

**REIMAGINING LADAKH THROUGH 19TH
CENTURY ENGLISH TRAVEL WRITINGS**

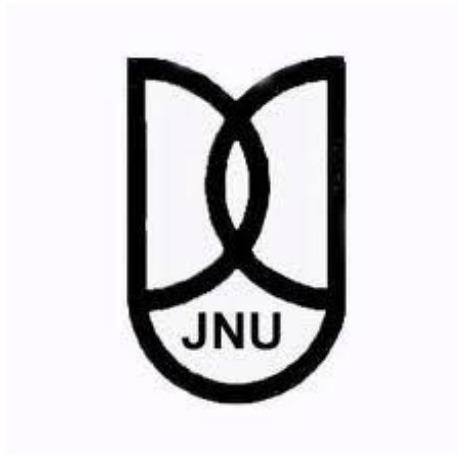
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by

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DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled "Reimagining Ladakh through 19th Century English Travel Writings" submitted by me for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other university.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Travel writing is an interdisciplinary genre, which in the last few decades has emerged as an important area of study. Travel involves a movement from a familiar location to an unfamiliar place, one that is completely different from one's home. This difference often questions one's identity and brings into purview the ideas of 'selfness' and 'other'.

The imaginative encounter of the English travellers with the people of Ladakh began on a significant scale from early nineteenth century onwards with the commencement of British India's interest in the geo-political significance of the region. As a result, a number of travel narratives were produced throughout nineteenth century, which also forms the core collection of travel literature on Ladakh.

Travel Writings, apart from supplementing the readers with the reflection of travel experiences of the travellers, also sheds light on the various issues like colonialism, multiculturalism, identity, gender and imperialism, which comes along with the cross-cultural contacts between the traveller and the land of natives.

Travelling during the colonial era witnessed a movement of travellers from west towards the artificially created exotic lands of East, which resulted in the close-up confrontation of societies which stood in complete contrast to each other, often putting forward few fundamental questions. How does travelling and travel writings reflects the idea of identity and with it the question of 'self' and 'otherness'? How does a traveller's personal identity influence his perception of the society of the 'others'? How does a traveller on coming across with a distinct society perceive his own identity with regard to this situation and how does this experience of otherness affects the sense of identity of the traveller or possibly leaves unaffected?

Ladakh, owing to its remote location and hostile geographical terrain, for centuries has been the least accessible region in the Himalayas, as a result only a handful of foreign travellers and explorers could actually manage to trespass these physical borders of the region. Also because of the nomadic tradition of the region and lack of writing tradition among the locals, there are hardly any written sources available on Ladakh, which often leaves the historians and researchers with a blurred picture of the region, when it comes to revisiting and reorganizing the history of Ladakh. Hence the writings of these

western travellers, if properly analyzed and researched, could open up a lot of new channels in the field of future research works on Ladakh, which so far has been lied buried in these travel accounts.

Various researchers and scholars in the last few decades have time and again referred to the travel accounts of these travellers, but the usage of these travel literature so far has been restricted only either as reference to support the sociological research on the region or in some cases by various historians and ethnologists to gather the empirical facts out of it. However, a very little work has been to do a detailed analysis of these travelogues and to extract the maximum out of it. As it is impossible to go back into the history and jot down each and every minute facts about the region, hence the only way to revisit back into the history is to immerse back into these travel writings, which is somewhere embedded in the description of these travellers.

1.1 Understanding Travel Literature

Travel literature in its simplest terms is a very broad genre of descriptive events, known as travelogue, which tells about the encounter of an individual or a group of travellers with a completely new culture, places and people. It is basically a non-fictional writing, which records the experiences of a traveller about the difference circumstances and places of his travel, and this often includes vivid description about the places of travel, historical background of the place, physical description, cultural description and a lot of illustrations depicting the uniqueness of the place. Hence, travel literature simply represents the Cross-Cultural contacts between a traveller and the places of his travels.

One of the core difference between a travel guide and travel literature is the content of the writing, as travel guide provides pragmatic information and travel advices to the travellers about a particular region, whereas travel literature is a broader area of study, wherein a place, culture and people of a particular region is being presented through the eyes of the traveller. The Travel writings of the colonial period provides a crucial insight of a native place from a cross-cultural perspective, through which a broader understanding of a native culture can be achieved.

The folklores and mythologies of every culture has instance of travels and exotic journeys, which forms the integral part of the tradition of that society having a fundamental significance, in forms of myths of its origin, or often in form of folktales

which recounts the brave journey of the protagonist and the various encounters from the journey of the travellers.

The earliest example of a form of travel literature is the description of the famous Greek traveller 'Pausanias'¹, who has provided the first written description of Greece in 2nd century AD. Similarly, the writings of the early Chinese Buddhist monks 'Fahien' and 'Xuanzang' are classic examples of travel writings from early 4 century AD.

Travel literature during medieval ages in Europe used to be the most important source of knowledge about natural philosophy. Wealthy merchants and young aristocrats often spent a of time travelling around Europe in order to broaden their horizons and to understand the places around them, and also to become more familiar with the different languages, social customs, art and culture. Travel literature during early 18th century or the "Age of Exploration" was commonly known as the book of travels, which often consisted of the narratives and diaries of the various sea travels of the European explorers. The travel endeavours of Christopher Columbus and other renowned explorers from the 'Age of Exploration' contributed an intense inducement to every literary genre in Europe. This thirst for knowledge in West was met in large by the various genre of travel literature. The study of travel literature as a critical area of study emerged during mid-1990's and later developed extensively at the dawn of 21st century.

1.2 Overview of Nineteenth Century Ladakh

Ladakh, in the contemporary world, is a major region within Indian territory of Jammu and Kashmir, bordering Chinese Tibet in the East, the districts of Lahoul and Spiti to the South, Kunlun range bordering Xinjiang in extreme north, Gilgit and Baltistan in West, and Kashmir in the south-western part of the region. With a total area of 86,904 km², the Ladakh is one of the largest region in India in terms of physical area. In terms of Physical Geography, the region can be divided into many sub-regions, Upper Ladakh (stod), Lower Ladakh (sham), Central Ladakh (Zhang), Changthang, Nubra, Zangskar and Purig (Kargil). The majority of the population in the region are followers of Buddhism and Islam, with a very little population of Christians.

¹ Pausanias was a Greek traveller from 2nd century CE, whose work 'Periegesis Hellados', also known as "Description of Greece" is considered to be the earliest available evidence of travel literature. His work 'Peregesis' is a ten volume written account of ancient time Greece, detailing about the topography and and society of heart of mainland Greece. Apart from this, his work contains description of various sites and monuments, mythical and folklore traditions and various other customs and rituals in Ancient Greece.

According to Historians the earliest inhabitants of Ladakh were Dards and Mons, who could have possibly migrated from the neighbouring regions of Central Asia and mainland India, and settled down in Ladakh around 4th and 5th century AD. Among them the Dards were believed to have settled first on the lower basins of Ladakh, followed by the Indo-Aryan race called “Mons”. It is believed that the history of Ladakh till late 9th century was a sort of Proto-history, as there are no written records about the region before the foundation of first kingdom of Ladakh in 9th century. Ladakh for the first time emerged on the pages of history with the disintegration of the Tibetan empire, which came short after the death of the famous Buddhist persecutor “Lang-Darma” (Petech, 1977).

Hence, with the foundation of Kingdom of Ladakh by Nima-gon soon after the disintegration of Tibetan Empire in 842 AD, we have the first remarks of Ladakh as a kingdom, also known as ‘*Mar-yul*’² or the ‘red-land’. After the death of Nima-gon in 930 CE, the kingdom was divided among his three sons. The eldest of them ‘Palgi-gon’ got ‘Mar-Yul’ or “Upper Ladakh, the second son Tashi-gon got Guge and Purang, and the youngest son Detsu-gon got Zaskar and Spiti. Although, historically the founder the Ladakh Kingdom was Nima-gon, however the actual true Kingdom of a separate Ladakh was founded by his son Palgyi-gon (Petech, 1977).

It is believed that the successors of Palgyi-gon were weak rulers, as a result Ladakh was subjected to multiple raids from Muslim invaders from South Asia between 1400 to 1600 AD, which also marked the emergence of Islam in Ladakh. During the same time many Sufi missionaries travelled extensively through Ladakh propagating Islam in the region, of which Sayyid Ali Hamdani, Muhammad Nur Baksh are believed to be the founders of Islam in Ladakh (Abedi, 2009).

Later around 1470, the king of Basgo ‘Lhachen Bhagan’ united Ladakh after overthrowing the king of Leh and took the surname of ‘Namgyal’ and founded one of the longest lasting Dynasty of Ladakh called ‘Namgyal Dynasty’, which ruled Ladakh independently for the next couple of years till mid-nineteenth century, when the kingdom fell under the wrath of Dogra invasion in 1834. With the invasion of Ladakh by Dogra rulers in 1834 the geo-political situation of the region changed.

² Nawang Tsering Shakspo, *A Cultural History of Ladakh*. Centre for Research on Ladakh, Leh. Pp. 3.

19th century Ladakh was primarily an agrarian-nomadic tribal society. Agriculture was the prime occupation of the people, besides nomadic herding and trade. Besides the king, Monasteries were the supreme institutions in Ladakh. The religion was primarily Buddhism and Islam, with Christianity making its entry towards the end of the century, when Christian Missionaries were granted permission by the Kashmiri ruler to setup Missions in Ladakh.

1.3 Geo-Political Situation of 19th Century Ladakh

The onset of nineteenth century marked major Geo-political shifts in Ladakh, which otherwise has been ruled by independent kings, first by Palgyi-gon and his successors and later on by the kings of Namgyal Dynasty. However, from the beginning of nineteenth century various domestic and foreign factors brought a major change in the geo-political dynamics of Ladakh. Of these, the most important was the entry of British India in the geo-politics of Ladakh followed by the Dogra Invasion of Ladakh in 1834.

The beginning of nineteenth century saw the rise of the Sikh ruler Gulab Singh, who with the support of his brother built a powerful Sikh empire bordering the hills of Ladakh and plains of Punjab. Around 1834 Gulab Singh turned his towards Ladakh gathering an army of around 5000 men and placed it under the charge of his most trusted and abled lieutenant 'Zorawar Singh'. Zorawar Singh with his armed med of 5000 warriors easily toppled the primitive Ladakhi soldiers. Although, Zorawar had already annexed the kingdom of Purig in 1843, he dethroned the king of Leh in 1835 (Petech, 1977).

This was also the time when British started marking their presence in the region, first with the journey of Moorcroft in 1820 and then Dr. Henderson during the time of Dogra invasion. The travelogue of William Moorcroft '*Travels in the Himalayan provinces of Ladakh & Kashmir*' mentions about the Geo-political situation of the Pre-Dogra Invasion of Ladakh, where the King of Leh sensing the fore-coming trouble from Gulab Singh had approached Moorcroft to accept the allegiance of Ladakh towards British India. Ladakh during the time of Moorcroft's visit had to pay annual tribute to the ruler of Kashmir as a part of centuries old taxation system from the period of Mughal ruler Aurangzeb. Ladakh during the invasion from Kalmaks in 17th century sought the assistance of Mughal king, in lieu of which they had to accept the region as a Tributary under the Mughal Empire and also Ladakh had to pay annual tribute to the Mughal

King. This was later transferred to the Durani King Ahmed Shah Abdali and later on to Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Hence, this refusal by the Ladakhi king to pay tribute to Ranjit Singh and subsequently to Gulab Singh brought the Dogra forces on the doors of Ladakh in 1834, and also this is where the British India came in the frame of Geo-politics of Ladakh.

With the Dogra invasion of Ladakh, the region lost its sovereignty and the king of Ladakh was reduced to a subordinate position. Zorawar Singh placed his officer 'Juan Sing' in charge of Leh to place Ladakh under his direct surveillance. The English traveller Godfrey Vigne, an English traveller to Ladakh in 1837, mentions about the geo-political situation of Post-Dogra Invasion of Ladakh in his travelogue '*Travels in Kashmir, Ladak, Iskardo*'. The writings of the position of Ladakh to a very Ladakh ever since 10th century AD has been a part of Tibetan Kingdom which lasted till mid-nineteenth century, when Ladakh lost its sovereignty to the Kashmiri ruler with the Dogra Invasion of Ladakh in 1834, when the king of Ladakh was reduced to a subordinate position.

Under the treaty of 1809 between British India and the Sikh Empire, the Sikh Empire was recognized as an independent territory under the patronage of British India, and by no means was British India supposed to interfere beyond the boundaries of Sikh territory. However, with the onset of Great Game during mid-nineteenth century British India was forced to make her way into the geo-politics of Ladakh, though without any directly political control, yet remained a driving factor in the region (Vigne, 1842)

The western Maps to Ladakh was for the first time drawn by British in nineteenth century. British interest in Ladakh was a primarily drawn by the Great Game of 19th century. Apart from her political interest, a strong hold on the region could have marked direct control over the crossroads of the trade routes between India, China and Central for which Ladakh was the central point. This could have gained the British a direct monopoly over the trades of Pashmina, which was considered as a prized product in nineteenth century Europe.

1.4 Demarcating 19th Century Ladakh

Ladakh or the "land of high passes" in the ancient times has been one of the most important centre for trade, connecting some of the important politically and economically significant regions of Central Asia, China, Mainland India and Middle

East. The region, owing to its significant geographical position, for centuries has been an important crossroad of the famed ancient Silk-route, which once upon a time used to connect major trade centres as far as China in the East till Rome in the western world.

Nested in the mountain peaks of higher Himalayas and spread over a large geographical area with a sparse population, the physical and cultural boundaries of Ladakh has been often debated. As historically, Ladakh included the present Ladakh region, Lahul Spiti, Baltistan and Zaskar region, however, geographically this boundary for most part of the known history, has been confined only to the contemporary Ladakh region only. It's quite easy to demarcate Ladakh from its physical topography, however, culturally the boundary of Ladakh is quite debatable. Throughout the history of Ladakh, there has been constant shifts in the territorial demarcation of Ladakh, with timely inclusion and exclusion of the adjoining regions of Baltistan and Lahoul and Spiti in Himachal.

The 19th century marked a major turning point in the history of Ladakh, which gave a whole new direction to the political and geographical affairs of Ladakh. Ever since the foundation of its first kingdom in 9th Century, Ladakh has been a self-reliable kingdom without any foreign interventions. Though there had been constant battles between the kings of Ladakh and the adjoining regions of Baltistan and Guge, nevertheless, historically all of them have been a part of one single kingdom. With the onset of 19th century the region for the first time came under direct threat from outside intrusions, firstly from the Kashmiri ruler and later on from expanding footprints of British India, which overshadowed the autonomy of the region. Dogra army under the patronage of Maharajah of Kashmir has also played a significant role in shaping the contemporary boundary of Ladakh, as for most part of 19th century, both Ladakh and Baltistan, though ruled by individual native kings, yet was merely a puppet under the direct control of Kashmiri rulers, which was later bridled by the higher commands of British India.

Furthermore, the onset of The Great Game of 19th century brought Ladakh under direct surveillance of British India, resulting in series of missions led by Royal Geographical Society, in order to map this unmapped part of the world. Strategically it was of significant importance for British India to keep a strict vigilance on the Russians from the borders of Ladakh, but it also provided for the first time a comprehensive boundary of Ladakh. Besides mapping the different trade routes across Karakoram to Yarkand and other Central Asian provinces, these geographical surveys also mapped

the ranges, rivers and lakes of the Tibetan plateau, resulting into a separate demarcation of the boundaries of Tibet, Ladakh and Baltistan. The earliest such survey was carried out by British geographer and East India Company Captain Henry Starchey, who in his writing ‘*Physical Geography of Western Tibet*’ has provided the first detailed description of the physical topography of Ladakh marking its boundaries. Starchey was deputed by Lord Hardings as a part of Tibetan Boundary Commission to obtain a Geographical Survey to be submitted to the British Indian Government. Captain Strachey’s description of the physical boundary of Ladakh states:

“The name of Ladak has a local as well as a general sense; belonging originally, and still in particular, to the central district in and about the valley of the Indus, and in the middle of which is situated the capital Le. The S.E quarter of this is called Rong...Hanle occupies the south-eastern extremity of Ladak...Zangskar, i.e. White Copper, though politically a province of itself, is geographically part of Ladak, in the S.W. quarter. It includes sTot, i.e. Upper, and Sham, i.e. Lower, Zangskar...Purik comprises roughly all the Musalman country at the western extremity of Ladak, towards Kashmir and Balti: its chief districts are Purik proper, Suru or Suru Kartse, and Hembaps, which last the Kashmiris improperly call Dras, after its chief village.” (Starchey, 1854: 14)

Strachey’s physical description of Ladakh is more or less the same as the contemporary geographical area of Ladakh. except for the additional inclusion of minor parts of Gilgit-Baltistan namely the villages of Turtuk and Tyakshi recently in 1970s.

1.6 Early Western Travellers to Ladakh

Ladakh for centuries has been travelled and explored by travellers. The earliest traveller to Ladakh is unknown, however the first reference of a place similar to Ladakh could be seen in the travel writings of the noted Greek historian “Herodotus”, where he mentions about a tribe called “Dadikal” somewhere in the Himalayas, and termed them as the Gold-digging ants of Central Asia. Next around 1st Century CE, the Roman philosopher “Pling The Elder” also talks about the “Dards” or Brokpas in Ladakhi as the Great Producers of Gold. It is unknown if they themselves have travelled to the region, however these tales of People of Ladakh as Gold washers clearly indicates, that the region of Ladakh wasn’t left unexplored by the western travellers even back then.

Down the line in 634 CE the Chinese Pilgrim Xuanzang in his description of Journey from “Chulodo” (Kulu) to “Luohuluo” (Lahul) also mentions about a kingdom further in the North as “Molousuo” or “Marsa”, which would seem to be synonyms with “Mar-yul”, which is often used for Ladakh.

Ladakh came under the Tibetan influence starting from the 9th Century AC, further with the establishment of the first empire of Ladakh under King “Lhachen Palgi-Gyon” a process of gradual tibetanization of Ladakh started, which later boosted further during the period of Namgyal Dynasty. There are hardly any evidences or records of foreign travellers during this period till late 15th century. A prime supporting factor behind this could be the “Dark Ages” in Europe, when people in West under the grasp of a strong cloud of blind faith actually feared to travel and cross the domestic boundaries. Hence with the onset of Industrialization or Renaissance, a wave of curiosity to explore the world emerged in West, especially after the success explorations of Vasco-de-Gama and Columbus everyone in West wanted to reach the hidden lands of the World.

The first western traveller of this period was the Portuguese Traveller “Diogo d Almeida”, reached Ladakh in around 1600 AD and spent almost two years in the region and wrote about the region as “*It was a land run by strange Christians whose monks, recalled those of Portugal*” (Prem Singh Jina “Western Explorers to Ladakh”)

Next in the row were series of Christian Missionaries, who aimed to take Christianity to the remotest parts of the world. Though these didn’t actually leave behind any detailed accounts of their travels, however their letters and short accounts have been well edited by “C. Wessels” in his Book “*Early Jesuit Travellers in Central Asia*”.

The first of these Christian missionaries, who has possibly travelled to Ladakh was the Portuguese Jesuit Father Antonio de Andrade, who reached Ladakh on 16th May 1624 with the purpose to enter Tibet via Ladakh. Later in 1631 another two Jesuit Missionaries Francesco do Azevedo and Giovanni de Oliveiro entered the region from Tsaparang. Their short accounts published in the edited volume of “*Early Jesuit Travellers in Central Asia*” provides a well description of Ladakh under king Singe-Namgyal.

However, the most important of these Jesuits Travels were the accounts of Desideri and Freyre, who entered Ladakh somewhere between 1710-1717. Originally written in Portuguese, Desideri letters weren’t published until 19th century. Desideri travel

accounts are well documented in the book “*An account of Tibet: The travels of Ippolito Desideri of Pistoia*”, published in 1931 with a bit of editing by Filippo de Filippi. Though not actually written in the form of a travel book, however his letters and excerpts from diaries provides us enough details about his travel in the Ladakh region, including his visit to the abode of King Nima Namgyal of the Namgyal Dynasty.

Nineteenth Century English Travellers

With the onset of 19th century embarked a series of travel missions to Ladakh starting with the English explorer William Moorcroft, followed by numerous other travellers including Isabella Bird, Robert Shaw and many more. A veterinary surgeon and an employee of the British East India Company, Moorcroft is often credited as the first western traveller to Ladakh, mainly because of his extensive travel account of the region.

