standing on a table or a ledge close by. He then books the bride by the collar from behind with the Da-dar, as a symbol of taking her out from among other girls whom the men could have married, and the parties are declared wed. This is the binding ritual which makes them husband and wife. Once the ceremony has been performed, the wife is not allowed into any private house or monastery in Ladak, just as unmarried girls are not permitted to worship at shrines except at those of families in the houses.

A feast lasting three days is the next item on the programmes. On the first day, the local villagers are fed, on the second the relatives and friends, and on the third the helpers and members of the bridegroom's p'ha - spun, dancing round the Drangyas and the Sha-Kog still standing in the yard, takes place on each of these days, and on the last one, it is broken up and distributed to the family and relatives, who accept the pieces as holy and of good omen. The Sha-Kog, particularly, is taken to the bride's home, where it is sliced into pieces and given to her family to eat, the last morsel being given to her. Then the witnesses are paid off, each of them, in 1938, getting one rupee, and their helpers half that amount, while the lamas, who took part in the ceremony, receive a squared piece of cloth each and some cash.

In the case of a Mag-pa marriage, the same order of procedure is followed, except that the roles are reversed, so to speak, the man taking the part of the woman, and the woman that of the bridegroom. It is the Mag-pa who is conducted in ceremony to the bride's house, and not the other way round. When signing the contract of marriage, it is the girl's par-

ents who endorse the pledge that her future husband will enjoy the property which is hers with him.”¹²²

About divorce, Peter says:

“Divorce in Ladak is called Chad-dral (bChad-aBral) or cut separate. There is rarely a ceremony connected with it, and formalities are reduced to the minimum. Usually, repudiation of one of the parties by the other takes place orally, simply in the presence of witnesses. It is possible, however, to have a written deed made out, which contains the declaration of divorce, the evidence gathered to justify it, and a record of how the dowry of the woman was paid back to the family. The ceremony which sometimes takes place is called Lso-pang (Lso-sPang) or “dung reject”, and occurs when a husband or husbands wish to divorce their Bag-ma wife. After the latter has been repudiated in either of the ways described above, the remains of the fermented grain with which the chhang was made, are thrown into the fire and the ashes cast away. Sometimes, instead of these things being burnt, sheep and goat droppings will be collected and symbolically cast away.

If a woman wishes to divorce her husband, an heiress or a widow of the deceased husband’s younger brothers, with whom she refuses to live any longer, she will sometimes tie a thread between one of her fingers and one of those of the (dead) man, and cut it across to show that she is free.

Divorce in Ladak is irrevocable, but can be conditional. It is thus sometimes stipulated in cases of proven infidelity that the partner at fault will not be authorized to remarry the paramour, and that if this does take place, the remarriage will be void and the divorce non-existent.

A Bag-ma wife can be divorced by her husband(s) on the ground of mutual incompatibility of temperament, of her own infidelity (in which case she loses all rights of compensation), of her carelessness and ignorance of her household duties, of what her parents-in-law consider to be her serious defects. A Bag-ma wife will be allowed to divorce her husband on the other hand, if impotence is proved in his case, or if she is wilfully neglected.

In a Mag-pa marriage, the wife can repudiate her husband and divorce him without any reason whatever; all she has to do is to turn him out of the house. Consequently, to be a Mag-pa is not an enviable position really, in Ladak. Many younger brothers are seen, however, to prefer it to bring the junior partners of a polyandrous marriage, and it is to be presumed that much depends on the merits of each individual case. Immorality in a Mag-pa is very rarely evoked by the wife, my informants told me, as his conduct in that respect is of no great importance. If he should change his religion, however, and become a Moslem or a Christian, that is another matter, and the wife will immediately be entitled to get rid of him on these grounds. In the previous case of a Bag-ma marriage, such a reason could not be held against the wife, simply because she would never be authorized by her husbands to change her religion. She would have to be divorced first in order to do so.

