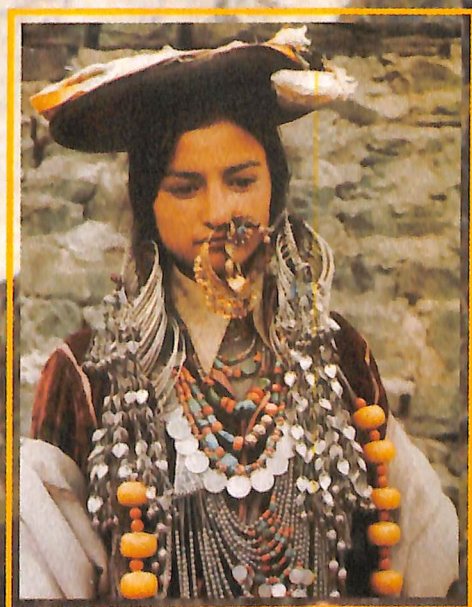


Development of Ladakh Himalaya

Recent Researches



Editor

DEVELOPMENT OF LADAKH HIMALAYAS Recent Researches



Editor

PREM SINGH JINA



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Preface

Ladakh 'The Abode of Nature' was once the kingdom of ancient races viz. Mons, Dards and Tibetans. It is believed that—the Indo Aryan Mons from across the Himalayan range, the Dards from the extreme western Himalayas, and the itinerant nomads from the Tibetan highlands had their early colonies in Lower and Upper Ladakh respectively. Today we have Buddhist and Muslim culture in dominance. There are indeed Indo-Aryan culture in a few pockets but this culture is influenced by both Buddhist as well as Islamic culture that is, the Dokpa villages which are in Kargil district are influenced by Shia culture of Islam and villages those are under Leh district are influenced by Mahayani Buddhist culture.

Ladakh, the gateway to the Central Asian countries, once served as an important trade and transit centre of central Asian countries. Numerous caravans carried exotic merchandise comprising silk, brocade, carpets, felts, tea, poppy, ivory, etc., to Leh and after exchanged these with other traders returned to their destination-China, Tibet, Yarkand and Kashmir. Now, since 1974 summer travellers of European countries have replaced traders of past and Ladakh has regained its importance as centre of travel-related activities.

The present volume is the product of thirty three chapters written by eminent scholars of Ladakh. Dr. Prem Singh Jina is the main contributor, he has written sixteen chapters on various topics— 'Paintings in Phyang monastery of Ladakh', 'A look at Bhoto society in Ladakh', 'Tourism and changing environment', 'Sindhu Abhyaan (Sindhu Darshan)', 'Rinpoches on Ladakh', 'Lamas of Ladakh', 'Gesar Epic of Ladakh', 'Dards of Ladakh and its adjoining areas', 'Monasteries of Ladakh', 'A Case Study of Tashi Ga-tsal Monastery of Choglamsar', 'The Ecology of wild life of Ladakh', 'Grazing free and Begari System in Ladakh' 'Life-Style of Changpas of Chang-Thang in Leh-district', 'Morup, Namgail a famous Ladakhi Artist', 'Famous mGonpa dkar-

brgyad in Nubra valley of Ladakh', 'Bhoti and Arabic influence upon Dok-culture of Ladakh', and 'Ancient trade route via Balumkhar to Central Asia'. In addition to these he has written six chapters with the help of others scholars— 'Dok-pa', 'An Aryan Race of Ladakh', with Jamyang Gyaltsan, 'Ladakh' Before and During the Indo-Pak war (1947) with Rev Konchok Namgyal, 'Historical Background of Ayu Kalon of Ladakh', with the help of Tsering Sonam', 'Origin and growth of Ladakhi Medicine (Amchi) System along with Dr. Thinles Yangzor', 'Buddhist Art in Ladakh', 'A Case Study of Sumda Valley', with Tsering Tundup Gojing Pa and 'Some rock, stone, wooden sculptures of Ladakh', with Mrs. Manju Jina, and 'Buddhist Monasteries in Ladakh', with Jamyang Gyaltsan. He also translated two chapters— 'Hemis Tsechu of Ladakh' of Jamyang Gyaltsan and 'Chortens of Ladakh' of Tsering Sonam.