The writings of William Moorcroft provide the most detailed description of the region, which for decades remained as the most valued and the most reliable source of information about the region for the Europeans. Though Sir Moorcroft was probably not the first European to have travelled in this part of the Himalayas, however all the travellers before hardly left behind any detailed writing about their journeys, or even if so, their writings only talk about the existence of such a land in the closet of Himalayas. Hence the writings of Sir William Moorcroft marks as the starting point of series of travelogues on Ladakh. The travelogue of Moorcroft “*Journeys in the Himalayan Provinces of Ladakh and Kashmir*” would form the base of this research work, which provides a splendid description of his travels in the region from 1819-1825.

The exact objective of his journey to Ladakh is somewhat dizzy, with some claims that he went to the region to gather information about the finest breeding of Horse, while other claims that his main purpose was to survey the sacred Lakes of the region. However, being a military stud for the East India Company, a larger geopolitical interest and objective of the East India Company in his travel can't be ignored.

Moorcroft successful journey to Ladakh created a wave of curiosity in the West about this hidden land of the Himalayas. Especially with the publication of his travel book “*Journey in the Himalayan Provinces of Ladakh and Kashmir*” a number of western explorers were looking forward to trespass the boundaries of Ladakh. Hence soon the region region was flooded with explorers and researchers from Europe. Some of the

earliest and famous travellers of this period were Alexander Cunningham, Cosmo de Koros and G.T Vigne, who worked widely in organizing and restructuring the history and linguistic resources of Ladakh in the English language.

While there are many other lesser known English travellers of 19th century as well, whose writings though contains complete narrations of their travels and could be of immense value, however has been eclipsed by other famous explorers of the same period. A major factor behind this could be, that unlike the other noted travellers who wrote extensively on history, Buddhism and Tibetan language, the writings of these travellers were purely travel writings, as a result it failed to draw the attention of the contemporary researchers. The list of these travellers includes William Henry Knight “Diary of a Pedestrian in Cashmere and Thibet” (1863), Lieutenant Colonel Henry Torrens “Travels in Ladak, Tartary and Kashmir” (1862), Cowley Lambert “A Trip to Cashmere and Ladak” (1877), and Henry Zouch Darrah “Sport in the Highlands of Kashmir: A narrative of an Eight Months’ trip in Baltistan and Ladakh, and a Lady’s experiences in the latter country: Together with the hints for the guidance of Sportsmen” (1898).

The most important mention towards the end of 19th century is the journey of the English traveller Isabella Bird, as unlike her predecessors, she was a solo female traveller, who not only dared to cross the hostile borders of Ladakh, rather has also provided a splendid description of the Ladakhi society, customs and traditions. Her travel diary “Among The Tibetans” (1894) provides an eagle view of the Ladakhi society from 19th century, which has specific chapters on Manners and Customs, and Climate and Natural Features etc. Besides her writings provides a general observation of the local Ladakhis from a European perspective and has mentioned the Tibetans (Ladakhis) people as truthful, independent, and friendly, one of the pleasant of peoples. Her writings further include descriptions on customs, traditions, architecture, climate, material objects such as prayer wheels, women's jewellery, clothing, and animals. She also has left remarks on the limited availability of the local medicines and has described the medical treatment as 'sorcery'. She has further stereotyped the Ladakhis, as the dirtiest and unhealthy people, who manage to live long lives. Besides commenting on the local tradition, customs and religion she has also written about the local trades links to Yarkand and Central Asia.

Christian Missionary Writings.

Though the earliest Missionaries to have travelled Ladakh were the Portuguese Jesuit travellers of the 17th century, however the actual roots of Christianity in Ladakh were successfully sowed by the German Christian missionaries, who for the first time arrived in Ladakh during 1855. Among whom the earliest of the Christian missionaries were Eduart Pagell and Wilhem Heyde, who as part of their missionary works established a Moravian Church and a School at Leh. Among the Moravian Missionaries, the writings of Dr. Karl Marx and A.H. Franke provides insightful remarks on the history of Ladakh. Apart from this, Dr Karl Marx was also the first trained missionary doctor, who travelled through the villages of Ladakh to provide medical services and to render free medical services. The female English traveller towards late nineteenth century Isabella Bird reports about the progress of the Moravian Missionaries of Ladakh in her travelogue '*Among the Tibetans*'. (Jina, 1995)

The Moravian missionaries were soon followed by the Roman Catholic Missionaries from England under the banner of Mill Hill Mission, with its first missionary Fr. Daniel Kilty reaching Ladakh in August, 1888. The Mill Hill Mission unlike the Moravian Mission lasted only for a short period in Ladakh starting from 1888 until 1895. They too followed a similar strategy to penetrate into the Buddhist majority society of Leh starting a mission station in Leh, engaged in medical and educational work. The missionaries of the Hill Mill Mission wrote detailed account of their travels, their encounters with local Buddhists and their observations on Ladakhi life and culture. However, most of their writings are hidden either in unpublished archives or in specialist missionary periodicals. Thus, unlike the Moravian Church which maintains a congregation in Leh, the Roman Catholic Mission is now largely forgotten in Ladakh. (John Bray, "The Roman Catholic Mission in Ladakh 1888-1898").

Since the Moravian Missionaries were mainly of German origin, hence the prime focus of this research would be on the important English missionaries of the Hill Mill Mission in particularly Henry Hanlon and Michel Donsen (1890), who other than pioneering the philosophy of Roman Catholic among the locals, were also involved in series of dialogues and interactions with the locals. Their reports and letters to the head of Mission in England are well documented in the monthly magazines of "Illustrated Catholic Missions".

Both Hanlon and Donsen wrote widely on Ladakh and Ladakhi society and religion. Most of the works of Hanlon were original, and, if brought together into a single publication, would have made a respectable book in its own right. His accounts can be divided into four parts: Land and People; Buddhist Public Festivals; Domestic Festivities; and Religion & Sacred Objects of Buddhism. Further other writings of Hanlon also give us a detail description of wedding ceremonies and Ladakhi customs.

Hanlon wrote several accounts of his discussions with local Buddhists over religion in a series of articles entitled “Buddhist-Christian-Dialogues” in “Illustrated Christian Mission”, where he has mentioned about the obstacles and challenges they came across in transmitting the Christian Doctrine of religion among the local Buddhists. During one of his travel accounts to Nubra Hanlon mentions “In speaking of God to the people about Leh we had often found it difficult to give them the right conception. They would insist on their notion of Konchok [dkon-mchog]. Their idea of Konchok as the supreme being always seems too vague to build upon”. (Hanlon)

Though the Roman Catholic mission to Ladakh short lived for only around a decade, however the writings they left behind are of immense value. In particular, the accounts of Hanlon would give a whole new dimension to this research, as besides being a missionary, he was a traveller too, who has described about the region in his travel accounts from a religious perspective.

The work of the historian P S Jina “*Earliest Western Explorers to Ladakh*” though provides a very well description of western explorers to Ladakh in a chronological order, however it doesn’t actually provide much on the travel writings of these travellers itself. Next among the contemporary researchers, John Bray has also extensively worked on recreating the history of Ladakh using the travel accounts of some of the travellers of 19th century, however he has again limited his research work to the domain of western Christian missionaries only.

Following the same pattern, the writings of Janet Rizvi and other contemporary researchers too have focused only on certain areas of research on Ladakh, with most of the research being carried out only in historical contexts. Hence other research areas including a large number of travel writings has been completely left out. Even if little research is done on the travel writings of the 19th century, they are primarily concentrated only a handful of important travellers like Alexander Cunningham, A. H

Francke and Cosmo de Koros, while the travelogues of most of the lesser known travellers of this period has been completely ignored.

This research work would deal primarily with seven of the following research questions such as a) What are the main themes of the travel writings of the western travellers on Ladakh? b) How travel writings could be an alternative and a crucial means of study about the projection of Ladakh in the western world? c) How the society and people of Ladakh has been projected in their travel writings. d) The Question of Identity. How the notion of “Self” and “Otherness” has been reflected in these travel writings? e) How the independent Identity of Ladakh has been compromised over the years in the western writings, as the region has been often marginalized as Second Tibet or Western Tibet? f) Could an orientalist study be a thread of uniformity in the travelogues of these western explorers. g) What makes up the composition of these foreign travellers and how does it reflects in their travel writings.

This research work further deals with the following two core arguments:

- Travel writings for ages has been the most vital medium of cross-cultural contacts and exchange. Among the western travellers in the context of Ladakh too, these travel writings reflect an overall orientalist description of 19th century Ladakh.
- The travels of most of the English explorers of 19th century were somehow dictated by the colonial powers. Hence these travelogues could provide a new dimension in understanding the Great Game of 19th Century.

The study of travel writing has often been undertaken with limitations to Literature only, sometimes as a supplementary work to support ethnographical or biological related research works. This work would not merely mean an ethnographic observations of the writings of these travellers from a literary perspective, rather it would also seek to make an attempt to carefully observe the writings of these travellers and reconstruct the larger geopolitical framework of the international order, which might have persisted at that very particular time of the visit of traveller.

Further, in this work I have engaged with Travel writings of various travellers from multiple countries, however I have primarily focused on the English travel writers,

which would give a highlight of the perspective of the English interest in this region both during the era of Great Game and even after that.

In order to acquire a better understanding of the writings of these writers, it is equally important to peek into the personal lives of these writers as well, as it would not only give an insight into the personal background of these writers, rather it would also indirectly provide a picture of the society, these writers came from. As travelling in those times involved a lot of financial budget, hence only the elite section of the society, or people with royal patronage could afford these travels. Hence no doubt most of these travellers were actually members of the elite capitalists class of West or in particular Britain at that time.

The travel accounts of these travellers could be a key tool to carve out the orientalist view and perspective of the western world towards the orient. The most splendid example of this is the travel narratives of the solo female traveller Isabella Bird, which on the one hand appears as a detailed narration of the Ladakhi Society and customs, but at the same time her narratives provides a comparative analysis of the Ladakhi society with that of the European society, i.e the object of otherness which she found in the Ladakhi society.

Speaking in terms of International Relations, the travel accounts of these travellers has a lot more to offer. Especially the travel accounts of these explorers of 19th century could be of extreme importance to reconstruct and to obtain a whole different angle of the Great Game of 19th century, focusing on the minute details provided by these travellers in their travel narratives. A similar attempt has been done by Peter Hopkirk in his book “Trespassers on the Roof of the World: Journey to Lhasa”, wherein he has provided the readers a perfect blending of the travel writings and geopolitics, in order to obtain a larger framework of The Great Game and the politics encircling Tibet.

Further, this research would seek to open up a new discourse in the area of travel writings, and to come to an interlinkage between these travelogues and various others areas of social science research, which would certainly help the researchers to look the various aspects of the Ladakhi society both in the past and present from a whole new dimension. Since the contemporary research on Ladakh is still at a very infant stage with very little works done on the region with a lot of research areas yet to be explored,

hence this research would be an attempt in contributing to get the contemporary research on Ladakh to a next level.

Chapter II: Overview of Nineteenth Century English Travel Writings

Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. –Mark Twain

2.1 The Legacy of Travel Writings

Ever since the first evolution of Human Being, travelling has been associated with the existence of humans. The earliest known men, even during the stone ages were wanderers, who were on a constant journey to explore the world they were living in, no matter how small it appeared for them. Their lives, full of challenges and constant threat from other species, were short and brutish. Hence, travelling was an essential part of their lives in order to survive and to look for more possibilities available in the environment they were living. The evolution of Human race itself has been a long journey starting from a jungle somewhere in Africa millions of years ago, to the people residing on the 100th floor of a skyscraper somewhere in California, this journey has been constant. And it was indeed travelling, which actually led to the evolution of man. Another curious thing, which differentiated Humans from the animals, was that man had the tendency to record his travels, which at first was in the form of inscriptions and signs, and later in the form of detail narrations.

Moving out from the stone age and steadily progressing into small communities, especially with the development of Agriculture, which led to the creation of settlements and small cities. Although the first usage of writings, were to keep account books and to pass on symbols from one generation to the next one, by 2700 BCE human learnt to inscribe tales from his lives in clay and stones, mainly in form of pictures and other form of illustration, giving a structure to these narratives by these earlier men.

The earliest available evidences of narrations are the chronologies of the Egypt, Mesopotamia and the Sumerians dating back to 3500 BCE, which primarily deals with the rulers of these civilisations and their kingdoms, mainly those by the Pharaohs of Egypt. However, the earliest example of travel literature can be seen coming from the travelogue of Pausanias, the Greek traveller and geographer, whose description of the

city of Greece accounts as the first ever recorded travel narrative. Though the period also marked series of other Roman and Greek travellers, yet most of these travellers preferred to stay within their own cultural boundaries and surveyed only the known world. But what marks actually the milestone in the history of travel writings comes from pilgrims and the armies of ancient rulers, who travelled thousands of miles to the unknown parts of the world and jotted down some parts of their journey to be counted as narrations from their adventurous expeditions.

Ancient wars on the one hand motivated the earliest kings to travel far-off kingdoms crossing the boundaries of the forbidden lands, to expand the reign of his empire and to leave a glorious mark on the pages of history. This quest for power and glory has brought ancient ruler like Alexander the Great, the ruler of Macedonia in Greek to the foothills of Indus Valley in 326 BCE. Similarly, ancient mythology and theological developments motivated pilgrims to travel to the remotest part of the world in pursuit of spirituality. The ancient known such pilgrim was the famous Chinese travellers ‘Fa-Hien’³, also known as Faxian, who travelled to India towards the end of Fourth century AD. His travelogue is actually the bible of modern travel literature, in the sense that it records the accounts of a foreign traveller, with detailed observation and remarks on the latter’s country. Collection from the records of Faxian, which has been later published in a for travelogue was ‘*A Record of Buddhist Kingdoms*’, which provides some important and interesting information about 4th and 5th century Indian society, regarding the various kingdoms of India, trade routes, various Buddhist sites and practices. Since he was primarily a Buddhist pilgrim, so his main quest from his travel in India was primarily Buddhism and things related to it like various versions from the ancient *Jataka* tales, description about various Buddhist sites in India and about Stupa veneration.

Following the tracks of Fa-Hien, another Chinese Buddhist traveller ‘Xuanzang’⁴ entered India somewhere around 7th century CE. Although there isn’t any available self-written travelogue of of his journey, but a relay of his travel narratives, which has been

³ Fa-Hien was a Buddhist monk from China, who travelled to India between 399 to 412 CE via Central Asia, including the regions of Xinjiang and contemporary Pakistan, looking for ancient available copies of written texts related to Buddhism.

⁴ Xuanzang is also famously known as “The man who brought Buddhism East”. Xuanzang travelled to India along the ancient Silk Route in 629 CE. The prime intention of his travel to India was to obtain the Buddhist teachings from India and take it back all the way back to China.

passed through monks, has preserved the record of his travel experiences in India. Captivated by the monastic city of Nalanda and its University, Xuanzang spent almost two years in the India, educating himself more about Buddhism and mastering some of native languages including Sanskrit. Nalanda, during the 5th to 7th century CE, was a major centre for Buddhist learning in the ancient Magadha kingdom, flourished under the patronage of Gupta. The university with its liberal cultural tradition was a major centre for learning, which attracted students from near and far-off places like China, Tibet and Central Asia. The university at its peak had a rich and vast collection of books and manuscripts, so vast, about which it is said, that when it was burnt down during the invasion of Muslim king Mahmud of Ghori centuries later, it is said that “*smoke from the burning manuscripts hung for days like a dark pall over the low hills*”. (Allen 2012: 3-5)

Coming down the line towards Medieval Ages, this legacy of travel writing was carried forward by two of the most famous travellers of the Medieval Ages, namely ‘Marco Polo’⁵ and ‘Ibn Battuta’. Among the travellers of the Medieval Ages, Marco Polo is probably the most famous traveller from Europe, whose travel writings became a guide book for generations of travellers from the western, who embarked on their journeys towards the East. Though, there has been records of western travellers much before Marco Polo to have reached far east, however, there aren’t any available records of their travel. Hence, what distinct the travels of Marco Polo from his predecessors, is his detailed narration of his wonderful journey, compiled in his travelogue “*Livres des merveilles du monde*”, also known as “*The Travel of Marco Polo*”.

The travelogue of Marco Polo was the among the earliest travel narrative about the mystery of East, which till then was still a mysterious land for the western world. Marco Polo’s great travels across the ancient Silk Route, is supposedly the first ever western description about this glorious ancient trade route, which has been time and again referred by most of the English travellers, when they travelled to Ladakh and the adjoining regions much later in 19th century. Besides leaving behind the trails of the ancient Silk route, Marco Polo also created a sort of imaginary fascination among the people in western from his remarks on the wealth of of Asia, the great size of China, and

⁵ Marco Polo was an Italian merchant and traveller from 13th century, who embarked on a 24 years long journey to Asia staying a large part of his journey in the court of Kublain Khan.

its capital Peking (Ancient name of Beijing), and other Asian countries. Furthermore, Marco Polo is also believed to have met the great Kublai Khan and having spent 24 years in the court of Kublai Khan. Though the writings of Marco Polo are more sort of a fascination of the Asian world, nevertheless the book even in the contemporary world has been highly referred to refer the East.

Merely a century after Marco Polo, a formidable traveller from Morocco transcended the domain of travelling. Although his travel achievement surpassed even that of Marco Polo, covering a large distance barefoot across continents, that nobody could have ever achieved until the invention modern modes of transportation, Ibn Batutta's travel narratives has been completely disdained by the western world until 19th century, when for the first time his travelogue was translated from Arabic by the European Orientalists, to make it legible to the western world.

Ibn Batutta's journey of a lifetime started with his first pilgrimage to Mecca in 1326, and from there he decided to join a caravan of pilgrims returning to their home in Mesopotamia (Modern day Iraq), and subsequently this triggered his departure on a journey, which involved over 40 countries throughout his lifetime. What sets apart his travels from the contemporary travellers is that unlike the contemporary age of superfast mode of travel and transportation, much of Ibn Batutta's journey was covered by foot and partly by water. The trails of the journey of Ibn Batutta encompasses his land journey through Syria, Egypt, from there he crossed the Black Sea to enter the regions of Central Asia, and then to the land of Constantinople (Modern day Istanbul), which in those days was the capital of Byzantine empire. Next his voyage towards East crossing through Afghanistan and Hindu Kush, landed him in India in 1333, where after spending eight years in India and serving in the court of Delhi Sultanate, Ibn Batutta sailed along the coast of Burma to reach China. During his lifetime of travel expanding more than thirty years of his life covering a whopping distance of 73,000 miles in total, he explored most of the eastern hemisphere and almost the whole of Islamic world of Arab, India and Africa, Central Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia and China.

The journey of Ibn Batutta has been much more like of a modern day backpacker, yet with a splendid and much more comprehensive description of his journeys, than modern day travellers. Ibn Batutta's thirty years of travel forms the major part of the travelogue

“*A Gift to Those Who Contemplate the Wonders of Cities and the Marvels of Travelling*” or simply as “*The Travels*” or “*Rihla*” in Arabic. His travel narrative has jotted down every details from his journey, about the experiences during his voyage, about people, landscape, animals, kingdoms, food, culture everything.

The legacy of travel writing starting from the ‘Age of Exploration’⁶ in 15th century was carried forward solely by the western explorers, who after long aperture during the period of ‘Dark Ages’ in Europe, set out again on missions to explore the lands, of which centuries ago Marco Polo had mentioned in his travelogue ‘*The Travel of Marco Polo*’, however this time with new innovations and modern technologies. This wave of explorers, who set out crossing the tradition boundaries of Europe either to discover new worlds or to find new trade routes, succeeded in reaching the shores of India in far east and the that of America in the far west, which ultimately led to the clouding up of the globe with colonialism for the next few centuries.

These western travellers, on their journey back had a lot of tales to tell to the people back at home, about places much different from Europe, of mysterious looking people, who stood in stark contrast to the people at home in England, of the strange and curious customs of people in the East, their strange ways of lives, their religion, which strangely doesn’t believe Jesus Christ as their god. This convection of contrasting societies, resulted in the description of us vs them, about sophisticated vs barbaric society, eventually leading to a series of prejudices against these primitive societies of Asia and Africa, which is altogether known as the ‘Orient’. Henceforth the next two to three centuries, the domain of travel writings was predominantly occupied by the westerners with themes related to colonialism and imperialism. This was also the period, when the world has witnessed a strong European dominance across the globe, which lasted till the dawn of 20th century. During this same hegemony of the western world, India became a subject for the western travel writers, seeking to bring to life a society and a part of the world, which most of the people in west would never see, but yet they found it indescribably exotic, resulting in chain of such travellers.