If a husband wants to divorce his Bag-ma wife or a wife is inclined to turn out her Mag-pa husband, both of these are liable, in accordance with Kashmir customary law, to give a sum of money, the equivalent of a cow, to the divorced person; the name of such a monetary amount is Mo-skyur-ba (mo-bskyur-ba) meaning "woman thrown out cow". If, on the other hand, the divorce occurs, at the request of the

Bag-ma wife or of the Mag-pa husband, the equivalent in money of a horse will be given to the injured party. This called P'ho-skyur-to (P'ho-bskyur-rTa) or "man thrown out horse". During the reign of the Tibetan kings of Western Tibet, real horses and cows were handed over. But with the accession of Dogra masters, Wazir-Wazarat Akbar Ali Shah, who ruled in Ladakh in the early 1870s, converted the value of these animals into cash, a horse being estimated as worth Rs 25/- and a cow Rs 12/8. Henceforward, compensation had to be paid in money and no longer in kind"¹²³

On 30th August 1938, Peter visited some families living in polyandry in the outskirts of Leh town and gathered the following information concerning the functioning of polyandry in Ladakh.

- (1) Sexual privacy seemed to be less due to cold climate
- (2) Ladakhis do not leave their homes regularly for commercial trips, so many husbands with a woman remain at home.

Peter found the following reasons for adopting polyandry system.¹²⁴

- (1) to avoid property division
- (2) to get human labour for cultivation.

He had noticed the following kinship in Ladakh:

- (1) Oma Chik-pa (aO-ma-gchig-pa)—for a milk brother and sister.
- (2) Chos-pun (Ch'hos-sPun)—for brothers in a religious order.
- (3) Meme—for old men and lamas assimilated to grand fathers.
- (4) Ama—for strange women of the age of one's mother.
- (5) api—(or Abi)—Grandmother.
- (6) Chomos (Jo-mo)—for maternal and paternal grand aunts, nuns and other old women.

- (7) Apa (Ap'ha) (or Aba)—for father.
- (8) Apa chembo (Ap'ha Ch'hen-po)—distinction between oldest father with others.
- (9) Apa-chung -ngan (Ap'ha Ch'hung ngu) or (apa panna)—middle father.
- (10) Agu (A-gu)—strictly means paternal uncle.
- (11) Ama (A-ma)—mother.
- (12) Zhidmat—Husband and wife.
- (13) Ajo (A-jo)—a wife calls to her eldest husband.
- (14) Ga-ga (Ga-ga)—a wife calls to her eldest husband more respectfully.
- (15) No (No)—younger husband.
- (16) Ga-ga Chung-Ch'hung-ngu—is the respective word for younger husband.
- (17) Achi (A-ch'he)—The eldest husband calls his wife.
- (18) Noma (no-mo)—other then eldest husband call the wife.
- (19) Chan-Chen (Byan-Ch'hen)—in the polygamous household, the eldest wife calls by this name.
- (20) Chan-Chung-ngan—second one of chan-chen.
- (21) Yang-Chung-ngan-(Yang-Ch'hang-ngu)—youngest one.
- (22) Ga-ga—eldest boys, before they are married.
- (23) No-no—youngest one.
- (24) P'horjag—a man called into a family to produce children when the husbands have failed to do so with their common wife.
- (25) Bu-tsa—sons of such polygamous system.
- (26) Bu-mo—daughters of such polygamous system.
- (27) P'haspun—The patrilineal clans, each descendant from a common ancestor is called P'haspun. People of the same P'haspun may not eat together for the stipulated period of time when they either 'Bangak' in the case of birth pollution, or 'Rongag'.

In this way during his stay in Ladakh, Peter made detailed study on polyandry system and under the supervision of Prof. Bronishaw Malinowski, he had done valuable research work on social anthropology, which was published with the title '*A Study of Polyandry*' in 1963.

Immediately after Peter, Walter Asboe came to Ladakh in 1939. He started a professional school at Leh, which gave training in handicrafts, notably weaving on new broader looms and Tibetan carpet weaving. Walter Asboe was also the principal organiser of the 'Gospel Inn' which opened in 1939 and catered to the many travellers who passed through Leh on account of the Central Asia trade. According to Periodical accounts 1940, in its first year there were 4000 guests and subsequent visitors included a Skushog from Sara monastery. Walter Asboe made a hobby of writing in his spare time. He published a series of articles about Ladakh in the Moravian Mission magazine as well as more academic papers in scholarly journals¹²⁵

After five years, later in 1945, F.A. Peter, who had spent the war years working on rural development projects at a Canadian mission in Punjab, came up with a set proposals to reclaim new land near Spituk in Ladakh using water channel from the Indus. This project was never implemented because Peter was called elsewhere.¹²⁶

In 1947, after the Partition of India, Ladakh found itself under Indian rule while its neighbouring part to the west, Baltistan came under Pakistan with the result that the ancient east-west trail along the Indus was closed. Soon after that tension in Central Asia led to the closure of the border with Sinkiang, blocking the north-south trade routes into the valley. During this time a judge of the Supreme Court of the United States, William O. Douglas, penetrated into Ladakh. He was a passionate mountaineer and travelled in Ladakh freely.¹²⁷

Ten years later, following the period of tension, Ladakh and particularly its capital Leh was again a busy cantonment at the border, 'bursting at the seams'. Leh was now converted into a garrison town, the northern base of the Indian Army confronting China and Pakistan.