Dr. Sonam Angchok has written on 'Physical Fitness Norms for High and Higher secondary students of Ladakh'. In his paper he used Modified Fleishman's Physical Fitness Test Battery. Dr. Saxena highlighted the travel account of Izztoollah, travelled Ladakh during 1812-13. Dr. Lobzang Tsewang has contributed two papers, 'Bhoti in Himalayan Culture : A Case Study of Ladakh', and 'Preservation and promotion of cultural Heritage of Himalayas region. 'A special reference to Ladakh Himalaya'. In his first paper he emphasised the importance of Bhoti language in the development of Buddhist culture and religion. Henceforth, he favoured to recognise Bhoti language under Indian Constitution. In the next paper he gave the detail picture of Ladakhi culture. Prof. Dembi read the Kharoshti inscription discovered by Francke near a bridge at Khaltse and proved that Kushana conquest Ladakh 2nd century A.D.

Abdul Ghani Sheikh made a descriptive study on wild life of Ladakh and in his paper he said :

"The wild life of Ladakh with its fascinating landscape and background have great attraction for the tourists".

He suggested Government should arrange exhibition of wild animals at their habitats which would promote. "Shooting with Camera" instead of with the gun.

Father C.D. Sebastian, presented his paper on 'Sa-skyapa order and Ladakh'. He gave detail historical facts of Sa-skyapa order and explained how this order introduced in Ladakh.

Prof D.D. Sharma made Linguistic Approach and contributed his paper on 'Linguistic Approach to Cultural Analysis of Ladakh Himalayas.' He also studied Ladakhi culture through the angle of language. He used linguistic terms in order to explain Ladakhi culture, social customs, rites and rituals.

Thus, the present volume is the outcome of thirty three papers written by different scholars in various fields of Ladakh. I hope this book will be useful for readers and research scholars of India and abroad who are interested to do their research work on Ladakh. Besides, it will become a guide tool for tourists who want to see Ladakh more correct and accurate.

Dr. Prem Singh Jina

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I owe a deep sense of gratitude to Prof. Maya Ram, Retd. Director, U.P. Higher Education and Dr. R.S. Tolia, Principal, Secretary Uttaranchal whose keen interest in my study on Ladakh has always been source of inspiration.

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Introduction

Ladakh, the northernmost region of India consists of a high-elevation dry land of rocky mountains and open plains north of the main Himalaya and south of the Karakoram mountains in the state of Jammu and Kashmir.¹ During olden days it was popularly known 'Kie-chha'. This name was given by Fa-Hien, who visited this part of the world in 399-400 A.D. Some historians have an opinion that during third or fourth century people who lived in cold arid valleys surrounded by snow mountains and totally dependent upon snow water, were called 'Kie-chha-pa'. Probably Fa-Hien was influenced by this word. Moreover, one may not firmly relate this word 'Kie-chha' only for Ladakh, it would be used for other regions of Central Asia. However, through Fa-Hien's travelogue it is easily understood that in those days travellers or traders came to Ladakh via two routes:²

- (1) The western route through 'Kukyar'
- (2) The southern route via 'Rudok'.

In seventh century A.D. Hiuen Tsang passed through Ladakh. He called it 'Mo-lo-pho'. According to him, it was

"A country probably situated about three hundred miles in the north of Shimla called 'Mo-lo-pho'.³

In my opinion 'Mo-lo-pho' was later corrupted into 'Mar-yul'. During 10th century A.D. Tibetan scholar Lo-tsa-va Rin-chen-bzang-po visited Kashmir via Ladakh. He used 'Mar-yul' for Ladakh and constructed many chortens and temples throughout in western Tibet including Mar-yul.

Besides 'Mar-yul', Ladakh was also known by different names, for example, Sanskrit Pundits called it 'Huna Desh' and Kashmiri scholars pronounced it 'Bhutan'.