⁶ The ‘Age of Exploration’ in Europe was a period from the early 15th century till early 17th century which marked the Europe discovery of the lands beyond the frontiers of the European boundaries. This was a period when European ships fuelled with modern machineries, travelled around the globe in search of new trade routes and colonies to feed the burgeoning capitalism of Europe.

2.2 Notable English Travel Writings of Nineteenth Century

Although Ladakh for centuries had remained an independent kingdom far off from the reach of the colonial powers, however, by the beginning of 19th century the clouds of expanding imperialism found its way to the frontiers of Ladakh as well. This was the period which brought a series of English travellers to Ladakh, and subsequently left behind detailed narrations of their travel journeys. This dominance could be seen in the travelogues. The 19th English travel missions to Ladakh marks the last reach of imperial travel mission, and how the society of Ladakh has been described in these western travelogues.

Each of these travelogues of nineteenth century are unique in the sense, that each of these travel writings were written by travellers belonging to different sections of the European society, bringing out the different perspectives of the western minds. Some of the early travellers for example were explorers commissioned by British India to explore and write about things, which would benefit the interests of the British East India. Similarly, there were travellers like Henry Strachey and Hayward, who were funded by Royal Geographical Society to contribute to the collections of the elite Geographical Society of England by mapping the remotest part of the world. Next there are other travelogues like '*Diary of a Pedestrian*' or '*Shooting in the Himalayas*', which tells about the adventurous journey of English traveller in the Himalayas looking for some adventure and some offbeat journeys. Other set of travellers were Researchers and Botanists to write a first-hand report of the unique Flora & Faunas found in this remote part of the world. Besides English, there were travellers from other parts of Europe too, prominent among whom were travellers from Germany, Italy and France.

Overall, these travel writings of the western travellers in a way constructed a set of knowledge about Ladakh, produced to deliver the curiosity of the western society about Ladakh. Starting from the travels of William Moorcroft in 1820 till the journey of G R Littledale towards the end of 19th century, these travelogues are full of descriptive information about Ladakh, among which the travelogue of William Moorcroft could be considered as the pioneer of western travel writings to Ladakh.

1) ***‘Travels in the Himalayan provinces of Ladakh & Kashmir’* by William Moorcroft**

The travelogue of Moorcroft *‘Travels in the Himalayan provinces of Ladakh & Kashmir’* is of immense value, as he was among the earliest western explorers of the 19th century, who opened up the door to Ladakh for the generations of western explorers after him. His itinerary of Ladakh, based on the rough sketch of his Indian servant Mir Izzatullah, was a masterstroke played by British India. Unlike his later English counterparts, whose travels to Ladakh came with a preformed knowledge about the region and its people, Moorcroft had the opportunity to be the flag bearer of the 19th century western travel missions to Ladakh. What he experienced in Ladakh was the first encounter of a western traveller with this remote civilization of the Himalayas. Though we have evidences of early western Jesuit travellers like Francesco do Azevedo and Ippolito Desideri to have crossed the natural frontiers of Ladakh already in early 17th and 18th century, but there has been negligible knowledge of their travel accounts in west.

Moorcroft, besides being the pioneer of western travellers to Ladakh in 19th century, was also one of the earliest traveller to have travelled extensively through Tibet, Nepal, Himachal, parts of Central Asia eventually reaching Bukhara in 1825. Although, Moorcroft died immediately of fever around June same year, however, his writings were published under the title of *‘Travels in the Himalayan provinces of Ladakh & Kashmir’* in 1841 by Asiatic Society under the editorship of H. H. Wilson.

Moorcroft was brought to India as a veterinary surgeon to look for the finest breeding of horses, which were much needed for the East India Company to maintain a strong cavalry unit. Moorcroft’s stepping into the Himalayan region came in early 1812, when Moorcroft was sent on a mission in April 1812, to obtain specimens of the Tibetan Pashmina Goat, to get a hold on to the Trans-Himalayan trade of Pashmina Shawls. (Alder 1980: 186)

Moorcroft along with an Anglo-India soldier Hyder Hearsey embarked on this mission in April 1812 passing through the territories of Gorkhas and deep into the Himalayas. Prior to this mission, the movement of Russians on the other side of northern frontiers of Himalayan range were unknown to the Britishers. Perhaps the soldiers of Company were too busy guarding the north-west frontiers of British India, that it failed to see the

gradual expansion of the Russian towards the British frontiers in the North, who had already reached till Yarkhand by then. From there, a joint invasion of Russians along with the forces of Bonaparte could have easily toppled down the crown of British India.

Though Moorcroft's mission to the northern end of Himalayan range including Ladakh, Yarkhand and Bukhara was an official move, however he wasn't actually a secret agent. He ideally was the first successful employee of the British East India Company, who could successfully penetrate into the rough and dangerous territories of Tibet, Ladakh, Kashmir, Bokhara, Afghanistan and Turkestan. Yet his fame as the most celebrated explorer of his time in the western world was eclipsed by another English traveller called Alexander Burnes, who followed the tracks of Moorcroft almost a decade after him.

Another important aspect of Moorcroft's travel writings was that he was a brilliant observer, which is quite prevalent from his accounts of Leh and adjoining regions. Moorcroft's narration provides a detailed description about everything on Ladakh as foreign observer with little or without any biased judgement about the later society and customs.

Moorcroft's masterpiece *'Travels in the Himalayan provinces of Ladakh & Kashmir'*, in spite of being primarily directed by the larger objective of East India country has produced marvelous description about the region. The key aspects of Moorcroft's travelogue forms the colonial interest of British India, with special emphasis on the trade routes, domestic situation in Ladakh, about the routes leading to the place, political relations of Ladakh with the neighboring regions like Kashmir, and the domestic productions of Ladakh including salt and Borax. Although, the travelogue elaborately mentions about the geo-political situation in early nineteenth century Ladakh, with remarks on the movements of the Russians and Chinese in the adjoining regions of Yarkhand, Tibet and Bokhara, yet at the same time a lot has been written about the domestic conditions of Ladakh. Among these his commentaries on Ladakh as an important centre for trade and the description about Leh, which during the time of his visit was with flooded with traders across Central Asia, are of commendable value. Besides this, his travelogue also includes his visit to the monasteries of Ladakh and his meeting with the king of Leh "The Khalun".

Other important mentions in this travelogue are about the physical topography of Ladakh, the taxation system in Ladakh, which as per Moorcroft description was more of a voluntarily offerings to the King and to the monastery. Next the travelogue talks about the houses in Ladakh and how it differs from rich to poor, the living condition of the people in Ladakh, which he mentions that there could be hardly any beggar seen in the entire kingdom. Apart from this, this travelogue also talks in a great detail about the nature of Ladakhi people, local customs related to marriage and other social functions, about domestic occupation of people and monastic lives of the monks in Ladakh.

Further this travelogue would form on of the key literature to study the significance of Ladakh in the nineteenth century “The Great Game”, about which will talk in detail in the subsequent chapters.

2) ‘*Travels in Kashmir, Ladak, Iskardu*’ by Godfrey Vigne

Godfrey Thomas Vigne, one of the early English travellers, visited Kashmir in 1835. Traveling widely in the region, G.T. Vigne also went to distant and at that time potentially hazardous places like Ghuzni, Kabul, Afghanistan, Ladak and Iskardo. Not only was he a prolific traveller but also a fine travel writer. In his *Travels in Kashmir, Ladak, Iskardo (1844)* he has provided an extensive physical description about Ladakh, with particular focus to the various trade routes linking Ladakh with the other parts of Central Asia.

G T Vigne travel to Ladakh was carried out under the patronage of British India, and his visit to Ladakh marks the dynamics of domestic political situation in Leh. Vigne visit to Ladakh comes with the post Dogra invasion of Ladakh led by Zorawar Singh, where the Raja of Ladakh was reduced to a minimal power. Hence his travel accounts from Ladakh talks much about the power sharing between Ladakh and the Dogra empire, which was supervised by Raja Ranjit Singh of Jammu. Hence Vigne visit marks the shifts in balance of power between the Raja of Leh, Raja Gulab Singh, Raja Ranjit Singh and also the Raja of Skardu “Ahmed Shah”.

3) ‘*Travels in Ladakh, Tartary and Kashmir*’ by Colonel Henry D’Oyley

Torrrens

One of the travellers who followed the track of William Moorcroft after reading his travelogue was the journey of Colonel Henry D’Oyley Torrrens. Although he was a

British India official, however, his travels to Ladakh was motivated by a whole different reason, i.e. the exotic wild animals of Ladakh.

Colonel Torrens travelogue '*Travels in Ladakh, Tartary and Kashmir*' in crux talks about the adventurous wildlife shooting journey in Ladakh, which is the home to many exotic rare wild species like Ibex, The Himalayan Wild Ass, also known as 'Kyang', The Himalayang Blue Sheep, Himalayan Bear etc. Beside narrations, the travelogues also has pictures of the places and people sketched by Colonel Torrens throughout his journey. This was a time, when the wider usage of camera was still unknown. Hence the sketches provided in this travelogue are among the earliest available images of Ladakh.

'*Travels in Ladakh, Tartary and Kashmir*' is a detailed narration of the journey of Colonel Torrens starting from Shimla, his arrival in Leh and his subsequent travel towards Kashmir and his experiences throughout his journey. The travelogue starkly reflects the colonial attitude of an elite western traveller, especially with his mockery of the natives and their looks. His writings has provided vivid images of the Ladakhis and their attires, their supposedly foolish nature, ugliness of the native women, drawing a powerful orientalist remarks about the natives of Ladakh.

Another important content of Torren's travelogue are his amusing stories and false statement about the natives of Ladakh. One was the tale of a cruel king of Lhasa, who ordered all women were supposed to smear their face with some sort of ugly jelly stuff to avoid the attraction of the opposite sex. Nevertheless, Colonel Torrens was quite decisive to believe its credibility, and mentions that perhaps it is the reason that even now in Ladakh, the faces of all women are smeared with some sort of varnish. This is the description and the reason colonel Torrens has provided terming the women in Ladakh as the ugliest of all races. (Torrens 1879: 206)

Besides his strong orientalist remarks, about which we will talk in the subsequent chapters, Torrens travelogue also provides some informative remarks about the Ladakh and the adjoining areas. One among them is the story of the Sikh commander, Mehta Basti Ram, whose army, chasing his dream to conquer the region of Baltistan for him, suffered heavy causality, after the sole bridge over Indus was cut loose by the Balti king. Similarly, his travelogue also has detailed description of the Dogra conquest of Ladakh and its aftermath situation on Ladakh. No doubt, this travelogue is full of sexist

and orientalist towards the natives of Ladakh, yet its significance as one of the earliest English travelogue can't be negated.

4) *'Our Visit to Hindostan, Kashmir, and Ladakh'* by Mrs J C Murray

Aynsley

Mrs Aynsley's travel narrative *'Our Visit to Hindostan, Kashmir, and Ladakh'* is the first available detailed travel description about Ladakh by an English female traveller. Of all English travellers, the one who is considered to be the ambassador of female travellers in Ladakh during 19th century, was Ms Aynsley, years later whose footsteps were followed by other female travellers like Isabella Bird and Jane Duncan. Though Ms. Aynsley was accompanied by her husband on this daring trip, nevertheless, her narrations are the first hand description of a female traveller with her own individual observations from her travels.

Mrs Aynsley's travelogue *'Our Visit to Hindostan, Kashmir, and Ladakh'*, is a classic example of travel writing in 19th century, as unlike most other travellers of her time, who detailed their journey as part of the project they were sent Ladakh from, either in the form of reports or as letters to people or societies back in Europe. In whatever way, Ms. Aynsley was neither an official of British India, or nor she was related to any of the missionaries of that time, rather it was only after her return to England two years later, the fascination of her friends on listening to the tales of her journey, inspired her to come up with a proper travel book from her journey, which would have certainly many other female travellers to embark on a similar daring task. *"A friend in England seemed pleased with some letters I wrote to him, giving descriptions of places we had visited; and thus arose the idea of a continued series of papers, which I thought might possibly interest other friends at home at some future period."* (Aynsley, 1879)

The travelogue *'Our Visit to Hindostan, Kashmir, and Ladakh'* is basically a sort of modern day travel book, which intends to give information to the travellers about the various places, starting with the journey from Kashmir. The centre piece of Aynsley's travel narrations are her description about the various customs related to Buddhism and her description of women in Ladakhi society, which is quite evident in her travelogue from her positive remarks on the status of women in Ladakh, which she found much better than many other well progressed societies of her time. From her illustrations on Buddhist customs, her travelogue talks in great detail about "Mani wall" (A Buddhist

long structure with piles of engraved stones, mainly found in Ladakh), Lamasery of Lamayuru, and the Buddhist wall paintings.

The travel achievements of Ms Aynsley not only includes her journeys in Ladakh, rather her months long extending travel in India includes many important Indian cities like Agra, Mathura, Kashmir, Delhi, Banaras etc, which she had already travelled extensively before her voyage to Ladakh. It is interesting to note that, Ms Aynsley before her coming across the primitive civilisation in Ladakh, had already witnessed the diverse and strange customs of the mainland India, which stood in complete contrast to that of Ladakh, yet she has given little or negligible space for a broad generalisation of the whole Indian society, often talking more about the diversities and differences she noticed, in social customs and rituals of all the places she visited.

Besides being a traveller, she was a well learned scholar and a historian as well, which reflects bluntly in her writings, as at various instances she has provided description about places drawing historical references. Though her travels in Ladakh was quite short lasting for only around 10 days, yet her observation and remarks on diverse subjects on Ladakh is stunning.

5) ‘*Among The Tibetans*’ by Isabella Bird

Among the Tibetans is among the earliest female travel writings on Ladakh. This travelogue from Isabella Bird provides the description of Ladakh from the eyes of a lady traveller, and marks the beginning of a new era of female travellers to Ladakh. Though, much before her almost a decade ago another female traveller, Mrs Aynsley had already travelled through Ladakh around 1879, nevertheless ‘*Among The Tibetans*’ provides the narratives of a solo female traveller, which wasn’t the case with Mrs Aynsley, who undertook this journey along with her husband.

Isabella Bird was an English writer and traveller, who spent a major part of her life travelling across the globe, and at the same time penned down most of her travel writings and published as books. One of such accounts from her travel diaries is the book *Among the Tibetans*, which has a written account of her journey to Ladakh in 1894. Isabella was the earliest female traveller who dared to cross the mysterious and forbidden lands of the western Tibet on her own, which otherwise was considered to be one of the harshest and toughest region to reach. Other than Ladakh and Kashmir, she

also travelled to many other Asian countries namely Japan, Korea, China, Vietnam, Persia and many other palaces.

Among the Tibetans, though primarily written about Ladakh, is an overall generalization of Ladakh as a region inhabited by the Tibetans, not in territorial terms, rather in cultural terms. The travelogue starts with the beginning of her journey towards Ladakh in a beautiful houseboat in Dal Lake of Srinagar. Isabella describes the hardship she faced while embarking on her journey to Ladakh and has further beautifully picturized the transition in the terrain and topography between Kashmir and Ladakh.

The travelogue has beautifully recorded the encounter of a lady from the modernized western society with the primitive society of Ladakh, which she preferred to call as “Tibetans”. *Among The Tibetans* provides a complete description of the travels of Isabella Bird to the various regions of Ladakh including Nubra valley and the vast open grounds of Changthang. Further, her travelogue unlike for other travellers before her, hasn’t restrained the journey to a particular aspect of Ladakh, rather she has colossally written about Topography of Ladakh, about land and people, customs and manners, climate, agriculture and trade in the region.

Her travelogue recounts different stages of her journey, detailing everything about Ladakhi’s, starting from their religion, customs, food habits, and her observations of the Ladakhi people and various sets of values among Ladakhi’s, which she has termed as ‘*Among the Tibetans*’. What distinguishes her writings from most of the other travelogues before her is her wide scale description of Ladakh from a feminist perspective, with particular references about women and their status in the Ladakhi society. Since there are hardly few written accounts about the culture and society of Ladakh due to inaccessibility of the region for centuries, hence, *Among The Tibetans* is of exquisite wealth.

6) ‘*Where Three Empires Meet*’ by Edward Friedrich Knight

‘*Where Three Empires Meet*’ by E F Knight counts among the most classical travel writing among all the travelogues of the nineteenth century. Written towards the end of 19th century, the writings of E F Knight has touched almost all aspects of the Ladakhi society within one book. E F Knight has given the most detailed description of every aspect of Ladakh drawing comparisons not only from the neighbouring countries, but

also putting Europe in a contrasting picture to Ladakh both from a negative as well as from a positive perspective.

“The Three Empires” from Knight’s travelogue though doesn’t clearly names the region, but the way thingd have been described, it seems with “The Three Empires”, he refers to the Kingdom of Ladakh, The Kashmir Raja and The British India, with all three of them having their own stakes in the capital of Ladakh.

Representing the image of East in the West, the travelogue highlights the western imagination of Ladakh and how E F Knight, himself being a European, could related the place with the place of his imagination, which indeed fit perfectly. E F Knight embarked on his journey to India vial Kashmir, arriving in Drass on May 24, 1891. His first encounter with the natives of Ladakh was indeed in Drass. It seems that before his travel to Ladakh, E F Knight had already been to Tibet or making an imaginary analogy with Tibet

“When one is in Ladak, one is practically in Tibet: the same strange scenery and climate, the same language, dress, and customs of the queer pigtailed inhabitants are found in both countries.” (Knight 1893: 103)

The travelogue of E F Knight illustrates the encounter of a primitive society with modernity, the example of which he has provided in an incident, where he showed his broken camera to a native, who had never seen such a strange gadget before, yet he comfortably tried to get a hold of with by trying to fix it. Knight, in comparison to the other fellow travellers of 19th, spent a vast time travelling around the villages of Ladakh and noting down all what he observed. In addition to that he has also drawn a comparison between Ladakh and the neighbouring state of Baltistan looking at the various aspects of both the two regions, in terms of economic condition, belief of the people and various other customs.

The centre stage of Knight’s travel writing ‘*Where Three Empires Meet*’ is occupied by his explicit description of the following aspects of Ladakh

1. His visit to the lamasery of the Hemis and his subsequent illustration of the Grand Hemis Festival and the so-called devil dance, which motivated the travels

of another female traveller “Jane Duncan” to Ladakh at the beginning of 20th century.

2. Lamaism of Ladakh and Buddhist practice of Idolatry, drawing a comparison with different forms of Christianity in Europe.
3. Remarks on the innocence of the natives of Ladakh.
4. Marriage system among Ladakhi families, and how it defines the power structure within a family.
5. A comparative analysis of Women in Ladakh and in other parts of the Indian society.
6. Religious tolerance of the Ladakhi people.

Besides writing his own travel experience, E F Knight’s travel narration also has remarks about other English travellers, who travelled to Ladakh before him, and in particular to the achievement of the western Christian Missionaries in Ladakh.

7) ‘*A Summer Ride Through Western Tibet*’ by Jane Ellen Duncan

Jane Duncan, once going through the pages of a travel magazine suddenly stumbled upon the description of an English traveller about his experience of a strange festival somewhere in the remotest part of the world, about which she had never heard about. This particular traveller remarks about this festival involves a strange dance in the mountains of Himalayas, where savage-looking people, wearing masks of skeletons and dreadful figures involves in a strange form of dances, which a person sitting in the comfy of an orchard in England would have never witnessed before. The description of this remote place and the illustration of that strange festival was actually about the Hemis festival of Ladakh, which astounded the traveller deeply. It was actually the well-versed description of Hemis festival mentioned in the travelogue of Edward Frederick Knight “*Where Three Empires Meet*”, which deeply affected Duncan and eventually decided to embark on her journey to Ladakh. And it was not just Duncan, rather these fascinating tales from far east inspired generations of people in west to explore the unexplored part of the world.