After three wars against Pakistan and one against China, the tension cooled down in Ladakh. Then only in 1974 Government of India decided that Ladakh should be opened to tourists. Rev.

Kushok Bakula, the then M.P. from Ladakh recommended to Syed Mir Qasim, the then Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir State to throw Ladakh open to tourists in the interest of its development. He, therefore, in consultation with the Govt. of India in 1974 declared Ladakh open to foreigners by road.¹²⁸

As soon as Ladakh was opened to foreigners, many renowned scholars visited Ladakh. In summer 1974, among them David Snellgrove and Tadeusz Skorupski came to Ladakh just after the ban was lifted by the Government of India. Both took their extensive study on Buddhism and cultural heritage of Ladakh and published a book *The Cultural Heritage of Ladakh* in two volumes. Similarly Prof. Tokan D. Sumi and Prof. Masato Oki, the two Japanese scholars visited Ladakh and wrote a book along with Prof. Fida M. Hassnain entitled *Ladakh: The Moonland*. The impression of their first visit to Ladakh was:

“As we drove on our way to Leh from Kargil, we felt that it was a sandwich land which was sun-beaten and wind-swept. As we drove miles and miles, we saw golden granite dust and the lonely peaks and it appeared that we had no connection with the world except the beautiful black-topped road. We saw mountains of different hues and shades, when there was no sign of a human being or a bird. We came across a green patch or a village only at places where there was some little water but the overall scenery of desert-like arid lands was overpowering. We simply felt amazed”.¹²⁹

In conclusion, before 1974 many famous scholars visited Ladakh, and they had written their experiences. David Snellgrove and Tadeusz Skorupski, Prof. Tokan D. Sumi and Prof. Masato Oki, Major M.L.A. Gompertz, Marco Pallis, Franke, S.H. Ribboch etc. were among the popular explorers who had written about Ladakh. Thus, with the result hundreds of European tourists visited Ladakh.

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CHAPTER 5

Overview

Though explorers came to India and Ladakh during very early age, the earliest explorers were Chinese scholars who came to India via Ladakh. Among them the most prominent were Fa-hien and Hiuen tsang. Chinese were thus the first explorers who came before Western scholars. In the following lines a brief discussion is made about them.

The first Chinese traveller who visited Ladakh was a Buddhist priest Fa-hien. He belonged to a place Shan-hsi (Shani) in China. At the age of ten years, his mother, father and brothers died, he therefore became a monk. He then came to India in 399 A.D. via south of Gobi desert and Yarkand. In fact, Fa-hien passed through Ladakh which was then spelled as 'Kie-chha'. 'Kie-chha' means a place where snow never melts, natives of such place were known as "men of the snowy mountains". At the southward to Kie-chha, Fa-hien travelled to Tsu-ho, Yu-hoe and Tsung-Ling mountains. According to Alexander Cunningham, Kie-chha the country Fa-hien talked in his travel records was nothing else, but Ladakh. As soon as Fa-hien reached Kashgar, he proceeded towards Kie-chha or Ladakh, after fifteen days' journey he came near the Indus river. From Kie-chha he went westward to Tho-ly and reached here after one month. Explaining further about Fa-hien journey, Alexander Cunningham says:

"There were two roads from Kotan to Ladakh—
Western side via Kukeyar and southern side via
Ruthag. Fa-hien followed Tsu-ho route with Chu-Kiu-

pho, which was 1000 li westward of Khotan. Tsu-ho was in between Khotan and Kukeyar. From Tsu-ho he went to the south and over the Tsung-Ling or 'Onion mountains'. From Kukeyar to Ladakh the road lies to the south over the Karakoram mountains which is known in Chinese language as 'Tsung-Ling' or 'Onion mountains'."³