During 16th century western explorers started visiting Ladakh. They renamed Ladakh in their own ways, e.g., some called it 'Land of lamas' and others 'Western Tibet', etc.

After independence Ladakh became an integral part of India and remained under Jammu and Kashmir state, however, known by 'Ladags' which later got gradually corrupted into present name 'Ladakh'.

Thus, till 10th century A.D. Ladakh was under 'Naris-skorsum' which comprises three provinces: La-dwags (or Mar-yul), Gu-ge (pron. Kuke) and Pu-hrang (pron. Purang). Later during the 19th century Central Tibetan Government had taken Guge and Purang provinces (except Menser village). In 1962 China occupied major portion of Ladakh, thus present Ladakh has only 1/3 area of the Greater Ladakh.

In 1947 the British Government finally quit India together with the Princely states of India. Seizing this opportunity, Pakistan mounted a major military offensive upon the state of Jammu and Kashmir. On 24th October 1947 His Highness Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir Riasat appealed to Government of India for military help and to include J&K state under Indian Republic. On 27th October 1947 the accession of J&K state in India was accepted by the Government of India. Three days later Indian troops were airlifted to Srinagar. It took not much time to repel the enemy. Then with Kashmir, Ladakh also came under the administrative control of Indian Government. Pakistan did not digest this incident and occupied Skardu and Gilgit region from J&K state. Since then Ladakh is surviving strategically as an important frontier of India.

Today the administrative system of Ladakh is looking by the I.A.S. officer till 1980 the I.A.S. officer appointed as a Deputy Commissioner, thereafter it divided into two separate districts: Leh and Kargil; subsequently administrative powers were also divided between two Deputy Commissioners.

In 1989, Ladakh Buddhist Association agitated for S.T. Status of the region, which was eventually granted by Central Government. The State Government later made a notification under the State Constitution on 7th October 1989 vide GSR 882 (E) by the order of President of India Shri R. Venkatraman declared Ladakhis 'Scheduled Tribe' with this success in 1993, Ladakh Buddhist Association again agitated against State Government's unfavourable attitude towards Ladakhies. This time Ladakh Buddhist Association decided to start a joint agitation with Ladakh Muslim Association for Ladakh

Autonomy. This agitation lasted for about one year. At last the President of India accepted their demand and on 9th May 1995 he approved the 'Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council Act'. The Act envisages an Autonomous Hill Development Council for each district: Leh and Kargil, and an inter-district advisory council for the Ladakh region as a whole which the State Government may constitute in consultation with the Councils of Leh and Kargil. But people in Kargil district did not agree to form Kargil Autonomous Hill district Council. Moreover, Buddhists in Leh district were happy with the Government's decision to form Ladakh Autonomous Hill Council in Leh District.

On 3rd September 1995, 30 councillors took oath. Among these councillors 26 were elected and four were nominated by Governor of Jammu and Kashmir state. The oath ceremony was witnessed by the Governor K.V. Krishna Rao. Later councillors elected Thupstan Chhewangas Chief Executive Councillor. He thereafter nominated four executive councillors named : Rev. Kyabji Thiksey Rinpoche, Rigzin Jora, Akbar Ladakh and Sonam Dawa. Rev. Kyabji Thiksey Rinpoche later resigned due to some differences with Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council's senior executive councillors. Tunchup Sonam was given Executive Councillorship in place of him. In the following year on 28th June, 1996 Akbar Ladakhi passed away. The absence of two senior leaders of Ladakh was a great setback to the Council. Thus, the Hill Council was not able to get sufficient financial assistance from state Government in order to develop Ladakh economy. The state's unfavourable attitude for Hill Council's function created tense atmosphere. However, to get the political support from Ladakh Dr. Farooq Abdullah favoured the nomination of Rev. Thiksey Rinpoche for Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha). Finally in April 1998 Thiksey Rinpoche became M.P., later Dr. Farooq Abdullah decided to give support to Atal Bihari Vajpayee Government at the Centre. His son Omar Abdullah was taken in as Union Minister.