Although Jane E Duncan journey to Ladakh came a little late in 1904, however, the significance of her writing as among the few early western travellers to Ladakh has made it irrefutable to be included among the nineteenth century travel writings on Ladakh. Jane Duncan undertook her solo journey towards Ladakh somewhere in May

1904 with her four servants from Kashmir. Her travelogue provides us inputs about late 19th century Ladakh through the eyes of a female traveller, having written extensively about the villages of Ladakh, Land and People, customs and traditions, climate, habitations, and especially the festivals. As the main drawing factor for her journey to Ladakh was the Hemis Festival, which she attended with another traveller from Australia ‘Miss Kendall’, hence her description about the Hemis festival in Ladakh, the rituals, the lamasery of Hemis and monastic lives is immense. Besides this her narrations also includes her observation about gender and condition of women in Ladakh during that time, often writing and recording the opinions of the native women about the practice of Polyandry among the Buddhists in Ladakh. Since most of the other western male travellers have hardly touched the role of gender in Ladakhi society, hence the writings of Duncan along with Isabella Bird and Ms Aynsley are of crucial significance

- *‘Physical Geography of Western Tibet’* by Captain Henry Starchey
- *‘Shooting in the Himalayas: A Journal of Sporting Adventures and Travel in Chinese Tartary, Ladac, Thibet, Cashmere’* by Fred Markham
- *‘Diary of a Pedestrian in Cashmere and Thibet’* by Captain William Henry Knight
- *‘Visits to High Tartary, Yarkhand and Kashgar, And Return Journey over The Karakoram Pass’* by Robert Shaw
- *‘Journey from Leh to Yarkand and Kashgar, and Exploration of the Sources of the Yarkand River’* by G W Hawyard
- *‘A Trip to Cashmere and Ladak’* by Cowley Lambert
- *‘A Journey Across Tibet, from North to South, and West to Ladak’* by G R Littledale
- *‘Picturesque Kashmir’* by Arthur Neve
- *‘Ladakh, The Ladakhis, and their popular Buddhism’* by Henry Hanlon.
- *‘Tibetan Martyrs’* & *‘Among the Ladakkis’* by Michael Donsen

2.3 Major Themes of English Travelogues

Starting from the early-nineteenth century onwards, a growing number of English travellers started to produce a number of written travel narratives, which varied in terms

of genre, contents and themes. Most of these travel narratives were non-fictional writings that were written out of the individual travelling experience of the travellers, which varied from another traveller to other. However, there has been certain broad themes, which fascinated and attracted the attention of most of these travellers, which they found worthy enough to be noted in their writings. Of these some of the major themes which has been among the few important themes of these travel narratives were:

1 Land and People

The narration of a traveller about any place is bound to be different and unique, as the way a foreign traveller perceives a native place is different from what the natives of a particular place look themselves as. Hence, in comparison to the the outlook of an indigenous traveller, the narratives of an outsider often reflect the curiosity and the foreign overview of the native land.

Hence, the Land and People of Ladakh constitutes one of the major and the prime theme of the writings on Ladakh. The strange and unique way of survival of the natives of Ladakh would have contributed a lot to add on to the western imagination of Ladakh.

The western travellers of 19th century have written a lot about the natives of Ladakh, their ethnicity, which has been often doubted as ‘Tibetans’, ‘Tartars’ or ‘Chinese’. Being one of the toughest place to live, and that also with the basic minimum resources, they art of survival of people in the remote land also fascinated and contributes to the writings of these travellers. Likewise, the writings of Isabella Bird talk a great deal about the family structure, gender role within family, occupation of the people. Next the writings of many other travellers like Edward Knight, Henry Torrens and Arthur Neve has provided remarks on various aspects of the life of people in Ladakh.

And finally the writings of British India explorers like G T Vigne, Starchey, Hayward etc., has given more space to the physical description of Ladakh in their narratives, writing extensively about the rivers, mountains, neighbouring regions. This also includes a comparison between the living standards and the economy of people in Ladakh and neighbouring Baltistan area, which in contrast to Ladakh, were presumably quite poor. One of the prime reason for this has been cited as the trade centrality of Ladakh for the famous ancient ‘Silk Route’.

2 Customs and Manners

Customs and manners of any society fascinate the interest of any foreign traveller. Ladakh being home to one of the most unique and diverse cultures of the far East has obviously attracted the eyes of a lot of English travel writers. The English travelogues of nineteenth century have provided narrations about the various customs of people, like rituals, marriage customs, folk dance and songs etc.

Of all the customs and practices, the custom of marriage has been highly written about in these travelogues. Of these, the earliest description about marriage is provided in the writings of William Moorcroft. Moorcroft talks about three different types of marriages within the Ladakhi society, which at the same time depicts a direct relationship between class and marriage, that how class difference is prevalent in social customs like marriage.

Closely related to the custom of marriage, one of the strangest customs which has been highly highlighted in most of the English travelogue was '**Polyandry**'. Polyandry in Ladakh has prevailed since centuries primarily among the Buddhist population, which has been analysed by these English travellers from different perspectives. Most of the women travellers like Isabella Bird and Jane Duncan interestingly have credited the system of 'polyandry' as a tool for women empowerment in Ladakh.

“The Thibetans by no means consider that each man is entitled 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 whatever among the difference matters” (Knight 1863: 184)

Drifting away from normal trend, another male traveller Edward Knight too has described polyandry, which otherwise has been seen or described as an evil practice in these mountains, as the key reason for prosperity and happiness among the Ladakhis. He supports his statement by drawing a comparison with the neighbouring Baltistan, where Muslim men with multiple wives have rocketed the local population, however the natural resources available are limited. Hence, as a result the region has been badly stricken the local population. However, in case of Ladakh, it has helped to control the local population for centuries resulting in maintain a balance between the population

and resources. On the other hand, missionary travellers like Henry Hanlon and Arthur Neve considering it as an evil practice has highlighted it in a negative sense

3 Geo-Political Missions

The western travellers interest in Ladakh was initially stimulated by the Geo-Political interest of British India. As a result, most of the travel writings of 19th century, especially the ones of the British Indian travellers has a lot mention about the geo-political situation of Ladakh in nineteenth century. Among these the main interest of the writings of these travellers were the trade routes, political relations of Ladakh with the adjoining regions of Kashmir, Baltistan and Yarkund. Similarly, the writings of British Geographers and explorers has mentioned a lot about the physical boundaries of Ladakh, about river and mountain peaks.

4 Buddhism

The indigenous religion of the inhabitants of Ladakh, which was primarily Buddhism, is a major topic of fascination among these English travellers of 19th, which in a way posed a whole set of mystic and nomadic faith to them. Though none of these travellers have described the religion of Ladakhi people as a matter of utmost stupidity, but in a way they found the rituals and customs quite amusing, and even has questioned its validity at times, which is more prevalent in the travel narratives of the English missionaries. Among the things of interest related to Buddhism, the few things of major interest to these western writers were:

1. Buddhist Festivals and Monastic Lives
2. Buddhist Structures.

The Festival at Hemis even today is one of the most grand local festivals of Ladakh, and the writings of these English travellers provides hints about the popularity of Hemis festival even during the 19th century. Especially, the narratives provided by Duncan has mentioned about travellers from around five different countries, who had come to attend the festival.

Moving next, the Buddhist structures in Ladakh like “Mani Wall”, “Chortens” etc. has also been a major topic of fascination in these writings.

5 Wildlife Expedition

It is true that the secluded geographical location of Ladakh coupled with the curious Buddhist customs of the region, often attracted these travellers towards, but another less known factor, which otherwise fascinated these western travellers, were the wild animals of higher Himalayas. These wild species of the Himalayas, which includes wild sheep as size of ponies and giant Himalayan Beers provided a huge sanctuary for wild shooting for these western travellers. The prevalence of this trend can be seen in the writings of these travellers, where these explorers have mentioned about this exotic wild shooting quite often, among which the travel narrative of the British East India Company explorer, Colonel Fred Markham “*Shooting in the Himalayas*” widely talks about this exotic sport.

Chapter III: Orientalist Trend Among English Travelogues on Ladakh

“The Orient was almost a European invention, and has been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences.”

–Edward Said, 1978

3.1 Understanding Orientalism

Orientalism in the simplest words is a western originated ideology, which constitutes a Euro-centric set of beliefs, having existed since antiquity, however heavily impacted the people in western society at the dawn of industrialization and modernization. Orientalism, as an ideology, constitutes a Euro-centric belief about the western hegemony often synonymizing the Western culture with modernity and enlightenment, whereas the cultures of the East or that of the Orientals as the culture of Barbarism. In the core of the Idea of Orientalism lies the debate of ‘Us’ (West) vs ‘Others’ (East).

The term Orientalism surfaced for the first time in 1978 after the publication of a canonical text of cultural studies by Edward Said titled ‘*Orientalism*’, in which he has challenged the concept of orientalism as a tool or ideology to cast the difference between ‘East’ and ‘West’, asserting, that how over the period of the time, scholars, writers and artists in West has used Orient (East) to construct and define Europe as a powerful and superior culture.

The Idea of Orientalism in its basic sense is an artificial boundary created by the Europeans, which has again created an imaginary polarization of the world into two parts.

1. Occident: The well civilized and so-called appropriate western society of the Europeans.
2. Orient: The uncivilized, barbaric and the primitive societies of Asia, Africa, Middle-East, together known as “East”.

The Europeans used orientalism not to define East, rather to define their own so-called might Europe through East. In simple terms the Europeans used Orientalism to define Europe and to define themselves. The Orientals were associated with all sort of negative attributes, i.e. “whatever the Orientals weren’t, the Occidentals were”. What’s more interesting was this artificial boundary of ‘Us’ vs ‘Others’ became so evident in the western writings, that eventually the Occidentals started portraying the Orientals as non-humans, and considered them incapable of governing themselves.

This other, according to Orientalism is everything which the West is not, the unfamiliar and the unknown. This unfamiliarity and the unknowability of ‘others’ has defined the western knowledge of East for centuries. For example, “Islam” in the western world was projected as “Mohammedism”, instead of Islam, because it was founded by prophet Mohammed. Since the followers of Christ were called “Christianity, so as per the Orientalist scholars, the followers of Muhammad have to be called “Mohammedans” rather than “Muslims”.

Apart from this, another feature of Orientalism was the way the culture of ‘East’ or of the orientals was explained to the western audience, which was by indirectly linking them with the western culture. Assuming themselves for being the more refined and responsible race, they presumed to have the right to represent the Orientals on behalf of Orientals, by doing away with the liberty of the Orientals to represent themselves. In this process they shaped the orientals the way they wanted to perceive them or in other words, they were “Orientalizing the Orientals”.

The Orientalism in nineteenth century England, however, wasn’t wholly built with real encounters with the East, but rather also on the basis of fictional writings which has been written about East since antiquity. The Europeans defined themselves as the superior race compared to the Orientals; and they justified their colonization by this concept. They presumed it to be their duty towards the world to civilize the uncivilized societies gradually colonizing them.

The fundamental flaw of Orientalism wasn’t the debate of ‘Us vs ‘Others’, rather it was the Europeans generalizing all the attributes associated with the Orientals, which amplified the portrayal of these artificial characteristics tagged with Orientals in their European world through literary works, travel writings, art, scientific reports, other

media sources, which itself was fundamentally based on false imagination or with little information about the Orientals.

This image towards the people of the East over the period created a biased attitude towards the Orientals. And this generalization of the Orientals with specific attributes is quite evident among the people in West and in their writings even today. For example, even today, India is seen as a land of snake charmers in the western society. Similarly, the entire entire people of East Asian countries, including Japan and other people of Mongoloid ethnic groups are labelled as “Chinese”. (Said 1978)

3.2 Orientalism and Travel Literature

Edward Said’s analysis of Orientalism talks about the inherent limits, prejudices and constraints having shaped the Western writers (the “Orientalists”) on Orientals. According to Said these Orientalist writers are bound by pre-established assumptions and opinions about the Orientals, which often reflects the mass impact of a common ideology (his “Orientalism”) which shaped the images about the Orientals in the west, knowingly and unknowingly dissolving the significance of an individual writer. In Said’s view, “*Orientalism imposed limits upon thought about the Orient. Even the most imaginative writers of an age...were constrained in what they could either experience or say about the Orient*”, such that “*every writer on the Orient...saw the Orient as a locale requiring Western attention, reconstruction, even redemption.*” Hence, Orientalism according to Said has sort of intoxicated the minds of western writers with a set of pre-formed ideas, which has imposed a major limitation to the domain of their imaginative idea towards the Orientals. (Scott, 2011)

Before the travels of Marco Polo, most of the Europeans in the West were completely ignorant of the great civilizations to their east. As the whole west was completely drenched in their own society, that nobody bothered to cross the frontiers and to see what lies beyond. Other than securing the defense of their borders and establishing trade contacts with the nearby regions, they cared little about the people residing outside their geographical frontiers, and used to scornfully label all of them as "barbarians." Similarly, in the east too, except for in their tales, the people didn’t even know of the existence of the western world. The Chinese people, for their part, called themselves for centuries, the centre of the earth, or ‘chung-kuo’. Similarly, the Arabs too, used to think of themselves as being on the centre of the world. And it wasn’t just the Asians,

who were doomed with such false beliefs, rather the Europeans, too had established their whole universe around their church.

At a time, when people across the globe were completely naive about the vastness of the world, Marco Polo emerged as the torch-bearer of the modern day navigation, who through his travel writings bound the two opposite threads of the western and the eastern civilisation.

When Marco Polo first returned to Europe and set down his memoirs in the form of his travel book, people in the west had little idea about, how, down the line for centuries, it would shape, or at least affect the thought process of the western minds about east and their imagination of society that lies in the east. It was indeed through the eyes of Marco Polo, that most of the Europeans in the west got to know for the first time about the civilizations to their east, and his travel book '*The Travels of Marco Polo*' was being used as the prime reference about '*East*', during his own time and for centuries thereafter.

When the whole western world at the dawn of *Renaissance*⁷ in late 15th and early 16th century, was crossing the traditional boundaries of Europe to explore the unknown, it was indeed Marco Polo's fascinating description of the eastern world, which was navigating the boats of the western world in their quests towards modernity. Most of the explorers in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, also known as the "Age of Exploration," were supposedly inspired by journey of Marco Polo, which indeed motivated them to carry out their explorations. Almost three centuries after the travels of Marco Polo, another Italian navigator, Christopher Columbus, following the zeal of Polo's travels, set out on a similar journey ending up with his discovery of America. In a similar fashion the travels of another noted western navigator 'Vasco da Gama' too ended up in finding a new route to the Indian continent, flooding the gates of India for western colonialism.

Throughout the era of colonialism India in the western travel writings was looked at from the point of view of wester expansion and power mingled with a sense of curiosity, which in a way legitimized the western imagination about India being aesthetically antiquarian and extremely exotic. In most of these travel writings India has been

⁷ Renaissance is derived from the French word meaning "Rebirth". Renaissance was a socio-cultural movement, which engulfed the whole of Europe between 14th to 17th century AD. Having its origin in Italy, it overthrew the rigid vernacular faiths and replaced it with modern rational ideas.

described as the fantastic and the fabulous, the “Exotic East”. When these travellers returned to Europe, they brought back with them the tales of Palaces made out of marble, of kings who rides elephants, of gold digging ants, of temples filled with golds, rubies and other precious stones. Other includes tales about snake charmers, people walking on burning coal, and tales about sword swallows, of magic and of reincarnations, which was highly spectacular and glorious, but at the same time very barbaric and unreal. In fact, throughout the colonial era “East” or India in particular, has been always viewed from a reductive and oversimplified position in the European travel writings.

The purveyors of orientalist writings in India in general and Ladakh in particular was the infamous East India Company, a venture which exploited and ruled a nation of over 100 million for almost a century, which was later relayed by the subsequent rule of British Raj. India prior to British Nation was a self-sufficient nation with adequate resources and a better living condition, however the British Raj which groped the Indian subcontinent for almost two centuries resulted in subjugation, impoverishment, and exploitation of the India. The greed and evil of colonialism had hollowed the Indian economy by the time of her independence in 1947.

In case of Ladakh, this orientalist expansion in the domain of western travel writings happened a little late owing to her tough geographical location.

3.3 Western Imagination of Ladakh

Ever since antiquity Orientals in the western world highly publicized, especially in the literary works of the western travel writers. Those who had the privilege to cross the western boundaries, highly romanticized the oriental land and their societies, presenting an exaggerated description to the readers in western world. The description of east in the western travel writings was presented as a place, still in its primitive form of human culture and aloof from capitalist evil. A place where people are so naive and ignorant about the world around them, at the same time so miserable and underdeveloped, thus it became their right and moral obligation to rule and to study such this innocent race of primitive people, which in a way justified western model of colonialism.

The land and people in East were often painted with the colors of orientalism, romanticizing it to such an extent, that often people in the west found it extremely necessary and fascinating to go on a pilgrimage to these exotic lands. The description

of the mysterious lands lying in the far east, the tales of floating islands, of places full of strange creatures, trees so tall piercing through the sky, and elephants of the size of a mountain, all these created a surreal picture of the ‘Orient’ in the minds of the audiences in the west.

One such classic example is the travel journey of the fictional ‘Orientalist’ traveller “Gulliver”⁸ to the mysterious island of ‘Balnibarbi’, the fictional flying island of Laputas. This fictional island of Balibarbi is set to be somewhere around far east among the islands of modern day Japan, which is inhabited by strange looking peoples. This fictional and highly romanticised tales of ‘Orientals’ had so deeply affected the minds of people in west, that these tales made an important part of their bedtime stories. Hence when they travel to the land of Orientals, they fail to see the originality of their travel, rather ends up putting together the scattered pieces from their childhood bedtime stories with their observation of the land of these natives. Also in case of Ladakh too, when these English travellers crossed the thresholds of the Himalayan frontiers, they looked for the same objects of romanticism or something they could relate to. One such conspicuous example is the remarks on the natives of Ladakh by British Traveller ‘Edward Frederick Knight’ in her travelogue “*Where Three Empires Meet*”. Knights writes:

“For some time I was greatly puzzled while wandering through this region. It all, in a way, seemed so familiar to me. Surely I had somewhere, long ago, lived amid this curious people and in such a weird land as this –but when and where? Was I myself a Ladaki re-incarnated in England by mistake...and I felt quite relieved, at last, when the explanation of this mysterious feeling flashed across me...I remembered that when a small boy I had read ‘Guliver’s Travels,’ and that the voyage to the flying island of Laputa had made a great impression on my imagination. I had conjured up that kingdom to my mind just such a perspective less, artificial, unreal-looking land as this; and just such a people as these queer Ladakis had those no more

⁸ Gulliver or Lemuel Gulliver is the fictional character from the Jonathan Swift’s fictional Satire “Gulliver’s Travels”, who made adventurous travels to the land of mysterious people of Lillipus.

queer people, the Laputans and the sages of Balnibarri, appeared to my fancy.” (Knight 1893, 126)

Knight’s analogy of Ladakh with land of Laputans even though talks about his personal opinion, nevertheless that’s exactly what Edward Said’s orientalism talks about. It’s actually the imagination about the East, that has been planted in the minds of people in west ever since they are born. ‘Gulliver’s’ travels to the land of Laputans is not just about the mysterious land of Balnibarri, rather it is how for ages East is being perceived in the western society. And moreover all these western travel missions at the dawn of modernisation wasn’t merely to explore the world, rather somewhere all these travellers in the western fascinated to travel to these mysterious places, the fairy tales about whom they have heard since their childhoods. And when they actually got to travel East, instead of perceiving the places and the natives in their original form, they tried to relate them with the objects of their fascination. Ladakh being one of those far-off places in the East was actually one such object of fascination for these western travellers, which was settled at the base of all these travellers of 19th century to Ladkakh.

Further it’s not just the fairy tales about East, rather the way Ladakh has been illustrated in travelogues of these travellers, has made it sound so fancy and alluring, that no wonder they have compared the place to the surreal land of Laputans. An another such remarks comes from Knight, when he spots a monastery built on the far edge of a hill.

“He builds his monastery on what to ordinary men would appear to be the most undesirable spot possible: he perches it on the summit of some almost inaccessible pinnacle, or burrows into the face of some frightful precipice.” (Knight 1893: 124)

Though it’s normal in Ladakh to have monasteries built on a height which is generally higher than the inhabitation of the common people. A similar trend can also be seen among the other cities of Indus Valley too, where both monasteries and places of higher importance, like the palace of king is generally built on a higher ground. One supporting reason could be the religious or cultural significance of the building. One of the closest explanation for this is to protect it from any foreign invasion. As monasteries in those days used to have a rich collection of relics and material wealth in form of offerings, among which the Monastery of Hemis was widely known. Hence in view of any sort of external attack, building the monastery on a higher ground, especially on the edge of

a mountain used to provide it some form of security due to its tough accessibility. Besides, monasteries have all the important Buddhists relics, images and statues of Buddha and other images of higher importance, which due to its higher stature, is generally placed on a level higher than where the common people resides. However, Knight instead of providing insights upon its cultural significance has provided such a mystical description, like “*burrowing into the face of a frightful edge of mountain*”, which would for certain spark phantasm among the people in West about Ladakh.