Major M.L.A. Gompertz 'Ganpat' also confirmed that Fa-hien came to Ladakh during 400 A.D. The next Chinese traveller was Hiuen-tsang, who came to India in 629 A.D. He also passed through high mountains near Ladakh. As he writes:

"From Kuluto for above 1800 li is Ko-hu-lo country still farther north above 200 li was the Mo-lo-so (or Sha) country, the roads being very bad and cold."⁴

Alexander Cunningham believed 'Ko-hu-lo' would be 'Lo-hu-lo' meaning thereby Lho-yul, whereas 'Mo-lo-so' might be Ladakh. The formation of Ladakh from 'Mo-lo-so' may be followed in the following ways:

Mo-lo-so > Mo-lo-po

Mo-lo-po > Mar-po

'Mar-po' means 'which appears red'. Therefore, country which has barren lands appeared red in colour from distance called 'Mar-po-yul' or Ladakh.

Hence before Western explorers, though Chinese travellers visited Ladakh, unfortunately they were unable to talk much about Ladakh. They, only presented a hazy picture of Ladakh. Among great explorers, Alexander the great and Marco Polo visited many Himalayan countries, but nothing is mentioned of Ladakh in the Alexander's travel records. Whereas in the Marco Polo's travel records, a hazy picture of Ladakh is mentioned. But the clear location of Ladakh came into notice only after the visit of Mirza Hyder Duglat when he invaded Tibet in 1534 and wrote a book about his expedition in Tibet in 1534 entitled *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*.⁵

Thus it can safely be assumed, according to available sources—the first Western traveller who reached Ladakh was a Portuguese layman, Diogo d' Almeida. He arrived in Ladakh in 1600 and spent two years here. Because he was professionally a merchant, and when he travelled to Ladakh over the Zojila pass, he was amazed by the merchandize activities at Leh and its surrounding. He sent his report to the Bishop of Goa about his detailed study of Ladakh. Because till then the Bishop of Goa was in confusion about the place. He thought at first that Diogo d' Almeida had been to the frontiers of China where Nestorian Christians were known to be established. Thus it took some time to discover the actual position of the land that Diogo d' Almeida was in fact referring to then as yet unexplored Ladakh.⁶

Just after Diogo d' Almeida, a Jesuit father Antonio de Andrade arrived in Ladakh. He desired to penetrate China via Kashmir and Tibet. He made two successive excursions from Agra northwards. Through his travel accounts, it indicates that Jesuit's main mission was to establish their missionary at the neighbouring countries of Tibet. Later missionary work was carried by Desideri and Freyre. Hence, Ladakh was properly discovered by the Jesuits. Their mission was then to establish a Christian mission in China and Tibet. They did not establish any missionary centre at Leh or its surrounding places.

It was about hundred years after Desideri, that William Moorcroft arrived in India, later he visited Ladakh and other Himalayan countries. Basically he was a veterinary doctor, and was interested only in his research work on diseases of horses and their improvement. He, therefore came to Ladakh for collecting materials for his research work. The British authorities also helped him in his research work and allowed him to buy horses from Ladakh and Tibet. He was also expected to report on the possibilities of trade, to find out in general everything about the whole area which was then utterly unknown. About the same time as Moorcroft was in Leh, there was another traveller on the Indus road for the most unexpected reason; he was a young Hungarian scholar Csoma de Koros. Moorcroft who acted

as an official envoy of British India, encouraged Csoma de Koros, advising him to study local language. He even gave him some money for his pocket expenses. Csoma de Koros later went to Zangskar and learnt Tibetan language from local scholar. Later on, he had written many articles and books on Tibetan literature.

After Moorcroft's report, Ladakh became one of the important place for Westerners for their research and expeditions. James Baillie Fraser, with the intention to discover social-economic condition of Ladakh, visited Leh in 1815 soon after British Government deemed expedient to declare war against Nepal. Dr. Henderson also came for the same purpose in 1834. According to Borong Hugel, Dr. Henderson had great tact in observation, and an account of his travels would have been particularly valuable. Because he was the first European who had ever visited Skardo and Ladakh.⁷

G.T. Vigne came to Ladakh in 1835 and visited Leh and the Nubra valley. Later he had written a book entitled *Travels in Kashmir & Ladakh, Iscardo—The countries adjoining the mountain-course of Indus, and Himalayan north of Punjab*.