In June 2000 Dr. Farooq Abdullah alarmed the Central Government for the state autonomy that is seeking restoration of the pre-1953 position in Jammu and Kashmir. In Ladakh all the senior Congress leaders and the Ladakh Buddhist Association did not favour the pre-1953 position of Jammu and

Kashmir State. However, they asked the Central Government to grant Union territory status to Ladakh in order to keep the distinctive ethno-cultural identity of Ladakh.

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PART I
Culture, Language and Religion

1

Linguistic Approach to Cultural Analysis of Ladakh Himalayas

D.D. Sharma

It is of general knowledge that every cultural activity, major or minor, has a definite linguistic term to denote it. Etymological terms serve as an epitome of the form and the function of the cultural elements or objects for which they stand. The language, an account of its conservative character, preserves and transmits them faithfully from one generation to another. As such it is the most trustworthy repository of the cultural heritage of speech community.

There are many social customs, rites and rituals of the tribals which otherwise have become a thing of the past, but are still traceable through their linguistic terms. But before coming to the problem it may not be inappropriate to say something about the basic nature of culture and language in general. This would not only give us insight into these two fundamental components of our social life but also will better equip us to appreciate the analysis.

Culture, though abstract in itself, manifests itself through the visual and concrete, e.g., art, architecture, paintings or religious performances.

It is, like language, a socially acquired knowledge. In both the cases the acquisition of this knowledge is either by direct instruction or by watching the behaviour of other members of the community. Cultural heritage is in many ways distinct from biological heritage. In a given society, in order to be acceptable to its other members one has to operate within the traditionally

established social norms. Thus 'Culture' is a knowledge which we learn from other people, and language becomes a potent vehicle to preserve as well as to transmit the cultural knowledge to members of the speech community.

There is an intricate relationship of language and culture which can be decided by socio-linguistic terms, largely manifested through various terminological and non terminological expressions. No doubt, speech has relatively high autonomy, but culture could probably not originate without language and language could be nearly empty without culture.

Language and society can not be separated. Language has its relevance with its society, Thus, it is so intricately interwoven in the texture of society that one cannot think of a society without a language and of a language without a society. The two are quite inseparable and co-existent. Any change in one is bound to bring a consequent change in the other.

A language, besides performing its function of verbal or written communication also serves as means of communicating the socio-cultural aspects and historical information of its speakers. It being the principal vehicle of social communication its socio-cultural oriented study is a very reliable source of knowledge of the past and present socio-cultural setting of the speech community concerned. Besides, it has also been noticed that not infrequently, such a linguistic information is a perfectly trustworthy evidence to determine the earlier history of the speakers of the language who otherwise have no record, whatsoever, of their past. A language based socio-cultural study, sometimes also provides clues even of the people who otherwise have totally disappeared from a particular region.

However, study of various terms and modes of address and greetings or of kinship terms is an important source to understand the socio-cultural ethos of the speech community concerned. For instance, prevalence of identical kin terms for maternal uncle, father's sister's husband and father-in-law (e.g., *azang* in Ladakh) and for the maternal aunt, father's sister and mother-in-law (*ane*) is a pointer to the cultural facet of the Ladakh Himalayas in which cross-cousin marriage is or was a socially sanctioned system. Further, the mode of address as between sister and brother and the father of the boy and the mother of the girl and vice-versa confirms the prevalence of this system in this region.

The peculiar marriage custom of Ladakhis where the father of the boy leave him to stay with the joint family or may leave parents house and parents along with unmarried children and stay in a newly build house. This indicates that newly married woman, (i.e., wife of son) holds a superior position than the parents of the boy.