The narration of another English traveller named ‘William Henry Knight’ from his first travels in Ladakh somewhere in 1860 tells us more about the Western Imagination of Ladakh. Having brought up with a highly fanaticised image of East from the fairy tales of the famous “*Arabian Nights*”⁹, when he actually got to see the place lying in the far East, was highly disappointed. Knight accounts 1860 mentions:

“We had been long enough in the country to have discovered that the gorgeous East of our imagination, as shadowed forth in the delectable pages of the “Arabian Nights,” had little or no connexion with the East of our experience.” (Knight 1863: 04)

One of the primary critique of western Orientalism is that it dissolves the originality of the writers in western world, often occupying the imagination of the writer.

3.4 Orientalist Description of Ladakh

According to Said the Western created artificial image of the Orient in reality had to do little with the “real” Orients. Whatever the western scholars over the years has reproduced in their writings and literary works about Orients is nothing more than an exaggerated description of the real Orient, creating a delusion among the people in West. One of the most important characteristic is the western textual representation of East or the “Orients”. These texts include travelogues, official documents, letters, missionary reports, books, manuscripts and various other textual remnants of cultural value.

Most of these texts were mainly based on assumptions drawn by the Europeans about the culture of the East, which marks a complete absence of the outlook of the actual

⁹ *Arabian Nights* is a collection of Middle-East folk tales written during the period of Islamic Golden Age.

inhabitants, which they usually don't consider rational enough to take into consideration. Most of these western writers are full of presumptions about the East, that any society outside Europe has to be barbaric and irrational. Accordingly, everything related to the orient, i.e. their society, their customs, their rituals, none of them makes any sense, giving the writers in West complete authority to judge them. As per Orientalism, they people in East doesn't have the intellectual capability to act and think rationally, hence, it's their moral obligation to guide them by giving sense to their customs and traditions. This is exactly what reflects in these travelogues, and the description of Ladakh provided by these travellers. One such evident example is the description of a statue of Buddha by the English traveller Cowley Lambert in his travelogue "*A Trip to Cashmere and Ladak*". It says:

But the only really important article on the altar was Buddha's bell and sceptre, or rather thunderbolt...The bell is for Buddha to ring when he wants his dinner, the thunderbolt is to throw at anyone who does wrong in the world; at least, so we were given to understand by the Lamas." (Lambert 1877: 120-121)

Lambert's description of the statue of Lord Buddha and the artefacts of Hemis monastery is completely hideous and reflects the typical orientalist outlook towards the material culture of the Buddhists of Ladakh. It seems he either was completely ignorant of Buddhism and its practices, or he intendedly refused to accept the cultural value attached to it, which he found too irrational and unworthy to accept. This exactly makes one of the core arguments of Edward Said's "Orientalism", that the Europeans draw assumptions, without taking into consideration the opinion of the actual inhabitants. In this case, it's the assumption of Lambert which gives a false meaning to the artefacts attached to Lord Buddha, and subsequently has provided a false information to the readers in West.

The "Bell" and "Sceptre", which is usually known as "Ghanta" and "Vajra" in general Buddhist philosophy, carries a deep meaning of "wisdom" and "compassion". However, Lambert with his description of it, has seemingly tried to reduce the stature of Buddha to a common living being. And it's not that Cowley Lambert has fallen prey to any misconception about his description of the Statue of Lord Buddha, rather he intendedly placed his own personal outlook above the perceptions of the natives. If

analysed properly, similar descriptions about Ladakh are available in abundance in most of these nineteenth century English travelogues.

Ever since the starting of the 17th century, the lands of mainland India has been widely travelled by western travellers, however, Ladakh even till late 18th century was completely aloof of these western travellers keeping it offshore from the colonial travellers. First, it was Moorcroft followed by The Great Game of 19th century which unbolted the tracks leading to Ladakh for generations of western travellers after that. Since the region till then was lesser known in the western world, hence little had been written about Ladakh till then. Hence these travellers of nineteenth through their travel writing were actually the pioneers of Ladakh as the least known destination in the western, which through their writings and the way they have given the description about Ladakh, customs and manners, people and place, shaped the western knowledge about Ladakh.

Susan Bassnet, one of the noted scholar on Comparative Literature argues, *“travel writing is not merely the innocent accounts of what a traveller sees or experiences; rather it also throws light on how a culture constructs its image of other cultures”*, i.e. how the experience of a traveller unconsciously is playing an important factor in the judging culture of the natives by comparing it with his/her own culture.

At the core of these English travelogues, things which were more prone for an orientalist description were the “Customs and Manners” and “Land and People”. What is more important, is that Orientalism is not merely the work of western imagination, rather it is also about the representation of domination, power, authority and hegemony. These orientalist descriptions of the various aspects of Ladakhi was not merely a collection of misrepresentations about the region in Europe, but it also created a body of theory and practice in which, for many generations, there has been a considerable material investment in form of art, literature and common sense.

Orientalist Description of People

Nineteenth century Ladakh was primarily dominated by two major religions, firstly Buddhism, which found its way to Ladakh way back around 10th Century and Islam was introduced in the region somewhere around 14 century owing to the ancient trade route linking Ladakh with other major trade centres in Central Asia.

As Edward Said speaks that western imagination of East mainly has to do with the lack of knowledge about East in the western world, which results in the creation of imaginary sets of attributes towards East. Towards the end of 18th century British already had gained their hold in the domestic politics of mainland India having control over revenues of parts of Bengal, with a large chunk of English population permanently residing in the country. However, Ladakh, even till early nineteenth century was almost unknown in the western world, which threw the place open up for orientalist description in early 19th century, when the place was first opened up for English travellers. And this orientalist description targeted first of all none other than the people and the ethnicity of the natives.

“Tibetans”, “Tartars”, “Chinese”, “Strange-Looking Creatures”, “Savage Tartars in sheepskins” all these are the different synonyms explicitly used to refer to the people of Ladakh in the travelogues of 19th century English travellers.

The native population of Ladakh ethnically is a blending together of the Dards, Tibetan Nomads, Mongols and Mons from North India. It is believed that the earliest inhabitants of Ladakh were actually Dard, who were later followed by Mons. The Mongols and the Tibetan nomads are believed to have migrated to Ladakh somewhere around 10th Century A.D. Hence, for centuries Ladakh has been home to people from different ethnic groups, yet the English travel writings of 19th century has bannered them all as either “Tibetans” or “Tartars”, which actually is an ethnic group in parts of Chinese Turkestan, or the modern day provinces of Xinjiang.

“The inhabitants of this place were a dirty, savage-looking lit of brutes, some with their long, greasy black hair hanging loose down their backs” (Lambert 1877: 103)

The above lines are the description of the first encounter of Cowley Lambert with the natives of Ladakh, which reflects the ideal illustration of the natives of Ladakh in English travel books. Similar orientalist and racist description about the natives of common in almost all the English travel writings. On another instance he writes “*The men certainly seemed a much worse set than any others we had seen, and the women, too, were frightful*”. Preoccupied with the orientalist prejudices about the identity of East and Asian in particulars as savage and Chinese-looking, these travellers failed to see the individual identity of Ladakh, painting all of them with the same brush. And it

is not the traveller who is to be blamed for this, rather it's how the identity of East has been developed over the centuries in west.

Of all the most identical jargon used bluntly in the nineteenth century travelogue to represent the natives of was their description of the people of Ladakh as "Pig-tailed". As E F Knight on his arrival to Ladakh after crossing the frontiers of Kashmir writes: "*We were at last well in the land of the pigtails*". (Knight 1893)

Pigtails according to these English travellers had basically to do with the long braid of hair among the natives of Ladakh, prevalent among the sexes of both gender in Ladakh. This long braid of hair has been a part of tradition of Ladakh for centuries, and also because of the extreme cold weather of Ladakh, it helps to keep the natives warm. However, starting from the description of "Pigtails" in the writings of Moorcroft, this orientalist jargon can be seen in all the travel narratives of 19th century. And it was more of one of those typical orientalist image of Ladakh firstly created with the writings of Moorcroft, and then passed on to other travellers, whose travels to Ladakh were motivated after reading the travel narrations of Moorcroft or other travellers prior to him. All these travellers carried along this identity of Ladakh as "Land of Pigtails" through their writings. One such remarks we can see in the writing of Cowley Lamber too.

"The people of Dras, which is under the domain of the Maharajah of Cashmere, are apparently of Chinese origin, having marked Chinese features, and wearing the customary pig-tail. They are called Bots, and are, I believe, a mixture of the Tibetan and Tartar races."
(Lambert 1877: 96)

Another prevalent stereotyping of the natives of Ladakh to be seen in the 19th century travel narratives are their labelling of being one of the dirtiest race of people. Their vivid descriptions about the natives of Ladakh includes remarks like "*clothed in filthy and scanty rags*" (Knight), "*high-cheek boned, smooth-faced, black pig-tailed lot of creatures*" (Lambert 1877), "*ill-dressed rascally-looking*" (Markham 1854), "*the ugly, short, squat, yellow-skinned, flat-nosed, oblique-eyed*" (Bird 1894), "*Ladaki women, though very ugly, have bright faces and pleasant*" (Darrah 1898). Another peculiar thing about their comments about people of Ladakh as ugly and dirty is that, their comments are not confined to the people of Ladakh, rather they have labelled entire people of mongoloid ethnic origin for being the same.

“They say out there that these Tibetans are only washed twice in their lives, once after they are born, and again before they are buried.”

(Lambert 1877: 123)

This comments from the writings of Lambert reflects, how this typical stereotyping about the natives is being formed and passed on for the other travellers to judge. The natives of Ladakh, lodged at a place where the temperate for most part of the season remains sub-zero degree, it is extremely harsh and difficult to keep themselves polished and squeaky clean as the sophisticated Europeans. Contact with the ice-cold water in winter is impossible, and also regular showers in winter could be subversive for the health. Hence, the natives of Ladakh have to keep themselves with heap of clothes to keep themselves warm and to survive in this harsh weather. A local way to survive, which they had adapted over centuries. With the scarcity of resources and primitive way of living, the people of Ladakh even till the dawn of 21st century were forced to stick to this primitive technique of survival.

However, the English descriptions marks a complete absence of all these explanations often creating a false image among the readers, tagging the natives as filthy and dirty. And such a stereotyping can be seen in writings of all categories of travellers.

The writings of English traveller Henry Zouch Darrah mentions about an incident from one of his wildlife shooting expedition to Ladakh. He was returning back to the city of Leh tired and half-starved after the shooting, when a native woman on seeing him in this condition, politely offered him a bowl of milk to fill his stomach. however, he had to refuse, because he found the bowl the native was carrying too dirty.

“Passing the village of Zinchan, a woman came forward with a brass vessel full of milk, and hospitably offered me a drink, but the bowl and the figure that presented it were too dirty, and I had to decline.”

(Darrah 1898: 376)

The most degraded remarks about the branding of the natives as “the ugly creatures” is vividly illustrated in the writings of Henry Torrens, who travelled to Ladakh somewhere around late 60’s. In addition to his repulsive description about the natives, he has also produces some extremely sexist comments in his writings. Torrens writes: *“These were the strangest specimens of woman-kind it had yet been my lot to meet –at once the most dressy and the ugliest of their sex!”*. Torrens writings blatantly shows

the typical colonial attitude of a western elite. He has reduced the stature of the natives to such a level, where he failed to see them as Humans from a parallel civilization, rather he saw the natives of Ladakh more of as a whole different creature to be looked upon. Among his blatant remarks about the natives, is his reference to the people of Ladakh as “Dogs”, perhaps because of their outfits or because his self-presumed colonial superiority. *“The fact is, they are very jolly dogs, these Botis of Ladakh.”* (Torrens 1862: 181)

One of another instance is where he was too quick to judge the monks as the most foolish person of the family, partially because of the looks of a monk, and partially because of his “foolish” decision, as judged by Torrens, to dedicate his whole life to priesthood.

“To judge from the appearance of our monkish friends, it is the “fool of the family,” I fear, who is generally selected for the holy profession.” (Torrens 1862: 182)

Similar orientalist remarks about the natives are prolific the Isabella Bird’s ‘*Among the Tibetans*’, which itself is the branding of whole Ladakh as Tibetans. Bird’s remarks states *“The Tibetans are dirty. They wash once a year, and except for festivals, seldom change their clothes till they begin to drop off”* (Bird 1894: 44). One of her other accounts gives the description about the way people in Ladakh generally sleeps with their faces deep covered inside their quilts, of which she mentions that this is how all the Orientals sleep.

“The sound of their “hubble-bubble” indicated that they were going to sleep, like most of the Orientals, with their heads closely cover with their wadded quilts” (Bird 1894: 34-35)

Isabella Bird’s travelogue ‘*Among The Tibetans*’ reflects a complete generalization of the entire population of Ladakh as Tibetan. Although, it wasn’t the English who first used the term “Tibet” to refer to Ladakh, rather indeed it was the Mughal kings used the term “Little Tibet” to introduce the region of Ladakh and Baltistan in their books. However, this terminology to refer Ladakh as “Tibet” or the natives as “Tibetan” has been thoroughly used by 19th century English travellers, which up to a great extent has marginalized the individual identity of Ladakh, which is a mixture of different ethnic races.

Apart from the overall generalization of Ladakh, people of one particular ethnic group called “Argons” has been outspokenly targeted in the writings of these English travellers. The Argons in 19th century were a particular ethnic group of Ladakh, whose origins can be traced back to 17th century, when during the reign of King Jamyang Namgyal, some Kashmiri Muslim traders were granted the permission and land to settle down in Ladakh to carry out trade activities. This particular groups of traders were often called “Kha-Che” traders. In the native language of Ladakh, Kashmir is called “Kha-chul” and similarly the Tibetan word for Kashmir is “Kha-Che”. The Kha-che traders were very good when it comes to trade with the adjoining regions. Hence, soon they extended their trade links to Yarkhand (Present day Xinjiang) and Lhasa in Tibet. Many of these Kha-che traders later married local women establishing a kinship between Kashmir and Ladakh. The descendants of this marriage between Kashmiri merchants and local Ladakhi women were known as "Argons." (Bray 2013)

The Argons of Ladakh has been represented with all sort of negative descriptions about them.

Ladakh 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.” (Shaw 1871: 74-75)

The above remarks from the writings of Robert Shaw has provided a typical stereotyping of all half-caste races, including Argons for being the vilest and most cunning race of all. Similar descriptions are quite evident in the writings of other travellers as well. For example, Henry Torrens has mentioned about Argons as “*a degenerated race in all points save rascality and ugliness; in these qualities they surpass even the parent stock.*” (Torrens 1862: 204). Similarly, the writings of Arthur Neve towards late 19th century reflects the orientalist image of Argons in his writing, which he supposedly inherited his English predecessors. “*It has been said that the Arguns inherit the vices of both parents and the virtues of none.*” (Neve 1900: 124)

The typical description of ‘East as per ‘Orientalism’ is not just all about the description of the ‘Orient’ as evil, barbaric, dirty and ugly, rather it is also about the portrayal of ‘East’ as too naive and ignorant to deal with the cruel world. Similar portray and mass generalisation of Ladakh are also evident in these travel writings. Of the earliest such

description about the natives of Ladakh is the description provided by William Moorcroft, which supposedly was highly responsible to have influence upon the observation of most of the English travellers after him. Moorcroft writes of the natives as “*The Ladakhis are, in general, a mild and timid people, frank, honest, and moral when not corrupted by the communication with the dissolute Kashmiris.*” (Moorcroft 1841: 321). Other than his portrayal of the natives of Ladakh as honest and innocent, he also throws light on how these innocent minds are steadily being corrupted by their interactions with the people of Kashmir, who in most of these writings has been mentioned as cunning and evil people. Some similar sort of expression about the natives of Ladakh is also evident in the travelogue of E F Knight.

“One comes to like these amiable Ladaki Buddhists; they are highly spoken of by all who have travelled in their country, as being truthful, honest, hospitable, and straightforward. They are harmless, simple race, with none of the narrow bigotry.” (Knight 1893: 137)

This is overall a uniform observation of all these English travellers, as their first impression of Ladakhis are generally described as some sort of “pity dirty looking creatures with pig tails, however, are good-tempered and quite humble”. One of the prime reason for this could be, because, most of these travellers came to Ladakh crossing through Kashmir, of whom all these travellers have described as “mischievous and cunning race”. Hence, they have usually drawn a comparison between Ladakh and Kashmir on various occasions. Something of similar fashion can be seen in the writings of Robert Shaw as well.

Overall the natives of Ladakh, the natives of Ladakh have been portrayed as too innocent to govern themselves, giving the Europeans the task to guide them through by helping them to prepare and adjust themselves in the modern world of the Europeans. And this is where the ‘White Men’s Burden’ comes into picture, which has not only justified orientalism, rather has been used as a tool to justify colonialism and to rule the East.

Orientalist Description of Culture

Orientalism having originated actually during the colonial period, continued to shape the attitudes, images and knowledge of the western world about the society in East. Society is often visualized through symbolic representations, and these symbolic

representations comes in the form of the description of the Asian society in the western writings. Everything about Ladakh stood in complete contrast to the European society. Apart from the racial judgements of the natives of Ladakh, another aspect of the society which has been highly ridiculed are the Buddhist monasteries and the various rituals associated with it. As Edward Said said, that it is not the knowledge of East, rather it's the lack of knowledge about Eastern society which is giving birth to prejudices and stereotyping in the western art and literary works. Since the majority of the people in Ladakh during 19th century were followers of Tibetan Buddhism, about which these English travellers had little or no information, did directly expose them for orientalist judgements by these colonial writers.

Drifting away from religion these orientalist remarks about Ladakh also extends to other spheres of the society, like marriage functions, traditional dance, lifestyles etc. One such description has been detailed in the narratives of Cowley Laambert. *"I might say idiotic, entertainments I have ever witnessed, this dance was certainly the worst. Why it should be called a dance I cannot imagine; it might be more aptly termed a funeral walk-round."* (Lambert 1877: 116)

Buddhism in Ladakh having close affiliation with the Tibetan Buddhism is a little unique than most known forms of Buddhism owing to its close affiliation with the "Bon" Religion. The origin of Tibetan Buddhism can be traced back to 8th century AD, when the king of Tibet invited the famous Buddhist teacher "Guru Padmasabhava", also known as "Guru Rinpoche". Guru Padmasambhava being an Indian master of Tantra eliminated the prevailing Bon religion of Tibet. According to the legends, when Guru Rinpoche first arrived in Tibet, instead of eliminating the Bon demons he made them the protectors of Dharma. Later during 10th century this religion found its roots in Ladakh too after the great Yogi "Naropa" introduced it in Ladakh.

Since Tibetan form of Buddhism has a lot of shamanistic and animistic elements, which stood in complete contrast to the European idea of "civilized society", they looked upon the religious rituals of natives as barbaric and full of superstitions.

"In the 'Arabian Nights' there is a description of a Mussulman prince who comes to a strange city of idolaters, terrifying to the imagination, where dwell magicians. Were I illustrating the old tale

I should draw just such a place as is this weird Lamayuru.” (Knight 1893: 154)

Edward Knight, who travelled to Ladakh around 1891 has provided a strange description of the village of Lamayuru and about his visit to the Lamasery over there. His thoughts were so preoccupied and constrained with his western imagination of East, that entering the streets of the village, he could immediately relate the place with the tale of “strange city” mentioned in the tales of the famous “*Arabian Nights*”. If one has read the fictional stories of *Arabian Night*, he/she could easily picturize the surreal streets, full of devils and magicians, which you know is just a fictional place and could never be real. This surreal city, however, Knight has found in the streets of Lamayuru, which according to him is identical as the strange city of *Arabian Nights*.

Another important thing to notice, is the way he has portrayed himself in the same description, i.e. the “prince”, who supposedly was also a traveller. The prince from the tale of *Arabian Night* was an enlightened person, who came to that strange city to free the people from their sufferings and from the atrocities of the devils, who used to dwell over there. Similarly, in the description of Edward Knight, he being the prince could be seen as the enlightened traveller from west, who has reached there in Lamayuru to relieve the natives of Ladakh from their sufferings, in terms of superstition and ignorance, by showing them the path to modernity and of western model of life.