After Portuguese, the next Christian missionaries arrived during 1855. This time Moravian missionaries were Eduard Pagell and Whelm Heyde. They had established a Moravian Church and a Christian Mission school at Leh. Later Heinrich Jaeschke, Dr. Karl Marx, A.H. Franke, etc. joined the Moravian mission. They visited village to village for the welfare of people and rendered free education as well medical services. During this period many Ladakhis were converted into Christianity. Among Moravians, Heinrich Jaeschke prepared Tibetan dictionary. A.H. Franke made detailed study of Ladakhi culture and religion. He was the only man who had made detailed archaeological survey in Ladakh and its surrounding countries, and wrote a book *Antiquities of Indian Tibet* in two volumes. F. Redslop established first resident missionary at Leh and started 'Mission School'. Dr. Karl Marx was the first trained missionary doctor. S.H. Ribbach, who spent twenty years in Ladakh, had done remarkable work for the Mission as well for the welfare of Ladakhi society. Like

Franke he also made detailed study of Ladakhi Buddhist culture and tradition during his stay in Ladakh.

Though G.T. Vigne collected many plant species from Ladakh and sent them to Royal Academy of Sciences, but they were in such a bad shape that the Royal Academy of Sciences was unable to identify the same. Similarly Falconar collected many species, but nothing is known about the plants which he collected from Dras area, the second coldest place in the world, where the temperature during winter drops to -60°C . Therefore since 1860 nothing was much known about plant species in Ladakh, the arid cold zone in higher Himalayan belt. In 1862, William Hay made collection of plants from Rupshu to which Hooker had access. Though his work was not published, yet it was considered important in the field of botany. Forsyth, Golden Trotten, though came to Ladakh on a political mission with the interest of watching the activities in Kashmir and Turkistan, published a list of 412 plants collected from Ladakh and Yarkand during the period 1873-74. Out of them about 276 plants were collected from Ladakh only. It was the first publication in Botany when a list of plants from Ladakh was published. Moreover, Stewart and Meebold made detailed study of plants in Ladakh and Kashmir. They came to Leh during 1905-12 and covered 'Khardung', the highest pass of the world.

G. Knight, S.H. Ribbach, A. Reene Heber and his wife Kathleen, G.T. Vigne, Frederic Drew, Marco Pallis and M.L.A. Gompertz 'Ganpat' collected informations about Ladakh for social researches.

Stolitzsky was the famous geologist from Austria who came to Ladakh around 1867-69. During this time Frederic Drew, who was also geologist, conducted important geological survey in Ladakh and its surrounding areas.

Among the famous explorers, he travel records of Hayward, Robert Shaw, Deasy, Mrs Isabella Bishop, Francis Younghusband and Seven Hedin are important. They draw a beautiful picture of Ladakh and other important Central Asian countries.

Francis Younghusband, though not a mountaineer, gave information about important mountains, among which Mount Everest was included. During his period, Johnson was the only one of the great mountaineers who scaled many mountains around Leh-Ladakh. In 1947, soon after India got independence, William O'Douglas, a judge of the Supreme Court of the United States visited Ladakh, and like Johnson, he also scaled many peaks near Leh.

Alexander Cunningham and A.H. Francke were the only Western historians, who had done considerable work on Ladakhi history and culture. Besides, Giuseppe Tucci and L. Petech were among the famous historians from Italy who had done authentic research work on Ladakh and Tibet.

Giuseppe Tucci, David Snellgrove and Tadeusz Skorupski were renowned scholars, who made extensive study on Buddhism and cultural heritage of Ladakh. Their work especially on monasteries and their paintings got popularity.

Hayward, Robert Shaw and Sven Hedin made remarkable journey to Ladakh and Central Asian countries. Their survey works were important for geography scholars, therefore, they were awarded by the Royal Geographical Society for their contribution in geographical study of then unknown regions of high Himalayan belt as well as for Central Asian countries.

Prince Peter of Greece was perhaps the only scholar of his time, who had done detailed study on anthropology of Tibet, Lahul, Rupshu and Ladakh. His work is an authentic research on Ladakh for anthropology students.

Thus Ladakh attracted many scholars, particularly from the West during 19th century. But due to political disturbances it remained cut off from rest of the world till 1974. With the result that only a few scholars visited Ladakh for research work. Still today, only in a few fields some scientific work has been carried out. Therefore, to explore more and more research fields, this study on 'Famous Western Explorers to Ladakh' will help the researchers to conduct their research work smoothly.

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