A Socio-linguistic analysis of euphemistic expressions and linguistic taboos also is a potent source of a given speech community. The former are a point to the ethical or moral outlook of its members towards certain objects and acts, and the latter have the potentiality of unfolding the mysteries of the superstitions and beliefs that the speech community has nourished or inherited. In this regard, an equally important but still unexplored linguistic area is the analysis of social code terms which contain, in a very subtle form, the deep rooted socio-cultural traits and practices of the speech of the community concerned. For instance, swearing trinity of gods, *konchok sum* by the Buddhists of Ladakh is a clear indication of their association with the Buddhist culture of the region.

Now coming to the real problem of Buddhist culture in Ladakh, it may be pointed out that though Buddhism as a religion discipline has its specific dimensions with regard to metaphysical considerations and religious practices, yet the same is not true of the cultural traits of its followers.

The history of the spread of Buddhism tells us that in its outward journey it was embraced by people belonging to different racial and social groups and climatic conditions, already having their respective socio-cultural bases. Under the circumstances the cultural milieu of all the followers of the Buddha could not be uniform. The uniformity, of course, could be at the level of religious practices, art and sculpture, though there too, the geographical impact on these patterns cannot be overlooked. The local cultural variations are observable both in their visual forms and abstract concepts.

Here we will study linguistic manifestation of the Buddhist culture in the Ladakh region. Lets take socio-cultural facets—

Socio-Cultural Facets

When all the other means of treatment of a sickman are exhausted and he is on the verge of death, a lama prepares an

effigy of the dying person and attires it as male or female as the case may be. After performing a ritual it is taken as in funeral procession along with lama musical instruments to a cross road during night. There while consigning the dummy to flames a man cries loudly that "so and so" is very sick and should be cured. After that they return home with a trust that the death has been averted and the sick will be alright.

The other term related to a post-death ritual is Lamaston. Among Buddhists of Ladakh the dead body of a person is not cremated immediately. It is kept for there to seven days, depending on the status of the deceased. The corpse is kept in a sitting posture in a room with the soles touching the ground. During this period the lamas read the scriptures by the side of the dead. This ritual is known as Lamaston.

An equally important and related to post death rituals of the cultural life of Bodhis of Ladakh region is termed as Yangkhuk. Etymologically, yang means calling faith. Its object is to retain the prosperity which otherwise may go with the outgoing soul. It is performed by a lama at the time of the departure of a soul from a house. The term 'phowa' which belongs to post-death ceremony is one of the important term of the Buddhist culture.

There is a term 'Rik-sum-gompo' (Trinity of Lords) universally used by the Buddhists of Ladakh region. It stands for the trinity of Buddhist pantheon viz. Arya Manjusri, Arya Avalokitesvara and Arya Vajrapani. According to the tradition, the figures of this trinity representing yellow, white and blue colours, respectively, are either made of clay, or carved on stone, or wood, or are drawn on paper and put on doorheads to ward off the entrance of various evil spirits passing that way.

Similarly, there are a number of terms in Ladakh which are indicative of various cultural traditions, followed by the inhabitants of these regions. One of such term is 'Tsha-khang' standing for a particular type of structure raised to house the images and a little medallion figure of a lama, made of a little portion of his ashes mixed with clay. It can be compared with the tradition of 'pratimāgriha' (image room) of the kings of the solar dynasty, as referred to by the poet Bhasa in his *Pratimā Nāṭku*, like Tsha-khang, erection of Dung-tan in the memory of a dead person is another form of the cultural tradition of the Buddhists of the repository of the relics of an honoured person

such as a lama, a king or a person of great importance. In case of a lama the relic could be his body as well, but in other cases it is their ashes only.

Another Linguistic relates to a post-death ritual 'Lamaston'. Among Buddhists of the Ladakh region the dead body of a person is not cremated immediately as said earlier. It is kept for three to seven days depending on the status of the deceased. The corpse is kept in a sitting posture in a room with the soles as 'En-dum chorten' the lateral meaning of which is 'En' discord 'dum' binding/bringing together, thereby conveying the meaning 'an accord'. According to cultural traditions of Buddhism in this part of the country such a *chorten* is erected to commemorate the event of an accord of two disputing Bhikshu Sangha of Buddhism: structurally, it differs from the other types which are so common in Ladakh.