Henry Knight, another orientalist English travel writer, who travelled to Ladakh in 1860, describes about an amusing narration of similar fashion. On one of his visit to a Buddhists monastery in Leh, he has reported about an empty bottle of English Brandy, about which he writes:

“One exception, however, I discovered; this was an empty brandy-bottle, bearing a magnificent coloured label, which certainly could not have been issued from the Grand Lama’s religious stores. To the English eye, or rather nose, it had but little odour of sanctity about it; but here it evidently held a higher position, and was prominently placed among the temporal possessions of “the Gods” (Knight 1863: 168)

This remarks from Henry Knight closely resembles the plot from the African movie “*The Gods Must Be Crazy*”, which is a typical satire of orientalist understanding of the

East, and how their society is being perceived in the western society through art and literature. The movie *“The Gods Must Be Crazy”*, sets around a farmer named “Xi”, who belongs to a primitive society in Kalahari Desert. Xi and his San tribe, who were bushmen and had nothing to do with the western world were living happily in the Kalahari Desert. However, out of nowhere he comes across with a glass of Coca-Cola bottle, which was supposedly thrown out of an aeroplane. Assuming that this strange artefact is actually a present by the God, they find many uses of it.

This is a classic example of encounter of modernity vs traditionalism. “Xi” and his San tribe are being portrayed as symbol of “Traditionalism” or primitive society, and the glass of Coca-Cola is being presented as a symbol of modernity. Overall, the movie is a mockery of the Orientals (In this context the “San” people of Africa), that how their ignorance and superstition creates God out of anything.

The remarks of Henry Knight about the bottle of Brandy in Hemis monastery exhibits an orientalist description about the society of Ladakh of similar nature. Knight has made a similar mockery of the monk in particular and of the whole Ladakh society in general, and has tried to emphasize on the extent of ignorance of the people in Ladakh. Though the narration is a bit amusing, but at the same time depicts the prevalence of orientalist outlook of these travellers towards the society of the East.

For most of the English travellers of 19th century the Tibetan Buddhism of Ladakh was their first encounter, which they often ended up judging as the one of the most barbaric religion. However, most of them didn’t even bothered to look for the deeper spiritual and cultural value, rather simply jotted down their unlearned experience of the customs as “ugly” and “dreadful”, which then was passed on to the next traveller.

“The places seemed to be full of what they were pleased to call temples, which were really square blocks of mud painted with men, dragons, devils etc...The tops of which are everywhere surmounted by little gods houses, or rather, I may call them, dolls’ houses.”

(Lambert 1877: 103)

Of the core tenets of ‘Orientalism’ is the debate of ‘Us’ vs ‘Others’. Buddhism in Ladakh is a form of ‘Vajrayana’ sect of Buddhism, which has to do a lot with rituals and practices, unlike Hinyana, which purely follows the teachings of Buddha without any such customs and rituals. For these English travellers this means a set of values,

which has never been part of their world, and which stands in complete contrast to what Christianity is, which is the ideal religion of the West. Hence, anything which doesn't have to do with the ideal religion "Christianity", has to be the religion of uncivilized and accordingly inappropriate. This was one of the prime reason most of these English travellers have looked upon Tibetan Buddhism only as a set of barbaric rituals and not as a religion in itself.

The description of another Christian Missionary missionary about the various Buddhist deities and gods of Buddhists provides a similar dreadful illustration of Buddhism, which in a way has intentionally negated the spiritual significance of these rituals.

"Around the various sitting figures of deities, uninteresting and conventional, which occupy the main panels, are many weird and forcible paintings, where skeletons are seen wrestling with one another, where demons struggle with men on horseback, and heroes endeavour to release the tortured souls of men. We have a grotesque Mongolian version of the people of Lilliput and Brobdignang; giant demons, with the tiny contorted figures of victims poking out of their hands or writing under their feet. These pictures depict such scenes as the Lamas love to dramatise." (Neve 1900:148)

The description of Arthur Neve is similar to what E F Knight has mentioned about the people and the land of Ladakh in his travelogue 'Where Three Empires Meet', in which he has mentioned about having Deja vu of going through the pages of the fictional tale 'Gulliver's travel'. Neve too has mentioned about his experience of his visit to a Buddhist monastery as a "Mongolian version of the people of Lilliput", however more demonic and scary, and something which according to him has been intentionally dramatized unnecessarily by the Buddhist monks.

I soon realised that I had reached a very strange land, a country of topsy-turveydom, where polyandry prevails instead of polygamy, where praying is all conducted by machinery, and where, in short, the traveller fresh from beyond the mountains is bewildered by the quaint sights, the strange beliefs, superstitions, and customs he comes across every day." (Knight 1893: 126)

The above remarks from Edward Knight summarizes the overall representation of Ladakh, its people, customs, society and various rituals in the western travel writings. The stunning impact it leaves on the travellers coming beyond the mountains and far beyond a civilization not even slightest close to it. What are the major questions and impacts it has posed to the minds of the travellers at this confluence of two contrasting images of the society of Ladakh, one is the Ladakh of their imagination and second is the actual image Ladakh, which they had experienced during their adventurous journey to this land of East or in the words of E F Knight "*A Country of topsy turveydom*". Were they able to do away with their preoccupied imagination of Ladakh, or they simply experienced everything through the lens of Orientalism and hence reproduced a similar illustration in their travelogues.

Chapter IV: A Comparative Study of 19th Century English

Travelogues

So far we have looked for Orientalism as a common thread in the writings of all the English travelogues, with a fair understanding of the perception of all these English travellers of nineteenth century, which were somehow bounded within the large framework of ‘Orientalism’ and a colonialist imagination of the ‘East’. However, in this chapter we’ll try to analyse, that how the writings of these travellers differs from each other, by indexing them into differing categories based on the purpose of their travels and other relevant strata. Further, this chapter will also discuss the significance of these travel writings in defining the British position during The Great Game of 19th century.

4.1 Indexing Nineteenth Century English Travellers

Beginning with the onset of 19th century till the culmination of the British Raj Ladakh has been travelled extensively by English travellers from various domain of the society. Each of them travelled to Ladakh for a different reason with individual interests, consequently looking for only those aspects which they would wanted to see the most. Some among these were solo travellers, some on a wild hunt looking for some adventure, whereas others were missionaries and Christian travellers with an aim to extend the faith of Christ to the nest of Himalayas. Similarly, there were many other researchers and explorers too, mainly funded either by the Royal Geographical Society or directly by British Raj to collect information about this remotest part of the world, about which till then there were no available written records. And last and end to the oppressive Victorian Era¹⁰ in Europe brought female travellers to Ladakh too, whose observations about Ladakh was through a lens of feminism.

Different sets of English travellers, be it the British Raj explorers or the Christian Missionaries, each group of these travellers viewed and analyzed different aspects of Ladakh in their writings. British Raj explorers for example were primarily occupied with those areas like Trade Routes, Geo-political relevance of Ladakh to British India, and others aspects of political nature. Similarly, the Individual travellers were much

¹⁰ Victorian Era was a period in 19th century England during the reign of Queen Victoria from 1837 to 1901. This era witnessed a massive violation of women rights, resistance against rationalism and an increasing turn towards romanticism.

more occupied with the own personal interests, which gave them the liberty to judge and write about anything of their will. Next the missionaries wrote more about subjects related to religion and Buddhism. And, finally, the female travellers perceived Ladakh from a feminist angle, as a result wrote more about topics like Marriages, family structure, gender and society.

Although the minds of all these English travellers of nineteenth century were nourished under the uniform umbrella of the same ideology of 'Orientalism', yet their interest in the oriental lands were driven by different factors, when stratified into different groups based on the motives of their travels, the demographic compositions of these travellers etc. provides stunning results about their observations and the description about Ladakh provided in their travelogues.

British Raj Explorers

This opening up of Ladakh for the English marked a series of another similar missions to the region throughout the 19th century, initially under the direction of East India Company and later on directly under the supervision of the British Crown in London. No doubt, these missions primarily served the purpose of England position in Great Game of 19th century keeping a check on the Russians, at the same time it also marked the European era of 'Age of Exploration', and to be the first to reach the 'no man's land'.

Of a century of British India missions to Ladakh, the demographic composition of these travellers doesn't only includes spies and agents, rather these British Raj explorers to Ladakh, also came in the form of Geographers commissioned by Royal Geographical Society, British officials to be stationed at Leh. Although, all these British Raj explorers were commissioned by British India, yet each of them maintained a dairy of their own travels within Ladakh, which provides an overview of the larger ambition of their travels. Some of the important British India explorers were:

1. William Moorcroft (1820)
2. Godfrey Vigne (1837)
3. Captain Henry Strachey (1847)
4. Robert Shaw (1867)
5. G. W. Hayward (1868)

The channel of western travellers to Ladakh in nineteenth century was firstly opened up by the British East India Company explorer 'William Moorcroft', who in search of finest breed of horses reached the frontiers of Ladakh, and partially also because of the hidden interests of the British East India Company. Though Moorcroft's travel to Ladakh is often denied as an official move by British India, as it was his individual vision to explore the hostile unexplored regions of Higher Himalayas and Central Asia which took him on his route to Ladakh. Also his travel to Nepal prior to his journey to Ladakh provided him with stunning information about the trade in Higher Himalayas, movements on of Russians on the other end of Himalayas, most probably in the neighboring region of Chinese Turkestan, Yarkhand and other places, about Pashmina Goat. Pashmina Goats are well known for the production of Pashmina, which was during that time was considered as 'Luxury' in the west. However, in the Indian subcontinent this trade of Pashmina was under the direct control of Tibetan and Kashmiri traders, which wasn't under the English jurisdiction till then. Hence, this was also one of the important factor, because of which Moorcroft's decided to travel far north to find information about the trade of Pashmina, a monopoly over which would have proven of immense benefit to the British East India Company, as no other European company had the access to the trade of Pashmina.

The success of Moorcroft's mission to Ladakh and his achievement in obtaining crucial information on the trade route and movement of Russia on the other side of the Himalayas prompted the British India officials to send a series of such missions in form of agents and geographers. G T Vigne soon followed Moorcroft in 1835, travelling through the parts of Ladakh and neighbouring Baltistan being one of the earliest European to undertake geographical surveys of these regions. Similarly, there are the writings of Robert Shaw, Hayward, Henry Torrens and many other English travellers, whole prime purpose was to conquer the interests of British India.

Apart for these secret agents and royal geographers, there were series of other travel expeditions to Ladakh by another set of travellers, who even though were British India officials, yet their travels to Ladakh were without any affiliation to any higher authority. Hence, whatever they wrote in their travel dairies, they wrote it for themselves, which unlike the missionary travellers or the Christian Missionaries was not a detailed report to be submitted to some higher authority. Hence, their description about Ladakh marks their personal opinion and their experience of of the natives of Ladakh. Although, many

of these travellers were employed with British India, yet their travels weren't sponsored for any such missions. The most prominent among the individual travellers of 19th century are Fred Markham (April, 1847), William Henry Knight (1860), Cowley Lambert (1877), Edward Frederick Knight (1891) and George R. Littledale (1895)

Christian Missionaries

The Christian Missionaries relatively had a late entry to Ladakh compared to the British Raj explorers and the Individual travellers, though they already had their presence in the neighbouring region of Keylong, with the Moravian missionary Heinrich August Jaeschke, who reached Keylong way back in 1857. One of the prime reason, was the Kashmiri Muslim ruler. Ladakh fell under the indirect governance of Kashmiri ruler with the Dogra conquest of Ladakh in 1835. Ever since then, the ruler of Leh was reduced to a subordinate position. Moreover, the ruler of Kashmir was suspicious of the English, especially with the dynamic relations of British with the other native rulers throughout the Indian subcontinent. Although, the ruler of Kashmir was on good terms with British India, yet he tried to keep the British at the bay of his governance as much as possible. Hence, the European missionaries found it extremely difficult to penetrate into Ladakh, especially till the first half of 19th century, when the presence of British India in Ladakh was negligible, and also it was a time when British India was more interested in securing its position in the region as part of the 19th century Great Game at the same time keeping good terms with the native ruler. Hence, it wouldn't have been clever enough on the British part to compromise its position in Ladakh by trading it off with the native ruler of Kashmir for the missionaries, who was quite rigid about this move.

However, towards the last quarter of 19th century, when the geo-political situation of Ladakh changed, with both Ladakh and Kashmir subsequently falling under the direct supervision of British, the Christian Missionaries for the first time gained entry to Ladakh and founded the first Moravian Mission Station at Leh in 1885. This marked the entry of series of western missionary travellers like Wilhelm Hyde, Dr. Karl Marx, Dr. F Earnest Shaw, and A H Francke.

Most of the early Moravian Missionaries were non Non-English, coming mainly from another European power "Germany", as a result of which British Indian government didn't really classified them as their own, which is more evident from the outbreak of

the war between Germany and England, when these Moravian Missionaries were banished from entering Ladakh considering them as subjects of the enemy. (Bray 1985: 35)

The English Missionaries relatively kicked off a little late than the Moravian Missionaries under the banner of Mill Hill Mission, among which the first English Missionary to Ladakh was Fr. Daniel Kilty. Kilty was arrived in Leh on September 1888 to start the missionary works in Leh. Kilty was a man of high ambitions, and hence quickly on a mission to study the native language in order to better interact with the natives. Kilty was soon followed by other English missionaries, who continued their missionary work in Leh for almost a decade after him. The Mill Hill Mission presence in Ladakh due to various reasons was quite short lived, yet the writings and the reports of some of their missionaries provides description about late 19th century Ladakh, especially about Buddhism in Ladkahi society. Some of the important Mill Hill Missionaries are.

1. Fr. Daniel Kilty (1888)
2. Henry Hanlon (1891)
3. Michael Donsen (1895-96)
4. Arthur Neve (1900)

Female Travellers

The last quarter of the nineteenth century witnessed for the first time female travellers crashing through the hostile mountains of the Himalayas to find their way to Ladakh. This was also the period, when in West the fate of the Victorian Era was counting its last living days, which otherwise, had restricted the role of women in West and England in particular, to the domestic boundaries only.

During the Victorian Era women in the western world were bound with a stark patriarch idea, which restricted her abilities only to survive in a world of man, and that it was expected from to focus only on her domestic duties. For women, who accepted their roles in this patriarch by dedicating their lives in happily creating a home for the male counterparts of their families were rewarded, however, for those who dared to break the norms by stepping out of it were typically scorned and ridiculed. The status of women during the Victorian Era was much more like that of the women in casteist Indian society across the medieval and modern ages, which is still prevalent in many

form in India. Besides ceiling them within the domestic affairs of the family, the agony of the women in 19th century Europe also came other domains of the society, in form of equality in wages, exclusion from ownership of land property. They were subjected to limited rights and privileges, and women across different sections of the societies had hardships and suffering, which were imposed on them by the male counterparts of the society. Marriages for the Victorian women were a form of contracts or a sort of social compromise, one which was impossible to get out of. While, on the other hand the men from Victorian Era had the full liberty everywhere.

Furthermore, the law during the Victorian Era was driven giving separate roles to men and women in different spheres of the society, with men having possessed supposedly the qualities of reason, strength and aggression, believed to be better suited for the public spheres. Whereas, women, on the other hand are believed to be filled with feminine qualities, such as submissive, emotional, and dependent were restricted to the private spheres only. However, things started to change towards the end of 19th century, when feminist ideas ignited among the educated middle classes, scrapped the discriminatory laws, which had been used as tools to suppress the liberty of women in west. Particularly, after 1888 a strong wave of equal rights and liberty for women trembled the governance of queen Victoria. The the formal end to the Victorian rule came on 1901 after the death of the queen, however the position of women in society had started improving already by late 80's. This was the period, when women in England, breaking the social stigma, smashed the domestic boundaries and embarked on journeys to distant places.

This was supposedly the driving factors, which brought the first female traveller from England 'J. C. Murray Aynsley' knocking at the doors of Himalayas in Ladakh in 1876. This period also paved way for modern means of transport and travel, which made travel a much cheaper and safer exercise than it has been ever, encouraging these women from west more to venture into regions, the privilege of which had previously been only to leisure upper class people, male adventurers and people belonging with association to the Royal Geographical society or with British India. This was one of the prime factor of the region being explored only by British agents or by employees of Royal Geographical Society throughout the first of 19th century. Among the female travellers of 19th century there are only a handful of travellers, who made it through the passes of the Himalayan and the Karakoram ranges and at the same time jotted the

events from their adventurous in their travel diaries. Those who have made through and who left behind the records of their travel narrations are of immense value in order to obtain a feminine perspective of the Ladakhi society in 19th century. Nineteenth century Ladakh witnessed only a handful of English female travellers, who successfully manage to cross the harsh natural frontiers of Himalaya and reach Ladakh. Among the the most notable of these female travellers were:

1. Mrs. J C Murray Aynsley (1876)
2. Isabella Bird (1889)
3. Jane E Duncan (1904)

4.2 Comparative Description of Women in 19th Century Ladakh

“One of the joys of the expedition was getting away from dress with its worries as distinguished from mere clothes, and many a time after returning to civilization I longed to be in the desert again, where the crows and the goats did not care what I wore.” (Duncan 1906: 11)

The above lines from the travelogue of solo English female traveller pleasant feeling of being away from the world, where nobody judges or cares about what you wear. As we have already discussed above, that how the weakening of Victorian Era liberated the women in European from all sort of restrictions, which was imposed upon them throughout 19th century. Hence towards the end of 19th century when women were finally provided greater independence within the society, it marked an end to male-dominated patriarch western society. Hence, apart from their orientalist remarks on the native, the first thing they observed in the Ladakhi society, about which they have also extensively written in their travelogues, is the “Women in Ladakhi Society”.

Most of the male travellers of 19th century, were so much captivated either with the strange customs of Buddhism and various rituals associated with Buddhism, or other few deeply engrossed in delivering the interests of their masters, that they didn't find the women of Ladakh worthy enough to accommodate space in their writings. Except for a handful of male travellers like E F Knight and Arthur Neve, the only description available about women of Ladakh is the description of their “ugliness”, which also they had put through the lens of beauty of western parameter. Hence, the writings of these

women travellers are of crucial significance to look back at women in 19th century Ladakh and to see the power structure in the domestic families of Ladakh. These female travellers from England having just attained their liberty from an oppressive reign of Victorian Era, travelling through the plains of mainland India, where the condition of women was more pathetic, were completely stunned to see the status of women in Ladakh.

Women in Ladakh, ever since centuries had enjoyed a position which has been almost on par with the male counterparts. Unlike most of other progressive societies of West, Ladakhi society, in spite of being primarily a nomadic society for ages, has accommodated a better place and position to women within the domestic structures of the society. At a time, when in the plains of mainland India, women had been suffering for centuries on grounds of caste, rigid social practices like Sati, Dowry etc., women in Ladakh stayed aloof of any such patriarch social evils. Although, throughout the recorded history of Ladakh, there has been hardly any evidence of women having giving the space in the large public sphere with administration roles, yet relatively their position was much better than women in 19th England and most of other European societies.

Among the female travellers to Ladakh Mrs Murray Aynsley has provided one of the earliest description about women in Ladakh, not just about their looks, rather everything about women in Ladakhi society, they role and position within the family, their attires, their wedding customs, divorce etc. Of her remarks on women in Ladakh, one of the notable mentions is of her visit to a monastery in Ladakh, where for the first time she saw a female nun.

“women, as well as men, can be lamas; all are such from their infancy, -the eldest, or even more sons (if no son, their daughter or daughters).” (Aynsley 1879: 93)

Mrs Aynsley travelled to Ladakh in 1876, and the first English traveller to Ladakh had already reached way back in 1820. For almost over half a century English travellers had been travelling to Ladakh and writing about the place and strange customs in their travelogue, yet none of these writings mentions anything about the Buddhist nuns of Ladakh. And it is not the case, that there hasn't been any English travellers to a Buddhist monastery in Ladakh, rather there has been many and their writings indeed includes a

lot about Buddhist monastery. However, these male travellers fancied much about the “Chinese looking figures”, “Devil Dance”, “Dreadful Figures” and the “Dirty Monks”. Speaking in the domain of religion, one of the unique feature of Buddhism in Ladakh was its inclusion of women in the monastic lives. Women among Buddhist in 19th Ladakh and even today has absolute freedom to dedicate their lives on the path of religion by voluntarily choosing to become nuns. This was something which stood in complete contrast to Christianity in the western world, where women couldn't take any position within the catholic churches. Not only in the European society, rather within the Indian society women were never allowed to hold any religious positions, and were kept within the boundaries of domestic family. Hence, this was a stunning and overwhelming experience for Aynsley to see such a thing in the remotest part of this world.