The cultural vocabulary of Ladakhi has another interesting term called 'mesol'. It is a ritual performed at the time of Losar as an integral part of it. According to the celebrations of Losar which start from the first day of the eleventh month of the Tibetan Calender, 'Lhato', the seat of family deity, is replaced daily with a new one called 'Lhasol'. Immediately after the 'Lhasol' a male member goes to the family with a big semi-circular cake of flour. He lights up a lamp on the grave and places small pieces of cake, meat and other eatables thereon. He loudly calls the names of the deceased members of the family where 'chang' and cakes are served.

It would be interesting here to make a mention of the terms which form the part of the cultural vocabulary of Ladakh dialect. These are Khang-chen (Lit. a big house). The currency of these two terms for 'house' is an indicative of prevalence of the cultural trait, known as primogeniture system, according to which the eldest son alone inherits the ancestral property. There the aged parents voluntarily give up their right to ancestral property, as soon as the eldest son is married, and retires to a nearby small house to live in, leaving the ancestral big house 'Khang-chen' for the eldest son who now becomes the sole legal owner of the ancestral property. Other sons and daughters either entirely become dependent on their elder brother or retire to the monastic order. As in other shapers of cultural life in the field of art-architecture, especially of temple architecture, sculpture or

iconography, mural painting or scroll painting, liturgy or spiritual performances, too, there are hundreds of technical and non-technical terms which when analysed linguistically throw a flood of light on their contemporary religious-cultural practices in their territorial settings. Besides, a textuo-linguistic analysis of such terms occurring in ancient and medieval texts of the Buddhist literature, can be successfully exploited to draw a trustworthy picture of these objects of religio-cultural life in the given period of history. Moreover, a contextual analysis of these terms can also help us in assessing the relevance and impact of art and sculpture in Buddhism. Various technical terms relating to structures of *gonpas* and *chortens* (Chhortens), forms and postures of icons of various deities of the Buddhist pantheon. Size, form and colour of scroll paintings (Thangkas and mandalas) when studied in their respective contexts are sure to yield quite faithful result of these aspects of Buddhist culture in the past and the present. For instance, a structural analysis of the elements denoted by the terms *ghi*, *gya*, *wang*, *tal*, etc., in the preparation of a *mandala* can give us an inside into the spirituo-cultural aspect of these formations in spiritual performances in Buddhism. The eight terms standing for eight types of chortens in the Ladakhi traditions are indicative enough of their structural peculiarities.

The few examples of the cultural vocabulary of Bodhis of Ladakh region as explained above, are enough to draw the attention of scholars to explore this source of the cultural study of the tribes living in the interior part of India.

A Look at Bhoto Society in Ladakh

Prem Singh Jina

Ladakh has two districts : Leh and Kargil. Leh is dominated by Bhotos whereas Kargil has Muslims of Shia sect in majority.

Though Bhotos do not believe in caste system, we can see some social classes in their society viz. Kalon, Lonpo, Mon, Gara, Beda, etc. Mon, Gara and Beda families considered lower class. Higher class families generally don't allow them in their worshipping room, (i.e., *chot-khang*) where their family god or Pa-lha resides. Ribbach said that Bedas are considered as unclean person by the higher Buddhist families. He remarks :

“One must take special care not to provoke the Pa-lha (father god). He is terrible in anger. If an unclean person – a Beda – enters the house or even touches the hearth, or if by mistake someone burns an old rag, dog's excrement or something like that in the hearth then, the Pa-lha becomes angry. It costs the lamas a great deal of trouble - and the householder. Considerable expense to appease the god by offering prayers and exorcisms and thus restore peace.”¹

It is said that Mons came in Ladakh much earlier to Mongolian tribes, However, they had good number of colonies in Zangskar later Skide Nima Gon called some Mons from Zangskar, to play music. Mons accepted king's request. Mons were good musicians, therefore, King offered them land near Leh. In later centuries when Bhotos became dominant in Ladakh they did not like Mons' society, however they invited them in all auspicious occasion for playing music. This tradition still continues and Mons still remained at their lower position in

the Bhoto community. Ribbach explains the Mons position in the following way :

“Mon called Chospel from neighbouring village had come in late one evening. He was refused entry and had to wait outside for a long time away from the house. Meanwhile the first of the monks had a flat pan fetched for him and told Namgyal, I’ll show you how to perform a fire—offering to conciliate the bad spirits. Namgyal had put all kinds of food leftovers into the pan—bread crumbs, flour, rice, bones, onions and salt. Glowing charcoal was placed on top so that the house was filled with a thick, stinking smoke. All the inhabitants of the house went down through the stable to the front door which the monk opened and then threw out part of the smoking contents of the pan over the threshold. The Mon, who still awaiting admittance outside, was allowed to step over the smoking contents of the pan, enter the house and carry out his business.”²

Bedas and Mons both existed till 1981 when I came first time to Ladakh. They rambled around in tents for begging and also moved from village to village and played Daman and Surna for public. Bedas belong to both Buddhist as well as Muslim communities. However, Mons belong to only Buddhist Community. Mons in-fact are old tribes whereas Bedas came very late that is probably during 16th century A.D. when Jamyang Namgyal was the king in Ladakh.

According to another local legend that :

“Once a Ladakhi queen fell in love with her Minister. This news when King heard, he immediately expelled his Minister and ordered him to live like a begger. He had to follow King’s order. Later his descendants also got bound to live like beggers and Ladakhis called them Bedas.”³

The third major lower group called Gara. They are normally blacksmiths and manufacture plough—scissors, arrow-heads, knives, axes, stones, etc.⁴

Besides, the following families of Buddhist Community are considered high class.⁵

1. King (or rGyal-po)
2. gzims-dpon
3. nan-gner
4. mk’ar-dpon

5. gner-pa
6. s'in-dpon
7. degs-dpon
8. dkor-dpon
9. yig-dpon

rGyal-po has the highest order in Bhoto community. In olden days rGyal-po was surrounded by officials gzims-dpon (Master of Chamber), he was the main speaker for king in audience; nan-gner presented the petitions of subjects before King; mk'ar-dpon was the incharge of order cleanliness inside the residence and acted as substitute (sku-ts'ab) of King and the Prime Minister when they were absent; gner-pa was the incharge of store; s'in-dpon procured and stored wood and coal from each district (or yul) of kingdom; 'degs-dpon weighed the incoming commodities; dkor-dpon was the incharge of religions objects and yig-dpon pinned the letters of rGyal-po; bka-blon, the Prime Minister and blon-po, the Governor.

rGyal-po, Co (or jo) and Lord families of Bhotos were considered first class families; bka-blon and blon-po, the second class families and the rest little lower but also come under sku-*Drag*.⁶

There is also a religious group who perform religious duties and are considered higher class in the Buddhist Community. These are :

1. Rinpoche
2. Lama
 - (a) Gelong
 - (b) Ordinary
3. Chomo

Rinpoche is also known as Tulku or Kushok. He is the head of the monastery and responsible for special rituals. Gelong is the senior lama and performs all kinds of rituals whereas other lamas and Chomos perform day to day rituals according to public needs Fig. 2.1.

Social Change

In olden days Polyandry was very common among the Bhoto community in Ladakh. Therefore many Buddhist girls remained unmarried. They had two options : either to become Chomo or