Hence, it seems Mrs Aynsley was stunned to see these women, who enjoyed uniform status as compared to their male counterparts, when it comes to their acceptance in monasteries, which wasn't the case with 19th century English church. For centuries it has been a tradition among the Buddhist population of Ladakh to send a child or daughter to the monasteries for religious teachings, where they are supposed to attain higher education about spirituality and Buddhism. One of the peculiar thing about it was, this tradition of sending a child was not restricted to the male heir of the family, rather a daughter was also often sent to become nuns. Although it has been rare that a nun in Tibetan Buddhism would reach the position of a “Skushok” or “Head Lama”, which itself shows a male dominance within religion, yet for female travellers like Mrs Aynsley, a woman being allowed to take part in religious institutions was a matter of applaud.

Besides religion, women in 19th century Ladakh were endowed with a relatively better position in the domestic affairs as well. The writings of another female traveller Isabella Bird narrates her experience of a marriage function in Nubra.

“It is the custom for the men and women of the village to assemble when a bride enters the house of her husbands, each of them presenting her with one rupees. The Tibetan wife, far from spending these gifts on personal adornment, looks ahead, contemplating possible contingencies, and immediately hires a field, the produce of

which is her own, and which accumulates year after year in a separate granary, so that she may not be portion less in case she leaves her husband” (Bird 1894: 95)

Bird here talks about a unique custom in Ladakh, where at the time of marriage a bride is usually presented with some amount of wealth by the relatives and villagers of the side of groom. It was so surprising for Isabella Bird to see, that instead of spending this amount on jewellery or any other sort of girly thing, the native woman used it to buy a piece of land for herself, which in a way self-sustaining attitude of a native woman. Similarly, there are numerous descriptions about women mentioned in the writings of Isabella Bird, which indicates how impressed she was on see the condition of women in Ladakh.

Apart from her description about marriage, she has also mentioned that women in Ladakh equally contributes to the family, not just being responsible for the upbringing of the kids, rather also works along their male counterparts in the fields, by ploughing the fields and harvesting the crops. Even physically women in Ladakh were same as men. She writes *“Even the women can carry weights of 60pounds over the passes”* (Bird 1894)

Similar remarks about the empowerment of women in Ladakh is also well described in the writings of another female traveller Jane Duncan. The travels of Jane Duncan came a little late around early 20th century, however, since the pertaining social and political situation was still the same and also since there has been a handful of female travellers to Ladakh, the inclusion of her writings was a necessity. Before her arrival in Ladakh, Duncan had travelled extensively through various parts of mainland India. Hence, her writings on Women in Ladakh also puts forward a comparison with the position and status of women in other Indian societies.

“The Tibetan women look with great contempt on a woman who has only one husband, and that the word widow is a term of scorn and derision. They have great power, and are very independent in looks and manner. They carry a large portion of their wealth on their heads in the shape of a pberak, a strip of red or brown leather or cloth about four inches wide.” (Duncan 1906: 55)

Like most of her female predecessors, Duncan too was highly impressed on seeing the position of women in Ladakhi society. The travelogue of Duncan primarily provides the description of Ladakhi women in domestic affairs. Duncan writes, that in a local Ladakhi family, a woman holds a better position than the male counterparts. Polyandry, of which most of other travellers, particularly the missionaries has written as an evil practice, has been portrayed as a positive thing to keep the women at a better position within the family, which is quite evident in the above excerpt of writings.

4.3 Missionary Writings and the Debate of Religion

Missionary travels have been one of the earliest form of travel, which has been instrumental in the trans-continental expansion of religion ever since antiquity. And it was not just the Christian missionaries, rather this concept of expansion of religion via travelling to far-off places has been common practice in other major religion too. To give an instance is the example of Islam. Having its birth in Saudi Arabia around 6th century AD, Islam initially was supposed to be the religion of Middle-East, yet over the centuries the religion reached as far as Europe in the West and China in the East. Moreover, throughout the middle Ages, it was indeed the Islamic Missionaries which posed a serious challenge to the Christian Missionaries of Europeans, resulting in series of war between the two often known as the “Holy War” of the medieval age. Similarly, there were missionaries in Buddhism too, which helped to grow the religion out of India to the various countries of South and East Asian countries.

Renaissance and the ‘Age of Exploration’ boosted the reach of the Christian Missionaries. At a time when most of the other major religions of world were polluted with many form of evils, the Christian Missionaries were on a voyage to take Christianity to every nook and corner of the world. Within this, their major success in converting natives came from ultra-primitive societies, where the locals lacked the presence of an influential religion. This was one of the major reason for the success of missionaries in spreading Christianity among the Red Indians of South America, Africa and other major tribal regions. As these missionaries often manipulated the natives by giving the definition of Christianity as a religion synonym with modernity, rationality and of being quite subtle, unwittingly reducing the religion of the natives to an inferior position.

The English Missionary writings of nineteenth century provides some similar sort of description from their dialogues with the locals about Buddhism. Most of the English Missionaries has criticized the Ladakhi version of Buddhism extremely superstitious and and meaningless.

“The only difference, as far as I have been able to make out, between the religious worship of the Ladakkis before the introduction of Buddhism and after its introduction, is that the Bon religion has been dressed up in Buddhistic clothes” (Donsen 1896: 13)

The above is an excerpt from one of the reports written by the English Missionary Michael Done titles ‘*Tibetan Martyrs*’, which has been published in the Missionary Magazine called “*Illustrated Catholic Missions*”. Most of the English missionaries of 19th century has recorded their travel narratives in form of reports rather than travel Book. The above excerpt from ‘*Tibetan Martyrs*’ describes about the failure of Buddhism in Ladakh, which still couldn’t bring the local out of their savagism. Donsen put special stress, that Buddhism in Ladakh still hasn’t completely enrooted within the society. Though the religion has been there for centuries, however, the people in Ladakh still primarily follows and practices Bon religion only under the banner of Buddhism. It seems that Father Donsen probably saw a lack of strong faith within in natives of Ladakhis towards Buddhism, which in turn could have made it easier for the missionaries to sow the seeds of Christianity among the natives. He further supports this argument with an incident and example from the Tibetan capital, where he talks about how the natives, who had embraced Christianity chose Death over apostasy. Maybe, Donsen wants to argue and put it forward to the Christian world, how there’s a lot of scope out there in the Tibetan world for Christianity, and how once seeded, the natives could go to any extent to preserve their new faith.

One of other important remarks from Donsen on the superstition of the natives of Ladakh was his encounter with a native, who was making a pilgrimage to a Temple in Srinagar as penance for the crimes he had committed.

“I met on the road a Buddhist, who, in penance for a murder he had committed in L’hassa, was making a pilgrimage... The whole way he had to walk; and at every step he took, throw himself on the ground at full length, stretch out his hands so that they joined above his

head... though it is now six or seven months since I met him, I am perfectly sure that he has not as yet reached the place of his destination. He will have to have patience yet for another year or two, before he can pray at the shrine of the Hindu Fakir, in order to obtain pardon of his sin of manslaughter; at least the Buddhists think that he then will obtain forgiveness for his crime” (Donsen 1896: 342)

Donsen describes about the harsh way the native man had to complete the pilgrimage, i.e. by throwing himself at the ground in a strange way at every step, which he has been doing the same for around past nine to ten years, and still had to do the same for another couple of years before he reaches his destination. While mentioning about this encounter, Donsen has given stress upon some particularities of this event, which somehow indicates about his reception of this event as barbaric and harsh way of repentance and at the same time has questioned the practices of Buddhism, manifesting a contrast to the western religion (Christianity). This is well reflected in the last lines where he mentions “*At least the Buddhists think that he will obtain forgiveness for his crime”*”.

It is interesting to note that, Donsen unlike many other missionaries, who restricted their missionary works to the local Buddhists population only, expanded his missionary works to the local Muslim population as well. Further he used the local Ladakhi language as the key tool to inject the basic tenants of Christianity among the locals, which he mainly used in the form of written pamphlets.

“Add to this that I am preparing in my spare moments two Ladakki pamphlets – one for the Buddhists, the other for the Mohammedans –introductory to Catholicism” (Donsen 1895: 19).

The explicit writing of the missionaries about Buddhism in the shadow lines of Christianity, patently illustrates the ultimate mission of the Christian Missionaries, i.e. to plant the saplings of Christianity among the natives of Ladakh by various means. Among these their prime tool was to convince the locals about Christianity as the more appropriate and true religion between the two. Apart from these Christian Missionaries, there were other travellers too, who wrote about Buddhism in Ladakh drawing a comparison between Christianity and Buddhism. What distinguishes the writings of

these travellers are a balanced and more rational debate about religion in comparison to the Christian Missionaries, who were bounded with their prime motive of presenting Christianity as a religion superior to all.

Among the writings of non-missionary travellers, the narrations of E F Knight on Buddhism and various customs and practices related to it are quite significant, provided that fact that unlike the Missionaries, who have thoroughly ridiculed the various practices of Buddhism, the writing of E F Knight provides a more balanced understanding of Buddhism in Ladakh.

“No one can treat with ridicule the beautiful teachings of Prince Siddhartha, and it is not altogether strange that among the enlightened peoples of Europe he now has followers as well as admirers; but these inhabitants of the Himalayan highlands have corrupted almost beyond recognition his pure and wise doctrines...but it is as degraded a system of idolatry as has ever been practised by a people outside savagery. The priests themselves have long-since forgotten the signification of their religion, and all that remains is an unmeaning superstition.” (Knight 1893: 132)

Many of the travellers from this period were vague, when it comes to the knowledge of Buddhism. Although, travellers like Knight had adequate knowledge of this religion of prince Siddhartha, which was slowly making progress into the lives of people on Europe as well, however, they weren't quite pleased to see this form of Buddhism in Ladakh, which comprised a lot of rituals and practices. Knight had made a stark critique of it, terming it as a degraded form of idolatry, which is being practices by savages. Among these also, it is not only the priests, who according to Knight seems to have knowledge of this form of Buddhism, whereas the common people of Ladakh seems quite blank when it comes to the spiritual value behind these rituals, as they think it *“as the affairs of lamas”*.

On another instance Knight appreciates about the tolerance, which the people of Ladakh has got towards the foreign religion. Though the Buddhists of Ladakh, according to him has corrupted the teachings of Buddha, yet they are very faithful to their own religion. However, they hold no grudges for the western travellers, who know how doomed they are by practising Christianity, yet unlike the Christian Missionaries

to don't attempt to don't expect neither do they try to convince the English travellers to accept the faith of Buddha.

“Following a religion that never persecutes, he is very tolerant to other creeds, though he adheres firmly to his own. He seeks to make no converts, but treats the unbeliever with a good-natured pity. He knows in his heart that his European friend is doomed... but he is too polite to allude to this” (Knight 1893: 131)

This stands quite in contrast to all what the Christian missionaries like Donsen and Hanlon have described in their missionary reports, as they have cited the Buddhists of Ladakh except for their faith as being Buddhist, knows nothing about the religion. According to them, it's not just the common people, rather even the Buddhist spiritual leader “Lamas” knows nothing about the spiritual values of the rituals they follow. The writings of Henry Hanlon, even describes that the concept of God is missing among the Buddhists of Ladakh, rather they just believe in a Supreme Being called “Kon-Jog”, which is too vague build upon.

Knight, however, leaves no stones unturned to draw an analogy of Buddhism in Ladakh with forms of Christianity in Europe, most probably hinting at the growing faces of Anti-Catholicism in England in 19th century, marking a war of acceptance for more legit form of Christianity between the Catholic, Protestants, Anglicans and the Pentecostal churches.

“But, after all, this Tibetan belief is not so far more foolish and corrupt than some forms of so-called Christianity we come across in Europe. The tenets of some of our own sects gone a little madder than they already are would not be unlike those of Ladak, a land, indeed, which, even as Laputa, is a living satire on the civilisation of the world. (Knight 1893: 133)

Another similar critique about Buddhism is explicit in the writings of the English female traveller Jane Duncan. What stands apart her critique, is that her critique of the customs and practices of Buddhism is not just confined to Buddhism, rather her remarks reflects a thorough understanding of religious rituals across religions, drawing a comparison between Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam.

“After seeing this and other Gompas the thought forced itself on the attention that, though all Christian sects would repudiate with horror the suggestions that their own forms of worship resemble in any way that of idolaters, yet it is the fact that the rituals of Hindus and Buddhists, of the Orthodox Greek Church, of Roman Catholics and a section of Anglicans, have alike developed in a greater or less degrees in the direction of vestments, images, pictures, banners, flowers, lights, incense, hand-bells, rosaries, offerings, and of a taste for darkness in churches and temples. An Indian mosque, in its freedom from all these things, and in its simplicity...is a standing protest against them.” (Duncan, 43)

The glitter of the Buddhist monasteries, which to some of these travellers was on the one hand very alluring and fascinating, for others it was equally dreadful and ugly. However, in these pictures and paintings of strange figures and the exaggerated rituals of the Buddhist monastery, Duncan found an analogy with rituals and customs of all other ancient religions, which has to do with Idolatries, be it the orthodox Greek Church, or the complicate rituals of Hinduism, and of all these the simplicity if the Islamic mosques, according to Duncan stands in a stark contrast.

Christianity in late 19th century in England was shuddered with many forms of liberal modernist movements, where most of the European countries witnessed a general diversion away from the traditional rigid and strict practices of Christianity, with a move towards a more liberal and secular form of Christianity. Among these the most prominent was the Broad Church movement led by the liberal theologian bishop Ernest William Barnes.

The onset of Enlightenment in 17th century, marked Christianity being hammered under various reform movements ever since, which later paved way to various other liberal and scientific reforms within religion in England giving more superiority to rationalism over religion. However, Ladakh in 19th century, still aloof from any such modern reforms, was a stark contrast and complete shock to these western travellers, when first exposed to them. With Buddhism still at its raw form in Ladakh, posed major questions in the mind of these travellers. Hence, no doubt, coming across the Tibetan form of

Buddhism couple with local antique customs, these travellers saw a reflection of pre-enlightenment Christianity in Europe.

The typical thread which justified colonialism up to a large extent was the driven de facto by the concept of ‘White Man’s Burden’, which justified imperialism as a noble enterprise to civilize the uncivilised world. And this Burden of the White Man implies the moral obligation of the western society to rule the so-called non-white of the world, to bring them out of their misery by transplanting the western model in the colonial world, supposedly encouraging the economic, social and cultural development of the orientals through colonials.

Hence the critique of these travellers of the local tradition and customs of Ladakh, in a way reflects the “White man’s Burden’, which they had carried all the way from England to Ladakh. And it wasn’t just the missionaries, who wanted to relieve the natives of their indigenous religion, by showing the path towards conceivably the more legitimate and apposite religion, i.e. ‘Christianity’, rather even most of the non-missionary travellers also saw the others various aspects of the society of the natives of Ladakh as flaws, when placed under the prism of their own western civilisation.

4.4 The Great Game in 19th Century English Travelogues

“The vast chessboard on which this shadowy struggle for political ascendancy took place stretched from the snow-capped Caucasus in the west, across the great desert and mountain ranges of Central Asia, to Chinese Turkestan and Tibet in the east. The ultimate prize, or so it was feared in London and Calcutta, and fervently hoped by ambitious Russian officers serving in Asia, was British India.”

-Peter Hopkirk, 1990

The above excerpt from Peter Hopkirk Book “*The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia*” beautifully summarize the political rivalry between the two most powerful nations of the 19th century known as ‘The Great Game’.

The term “Great Game” was first coined by an intelligence officer of the British East India Company's Sixth Bengal Light Cavalry, Arthur Conolly, however, it was Rudyard Kipling who with his popular novel *Kim* (1901), familiarized it to the scholars across

the globe. His novel set against the background of the Anglo-Russian rivalry for control over the lands of Central Asia along northwest border of India and across Eurasia. Both Russian and British India was in a hurry to expand her boundaries to such an extent that, the vast border of thousands of miles over Central Asia, which once separated the frontiers of British India and Russia, had been reduced to merely twenty miles over the Pamir Ranges by the end of nineteenth century.

For long the British officials in Calcutta failed to take notice of the gradual movement of the Tsarist Russia, which was expanding at an average of 55 square miles a day by the end of 18th century towards British India, shortening further the distance between Moscow and Delhi, which in a way was posing a serious threat to the British possession of India. It was only after secret services reached to the ears of London about Russian motives, when the company officials in India actually started to worry about the same and everything they could do to prevent such an invasion.

The Anglo-Russian rivalry for most part of the nineteenth century, dominated events in Eurasia and the natural frontiers of Himalayas, preoccupying the diplomats in Russian and London. While the rapid expansion of Russian towards Central Asia and Chinese Turkistan was making her the largest contiguous land empire, Britain on the other hand complete dominance over maritime and global colonial power. The British East India Company, which started her career as a trading company was no longer merely a trading enterprise in the Indian Subcontinent, but with her cunning politics of imperialism had gained control over domestic territories across India, either replacing the native rulers to take direct control, or by keeping them under her patronage. Especially, by mid-eighteenth century British had even snatched away the whip from the Mughal king, who had ruled India for over three centuries. Starting from the late-eighteenth century, the British started intensifying their domination over India, by defining the borders of her empire by creating buffer zones to secure them against any foreign invasion.

During the late 19th century till early 20th century, the whole of Central Eurasia was bombarded with secret missions and tensed situations between the two major colonial powers “Russia” and “Great Britain”. This vast open region, stretching from western border of Russia in the east to the Pacific Ocean in the west, has been throughout ancient times mostly a vast, unmapped land between the Roman and Chinese empires. Throughout the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries, both Russia and China

clashed with each other for boundary disputes, which eventually was settled by negotiating political treaties between the two. The Congress of Vienna (1814-15) marked a major shift in the dynamics of global powers towards early nineteenth century. This was for the first time when the French and British colonial hegemony was directly challenged by other when rising global players like Russia, Prussia and Austria, when these new players sought their share of colonial territories by pushing their own territories. This posed a direct threat to the imperial ambitions of Great Britain. Her focus on Central Asian countries stemmed from the fear of a possible expansion from the Czarist Russia towards British India and from the growing suspicion of Russian ambitions in the Indian subcontinent.

The travels of the British India explorers concerned fundamentally about British India's interests in Ladakh, in terms of trade benefits, political security or because of her colonial ambitions. Their writings more explicitly manifest the cunning nature of 19th century British Empire and her desperation to expand her reach to everywhere. Most of these travel missions were primarily political in nature, even though some of these travelogues have also included other topics outside the domain of interest of British India.

Though, Ladakh throughout the period of Great Game, was merely a small pawn, which was well played by the British India, to protect the Crown, however, the British knew well, if ignored, the tumble of this small pawn could lead a foray of Russian invasion, breaching the borders of British India, which could have had devastating consequences towards British possession of India.

Starting from the travelogues of Moorcroft, who has jotted down the ignition of Great Game, till the narratives of E F Knight, which reflects the dampening of the same, these travelogues have a lot of story to tell from the Great Game its own unique way.

The writings of G J Alder '*Standing Alone: William Moorcroft Plays the Great Game*' portrays the significance of Moorcroft's travel to Ladakh as a key move to have prepared the hostile terrains of Ladakh and upper Himalayas for a series of secret missions as a part of the great 19th century rivalry between the two major powers of the 19th century global order.

When Moorcroft was penning down the details of his journey in his travelogue '*Travels in the Himalayan provinces of Ladakh & Kashmir*', Ladakh was still an independent

kingdom. This wasn't the case with most of the travellers after him, as Ladakh had to undergo the wrath of Dogra ruler by mid 1830's.