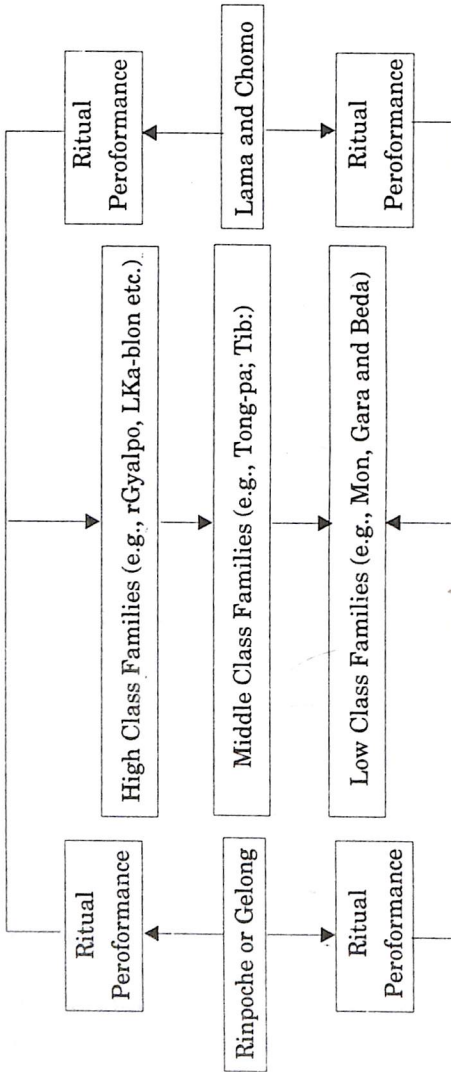


Fig. 2.1. Socio-cultural relations among Bhoto community in Ladakh.

marry with Muslim boys. This helped to increase Muslim population.

Leh was also trade centre of Central Asian traders. Muslim traders were then in majority. They came to Leh from Kashmir, Yarkand, Skardu and Turkistan. During trade affairs they had to stay at different Sarais at Leh for some days. On these occasions they happened to come in contact with young girls and later under Mutta Muslim tradition they married them. This tradition also increased Muslim population and the descendants of such marriages called Arghons.⁷

During Dogra period 1834-42 many Dogra soldiers married with Buddhist girls. Their offerings were called Ghulamzadas.⁸ After Maharaja of Jammu & Kashmir state in 1871 permitted they were allowed to do any kind of private job. Later they were absorbed in the general public.

Today Ladakh is emerging as one of the best tourist stations in the world map because of Buddhist cultural identity. However experiences point at the following changes :

1. Polyandry system has been stopped to a great extent.
2. Inter-marriages are taking place. Higher class Bhoto families have now started to get married with middle class.
3. Lower class families without any hesitation are now ready to get married with Hindus.
4. Lower class Buddhist families are now gradually changing their traditional jobs and prefer to do white collar Government job and jewellery business.
5. Many learned lamas have change their traditional lama dress. They prefer to lead family life.
6. Marriages between Buddhist girls and Muslim boys have been decreased to the lowest minimum.
7. Child marriages have been decreasing day by day among educated Bhotos.
8. We find education awareness among Bhoto families.
9. The percentage of marriages have been increased by 2 to 3 per cent per year.
10. The custom of monogamy is being followed by the educated Bhoto families. They also prefer to have only two or three children.
11. Young generation likes to live western style.

12. Cultural clashes between old and young generation can be noticed.
13. Cigarette smoking, drinking, cycling and driving are popular among Buddhist youths.
14. Mountaineering, trekking, rafting, etc., are the newly emerging games.
15. Buddhist boys, lamas and even ladies are ready to become tourist guides.

Notes and References

1. Ribbach, S.H., *Culture and Society in Ladakh* Tr. John Bray, Ess. Ess. Publication, New Delhi, 1986, p. 31.
2. *Ibid*, p. 173.
3. Jina, Prem Singh; *Ladakh: The Land and the People*, Indus Pub. Co. 1996.
4. *Ibid*.
5. *Ibid*.
6. *Ibid*.
7. Arghons : Families of half Casts (i.e., the offerings of Kashmiri or Yarkandi Muslim with Bhoto women).
8. Ghulamzadas : The slave, born. The theory was that being out of wedlock, under which it is usual practice that they used to receive their daily bread from J & K Maharaja Govt., and to give, unwillingly their labour in return viz. wool-cleaning Cf. Drew, Frederic : *Jammoo and Kashmir Territories* Cosmo Pub. 1971 (Reprint). p. 244.