When Ladakh was attacked by the Kalmaks during the period of Aurganzeb, Ladakh sought for the assistance and support from Mughals, who had their empire extended as far as Kashmir. Ladakh on the conditions of her acceptance as a Tributary under the Mughal king, was provided with reinforcement which lasted till the reign of Mohammed Shah in Kashmir, wherein Ladakh was supposed to pay annual tribute to Mughal. This was later on transferred to the Durani kingdom after the invasion of Ahmad Shah Abdali on Hindustan. However, after Ranjit Singh overtook Kashmir, Ladakh was forced to pay the compensation directly to him now. In order avoid this centuries old taxation to the Kashmiri ruler, the Khalon of Ladakh "Tsewang Tundup" wanted to bring the British on his side, using Moorcroft as a medium to forward the tender of allegiance to the British officials sitting in Bengal. (Moorcroft 1841)

Moorcroft's meeting with the ruler of Ladakh bargained by Mir Izzatullah is of crucial importance, as this meeting was more sort of a modern day diplomatic conference of delegates of different nations. It seems the ruler of Ladakh already felt the growing shadows of the Kashmiri ruler, who was by then eyeing upon Ladakh. Hence, a deal was broken between Moorcroft on behalf of British India and the Khalon of Leh as the ruler of Ladakh. Under this meeting the king of Ladakh sought the protection of British India in view of any invasion from the ruler of Kashmir, and in return Moorcroft put forwarded his four demands with the king.

1. Liberty to trade with Ladakh, and through it to the adjoining regions.
2. Moderate duties.
3. A permanent factory at Leh.
4. To open the Niti Ghat for British commerce.

The writings of Moorcroft has provided detailed remarks on the geo-strategic importance of Ladakh both in terms of commerce and as a point of defense against the Russians. This also raises a big question about his journey to Ladakh as a British agent, as it seems the British officials in Bengal were equally unaware of his political interests, which is quite prevalent when disciplinary actions were taken against him for his

voluntarily involvement in the political arrangements in Ladakh without the sanction of the government.

This responsibility of the supervision of British position in the adjoining regions of Ladakh was soon acquired by another British traveller Godfrey Vigne, who travelled to Ladakh somewhere around 1837. Vigne unlike other travellers has unlikely hardly given any details on the people and culture of Ladakh, rather has provided the readers much in detail the geographical description of Ladakh and the routes leading from Ladakh to the adjoining regions like Skardu and Yarkhand.

Vigne travels to Ladakh coincided with the period of post Dogra invasion of Ladakh. The rajah of Leh, by then was merely left as a subordinate of Raja Gulab Singh of the Dogra empire, with negligible power bestowed upon him. This is quite prevalent from the accounts of Vigne upon his arrival in Leh talks about how on his arrival on Leh a strict restriction was imposed on him, partly because of his suspicious movement in Ladakh and adjoining regions including Yarkhand and Baltistan, which rose suspicion with the ruler of Kashmir. Another important factor was also that, Gulab Singh had a bigger ambition in these region, especially after his conquest of Ladakh under the command of Zorawar Singh, who had now eyed to seize the power from the hands of the ruler of Skardu "Ahmad Shah". Ahmad Shah on the other hand too was trying to seek the patronage of British, which could have eclipsed the ambitions of Gulab Singh in the events of a conquest on Skardu.

The travelogue of G W Hayward stands in par with the writings of William Moorcroft in terms of its significance to The Great Game. Hayward was a British Army lieutenant station in Multan in 1859. However, in 1865 he left the British Army and joined the Royal Geographical society to be an explorer. Though one of the objectives of Hayward travel from Leh to Yarkhand seems to map this route with greater precision as addition to the route, which have been already mapped by the travellers before him, however, the secondary objective of his travel, also seems to find a new route directly from Yarkhand to British India, cutting short the regions of Ladakh and Kashmir. Although, he mentions that such a route would benefit to boost the trade between British India and Yarkhand, nonetheless, keeping in view the larger geo-political scenario and the growing Anglo-Russian, this would have of course benefitted the colonial master of British India in many ways.

“The great desiderantnm to insure an increasing traffic with Central Asia, is the opening out of a shorter and easier trade route, leading direct from the North-west Provinces of India to Yarkand. A good road, avoiding both Kashmir and Ladak, would offer greater facilities to the Yarkand traders for reaching India direct, and have the desired effect of insuring an easier transit, as well as doing away with the difficulties, both political and geographical, which attach to the old Karakoram route. (Hayward 1869: 42)

With the whole of Central Asia under the cloud of Great Game of the nineteenth century, both Russia and England wanted to strengthen their holds in Central Asia. Russia, on the one hand was swiftly and successfully expanding by occupying areas like, Tashkent in 1865, Kokand and Bukhara in 1865, and Samarkand in 1868, which were of crucial importance to rule Central Asia. However, on the other hand, with the loyalty of Afghan rulers towards British still under a dark shadow, Britain was failing to launch any successful campaign to penetrate into Central Asia. Hence, the provinces of Yarkhand and Chinese Turkistan could have been the Gateway to Central Asia for the Britishers. Further, in the successful scenario of a direct route from Yarkhand to the North-western provinces of India, this could have been a milestone for British in multiple ways.

Firstly, no doubt such a route could have boosted the trade between Yarkhand and British India, but also it could have opened the whole of Central Asia as a market ground for British goods. Next, in the situation of a possible Russian expansion towards British India via Chinese Turkistan, such a route could have helped the Britishers to send immediate reinforcement to stop the Russians. Finally, this route could have been the key for the British policy of expansion in Central, both commercially and strategically

It is very interesting to observe that, among all the travellers, explorers with affiliation to British India were more interested in exploring routes to the adjacent regions like Yarkhand, Kashgar and Toorkistan, than Ladak itself, which somehow manifests the larger geo-political interest of the 19th century Great Game. For most of these British explorers, Ladakh was merely a transit to enter into Central Asia via Chinese Turkistan. It seems, that the British were much confident about its hold on Ladakh, both in terms

of the region as a transit for trade activities and also as a last line of defense in the Northern frontier.

However, they understood it pretty well, that guarding the frontiers of Ladakh might not be enough in time of a possible expansion from the Czarist Russia, which could threaten the British possession of British India. Hence, they were more keen to slowly penetrate into regions beyond Ladakh. The travel narratives of Robert Shaw "*Visits to High Tartary, Yarkand, And Kashgar, and return journey over the Karakoram Pass*", of G. W. Hayward "*Journey from Leh to Yarkand and Kashgar, and Exploration of the Sources of the Yarkand River*" and Colonel Henry Torrens "*Travels in Ladak, Tartary and Kashmir*", all these reflects a popular trend among the explorers of the British India to explore the region lying beyond Ladakh.

Apart from his travel dairy on his journey from Leh to Yarkhand, Hayward also wrote a series of letter to his superiors of the Royal Geographical Society, where he has given report of his travels in the provinces lying North-west of Ladakh, including the valley of Yasin, The Yasin valley was of extreme strategic importance for both of these two colonial powers of the Great Game, as the valley links the key mountain pass of Yarkun in Chitral, the Broghol Pass, the Wakhan Corridor, and eventually leading to Hissar into Tajikistan. Hence, the Yasin valley was exposing the vulnerability of the crown of the British India from the north-western frontier, as the valley could have easily lead an invasion route for the Czarist Russia into the territories of British India, posing a serious threat to the future of British India.

"Should the Yassin chief further my views, and render assistance as far as Wakhan, it will not be imperative to visit Chitral, since his vakeel mentions a very good route leading direct from Yassin via the Darkote Pass to Gujal in the basin of the Oxus, thence to Shignan, Roshnan, Derwaz, Kolab, Hissar, and Shahr-i-Sabz." (Hayward 1870: 11)

In addition to his description on the routes leading to Tajikistan, Hayward also has hinted towards the errors in the existing maps of these routes, mapped by the previous explorers, of which he has provided corrected details with more precision. Another important thing to note here, is that Hayward undertook this journey towards the

western border of Ladakh at a time, when a tight territorial scuffle was going on in the northern plateau, and also this period marked the peak of the Great Game.

“I regret, however, to tell you that a letter of mine representing the atrocities committed by the Maharaja of Kashmir’s troops in the countries across the Indus, with an account of their massacre of the Yassin villages in 1863, and certain comments and opinions expressed thereon, has been published in the ‘Pioneer’ newspaper of May 9th. The publication of this letter is most unfortunate; and likely to interfere very much with the objects I have in view...The resentment aroused amongst the Maharaja’s officials is very great, and it cannot be doubted they will in every way secretly strive to do me harm.” (Hayward 1870: 17)

This was the last ever letter written by Hayward to his official in Britain, where he talked about the possible threat to him from the Dogra troops, in response to a letter published in a journey, where he made a stark critique of the atrocities of the Dogra rulers towards the locals of the Gilgit valley. Surprisingly, within a month or more after writing this letter, Hayward was cold-bloodedly murdered in Darkot on 18 July, 1870. Though the rumours pointed the the plot of this murder was speared by Meer Wali, the nephew of the chief of Chitral, however, the involvement of the Dogras behind the death of Hayward can’t be ruled out. As Peter Hopkirk has cited in his book “The Great Game”, the death of Hayward was one of those lives, lost in this battle of series of secret services to the highlands of Central Asia.

The travelogue of E F Knight finally puts light on the waning moments of The Great Game, when towards the end of 19th century both Russia and Britain had come to a compromise.

“Since the commercial treaty that was entered into between the Governments of India and Kashmir in 1870 we have a representative, known as the British Joint-Commissioner, at Leh...His duty is to settle all disputes between our subjects and natives of Kashmir on the one hand, and the Central Asians merchants who are subjects of Russia and China on the other hand.” (Knight 1893: 159)

Edward Knight with his remarks on the commercial treaty of 1870 between India and Kashmir, which led to the establishment of a British Joint-Commissioner in Leh, and how it has been instrumental in regulating the trade on these crossroads of higher Himalayas. Further it seems, that the domain of this office wasn't just confined to the boundaries of British India, rather it was also responsible for settling the trade disputes between the Indian subjects of Leh and adjoining Kashmir on the one hand and the subjects of Russia, who were primarily the Central Asian merchants. Ever since the onset of Great Game, British India has been sceptical to consider Central Asia as the extended territory of Russia. However, by the time of journey of E F Knight to Ladakh in 1890's, when on a grander scale, preparations were being made for the signing of Pamir Boundary Commission of 1895 to end the Great Game, British India had already accepted Central Asia as an interior part of Russian Empire. This is quite obvious from the statement of E F Knight, when he says "*The Central Asian merchants, who are subjects of Russia*".

Another important tale of the easing relationship between Russian and British India described in the travelogue, is his description about Dad Muhammad, an Afghan fugitive and a Kakar Pathan from Quetta, who was on run after committing the cold-blooded murder of English traveller Andrew Dalgleish in 1888. He was later captured in Samarkand (Russian) by Captain Bower with the help of Russian police. The Russian help in arresting Dad Muhammad was well appraised by British Indian officials, and was certainly a milestone in curtailing the century old rivalry between the two. (Knight, 168-169)

The writings of Edward Knight apart from his remarks on the smoothening relations between British India and Russia also marks the end to similar British Missions to Ladakh, as Knight was among the last British officials to have travelled there towards the last quarter of 19th century, which in itself represents the climax of The Great Game of 19th century.

Many historians and thinkers believes that the Great game was actually about the political and trade control over the crossroads of Central Asia, however, in reality it was the golden bird of the South Asia (British India), that the colonial powers had their eyes upon. All the other frontiers bordering British India, including Ladakh was merely a route leading to India, about which the colonial powers had limited or no information.

Hence, Ladakh in herself has never been the prime quest for power throughout the Great Game, but at the same time the region in itself has played a crucial role in defining or balancing the struggle for power between the heavyweights of nineteenth century global order, a better hold on which would meant a certain advantage for the British over the Russians.

Chapter V: Conclusion

Orientalist writings has emerged as an important area of studies in the last few decades, especially with the onset of post-colonialism, the traditional writings of the colonial era have become an important subject of research. For long travel writings has been a subject of lesser attention, which otherwise is very crucial to have a detailed understanding of every aspects of the society from the perspective of the traveller. This study has examined the various aspects of nineteenth century Ladakh through the lens of English travellers, looking on the individual experience of the traveller as well as the combined attitude of all the English travellers from their writings on Ladakh.

The first chapter forms the bedrock of this research work with a brief introduction about the significance of travel literature in postcolonial studies. How travel writings record the experience of the cross-cultural contact between a traveller and the native land. Next this chapter provides a brief inspection of Ladakh in nineteenth century. Various aspects of society in 19th century Ladakh, major religion and customs etc. In addition to this, this part also explains the geo-political interest of British India in the frontiers of Ladakh. How these travellers disguised as traders and explorer played The Great Game for British India.

The second chapter provides an overview of nineteenth century travel writings on Ladakh. This chapter is broadly classified into three sub-sections. The first section talks about the relevance of Travel writings in studying the historical and cultural importance of a society from the perspective of a traveller. This section also deals with the prime debate that, how over the period of time travel writing has evolved as a major literary genre. The next section provides a thumbnail of the important English travel writings of this period. The last section has underlined the major themes of the nineteenth century travel writings. This section includes a broad categorization of the various themes and things of interest in these travel writings like ‘Land and People’, ‘Customs and Manners’, ‘Buddhism and its rituals’, ‘Festivals’ etc. Apart from the mentioned themes, there has been multiple other things which interested these travellers and has occupied a major portion of their travel writings. Among this the exotic wildlife of Ladakh, which includes wild animals like “Ibex”, “Blue Sheep”, “Himalayan Bear” and “Wild Ass”, provided a safe haven for these travellers for shooting. Among the customs of Ladakh, polyandry among the Buddhist population has put a cultural shock to most

of these English travellers, yet, at the same time most of the female travellers have described about the positive attributes of this strange custom, citing the better role and position, it provides to the women in a family.

Third chapter seeks to look for Orientalism as a uniform thread, which binds the travel narratives of all the English travellers of 19th century. It is again further divided into three sub-sections. The first section explains about idea of orientalism and the question of western scholarship with their representation of the society of 'others', which is East. This includes Edward Said's definition of Orientalism and how in the last few decades it has opened the floodgate of Postcolonial criticism. The core argument of this section is the depiction of 'us' vs 'others' in the western literature. The next section talks about the western imagination of East and Ladakh in particular. How Ladakh and overall East is being perceived in the western society, what constitutes their knowledge of East and the writings of the western travellers about their exotic travels in the land of orient forms a fallacious imagination of Ladakh in the minds of people in West. The final section of this chapter discusses the depiction of Ladakh in the writings of these travellers. Further, this section looks on how orientalist attitude of the western scholars plays a pivotal role in their perception of people and society of Ladakh through a colonial lens.

The travelogues of most of the English travellers of nineteenth century have used various phrases for Ladakh, often calling the land and the people of Ladakh as 'Tibetans', 'Tartars', 'Chinese', 'Savages' etc. One of the prime supporting factors was that, except for some artificial imaginative knowledge, only a handful of travellers were well aware about the region. As a result, they failed to see a difference between Ladakh and most of other East Asian nations. The writings of these travellers have branded the habits and life style of the people of Ladakh as something common among all Orientals. Similarly, their perceived Tibetan Buddhism and various rituals associated with utmost absurdity, often negating the spiritual significance of the religious affairs of the natives of Ladakh.

Having looked for uniformity of orientalist attitude in the writings of these English travellers, the fourth and final chapter deals with a comparative study of the travelogues by indexing them into different categories. This chapter is classified into four sub-sections. This first section has categorized the noted western travellers and

their writings into three main categories based on the purpose of their travels and the content of their writings. The second section looks for the representation of women in the writings of these travellers, i.e. how different sets of travellers have given different description of women in 19th century Ladakh. This section has to do more with the description of society from a feminist perspective. The next section brings into play the role of Christian missionaries and the reflection of Buddhist-Christian dialogues in their writings. This puts into front the debate of religion, and how Buddhism as a religion is perceived by these English travellers. The final section attempts to revisit the nineteenth century 'The Great Game' through these travelogues, and how it looks into The Great Game from a whole different angle. This section describes about the role of British India Explorers in playing the larger role of British India's interest in the region through their travels and how has it affected their overall outlook of Ladakh. Starting with the writings of William Moorcroft, these British India explorers were crucial for British India to secure its position in the region.

It is widely known that the Great Game of nineteenth century was a campaign between the Czarist Russia and British India to gain access and to control the major regions of Central Asia, which had become important for both the colonial powers to pursue its larger goal of colonialism in the region. Russian on the one hand was keen and ambitious to expand her colonial boundary further down towards British India, and British India sensing the fore-coming threat from Russia did everything it could to protect her frontiers. However, what lesser known is the significance of Ladakh and the neighboring regions of Gilgit-Baltistan during this rivalry between the two major global powers.

The writings of these English travellers have beautifully captured everything which they experienced during their travels in Ladakh. This also includes remarks about festivals, people, strange customs. Hence, these writings could be used as a yard stick to compare the society of Ladakh in 19th century and with contemporary Ladakh. The changes that we could see in the contemporary Ladakh from all what mentioned in these travelogues. Apart from this we can also look at the legacies of various customs and cultural aspects of Ladakh, which has continued over the century even till the present time. One such classic example is the festival at Hemis. For example, the writings of Jane Duncan has mentioned about the popularity of Hemis festival even in nineteenth century, which used to draw a lot of audience from far off places, of which she has

mentioned about travellers from over 5 different countries to have attended Hemis Festival during the time of her visit.

Edward Said has criticized the western scholars for being biased about the society in the East. However, it wasn't just the western scholars or writers who were pre-occupied with such colonial imagination of East, rather the indigenous population were equally to be blamed to amplify the idea of colonialism and imperialism at the first place. This is quite prevalent from the reactions of the natives of Ladakh on their early encounters with the western travellers, when the villagers presented them with gifts like sheep, barley, 'Chang'¹¹ etc. on their arrival in the villages. Also the usage of term 'Sahibs', which means 'masters', for the western travellers reflects a similar colonial mind-set. Although, such welcoming behaviour of the natives of Ladakh towards outsiders has been a part of her tradition since centuries, yet the abundance of such subjugated attitude of the natives towards these travellers exemplifies the submissive nature of the natives. And for that matter, it wasn't just the natives of Ladakh, rather whole of Indian society owing to a century of British ruled had developed this submissive attitude.

The travel accounts of these travellers were not merely a written description of their journeys, rather it provides a multidimensional view of the region from the perspective of the traveller. These travellers, though were mainly individuals in quest of something unknown or least known, however these travellers were also the flag bearers of a society, which, when they were first exposed to it, stood in complete contrast to the alien society of Ladakh. Similarly, their travels account doesn't only reflect the observation of an individual, rather it reflects the observation of a whole society, i.e. of the whole western world and Europe in particular.

It would be wrong to analyze the writings of these travellers under a common umbrella, as the writings of some of the travellers stand apart from the rest. No doubt, the writings of these travellers are pre-occupied with orientalist understanding of the region, yet some of these writings forms the bedrock of the collection of our knowledge on Ladakh, which till 19th century was completely blank. In fact, it was the western travellers of nineteenth only, who took the initiative of reframing the political and cultural history

¹¹ 'Chang' is a type of local alcohol in Ladakh made out of the fermentation of wheat.

of Ladakh by putting together the various scattered fragments of cultural history of Ladakh, and by compiling them together to make the modern day history of Ladakh.

Apart from the valuable information about every aspect of nineteenth century Ladakh, these writings have brilliantly recreated the society of Ladakh in 19th century. The writings of most of these travellers provides only an orientalist dimension of its description about Ladakh, nevertheless for a place with so little of written history, these travelogues are of prized possessions. One could actually have a “Deja vu” after reading these travel narratives. Though we see a common trend and similar sort of interest in all the nineteenth century English travel writings, yet, there is also a uniqueness and individuality in the narratives of each of these travellers. Hence, it would be wrong to paint all these travelogues with the same brush of orientalism and to not to look on the individual aspects each of these travelogues.

Scope for future Research

- A similar study can be done including the adjoining regions of Gilgit-Baltistan, which through the history has been an extended territory of Ladakh, with close cultural affiliations.
- The study has been confined to the period of nineteenth century due to the vastness of the period. Post-1970s Ladakh saw a new wave for western travellers to Ladakh. It would be interesting to see the contrasting descriptions of Ladakh in the writings of western travellers from two different centuries.
- Apart from the English travellers, various travellers from other major European countries like Germany, Italy and France have also left behind detailed narrations of their journeys. An analysis of travelogues of the combined travellers of Europe could provide a parallel overview of nineteenth century Ladakh
- The study could not include the narratives and writings of various indigenous travellers like Mir Izzatullah. Hence, a comparative study between the western travelogue and the writings of indigenous travellers can broaden the existing horizon of available research works on Ladkah.

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